

Judges 17

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[0 : 00] We have come to the point in the book of Judges that we are no longer looking at any judges. The last judge which we look at is Samson.

He is the final one. Samson, if you remember, by appointed purpose, the angel of the Lord told Manoah's wife, that would be Samson's mother, we don't know her name, that he would raise up a child from her, that she would have a child, and that he would be a judge, and that he would begin to deliver his people Israel from the hand of the Philistines.

Samson is the one who starts the battle. David is the one who finishes it. That kind of helps us put our timeline together. If you're looking at biblical history, Samson immediately precedes the coming of Samuel.

We turn our pages, we get into 1 and 2 Samuel. Samuel very quickly after the book of Judges in the Old Testament. I know we have some other historical works to get to there.

But Samuel comes immediately following the life of Samson. Samuel is the one that comes at a low period when the word of God was very rare in those days.

[1 : 13] Even though he's living with Eli, the word of God is very rare, and people aren't used to hearing a word from God. We understand that when Samuel is called, all of a sudden it's a new thing, and God confirms him through speaking through him.

Samuel is the one that's used to anoint Saul. Saul begins to fight against the Philistines as well. Saul fails to deliver his people from the hand of the Philistines, and therefore has the kingdom ripped from him, and it's given to David.

Now all this is a part of the plan that started with Samson. Samson is the last judge we look at, but it's not the end of the book. What we get to when we turn the page and we get into the 17th chapter and the chapters that follow, many people say, and many biblical scholars will tell you it's an appendix.

But we don't need to look at it as an add-on at a later date. We need to look at it as a pullback from the historical events to show us what society looked like. Because we have seen the judges, and we have seen how they failed, and how they failed to be those who would deliver fully and finally. We have seen through our study of the book of Judges that man cannot deliver himself. We have seen that what man needs is a judge who is perfect, who is strong, who is powerful, who is capable, and who is eternal.

[2 : 29] And the problem we have seen is that no matter how good the judge is, no matter how amazing the battles he wins is, when he dies, deliverance dies with him. So we have this longing up to the end of the life of Samson, because as with every other judge, Samson dies.

And our longing is for a judge who will last. We don't find that promise for a judge that will last until we get to David. Now, this is all a part of God's plan.

We understand that. But through all of this, we've been focusing on this downward spiral of the nation of Israel, how each time they were delivered, they not only went back to where they were, they went a little bit lower, a little bit lower, a little bit lower.

And we have seen how that's a picture of society as a whole, that man is digressing. They're on a downward trajectory, not an upward one. We're not progressing. We're not getting better.

As a matter of fact, man is getting worse. The theme, and I know this is a long introduction for Wednesday night, but it helps us to dive into it, and that's what we want to do, kind of get into the meat of it.

[3 : 39] The theme of the book of Judges, if you had to have this theme that kind of overarches the entire book, is the phrase that we will find repeating itself four times in the final chapters.

In those days, there was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes. The theme throughout the book of Judges is, in those days, there was no king in Israel.

That should bother us a little bit. It doesn't bother us a lot, because when we think about it, we say, well, sure there's no king, because Saul hadn't been anointed yet, and David hasn't been anointed yet.

But the reason that should bother us is because long before the anointing of Saul, Samuel had a problem with the nation asking for a king, and God says, Samuel, they haven't rejected you, they've rejected me.

Because, see, they were to be a theocracy. That is, God was to be their king. There was to be a king. God was to be their king.

[4 : 40] But when they did not allow him to be king, there was no king in Israel. It wasn't that there wasn't one who had been appointed, it's that they weren't allowing him to be king.

And every man did what was right in his own eyes. And therefore, man begins to try to deliver himself over and over and over and over and over again, and each time it fails. Every time.

And we have seen that. Now, the final chapters of the book of Judges is going to let us see, this is not chronological order, by the way.

Chapter 17 doesn't follow chapter 18 chronologically. It follows it in literature, in your book, but not chronologically in time.

Because now that the author has shown us, being inspired by God, how man cannot deliver himself, he wants to pull us back and allow us to see what society looked like, even when we don't focus on the judges.

[5 : 44] Because, just in case you haven't caught it yet, the judges weren't the only people to have problems. Samson wasn't the only messed up individual in the land.

