

THE FAMINE IN ISRAEL AND DEFEAT OF THE PHILISTINES

BIBLE TEXT : II Samuel 21:1-22

LESSON 243 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them" (Joshua 9:19).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

2 Samuel 21:1-22

¹ Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, *It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.*

² And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites *were* not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.)

³ Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites, What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD?

⁴ And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house; neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, *that* will I do for you.

⁵ And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us *that* we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel,

⁶ Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, *whom* the LORD did choose. And the king said, I will give *them*.

⁷ But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the LORD'S oath that *was* between them, between David and

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Praying

During the time when David was king over the Children of Israel, there was a famine. For three years, year after year, the famine continued. At this time, when there was a scarcity of food and the people were probably hungry, David prayed. He inquired of the Lord concerning the famine that had lasted so long. David acted wisely by talking to the Lord about the situation. It was a time of need, and David did not know how to relieve the distress. David talked to God, who was the only one who could tell David the cause. To pray is always the right thing to do.

David could have called in his advisers. Perhaps some would have thought that they could try one thing; another might have suggested something else. But by going to God in prayer, David was told the actual reason for the famine. David did not pray long before the answer came.

Many times people suffer because they do not go to God in prayer. There are times when God permits judgment to come to people because of sin in their lives. In His love and mercy, God would lead them to a place of prayer to inquire of Him, but they will not pray. One trouble after another may come upon them, yet they do not seek God. By delaying to pray, they deny themselves God's blessing and His help. Some people go on, year after year, in trouble, in affliction, and in sin, without seeking God. By neglecting and postponing prayer, one will continue in ignorance, sin, or mistake. We can avoid much heartache by praying sooner

Gibeonites

The Lord told David that the famine had come because Saul had killed some of the Gibeonites. These people were not of the Children of Israel, although they had lived among them for many years. The Gibeonites had lived in the Land of Canaan and were not destroyed when the Children of Israel first went into the land. The Children of Israel had made a league to let the Gibeonites live; for with a deceitful appearance and lying words, the Gibeonites had persuaded the Children of Israel to make this league. The Children of Israel did not ask counsel of God at that time, but when the league was made God required them to keep it.

A League

The Children of Israel realized the seriousness of the vow that they had made. They said: "We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them. ... we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them" (Joshua 9:19, 20).

About 400 years had passed when Saul, as king, had slain some of the Gibeonites. In his zeal, Saul had broken the league. He had not made this league, but God considered it binding

Jonathan the son of Saul.

⁸ But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, whom she bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth; and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholahite:

⁹ And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before the LORD: and they fell *all* seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first *days*, in the beginning of barley harvest.

¹⁰ And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.

¹¹ And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done.

¹² And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabeshgilead, which had stolen them from the street of Bethshan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa:

¹³ And he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son; and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged.

¹⁴ And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father: and they performed all that the king commanded. And after that God was intreated for the land.

¹⁵ Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with

upon Israel and expected Saul to honor it. The complaint was not made by the Gibeonites; God spoke for them.

Guilty

David had been king for a number of years when this famine came. There is no account given of Saul's slaying the Gibeonites; we do not know exactly when it happened. But Saul's reign had ended some time before this, so the famine was punishment for a deed committed many years before. Some people seem to think that time alone will cover sin, but not so according to the Word of God. Perhaps nothing was mentioned of the wrong when the slaying was committed, but the time came when God required payment. "Ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23). "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished" (Proverbs 11:21). The whole nation suffered because of the sin of Saul.

When people disobey God, they cause suffering to come upon themselves and others also. If one member of a family does wrong, the whole family is affected. If one member of a congregation fails God, the others feel the sorrow of the separation. One is punished for his own sin, but that sin will cause others to suffer, too. We have studied another example **of** this fact. (See Lesson 172.) The Children of Israel suffered defeat at Ai when Achan had sinned (**Joshua 7:4** ⁴ So there went up thither of the people about three thousand men: and they fled before the men of Ai.). All of them were not punished as was Achan, but they all suffered because of it.

