

THE FALLEN PEOPLE IN ISRAEL

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have prayed for wisdom and read the Bible to learn what the Holy Spirit wants you to teach your students. Then let Him guide you in using these notes below to meet the needs of your students.

Lesson Aim: Remind believers that they need to turn from all sins and follow after righteousness.

Suggestion: Give next week's Student Lesson to your class to answer the questions. Let them share their answers in class. The questions below will reveal important truths you may want to emphasize.

Introduction: In the last five chapters of the book of Judges two stories are recorded that reveal the rotten fabric of Israel's spiritual and moral life. The first story exposes Israel's idolatry (17:1-18:31) while the second story uncovers her immorality (19:1-21:25). Around these two major areas of sin were a number of other sins that added to the corruption of Israel's life. God had to severely punish Israel from time to time to bring her to sincere repentance or else she would have become as corrupt as Sodom and Gomorrah. "For he that will love life, and see good days . . . let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it" (1 Pet 3:10, 11).

Why was idolatry so attractive when Joshua had shown them the power of the LORD? 17:1-6

Most of the people that lived during Joshua's conquest of the Canaan seem to be believers. They loved the LORD and had faith in Him as Joshua did. The next generation did not see the power of the LORD during those battles; they only heard about the power of the LORD. Some believed what they heard, but others doubted the stories that they heard. The unbelievers were blind to the ways of God (Isa 55:8-9). The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness to him (1 Cor 2:14). As unbelievers, they did not attempt to obey the LORD's command to remove all Canaanites from the land. That called for war and they had no heart for it. Instead, they could tolerate the religion of their neighbors and attempt to live in peace with them. Peace at any cost is a great incentive to unbelievers, but this caused them to lose peace with God. Now they had to find something to compensate for their lack of faith in the LORD. They learned that the Canaanites worshipped gods that they could see and it seemed that their gods met their needs. So the things that were right in their own eyes led them to worship idols (17:6). The second generation is the place where Satan will attack the people of God. The children of believers are vulnerable. They must experience the power of God in salvation so that it changes their lives or they will fall prey to the lies of Satan. Then they must grow in their faith by prayer and applying Bible truths to their lives. They must die to selfish desires and learn to serve the Lord with a heart of love for Him and a passion to bring unbelievers to Him. This will cure the second generation of idols in their hearts. (Idols are things that excite us more than Jesus Christ.)

Why was immorality tolerated by the tribe of Benjamin? 20:11-14

The immoral acts of some men of Gibeah were so repulsive that the eleven tribes of Israel unanimously agreed that these men needed to be put to death. So why did the tribe of Benjamin defend these men that did these horrible sins, even to the point of going to war with fellow Israelites? They felt they must protect members of their tribe from death at all costs, even at the cost of their own lives. There is no justification for this kind of protection for tribe members, even for family members (Deut 21:18-21). The leaders of the tribe of Benjamin did what was right in their own eyes. As a result they put their tribal laws above the laws of God and became guilty of the sins that these men of Gibeah did. What do we learn from this story? We must not protect the members of our family from just charges against them. Nor should we protect anyone from being punished for wrong doing. On the other hand, we may plead for mercy on their behalf, but only if they show signs of repentance. We dare not change the laws of God for those that we love by calling their sin good. If we do then we will become guilty of their sins and be punished by God as they are punished. Let God be just and all men be sinners.