

THE DECEPTION OF THE GIBEONITES

Joshua 9:1-27

We have been studying how God brought the **Israelites** from aimlessly wondering in the *wilderness* to entering the **Promised Land**...the land of **Canaan**...*the land flowing with milk and honey*. This is the same process that God uses to bring His children out of *carnality* and *aimless wondering* in life to living the *abundant Christian life*. This is the same process that is necessary for one to come under the *Lordship of Christ*.

- **Consecration** (holiness...sanctification...repentance).
- **Restored worship** (renewal of circumcision and Passover).
- **Victory at Jericho** (learning to obey and walk with God in victory).
- **Defeat at Ai** (over confident, as well as, sin in their camp).
- **Sin of Achan** (learning how to deal with sin).
- **Forgiveness and restoration** (repentance).
- **Victory at Ai** (a second chance).
- **Corporate worship and affirmation of covenant**.

As you move towards victory with each battle in the *abundant Christian life*...you can be sure that the devil is going to try to *defeat* you, or *destroy* you, or *devour* you...or at the very least, try and *deceive* you. The devil is going to attempt to bring you down in your Christian life.

Israel's failure to consult the Lord was a major factor in her defeat at **Ai** ...and the *prayerlessness* of her leaders was about to precipitate another crisis. It all came about when it was least expected. The people had just returned to camp at **Gilgal** after hearing the **Law of God** read to them at **Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim**. The **Law** that was inscribed on the stones affirmed **Israel's** willingness to obey God's Word. It was a time of *spiritual victory*...now it was a time for a subtle attack from Satan.

When God's people let their guard down, they become vulnerable to the enemy's assault. This story unfolds in the next two chapters.

I. **THE DECEPTION OF THE GIBEONITES:** (vs. 1-15)

When all the kings who were beyond the Jordan...heard of it, that they gathered themselves together with one accord to fight with Joshua and with Israel (vs. 1-2)...

Israel's victories over **Jericho** and **Ai** had aroused the whole region to concern. Here in **verse 1**, Scripture states that there were *three*

geographical regions in **Canaan**...and *six* of the *seven* cities in those regions were about to come together for one purpose.

- The **hill country of central Palestine**.
- The **western foothills** (valleys and lowlands).
- The **coastal plain** that stretched north to **Lebanon**.

These powerful confederations are going to form together to fight against **Israel**. Truces were declared among tribal factions and enemies in order to join together with a common goal...to come against the invasion forces of God's people.

When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, they also acted craftily and set out as envoys, and took worn-out sacks on their donkeys, and wineskins worn-out and torn and mended, and worn-out and patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and had become crumbled. They went to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal... (vs. 3-6a)...

Not all of **Israel's** enemies wanted to fight. The **Gibeonites** were convinced that they could never defeat **Israel** in war so they pursued peace. They went to great lengths to *deceive* **Joshua** and the **Israelites**...to emphasize that they were from a **far country**.

Gibeon...is a city about *25 miles southwest* of **Gilgal**...*6 ½ miles southwest* of **Ai** and *6 miles northwest* of **Jerusalem**. **Gibeon** was considered a *great city*...an *important city*...that of a *royal city* (**Joshua 11:2**). Its men were *mighty*...yet they pursued peace.

The Gibeonites...said to Joshua and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant with us." (vs. 6b)...

Apparently they had become aware of the provision in the **Mosaic Law** that permitted **Israel** to only make peace with cities that were at a considerable distance...and that it required them to completely destroy the *seven cities* in **Canaan**.

"When the Lord your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, and when the Lord your

God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them...But thus you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, and smash their sacred pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire. For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”

~Deuteronomy 7:1-2, 5-6

The **Gibeonites** are the same as the **Hivites**...they are called **Hivites** in **Joshua 11:19**. They were descendants of **Canaan**, a son of **Ham**, who was one of the three sons of **Noah** (**Genesis 10:17**).

The enemy of God’s people is the **devil**. In Scripture the **devil** is referred to in *one of two ways*:

- As a **lion** (**I Peter 5**)...to *destroy* and *devour*...a picture of *destruction*.

“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”

~I Peter 5:8

- As a **serpent** (**Genesis 3**)...to *deceive*.

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made...Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ And the woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me’.”

~Genesis 3:1a, 13a

The question is...how can **Joshua** and the children of **Israel** be so easily and so quickly *deceived*...especially in light of **Ai** and **Achan**. The reason is because of their *prayerlessness* (**vs. 14**).

Acted craftily (**vs. 4**)...Heb. *ormah*, means *prudence* or *with forethought*...or in a good sense, *discretion*...ie. *subtle* or *with wisdom*.

Worn-out...sacks, wineskins, sandals, clothes (**vs. 4-5**)...Israel judged them based on their appearance.

The men of Israel said to the Hivites, “Perhaps you are living within our land; how then shall we make a covenant with you?” (**vs. 7**)...At first **Joshua** and his leaders were hesitant and not convinced. It was good that they had their guard up because things

are not what they always seem to be. They should have listened to that caution. *Evil* always tries to take advantage of the *righteous*.

