

BIBLE LESSON

Judges 21:1-4

LESSON

Chaos

VERSE 3

*And said,
O Lord God of Israel,
why is this come to pass in
Israel, that there should be to
day one tribe lacking in Israel?*

After the men of Israel defeated the children of Benjamin, they swore in Mizpeh that they would not give their daughters to be wives for the Benjamites. The crimes that the men of Gibeah committed was so vile that the Israelites considered the Benjamites to be like the barbarous neighbours, the Canaanites, whom they were not only obliged to annihilate, but whom God had forbidden them to marry. However, soon after, the people realised the devastating consequence of the oath that they had made in the heat of anger. They went to God's house, and cried out before the Lord, bemoaning the loss of one tribe in Israel, because of their oath.

Oaths made in the heat of the moment often ends with dire consequences. In Judges 11:30, Jephthah vowed to sacrifice unto God as a burnt offering whatsoever came forth first from his house to greet him upon his return. The Bible tells us time and again the seriousness of making oaths, vows and promises [Ecclesiastes 5:2,4-5; Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21-23]. It is not to be taken likely, and when one is not in a proper frame of mind, how can this lead to anything but chaos? Our Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:33-36, "swear not at all; neither by heaven ... nor by earth ... Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black".

As Christians, we live by our words. This is also a commandment from God. Finally, we live by God's Word, and this is the only Word that is altogether true and faithful.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 12-13
REVELATION I

MEDITATE

I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people. — Psalm 116:18



11 DECEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Judges 21:5-7

LESSON

Find someone
to blame

VERSE 5

And the children of Israel said, 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.

After realising the mistake they made when taking the oath to not give their daughters to Benjamin to be their wives, the children of Israel began to question the errors of their ways. When Jephthah made the foolish vow, he had no one to blame but himself. But in this case, the question was: what was the cause of this foolish oath that led to the loss of one tribe in Israel? Was there anyway that this could have been avoided? Did all the tribes come out when the summon was called to meet before the Lord in Mizpeh? Surely, if all were done properly, the wrong decision would not have been taken, which led to the tribe of Benjamin unable to find wives for their sons to continue the heritage that the Lord had given to each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

As sinners, we are quick to judge and blame others. When God asked Adam: “Hast thou eaten of the tree?”, Adam answered: “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” In response, Eve said: “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” Let us not blame others for our own sins, but rather own up to it, repent from it before God, and seek to draw close to God again, by keeping His commandments. Our God is all-knowing, and He shall not be mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap [Galatians 6:7].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 14-15
REVELATION 2

CONSIDER

Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned? — Proverbs 6:27-28





12 DECEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Judges 21:8-15

LESSON

Humanistic
solution

VERSE 14

*And Benjamin came again
at that time; and they gave
them wives which they had
saved alive of the women of
Jabeshgilead: and yet so
they sufficed them not.*

It turns out that there were some who did not come up to Mizpeh when summoned: the people from Jabeshgilead were not present at the assembly when the Israelites numbered them. Therefore, the children of Israel sent twelve thousand valiant men to smite the inhabitants of Jabeshgilead, to kill every man and wives therein. And there were left four hundred young virgins, whom they brought to the camp at Shiloh. They then decided to call upon the remaining Benjamites, and gave their captives to them to be their wives. However, these were not sufficient as there were more Benjamites than the number of the women from Jabeshgilead. Therefore, the situation was only partially alleviated.

In today's verses, we see again how men, in their attempts to solve the problems that their sins created, turned to their own wisdom and strength. When tempted by the serpent, Adam and Eve ignored God's warning and ate the forbidden fruit because it was good for food, pleasant to the eyes and able to make them wise. They sought to become wise, but ignored God's wisdom and commandment. When God did not give Abraham an heir after a long while, Sarah devised a plan to give Abraham an heir through her servant Hagar. Both Abraham and Sarah trusted not in God's timing and were impatient.

Let us put aside our unbelief and faithlessness. Instead, let us put our trust fully in God, knowing that we are His children, and He will bring to pass all things for our good, because He loves us.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 16
REVELATION 3

REMEMBER

Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you. — 1 Peter 5:7





13 DECEMBER

BIBLE LESSON
Judges 21:16-24

LESSON
Find someone
to exploit

VERSE 22

*And it shall be, when their
fathers or their brethren come
unto us to complain, that we
will say unto them,
Be favourable unto them for
our sakes: because we reserved
not to each man his wife in the
war: for ye did not give unto
them at this time,
that ye should be guilty.*

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 17
REVELATION 4

CONSIDER

As the problem of the Benjamites was not fully resolved, the Israelites were in a quandary. On the one hand, they had made an oath not to give their daughters to them. On the other hand, they had to ensure that the Lord's inheritance for Benjamin was preserved, and that the tribe was not destroyed out of Israel. The Israelites, therefore, devised another scheme to circumvent the problem, by asking the Benjamites to catch any daughter of Shiloh that came out to dance at the annual feast of the Lord there. For their part, the Israelites assured them that they would entreat any father or brethren of the girls who were taken, to be favourable to the Benjamites, seeing that they had not made the same oath as them. And thus, the problem with the tribe of Benjamin was resolved.

Even though the Israelites managed to wriggle themselves out of the quandary which they created, when they made the oath foolishly, it was not without casualties. The end result was that the daughters of Shiloh were exploited, and forced to marry the Benjamites. We see the same happening today. God created all men to be equal, and yet, in reality, those who are in power often exploit those who are powerless to defend themselves.

