

# **CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

## **DHW BIBLE CLASS**

### **LESSON 14C**

#### **JUDGES**

#### **CHAPTER 21**

### **INTRODUCTION**

There are many kinds of problem in the service of the LORD. Some of these problems are good and healthy for spiritual growth. They stem from the increase in the church and are allowed by the LORD for the strengthening of the faith of the believers. But the other kind of problems is man-made. These problems stem from dereliction of duty or sin. They could have been avoided if they had obeyed the Word of God. But they are committed by the disobedient.

The situation that the people of Israel have gotten themselves into in this chapter belongs to the latter kind of problems. The tribe of Benjamin had been so thoroughly destroyed that only men were left. Furthermore, the rest of Israel who fought against Benjamin had also sworn in the name of the LORD that none of their daughters should be given to them for marriage. Without women in the tribe of Benjamin, it is only a matter of time when all the men died that the tribe would be gone forever.

The people of Israel suddenly realized the enormous pit they have dug for themselves. If they did not find a remedy, Israel would soon become an eleven-tribe nation instead of twelve. In the heat of battle, they were not thinking of such a great tragedy. They just fought for their lives and gave their heart and soul in trying to kill as many Benjamites as possible.

Now that they have succeeded in defeating the Benjamites, they were shocked by the possible outcome, which no one wanted. They wept and cried to the LORD for a solution. None came. Again they took matters into their own hands and did what was right in their own eyes. They created a problem and will create another problem to solve it. What a tragic way to deal with issues when Israel could have God's infallible guidance.

Israel went her own way without God and now pays the price for her mistakes. What a sad end to a grand and hopeful beginning.

### **OUTLINE**

1. A sorry state of affairs – 21:1-4
2. An evil solution – 21:5-15
3. Another carnal solution – 21:16-25.

## COMMENTARY

### **A sorry state of affairs – 21:1-4**

When decisions and actions are taken without due consultation with God in accordance with His Word, the consequences are less than desirable or even disastrous. This was what happened to the children of Israel. Although they sought the LORD's counsel, they did not ask with the right spirit and motive. The LORD gave them over to their own ways.

Calm reflection caused the children of Israel to become more sensible. One of their tribes had been considerably reduced with only 600 men remaining. These remaining 600 Benjamites were without women to pro-create. The children of Israel had made a foolish and senseless vow in Mizpeh, that is, that they would not give their daughters to the Benjamites.

Then they wept sore before the LORD till evening. Israel complained to the LORD asking why the present situation came to be that there should be one less tribe in Israel (21:3). But there was no reply from the LORD. It was as if the LORD had departed from Israel. This is an action from the LORD that is in accordance with Psalm 66:18. It was a ridiculous cry! Did they not know how the present situation came about? Of course they did! They caused the situation. They were the ones that had made the decisions and acted according to their own

sinful ways. Now, what they should have done was to repent of their vow and give their daughters to the remaining Benjamites.

Instead they offered burnt and peace offerings unto the LORD the following day. Burnt offering was for the atonement of sins. Peace offering was a declaration that the worshipper's relation with God has been mended and now there is peace between him and the LORD. Israel was presumptuous. They had not repented of their sins and merely bringing a burnt offering as a form of ritual will not mean anything to the LORD. If sins are not atoned for there is no peace between the worshipper and God; and in this case Israel and her LORD! It was therefore arrogance on Israel's part to just assume that their offerings would be accepted by the LORD.

The result was a compounding of their sins!

### **A carnal solution – 21:5-15**

Israel came out with a solution which meant more carnage, more unnecessary killing and suffering for the people. They tried to look for a scapegoat. What could possibly be a good reason to justify more killing? Apparently Israel had made an oath. The oath was, "*Who is there among all the tribes of Israel that came not up with the congregation unto the LORD? For they had made a great oath concerning him that came not up to the LORD to Mizpeh, saying, He shall surely be put to death.*" The

ones who did not participate in the killing of the Benjamites will now be killed!

They discovered that the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead (from the tribe of Manasseh) did not join them in “disciplining” the Benjamites. The children of Israel decided to destroy the city and all its inhabitants except for the virgin women because they wanted them for the Benjamites (21:10-12). They sent twelve thousand of their most valiant soldiers to accomplish this dastard deed. After the horrible carnage, they found only 400 virgins.

