PUNISHING THE MEN OF GIBEAH

Judges 20:26 Then all the Israelites, the whole army, went up to Bethel, and there they sat weeping before the LORD. They fasted that day until evening and presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to the LORD.

The Back Story

A woman has died after being brutally gang raped by the men of Gibeah. Her husband has sent messengers throughout Israel telling everyone what has happened.

Judges 20:1-3 Then all Israel from Dan to Beersheba and from the land of Gilead came together as one and assembled before the LORD in Mizpah…Then the Israelites said, “Tell us how this awful thing happened.”

Judges 20:12-14 The tribes of Israel sent messengers throughout the tribe of Benjamin, saying, “What about this awful crime that was committed among you? Now turn those wicked men of Gibeah over to us so that we may put them to death and purge the evil from Israel. But the Benjamites would not listen to their fellow Israelites.

Judges 20:15-17 At once the Benjamites mobilized twenty-six thousand swordsmen from their towns, in addition to 700 able young men from those living in Gibeah…Israel, apart from Benjamin, mustered four hundred thousand swordsmen, all of them fit for battle.

The First Battle

Judges 20:18-20 The Israelites went up to Bethel and inquired of God. They said, “Who of us is to go up first to fight against the Benjamites?” The LORD replied, “Judah shall go first.” The next morning the Israelites got up and pitched camp near Gibeah. The Israelites went out to fight the Benjamites and took up battle positions against them at Gibeah.

Judges 20:21 The Benjamites came out of Gibeah and cut down twenty-two thousand Israelites on the battlefield that day.

The Second Battle

Judges 20:23&24 But the Israelites encouraged one another and again took up their positions where they had stationed themselves the first day. The Israelites went up and wept before the LORD until evening, and they inquired of the LORD. They said, “Shall we go up again to fight against the Benjamites, our fellow Israelites?” The LORD answered, “Go up against them.” Then the Israelites drew near to Benjamin the second day.

Judges 20:25 This time, when the Benjamites came out from Gibeah to oppose them, they cut down another eighteen thousand Israelites, all of them armed with swords.

Preparation for the Third Battle

Judges 20:26 Then all the Israelites, the whole army, went up to Bethel, and there they sat weeping before the LORD. They fasted that day until evening and presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings to the LORD.

Leviticus 1:3&4 “’If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, you are to offer a male without defect. You must present it at the entrance to the tent of meeting so it will be acceptable to the LORD. You are to lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on your behalf to make atonement for you.’”

Leviticus 2:1&2a “’If your offering is a fellowship offering, and you offer an animal from the herd, whether male or female, you are to present before the LORD an animal without defect. You are to lay your hand on the head of your offering and slaughter it at the entrance to the tent of meeting.’”

I Samuel 7:6(ESV) So they gathered at Mizpah and drew water and poured it out before the LORD and fasted on that day and said there, “We have sinned against the LORD.” And Samuel judged the people of Israel at Mizpah.

Judges 20:27&28a And the Israelites inquired of the LORD. (In those days the ark of the covenant of God was there, with Phinehas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, ministering before it.)

Judges 20:28bThey asked, “Shall we go up again to fight against the Benjamites, our fellow Israelites, or not?” The LORD responded, “Go, for tomorrow I will give them into your hands.”

The Third Battle

Judges 20:35 The LORD defeated Benjamin before Israel, and on that day the Israelites struck down 25,000 Benjamites, all armed with swords.

The Strange Story of Moses on His Way to Egypt

Exodus 4:19&20 Now the LORD had said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all those who wanted to kill you are dead.” So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand.

Exodus 4:24-26a At a lodging place on the way, the LORD met Moses and was about to kill him. But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son’s foreskin and touched Moses’ feet with it. “Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me,” she said. So the LORD let him alone.

Why Israel Was Defeated at Ai

Joshua 7:10-12 The LORD said to Joshua, “Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep. They have taken some of the devoted things; they have stolen, they have lied, they have put them with their own possessions. That is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies; they turn their backs and run because they have been made liable to destruction. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction.

Summing Up

The nation of Israel was outraged by the death of a gang raped woman and felt very strongly that such blatant sin must be punished. They gathered in force to deal with the men who had done it.

The tribe of Benjamin was determined to protect their own. What the men had done did not seem to matter to them.

The Israelites, sure in their own minds that they were those in the right and determined to punish the evildoers, asked God for direction and He told them who should go into battle.

They were thoroughly defeated. After being defeated, they wept before the LORD and asked again if they should attack Benjamin again and God said yes.

After being defeated the second time, they wept, fasted and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. The fasting, burnt offerings and fellowship offerings all seem to be acknowledgements of their own sins.

Then they asked God again if they should attack Benjamin and God said yes and that on the following day He would give them victory and He did.

After Moses was finally convinced by God to go back to Egypt and rescue God’s people, he went, but without one of his sons being circumcised and God was about to kill him until his wife circumcised his son.

The Israelites were defeated at Ai because of unconfessed sin.

Application

Most evangelical Christians are rightly very concerned about what we see as gross violations of God’s holy standards.

Some, perhaps many, are willing to weep over the state of our nation and to pray about it both individually and collectively.

What I don’t think I see is a general conviction that we are in the situation we are in because the church has failed to be salt and light and that any major change must begin with the church acknowledging her sins before we try to deal with the sins of others.