They were a representation of the greater part of society, which is what leaders always will be. And we get a picture of the times illustrated.

So for the final, I don't normally give subtitles, but for the final portion of the book of Judges, we will see the times illustrated. You'll see it, how it affects tonight, in the 17th chapter, that the times were times of a broken down family, the breakdown of the home.

In the 18th chapter, we'll see that not only was the home impacted, but every tribe was impacted. When we start focusing on the Danites, the tribe of Dan.

And you'll see how the breakdown of the home led to the breakdown of the culture. And then eventually, by the time we get to the end, in the 19th chapter, to the end of the book, we'll see how they have not only had a broken down home, a run down clan, now they begin to fight one another and the greatest enemy in the final chapters of the book of Judges is not the Philistines, it's one another.

[7 : 09] That man is literally killing one another. This is a snapshot of the times during the season of the book of Judges.

Now, before we get to down and out, and before we really get into it, and I love this, by the way, this is right in my wheelhouse, I love talking about these things, how it all goes together.

You have a book that follows this, right? You have the book of Ruth, right? And it was during the time of the Judges.

Right? You remember that? During the times of the Judges. Just in case you lose hope and you think society was so dark, God wasn't moving. Ruth was a Moabitess who came home with her mother-in-law and met a man named Boaz.

And Boaz is a kinsman redeemer. And Boaz takes Ruth, and Ruth has a son. And that son's name is Obed. Obed has another son.

[8 : 14] And then that son has another son, and that son's name is David. Just so you know, before you really get into it, God's always got his people. Always got his people.

They may be hidden behind the scenes, but he's always got his people. Sometimes he's got his people moving to Moab just so he can pick up a sojourner on the way back home named Ruth. But God's always got his people.

But we see the times illustrated. In Judges 17, we start with the breakdown of the home. We'll read the entire chapter. It's just 13 verses.

It says, Now there was a man of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah. And he said to his mother, it's very random by the way, if you notice how it just steps right into it.

Now there was a man of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah. He said to his mother, The eleven hundred pieces of silver which were taken from you about which you uttered a curse in

my hearing. Behold, the silver is with me.

[9 : 18] I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be my son by the Lord. He then returned the eleven hundred pieces of silver to his mother. And his mother said, I wholly dedicate the silver from my hand to the Lord for my son to make a graven image and a molten image.

Now therefore, I will return them to you. So when he returned the silver to his mother, his mother took two hundred pieces of silver and gave them to the silversmith who made them into a graven image and a molten image.

And they were in the house of Micah. And the man Micah had a shrine and he made an ephod and a household idols and consecrated one of his sons that he might become his priest.

Here it is. In those days, there was no king in Israel. Every man did what was right in his own eyes. Now there was a young man from Bethlehem and Judah of the family of Judah who was a Levite. And he was staying there. Side note, we'll find out in the 18th chapter, this man's name is Jonathan. You need to hold on to that. Jonathan is a descendant of Moses.

[10 : 22] He's one of the grandchildren of Moses. That's important historically, by the way, because Dan will always say, well, we've got one of Moses' descendants with us.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. He was staying there. Then the man departed from the city, from Bethlehem in Judah, to stay wherever he might find a place.

And as he made his journey, he came to the hill country of Ephraim, to the house of Micah. And Micah said to him, where do you come from? And he said to him, I am a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am going to stay wherever I may find a place.

And Micah said to him, dwell with me and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you 10 pieces of silver a year, a suit of clothes, and your maintenance. So the Levite went in. The Levite agreed to live with the man, and the young man became to him like one of his sons.

So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest and lived in the house of Micah. Then Micah said, now I know that the Lord will prosper me, seeing I have a Levite as a priest.

[11 : 23] Judges 17, the breakdown of the home. If you look at the very next verse, 18.1, it says, now in those days, there was no king in Israel. So this continues our theme.

But before we get into what happens with the tribe of Dan, we need to see that before we got there, we had a problem at home. Because the reality shows us that when man has a problem, a messed up man, as Tony Evans would say, a messed up man creates a messed up family, and a messed up family creates a messed up society.

And it does not surprise us that this picture of the times starts with, now there was a man. There was a man of the hill country of Ephraim whose name was Micah.

