

A Double Ending Part 1

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[0 : 00] And if you would open up your Bibles, please open up to the book of Judges, chapters 17 and 18. If you've got a pew Bible, it's on page 256 of your pew Bible.

Do you know what it means to give lip service? Lip service is essentially a kind of hypocrisy. It's saying one thing, but you actually mean or are doing something else. For example, you tell your spouse that you're going to do something, but then you don't do it. I'm sure that doesn't apply to anybody in the room.

They become empty words. And if you keep on doing that, you lack integrity. You're saying one thing and you're doing another thing.

Another example would be a close Christian friend comes up to you and asks, how are you doing spiritually? A very specific question from a person who loves you, and you say, just fine.

[1 : 12] Or maybe you say something like, I'm a blessed man, blessed. But the reality is you are in a spiritual tailspin. It's lip service, empty words, lack of integrity.

Let's say that there's a sister in our church who's claiming that Jesus Christ is her king, but in reality, this sister is the king of her own life. Her profession is lip service.

Because actually she is reigning on high in her own life. Hypocrisy is when you say one thing but do another.

Do you know what the opposite of hypocrisy is? Integrity. It's when your words and your life, they line up.

Have you been in a situation where a non-Christian says this to you? The church is full of hypocrites. I've heard that.

[2 : 25] I'm sure you've heard that. And in one sense, it's true. We're all hypocrites. We all have a gap between our profession of Christ and our practice of living for Christ.

Anybody heard of the album Jesus Freak? DC Talk? Third track, What If I Stumble? Brendan Manning is recorded by saying this.

The single greatest cause of atheism in the world today are Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, but walk out the door and deny Him with their lifestyle.

This is what an unbelieving world finds unbelievable. Friends, I want you to know something. Lip service Christianity.

Lip service Christianity. Hypocrisy. It's not the cause of worldliness. It's a symptom of it. If your skin breaks out with itchy little pock-like lesions that are spreading over your body, they're not telling you that you may have chicken pox.

[3 : 46] They're telling you, you've got the virus. We're going to see a virus hitting full tilt in the people of Israel.

The no-king virus. It canonizes people. If you're acknowledging Jesus with your lips, but denying Him with your lifestyle, you got the virus.

We've reached the end of the book of Judges. And just as Judges began with a double introduction, Judges ends with a double conclusion.

And so next week, we're going to look at Judges 19, 20, and 21, where the people of Israel hit rock bottom, and you see it because they've been completely canonized, made, they've become just like the nations around them morally.

Today, we're going to look at 17 and 18, where this complete canonization of the people of Israel, they are religious apostates.

[4 : 53] They say one thing, but they do another. Hypocrisy isn't the cause of worldliness. It's a symptom of it. And do you know what the cure is?

Do you know what the cure of a divided heart over Jesus is? It's a united heart in Jesus. And He specializes in that work.

So what we're going to do is, I'm going to walk you through chapter 17 and 18, and then we're going to bring it to bear towards the end of the sermon.

So we're going to see that this canonization of Israel starts in a household, it moves to the clergy, and then it affects a tribe.

You ready? Let's dig in. Chapter 17, we're going to see a compromised household in verses 1 through 6. Let me read it for you. There was a man of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah.

[5 : 58] By the way, Micah means, who is like the Lord. No one. That's what his name means. Whose name was Micah, and he said to his mother, the 1,100 pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse and also spoke in my ears, behold, the silver is with me.

I took it. And his mother said, blessed be my son by the Lord. And he restored the 1,100 pieces of silver to his mother, and his mother said, I dedicate the silver to the Lord from my hand for my son to make a carved image and a metal image.

Now therefore, I'll restore it to you. So when he restored the money to his mother, and his mother took 200 pieces of silver and gave it to the silversmith, who made it into a carved image and a metal image, and it was in the house of Micah, who is like the Lord.

And the man Micah had a shrine, literally a house of God, and he made an ephod and a household gods and ordained one of his sons, who became his priest, his priest. In those days, there was no king in Israel.

Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Let me just summarize what we just read. We're introduced to this guy named Micah. His name means who is like Yahweh. He steals 1,100 silver pieces from his mom.

[7 : 18] He hears her curse. Whoever steals it, he freaks out, and so he confesses it. Not because he fears Yahweh. He fears his mom. He returns the 1,100 silver pieces after his mom blesses him in the name of the Lord.

This is crazy. Well, he returns the 1,100 silver pieces. His mom takes 200, gives them to a silversmith, and she's like, I'm dedicating this to the Lord for my son, so let's go make an idol.

It's crazy. Micah puts the image in his, quote-unquote, house of God, makes an ephod, which is a fancy kind of dress, priest's wear.

Household gods. What? And he ordains his own son as his priest. Not Yahweh's priest, his priest.

Okay, what you're going to find out about Micah as we go through 17 and 18 is he is an opportunist, a self-serving opportunist.

He's looking for opportunities to advance what he wants when he wants it, but he is also quite a disobedient dude in other respects as well. He steals.

[8 : 31] Exodus 20, 15. No, no. He dishonors his mom. Exodus 20, 12. No, no. His confession is totally suspect. His mom blesses her disobedient son in the name of Yahweh like she's trying to reverse the curse she just spoke.

What? He did not need blessing. He needed to be spanked. Both mom and son were involved in creating and worshiping an idol.

Carved images of Yahweh were not allowed. Exodus 24. And household gods were a big no-no.

You shall have no other gods before me. Exodus 23. This is a mess. And they're doing it in the name of the Lord.

You know what's crazy about it? They seem oblivious to it. They seem like everything's fine. Now, this household has been Canaanized!

They're just doing what everybody else does around them. And then the author in 17.6 tells us why. He gives us an explanation. He says, in those days, there was no king in Israel.

[9 : 42] Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Their worshiping this way is a doing what was right in their own eyes, just like everybody else. Because there's no king in the land.

Now, you may see that phrase, there's no king in the land. You might be thinking, well, they're talking about a human king. And Judges, what follows Judges is Ruth. They talk about this coming one from the line of kind of like David guy.

And then 1 Samuel rolls around. And it's 1 Samuel that Saul is anointed the first king of Israel. Israel. So this is decades out. So you might think this is talking about a human king.

There's no king in the land. No king in Israel. But I think the author is being a little tongue-in-cheek here. Because there is a king in Israel. King Yahweh.

As we've been going through the book of Judges, do you remember the cycle? Israel sins. God sends an oppressor. Israel cries out.

[10:46] God sends a deliverer. God has been at work in Israel since the book of Judges began. What do you mean there's no king? In fact, in 1 Samuel 8, the people demand from Samuel a human king to lead their armies.

Just like all the nations. And do you know what God says to Samuel? Samuel, they're not rejecting you. This is 1 Samuel 8.8.

They have rejected me from being king over them. There's no king in the land as a way of explaining how Israel has deceived herself.

She doesn't think there's a king in Israel. They're ignoring King Yahweh. And when you ignore God as king, do you know what you're left with?

lip service. They're acknowledging Yahweh with their lips but denying him with their lifestyles. This household is representative of all the households in Israel at the time.

[11:57] We're seeing a kind of compromise on the household level. And what we'll see again and again is that Micah is this self-serving opportunist who's using Yahweh for his own gain.

Is your household, brother, sister, paying lip service to King Jesus? Moms, dads, kids, are you acknowledging King Jesus with your lips but functionally denying him with your lifestyle?

Have you been infected with the no king virus? Okay, we've seen a compromised household.

Let's look at a compromised clergy, a lip service Levite. It's in verses 7 through 13. Let me read it for you. Now there was a young man of Bethlehem in Judah of the family of Judah who was a Levite and he sojourned there and the man departed from the town of Bethlehem in Judah to sojourn where he could find a place.

