

**I. Introduction and review.**

- A. II Samuel 21-24 are an epilogue or an appendix to the book.
- B. There is a clear and significant pattern or structure to these chapters (chiasm).
  - 1. King Saul's sin causes a famine which ends after atonement is made. 21:1-14
    - a. A list of heroes (David's mighty men) and their exploits. 21:14-22
      - (1) David's song of praise to the LORD for His past faithfulness. 22:1-51
      - (2) David's song of praise for the LORD's future faithfulness. 23:1-7
    - b. A list of heroes (David's mighty men) and their exploits. 23:8-39
  - 2. David's sin causes pestilence which ends when atonement is made. 24:1-25

**II. Israel's sin is exposed. v. 1-2**

- A. There is a three year famine in the land – a curse for covenant disobedience. v. 1a  
Ruth 1:1 I Ki. 17:1ff II Ki. 4:38 Lev. 26:19-20 Deut. 28:1-2,12,18,47-48 11:13ff
- B. David inquires of the LORD who reveals that the famine is because of Saul's past sins against the Gibeonites. v. 1b 2:1 5:19 Num. 27:21 35:33 I Sam. 22:10 23:2 30
- C. Who are the Gibeonites and how did Saul wrong them? v. 2 Josh. 9:3-27
  - 1. The Israelites had been told by the LORD to exterminate the Canaanites (Amorites) from the promised land in holy war. Deut. 20:16-18 Gen. 15:16
  - 2. The Gibeonites deceived the Israelites to make a covenant of peace with them by pretending to be from far away. Josh. 9:3-15 Dt. 20:10-15
  - 3. Even though the Israelites had erred by making the covenant, they had to keep their word so the Gibeonites lived with them in the land. Josh. 9:16-27
  - 4. King Saul had, in his misguided zeal, sought to exterminate the Gibeonites in violation of the covenant Israel had made. v. 2 Pr. 3:5-6
  - 5. Saul, as the leader of the nation, broke an oath made in the LORD's Name, thereby bringing judgment upon all the people.

**III. King David seeks and implements a solution. v. 3-9**

- A. David humbles himself before the Gibeonites and seeks to make atonement (*kaphar*). v. 3 Gen. 32:20 Ex. 30:10 32:20 Lev. 1:4 Dt. 32:43 Ps. 78:38 Dan. 9:24 Is. 6:17
- B. The Gibeonites demand that seven of Saul's sons die to atone for his sin. v. 4-6
  - 1. They are unwilling to ransom their dead ancestors for cash. Ex. 21:23 Gen. 9:6
  - 2. A blood sacrifice must be made to expiate the sin and propitiate their wrath.
- C. David chooses those who are to be sacrificed v. 7-9
  - 1. David keeps his covenant with Jonathan and spares his son Mephibosheth. v. 7 9:10ff I Sam. 18:3 20:14-15,42
  - 2. David chooses two of Saul's sons through his concubine Rizpah, plus five of Saul's grandsons through his daughter Merab. 3:7 I Sam. 18:19
  - 3. Saul's sons die an accursed death before the LORD. v. 9 Deut. 21:23
- D. The aftermath.
  - 1. Rizpah tries to shield the bodies of her sons from further desecration by the birds and the beasts. v. 10 Jer. 16:4 Pr. 30:17 Ps. 79:2
  - 2. David gives Saul and his sons a decent burial. v. 11-14a I Sam. 31:12-13

3. After the atonement is made, the LORD is moved by David's prayer and again blesses the crops of His people. v. 14b 24:25 II Chron. 7:14
4. Could this be why Saul's tribe (the Benjaminites) were angry with David? 16:7ff

**E. How can such a judgment on Saul's sons be just?**

1. Isn't it wrong for the sons to die for the sins of their father? Deut. 24:16 Ex. 20:5
2. Were Saul's sons involved in the slaughter of the Gibeonites?
3. Saul sinned not merely as an individual but as a representative his people who thus bear the consequences of his covenant breach. v. 6,1
4. The judgment on Saul's house was actually restrained – a limited symbolic retribution – Saul killed far more than seven Gibeonites.
5. We must humble ourselves under God and His Word. Rom. 9:14ff II Tim. 3:16
6. Those who were executed did not deserve better from God. Rom. 6:23

**IV. Concluding applications:**

**A. How do principles from this section apply to us today?**

1. There is no such thing as a merely "natural" disaster or calamity. God is sovereign over all of creation. v. 1 Eph. 1:11 Isa. 45:7 Ro. 6:23 3:10ff 1:18ff 8:20
2. When in trouble, seek God's face by prayerfully asking why He might be bringing calamity upon us. v. 1 He. 12:1ff Js. 1:1f
3. The Lord takes covenant commitments very seriously. Ps. 15:4 Mt. 5:31-37
4. The Lord has a long memory and may choose to expose and punish sins from long ago. Nu. 32:23 Deut. 32:35 Ps. 9:12
5. The entire community (or nation) may suffer for the sins of its leaders and representatives. Rom. 5:12 Ex. 20:5 Ezek. 24:6,9
6. Horrible events may take place which are hard for us to comprehend. Dt. 29:29 Rom. 11:33-36
7. How does II Chronicles 7:14 apply to us under the New Covenant?

**B. Where do we see Christ in this text?**

1. God has revealed why we and our world are under a curse: human sin. v. 2 Ro. 6:23 3:10ff 1:18ff 8:20
2. God has revealed a way of atonement through Christ's propitiatory sacrifice. v. 3 Isa. 42:1 Rom. 5:18-19 3:25 II Co. 5:21 John 11:50 1:29 I Pe. 3:18 Gal. 3:13
3. We see how awful blood sacrifice is. Heb. 9:12,22ff
4. Because of Jesus' sacrifice, the curse of judgment is lifted and the inheritance of the LORD is blessed. v 3,14
5. We are like Mephibosheth who is kept safe because of a covenant. v. 7

**Discussion questions**

1. What is the significance of a famine in Israel?
2. What was the cause of this particular famine?
3. Have you broken promises/covenant?  
Does it matter if it was a long time ago?
4. How could Saul's descendants be justly punished for what Saul did?
5. How does this passage put David in a favorable light?
6. What does this section teach us about dealing with difficult passages?
7. Are there contemporary examples of people suffering for the sins of their leaders?
8. How does this passage point to Christ?
9. Does a silver cross around the neck give a wrong message about Calvary?
10. How did the promise of II Chronicles 7:14 apply under the Old Covenant differently than it does under the New Covenant? How does it apply now?