And we see the breakdown of the home being played out in three ways. Three very instrumental, important ways throughout this 17th chapter. I'll go ahead and give you all three of them, and then we'll break them down.

The home was broken down in word. It was broken down in witness, and it was broken down in worship. Their word was not true, their witness was false, and their worship was misplaced.

[12 : 36] And we see that the home breaks down around an individual in these three areas. We see it broken down, first of all, in word. It says, this man Micah, we're introduced to him out of nowhere, it appears, but he is, again, just a snapshot.

We don't know anything about his past. All we know is about his present. All we know that is Micah is old enough to have adult children, and his mother is living with him.

And we also know at the very beginning that he states to his mother, you know that 1,100 pieces of silver, by the way, was probably her life savings. Those 1,100 pieces of silver about which you uttered a curse in my hearing, because somebody had stolen her life savings.

Micah said, I took it. It's with me. See, we begin to see the breakdown in the word because there had been some lying and stealing even in the home.

Micah said, I took that. It's me. You say, well, at least Micah is an honest man and he's confessing. Well, the confession does not come because the word of God says thou shalt not steal.

[13 : 45] The confession comes because he's afraid of the curse his mother has uttered. Big difference. Was there a fear of discipline or a fear of the Lord?

See, it's a fear of discipline which leads him to admit his fault. So he comes back to his mother. Now, just try to wrap your mind around this just for a moment, okay? Because we're just looking at

how little the word meant to them.

They were breaking down in what they said and they were breaking down in what God had said to them. Words no longer had an impact or a purpose because his mother had uttered a curse.

She had pronounced a curse on the individual who had stolen her money and Micah was present when she said it and then he says, by the way, I'm the individual that stole your money.

And as soon as he confesses that, she pronounces a blessing upon the very individual she had already cursed. Now, she did not know when she uttered the curse that it was her son.

[14:45] But look at what she did next. Blessed be my son of the Lord God. She was blessing the very one she had already cursed. So evidently what she had said before mattered no more.

She wasn't gonna be a person of her word because just because the individual who stole it was her son, now things had changed. See, with God there is no variation.

There is no twisting and turning, no shadow. Right is right and wrong is wrong. He's very accurate in what he says and intentional in his purposes.

But yet Micah's mother, we don't know her name. We're not given the name of very many ladies in the Old Testament, especially in the book of Judges. Only the one prophetess that we're giving.

But it says that now she pronounces a curse, then a blessing, and then a praising. As if this oxymoron of blessing whom she has already cursed is not enough, then she praises God and then declares that she's gonna give this money back to the Lord so that she can have an idol built with it.

[16:01] That just doesn't make sense. Because see, the word of God had very clearly said, you should not have any graven images among you.

But as a part of her dedicating the money back to the Lord, she gives a portion of it to a silversmith and many would say she makes two idols here.

A graven image and then a molten image. She wants both of them made. Because see, one another's word didn't matter anymore and evidently the word of God didn't matter anymore.

Mark it, friends, that individuals start a downward spiral when the words they say and the words that God says begins not to carry any weight any longer.

One thing that we always strive to remind ourselves and our family of, and I say ourselves because we all need to hear it, not just the children when they were young or Braden when he's eight, but every one of us.

[17:14] Words matter. What we say matters. We have a saying.

I'm having to do a little sheetrock at our house right now. I don't want to get into why. I made a big boo-boo. Well, I don't mind telling you. You're my Wednesday night crowd. Carrie wanted the Christmas decorations down from upstairs, so I fell through the attic.

Beautiful story, right? It's great. I did that because I always had a sign on the other side I could hand stuff to, and since I didn't, I was, and you say, well, what about, are you saying that Kylie can't help? No, because it was always a plan that Kylie and Carrie were at the bottom of the ladder, and I handed things down to them, and I always had a sign up, and now I don't anymore, so stepping over the ductwork, yes, I fell through my attic. It hurt pretty bad.

It was a wonderful story. It was the day before Thanksgiving. It was great. It made for a great Thanksgiving, so thankfully things weren't at our house. Big old hole in my ceiling. Wonderful. So I had to go buy some more sheetrock and fix that, and yes, we did it that night, and last night I was working.