And as he journeyed, he came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah, the guy that we were just reading about. And Micah said to him, where do you come from? And he said to him, I am a Levite of Bethlehem in Judah and I am going to sojourn where I may find a place.

[13:30] And Micah said to him, the opportunist that he is, stay with me and be to me a father and a priest and I will give you ten pieces of silver a year and a suit of clothes and your living.

And the Levite went in and the Levite was content to dwell with the man and the young man became to him like one of his sons. And Micah ordained the Levite and the young man became his priest and he was in the house of Micah.

Then Micah said, now I know the Lord will prosper me because I have a Levite as a priest. Now I know God will prosper our church because we have a Trinity Evangelical Divinity School grad as a pastor.

Let me kind of summarize what just happened. Not what I just said, but the story. We have a sojourning Levite.

He's a young man, probably just over 30. He's unnamed at least for now. And he's sojourning from Bethlehem.

[14:41] A sojourn is a wanderer. And he's a Levite, which means he's of the tribe of the Levites, which means he is one of those precious Levites in Israel.

They don't have a land allotment because Yahweh is their allotment. They have been uniquely called and set apart to serve the Lord in his house. And at this point in Israel's history, the house of the Lord was in Shiloh.

You can see it, 1831. Well, this Levite is sojourning and he just happens to sojourn up to the hill country of Ephraim and he comes across Micah's house and Micah greets him and starts a conversation with him.

Where do you come from? Verse 9. And this Levite says to him, I'm a Levite of Bethlehem and Judah. I'm going to sojourn where I may find a place. That little phrase, where I may find a place, shows up twice in this passage and it's getting at something.

You know who's restless? The sojourning Levite. He wants to find a place. He wants to lay some roots. But he's not consulting Yahweh.

[15:52] He's making this thing up as he goes. He's a pastor for hire. Well, he's an opportunist and Micah's an opportunist and so Micah sees the opportunity because he's got his house of God that he's been filling with trash and now he wants a priest from the people of Levite and it'll just round it

off and make it beautiful.

So he starts cooking on a scheme. Where do you come from? Oh, stay with me and be to me a father or priest. That is appealing to this young man's ambition. A father and a priest.

Status. Hey, you'll have authority over me and then you'll be a priest at 32. And then he appeals to his wallet. I'll give you a salary of 10 silver pieces a year.

You'll have a clothing allowance so you will be dressed beautifully and then, you know, I'll take care of your room and board too. Quite a deal.

And so this Levite says, I'm in literally. And the Levite went in. The Levite in verse 11 is happy. He is content to dwell with the man.

[17:11] That word content should make you think, where is he finding his happiness? Because it's not in the house of the Lord in Shiloh. In verse 12, Micah ordains him as his priest.

Sorry son, you are fired as my priest. We have a Levite now who will be my priest. Not a priest of Yahweh, a priest of Micah. And then in verse 13, Micah is happy.

Now I know that the Lord will prosper me because I have a Levite as a priest as though that is what will cause God to prosper you. So, I'm guessing somewhere along the line, Micah threw out to this Levite.

Hey, this is a win-win situation, buddy. Hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, hey, we have two opportunists who are ignoring God.

They think that there is no God, no king in Israel, but there is. They're disobeying, they're seemingly unaware, they're totally misguided.

[18:22] What the Levite should have done is said this, no way, buddy, no way. I'm not going to be your priest, I'm Yahweh's priest. I'm not serving in your house, I'm serving in the house of the Lord where the Lord says he will be worshipped.

You know what this is? This is a sober warning for anybody who provides for their families in the service of God. Do you know what's possible? Within Christian ministry, it's possible to serve in the name of the Lord Jesus, but you're actually serving yourself.

There's a no king virus with this clergyman in the hill country of Ephraim and there's a no king virus plaguing much of the pastors in the United States of America.

They're in it for themselves. It's representative. Do you know what happens when spiritual leaders are infected by this no king virus where you are just acknowledging Jesus with your lips but you're denying him with your lifestyle?

Do you know what happens? Here's what happens to pastors is that they start seeing spiritual positions as self-serving opportunities.

