

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Judges And Ruth: Personal Blessing Amid Group Apostasy

Part III: Epilogue - Illustrations Of Life In The Era Of The Judges, Judges 17:1-21:25

A. Illustrating Religious Apostasy: A Lesson On Thriving At The Grassroots Level Amid Ungodly Leadership (Judges 17:1-18:31)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

In our current world, the spiritual welfare of people at the grassroots level is at risk due to the lack of godliness in many leaders, what we can readily illustrate (as follows):

(1) Peggy Noonan, a former speech writer for the late President Ronald Reagan, in her column, "Trump and the Rise of the Unprotected" in The Wall Street Journal, February 27-28, 2016, p. A11, claimed that in "the U. S. and Western Europe" right now "(t)here are the protected and the unprotected . . . The protected are the accomplished, the secure, the successful -- those who have power or access to it . . . (T)hey are protected from the world they have created" by their formation of "public policy. The unprotected live in it . . . (W)e are governed by protected people who don't seem to care that much about their unprotected fellow citizens," for their "attitude . . . is: You're on your own. Get with the program . . ." (Ibid.)

(2) Keenly aware of their vulnerability before this governing "protected" group, many evangelicals at the grassroots level are voting in an unusual way in the presidential primaries: William A. Galston's column, "Trump's Hostile GOP Takeover" (Ibid., February 17, 2016, p. A11) cited an evangelical intellectual as claiming, "Evangelicals are terrified that everything they value is under assault, and they have concluded that only a strongman can stem the tide. So they are willing to make common cause with someone they normally would disdain."

(3) However, Justin Peters of Justin Peters Ministries wrote: "Ironically, many of those in the Religious Right and many evangelical celebrities who claim to be fighting" the world's "troubling trends are actually contributing to them by their dilution of biblical doctrine and standards." (Brannon Howse, The Coming Religious Reich, 2015, p. iii) For example, philosophers "Neitzsche and Kierkegaard believed a person could not know truth, that we should embrace the mysticism of the world and reject absolutes," and "(w)e can see this influence . . . on . . . many of America's churches, seminaries, and Christian colleges." (Brannon Howse, Religious Trojan Horse, 2012, p. 21)

(4) The risk to the spiritual welfare of grassroots believers due to ungodliness in leaders occurs locally: I was told last week that in an evangelical church in our area, if someone wants to get counsel or ask a question of a pastor, he has to be put on a waiting list for 3 weeks! I was stunned at such a cavalier attitude of pastors toward the flock!

Need: *So we ask, "How can we at the grassroots level spiritually thrive amid such ungodliness in many leaders?!"*

I. **Judges 17:1-18:31 illustrated the religious ungodliness that afflicted Israel's individuals at the grassroots level in the era of the Judges, which apostasy, as in our era, occurred due to the lack of godly leaders:**

- A. Judges 17:1-5 reports how a man named Micah, whose name meant, "Who is like Yahweh?" (B. K. C., O. T., p. 408), from the tribe of Ephraim, established an apostate shrine and an unlawful priesthood (as follows):
1. Micah heard his mother utter a curse against whoever stole her silver (Jud. 17:1, 2b), so he confessed to her that he took it and returned it to her in hope that she would neutralize the curse as in pagan magic, and she tried to do so by blessing her son in God's name, Jud. 17:2a,c. These actions violated the 8th and 3rd commands of the Ten Commandments against stealing and taking God's name in vain, Exodus 20:1-17!
 2. When Micah returned the silver, his mother violated the 2nd commandment by dedicating the silver to God to make a graven and a molten image, the mingling of true with pagan worship, Judges 17:3-4.
 3. Micah later set up a temple containing these images, and made an ephod and images of female deities (*teraphim*, Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Jud. 17:5 and Gen. 31:19) and consecrated his son to be the priest of his new religion (Jud. 17:5) in violation of the 1st and 2nd commandments and Leviticus 8-10.
- B. In time, Micah met a young Levite of Bethlehem in Judah who was traveling through Ephraim, and he offered to meet the Levite's livelihood needs were he to be the priest of his shrine, and the Levite agreed in violation of Leviticus 8-10 where only the line of Aaron were to be priests. This formed a syncretism, the mixing of Bible beliefs with paganism in violation of the First and Second commandments, Ibid., ftn. to Jud. 17:12-13.
- C. What made this a *potent* error was the fact that this Levite was also **Moses' grandson**, Judges 18:30 NIV!
- D. The tribe of Dan then adopted this priest and syncretistic religion in complete ungodliness, Judges 18:1-30:
1. Failing to trust God so as to displace the Canaanites from their land (Jud. 1:34), the tribe of Dan sent scouts out to look elsewhere for land (Jud. 18:1-2a) in violation of God's assigned inheritance for them.