[18:17] I said, I hate sheetrock. Kylie said, that's a big word, Dad, because around our family, hate is a big word. You don't just say you hate anything, because hate's a big word, and I said, I know it, and I'm using it for all it's worth, because I hate sheetrock.

I really do, especially on a ceiling, when your shoulders are on fire because you're trying to fix it, because words matter, but when the words don't matter in the home anymore, we shouldn't be surprised when the word of God doesn't matter anymore, and this is part of the breakdown of the home.

When you couldn't take one another seriously or literally, is it any wonder that they could not take God literally? When the mother could pronounce a curse and then turn around and give a blessing instead, is it any wonder that when God said you shouldn't make a graven image that they didn't take him seriously either?

Because the breakdown of the home always begins in word. The second thing we see is the home breaks down around witness.

It tells us that his mother gives the silver to the silversmith, and he makes a molten image and a graven image. Molten would be a wood-carved image overlaid with silver.

[19 : 44] The other was probably like a cast silver image, and then gave them to Micah, and Micah went home with these, and it says that these weren't the only two idols that Micah had.

Micah had a whole shrine in his house. He had built a shrine. He said he had a, literal wording is there, he had a house of gods. Many people think that this was probably more like a communal living area because the tribe of Dan stops here.

We'll see that in the 18th chapter, so you kind of have all these houses connected like you would during that time, and Micah had built a portion of that house to be a house to hold his gods. What kind of witness is that?

Because fathers were charged to teach their children. The Shema, S-H-E-M-A, Deuteronomy 6, is the very thing that fathers were supposed to pass on to their children, that when they rise up to walk or sit down, or when they're going along the way, they are to teach their children about the things of God.

They are to teach, they are to write it on the doorposts of their houses and on the foreheads of their, across their head and across their hand and in their heart, and they were to teach the word of God.

[21 : 01] They were to, it was to be, the family was to be a place of witness. Remember that?

Remember all the festivals that would take place at least six times a year. They were supposed to have festivals, and during those times, they were supposed to take their whole household with them, and they were to go to the tabernacle or wherever the name of God had chosen to put himself on display, and they were to go there and to sojourn there together and as a family unit to worship, and there was to be all this opportunity for testimony, and they were to witness to one another about what God had said.

But rather than doing that, Micah built a house of idols. That shouldn't surprise us any because Micah's just following the example of his mother.

And then just to prove that this is not an effective witness, Micah then takes one of his own sons and makes him priest. Now God had been very clear. There's the Arianic lineage of priests.

From the lineage of Aaron, all the priests were to come according to the law. Now Christ is not a priest according to Aaron. He's a priest according to Melchizedek.

We'll get to that some other time in the book of Hebrews. But nowhere is man ever told to establish his own priest in his own house through one of his own sons.

[22 : 31] But he said, if I'm going to have a house of gods, I need to have a priest. So he takes one of his sons. And look how sad the witness is here. Because when the word is not taken serious, the witness begins to falter.

And just in case we put all the blame on Micah, now we can shift over to this man from Bethlehem. This Levite of the tribe of Judah who was living in Bethlehem.

You say, well that makes sense. Well it does make sense until you realize that Bethlehem is not a Levitical city. His name is Jonathan. It's in 1830.

Not the year, the chapter and verse. In chapter 18 verse 30, we read that his name is Jonathan because he gets picked up by the tribe of Dan. But we don't want to get ahead of ourselves. He says he is a man of Judah who's living in Bethlehem.

This is where the problem starts. Because the Levite was not supposed to be living in Bethlehem to begin with. There were Levitical cities and Bethlehem was not one of them.

[23 : 34] They were to be where the tabernacle was or to be in one of the Levitical cities. So he was living where he wasn't supposed to be to begin with.

More than likely, the reason he is there is because by this time in history, the people of Israel are not providing for the Levites. So in the Levitical city where he had no inheritance but he had a city to live in and he was completely dependent upon the nation of Israel.

Since the nation had degraded to the point the man was building his own idols at home, more than likely they weren't supporting the Levites who were living in the Levitical cities so he decided to go to Bethlehem and he was living in Bethlehem for a while but it was while in Bethlehem that he decided that he was going to leave Bethlehem and go wherever he might find a place.