[19:53] That's what happens. And they do it all in the name of the Lord. You know what the test is? Where do you find your contentment?

What makes you happy? And if it's not Jesus you got some hard work. So so far here's what we've seen. We've seen a compromised household.

The no king virus affects Micah and his mom. And now this no king virus is showing up in the clergy. Levite, this priest. It is a comprehensive compromise of God's people.

Now let's turn to the tribe. Chapter 18. The tribe of Dan. Instead of reading all 31 verses I'm just going to kind of walk you through in summary.

In chapter 18, 1-6, here's what happens. We're first shown in one. In those days there was no king in Israel. They think Yahweh isn't reigning.

[21:03] But he is. And then we're introduced to this people of Dan who are seeking for itself an inheritance to dwell in. For until then no inheritance among the tribes of Israel had fallen to them.

Oh no, the people of Dan, they don't have an inheritance. Here's what we know from Judges 1 34-36, they did have an allotment.

They're talking about a land allotment. God had given them a land allotment. And you know what Dan did? They didn't do anything. Of all the tribes named in chapter 1, Dan is the last.

And of all the tribes named, we see repeatedly again, they couldn't put out the Canaanite indwellers as they were supposed to. What happened with Dan was this, they couldn't push out the Amorites, the Amorites pushed them back.

Here's what that does. It makes you realize Dan's already disobedient. We have a compromised people who aren't being faithful to their God.

[22 : 12] And so here's what we see happen. In verse 2, they're like, hey, let's have a Dan rally. Okay, let's get five spies to go find some land of our own choosing, not what the Lord has given us.

And so they send out five spies. And those spies are supposed to be kind of like make you think of Joshua 2, those spies. But these spies are under false pretense.

The tribe God is, the land God is allotted, is still there, just west of Jerusalem, just west of Ephraim, just north of Judah, right in the middle of Israel, the promised land, right on the shores of the Mediterranean.

But no, no, no, they don't go there. They head north. They're in a town, two towns called Zorah and Eshterol, and they move north. And you know whose house they come across in the hill country of Ephraim?

The house of Micah. And while there, they hear the voice of the Levite, they recognize it. Bethlehem and Zorah Eshterol, they're pretty close, so the chances are they already knew each other.

[23 : 21] And so they now stop by these five spies and they check out Micah's place. They ask the Levite, you know, what's the story? Hey, how'd you get here? And then in verse five, they ask him to inquire of God.

They don't really, everything's suspect here, gang. They're in disobedience. I think they're playing them. Because the tribe of Dan, they're opportunists too.

Inquire of God, please, that we may know whether the journey on which we are setting out will succeed. In the priest, the Levite says, go in peace. The journey in which you go is under the eye of the Lord. Do you know what?

That's a mess. Because we already know they're in disobedience. that Levite isn't speaking on behalf of God. But man, it's exactly what the tribe of Dan wanted to hear.

And so, in verses 7-13, they send the spies north to this city of Laish, and it's actually in the inheritance of Naphtali, another tribe of Israel, but they come across these unsuspecting people who, man, they are unprotected, and they're living in a rich and fertile land, so they're like, let's do it.

[24 : 38] So they send a report back to their brothers and sisters in Zorah and Eshter all in verses 8-10, and they say, hey, we found the land, let's go do it. And if you look at verse 9, you start seeing some interesting language.

Arise, let us go up. And look at verse, that last sentence, do not be slow. 10, as soon as you go, let's do this. Woo, woo, woo, woo, woo.

Woo. They rally 600 men of war, and they send them north. Let's go take Laish.

Guys, let's, there's a little spot, hill country of Ephraim. Let's stop there first. So in verse 14, this 600 people, 600 men of war, with these five spies, they stop at Micah's house, because they're on a mission.

In verse 14, we read this, the five spies say their 600 brothers, do you not know that in these houses there are an ephod, household gods, a carved image, and a metal image? Now, therefore, consider what you will do.

