

# THE PRIEST OF DAN

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One of the more famous statements in all the Bible is found in 1 Timothy 6:10, which says, “*For the love of money is the root of all evil.*” In Luke 12:15, our Lord Jesus Christ said, “*Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*” In addition to warning us about covetousness, God’s word also repeatedly warns us about false teachers. They themselves are typically motivated by the love of money. The prophet Micah said of Israel’s leaders, “*The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money*” (Mic 3:11). Balaam was a prophet who taught Balak king of Moab “to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication” (Rev 2:14; Num 31:16). He did this so Jehovah would curse His own people, for which Balak had promised a great amount of money to Balaam (Num 22-24). The Book of Judges tells us about a priest of Dan who also forsook the right way and went astray, “*following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness*” (2 Pet 2:15).

## **Micah and the Levite**

Judges 17:7 introduces us to a young man who was of the tribe of Levi who sojourned in the town of Bethlehem in Judah. We do not know the specific circumstances that led to this young man seeking a new place to live, but “the man departed out of the city from Bethlehemjudah to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.” Micah (not the prophet) was a man of Ephraim who “had a house of gods,” including an expensive graven image, and had also “consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest” (Judg 17:1-6). Micah had violated the first two of the Ten Commandments (“Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image,” Exod 20:3-4). He also ordained a priest that was not of the sons of Aaron, and therefore was unauthorized by God (Exod 30:30; 40:13-15). Jeroboam was killed by God for committing this same sin (1 Kgs 12:31; 13:33-34). When the Levite from Bethlehem arrived at Micah’s place, Micah made him an offer: “And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. *And the Levite was content to dwell with the man;* and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. Then said Micah, Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest” (Judg 17:10-13). Micah’s confidence that Jehovah would bless him because he now had a Levite to serve as priest in his *house of gods* was certainly misguided and misplaced. The tribe of Dan brought Micah’s “good” to a rapid end.

## **Dan and the Levite**

Judges 18:1 says, “In those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel.” The

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Amorites were dwelling in their territory: “And the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the mountain: for they would not suffer them to come down to the valley” (Judg 1:34). Dan should have solved their problem by obeying God and destroying the altars and idols of the Amorites, not making league with them, and then God would have fulfilled His promise and driven them out of their land (Judg 2:1-5; Deut 7:1-5,16-24; 28:15,25). But, rather than choosing to obey God and solving their problem the right way, the tribe of Dan decided to move to a new location. “And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valor, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there” (Judg 18:1-2). The five men from Dan talked with the Levite that served as Micah’s priest and asked him, “Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this place? and what hast thou here? And he said unto them, Thus and thus deals Micah with me, and has hired me, and I am his priest. *And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the Lord is your way wherein ye go*” (Judg 18:3-6). Those five men of Dan later led their fellow soldiers to that same place, where they stole Micah’s image and took this Levite to become the priest for their entire tribe (Judg 18:13-31).

## **For sale to the highest bidder**

Clearly, this Levite was willing to say or do anything for material gain. When Micah offered him a place to live, food, clothes, and a yearly salary, this Levite was willing to become a priest for a house of idols. He was then quite willing to tell the men of Dan the smooth words they wanted to hear. When Dan offered to make this Levite an idolatrous priest for their whole tribe, his “heart was glad” and he was even willing to steal from his former master after receiving this better offer (Judg 18:14-20). False teachers are willing to scratch the itching ears of the people, especially for money (see also Isa 30:9-11; Jer 5:30-31; 2 Tim 4:3-4). We must not sell our principles and beliefs as merchandise. No amount of material gain is worth our soul (Matt 16:26; Mark 8:36-37; Luke 9:25). We must resist the temptation to adjust our teaching and preaching in order to satisfy and please men (1 Thes 2:4-6; 2 Tim 2:3-4). We also must flee from anyone who is willing to do that. We are warned in 2 Peter 2:1-3 that we will have false teachers *among us* who are like this Levite, and the sad fact is that “many shall follow their pernicious ways.” What should we do? “If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: *from such withdraw thyself*” (1 Tim 6:3-5). We must never be like this priest of Dan or listen to anyone who is like him!