Now that sounds simple enough but literally what he is doing, we want to talk about witness, what were the Levites supposed to do? The Levites had no inheritance so they were supposed to live in the Levitical cities and in the Levitical cities they were to, they had places to keep their livestock and

they had places to do that, they had places to live but the whole charge of the Levites was to assist in the worship and the tabernacle and to teach the people the word of God.

Remember that? That's all the Levites were supposed to do. You get a beautiful picture of what the Levites were supposed to do in the book of Nehemiah. I'm giving you a lot of information tonight but it's okay. You get it in the book of Nehemiah and you get it in the book of Ezra.

[25 : 06] Ezra and Nehemiah kind of one book in Jewish literature it's one book combined we have it two here but when Ezra goes back and he sees the people there and Nehemiah comes back and they rebuild, you remember what they do?

They stand for a quarter of the day and they read the word of God and there's this platform the very first time anybody ever preaches or teaches from a platform in history is scripture, the word of God by the way.

I don't want to say that it never happened before but the very first time we have recorded for us someone preaching from a platform is in the book of Ezra and we have Ezra up there and there's all these people on each side of Ezra and he reads the word of God for a fourth of the day and then the Levites who are the people standing beside him go among the people for a fourth of the day and they teach them what he has read.

Today we call that small groups. They break in small groups, right? And they go out in their small groups and then they go home and they put into practice what they heard that day. That's an effective small group ministry.

And then they come back the next day and Ezra reads again and then the Levites go again and then they go back home and they put into practice what they had just learned that day. That's a really good church service. So that's what the Levites were supposed to do.

[26 : 12] They were to teach the people the word of God. This Levite was living where he should not have been living and then decided that wasn't good enough so he was going to go find a place literally what it's saying is I'm going to go find something that works for me.

I'm going to go wherever I can find something that works for me. He had become a hireling. He was looking for somewhere to meet his needs.

Levites were called to meet the needs of the people. He was wanting to get his needs met. It's probably a vicious cycle since the nation was not providing for him.

He was not providing for them and onward and onward we go until he comes to the hill country of Ephraim and ends up at a house of a man named Micah. And rather than rebuking, correcting, and chastising Micah for his idolatrous worship, Jonathan says, hey, that's pretty good pay.

He'll pay me this so much a year, he'll give me a change of clothes and my maintenance. Sounds good to me. Now what kind of witness is that? Just in case we think that he's, that's not what he's doing, when the tribe of Dan comes along and offers him something better, he leaves very quick.

[27 : 38] He had made himself a hireling because when the witness of the people who were supposed to be teaching the individuals the word of God is no longer present, then should we be surprised when messed up men create a messed up home.

When the ones that were supposed to be teaching them were no longer teaching them but rather joining with them, we see the home breaking down. The last thing we see that is part of a broken down home is faulty worship.

The home broke down in word and witness and worship. All throughout this we see that the worship was not what God had called it to be.

We've seen how Micah was not supposed to appoint one of his sons to be a priest. The Levite was never supposed to be combined to a home and to serve as a priest of a family.

He was to serve as the Lord God led him in the Levitical cities and to serve the nation. Yet this house of gods is erected and Micah is worshiping here but probably the saddest reality of and every man did what was right in his own eyes is how Micah justifies this at the end.

[29 : 05] It's called syncretistic worship where you join true worship with false worship and you decide how you're going to do it and then you say oh I've got to be right because he makes that declaration now I know the Lord will prosper me seeing I have a Levite as a priest.

There was no concern that the Levite was not right and what he was doing was wrong. He was claiming God's blessings because he was going through some appropriate measures.

See worship is misguided when man thinks that they can worship however whenever and wherever they so choose. Now we're free on this side of the cross.

We don't have to go to a tabernacle. The Bible tells us in the gospel of John Jesus says that it is for our benefit that he went away. John 15 and on in 16.

He says it's for our benefit for him to go away. His disciples couldn't understand it. He said because if I do not go then the spirit cannot come. He says but when I go the spirit the paracletes the Holy Spirit will come and tabernacle with you.

[30 : 23] He said and then I and the father will come and make our abode in you as well. Now that word abode is tabernacle so we don't have to go to the tabernacle because the tabernacle came to us.

