

✿ Announcements ✿

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”
— James 5:13–16 —

Jo Byrnes ✿ Betty Cannon ✿ Joyce Coones ✿ Sleatha Gore
Evelyn Griffin ✿ Essielene Henderson ✿ Faye Kilpatrick
Gary Ogden ✿ Randy McElroy

With *Spring Break* upon us I hope everyone has a safe and enjoyable week . . . wherever you might find yourself this week!

Birthdays

Buddy Johnson (*today*) ✿ Matt Cannon (*today*) ✿ Taylor Jones (*Tuesday*) ✿ Linda Gore (*Friday*)

Upcoming Gospel Meetings

- April 19–24 ✿ South Pine Avenue congregation in Ocala ✿ Danny Roberts, preaching ✿ 7:30 PM Mon–Fri.
- April 24–26 ✿ Northeast congregation in High Springs ✿ Ed Culp, preaching ✿ 7:30 PM Fri–Sat

↪ Church of Christ ↪

Meeting at 211 NE 2nd Street in beautiful Chiefland, Florida
PO Box 2539, Chiefland FL 32644 • (352) 493-1242

THINGS REVEALED

“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”
— Colossians 3:1-2 —

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ELDERS Tony Beach, Buddy Johnson, Devoise Lord
DEACONS Brent Brooks, H.C. Henderson, Jamey Hinds, Jerry Smith
PREACHER Jamey Hinds
www.chieflandchurchofchrist.com

In the Days of the Judges — Religious Corruption —

By Jeff Himmel

The book of Judges records one of the most turbulent periods in Israel’s history: the first 300 years following the conquest of Canaan. It was a time when upheaval — civil, political, and spiritual — seemed to be the norm. Most of Judges is focused on the work of great leaders whom God raised up to deliver the people from their enemies. But the last five chapters of the book (17–21) are different. They describe events which evidently took place in the early part of this period and do not involve any of Israel’s great judges. We might think of this section as a

“historical appendix” that illustrates the way things were during that time. The section begins and ends with this observation: “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes” (17:6; 21:25). That’s a fitting description of the entire period of the judges; everyone chose to do what seemed right to him — some good, some bad. The events of these closing chapters reveal the toxic fruits of that way of thinking and provide valuable lessons for us.

Within a generation of settling in Canaan, the Israelites “forsook the Lord . . . and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them” (2:12). Judges 17 provides a good example of the mindset behind that problem.

The story centers on Micah, a man of Ephraim. For reasons not stated, Micah decided to set up his own system of worship. He placed a silver image in his house and made a shrine (a place of worship), an ephod (a priestly garment), and household idols (Hebrew *teraphim*) to use in worship along with the image. He even got his own priest: first he appointed his own son; and later, when a traveling Levite lodged at his house, Micah convinced him to become his priest for hire, thinking that having one from God’s priestly tribe would bring him prosperity.

When it came to worship, Micah certainly did what seemed right to him. It appears that he was professing to serve the true God (cf. v. 3). It also appears that he was sincere. But this did not change one simple fact: what he did was a violation of God’s law (cf. Exodus 20:4–5; 28:1).

Even today, many people approach service to God pretty much the way Micah did: they do what seems right

to them, with little or no consideration of what the Lord has said. This is most evident in the area of public worship. Practices are often adopted on the basis of “What makes people feel good?” Folks assume that if they find it personally satisfying, God will find it acceptable. But where do the Scriptures ever give us such a guarantee?

James E. Smith comments:

Though modern man may not make a graven image, he still displays much of the same attitude about worship which guided Micah down a dead end street. Biblical worship is God-centered, not man-centered. To please God must be the ultimate obsession of the worshiper. God cannot be pleased when his specific commands about worship are either violated or ignored (*The Books of History* 199).

Worship in many religious groups is characterized by things that are completely absent from the New Testament: burning candles or incense, theatrical performances, musical instruments, dances . . . the list goes on. Usually such things are adopted because people enjoy them, or because they make them feel more “spiritual.” But if a thing is without God’s authority, how can we seriously offer it as worship to Him?

Micah worshiped God the way he wanted, not the way God wanted. He was not the only one in Israel to do so. And, as we will see in the coming weeks, the results ultimately were far-reaching and terrible. If we base our worship on personal desires instead of divine authority, we will fare no better.