Christians, let us take heart that while we are in this world, we will have tribulations, but be of good cheer, because our Lord Jesus has overcome the world. Let us trust in God, and know that our sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us [Romans 8:18].

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.
— Galatians 6:9



BIBLE LESSON

Judges 21:25

LESSONThe formula
for failure**VERSE 25**

*In those days there was no
king in Israel: every man did
that which was right
in his own eyes.*

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 18
REVELATION 5

THOUGHT

Step into any bookstore and you will find an assortment of books on how to be successful in anything; from being a father to being the chief executive of a Fortune 500 company. You are unlikely to find one that teaches you how to be a failure. Yet this is exactly what the Word of God teaches in this last verse of the Book of Judges. Do what is right in your own eyes. That is the formula for failure. Failure is guaranteed because this is a tested formula. The entire twenty-one chapters of the Book of Judges demonstrate the effectiveness of this formula. Without the restraining power of an absolute authority, iniquity abounded and the result was that Israel went through four hundred over years of its darkest history.

Of course, having a king does not necessarily guarantee ‘success’ as seen through God’s eyes. In the books of Kings and Chronicles, we see numerous examples of the same lawlessness when Israel was ruled by kings who “did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord”.

Speaking of kings, there was one wise king who does not need to read our modern-day success books. His name was Solomon, and he could have written these very same success books, based not on theory or academic research, but on personal experience. And his verdict; “vanities of vanities; all is vanity”. And his formula for success? Just six words; “Fear God and keep His commandments” [Ecclesiastes 12:13], for this is the whole duty of man.

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word.

— Psalm 119:9

BIBLE LESSON

The book of Ruth

LESSONBackground
and introduction
to Ruth**RUTH 1:16**

And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 19
REVELATION 6

THOUGHT

It has been said that seventy-five percent of the Old Testament is made up of stories; i.e. events and people. God uses stories to tell us about Himself and His eternal plan to redeem mankind. One such story is found in the Book of Ruth. It is a short book of only four chapters and eighty-five verses; but it is packed with lessons. Ruth is a beautiful love story. It tells of love in a time of darkness, of the love of a young woman for her mother-in-law, the love between a man and a woman, and above all, the love of God for His lost people

Ruth is a story of God's redemption plan. In Ruth, we see how God providentially orchestrated events to enable Ruth, a Moabitess to be grafted into the commonwealth of Israel. Moab, as a people, were cursed and had no role in Israel's destiny, and yet we see that Ruth eventually became the direct ancestor of Jesus Christ.

The Book of Ruth is also one of the most significant books in the Old Testament about the Church, even though the word 'church' is not used. The main character, Ruth is a type of the Church; while Naomi is a type of the nation of Israel and Boaz of Jesus Christ our Kinsman-Redeemer.

At the personal level, we learn that when trials and tragedies come into our lives, we can be comforted by the knowledge that God is in sovereign control, and He can use these tragedies to bring about His perfect plan for His children.

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.
— Romans 15:4



16 DECEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ruth 1:1-5

LESSON

No bread
in the house of bread

VERSE 1

Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

Is it not ironic that a man named “My God is my King” (Elimelech) should leave a place called The House of Bread (Bethlehem) to seek food in a pagan land? In fact, the Moabites were idol worshippers and enemies of God and Israel; and had oppressed Israel for at least two periods during the time of the Judges. This irony takes a bitter twist when at the end of ten years, Naomi returns to Israel and declares that she had gone out full, and had returned empty [v. 21].

What caused Elimelech to uproot and leave the land of promise was a famine. In Deuteronomy 28, we are told that famines were a disciplinary measure from God. God promised to send the harvest, rain and sunshine if the people obeyed Him. But in this case, the famine was also a part of God’s plan to send the promised Messiah; for He “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” [Ephesians 1:11].

The lesson for believers is that in times of trials, we should run to God and not to the world. We should live by faith not by sight. We should know the Scriptures and remember His promise that the righteous or godly would be preserved by God in time of famine [Job 5:20; Psalm 33:18-19; Psalm 37:18-19]. We should follow the Lord and not the world; especially when we live in an age where “every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 20
REVELATION 7

REMINDER

Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy;
— Psalm 33:18





17 DECEMBER

BIBLE LESSON

Ruth 1:6-15

LESSON

It's time to return

VERSE 6

Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited His people in giving them bread.

“Return” is the key idea in this passage because the words “return”, “turn again” and “gone back” appear in practically every verse. First, Naomi decides to return to Bethlehem having received news that the famine there has ended. It is likely that she is not just motivated by the simple fact that food is now available there. She must have looked at her circumstances and realised that her position in God’s eyes was not correct and it was time to get back to the things of God.

Her two daughters-in-law want to follow her but she tries to persuade them to “turn again” and return to their parents and their gods [v. 15]. This is wrong in God’s eyes. Some have speculated that she wanted to get rid of the evidence of her disobedience in taking Moabite wives for her sons. This is a rather harsh opinion. More likely, her motivations were noble, albeit based on circumstances. Widows in those days were very disadvantaged people. Orpah and Ruth had suffered enough [v. 13]. As Naomi had no other sons to take up their duties under the Levirate Law to marry them, they can only look forward to a life of hardship in an entirely new and possibly hostile environment.

As Christians, if we ever backslide and find ourselves in a position like Naomi, far from God and in a spiritual ‘foreign land’; the only right decision is to pray like the Psalmist in Psalm 85; “Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause Thine anger toward us to cease” [v. 4].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
2 CHRONICLES 21-22
REVELATION 8

THOUGHT

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works;
— Revelation 2:5a

