

THE FAMINE IN ISRAEL AND DEFEAT OF THE PHILISTINES

BIBLE TEXT : II Samuel 21:1-22

LESSON 243 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "But the mercy of the LORD Is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17)

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

2 Samuel 21:1-22 (KJV)

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:

I The Three Years of Famine and the Reason

1 David inquires of the Lord concerning the famine, II Samuel 21:1;

1 Kings 17:1 (KJV)

¹ And Elijah the Tishbite, *who was* of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

1 Kings 18:17-18 (KJV)

¹⁷ And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art* thou he that troubleth Israel?

¹⁸ And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

2 Saul had unjustly slain the Gibeonites, II Samuel 21:1

3 Israel is held to their covenant with Gibeon, II Samuel 21:2;

Joshua 9:3-27 (KJV)

³ And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai,

⁴ They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up;

⁵ And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry *and* mouldy.

⁶ And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us.

⁷ And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?

⁸ And they said unto Joshua, We *are* thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who *are* ye? and from whence come ye?

⁹ And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the LORD thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt,

¹⁰ And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that *were* beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which *was* at Ashtaroath.

¹¹ Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We *are* your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us.

¹² This our bread we took hot *for* our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy:

¹³ And these bottles of wine, which we filled, *were* new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey.

¹⁴ And the men took of their victuals, and asked not *counsel* at the mouth of the LORD.

¹⁵ And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them.

¹⁶ And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they *were* their neighbours, and *that* they dwelt among them.

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 Meholathite:

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

¹⁷ And the children of Israel journeyed, and came unto their cities on the third day. Now their cities *were* Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjathjearim.

¹⁸ And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the princes.

¹⁹ But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them.

²⁰ This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we sware unto them.

²¹ And the princes said unto them, Let them live; but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation; as the princes had promised them.

²² And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We *are* very far from you; when ye dwell among us?

²³ Now therefore ye *are* cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.

²⁴ And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing.

²⁵ And now, behold, we *are* in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.

²⁶ And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not.

²⁷ And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose.

II The Request of the Gibeonites to Be Avenged for the Wrong Done Them

- 1 David acknowledges the wrong, II Samuel 21:3;

Proverbs 14:34 (KJV)

³⁴ Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people.

- 2 The request of the Gibeonites is granted, II Samuel 21:4-9

- 3 Rizpah mourns for her sons, II Samuel 21:10, 11

- 4 David responds by respecting the house of Saul, II Samuel 21: 12-14;

2 Samuel 2:5-6 (KJV)

⁵ And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabeshgilead, and said unto them, Blessed *be* ye of the LORD, that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, *even* unto Saul, and have buried him.

⁶ And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you: and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing.

III The Final Victory over the Philistines

- 1 Goliath's brother, the giant Ishbi-benob, tries to kill David, II Samuel 21:15, 16

- 2 Abishai rescues David, II Samuel 21:17;

1 Samuel 26:8 (KJV)

⁸ Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not *smite* him the second time.

2 Samuel 16:9 (KJV)

⁹ Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go

went down, and his servants with 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.

over, I pray thee, and take off his head.

2 Samuel 19:21 (KJV)

²¹ But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD'S anointed?

2 Samuel 23:18-19 (KJV)

¹⁸ And Abishai, the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief among three. And he lifted up his spear against three hundred, *and slew them*, and had the name among three.

¹⁹ Was he not most honourable of three? therefore he was their captain: howbeit he attained not unto the *first* three.

3 The final victory is won over the giants of Gath, II Samuel 21:18-22;

1 Chronicles 20:4-8 (KJV)

⁴ And it came to pass after this, that there arose war at Gezer with the Philistines; at which time Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Sippai, *that was* of the children of the giant: and they were subdued.

⁵ And there was war again with the Philistines; and Elhanan the son of Jair slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, whose spear staff *was* like a weaver's beam.

⁶ And yet again there was war at Gath, where was a man of *great* stature, whose fingers and toes *were* four and twenty, six *on each hand*, and six *on each foot*: and he also was the son of the giant.

⁷ But when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea David's brother slew him.

⁸ These were born unto the giant in Gath; and they fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

NOTES:

Famine

"There was a famine in the days of David . . . and David inquired of the LORD" (II Samuel 21:1). There have been many famines in history, but not very many Davids to ferret out the cause and produce a remedy. It is true that we have technicians who have analyzed such problems as dust bowls, crop failure, and erosion; but they do not seem to see the hand of God in the catastrophe. Elisha told a woman of Shunem, "The LORD hath called for a famine" (II Kings 8:1). The world today needs men like Elisha and David who recognize the call of God in a famine. The Psalmist tells us: "He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein" (Psalm 107:33, 34).

The Cause

War, famine, and disaster are common in our day, and there have been some calls for prayer, but very little turning from the wickedness and sin which is the prime cause of the trouble. Analysts criticize our foreign and economic policies, production and farm methods, and many other things; but few, if any, see the hand of God in our perplexing problems.

