

REFORMED CHURCH BELLVILLE: SUNDAY 18 May 2008: EVENING SERVICE

Sing before: Psalm 4:4

Let us commence this meeting with God by declaring openly to one another and to God:

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Beloved grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Psalm of praise: 118:12

Prayer:

- **Doxology**
- **Worship**
- **Confession of sins**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Gratitude**
- **Prayer for the need of the congregation for the church, the authorities and the sinful world and appeal to God's promises.**
- **General prayer**
- **Enlightenment from the Holy Spirit for the sake of the ministry of the Word.**

Amen

Psalm 122:1

Scripture: Judges 2

Text: Judges 2:2

And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this?

What have you done now?

It is a very critical position man finds himself into when facing God and being asked: What have you done now?

- Why are you mixing with the people and religions I specifically prohibited you from doing?
- Here the Lord is warning against the mixing of religions.

The background to this history is as such:

- Upon arrival from Egypt at the promised land the people were commanded to cause anathema to all living in this land.
- Every human being had to be exterminated.

The Lord determined through the lot which tribe had to execute the first attack and also where the attack had to be launched.

- The Urim and Tummim, that is the lot, showed that Judah had to initiate the battle. They, and the tribe of Simeon had to attack together.
- The Jews followed a very clever tactic – they attacked the Canaanites in the mountains.
 - The reason for using this difficult terrain was due to the fact that the Canaanites had chariots of war.
 - The Israelites did not possess such war equipment and could also not fight against it.

- The only solution was to force the Canaanites into the mountains where they were unable to use their chariots of war.
 - In the mountains they had an overwhelming victory over the Canaanites.
 - But not on the plains – there they did not want to engage the enemy.
 - This resulted in that they did not execute the command of the Lord.

They were supposed to, faithfully believing, do battle on the plains, exterminating the people.

- Now, due to their lack of faith, they are reaping sour fruit.
- Because they did not comply with God's instructions they are suffering under His wrath.

The other tribes all made the same mistake as Judah.

- Instead of killing all the tribes they had conquered, they just enslaved them.
- The result was that the Canaanites again grew in numbers and at later stages often suppressed the children of Israel.

Now an Angel of the Lord appears to them at Bochim

- This Angel of the Lord is not just an ordinary angel.
- He was also not a human messenger – a prophet is never given such a name.
- This Angel of the Lord is always of one substance with God.
- Therefore we may say that it is God himself addressing the people.

The Bible underlines the importance of this appearance by stating that the Angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim.

What happened at Gilgal?

- It was here where the Israelites held their last Passover before moving into the land.
- The manna and quail stopped here.
- The most important is that it is here where the Lord stopped his punishment over the people.

The people had to roam the desert for forty years until everybody who also had been in Egypt died.

- After those people had died at the end of forty years, not one of these young men facing Joshua, was circumcised.
- They did not carry the sign of God's covenant with them!

There the Lord instructed Joshua to re-introduce the sign of His covenant with the people.

- In conjunction with that, they, for the first time, ate of the fruit of the land.
- Look at the symbolism. A lovely future, together with the Lord, awaited them.
- To finalise, round off and strengthen the matter, the Lord Himself appeared to Joshua.
- He encouraged Joshua not to be despondent as He had come to help in the battle.
- Joshua would thus not be dependent on a human army to fight the Canaanites; the whole army of the heavens was with them.

Now you can understand why the Bible says that the Angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim.

- This does not mean that the Angel actually stayed in Gilgal for all these years. and only, on this day, came up to Bochim.
- We know that He entered the land with them and always was battling with them.

The author wants to say that the reason for the appearance of the Angel has to be sought at Gilgal. What is the reason?

- It was at Gilgal where the people were commanded to wipe out all the nations.
- This command was amplified by the specific announcement of the Angel that He and his army will accompany them in battle.

Now the Angel is asking: What have you done now?

- He is reminding them about the past, making them aware of the decay of faith that has developed amongst them.
- Now God is calling them to account.

The message by the Angel of the Lord has four points:

Firstly:

- He is reminding the people that they have only the Lord to thank for their whole existence, liberation out of Egypt and possession of the promised Land.

Secondly:

- That a special relationship exists between Israel and the Lord.
- They belong exclusively to Him and He has a covenant with them – a covenant is a contract with God.
- He also had promised never to break this covenant.
- But together with that He set them the responsibility of not mixing with the inhabitants of Canaan.

They were not allowed to enter into any treaty with them.

- They had to kill all of them and destroy their altars.
- Nothing of their religion, that could lead Israel into temptation, may be allowed to survive.
- This new land is God's property and the people had to destroy everything that could do damage to the glory of God.

In the **third** instance the Angel of the Lord is holding the sins of the people against them.

They did not exterminate the nations.

- They did not put their trust in God.
- They reverted to idolatry – they did not heed the covenant that God has with them.
- *What have you now done? How could you be so reprehensible in your conduct? You are negligent and half-hearted!*

In the **fourth** instance the Lord now announces their punishment.

- They are now to be punished because they committed the same sin as Agan.
- They saved things accursed by God.
- Because of this they intermingled with these people and their religions and now they themselves have come under the judgement of God.

From now on, these people, says God, will be your enemies and their gods will be a snare to you.

Beloved, the warning to us is very clear!

- Should we start importing things, not fitting to be there, into our religious life, we are tainting ourselves in front of God.
- This brings us indescribable loss and suffering because it leads to hell.

The people then burst into tears and named the place Bochim. This means "cried"

- Tears help nobody unless you do something constructive about the matter.
- That day, facing God, the people wept bitterly, but afterwards disregarded all His warnings.
- The Lord then had to institute punishment against them – they were oppressed by other nations.

Let us now look at the meaning this passage holds for us.

- We are aware of many wrongful customs and things that we do in life.
- But as time passes we get used to it all,
- As we get used to it, we import these things into our life and religion.
- One day we will have to answer to God about these things!

Israel, that day at Bochim, stood for us, as we must always remember that they, in the Old Testament, were the church!

- We are under the same covenant as they..
- This Angel of the Lord came to earth as Mediator, Jesus Christ.

When our Lord Jesus Christ was hanging on the cross, he promised us, as he did to Joshua, that we must, through His power, continue the battle against satan.

- There He defeated satan by dying and rising from death.
- The determining battle was done.

But we are not alone.

- During our whole religious battle the Holy Spirit accompanies us.
- We never need to shirk and carry sin due to fear or inability. He is battling together with us.
- Also for us, God the Holy Spirit, conquers.

Therefore there is so much of which we have to purify in our lives.

- The Lord is now asking: What did you do?
- But upon you standing in front of His throne, He is going to ask it from you again.
- Let us not just cry over our sinfulness
- Let us learn by the mistake of Israel and let us reform ourselves.

Amen

Closing prayer

Closing Psalm: 134:1-4

The Lord bless and keep you, the Lord make his face shine on you, the Lord turn His countenance to you and give peace.

Amen

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 Reformed Church Bellville
 18 May 2008 (evening)
 Scripture King James