And this is why we read later on that we are the temple of God. We possess the fullness of God within us. Those who have been called to him and redeemed and forgiven and set free through salvation and have given their life to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior are the temple of the living God because he has made his tabernacle in us.

So we are on this side of the cross and the empty tomb. We are on this side of the resurrected Savior free to worship wherever because he is always with us.

But in this day they were only to worship wherever God put his name. Wherever the tabernacle was at and then later the temple.

God had dictated to them you cannot just worship me wherever you want to. You have to come to me to worship me. The beauty of Christ and the cross is that God came to us because we can't come to him.

[31 : 38] Don't ever forget that. So now we are free to worship wherever. But we are not free to worship however. Man has never been free to worship however.

Now I'm not talking about that God has said we have to sing this hymn, this hymn, this hymn, this hymn. I'm not talking about our manner of worship service. What we have here, how we do church.

Because when we gather together on Sunday morning and when believers all around the world gather together and they're different in varying places then worship may look different. Right?

It looks different. Some of us would be appalled at the worship over there and some of them would be appalled at our worship over here because it looks different. But that does not mean however because Jesus says those who worship in truth worship by the spirits.

See we can only worship through the power and the presence of the spirit given to us through Christ and through the blood of the lamb. We dare not come before him in any other way.

[32 : 42] But the problem with false and misguided worship that led to a breakdown home, a broken down home is when man thought they could worship God however, whenever, they wanted to.

When man thought God was just joking when he said this is how you worship me. They thought they could put what God had said together with what they wanted and their desires and God's commandments began to take on similarities and their likens and God's commandings began to be joined together so much so that they thought that they could just worship however they wanted. God is very clear on how he will be worshipping. That's not just an Old Testament principle by the way. That's not. That is a biblical principle.

The purity that God demanded in the Old Testament for worship is the same purity he demands in the New Testament. The book of Leviticus theme is what?

Be holy. Be holy as I am holy says the Lord. That's the theme. The holiness. We say the book of Leviticus because of any other book in the Old Testament the book of Leviticus is all about worship.

[34 : 03] It's all the sacrifices and all the rituals and all the sun dry laws and everything that God commands to be next to him and his theme is holiness. Be holy as I am holy says the Lord.

You know the New Testament says the same thing. The book of Hebrews says be holy. Our holiness is not a result of our works and our efforts and our keeping of the law.

Our holiness is a result of our surrender to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and our sanctification by him. See we worship through the lamb. Through the blood of the lamb just as they worshiped then through the blood of the sacrifice.

We worship through the blood of the lamb. So just as I would not go to an altar as I could not go to an altar however I wanted to to offer whatever kind of blood I wanted to worship.

So today I cannot take whatever I want to into the presence of God. I must come through the blood of the lamb who is Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior. God is a part of the God.

[35 : 10] And when worship is degraded the family begins to crumble. Guarantee it.

And degraded worship leads to a crumbling family. And that crumbling family will be a part of a larger society. And it will infiltrate that society to the point that it's like gangrene it begins to spread. And this is how we begin to get this downward spiral. Read your church history.

When worship was its purest the church was its strongest. When the families in the church worshiped together in spite of persecution and sometimes because of persecution society was affected the most by the presence of the church.

When the church began to lessen its impact on society society began to leave the church alone. And as society left the church alone the church began to go on its own way and began to worship however they wanted to worship.

[36 : 36] And all of a sudden the church seems to have lost its relevance. Now there's no major difference between the families in our churches and the families in our societies.

That's just that's just a honest western civilization evaluation. It is what it is.

And it all starts at the home. If we want to see a snapshot of what the times look like I know it gets uncomfortable but if we want to see a picture of the times look at the homes of God's people.

Look at the homes of God's people. I didn't say look at the gathering of God's people. I said look at the homes of God's people. Are any of our homes perfect?

No. Absolutely not. No. I mean I fall through sealants. I you know do all that. I mean none of us are perfect. None of us.

[37 : 54] But if we want to see what society looks like the first place to look is to look at the homes of God's people. And may this never be the picture of our home. And through the grace of God through the presence of Jesus Christ it doesn't have to be.

It really doesn't have to be. Because when the home breaks down everything else follows. Judges 17. Thank you brother.

Thank you brother. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.