2. On the way, they met the Levite from Bethlehem whom they knew, and in asking of his activities only to learn he was a priest in a new religion (Jud. 18:2b-4), they errantly asked him who was not a high priest if God would prosper their search, and the Levite errantly gave them his blessing in God's name, Jud. 18:5-6!
 3. The scouts from Dan later found the city of Laish inhabited by peaceful, quiet, secure people who had no associations with others, so the scouts decided to report back to their tribe that they should conquer Laish in violation of Deuteronomy 20 on waging war only against Canaanites or hostile Gentiles, Jud. 18:7-10.
 4. When the tribe of Dan then began to migrate north to conquer Laish (Judges 18:11), along the way, they forcibly took Micah's priest and idols as the religion for their tribe, and the Levite willingly went with them knowing he would be a priest of a whole tribe, and they all went north to Laish, Judges 18:12-27a.
 5. The men of Dan slew the people of Laish, making their city the tribe's new home, setting up the Levite and his sons as priests until Israel was captured by Assyria, Jud. 18:27b-31; *Ibid.*, Ryrie, *ftn.* to Jud. 18:30.
- E. The **reason** for all of this sin and ungodliness, stated first in Judges 17:6 and then again in Judges 18:1, was the fact that *the lack of a [godly] king in Israel led every man to do what was right in his own eyes.*
- II. Thus, the answer to the lack of godly oversight is COUNTERED by applying Deuteronomy 17:14-20 that reveals STEPS toward PRODUCING GODLY KINGS, AND THIS CAN APPLY TO US IN OUR ERA:**
- A. First, the man who would be Israel's king had to be chosen by the Lord, Deut. 17:14-15. Applied to us, **we must function in the Biblically sanctioned oversight role that God assigns us, Rom. 12:3-8; 2 Tim. 1:9.**
 - B. Second, the king was not to multiply horses or go to Egypt to multiply horses to himself, but rely on God for national security, Deut. 17:16. Applied to us, **we must trust God to help us succeed in our role, Prov. 3:5-6.**
 - C. Third, the king was not to multiply wives lest his heart turn to idols, nor was he to multiply silver or gold to himself, Deut. 17:17. Applied to us, **we must part with idolatry and worldliness, 1 John 2:15-17; 5:21.**
 - D. Fourth, the king was to write for himself a copy of the Law, to keep it with him and to read from it every day of his life, Deut. 17:18-19a. Applied to us, **we must daily expose our minds to Scripture, 2 Tim. 3:15-17.** The effects of this exposure to the Word would yield (1) **reverence for God** (Deut. 17:19b), (2) **heeding Him** (Deut. 17:19c), (3) **humility in relating to one's subordinates** (Deut. 17:20a), (4) **a strict alignment to God's will versus man's ideas or agendas** typical of the era of the Judges (Deut. 17:20b) with (5) resulting blessing on the king and his offspring (Deut. 17:20c). In application to us, **we too will revere God, heed Him, relate with humility to subordinates, strictly align to God's Biblical will versus heeding human agendas and find God blessing us and others we influence.**

Lesson: *In the era of the Judges, the lack of a king led to many Scripture violations with very complex evils. Thus, heeding God's directives about the establishment and development of godly kings in Israel in Deuteronomy 17:14-20 would have countered the apostasy of the era of the Judges, as it would for our similar era today.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ to have eternal life, John 3:16. (2) In facing a vacuum of godly overseers in various realms in today's world, may we EACH at the GRASSROOTS level ASSUME the ROLE of a GODLY "KING" in the institutions of oversight that GOD ASSIGNS US -- be it in marriage, family, business, church or government. (3) In our respective oversight roles, may we (a) stick to God's Biblical assignment, (b) may we rely on the Lord by faith to succeed there, (c) may we separate from idolatry and worldliness (d) and keep our minds immersed in Scripture to know how to function there. (4) This exposure to Scripture will produce (a) a reverence for God (b) that leads to obeying Him, (c) humbly interacting with our subordinates and (d) aligning strictly to Scripture versus any human agenda, (e) resulting in God's rich blessing for us and for others around us.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

I want to apply this message in my own walk. You may recall in our sermon introduction that we reported how an evangelical church in our area requires that anyone in the congregation who wants to meet with a pastor must be put on a waiting list for 3 weeks. I want to avoid that in our Church -- I want to avoid being lifted up in pride above anyone else in the body in violation of Deuteronomy 17:20. I want to act as a godly pastor toward you.

Thus, if you want to speak with me after Church, but you see that I am busy talking with someone else, please take a "Welcome" card out of a pew slot and write on it your request either for me to contact you or for you to contact me along with the phone, e-mail and scheduling information needed for the meeting to occur, and come up to me and hand me the card while I am busy speaking with the other party. That way I can best help each person as soon I can.

In our era of the apostasy of our leaders in many realms, may EACH of us assume the KING role GOD has ASSIGNED us to have in relating to others, and so be GODLY KINGS for His glory and with His blessing.