

APOSTASY AND THE BOOK OF JUDGES

The Jewish calendar is two days ahead this month because they do not go by sighting of the new moons anymore. They have not done so since 350 A.D. Prior to that time the Jews sighted the new moon in Jerusalem and they would declare the new moon when the first faint crescent became visible. In the days of Roman Emperor Constantine and the Jews' captivity, the Jews resorted to a fixed astronomical calendar approximation. They have continued using it rather than returning to the Biblical observed new moon calendar as God commanded his people to do. We are to fear God and keep his commandments.

All mankind is human in nature and born with a carnal mind. **Romans 8:7**—those following Jesus Christ, walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (led by the Holy Spirit of Christ that dwells in them). “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but those that are after the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit. To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. The carnal mind is *enmity against God*: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” The “carnal” mind refers to fleshly mind of man. **Jeremiah 17:9**—“The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” The way that we can please God is to repent of our deceitful carnal mind and ask God to clean us up and give us a new mind and heart that fears him and loves his commandments. David prayed: **Psalms 51:10**—“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit (mind) within me.” Christ said in **Matthew 12:34**—“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” And in **Matthew 15:19**—“understand those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies—these are the things which defile a man.”

We who are on the path of following the commandments of God and fearing him are blessed of all men. The world around us is not on that track. Most are oblivious to the knowledge and presence of God and many do not believe there is a God. **Romans 1:20** (NKJV)—“For since the creation of the world God's invisible attributes (his eternal nature and divine power) have been clearly seen, being understood by the things that have been made, so that men are without excuse.” When the works of architects and builders are completed in this world, we can have a pretty good insight into the mind of the creator-builder who are known by their works. So it is with God. We can study his Creation of the Universe and life around us on earth and get a concept from these just how great and awesome is our Creator God. Study of the human mind, anatomy and physiology of the body and the human reproduction system that creates new life gives us just an inkling of just how great God is. We are made in His image as the word of God says in **Genesis 1:26-27**. The world and its leaders are in ignorance of that.

“*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*—**2 Timothy 3:16**.” Many people in our country profess Christianity, but most of them give “lip service”, but don't know very much about Christianity. **Mark 7:6-8**—“Christ said to the Pharisees and teachers of the law, Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they *worship me in vain*; teaching as doctrines the commandments of men’. You have let go (ignore) the commands of God and hold on to (substitute) the traditions of men—the washings of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.” Such are the ancient pagan holidays of men mentioned nowhere in the Bible—Christmas, Easter, Halloween. God says we are to keep his holy days which are ordained to be kept forever—Passover,

Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah), Atonement (Yom Kippur) and Tabernacles (Sukkoth and Shemni Azaret). These annual holy days are commanded by God in **Leviticus 23**. From Genesis to Revelation the seventh day Sabbath is the commanded Lord's day of rest –Saturday. Yet men keep Sunday the first day of the week. Satan has confused and deceived the world beginning with Adam and Eve. God has called out *a few* in this world and has opened their mind and enlightened them.

We are to read the Bible, study and meditate on the word of God every day. That is the way we can learn and continue to grow in knowledge and wisdom, gaining depth and understanding of God and his will. **John 6:1-14**—recounts the miracle of Jesus feeding a group of *five thousand* with five barley loaves and two small fish from a lad after he blessed the food and then the disciples filled twelve baskets after everyone finished eating with the leftover pieces. After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world.” Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to a mountain by himself. Evening came and the disciples went down to the sea, boarded a boat and headed for Capernaum. It had become dark and a strong wind began to blow and the waters grew rough. They had rowed about three or four miles and they saw Jesus walking on the water toward the boat and were terrified. But he said to them, “It is I: don't be afraid.” Peter said, if you are really Christ, bid me to come to you. So he got out of the boat and started toward Christ. As long as Peter kept his eyes fixed on Christ he successfully walked on the water, but he took his off of Christ and began to drown calling out to Christ to “SAVE me!” Christ reached out and rescued him and the disciples received them into the boat and “immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading”—another miracle.

