

WEEK #19

JUDGES 17 THROUGH 1 SAMUEL 7

JUDGES 17

A man from Ephraim, Micah, made an idol from shekels and put it in his house with an ephod and other idols. Israel had no leader and everyone did what they wanted. Micah met a Levite and hired him to be his personal priest. **There is an old saying: "As goes the home, so goes the nation." If that is true, Israel was in trouble; for everything about this home violated the law of God. The family was devoted to idolatry. The son had established his own priesthood and was a thief, and the mother was guilty of speaking both curses and blessings (James 3:9–10). She was concerned more about her money than about her son's character.**

JUDGES 18

The Danites, looking for a land to call their own, attacked Ephraim and enter Micah's city. They went to Micah's house and took his idol and priest. Micah could not overpower them. The Danites rebuilt Laish and called it Dan. They set up the idol to worship. **What a way to find a new home! The Danites kidnapped the hireling priest of the false religion and stole the idols. Then they killed innocent people who were living in ignorant isolation, a dangerous thing in that day. The climax came when they set up their own center of idolatrous worship, in open disobedience to the Word of God. They were living in a place where there was "no lack of anything that is on the earth" (v. 10); yet they lacked everything that God wanted to give them from heaven. Their false prosperity gave them false security that could not last.**

JUDGES 19

A Levite and his concubine left Bethlehem and travelled to Gibeah in Benjamin. They stopped in the city square but no one took them in. Finally a man from Ephraim allowed to stay at his place. That night, evil men of the city wanted to have sex with the stranger. The host offered his virgin daughters. The crowd refused. The Levite offered his concubine. They raped her and left her for dead. The Levite cut the woman in twelve pieces and sent them to all areas of Israel. **The sad history of Israel moves now from idolatry to immorality and civil war. If sin is not dealt with, it spreads like a plague and destroys. The basic cause of Israel's plight was their independence from God and their indifference to His law. Nothing can be right when every man does what is right in his own eyes. It was a time of moral and spiritual darkness (Isa. 8:20).**

JUDGES 20

The tribes reacted in horror to the body parts sent to them, so the tribes surrounded Gibeah and the Benjamites. They asked for the evil men, but Benjamin refused to release them. The tribes inquired of the Lord who encouraged them to move ahead. After two setbacks, Benjamin was destroyed, putting the town to the sword. **This chapter is a good illustration of James 3:13–18. When we operate on the basis of human wisdom, we create one problem after another, but when we pause to pray and seek the mind of the Lord, He shows us what to do. The Benjamites did not seek the Lord, admit their guilt, or repent of their sins. There can be no peace unless sin is put away, but the people of Benjamin would not judge their own people in Gibeah. "So shall you put away the evil person from among you" is repeated nine times in Deuteronomy, and God expected His people to obey.**

JUDGES 21

The tribes lamented the destruction of Benjamin and the gap in the tribes, but they made a solemn oath that no one would give their daughter to a Benjamite in marriage. The tribes of Israel gathered at Mizpah and discovered one group from Jabesh Gilead failed to show up. The tribes sent 12,000 fighting men to kill every male and woman who was not a virgin in Jabesh Gilead. They took 400 virgins and gave them to the surviving Benjamites. There was not enough women. So they encouraged the Benjamites to kidnap the girls of Shiloh and take them home to rebuild the tribe. In those days there was no king and everyone did what they saw fit. **The leaders of Israel became peacemakers (v. 13), and the tribes began working together to solve the problem. Their solution was a matter of semantics: Israel had vowed not to give them wives, but that did not prevent the men of Benjamin from going out and taking wives. The apostle Paul came from the tribe of Benjamin. No doubt he was grateful for those four hundred women from Jabesh Gilead (v. 12) and the two hundred women who were kidnapped at Shiloh, for they kept the tribe alive.**

RUTH 1

A famine caused Elimelek and his wife Naomi to move to Moab with her sons. The sons married two Moabite women, Orpah and Ruth. When her husband and sons died, Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem and told her daughters in laws they should stay in Moab. Only Ruth agreed to go with her. Orpah returned to Moab. When Naomi arrived home, the town was amazed. She asked to be called Mara because of her bitterness. **Naomi and her husband sinned when they left Judah for enemy country. Better to be hungry in the will of God than to have a full stomach and be out of His will. They planned to stay in Moab a short time, but their "sojourn" was long enough for their sons to marry. Then the sons and father died. You can run away from famine, but you cannot escape death. Although God does not prevent the painful consequences of our sins, He does overrule so that His purposes are fulfilled. By the grace of God, Naomi's emptiness will become fullness, and her sorrow will turn to joy.**

RUTH 2

Ruth gleaned grain in the fields and met Boaz who caught his eye. He asked the others who she was and gave her special treatment and protection. Naomi rejoiced over the grain Ruth picked and called Boaz a kinsmen-redeemer, a close relative. **Boaz protected Ruth and provided for her even before she discovered who he was. (On his part, it was probably love at first sight!) Instead of living on leftovers, Ruth became a friend of "the lord of the harvest" who gave her generous gifts. Can you see in all of this a picture of what Christ has done for His own?**

RUTH 3

Naomi encouraged Ruth to present herself to Boaz by laying at his feet on the threshing floor. Ruth did so and pleased Boaz who called her kind. He offered to help her. **Ruth is a good example for us to follow when we have needs to be met. She listened to instructions (vv. 1–4), obeyed (vv. 5–9), believed what her redeemer said (vv. 10–14), received his gifts (vv. 15–17), and waited in patience for him to do the rest (v. 18). When you are at the feet of your Redeemer, you have nothing to fear.**
THE KINSMAN-REDEEMER (Lev. 25:23–55) This law helped to protect the poor from being exploited and the rich from taking property from one tribe to another. The redeemer had to be a near kinsman who was able to redeem and willing to redeem. He was not obligated to do so, but it was expected of him. To refuse was to hurt the family and tribe as well as his own reputation. By being born at Bethlehem, Jesus Christ

became our near kinsman. He was able to save and willing to save; He saves all who will put their trust in Him.

