

Judges 17-21. Do you worship like an atheist?

Several years ago Jeff Foxworthy made millions of dollars by creating “redneck tests”

If your wife can climb a tree faster than your cat.....you might be a redneck

If your lifetime goal is to own a fireworks stand....you might be a redneck

If your wife’s hairdo has ever been ruined by a ceiling fan....you might be a redneck

It’s funny how we all know the stereotypes.....I’ve heard these turned into jokes about Canadians, Californians, preachers, hipsters, and just about everything else under the sun....

As we look to wrap up the book of Judges this morning....there is a stereotype that plays out in Judges 17-21 that I believe is an important stereotype for us to be cautious with....

I’ve entitled this morning’s sermon.....Do you worship like an atheist? As we examine some things from Judges 17-21 I want you to see that the way we worship God is important.

It is wrong for us to assume that we can worship God however we want, or that we are free to do whatever we want in the name of “worship”

Jesus says in **John 4:23-24**....that the Father is seeking a people that will worship him in spirit and in truth...

What we have to assume from his teaching is that there are apparently some who worship him in falsely....

Lets look at some ways we can worship him falsely....by looking at Judges 17 and a random guy named Micah

Judges 17:1-6. – go through the story....

Teaching point 1 – If you are trying to redefine God rather than submit to him...you might be worshipping like an atheist

What do I mean by that....on the surface...it might seem like Micah isn’t doing anything wrong....he has taken silver and had it formed into the shape of Jehovah – how do we know...his mother worshiped Jehovah in v.2....Micah feared the curse of Jehovah

Secondly...in v. 5....he makes a “Shrine”the literal meaning of shrine is “a house of God”

Thirdly...he appoints his son as priest....

What Micah has done here in 3 different ways is he has redefined God and his law....Exodus 20:4, Numbers 16:40,

To worship God in truth, we must have an understanding of his word, and a submission to it....i could say so many things about worship and how we do it wrongly, be it...Christians who endorse sin, or are attempting to redefine bible

But....they all have one thing in common....when we attempt to worship God without a broken spirit and a contrite heart.....we are worshipping him like an atheist....how did you approach worship this morning?

Teaching Point 2 – If God is something you use to make you feel better.....you are worshipping him like an atheist...

Judges 17:7-13 – go through the story –

Now I know that the lord will prosper me, because I have a Levite as a priest.....

We may not use that verbiage, but we are guilty of thinking of God like this....

I want to make sure nothing bad happens....i better give some money to the church

Or.....something bad has happened....i better go to church....

Maybe you are sitting here in church today thinking something like that.....you are here today because you need something from God, or you hope something bad doesn't get worse....

Listen...the best news I can tell you is....God doesn't work that way....

We make an idol out of God when we think we can manipulate him by our actions...

Its not giving money, its not trying to be a better spouse, its not bartering with God....God, if you will just fix my marriage I will come to church faithfully.....its none of that....

If you can manipulate god, then you must ask the question....is he really God?

Teaching point 3 – If you are doing what is right in your own eyes.....you are worshipping God like an atheist

This phrase comes out of ch. 17-21 (17:6, 21:25)

The stories found in the final few ch. Of judges are horrific...and they begin and end with this phrase...."in those days there was no king in israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes".....

What were some of the things that Israel did....let me summarize the last 3 ch. 19-21. as much as possible....

A Levite (priest...not the same one with Micah) has a concubine....this is where the problem begins....a priest w/ prostit

The concubine is unfaithful and leaves him....he chases after her and finds her at her fathers house....the Levite asks the father to send her back home with him and the father agrees....

They leave to go home, and stop for the night in Jebus which was in the land of Benjamin....while they are there a huge party erupts and some men show up at the house where the levite is staying.....the morally bankrupt men demand the owner of the house send out the levite so they could rape him.....so instead, the levite gives them his concubine....

The men of the city rape her and leave her for dead.....the next day the levite packs her up on his donkey and takes her home where she dies....in his anger, he cuts her into 12 pieces and sends them to the 12 tribes....

You can imagine the horror....the 12 tribes convene, and ask what happens....the levite tells them what happens but conveniently leaves out the part where he throws the woman out.....in retaliation Israel declares war on Benjamin, and wipes them out....600 escape....after they cool off...the 600 come out asking....hey...what about us...we need wives

Israel...feels guilty goes out and kidnaps enough women to make wives for the benjamites...

The question that should be asked here....is why? Why is this in the bible? How does this tell us anything about God...

The answer is....when people do what is right in their own eyes the world goes haywire....and the writer of judges wants us to know this.....its why he ends the entire history of the judges with this phrase....

There was no king, all of the judges fell short in some way.....these chapters may be dark and gruesome, but they are not the darkest chapters in the bible. The most gruesome and awful section of the bible is the crucifixion of Jesus

This is what the roman historian cicero said of crucifixion¹

¹ Ciceros prosecution of crucifixion

Crucifixion was used by the romans to ensure that nobody would rebel....it was a public spectacle
It is said that the bodies of those crucified were beaten until they were barely recognizable

Cicero said that it was not uncommon in the scourging to see a rib go flying off the frame....we are almost certain that those being crucified were partially disemboweled

Isaiah told us that the messiah would be beaten to the point of being unrecognizable....

Cicero goes on to say that those who watched crucifixions often found themselves weeping at the sight of the mutilated corpses of those being crucified....it wasn't uncommon for onlookers to vomit...or even urinate all over themselves at the site of what was going on....

Why? because Jesus was entering into Judges 17-21 for us....the price he paid for our sin had to be equal to the horrific nature of our sin...

Why does the bible portray often gruesome hard to understand stories....in order to show our debased nature

Why was the cross so bloody? because our sin demanded that it be....

Instead of sending out his bride and cutting her into pieces, Jesus would give himself to be cut up for us....so that he could redeem us as his bride and make us perfect

Maybe today you are living in your own version of Judges 17-21....the only answer that will bring you out of that horror is the grace of a God who would go through it for you....