

Curse Ye Meroz, Curse Ye Bitterly

by Jeremy James



One could search long and hard among the books and sermons of the past 50 years for a reference to the town of Meroz, and not be successful. Even if one goes back to the time of Spurgeon, references to Meroz were few and far between. Today, it is doubtful whether one Christian in a hundred – perhaps even a thousand! – could tell what Meroz was or why it is so important.

The Apostle Paul speaks of the woman who left her husband and married another man (Romans 7:1-3). For years she lived in sin as an adulteress. Then one day, without any action on her part, she was no longer an adulteress. She was no longer living in sin, even though her second husband was still alive. What had happened to bring about such a dramatic change in her spiritual condition? The answer is simple: Her first husband had just died.

Paul was using the changing marital status of this woman to illustrate the way grace has freed us from the grip of the law. But he was also showing how sin is an enduring condition that must be addressed. The day she married another man, the woman entered into a sinful state. The act itself occupied only one day, but the effect – the sin – continued without interruption for many years thereafter until her first husband died.

The Blight of Unconfessed Sin

Alas, Christians today give little thought to sin and its enduring effects. Left unconfessed, it continues to exact a spiritual toll. We cannot afford to ignore it, otherwise it will blight our lives in ways we hardly understand.

The Word of God tells of a famine that struck Israel during the reign of King David. It had continued for three years, to the point where David finally realized that some undisclosed sin must have brought this calamity upon Israel. When he enquired of the LORD, he was told: **“It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites.” (2 Samuel 21:1)**



The Gibeonites were Amorites whom Joshua and the princes of Israel agreed to spare, having been caught out by them in a clever deception. The Israelites had given their word. However, Saul, in one of his many rages, tried to have them exterminated. He probably reasoned that the children of Israel were not bound by an oath made to a heathen race, especially one obtained by deception. But, by means of this famine, the LORD was showing them otherwise.

David had to hand over seven men for execution in order to make retribution for the crime committed by Saul.

We can see in this instance how he had to identify and expose the sin before he could address the problem. Today the church has many problems. Alas it also has many pastors who are unwilling to identify and expose the sin that is causing these problems.

There was a time when a local church was seen as a place frequented by sinners, a gathering of people who recognized the wretchedness of their own spiritual condition and who came before God to bare their souls and sing the praises of the wonderful Saviour who set them free.

Where, O where are those churches today?

This brings us back to Meroz, a town mentioned only in chapter 5 of Judges:

**“Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.”
(Judges 5:23)**

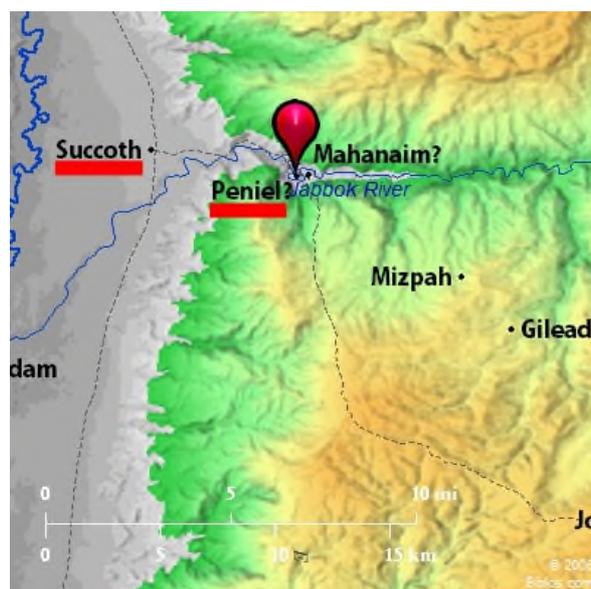
The word “against” should probably read “among”. The residents of Meroz had failed to come to the aid of the army, “the mighty,” assembled by Deborah and Barak to overcome the massed forces of Sisera. Situated near the site on the river Kishon where the great battle took place, Meroz refused to offer any military assistance. Instead her citizens kept to themselves, expecting to reap the benefits if Israel won and to avoid any reprisals at the hands of Sisera if Israel lost.