The world today resents any curbs upon liquor, vice, and sin. God told Israel through the Prophet Amos that He had sent famine, drouth, pests, disease, war, and fire upon them, and "*yet* have ye not returned unto me" (Amos 4:11). The world today is alarmed about her condition, but blind to the remedy. The world wants peace, but is deaf to the call of the Prince of Peace. The call of Prophets throughout the ages has been "Repent! Repent!" But America has not repented. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die" (Ezekiel 33:11). Yet millions follow on in the ways of sin and death while destruction stalks our land.

Treaties

The answer God gave David as the reason for the famine was, "It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites" (II Samuel 21:1). These Gibeonites were the ones who came to Joshua after the fall of Jericho and desired a league with Israel. They came with old clothes and moldy provisions, feigning that they were from a far-off country, and thereby tricked Joshua into a peace treaty. Although the commandment of the Lord forbade a treaty with the people of the land, and even though these Gibeonites used guile to obtain the treaty, still God required the Israelites to keep their word. It is easy for man today to find loopholes and excuses for breaking his word; but the man who will make Heaven his home is "he that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not" (Psalm 15:4).

Four hundred years had elapsed since this covenant had been made between Israel and Gibeon, but God remembered it and required it of them. Treaties between nations today mean very little in the eyes of men. The world reeks with propaganda and lies. God requires his people to be honest. "That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform" (Deuteronomy 23:23). Paul tells us of the promise that God made to Abraham which still stands, and says that the Law of Moses which came 430 years after that promise could not disannul the promise, to make it of none effect. God keeps His word and demands that His people keep theirs.

The Soul that Sinneth

The Lord placed the guilt for this famine upon Saul and his house. When the Gibeonites asked for seven sons of Saul to be hanged, they were delivered to them by David. This was not a case of the sons' suffering for the sins of their father, but inasmuch as the Lord placed the blame on the house of Saul it is evident that these sons were guilty of the same offense as their father was. The heathen custom of killing hostages was not permitted in Israel. The law provided: "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). Also Ezekiel tells us: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezekiel 18:20).

There are many who suffer death who are innocent of transgression of the laws of man. Sometimes we read of one who is punished for another's crime. But the Lord does not permit anyone to suffer death as an atonement for someone else who committed sin before him. The only case in all Scripture where the innocent died to atone for the guilty was when Jesus Christ suffered — the just for the unjust. Jesus, the innocent One, willingly went to the cross for the sins of the whole world. "God com- mendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Some may contend that the Law states that the children shall suffer for the iniquity of their fathers, basing their contention on the passage of Scripture that reads: "I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (Exodus 20:5). There is only one way which we may properly and Scripturally construe this verse, and that is that when the iniquity of the fathers is visited upon the children it is visited upon them because they have continued in the sins of

their fathers.

This is like the case of the Amalekites. The punishment which was decreed against this nation of the Amalekites, at the time they fought the Children of Israel, was not executed until 400 years afterward, so there must have been at least four generations in that time. The unbeliever might ask, "How are you going to reconcile that with the sin of their forefathers way back there 400 years before?" Simply upon this basis: They had continued the same sins; they had kept the same attitude; they had received and retained the same spirit toward the people of God as did their forefathers. (Luke 11:48-51 (KJV) ⁴⁸ Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. ⁴⁹ Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: ⁵⁰ That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; ⁵¹ From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation)

A Mother's Love

Rizpah, the mother of two of the sons of Saul who were hanged, "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" (II Samuel 21:10). David, hearing of this touching devotion of a mother, ordered the remains buried and had the bones of Saul and Jonathan also buried in the family plot. "And after that God was intreated for the land" (II Samuel 21:14). Thus with satisfactory amends made, God again poured out His blessings upon Israel.

Giants

Forty-five years after David slew Goliath, his brother Ishbi-benob, with a new sword and a heavy spear, sought to kill David. Many years of fighting had taxed the strength of David, but Abishai, his nephew, who was one of David's mighty men, killed the giant and spared his king. In their turn, three other brothers of Goliath arose against the Israelites but met their match in the mighty fighters of Israel. But these men fought not alone, for God was with them. Their leader, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, was a man after God's own heart.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why was there a famine in Israel?
- 2 Who were the Gibeonites?
- 3 Why was it wrong for Saul to slay the Gibeonites?
- 4 Of what similar transgression was Saul guilty?
- 5 How do we know Saul's sons were implicated in the slaying of the Gibeonites?
- 6 Name some of the other times of famine mentioned in the Bible.
- 7 Are children responsible for the sin of their parents?
- 8 Name one instance when the innocent suffered to atone for the sins of the guilty.
- 9 Who were the giants mentioned in this chapter? 10 About how old was David at this time?