Judges: Straight Lines – **wk 10 - #Blessed**

**Judges is a mess. Words to describe: Violent, weird, odd, strange, tragic, scandalous, treacherous, sad.**

**Coming out of Egypt, following the death of Joshua – they are dispersed to different areas in the region now known as Israel.**

**They had no single leader and no king. God was to be their King, but they were terrible subjects.**

**\*\* The Cycle of sin – Sin, suffering, supplication, salvation – repeat.**

**Judges is a list of temporary leaders that occasionally got them out of trouble. Some raised up by God – some were not.**

**We are going to jump ahead in the book – but it is really a jump back.**

**But first – let’s pick up where we left off… 8 vs – 3 judges – 25yrs**

**Jephthah dies - Judges 17:8 After him, *Ibzan* of Bethlehem led Israel. 9 He had thirty sons and thirty daughters. He gave his daughters away in marriage to those outside his clan, and for his sons he brought in thirty young women as wives from outside his clan. Ibzan led Israel seven years. 10 Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem. (Influential)**

**11 After him, *Elon* the Zebulunite led Israel ten years. 12 Then Elon died and was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun. (Peace)**

**13 After him, *Abdon* son of Hillel, from Pirathon, led Israel. 14 He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who rode on seventy donkeys. He led Israel eight years. 15 Then Abdon son of Hillel died and was buried at Pirathon in Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites. (Wealthy)**

**NOTICE - No mention of the LORD, or that God raised them up. They were on auto pilot. The LORD was not guiding or leading.**

**\*\* Good times do not mean God’s blessing or favor - #blessed**

**Influence, peace, and wealth – are not indictors of God’s favor.**

**This is really the arch of today’s sermon. More on this in a bit…**

**What follows them is the most famous judge of all – Samson.**

**4 chapters – will be its own series.**

**It is a tragic story of a failed person and God’s faithfulness.**

**He is the poster child for missed opportunities. The last one.**

**The Judges went from decent to deplorable.**

1. **Othniel 40 yrs - only thru the power of God is there a way.**
2. **Ehud - 80 yrs - Left handed - God uses those considered weak.**
3. **Shamgar – Mercenary judge fight against 600 Philistines with staff**
4. **Deborah and Barak - 40 yrs - The woman judge and a soldier**
5. **Gideon - 40 yrs - Farmer who becomes a warrior – Fell**
6. **Abimelech - Wicked leader and mass murderer – no LORD**
7. **Tola - 23 yrs - rescued Israel (least talked about) – no LORD**
8. **Jair - 22 yrs – wealthy and influential – no LORD**
9. **Jephthah - 6 yrs - God is not to be mocked - Fell**
10. **Ibzan - 7 yrs - 60 kids - half the area was family – no LORD**
11. **Elon - 8 yrs - Zebulunite Judge – no LORD**
12. **Abdon - 8yrs - 40 sons with 30 grandchildren – no LORD**
13. **Samson - 20 yrs – the ultimate crooked stick – Fell**

**7 times – the LORD had compassion and raised up a Judge**

**After Samson – a 5-chap appendix follows. Stories that happened much earlier. Some of the worst depravity of Isarel is recorded.**

**Rated R - the closing chapters just get worse and worse.**

**\*\* We will spend a couple of weeks on this. Judges ends tragic.**

**Understanding judges (map)**

**The 12 families of Jacob move into the land, territories are dispersed.**

**They were to drive the locals – they do not. Compromise & sin follow.**

**12 large tribes living in a small area about 120 miles radius. Plus, about 7 other tribes fighting over the same area. (19)**

**It is not always in chronology (like much of the Bible). There is a lot of overlapping. Timelines are difficult to establish – and diff.**

**When did chapters 17-21 happen? Impossible to place dates.**

**- Chap 17-18 – happens shortly after they get here. Early on.**

**- Chap 19-21 – is just a little later.**

**- Ruth - happens during judges as well and some of 1 Samuel.**

**(This is their sin on display) Judges 17:1 There was a man of the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Micah. 2 And he said to his mother, “The 1,100 pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse, (10 shekels are a year’s wage - her life savings was stolen) and also spoke it in my ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it.” (He owns up to it only to avoid a curse.) Then And his mother said, “Blessed be my son by the LORD.”**