The Angel of the LORD

Even though these fateful words were quoted by Deborah in her victory song, they did not originate with man. The angel of the LORD is the Pre-incarnate Christ. He personally cursed the town of Meroz and all of her residents for their failure to come to the support of Israel. His curse is repeated and pronounced “bitterly” for emphasis.

There are few verses in the Bible which deliver such a withering rebuke. A curse from heaven must surely count as the worst possible fate that could befall anyone. It is irreversible, final, and devastating. In the eyes of God, the people of Meroz had committed a terrible crime. And yet, in their own eyes, they had not done anything amiss.

The town of Meroz is not mentioned again in the Bible so we can surmise that the curse took effect shortly thereafter.



If this were an isolated incident, we might be justified in thinking that there were circumstances surrounding the case, unstated in the text, which made the crime much worse than it appeared. Perhaps that was why the LORD condemned it with such fury?

However, we know that a failure to support the cause of Israel had fatal consequences on other occasions. For example, when Gideon was chasing down the forces of the Midianite princes, Zebah and Zalmunna, he sought support from the citizens of Succoth. All he asked of them was bread to feed his hungry men. But they refused. Enraged by their attitude he promised that, on his return – having defeated Zebah and Zalmunna – he would punish them severely: “**...I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.**” (Judges 8:7)

The next town he passed through was equally dismissive. The elders of Penuel responded to Gideon with the same rebuke that was thrown in his face at Succoth: “**Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in thine hand, that we should give bread unto thine army?**” (Judges 8:6-8)

On his return from victory over the Midianites, he got a citizen of Succoth to identify the elders of the town, seventy-seven in all, and did exactly as he had promised: “**And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taugh the men of Succoth.**” (Judges 8:16). The men of Penuel fared even worse. After they tried to avoid their punishment by seeking refuge in a tower, Gideon knocked it down and slew them all.

The message is very clear, is it not? Failure to take a stand against evil, when circumstances demand that we do so, will incur the wrath of God. When Gideon had destroyed one evil, the Midianites, he then turned about and destroyed another, an evil which until that hour had been hidden from view.



Moral Cowardice

Today we might describe this failure as moral cowardice. Christians need to recognize it for what it is since it has spread like a plague throughout the modern church. Indeed, it is so flagrant in our churches today that, left to itself, it could usher in the One World Religion all by itself, providing as it does an all-embracing attribute to unite them all!

The treatment meted out by Gideon was not the work of one man, but a shared response by the people of Israel to the evil in their midst. For example, when the tribes of Israel united to deal with the sin of Gibeah, igniting a confrontation which almost wiped out the tribe of Benjamin, they later discovered that one town had failed to send any military support. Not one man from Jabesh-Gilead could be found among their ranks. So they sent a strong force to completely destroy all the males, young and old, in Jabesh-Gilead, and every female who was not a virgin. (Judges 21:11-12).

The Word of God leaves the believer in no doubt that moral cowardice is a deadly sin. Even though it does not involve the commission of an act or deed, or even a blasphemy by word of mouth, it is abhorrent in the eyes of a just and holy God. It is a form of treason, a failure to honor one's father and mother, to support the nation that raised us and defend the values that sustained us.

It is also a form of blasphemy, not by word of mouth, but by its sore negation of our role as priests of God and representatives here on earth of His righteousness and mercy. Moral cowardice gives ample opportunity to the enemies of Truth to blaspheme the LORD and mock the sufficiency of His Word.



David's punishment

Consider the case of David. He had Uriah removed by treachery so that he could take the man's lawful wife. The punishment decreed by the LORD for this wicked deed included the loss of the infant son born from his union with Bathsheba. Here is how the Word of God explained it:

“Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.” (2 Samuel 12:14)

Long-saved believers, elders and pastors who fail to take a stand against the sin in their church are guilty of the same offense. They have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme.

In their own eyes, much like the inhabitants of Meroz, they do not believe they have actually done anything that merits condemnation. At most, they were weak or lacking in conviction, but certainly not guilty of sin. But that is not how the LORD sees it! As He sees it, their guilt runs down the page, making a mockery of His Word, violating His commandments, and bringing the church into disrepute.

