

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: August 12, 2018
Lesson Title: "Resolved"
Lesson Passage: 2 Samuel 21:1-6,10-14

ABOUT THIS LESSON

When Israel experienced a famine for three consecutive years, King David concluded that this calamity was the result of sins perpetrated by his predecessor, Saul. Years earlier, Israel's great leader, Joshua, had sworn to let the Amorites in Gibeon live (Joshua 9:15); but Saul had violated this promise by trying to kill the remaining Amorites. When David sought to make amends, thus removing the nation's "bloodguilt" resulting from Saul's sin, the Amorites proposed that they be allowed to execute seven of Saul's descendants. After they were killed, Rizpah, the mother of two of them, took it upon herself to stay near where their corpses lay, protecting them from vultures and wild beasts. Inspired by Rizpah's concern for the bodies of her sons, David decided that he should do something about the bones of Saul and Jonathan, so he entombed their bodies in the land of Benjamin, Saul's home territory.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

- (1) Explain why the famine was such a serious concern to David.
- (2) Explain why Saul's killing of Gibeonites was especially sinful.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Begin with this observation: It is sometimes said that "the New Testament should be interpreted through the eyes of the Old Testament." But, actually, that statement should be reversed, for the New Testament should inform our understanding of the Old Testament. We should keep that in mind when we study Old Testament writings like this week's lesson passage, in which the killings perpetrated by a previous king are rectified by subjecting that ruler's children and grandchildren to a terrible death. This was a far cry from the teaching of Jesus, who said, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth for a tooth, But I say to you...if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also...Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:38, 39, 44-45).

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. *Comment on the first clause in 2 Sam. 21:1, "Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year...":* (1) A three-year famine in ancient Israel was a terrible catastrophe. Such a famine could be so deadly that inhabitants of the land would flee to other countries in order to survive. EXAMPLES: Abram (Gen. 12:9), Isaac (Gen. 26:1), Jacob's family, (Gen. 47:4); Elimelech, (Ruth 1:1.)
- (2) To further dramatize the fear of famine in David's time, observe that three major calamities are mentioned repeatedly in Old Testament

history--the sword (military aggression), pestilence (disease epidemic) and famine (refer to Jer. 14:12, 21:9). And on one occasion, when confronted with a choice of these, David chose pestilence (2 Sam. 24:14), because famine was a greater evil. (3) As the famine continued for the third year, King David prayed about it, and was told that King Saul had murdered many Gibeonites, and that his guilt had been transferred to his descendants (2 Sam. 21:1b).

2. *Note that 2 Sam. 21:2 explains why Saul's massacre of the Gibeonites was a grievous sin:* The people in the city of Gibeon were Amorites, who were living in Palestine when the Israelites conquered it. Having heard of Joshua's bloody conquest, they went to him and bargained for their lives; and Joshua agreed to allow them to live (Josh. 9:3-27). But when Saul ruled, he had tried to kill all the Amorites, thus violating Israel's treaty with them (2 Sam. 21:2b).

3. *Read 2 Sam. 21:3-6, then comment:* (1) Biblical scholars have different opinions about why David felt obligated to atone for the sins of his predecessor. (2) However, this lesson doesn't focus on the concept of inherited "bloodguilt," but, rather, on the loving devotion of Rizpah, which appears later in the lesson passage. (3) But, according to 2 Sam. 21:3-6, given the chance to settle their grudge against Saul, the Gibeonites proposed that they be allowed to execute seven of the former king's descendants (21:6). And King David agreed to this, in the hope that this would atone for the crimes of his predecessor.

4. *To explain the reference to Jonathan's son Mephibosheth in 2 Sam. 21:7, recall your study of 2 Sam. 9:1-3 on July 1. Then comment on vv. 8-9 in our present lesson passage:* (1) Armoni and another Mephibosheth were sons of Saul born to Rizpah, a concubine of Saul (see 2 Sam. 3:7). (2) The five sons of Saul's daughter Merab apparently were grandsons of King Saul. (3) The phrase "they hanged them" can mean that they were impaled on a stake; or they might have been hanged by the neck.

5. *With reference to 2 Sam. 21:10, share these thoughts:* (1) It seems that the bodies were exposed all summer. (2) Usually, exposed corpses would be picked clean by carrion birds and beasts; first the vultures, then the jackals and, finally, the crows. But, somehow, Rizpah managed to ward off these predators night and day for six months.

6. *Comment on 2 Sam. 21:11-14:* Inspired by Rizpah's act of loving devotion, King David was prompted to recover the bones of Saul and Jonathan, which had been buried in Jabesh-Gilead by patriots who had saved them from public abuse by the Philistines. (That episode is recorded in 1 Samuel 31:8-13.) And, interestingly, David's men also re-covered the bones of the seven men who had been guarded by Rizpah (2 Sam. 21:13). David then saw to it that the bones of Saul and Jonathan were buried in Saul's home territory (21:14).

CLOSING THE LESSON

Encourage class members to talk about the various ways they preserve memories of family members and relatives who are no longer with them.

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