

Introduction

Question

[Leviticus 10:1-3](#) “1 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. 2 And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. 3 Then Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the Lord has said: ‘Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.’ ...”

*Does God care **how** we worship Him?* According to Scripture God cares about **who** we worship and **how** we worship. He cared enough that He killed Nadab and Abihu for using “unauthorized fire” when burning incense.

Main Idea

Scripture regulates how we worship God. Scripture instructs the church about **who** we should worship, **who should lead** that worship, and **what we should do** when we gather.

[Judges 17-18](#) gives a few examples of unacceptable worship. These chapters again highlight how far Israel has declined. It remains in Scripture as a warning to the church that we must guard our worship of God by Scripture.

Context

Many scholars believe that [Judges 17-21](#) are not chronologically after the story of Samson. These chapters do not mention the oppressors of Israel or judges sent to deliver Israel. The Philistines who were still oppressing Israel at the end of chapter 16 (though weakened by Samson) are still oppressing Israel in 1 Samuel (chapter 4). There is an emphasis in [Judg 17-19](#) on the “hill country of Ephraim,” which prepares for the birth of Samuel from “the hill country of Ephraim” ([1 Sam 1:1](#)). So, these final chapters emphasize Israel’s spiritual state before Samuel.

Micah’s Idolatry

[Judges 17](#) focuses on an Ephraimite named Micah who ignores what Scripture teaches about worship.

False gods

[Judges 17:1-6](#) “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, and also spoke it in my ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it.” And his mother said, “Blessed be my son by the Lord.” 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 for my son, to make a carved image and a metal image. Now therefore I will restore it to you.” 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*. 5 And the man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and household gods, and ordained one of his sons, who became his priest. 6 In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”

How did Micah’s mother lose and regain her 1100 pieces of silver? She lost the silver because Micah stole it. However, he was worried about the curse she pronounced, so he returned the money.

What did Micah’s mother commit to do with the silver? She dedicated the silver “to the Lord” ([Judg 17:3](#)), but paid for a carved image and metal image (idols).

What does Scripture say about carved/metal images of gods? [Exodus 20:4](#) “4 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.” [Leviticus 19:4](#) “4 Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves any gods of cast metal: I am the Lord your God.” Even if those idols were made to worship the Lord, they were unacceptable forms of worship.

What did Micah make (verse 5) to assist in worshipping these idols? Micah made an ephod and household gods. An ephod was a garment worn by the priests ([Exod 28:6-14](#)). Samuel, the last judge, wore an ephod ([1 Sam 2:18](#)) and served as a prophet, judge, and priest. David is the last person described in the OT who wore an ephod ([2 Sam 6:14](#); [1 Chron 15:27](#)). Although David was from Judah and not qualified to be a priest, when he wore the ephod, he made burnt offerings to the Lord ([2 Sam 6:17-18](#); [1 Chron 16:1-2](#)). Rather than rebuke David, God established the Davidic Covenant right after that event, promising that David’s descendant would rule God’s Kingdom forever. [Hebrews 7](#) describes how Jesus could be both a king and a priest, although He was from the tribe of Judah.

Who served as Micah’s priest? Micah appointed one of his sons to be his priest. This is another example of by-passing God’s commands regarding worship by appointing someone to be a priest.

*What are some possible ways a church can err in **how** we worship when we gather?* (1) We can be man-centered, shaping our service around interests. (2) We can be seeker-centered, overemphasizing catering to those who don’t know God. (3) We can be tradition-centered, doing what we have done because it is what we have done. **Instead**, we should be Christ-centered and Scripture-centered.

Levite priest

[Judges 17:7-13](#) “7 Now there was a young man of Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah, 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. And as he journeyed, he came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah. 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.” 10 And Micah said to him, “Stay with me, and be to me a father and a priest, and I will give you ten pieces of silver a year and a suit of clothes and your living.” And the Levite went in. 11 And the Levite was content to dwell with the man, and the young man became to him like one of his sons. 12 And Micah ordained the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. 13 Then Micah said, “Now I know that the Lord will prosper me, because I have a Levite as priest.””