**He stole his mother’s money, and she blessed him? Reveals the character and spiritual life of Micha and his mother.**

**3 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 (she was to take it to the Shiloh tabernacle for Kingdom service – but…) for my son, to make a carved image and a metal image. Now therefore I will restore it to you.” (WHAT!!!?? Abomination)**

**She blesses her thief of a son by making a large wooden idol of Yahweh – and covers it in 5 pounds of silver.**

**4 So when he restored the money to his mother, 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. (Abomination)**

**Images or idols of Yahweh are forbidden. They distort the complexity of God’s character and glory. Highlighting what we like.**

**Left to ourselves we make idols in our own image. We like stuff and like the stuff to look like us or to make us happy.**

**God says – I am not like anything on earth – you cannot possess me, contain me, or find me in objects. The incarnation of God – JESUS – gives us the God in the flesh – is not an idol.**

**She spends 10yrs of saving to make an idol of Yahweh for her son. This is wrong on so many levels. (Yahweh have been idols found)**

**5 And the man Micah had a shrine, (builds altar / temple - Abomination) and he made an ephod (designs worship garments - Abomination) and household gods, (adds Yahweh to other idols, breaks 1st Com - Abomination) and ordained one of his sons, who became his priest. (Puts it on his kids - abomination)**

**Like his mother he dragged his kids into his idolatrous beliefs.**

**\*\* Parents - Modeling God for our Children is not just our words but our actions too – both.**

**They talked the talk – throwing love of God around – but did not really follow the LORD or His Word themselves.**

**She did not discipline or use this to teach him but honored his sinful behavior. Enabling parents – produce reckless people.**

**He sets up a whole system of false worship to Yahweh.**

**None of this is from God – it is man-centered , man-originated.**

**The next verse says it all – the writer (Samuel) lays it out in one verse.**

**6 In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (NIV, “everyone did as they saw fit”)**

**Simply - they did whatever they wanted to do…**

**(Micah sets up his own religion) 7 Now there was a young man of Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah, (where David and later Jesus is born) who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. 8 And the man departed from the town of Bethlehem in Judah to sojourn where he could find a place. (Looking for my own way (place). Assigned a place, but - he wanted to be a free agent. We find out later his name was Jonathan) And as he journeyed, he came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah. (Okay, a family of priests, knows the Word of God - will set him straight)**

**9 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.” (I’m looking for work) 10 And Micah said to him, “Stay with me, and be to me a father and a priest, (Deep down Micah was looking for God and a father figure) and I will give you ten pieces of silver a year (Mom’s money, still controlled it.) and a suit of clothes and your living.” And the Levite went in.**

**Come, be my father and run my temple – I’ll pay you. Yearly contract, room, board, new clothes - let me pray about it… yes.**

**The Father Void - V10 “Stay with me, and be to me a father and a priest”**

**\*\*\* The search for father relationships and the search for God met outside of God’s design – results in all kinds of depravity.**

**Violence and perversion follow – Crime, sexuality confusion, low self-esteem. He was looking to people rather than God.**

**11 And the Levite was content to dwell with the man, and the young man became to him like one of his sons. (Became like a father) 12 And Micah ordained the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. (Became his priest - Now he has a real Levite priest sacrificing to his new Yahweh cult) 13 Then Micah said, “Now I know that the Lord will prosper me, because I have a Levite as priest.”**

**This story lays the groundwork for some horrible events that will follow in the weeks to come.**

**Major Missteps Of Micah**

1. **We cannot trust our heart**

**Judges 17:6 In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (NIV, “everyone did as they saw fit”)**

**OT version of “follow your heart.” Do what makes you happy. Do as you think and feel – “Let your conscious guide you”**

**Proverbs 14:12 - There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. (Followers of Jesus, follow God’s ways, not ours)**

**Jeremiah 17:9 - The heart (heart mean our desires) is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?**

**(Before the flood) Gen 6:7 - every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was altogether evil all the time. (After the flood) Gen 8:21 - every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood.**

**Galatians 5:17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.**

**If we do what we want – we are led by our feelings and desires and they are often opposed to what God says and desires.**