The Benjamites were approached peaceably. They were asked if this solution was acceptable to them. The Benjamites agreed. The 400 virgins were given to the Benjamites in Rimmon. But there was a shortfall of 200 women.

The commentary after this carnal solution is most interesting. Judges 21:15 (KJV) says, *“And the people repented them for Benjamin, because that the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.”* What sort of repentance would cause the deaths of a city of people? To put the blame on the LORD for the near destruction of the tribe of Benjamin was beyond comprehension! Israel did it all by their continuous sinning. Idolatry is more than just bowing down to idols. It bears the fruits of immorality and a family of heinous sins such as homosexuality! This was the cause of it all. Now Israel is

reaping fruits of the many sins she has sown! The LORD cannot be blamed for the sinful choices of Israel. The beginning of true repentance is to own up to the sins one has committed. If there is no ownership of sin, there is no genuine repentance!

### **Another carnal solution**

#### **– 21:16-25**

They came out with another carnal scheme to make-up for the short fall of 200 virgins. The children of Israel would present themselves at the “feast of the LORD in Shiloh” which was an annual event. They encouraged the Benjamites to lay in wait in the vineyards on the road to Shiloh. And when their daughters came out to celebrate and dance, they could “catch” them. And when their fathers complained, the children of Israel would tell them to be favourable to these Benjamites for their sake because they had to keep their vow not to give their daughters to them (21:22).

Israel was playing with semantics. They could not give their daughters to the remaining 200 Benjamites. They now fooled themselves by asking the Benjamites to “catch” their unsuspecting daughters. Since they did not give, they did not break their vow. The Benjamites “caught” them by force! Who are they kidding!

This was not rational. Sin begets more sin, and sin is never rational nor can it be justified. How

apt is the divine writer’s summary of the book of Judges: *“In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes...”*

**PRACTICAL VALUE**

The Benjamites needed to be disciplined. The crime committed by a group of them in Gibeah could not be condoned. The decision of the children of Israel to discipline the Benjamites was right. But they did not do it in the right way. They did not seek the counsel of the LORD first as they had already decided what they would do. They went too far by trying to annihilate the entire tribe of Benjamin, many of whom were innocent of the crime. And they very nearly succeeded, but for the 600 who managed to escape into the mountains.

Then, later upon reflection, they had the audacity to ask the LORD why this had happened to them – that they were one tribe less. Instead of giving their own women to the remnant Benjamite soldiers, they would rather keep their foolish vow and further commit another sin to save their ‘honour’. When we have made foolish decisions or vows, we should not hesitate to change them in accordance with the Word of God. We should not be stubborn and persistently hold on to them for the sake of our reputation and absolve ourselves of any blame.

Sin, if it is not confessed and repented of, will lead to more sin. Are there such people in our midst, especially those in positions of leadership? Where there is a lack of godly leadership, the people all too often resort to their own devices, even when their motives seem good.<sup>1</sup>

AMEN

**DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**Daily Readings**

**MONDAY:** Judges 21:1-25.

**TUESDAY:** Judges 21:1-25.

**WEDNESDAY:** Judges 21:1-25.

**THURSDAY:** Judges 21:1-25.

**FRIDAY:** Judges 21:1-25.

**Discussion Questions**

1. List some of the healthy problems a church ought to have?

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Dray, *Judges and Ruth*, 124.

2. List some of the unhealthy problems a church ought not to have? What prevention can the church take to ensure that these problems do not arise within the church?

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3. Ritual worship was common in the days of the Judges. Is it common in today's churches? Do you think it is common in CPBPC?

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4. Do you think Israel could have broken their vow of not allowing the daughters to marry the Benjamites without sinning against God?

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5. Could there be another solution to the problem of not losing the tribe of Benjamin other than the one recorded in this chapter?

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6. What are the most important decisions and choices that were made in Chapter 21? How would you analyse each one?

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7. What would you say is the main point God is making by

including this last chapter of Judges in the Bible?

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8. There is a great deal of tolerance today toward people who wish to live as they like. What warnings does the book of Judges have for our society?

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