Times of the Judges

WHEN GOD IS LEFT OUT

Saturday, November 14

Reading: Judges 17-18

Judges 17:6 *In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (NKJV)*

The last five chapters of Judges show just how messed up the nation of Israel had become! The "religion" of Israel had become blended with the heathen cultures around them. The story in these two chapters introduces us to a man named Micah. After stealing from his mother, he becomes afraid because of his mother's curse on the thief. He returns the money and she dedicates it to the Lord. However, her method of dedication reveals how mixed up her worship had become. She dedicates the silver to the Lord by making an idol out of it!

Micah takes things a step farther by building a shrine, adding more idols, and appointing a priest outside the tribe of Levi (the only ones accepted by God as priests). When a young Levite passes through the area, Micah offers him the job of priest at his shrine and this Levite (who should have known better) accepts. Micah now believes he is in good standing with God because he has a Levite serving as priest before his idols.

Later the tribe of Dan, having failed to conquer the land God had allotted to them, are looking for an easy target. They find a Canaanite city outside of their God-given territory that is weak and they plan their attack. When they find Micah's shrine, they ask the Levite to inquire of God for them. The Levite tells them exactly what they want to hear because he is an opportunist and not a true spokesman for God.

When the Danites pass through again on their way to their new home, they offer the Levite a job as their personal priest. He jumps at the chance to be priest to a whole tribe and not just one man. They steal all of Micah's idols and threaten Micah's life when he tries to protest. The Danites then attack "a peaceful and unsuspecting people" and annihilate them. They settle in their land and set up their idols to worship with the Levite and his sons as priests.

LESSON: The motto of the book of Judges is "in those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (17:6; 21:25 NKJV). God was to be Israel's king, but they rejected His authority. Everyone did what they THOUGHT was good, not what God SAID was good. Two facts make this story doubly troubling. First, Micah's shrine is in "the hill country of Ephraim - the very region where God's Tabernacle was at Shiloh. Second, the Levite who serves as priest to this false religion is the grandson of Moses! These facts show that in a matter of 2 generations the worship of God had been completely corrupted. This led to moral depravity. Judges 19-21 record the story of a terrible husband, a wicked city, a brutal rape, and a war of revenge. When God is left out of a nation's life, morality and justice soon disappear.

How does our country compare to Israel in the days of the Judges? What would God say about the state of our nation today? What should we be doing to bring the Lord back into the conscience of the nation?