**Following our heart can lead to all kinds of horrible decisions.**

1. **We can be sincerely wrong**

**Micah was utterly sincere in all his actions – but was totally wrong.**

**Movie ticket, well I think it should only cost. I think I just have to believe in God, pray to Mecca 3X, be a good person, I don’t think anyone goes to hell, she came back as a bird = sincerely wrong.**

1. **Be careful of the hirelings - Ministry is filled with hireling’s**

**The Levite was a perfect example of a hireling, someone who served God for what could get from Him, instead of serving to glorify the LORD.**

**Worship Leaders FB page: Pastor has no idea what I really believe. How can I get paid to do this? Grad from seminary - they like doing ministry stuff and want to get paid to do it – but are they truly called to ministry – \*\* Truth is ministry is not lucrative.**

**Thinking about ministry - Reality check: (2023 Rainer / Hartford institute) 320,000 protestants in USA - churches can afford on avg 1 staff per 150 ( pastor)**

**\* 92% under 100 (Median size 65) / \* 8% above 250 / 4% over 500**

**\* 2% are over 1000 \* .04% are mega 2000 plus (1750 in 46 states)**

**10% of protestants attend a megachurch**

**\*\* That means most pastors (92%) all work outside the church.**

**Is it right to pay a pastor? Yes, according to the OT & NT.**

* **The Financial Hireling – make money doing things I like.**
* **The Emotional Hireling – meets my insecure need for approval and acceptance. Comfort and emotional high. (Messiah Complex)**

**Like some ministers today, this priest did not preach or teach God’s word. He did not remind others of God’s ways, holiness, and goodness. He wanted to get paid & wanted to be wanted.**

1. **They redefined God – rather than submit to God**

**What she did knowingly contradicted the attributes of Yahweh.**

**You can say you worship the LORD and do church things - but if it is not how the Lord commanded – it is false worship.**

**Church is filled with false worshippers. People come to church and do their own things while taking the name of Christ – Christian.**

**I love Jesus – but let’s do this… God will understand.**

**Name of the LORD is thrown around / used a lot in the passage, but nowhere to be found. He is there, but not engaged**

**And like Micah we tend to add the LORD to our own idols.**

**As long as we honor the LORD – the other idols are okay.**

**What naturally follows is –**

1. **They redefined morality – rather than submit to God’s design**

**v.6 “Did what they saw was right in their own eyes” They redefined what was right and wrong according to their own preferences.**

**We see this today in our culture and in our churches – God would not do that; I can’t believe God would say that… I think he would do this… Love is love. Well, who gets to define love? You or God?**

1. **You cannot wager for God’s favor**

**17:13 Then Micah said, “Now I know that the LORD will prosper me, because I have a Levite as priest.”**

**The right things, people, and places don’t bring God’s favor.**

**A bible in your nightstand – bible app on our phone, cross necklace, pastors’ number in your phone, etc.**

**Miach had a false image of Yahweh and assumed He existed to serve him and meet his needs. If I do and have the right things – God has to show me favor. “Now I know that the LORD will prosper me”**

**We do it too: How can I get God to bless my job, my family, my finances? Maybe give here, pray like this, fast longer, read more chapters, perfect church attendance – God, now you owe me. This is religion through and through.**

**Truth is, we exist for God and His glory. We must ask, “God, how can I honor you – reflect you – surrender control to you – glorify you?”**

**(Romans 11:36, Galatians 1:10, 1 Cor. 6:20, 10:31, Ps 86:12)**

**\*\* Good times do not mean God’s blessing or favor - #blessed**

**A family, getting your needs met, having a house, buying groceries, gas in your car, health, cup of coffee at your fav place – do not mean you are in a good place with God.**

**Be thankful and grateful for the things God provide**

**But they are not indicators of God’s favor. Only one thing is…**

**Ephesians 2:8 For by grace (God’s loving unmerited favor) you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

**Food on my table or barely eating - gas in my car or walking. God’s favor is Jesus. That God would call you His own.**

**Ironically – Micah’s name means, “Who is like YHWH” – no one! But yet he does not know the one who gave him life. Do you?**

**Next week - see intro JD Greer**

**We will not read every verse… but I encourage you to do so.**

**Dan went to the area given to him (Joshua 19:47)**