[25 : 49] Wink, wink, wink, wink. Take it. They meet the Levite, it's false pretense, small talk, they ask him about his welfare.

The 600 men are outside the gate, flexing their muscles, sharpening their swords, and then in verse 17, the five spies go into Micah's house, and they take the carved image, the ephod, the household gods, the metal image, while the priest stood there and watched.

And then in verse 18, the priest says, hey, what are you doing? And then in verse 19, they say, shh, shh, shh, shh, please be quiet. Oh, we've got a job offer for you.

They appeal to his ambition. They know he's an opportunist. So, these five spies in the house of Micah, holding on to this image, say to the false priest, hey, what's better, being a priest of a one-man household, or being a priest of the people of Dan.

Promotion, baby. And look what he says in verse 20, the author, and the priest's heart was glad. Yes! Finally, they see the talent.

[27 : 16] What's making him glad is that his self-serving opportunist heart is being satisfied. In 21 through 26, I forgot to mention this one point.

Not only was the heart of the priest glad, this Levite, he took the ephod, household gods, in the carved image, and went along with the people of Dan. He became a thief.

So, in verses 21 through 26, the 600 men with this Levite, with this carved image, they bolt. They're going up to Laish.

Micah finds out. He chases them down. In verse 24, he confronts them. Hey, you take my gods that I made, verse 24, and the priest, and go away, and what have I left?

This is my everything. This is my treasure. To which these people of Dan respond in verse 25, would you shut your face?

[28 : 24] Lest one of the angry ones in our midst should cause you to lose your life with your household. Wink, wink. Murderous, thieves, idolaters.

Don't miss the irony. Micah, who stole silver from his mom and made a carved image, has now had that stolen from him by the God that he trusted.

In verses 27-31, Micah goes home without anything. In verse 27-31, we read that this people of Dan, they go up to Laish and they decimate the place.

They did to Laish what they were supposed to do to the land allotted to them by Yahweh down south. They wipe it out. They bring the edge of the sword to bear on it.

It's complete destruction. It's completely under false pretense. This isn't Yahweh's doing.

[29 : 33] This is Dan's doing. In fact, you start actually feeling pretty bad for the Canaanites that just got wiped out. That's the irony of it all.

But there's more surprises. In verse 30, as we're coming to the end of this account, we finally learn the name of the Levite. Check it out.

The people of Dan set up the carved image for themselves and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, son of Moses, and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity.

Do you see what just happened there? Two generations from Moses, his grandson is leaving a tribe in the false worship of Yahweh.

Complete Canaanization of Israel. That it hit so close. And then in verse 31, surprise number two, so they set up Micah's carved image that he made as long as the house of God was at Shiloh.

[30 : 41] What's being here is the origin story for the false worship in the northern kingdom for hundreds of years to follow that eventually result in Yahweh sending the Assyrians to take the northern kingdom into captivity and to decimate in judgment.

what we have here is the origin story of a deep and long standing false worship in Israel.

It was all accomplished through hypocrisy. Lip service. Opportunists, disobedient, oblivious seemingly to what they're doing, completely misguided.

They're setting up a worship place for Yahweh when they are setting up something abhorrent to Yahweh. Hypocrisy, it turns out, can affect a whole tribe of people, a whole denomination of people. We've all watched what's been happening to the Methodist church over the last few decades. It can affect American evangelicalism, make us opportunistic.

[32 : 09] It makes you start asking the question, who are we really serving when we declare certain political partnerships? Who are we doing it for?

Really? Really? the accumulated effect of a compromised household, a compromised clergy, and a compromised tribe is to make you realize the extent of the religious canonization that has taken place in Israel.

They have reached rock bottom spiritually. this hypocrisy, this lip service, it's not the cause of their canonization, it's a symptom of it.

There's no noble characters in this account. The name of Yahweh is used as a byword. There's lip service of self-serving opportunists all the way through disobedient idolatrous thieves who are murderous, disobedient to their parents, misguided, seemingly oblivious.

