



Lesson 99

David Avenges the Gibeonites

Story Elements

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text: 2 Samuel 21:1-14 • Setting: between 1010 and 970 B.C. • Main Characters: God, David, the Elders of Gibeon, Michal, and Rizpah. • Plot: Saul's bloodguilt against the Gibeonites brings divine judgment upon Israel, and David seeks deliverance by making amends with the Gibeonites. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key word(s): “the LORD's _____” • Climax: 2 Samuel 21:6 <i>“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.”</i> |
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Broken Promises

1. (21:1-2) Sometime during David's reign, a famine afflicted the land of Israel.
 - (a) The LORD showed David that the famine was a divine judgment against Israel because of an egregious sin committed by _____.
 - (b) Saul, at some point, slaughtered many of the Gibeonites, which broke the covenant Joshua had made with the _____ some 400 years earlier (cf. Josh. 9:3-27). Saul's hometown was in Gibeah, so we might assume he was wanting to “cleans” his land of the leftover Amorites. God said that Saul's house was bloody, or that bloodguilt resided upon his family.

2. (21:3-6) David approached the Gibeonites and asked them how he could amend the wrong committed by Saul. The Gibeonites requested that _____ of Saul's male descendants be executed and hung before the LORD, i.e., their dead bodies be publicly displayed.
 - (a) (21:7-9) David agreed to the Gibeonites request, and two sons of _____, Saul's concubine were taken: Armoni and Mephibosheth (not the Mephibosheth that was Jonathan's son – cf. v 7), and five sons of Michal¹ were taken.
 - (b) (21:10-14) Rizpah built a sackloth tent to keep watch over the dead bodies of her family. This pitiful scene moved David to have compassion, and the remains of Saul and Jonathan were fetched from their resting place in Jabesh-gilead and interred along with the remains of the seven sons in the tomb of _____, Saul's father.

¹ Merab was married to Adriel, but Michal raised these sons (for reasons not given in scripture).

Difficult Questions

3. **Question:** Does God punish children for their fathers' iniquity?

(a) **Answer:** Some verses indicate that God does (Exo. 20:5; Le. 26:39; etc.), but these should be understood in the context of their _____ role – parents who incur the wrath of God will bear children under that judgment, and their children will continue to feel the effects of that judgment, sometimes for years to come (e.g., the Babylonian captivity of the Jews).

4. **Question:** Why would God send a famine for something Saul did?

(a) **Answer:** What Saul did was done in the name of the nation of Israel (v 2); The oath that Joshua and the elders of Israel took invoked the sacred name of God (Joshua 9:15, 18) and invited His judgment on Israel if ever the oath was broken. Saul, as the nation's king and representative, broke that sacred oath. If God hadn't judged Israel, then his name would have become a _____ among the Amorites (who were probably still not strictly followers of Jehovah).

Application

5. Matthew Henry points out the similarities between the deaths of Saul's sons and the death of God's Son: "They were hanged up, as anathemas, under a peculiar mark of God's displeasure; for the law had said, *He that is hanged is _____ of God*, (Deu. 21:23; Gal. 3:13). Christ being made a curse for us, and dying to satisfy for our sins and to turn away the wrath of God, became obedient to this ignominious death."²

6. Our story shows the failure of Saul to keep a promise, and the virtue of David for keeping his (v 7). God honored His name by judging Israel for breaking their age-old, sacred oath. God is _____. He always keeps his promises even when we don't.

*Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering;
(for he is faithful that promised;)*

Answer Key: Key word(s): oath • 1. a) Saul; b) Gibeonites • 2. seven; a) Rizpah; b) Kish • 3. a) covenantal; b) individual
• 4. reproach • 5. accursed • 6. faithful

How to use this worksheet for personal Bible study: (1) Read the Bible passage given in the **Story Elements** section. (2) Read through the worksheet and try to fill in the blanks without looking at the **Answer Key**. (3) Check your answers with the key and make the necessary corrections. Keep in mind that some answers are a matter of opinion, and often more than one answer is correct. (4) Write down your own thoughts, applications, and questions for further study in the **Notes** section.

² Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994. Print.