The next day, once the people realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were present they got into boats and went to Capernaum in search of them. **Verse 25**—when they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” Christ knew their hearts and said, “I tell you the truth, you are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and were filled. Do not look for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life which the Son of Man will give you because God the Father has placed his seal on him.” They wanted to know, “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God? *This is the work of God*, that you believe in him who He sent”— in Christ, the Word of God. **John 6:32**—“I assure you, Moses didn't give you manna (bread from heaven), but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. **For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.**” Christ was the *Logos* (the Word, the Son of God) who was with God in heaven and he became a man. “I am the bread of life. **He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.**” “Sir, from now on give us this bread!”

John 6: 36-51—“But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and *the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out* (reject).” God is full of mercy and keeps working with us human beings even though we stumble and slip up at times. “**I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.** And this is the will of him who sent me that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” People began to murmur in disagreement about what Christ was saying about coming down from heaven—“*eating his flesh and drinking his blood*” *meaning*, spiritually speaking not literally speaking because his bread is the Word (we are to devour the word of God—live by the Word of God). Literally, we would die physically without food and water which we eat and drink every day. With the Spirit we have to drink of the blood of Christ—he sacrificed his blood to give us eternal life so that our sins could be forgiven and be covered by his blood, so that we can LIVE by the

Bread (the Word of God) by study of the Word (testimony of Christ/his Spirit living in us) and obedience to the will of the Father (keeping His commandments).

John 6:52-58—“After hearing this, the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” Jesus said, assuredly unless you eat the flesh of the son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Our forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.”

John 6:59-70—“Christ said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it’?” “Does this offend you? The Spirit gives life, the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are eternal life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe. Therefore, this is why I have said to you that no one can come to me unless it has been granted to him by my Father.” “From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.” Verse 67—Jesus asked the Twelve, “Do also want to go away?” Peter asked, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also, we have come to believe and know that you are the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, ‘Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Even one of you is a devil!’ He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray him, being one of the twelve.” Just like the disciples’ of Christ that departed then, disciples have been departing from the truth ever since. They have been worshiping Christ in name only. They don’t worship Christ in Spirit and truth.

John 4:19—Jesus talks to a Samaritan woman who said, “You are a Jew and I a Samaritan. How can you ask me for a drink? Jews did not associate with Samaritans.” Jesus answered her, “If you know the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.” “Believe me, woman, the time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit and his worshipers must **worship in spirit and in truth.**”

Human nature is not inclined to listen to or obey God. The book of Judges, records that time and time again Ancient Israel went astray and seemingly could not remain faithful. One generation departed from God after another. Today, Ephraim and Manasseh (America and Great Britain) and the world are departing from God. **Judges 9**—“As soon as Gideon died the children of Israel again played the harlot with the Baals, and made Baal-Berith their god.”

Abimelech the illegitimate son of Jerubbaal went to his mother’s father and persuaded the men of Shechem to accept him as a brother, they gave him seventy shekels of silver and followed him. Then Abimelech killed all his brothers—the 70 sons of Jerubbaal on one stone—but Jothan (half-brother) escaped. Abimelech was made high king (*abi melech*) . **Judges 9:7-20**—Jothan cursed Israel against Abimelech and then escaped to Beer. Civil war erupted between the men of Shechem (Gaal leader of Israel) rebelled against Abimelech who was killed by a millstone dropped on his head by a woman. Thus God repaid the wickedness that Abimelech had done to his father by murdering his seventy brothers. God made the men of Shechem pay for all their wickedness.

Judges 10:13-39— for eighteen years the Ammonites oppressed Israel who again cried out to the Lord. **Judges 11**—Jephthah a mighty raider was chosen by the elders of Israel to be their ruler and Israel was

delivered from the children of Ammon, but Jephthah made a tragic vow (verse 30). He promised the Lord if the Lord delivered the Amorites into his hands that whatsoever came out of the doors of his house to meet him upon his return he would offer it up for a burnt-offering. His daughter, his only child came out to meet him. He could not go back on his vow to the Lord and the daughter said do what you have said according to your mouth because the Lord has avenged you against your enemies, the people of Ammon. Let this one thing be done for me, let me alone for two months that I may go wandering up and down upon the mountains and bewail my virginity with my companions. He said, 'Go'; and she went for two months and returned to her father who did with her according to his vow: and she knew no man." In view of the *Divine commands in the Mosaic Law against human sacrifice (Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5; Deut.12:31; 18:10)*, a question has been raised about Jephthah's action here. God never appreciates human sacrifices. A burnt offering can also mean one that has been set apart or set aside to serve God. This was a very sad thing that she was going to remain a virgin, when God's purpose for women in general is to marry and raise children. That opportunity was snatched away from her because of the vow.