RUTH 4

Boaz settled legal matters with the true kinsman-redeemer, next in line to acquire Elimelek's and his sons' land. However, the transaction included Ruth, who the kinsman-redeemer refused. Boaz acquired the property and Ruth. They married and had a son, Obed. Obed's son was Jesse, whose son was David. **What a contrast between chapters 1–2 and chapter 4: from tears to joy, from hard labor to rest, from emptiness to fullness, from fear to peace and assurance. And the thing that made the difference was obeying the Word of God. When Ruth put herself at the feet of her redeemer and entrusted herself to him, he took over and changed everything.**

1 SAMUEL 1

A man named Elkanah had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah. Hannah could not have children and Peninnah teased her. Hannah went to pray at the temple to pray for a child while Eli watched her. Because of her passionate prayer, Eli misinterpreted her behavior for drunkenness. When she told him her request, he affirmed it and Hannah promised to dedicate the child to the Lord. After Hannah conceived and gave birth, she made good on her promise and gave her son Samuel to Eli. **When you consider her situation at home and also the way Eli treated her, you find it remarkable that Hannah had any faith at all. But she did not become bitter against God, as Naomi had done (Ruth 1:19–22), nor did she create problems in the home. She asked God for a son, and God answered her prayer. No wonder Samuel ("heard by God") was a great man of prayer. Look at the mother God gave him!**

1 SAMUEL 2

Hannah sang a song of praise to God. Eli's sons were wicked, eating the choice parts of the offering and sleeping with women who served at the Tent of Meeting. Eli prayed for Hannah to have more children and she had five more while Samuel grew and served the Lord. A man of God prophesied that both of Eli's sons would die the same day since they disgraced God. **Blessed are those parents who realize that their children are growing and facing new needs and struggles, and blessed are those children who grow "before the Lord" (Luke 2:52). God kept Samuel pure in the midst of a defiled environment because he had parents who loved him and prayed for him. Jesus has a special love for children, and we must pray for them.**

1 SAMUEL 3

Samuel heard someone calling him three times, thinking it was Eli. Finally Eli told him it was probably God and to answer. The fourth time Samuel did and God told him that Eli's time as priest would end soon. **God gave His message to Samuel because He knew Samuel was faithful. The lad was accustomed to being alert to Eli's voice and to obeying immediately, so when God spoke, Samuel was ready.**

1 SAMUEL 4

Israel attacked the Philistines, but the Philistines fought back, killing about 4,000 of them. The Israelites decided to bring the ark to camp, but that did not deter the Philistines, who

slaughtered 30,000, captured the ark. Eli's sons, Hophi and Phinehas, died. When Eli heard the news, he fell off his chair and broke his neck (apparently he was old, blind and fat). Phinehas' wife gave birth to a son, who she named Ichabod, which means "the glory of the Lord has departed Israel." **Eli's two sons wanted God's help but not God's holiness. They wanted God for the crisis experiences of life but not in their daily ministry (1 Sam. 2:12–17). They thought that the presence of the ark would assure victory, but their superstitious faith had no foundation. The bad news from the battlefield brought death to Eli and his daughter-in-law. In Eli's case, it was a judgment from God; in the mother's case, it was the result of her burden for the glory of God. Phinehas was an ungodly man, but his wife must have been a godly woman to speak as she did.**

1 SAMUEL 5

The Philistines placed the ark in the temple of their god, Dagon, but when they woke up in the morning, the idol was face down before the ark, with its head and hands broken off. Tumors began to spread among the people. The Philistines moved the ark to Gath and the same outbreak occurred. So they move the ark to Ekron and more died. Tumors broke out on those that did not die. **The glory may have departed from Israel, but God was still in control and well able to defend His name. If you get depressed because the enemy seems to have "captured" the glory, rest assured that God is still on the throne.**

1 SAMUEL 6

After seven months, the Philistines returned the ark on a cart and pointed it towards Beth Shemesh. Inside the ark they put five gold rats and five gold tumors, representing the rulers and cities inflicted with the plague. When the ark arrived, the people rejoiced, but seventy men looked inside the ark and died. **The men of Beth Shemesh were reaping the harvest when the cart with the ark came into view. The ark had been gone for six months, but the men did not allow that to keep them from working. Even in times of defeat, there are jobs to be done and people to feed. Abinadab's house will become a tabernacle of the Lord, but should not every home be a holy dwelling-place for Him? (See Isa. 4:4–5.)**

1 SAMUEL 7

The men of Kiriath Jearim took the ark to Abinadab's house. During the 20 years the ark was there, Samuel pleaded for people throw away their idols. The Philistines threatened, but God scared them with thunder and panic. The Israelites pursued the Philistines and killed them. Samuel set up a stone and called it Ebenezer, meaning the Lord has helped us. Samuel remained as judge over Israel all the days of his life. **Ebenezer means "stone of help." It was a memorial to God's helping His people from the beginning to that very day. Missionary J. Hudson Taylor had a plaque in his home that read, EBENEZER and JEHOVAH-JIREH. That means, "Thus far the Lord has helped us—The Lord will see to it." This takes care of the past and the future, so why worry about the present? God is in control!**

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