Rizpah – 2 Samuel 21

 November 29, 2015 @ LifeTree Church

Notes from my journal in May 8 and Sept. 22 – 2015

It all started on an evening in early May when Ian Green was at our home for dinner.

We went for a walk to the ocean in Brentwood Bay after our evening meal and sat down on the dock to chat while the sun set.

There, bobbing on the water was a tiny little dingy with a name painted on it ‘Rizpah’

It struck me that I should know what that name meant but I drew a blank.

That night climbing into bed, I was reminded ‘Rizpah’.

I sensed it was a name from the bible so I thought – hmm, it may be in there, I’ll take a peek.

Propped up the pillows, put on my reading glasses and ‘randomly’ opened my bible. The heading at my thumb was ‘The Gibeonites Avenged’ and I was in 2 Samuel 21. I read to verse 8 and there was her name – Rizpah!

God must be wanting to teach me something, time to listen, time to learn.

**1 Samuel 21**

**verse 1**

when in David’s reign did this happen? How long was his reign?

Situation:

After 3 years of famine – David sought the face of the Lord

Do things just happen? If not, are the causes of the things taking place necessarily spiritual?

3 successive crop/harvest failures

First Action step:

WHEN David sought the face of the Lord - the Lord spoke!

Reason for the situation:

Saul’s actions are the reason for the famine

David’s predecessor, Saul, put Gibeonites to death

Go back and tell the story of Joshua chapter 9 and the Gibeonite deception

**Main point:** 400 years earlier Joshua had made a promise/covenant with Gibeon that they would NOT be put to death

In the book of Joshua, we read of Joshua leading Israel across the Jordan – west into the promised land they were to claim. Going back to the promises first made to Abraham – about 600 years earlier.

There was widespread fear in the nations on the west side of the Jordan as Israel approached so they collectively (except for Gibeon) assembled as an army to fight Israel.

The Gibeonites’ plan was vastly different from their neighbors. Rather than war they chose the strategy of deception.

-they Outfitted themselves with old, tattered supplies making themselves look like they’d traveled a great distance in hopes of a peace treaty with Israel

-they lied to the leaders of Israel and said they’d come a great distance over many weeks of travel

-in fact they were in their own backyard

-the leaders of Israel messed up big time – they believed the story of Gibeon and (Joshua 9:14) did NOT inquire of the Lord. They gave Gibeon a peace pact thus violating God’s demand upon them to purge the area of all hostile nations.

-almost immediately the deception was uncovered, Joshua whined and complained to Gibeon for tricking him but in the end, he’d made a promise that God and Gibeon held him to – **‘we’ve given them our oath and we cannot touch them now’ Joshua 9:19**

-instead of destroying them, Joshua cursed them as slaves ‘**you will never cease to serve as woodcutters and water carriers’** Joshua 9:23

-we don’t know the particulars of what Saul did but God makes it clear that it was (best rendered in the KJV) Saul and his bloody house – Saul didn’t act alone

-Saul was from Gibea, it’s his ancestral hometown, likely a hometown feud borne from some longterm animosity

**and Verse 2**

shows us that Saul had gone hard after these people - we read that Saul tried to annihilate the Gibeonites

-David takes that as cause for his next Action step and he summons surviving Gibeonites i.e those who had been wronged by Saul’s actions

Gibeonites were survivors of the Amorites – they were not part of Israel, they didn’t descend from the sons of Jacob

**Vs. 3**

How shall I make atonement?

**Vs. 4** – it won’t be money

**Vs. 5,6** – we will put to death 7 of his male descendants, OKAY

Hebrews 9:22 the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

**Vs. 7,8,9**

Selection & execution

The two sons of Rizpah,Saul's concubine, are executed, along with the five sons of Saul's daughter, Merab

They were put to death as the barley harvest was beginning

Middle of the Month of Aviv = to march/april of our calendar

Typically this period lasted one month

Barley harvest is only named one other time in the bible – the book of ruth – another story where the choices of a woman (during barley harvest) create a huge shift in the trajectory of the nation of Israel

**Vs. 10**

Rizpah

**Vs. 11-13**

1 Samuel 31: 8-13

**Vs. 14**

AFTER that – God answered prayer on behalf of the land

1. Keeping your word/promise/covenant
2. Sin & atonement – blood for forgiveness
3. God’s timing – revealing sin when resources are in place to deal with it
4. People who keep us honest
5. Overarching theme: Seasons of blessing & answered prayer

Themes/lessons

People who won’t let us get away with things

The persistence of the person in the background who tenaciously holds on

The reporter who keeps on asking the question that the person being interviewed wishes wouldn’t be asked

The long term effect of our actions

The spiritual climate of a nation due to the choices of a few in leadership

When WE think we’ve dealt with something but there’s still MUCH more we need to do

Answers from God typically come AFTER we ask questions i.e. if you’re not in a listening posture don’t expect God to speak

TIMING: When is it time to look back (do an autopsy of events gone wrong) and correct what we can, repent, make amends, change things, learn for the future AND when is it best to put our head down and move forward despite circumstances?