Judges 13:1-7—Once again, the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years.

There was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites (tribe of Dan), whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren and had no children. The angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, "Indeed now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and bear a son. Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean. No razor may be used on his head, because the boy is to be a Nazarite set apart to God from the womb to the day of his death; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. The woman came and told her husband, a man of God came to me, and his countenance was like the Angel of God, very awesome; but I did not ask him where he came from, and he did not tell me his name."

Judges 13:8-23--"Manoah prayed to the Lord, 'O my Lord, please let the Man of God whom you sent come to us again and teach us what we shall do for the child who will be born'. God answered his prayer and the angel of God appeared once again to his wife while she was out in the field but her husband was not with her. She ran in haste to tell her husband: 'He's here, the man who came to me the other day! So Manoah followed his wife, and when he came to the man, he said to him: 'Are you the man who spoke to this woman?' 'I am,' he said.'" *Note*: This is a hint right there, that the one Manoah is talking to, is the one who became Jesus Christ, "the I AM". Christ uses this expression many times in reference to himself as the diety—the Son of God (John 8:12).

Verses 16-23—So Manoah asked him, "When your words are fulfilled, what is to be the rule for the boy's life and work?" The Angel of the Lord replied, "Your wife must be careful to do all that I have told her. She must not eat anything from the grapevine, nor drink any wine or other fermented drink nor eat anything unclean. She must do everything that I have commanded her." Manoah said to the Angel of the Lord, "Please let us detain you and we will prepare a young goat for you." The Angel of the Lord replied, "Though you detain me, I will not eat your food. But if you offer a burnt offering, you must offer it to the Lord." Manoah knew not that he was the Angel of the Lord. Then Manoah asked, "What is your name so that we may honor you when your words come to pass?" The Angel of the Lord said to him, 'Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful' (beyond understanding)? **Isaiah 9:6-7**—"And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." So this is the one who became Christ. This is the same Angel of the Lord who commanded Moses at the burning bush.

So Manoah took the young goat with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the Lord. And he did a wondrous thing while Manoah and his wife looked on—it happened as the flame went up toward heaven from the altar—the Angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar! When Manoah and his

wife saw this, they fell on their faces to the ground. When the Angel of the Lord appeared no more to Manoah and his wife, then Manoah knew (realized) it was the Angel of the Lord. ‘We are doomed to die!’ he said to his wife. ‘We have seen God!’ But his wife answered, “If the Lord had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and grain offering from our hands, nor shown us all these things or now told us this.” **Judges 13:24**—“the woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew and the Lord blessed him, and the Spirit of the Lord began to stir him while he was in Mahaneh Dan, between Zorah and Eshtaol.” Later on the Danites were one of the first tribes of Israel to go into idolatry.

Judges 14:1—“Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. When he returned, he said to his father and mother, ‘I have seen a Philistine woman in Timnah who pleases me well. Get her for my wife.’ His mother and father did not know that it was of the Lord—that he was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines who at that time had dominion over Israel. Samson and his parents went down to Timnah together and when they came near the vineyards of Timnah a young lion attacked Samson. At that moment the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon Samson and he tore the lion apart bare-handed, but he did not tell his father and mother what he had done. Then he went down and talked with the woman, and she pleased Samson well. Some time later, when he went back to marry her, he turned aside to look at the lion’s carcass. In it was a swarm of bees and some honey, which he scooped out with his hands and ate as he went along. When he rejoined his parents, he gave them some, and they also ate. But he did not tell them that he had taken the honey from the lion’s carcass.

