



Time to Reflect

- In what ways is covetousness still very much evident in our world today?
- Do you think that Christians, today, are discerning enough? How can we be sure that we are hearing God accurately?

Last week we focused on a man called Micah and we saw how he stole from his mother, built an idol for his shrine, and engaged with ‘home-made religion.’ This was a demonstration of just how far Israel had drifted from God. This week we see the drift continue and our attention is specifically drawn to the tribe of the Danites. We will encounter idolatry, covetousness, ungodly counsel, and conquest. It is fair to say that this passage highlights the wickedness of the human heart and the hopelessness of a society without God.

“God should have been the king in Israel and His Word the law that governed society, but the people preferred to ‘do their own thing.’”

(Warren Wiersbe, *Judges: Be Available*, p158)

Specifics

- Our passage begins by reminding us that Israel was without a king (v1) and it moves, rather quickly, to draw our attention to the tribe of the Danites. We are told that they were “...seeking a place of their own where they might settle, because they had not yet come into an inheritance among the tribes of Israel” (v1).
- The Danites were not a large tribe (Numbers 1:39) but they were given choice territory when the tribal boundaries were assigned (Joshua 19:40-48). Why then were they seeking a place of their own?
- In Judges 1:34 we are told that the Danites were unable to defeat and dispossess the Amorites. As such, they didn’t fully claim the land that had been allocated to them. Instead of seeking God’s direction and help, and failing to demonstrate perseverance, they took the decision to turn north and relocate. In (v2) spies were sent to scout out new lands.
- Warren Wiersbe helpfully observes, “God put each tribe just where He wanted it. For the tribe of Dan to reject God’s assigned territory and covet another place was to oppose His divine will.¹”
- This covetousness and failure to seek and follow God is very much evident in our world today. It is so easy to be unsatisfied and unthankful for what we have and to desire what we see in other people and places.
- (v3-6) take us back to Micah’s house and the episode we reflected on last week. We see that the voice of the young Levite, who is later named as Jonathan, attracted the attention of the spies. They proceeded to ask three questions (v3) and he answered honestly (v4).
- The spies asked him to enquire from God on their behalf (v5) and the priest told them exactly what they wanted to hear (v6). At surface level this request appears to be commendable but in reality it was anything but.

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Judges: Be Available* (Colorado Springs: David. C. Cook, 1994), p159.

- Warren Wiersbe observes, “If the tribe of Dan had really wanted God’s counsel, they could have consulted with the high priest. But they were actually rejecting God’s counsel by refusing to remain in the land He had assigned to them. Therefore, it wasn’t very likely God would have revealed anything to them (John 7:17).²”
- (v7) tells us that the spies came to a place called Laish, located at the foot of what is now called the Golan Heights, thirty miles east of the Mediterranean Sea. This was an appealing area. Note the words used in (v7) “...safety...peace...secure...land lacked nothing...prosperous.”
- This was an appealing land, populated by a peaceful people (v27), and it was highly desired by the Danites (v9). Six hundred men, armed for battle, set out to conquer this land (v11).
- The actual conquest is recorded towards the end of the passage (v27-29). We don’t know how many people lived in Laish but we assume that the inhabitants were all killed, hence the reference to the burning of the city (v27). This speaks of total destruction.
- Unfortunately, what Jacob had prophesied about the tribe of Dan came true. “Dan will be a snake by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that its rider tumbles backward (Genesis 49:17).”
- Jonathan, the Levite, had told the Danites that they had the Lord’s approval. Therefore, they believed that they were doing God’s will. Simon Robinson reflects, “This led them to assume that it was the Lord’s will, but the idolatry that followed (v29-31) proves that they had no intention to serve God.³”
- It is dangerous for us to use circumstances to gauge whether we are following God faithfully. We can interpret events in many different ways, convincing ourselves that we are hearing God and being faithful to God when that may not be the case.
- The final issue that draws our attention is that of idolatry and it calls our attention to Jonathan the Levite and his engagement with the Danites.
- On their way to conquer Laish, the Danites stopped off at Micah’s house in Ephraim. They were aware that Micah had a shrine and they were also aware of its value (v14).
- (v15-17) indicate that the Danites took the ephod, idol and the various household gods. Jonathan sought to stop this but he was quickly silenced (v18b-19). The Danites bought him and his hireling ministry was set to continue. Isn’t it sad that Jonathan was “...very pleased...” (v20)?
- Micah pursued the Danites, although he was no military match for them (v25-26). He had no option but to surrender his personal shrine and lament “What else do I have?” (v24). This is a heartbreaking declaration, one that highlights the emptiness of idolatry.
- Wiersbe unpacks this further. “Micah’s sad question ‘What else do I have?’ (v24) reveals the folly and the tragedy of religion without the true and living God. Idolaters worship gods they can carry, but Christians worship a God who carries them (Isaiah 46:1-7).⁴”
- Our passage concludes with such idolatry continuing (v30-31) and the Danites steadily drifted even further away from God. Ultimately, what we see here is a revelation of the wickedness of the human heart and the hopelessness of society without God.
- We are challenged, this week, to reflect on the depth of our Christian faith and our readiness to seek God with all our hearts. We are also warned that when we stop focusing on God we are in danger of moving beyond His will for us – and this leads to an absence of His blessing.

² Wiersbe, *Be Available*, p159.

³ Simon Robinson, *Opening Up Judges* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2006), p105.

⁴ Wiersbe, *Be Available*, p160.