Most of the pastors and elders in our churches today are steeped in this witting indifference to sin and convinced beyond all doubt that, while their church might not be perfect, it is certainly not defiled in the eyes of the LORD. Well, they need to think again.



The Word of God is very clear about all of this. One has only to study the assessment that Christ himself made of the seven churches in the Book of Revelation to realize that he will not judge the church as it is today by man’s self-indulgent standards. Rather he will judge it by his unchanging standard, the one set out so clearly in his Word. He is no respecter of persons. He will make no allowance for the countless excuses that pastors and elders today are leaning on, the broad and liberal interpretation of his words which make them of no effect and rob them of their meaning.

A church that remains silent...

A church that remains silent and fails to condemn abortion for what it is, the murder of innocent unborn children, is a church that could relocate to Meroz. A church that remains silent and fails to condemn homosexuality and homosexual 'marriage' is a church that could relocate to Sodom. And a church that remains silent while wicked politicians promote witchcraft, humanism, gender perversion, moral relativism and the 'New World Order' is a church that could easily relocate to Succoth or Penuel.

Remember the words of the Pre-incarnate Christ, **“Curse ye, Meroz ...curse ye bitterly...”**. They are speaking to us today.

Some so-called leaders will be indignant at this. In the Age of Grace, they say, the church is not hedged about with inflexible rules, where those who wander from the straight and narrow are held to account. Really? When did sin cease to be sin? When did the Ten Commandments become ten broadly acceptable modes of behavior? When did “Curse ye, Meroz” become ‘Now, now, we could do better, couldn't we?’?

Christ himself set the tone, as it were, for the age we are in. He twice railed with great fury in the grounds of the Temple, protesting in a loud voice against the way it had been desecrated by worldly interests. He overturned tables and caused great commotion; his zeal for Truth consumed him.



Do you see this today? Have you EVER heard a pastor preach against the sickening hypocrisy that grips the church today? Have you ever heard one who came remotely close to expressing in plain and simple terms the horrific effects of sin, the staggering damage it does when it is allowed to fester unchecked, when men and women – well-meaning, loving and kind – redefine sin so that it means something else, something that somehow God in His mercy will be able to tolerate?

No? Well, sadly, neither have I. But we all need to hear this! And we need to hear it 'loud and long and clear.' Even when we know it and understand it and grasp it firmly, we still need to HEAR it.

Alas, few pastors and leaders seem to know it or understand it. At best, it is but a concept that pops up from time to time in their sermons, but the real meaning is lost. People whose hearts are filled with moral cowardice will never condemn sin for what it is. They know some nice men who are living together as a married couple. They know a lovely woman, the kindest person you could ever meet, who had an abortion. How can we possibly judge them and condemn their sin? Their hearts are full of love. Well, I have news for you. Their hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. They are just as corrupt in the eyes of God as the rest of us! They are just as sin-damaged as any man or woman who ever walked the earth. Sin is sin, and we fail them – and hurt them spiritually – when we pretend their sin is somehow acceptable, excusable, or normal. We fail them when we neglect to call sin by its proper name and explain, as best we can, the cleansing mercy of the blood of Christ. We fail them when we step inside their veil of wilful illusion and pretend their man-made morality is okay with God. Because it isn't.

What God cannot do

There are a few things God cannot do. He cannot tolerate sin. He cannot go back on His Word. He cannot fail to fulfil His promises. He cannot lie. And he cannot forgive us unless we repent.

Thankfully, there is something else God cannot do: He cannot refuse His Son when he intercedes on our behalf. When we confess our sins, he is faithful to forgive. He can do this because Jesus paid the price, the full penalty, for our sins. He paid it ALL.

But to receive forgiveness, we must repent.

Several decades ago the church stopped teaching this fundamental truth. The lukewarm Laodicean church has turned its back on the blood of Christ and fallen in love with its own reflection.

We should dwell on these words because they speak so loudly to us today: **“Curse ye, Meroz ...curse ye bitterly...”**.

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