Theme of atonement – blood for blood, life for life

How long does your Word / promise matter? Does your word ever expire?

What about a blessing or a curse?

To the 3rd and 4th generation?

Under the leadership of Joshua, the Israelites had just crossed the Jordan River (Joshua 3) and captured the city of Jericho (chapter 6), and then Ai (chapters 7 and 8). The next city to come under attack by Israel almost certainly would be Gibeon, and the Gibeonites knew it.

Like Rahab in Jericho, these Gibeonites believed that God had given the land of Canaan to Israel. They knew they did not have a chance if they waged war against Israel

Gibeon was the hometown of Saul's forefathers (1 Chronicles 8:29-30; 9:35-39).

As we come to our text, some 400 years or so has now passed since the leaders of Israel made their covenant with the Gibeonites. We are tempted to write this covenant off as ancient history,

Saul and his house commenced a program of genocide against the Gibeonites . . . We do not know how far Saul got with this evil scheme nor what stopped him from completing his task.

The Mosaic Covenant indicated that famine would come from God's hand as a judgment for sin (see Deuteronomy 28:23-24; 2 Chronicles 6:26-31). And so David inquired of the Lord concerning the reason for this famine. God's answer was clear:

“*It is* for Saul, and for *his* bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites” (2 Samuel 21:1b, KJV).

“Saul just didn't seem to be able to get it right.” He refused to completely annihilate the Amalekites, whom God commanded him to kill (1 Samuel 15), and he tried to annihilate the Gibeonites, whom he could not put to death. Thinking to do Israel and Judah a favor, Saul brought a famine on the land.

Why does David execute Saul's sons and grandsons for the evil Saul committed? The law of Moses forbade Israel to punish children for the sins of their fathers:

“Fathers shall not be put to death for *their* sons, nor shall sons be put to death for *their* fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin” (Deuteronomy 24:16, NASV). . . . Whether any Gibeonite blood was shed by their hands or not, they must have known, and thus they became accomplices in this heinous plan.**95**

For he will deliver the needy when he cries for help, The afflicted also, and him who has no helper (Psalm 72:12).

The two sons of Rizpah,**97** Saul's concubine, are executed, along with the five sons of Saul's daughter, Merab.**9**

There are those who think the gospel of the New Testament is too bloody (remember “testament” is an old fashioned word for covenant). What else can wash away our sins? Can our efforts at good works? Can our money save us? Only the shedding of blood atones for sin:

And according to the Law, *one may* almost *say*, all things are cleansed with blood, and without sheddingof blood there is no forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22).

There is only one Person's blood that was shed which can save us from our sins -- the blood our Lord Jesus Christ shed on the cross of Calvary:

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7).

But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the bloodof Christ (Ephesians 2:13).

Some seem to think that if God does not immediately deal with sin He will never deal with it, but they fail to grasp God's delay as a manifestation of His grace, not an assurance that men can sin without fear of judgment (see 2 Peter 3:1-13).

I am inclined to infer from this that David saw this connection between Saul and his three sons, killed and then hung earlier, and now Saul's other seven sons, who have been publicly hung for the attempted annihilation of the Gibeonites. Had these earlier deaths and hangings not also been an atoning for this same sin? When David buries all of these “sons” in Saul's father's tomb, he not only gives them a decent burial, he seems to link them in the same sin and the same judgment. This is the only way I can see the author making so much of Rizpah's actions and David's response. At least we can say that this matter now seems to have closure.

the people must have been praying for God to remove the famine for the entire three years, but God would not heed their petitions because of the sin of Saul and his bloody house. Now that this sin was atoned for, God would hear the prayers of the people. God is sovereign, but He often acts in response to the means He has appointed. The means here is the prayer of His people. Note what Solomon will say in only a few years:

26 “When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, and they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their sin when You afflict them; 27 then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants and Your people Israel, indeed, teach them the good way in which they should walk. And send rain on Your land which You have given to Your people for an inheritance. 28 “If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence, if there is blight or mildew, if there is locust or grasshopper, if their enemies besiege them in the land of their cities, whatever plague or whatever sickness *there is,* 29 whatever prayer or supplication is made by any man or by all Your people Israel, each knowing his own affliction and his own pain, and spreading his hands toward this house, 30 then hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and render to each according to all his ways, whose heart You know for You alone know the hearts of the sons of men, 31 that they may fear You, to walk in Your ways as long as they live in the land which You have given to our fathers” (2 Chronicles 6:26-31).