What did Micah offer the Levite to serve as his priest? Micah gave the Levite payment (10 pieces of silver per year), clothing, and his living wages.

What did Micah expect would happen since he had a Levitical priest? Micah expected the Lord to prosper him because of the Levite priest.

What are some ways a church can err regarding how we choose our leaders? (1) We can choose based on personality, rather than biblical qualification. (2) We can choose based on potential “success,” rather than biblical faithfulness.

Danite's idolatry

Chapter 18 relates directly to chapter 17. Chapter 18 focuses on the tribe of Dan. They demonstrate similar wrong views as Micah.

Danite spies

[Judges 18:1-6](#) “1 In those days there was no king in Israel. And in those days the tribe of the people of Dan was seeking for itself an inheritance to dwell in, for until then no inheritance among the tribes of Israel had fallen to them. 2 So the people of Dan sent five able men from the whole number of their tribe, from Zorah and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to explore it. And they said to them, “Go and explore the land.” And they came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, and lodged there. 3 When they were by the house of Micah, they recognized the voice of the young Levite. And they turned aside and said to him, “Who brought you here? What are you doing in this place? What is your business here?” 4 And he said to them, “This is how Micah dealt with me: he has hired me, and I have become his priest.” 5 And they said to him, “Inquire of God, please, that we may know whether the journey on which we are setting out will succeed.” 6 And the priest said to them, “Go in peace. The journey on which you go is under the eye of the Lord.””

Why didn't these Danites have an inheritance? Joshua allotted a portion of land to Dan in [Joshua 19:40-48](#). However, [Judges 1:34](#) states that the Amorites pressed the people of Dan back into the hill country.

What did the Danites seek from Micah's priest? They asked him to inquire about God's blessing on their attempt to find a city to conquer. The irony is that they inquired from a Levite serving in a man's house in the presence of idols.

[Judges 18:7-10](#) “7 Then the five men departed and came to Laish and saw the people who were there, how they lived in security, after the manner of the Sidonians, quiet and unsuspecting, lacking nothing that is in the earth and possessing wealth, and how they were far from the Sidonians and had no dealings with anyone. 8 And when they came to their brothers at Zorah and Eshtaol, their brothers said to them, “What do you report?” 9 They said, “Arise, and let us go up against them, for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good. And will you do nothing? Do not be slow to go, to enter in and possess the land. 10 As soon as you go, you will come to an unsuspecting people. The land is spacious, for God has given it into your hands, a place where there is no lack of anything that is in the earth.””

How did the spies describe the people of Laish? The people of Laish were quiet and unsuspecting; they were an easy target. The people of Laish lacked nothing and possessed wealth; it was a good city. The people of Laish were far from the Sidonians and everyone else; they would not have support.

Danite army

[Judges 18:11-16](#) “11 So 600 men of the tribe of Dan, armed with weapons of war, set out from Zorah and Eshtaol, 12 and went up and encamped at Kiriath-jearim in Judah. On this account that place is called Mahaneh-dan to this day; behold, it is west of Kiriath-jearim. 13 And they passed on from there to the hill country of Ephraim, and came to the house of Micah. 14 Then the five men who had gone to scout out the country of Laish said to their brothers, “Do you know that in these houses there are an ephod, household gods, a carved image, and a metal image? Now therefore consider what you will do.” 15 And they turned aside there and came to the house of the young Levite, at the home of Micah, and asked him about his welfare. 16 Now the 600 men of the Danites, armed with their weapons of war, stood by the entrance of the gate.”

Why did the spies suggest that the army should visit Micah? Micah had an ephod, household gods, a carved image, and a metal image.

[Judges 18:17-20](#) “17 And the five men who had gone to scout out the land went up and entered and took the carved image, the ephod, the household gods, and the metal image, while the priest stood by the entrance of the gate with the 600 men armed with weapons of war. 18 And when these went into Micah's house and took the carved image, the ephod, the household gods, and the metal image, the priest said to them, “What are you doing?” 19 And

they said to him, “Keep quiet; put your hand on your mouth and come with us and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for you to be priest to the house of one man, or to be priest to a tribe and clan in Israel?” 20 And the priest’s heart was glad. He took the ephod and the household gods and the carved image and went along with the people.”