Payment

David knew that sin is a reproach and a disgrace to any nation (**Proverbs 14:34** ³⁴ Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.). David wanted to pay for this wrong that was done to the Gibeonites. He asked them what should be done. They did not want payment in money. Silver and gold cannot always pay people for the wrongs that have been committed against them. The life of any man of Israel would not do, either. In a case of this kind, according to the Law, the guilt of the nation could be cleansed only by the shedding of the blood of the one who committed the murder (**Numbers 35:33** ³³ So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.).

Saul was dead at this time, but David agreed that seven sons of Saul's family would be delivered to the Gibeonites. We can only believe that these sons had had a part with their father in the slaying. The Law teaches that "the fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deuteronomy 24:16).

Jesus, the Innocent One

There is only one account in the Bible where an innocent person was required to die in order to atone for the sins of the guilty ones. That Innocent One is Jesus, God's only Son, who gave His life that our sins might be forgiven and that our debt might be paid. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). "For Christ also hath once suffered for

him, and fought against the Philistines: and David waxed faint.

¹⁶ And Ishbibenob, which *was* of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear *weighed* three hundred *shekels* of brass in weight, he being girded with a new *sword*, thought to have slain David.

¹⁷ But Abishai the son of Zeruiah succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David swore unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel.

¹⁸ And it came to pass after this, that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob: then Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Saph, which *was* of the sons of the giant.

¹⁹ And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim, a Bethlehemite, slew *the brother of* Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear *was* like a weaver's beam.

²⁰ And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of *great* stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant.

²¹ And when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea the brother of David slew him.

²² These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (I Peter 3:18).

Death

David was careful not to break another covenant — one made with Saul's son, Jonathan (**1 Samuel 18:3** ³ Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.) Because of that agreement David spared Mephibosheth, but seven others lost their lives for the breaking of the league with the Gibeonites.

The mother of two of them lamented and mourned their death. She showed her love by protecting their bodies from the elements and wild beasts. Not once did she accuse the Gibeonites of wrongdoing. She did not blame David for permitting this to happen to her sons. She did not steal away their bodies, but allowed sentence to be carried out. Their death was the wages of sin (**Romans 6:23** ²³ For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord).

Burial

When the rains came, David gave them a proper burial, with respect to Saul, the former king. Into the sepulcher of Kish, Saul's father, David placed them, along with Saul and Jonathan whose bones had been cared for by the men of Jabesh-gilead.

Even though they had been sons of a king, their blood was required for the sin that was committed. By so doing, the Lord was entreated for the land and the famine ceased.

A War with Giants

This was not the end of all trouble for David. The Philistines, an old national enemy, began a war against him. We remember that many years before, David had killed one of their number, Goliath, a giant. It seems that the members of Goliath's family had not forgotten.

No doubt, David was beginning to grow old and his body could not stand the fatigue of battle. Although he grew faint, David did not flee. When David "waxed faint" Abishai risked his life by going to David's rescue. Abishai slew the giant who had planned to kill David.

The Children of Israel had respect for David as their king. They would not permit him to go into battle any more. They honored David for the position he held before the Lord. David's men went to the battle against the giants of the Philistines. The Lord helped the Children of Israel to slay those who defied God and Israel, as Goliath had done before his defeat. At this time God helped the Children of Israel to slay four giants — one of which had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. God was with the Children of Israel, and the strength of the giants came to nought. So the Children of Israel had final victory over their enemies, the Philistines.

Another Spirit

We remember the evil report of the ten spies. The people feared the giants and the walled cities of Canaan (Numbers 13:28). But Caleb had "another spirit" that had faith in the Lord. Forty-five years later, when he claimed the city of giants as his inheritance, Caleb said, "If so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out" (Joshua 14:12). With the help of the Lord, Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb because he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel (**Joshua 14:14** ¹⁴ Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh

the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed the LORD God of Israel).

With their trust in God, David and his men were able to have complete victory over the giants of Gath and over the Philistines. By trusting in God and by being obedient to His Word, we, too, can overcome every enemy giant which would come against us.

QUESTIONS

- 1 How did David know what caused the famine?
- 2 How long did the famine last?
- 3 Who were the Gibeonites?
- 4 What league was made with them?
- 5 Why were seven of Saul's sons hanged?
- 6 Why was Mephibosheth spared?
- 7 How many giants were slain at this time?
- 8 Why did the Philistines fight against David?
- 9 Who won the final victory in the battles of David and the Philistines?