As Samson’s father was making final arrangements for the marriage, Samson threw a party at Timnah, as was the custom of the day. Thirty young men were invited to be his companions. Samson gave them a riddle to solve during the seven days of the wedding celebration and told them, “If you can give me the answer within the seven days of the feast, I will give you thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes. If you can’t tell me the answer, you must give me thirty linen garments and thirty sets of clothes.” This was the riddle: “*Out of the eater came something to eat; out of the strong, came something sweet.*” “Let’s hear your riddle,” they said. For three days they could not solve the riddle. And on the seventh day they threatened Samson’s wife, “Entice your husband, into explaining the riddle to you and you tell us, or we will burn you and your father’s household to death. Have you invited us in order to take what we have?” Then Samson’s wife threw herself on him, sobbing, “You hate me! You don’t really love me. You’ve given my people a riddle, but you haven’t told me the answer.” “I haven’t even explained it to my father or mother,” he replied, “so why should I explain it to you?”

Verses 17-20—“Now, she had wept on him the seven days while their feast lasted. And it happened on the seventh day that he told her, because she pressed him so much. Then she explained the riddle to the sons of her people. So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down: “*What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?*” And Samson said to them: “If you had not plowed with my heifer, you would not have solved my riddle!” Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power. He went down to Askelon, and killed thirty of their men, took their apparel, and gave the changes of clothing to those who had explained the riddle. Furious with anger, he went back up to his father’s house.

Judges 15:1—After a while, during the time of wheat harvest, Samson took a young goat and went to visit his wife and reconcile. He said, “Let me go into my wife, into her room.” But her father would not permit him to go in. Her father said, “I really thought that you thoroughly hated her; therefore I gave her to your best man. Is not her younger sister fairer than she? Take her instead.” Samson said, “This time I shall be blameless regarding the Philistines if I harm them”—I have a right to get even with the Philistines; I will really harm them. He went out and caught three hundred foxes and tied them tail to tail

in pairs. He then fastened a torch to every pair of tails, lit the torches and let the foxes loose in the standing grain of the Philistines. He burned up the shocks and standing grain, together with the vineyards and olive groves. When the Philistines asked, “Who has done this?” they were told, Samson, the Timnite’s son-in-law, because his wife was given to his friend. So the Philistines went up and burned her and her father to death. Samson said to the Philistines, “Since you’ve done such a thing as this, I will not stop until I get my revenge on you, then I will cease. He attacked them viciously and slaughtered many of them. Three thousand men of Judah went to arrest Samson at the top of the rock Etam. “Do you not know that the Philistines rule over us? What is this you have done to us?” He said, “As they did to me, so I have done to them.” But they said to him, “We have come down to take you up to deliver you into the hand of the Philistines.” Then Samson said to them, “Swear that you will not kill me yourselves.” “Agreed”, they answered. They bound him with two new cords and as he approached Lehi (means jawbone), the Philistines came toward him shouting. “The Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power. The ropes on his arms became like charred flax and the bindings dropped from his hands. He found a fresh jawbone of a donkey, reached out his hand and took it and killed a thousand men with it. When he was finished, he threw the jawbone away. Because he was very thirsty, he cried out to the Lord. “You have given your servant this great victory. Must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?” But God clave a hollow place water came out of it; and when he had drunk his spirit came again and he revived. He called the name of it En-hakkore (means the well of him who cried), which is in Lehi unto this day.” Samson was Israel’s judge for twenty years, while the Philistines ruled the land.

Judges 16:1—Samson was a mighty man of God and the Spirit of God came on him with power, but he had failings of temptations of the flesh. “One day Samson went to the Philistine city of Gaza, where he saw a prostitute. He went in to spend the night with her. The people of Gaza were told, ‘Samson is here!’ So they surrounded the place and lay in wait for him all night at the city gate and lay quiet all night, saying, ‘In the morning, when it is daylight, we will kill him.’ Samson laid there only until the middle of the night. Then he got up and took hold of the doors of the city gate, together with the two posts, and tore them loose, bar and all. He lifted them to his shoulders and carried them to the top of the hill that faces Hebron.” After this, he loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. The rulers of the Philistines went to her and said, “See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver.” This amount of money was an attractive offer, so Delilah agreed.