What did the spies take from Micah? The spies took the objects of worship. Verse 16 suggests that was their purpose in going to Micah’s house.

How did they convince the priest to come with them? It is better to serve an entire clan than one man’s house. *What does it seem was the priest’s motivation?* He does not seem to be motivated by a desire to serve the Lord. He wants to serve himself.

What wrong motives might guide a church’s leaders (overseers)? (1) Pastors may be motivated by praise. (2) Pastors may be motivated by fear of men. (3) Pastors may be motivated by success. (4) Pastors may be motivated by personal preference.

[Judges 18:21–26](#) “21 So they turned and departed, putting the little ones and the livestock and the goods in front of them. 22 When they had gone a distance from the home of Micah, the men who were in the houses near Micah’s house were called out, and they overtook the people of Dan. 23 And they shouted to the people of Dan, who turned around and said to Micah, “What is the matter with you, that you come with such a company?” 24 And he said, “You take my gods that I made and the priest, and go away, and what have I left? How then do you ask me, ‘What is the matter with you?’ ” 25 And the people of Dan said to him, “Do not let your voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows fall upon you, and you lose your life with the lives of your household.” 26 Then the people of Dan went their way. And when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his home.”

How did Micah respond to the Danites taking his idols and priest? Micah gathered his neighbors to take back his idols and priest. *What convinced Micah to return home?* The army from Dan was too strong.

[Judges 18:27–31](#) “27 But the people of Dan took what Micah had made, and the priest who belonged to him, and they came to Laish, to a people quiet and unsuspecting, and struck them with the edge of the sword and burned the city with fire. 28 And there was no deliverer because it was far from Sidon, and they had no dealings with anyone. It was in the valley that belongs to Beth-rehob. Then they rebuilt the city and lived in it. 29 And they named the city Dan, after the name of Dan their ancestor, who was born to Israel; but the name of the city was Laish at the first. 30 And the people of Dan set up the carved image for themselves, and Jonathan the son of Gershom, son of Moses, and his sons were priests to the tribe of the Danites until the day of the captivity of the land. 31 So they set up Micah’s carved image that he made, as long as the house of God was at Shiloh.”

What did the Danites rename the city of Laish? They named the city Dan. Dan was near the base of Mt Hermon. After David’s death, Jeroboam set up places of worship at Dan and

Bethel to prevent Israel from going to Jerusalem for worship. [1 Kings 12:26-29](#) “26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, “Now the kingdom will turn back to the house of David. 27 If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn again to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.” 28 So the king took counsel and made two calves of gold. And he said to the people, “You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” 29 And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.”

What did the Danites set up for worship? They set up the carved image they had stolen from Micah for worship. *Who served as priests for the Danites?* They recruited Jonathan, a descendant of Moses to serve as priests. This is likely the same Levite who served Micah.

Conclusion

*Does God care **how** we worship Him?* Scripture instructs churches **what** we should do, but not necessarily **how** we should do those things. For example, if we were a church in Africa, our music would likely include dancing. Dancing in the music service in Greenbrier would be more awkward. Scripture does not command nor forbid dancing as part of the music. That is determined by culture.

One of my favorite church services I attended as a child was in a tiny church in Ellington, MO. They had old wooden floors, wooden pews, and outhouses. The style of their service was much different than the style of Bethlehem’s services, partially because of the location and partially because of the time-period.

The style of music, the type of seats, whether you have A/C, the style of building, the length of service, the language we preach and sing in, and whether we have dancing or not ... is shaped by the culture in which God plants the church.

However, Scripture does teach **what** a church should do when it meets. *What are some things the NT tells churches to do when they gather?*

Churches should gather and pray ([1 Tim 2:1](#)), read Scripture ([1 Tim 4:13](#)), preach Scripture ([2 Tim 4:2](#)), sing together ([Eph 5:19](#); [Col 3:16](#)), baptize ([Matt 28:19](#)), and share the Lord’s Supper ([1 Cor 11:23-34](#)).

Above all, Scripture teaches that when we gather, we should glorify God, by exalting Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. [John 4:23-24](#) “23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.””