Do you know what you could say at this point? Israel, you're full of hypocrites. Just like the charge against the church.

[33 : 36] The church is full of hypocrites. It's true. We've all got a gap between our profession and our practice. Here's the question.

Are you aware of it? Or are you ignoring it? Are you comfortably numb in your compromise?

Are you acknowledging Jesus with your lips but denying him with your lifestyle? This has plagued God's people for millennia.

In Matthew 15, 7-8, Jesus confronts the Pharisees who were insisting that God's people obey the commands of man over God.

And this is what he says in verse 7-8. You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said, this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

[34 : 46] In vain do they worship me. Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. Jesus could have quoted Isaiah to Micah. He could have quoted that to Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses.

He could have quoted it to the five spies of the tribe of Dan. and he could quote it to us. Are you honoring Jesus with your lips, but your heart is far from him?

If Jesus Christ, if King Jesus is not the controlling center of your life, I doubt that you're going to publicly disavow him.

I'm going to guess though you will pay him lip service. Because that's what I do. You acknowledge him with your lips and then walk out the door and deny him with your lifestyle.

Brothers and sisters, this no King virus that we see back in Judges, wow, that virus is around a day. Do you know what the cure to the virus is?

[36 : 04] Do you know what the cure for hypocrisy is? Do you know what the cure for acknowledging Jesus with your lips, but denying him with your lifestyle? Do you know what it is? Do you know what the cure of a divided heart is?

It's a heart fully united in the worship of Jesus. That's the cure.

King Jesus is the cure to our hypocrisy. he is no hypocrite. He never said this and did that.

Never. In fact, in Revelation 19, when he's coming back on a white war horse, his title is faithful and true.

He's true to his word, faithful to what he says. And this king, he died for you and he died for me. He died for our hypocrisy so that when he was raised, we'd be raised with him to live whole, united, integrity lives by his power, by his grace.

[37 : 25] Jesus is not some imperfect small S savior who accomplishes a little salvation. He is totally God, totally man, the perfect capital S savior who has accomplished a forever salvation and you know what that begins with?

salvation, that salvation starts in your heart where he flips you by his grace and transforms a self-serving opportunistic heart and he transforms it by this grace into a Christ magnifying opportunistic heart.

Now we're looking for opportunities to magnify him as our king. There is a king in our land.

There is a king reigning on high in 2024. The risen king, King Jesus.

Let me press you. Are you aware of some hypocrisy in your life? Are you aware of the gap between your profession and your practice?

[38 : 42] Don't run from that. Run to Jesus with that. Say to him, Lord, I see it, I see it, I see the gap between what I say about you to be true and my actual living of that.

Thank you for showing me this. Would you change me, please? Could you imagine if one of your children comes up to you and says this? You know, dad, I'm not going to become a Christian. The church is full of hypocrites.

You know what you get to say? Yes, I'm one of them. There's a gap between my profession and my practice. Son, what are you seeing? Help me to see it.

I don't want to live that way. I'm living for Jesus. You're right. That's why I need Jesus. do you need to repent of some hypocrisy in your life?

Do you need to turn from it? Do you need to ask Jesus to unite your heart to fear Him? Do it. Do it. For the glory of His name.

[39 : 51] When it comes to our households, parents, don't bless your children when they're sinned against God. Don't bless your children when they sin against God. Help them to understand that they're sinning against God.

If your son is lying and you catch him in a lie, you help your son realize, son, you're lying. And it's not just affecting this throne of lies that you're sitting on with your people who are around you, but you're actually sinning against the God of truth.

And this God of truth died for your lying in order to help you be a truth speaker. your lying shows you need Jesus, son. Don't pat your children's backs when they sin.

Lovingly confront them with truth. Spiritual leaders, where's your gladness? If it's not the glory of King Jesus among the nations, you've got some hard work to do, can I encourage you to memorize 2 Corinthians 4 or 5?

What we proclaim is not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Christ's sake. as leaders in the church, it's not about us, it's about him, King Jesus.