They said to him, “Your servants have come from a very far country because of the fame of the Lord your God; for we have heard the report of Him and all that He did in Egypt, and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon and to Og king of Bashan who was at Ashtaroth” (**vs. 9-10**)...Notice that their response is one of *flattery*.

The **Gibeonites** were clever not to mention any of **Israel**’s recent victories at **Jericho** and **Ai**. The news would not have had time to travel a great distance yet. They did mention **Egypt** and the victory over the *two kings*, **Sihon** and **Og** (**Numbers 21: 21-25**; **Deuteronomy 2:26 - 3:11**).

So the men of Israel took some of their provisions, and did not ask for the counsel of the Lord (**vs. 14**)...*Prayerlessness*. This is why it is essential to devout one’s self to prayer and understand the importance of prayer.

Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them (**vs. 15**)...This was in direct opposition to what he had been previously instructed to do.

“You shall make no covenant with them or with their gods. They shall not live in your land, because they will make you sin against Me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.”

~Exodus 23:32-33

“Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst.”

~Exodus 34:12

II. THE DISCOVERY OF THE PLOY: (**vs. 16-17**)

It came about at the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were neighbors and that they were living within their land (**vs. 16**)...Within three days Israel learned that they had been *deceived*...that **Gibeon** was only *25 miles* from **Gilgal**.

Sooner or later *deceit* and *lies* are exposed. Truth will win.

III. THE DECISION OF THE LEADERS: (vs. 18-27)

The sons of Israel did not strike them because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the Lord the God of Israel. And the whole congregation grumbled against the leaders. But all the leaders said to the whole congregation, “We have sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel, and now we cannot touch them. This we will do to them, even let them live, so that wrath will not be upon us for the oath which we swore to them.” (vs. 18-20)...

Even if a *covenant* is made under *false pretenses*, it is still *sacred* and *unbreakable* (This is the difference between a *covenant* and a *contract*).

“If a man makes a vow to the Lord, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.”

~Numbers 30:2

To break a *vow*...it would bring down the *wrath* of God on **Israel**. This can be seen later during **David**'s reign because **Saul** disregarded his oath (**II Samuel 21:1-6**).

God intervened. Even though God allows the harvest of your wrong decisions, He is still at work. God preforms the miracle of *right direction*. He will take your *wrong decision* and turn it according to *His will*...for *His glory*.

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”

~Romans 8:28

Joshua was a man of *integrity*. Though humiliated by what had transpired, he didn't want to bring disgrace on God and His people by breaking a covenant. Yet, at the same time, the *deceivers* must be *punished*. **Joshua** therefore told the **Gibeonites** that they were *cursed to perpetual slavery*...rebuking them for their dishonesty.

So they became hewers of wood and drawers of water for the whole congregation, just as the leaders had spoken to them (vs. 21b)...

In order to keep the **Gibeonites'** *idolatry* from defiling them, **Joshua** stated that their work would be carried out in connection with the tabernacle where they would be exposed to the worship of the one true God.

Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the Lord, to this day, in the place which He would choose (vs. 27)...

IV. THE DEMONSTRATION OF GRACE TO THE GIBEONITES: The curse became a blessing. Such is the grace of God. He still is able to turn a curse into a blessing.

- When **Canaan** began to be divided, **Joshua** gave the city of **Gibeon** to the line of **Aaron**. It became a special place where God was known (**Joshua 21:17**).
- 400 years later, **David** put the *tabernacle* in the city of **Gibeon**. That meant that the *altar* and *priest* were in **Gibeon** as well (**I Chronicles 21:29; II Chronicles 1:3**).
- One of **David**'s closest friends...**Jonathan**...one of his mightiest men that he was closest to when in battle...was from **Gibeon** (**II Samuel 21**).
- When **Solomon** ascended to the throne, one of the *offerings* that was offered was at **Gibeon** (**I Kings 3**).
- When **Solomon** had his vision regarding the future, and what God was going to do...this vision was at **Gibeon** (**I Kings 3:5**).
- When asked by God in a dream what he wished for God to give him, and **Solomon** responded by asking for **an understanding heart to judge God's people and to be able to discern between good and evil**...it was at **Gibeon** (**I Kings 3**).
- The **Gibeonites'** descendants became *Temple servants* (**Ezra 2:43**).
- The *prophet* **Hananiah** was from **Gibeon** (**Jeremiah 28:1**).
- Some **Gibeonites** helped **Nehemiah** *rebuild the wall* around **Jerusalem** (**Nehemiah 3:7**).

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **Prayerful dependence** is essential for one to come under the Lordship of Christ and to live the abundant Christian life. The ability to hear God and know God when He speaks is absolutely essential to living the victorious Christian life.
- When we walk by **sight** and not by **faith**...we will be **easily deceived**.
- One's **yow**...one's **word**...should be honored at all cost.