She said to Samson, “Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued.” She pressed him daily for the answer. Three times she followed his instructions to make him weak like any other man. 1) Bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, 2) Bind me with new ropes that have never been used. 3) Weave the seven locks of my head into the web of the loom. But when she called to him, ‘Samson the Philistines are upon you’ and he awoke from his sleep he escaped. So the secret of his strength was not known. Then Delilah said to him, “How can you say, I love you, when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me three times and haven’t told me where your great strength lies.” So it came to pass when she pressed him daily with her words and pressured him, so that his soul was vexed to unto death, that he told her everything in his heart. “No razor has ever come upon my head, because I have been a Nazarite set apart to God from my mother’s womb. If my head were shaved, my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as any other man.”

Judges 16:18—“Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart and she called the lords of the Philistines to come up once more, ‘Samson has told me the truth.’ So they came and brought the silver in their hand. She lulled Samson to sleep upon her knees and called for a man to shave off the seven locks of his head and his strength left him.” Then she called, “Samson, the Philistines are upon you!” He awoke from his sleep and said, I will go out as before and shake myself free. But he did not know that the Lord had left him.

The Philistines captured him, put out his eyes and took him to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles; and set him to grinding in the prison. But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved. The rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate, saying, “Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands.” When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, “Our god has delivered our enemy into our hands, the one who laid waste our land and multiplied our slain.” While they were in high spirits, they shouted, “Bring out Samson to entertain us.” So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them.

Judges 16:27-31—“The temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. Then Samson prayed to the Lord, “O Sovereign Lord, remember me, O God, please strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.” The Samson reached for the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines!” Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it (over 3,000). Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived. Then his brothers and his father’s whole family went down to get him. They brought him back and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father. He had led Israel twenty years.

Samson had flaws, but God used him. None of us are perfect. However, as we turn to God, He will forgive us and is willing to use us and fill us with his Holy Spirit of power, love and a sound mind to do his will and work. He is the God of miracles. After the death of Samson, chronological sequence in Judges ends. The events in the last five chapters of Judges show the utter apostasy of Israel in their religious, civil and moral degradation caused by the departure from the law.

Judges 17:1-12—There was a man of the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Micah. He wanted to have a priest living with him to bless his household. One day he said to his mother, “The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from you and about which I heard you utter a curse—I have that silver with me. I took it.” Then his mother said, “The Lord bless you, my son!” When he had returned the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, “I had wholly dedicated my silver to the Lord for my son to make a carved image and a molded image (idol); I will return it to you.” So he returned the silver to his mother, and she took two hundred shekels of silver and gave them to a silver-smith, who made them into the image and the idol. And they were put in Micah’s house. Micah had a shrine and he made an ephod and some idols and installed one of his sons as his priest. In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit. This is what Micah was doing.

A young Levite from Bethlehem in Judah who had been living within the clan of Judah, left that town in search of some other place to stay. On his way he came to Micah’s house in the hill country of Ephraim. Micah asked him, “Where are you from?” “I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah,” he said, “and I am looking for a place to stay.” Micah said to him, “Live with me and be my father and priest and I’ll give you ten shekels of silver a year, your clothes, and your food.” So the Levite agreed to live with him, and the young man was to him like one of his sons. Then Micah installed the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in his house. And Micah said, “Now I know that the Lord will be good to me, since this Levite has become my priest.”

Judges 18—“In those days Israel had no king. And in those days the tribe of the Danites was seeking a place of their own where they might settle, because they had not yet come into an inheritance among the tribes of Israel. They had not yet driven out the people who lived in the land assigned to them. So the men of Dan chose five warriors representing all their clans who lived in the towns of Zorah and Estaol, to scout out a land for them to settle in. They came to Micah’s house where they spent the night and

