

Judges Chapter 18 Commentary

1 ¶ "In those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel. 2 And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there."

The tribe of Dan has never conquered the whole of the territory given them; or they never actually lived in all their possession, and it has been inhabited by their enemies. Now, they have grown in number and have need to expand their inhabited borders. They send spies to search the territory and bring back a report, so they would know how to move forward.

3 "When they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this place? and what hast thou here? 4 And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest. 5 And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. 6 And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the LORD is your way wherein ye go."

The five spies recognize the voice of the Levite priest. How, and why, could they recognize the voice of the Levite? Because of what we have already seen in: *Jg 12:6 "Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand."* The Ephraimites could not pronounce certain words, their dialect was different, which showed that the Levite was not an Ephraimite.

Then they ask the Levite priest to inquire of God about their mission. They get an answer of peace and prosperity from the Levite and go their way.

7 ¶ "Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in anything; and they were far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man. 8 And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What say ye? 9 And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it is very good: and are ye still? be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land. 10 When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where there is no want of anything that is in the earth."

They find the territory just as the priest had told them, and report back to their brethren. They explain; the land is a land in which there is no want of anything to live a good life. They also report that the Levite priest has told them that God is with them, and God has delivered the land to them.

11 "And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war. 12 And they went up, and pitched in Kirjathjearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahanehdan unto this day: behold, it is behind Kirjathjearim. 13 And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah. 14 ¶ Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? now therefore consider what ye have to do. 15 And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, even unto the house of Micah, and saluted him. 16 And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which were of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate. 17 And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, and came in thither, and took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men that were appointed with weapons of war. 18 And these went into Micah's house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye? 19 And they said unto him, Hold thy peace,

lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel? 20 And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people. 21 So they turned and departed, and put the little ones and the cattle and the carriage before them."

From this account, we can ascertain that the Levite was probably a covetous person, which may tell us why he left the priesthood service to begin with. He has been getting a small salary from Micah, but the Danites give him promise of a better wage by the many of their family.

They gather their army and begin the journey to conquer the land. The spies tell of the Levite priest and the idols. They go to Micah's house and take away the idols and the Levite priest. They tell the priest that he will be priest to this family and the tribe of Dan. They carry forth the priest, his family, and his possessions.

22 "And when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that were in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan. 23 And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company? 24 And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee? 25 And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household. 26 And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house."

Micah gathers the men near his home to go with him to take back the images and the priest. This family of Dan, their men of war, tell Micah and his group to go home or be destroyed. Understanding the Danites are too strong for them to conquer, they return home.

27 ¶ "And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire. 28 And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Zidon, and they had no business with any man; and it was in the valley that lieth by Bethrehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein. 29 And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first."

They take the Laish and burn it with fire. Since they had need of nothing, the people of Laish did no business with their neighbors. They have no one close enough to deliver them and are destroyed. The Danites build a city and the city's name Dan. Since, scripture records that the name of the city was Laish at first, we understand that they rebuilt the city which they had burned down.

We point out here; the danger of having plenty of everything can give us a false sense of security. This is a thorn in our sides sometimes, because in the abundance of God's mercies and provisions in our lives, we tend to forget; it was God that gave us the needed things to live, and much more than is needed. Forgetting God is not a good thing in any way.

30 "And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. 31 And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh."

We see the Levite's name is Jonathan. We cannot discern with certainty if his mother or his father was from the family of the Levites, but believe it to be through the father's lineage.

We see an obvious disconnect between the house of God, which is at Shiloh, and this family of Dan. They set up the idols, and the Levite priest and his sons become priests for this family of Dan. They continued in this idol worship, until God sends judicial judgment and takes them into captivity.

What lessons can we learn from this chapter?

- Sin begets more sin, if not checked. In the last chapter: we saw the idolatry of the house of Micah, and we saw the Levite priest become involved in this idolatry and becoming a hypocrite. Now, we see, in this

chapter, that the idolatry has spread to this whole family of Danites. Thus, we learn: Forsaking God and indulging in idol worship is not a good thing to do.

- If we become secure in our abundance, we will forget the need to prepare for war in time of peace.
- If we isolate ourselves, we can easily be overcome, wherefore, keeping up Christian fellowship with Christian believers is a good thing to do.

Lastly, to bear the name, of being God's chosen people, is not enough to keep us safe in life. Not only must we bear the name, but we must also live up to what the name Christian says to all who hear it. We cannot say we are Christians, and worship idols and thereby disavowing Christ. If we call ourselves Christians, and we do not have a personal relationship with Christ, all our efforts are in vain, and we are hypocrites. Because of our hypocrisy, and idolatry; we, like Israel, will come under the judicial wrath of God. We will be carried away captive by our enemies.

God has given us chapters, in the bible, like this, as a warning to his people of how not to live your lives. Herein, we see that the glory of man has been put ahead of the glory of God. It is easily discerned that idolatry, and hypocrisy, will not lead us to a good end. This is demonstrated in the New Testament in: **1Jo 1:5-10; 5 "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 8 ¶ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."**

"If we say that we have fellowship with him," If you have "**Christ in you**," you will have the desire to live a life as Christ exemplified. If you do not have "**Christ in you**" then you will exemplify the sin nature that you were born with naturally.

Having therefore received this warning, let us hold fast, the profession of our faith in Christ Jesus, and his finished work of eternal salvation. Help us, Oh God of heaven and earth, we pray, in the name of Christ Jesus our Saviour and Lord, Amen!