recognized the voice of the young Levite living with Micah and asked him, “Who brought you here and what are you doing? Why are you here?” He told them what Micah had done for him, and said “He has hired me and I am his priest.” Then they said to him, “Please inquire of God to learn whether our journey will be successful.” He said, “Go in peace. Your journey has the Lord’s approval.” So the five men left and came to Laish where they saw that the people were living in safety, like the Sidonians, unsuspecting and secure. And since their land lacked nothing, they were prosperous. They lived a great distance from Sidon and had no allies. When the five men returned they reported a spacious and fertile land lacking nothing and advised their brothers to attack and take over the land. Six hundred warriors armed for battle from the tribe of Dan set out from Zorah and Eshtaol. Then they went up into the hill country of Ephraim and came to Micah’s house. The five men who had scouted out the land around Laish said to their brethren, “Do you know that one of these houses has an ephod, other household gods, a carved image and a cast idol? Now you know what to do.” They turned in there and went to the house of the young Levite at Micah’s place and greeted him. The six hundred Danites, armed for battle, stood at the entrance to the gate. The five men who had spied out the land went inside and took the carved image, the ephod, the other household gods and the cast idol while the priest and the six hundred armed men stood at the entrance to the gate.

When these five men went into Micah’s house and took these things, the priest said to them, “What are you doing?” They said to him, “Be quiet. Put your hand over your mouth and come with us and be our father and priest. Isn’t it better that you serve a tribe and clan in Israel as priest rather than just one man’s household?” Then the priest’s heart was glad, and he took the ephod, the household idols, and the carved image, and took his place among the people. When they had gone some distance from Micah’s house, the men who lived near Micah were called together and overtook the Danites. As they shouted after them, the Danites turned and said to Micah, “What’s the matter with you that you called out your men to fight?” Micah said, “You have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and you have gone away. Now what more do I have? How can you say to me, ‘What ails you?’” “Don’t argue with us or some angry tempered men will attack you, and you and your family will lose your lives.”

So the Danites went their way, and Micah, seeing that they were too strong for him, turned around and went back home. So they took the things that Micah had made, and the priest who had belonged to him and went to Laish, against a quiet, secure and unsuspecting people. They attacked them with the sword and burned down their city. “There was no one to rescue them because they lived a long way from Sidon and had no relationship with anyone else. They rebuilt the city and dwelt there. They called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born to Israel. However, the name of the city formerly was Laish. Then the children of Dan set up for themselves the carved image; and Johnathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. So they set up for themselves Micah’s carved image which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.” The Ark of the Covenant was in Shiloh, until the Philistines invaded and took the Ark of the Covenant captive.

Who is Johnathan the son of Gershom? Who was this Levite that became a priest to the tribe of Dan and was the first to engage in idolatry with a whole tribe of Israel. Who was he, really? The name Manasseh is really incorrect. In my Bible margin it says according to the Septuagint and the Vulgate that the name is Moshe (Moses) and this was the grandson of Moses. Moses had a son named Gershom. This shows us how bad things had gotten in Israel when even the family of Moses was going apostate and into idolatry.

Reference: Jamison Faucet-Brown Commentary regarding this passage says that the children of Israel set up the graven images and perpetuated idolatry among them for many generations. RE: “Johnathan the son of Gershom” as noted here as the son of Manasseh, the best manuscripts universally have this name as

Moshe (Moses) **not “Manasseh”**; proof of this degeneracy of the great law-giver’s family, as well as the religious disorder of that age. This idolatry continued until the Ark at Shiloh was taken away.

Reference: Adam Clark’s Commentary likewise says: “Johnathan, the son of Gershom, the name of the young Levite could not be the Manasseh the son of Joseph, for he had no sons called Gershom, nor could it be Manasseh, king of Israel because he lived 800 years later. Instead of Manasseh, the word should be read Moshe—Moses as it is found in some manuscripts in the Vulgate and in the concessions of the most intelligent Jews.” Kenschke acknowledges that *ascended* “n” the letter *nun* over Moshe gives it the sound of Manasseh if you quote from the “n” suspended over the word which was a later addition. So this converted the name Moshe into Manasseh because they thought it would be a great reproach to their legislator, Moses, to have a grandson who was an idolator and a leader of idolatry.

Brethren, today we live in an age of idolatry and apostasy of people departing from the truth of God and departing from the living word of God—following traditions of men instead. It behooves us at this time to get back to the FAITH once delivered to the saints. **2 Timothy 2:15**—“**Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**”

Do not be led astray; but fight to stay the course and to follow Christ who has chosen us **as His first fruits** to serve Him and be in his kingdom. **Jude 3 and 24**—“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write to you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write to you, and urge (exhort) you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints... Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.”

THANKS be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the name of the Lord our God! Amen!