

Joshua 9:1-27 “Trick or Treat”

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I. Intro

While Israel was at Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim, reaffirming their commitment to the Lord, the kings in Canaan were reaffirming their commitment to destroy Israel. They had heard about the defeat of Jericho and Ai and were not about to give up without a fight. It was time for them to go on the offensive and attack these Jewish invaders. The city-states in Canaan were not always friendly with one another, but local rivals can often come together when they have a common enemy.

Someone once said *“It’s only those who do nothing that make no mistakes.”* But in Joshua’s case doing nothing was his mistake; and this chapter explains what happened. Allen Redpath gave a great exhortation, *“Be strong enough and brave enough to stand and wait on God, for none of them that wait on the Lord shall ever be ashamed!”* **Waiting on the Lord is doing not just something it is doing the BEST.** This reminds me of the words that Joel Rosenberg wrote with regards to an economic crisis as he said; *“Let us consider the possibility that the Lord is allowing this economic meltdown in part to shake our confidence in anything but a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Is it possible that God is trying to shake us loose from trusting in our wealth, from trusting in our political leaders, from trusting in our own ingenuity and our own hard work? Is it possible that He is trying to get us to shift our focus from worldly, materialistic things to how much He loves us, and the truth that the only person we can truly trust in life to never leave us or forsake us is Jesus Christ? Is it possible that He is trying to get us to read the Bible more, and the stock tickers less? To pray more, and to worry less? To store up our treasures in heaven, and not concentrate so much on our treasures on earth?”*

II. Vs. 1-13 Living with liars

Vs. 1-2 This chapter begins the advance into the Southern part of the conquest which will conclude in the 10th chapter when Israel wars against the coalition of nations listed in verse 1-2 of chapter 9. Joshua records two separate threats once they came down the mountain of bareness: **The first was a confederation of kingdoms ready to attack** but the far more dangerous threat was **the nation that wanted to join them.** Friends satan sometimes comes at us as a devouring lion (1 Peter 5:8) but sometimes he comes as a deceiving serpent (2 Cor. 11:3). All the more we need to heed the words of Paul in Eph. 6:10-18 and put on the whole armor of God. So we notice the two responses that the nations had with regards to God’s coming to judge their life style.

1. The first we are told that when they all heard about God’s judgment of both Jericho and Ai they *“gathered together....in one accord....to fight with Joshua and Israel.”* Amazingly those nations who had never gotten along could now unite against Joshua and the nation united with the Lord. There has been and will continue to be a deviant attitude in hearts of those who live and love the darkness of sin and when the *“light of the world”* comes into their darkness ill regardless of their differences they will unite and fight against righteousness. ***Those who advocate non-violence will rise up and kill you if you oppose them.***
2. The second response is deception who will fake an outward change while remaining untransformed inwardly. Such was the case of the Gibeonites who heard what the Lord had done to Jericho and Ai and planned to join them without change. This group always reminds me of my old nature that is willing to do any and everything except die to inherit the promises of God. Paul said in Romans 13:14 that we are to *“put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”* These Gibeonites were willing to put on errs so they could continue to fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Vs. 3-6 **Gibeon was located only twenty-five miles from the camp of Israel at Gilgal** and

according to Deuteronomy 20:10-20 they were on the list of cities that were to be destroyed as Jericho and Ai. Apparently the Gibeonites knew this and saw the futility of fighting against God and prepared to join the nation instead. Everything they did as ambassadors was designed to trick God's people into making a treaty with them which they knew Israel would not break. They weren't their servant they were their enemies, not from 100's of miles away but from 25 miles away. They were smart enough not to mention Israel's recent victories over Jericho and Ai only mentioning the victories prior to entering the land of promise. These fellows weren't "professors" they were "pretenders" who only wanted to appear to be something in order to benefit themselves. Many suggest that there are things to admire with regards to the Gibeonites as they were facing annihilation and were desperate to save themselves but in Deut. 20:10-12 the Lord gave provisions for the nations like the Gibeonites to be spared by saying, "When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it. And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people who are found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you. Now if the city will not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it." But these Gibeonites **preferred deception over conversion!**

Notice the three methods of deception used by the Gibeonites.

1. They were clever as they misrepresented themselves (*pretended*)
2. They gave "*false evidence*" of their deception by use of old sacks, old wineskins, old and patched sandals, dry and moldy bread.
3. Beyond their deceptive appearance, the Gibeonites simply *lied*. They said, "We have come from a far country" when of course they had not. The torn and ragged clothes, the worn out sandals, the torn and mended wineskins and dry moldy bread authenticated the lies that the Gibeonites told.

Israel trusted in their reasoning and natural observation and many may wonder, "What's wrong with that?" But Paul writes in 1 Cor. 2:14 that "*The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*" In Proverbs 3:5-6 we are admonished to "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.*" The word "*craftily*" here is the same word used to describe Satan's tactics in Ephesians 6:11 the use of employing trickery to gain advantage. Apparently there was a republic that included the inhabitants of "*Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim*" with Gibeon being the capital (verse 17). These fellows were pretenders; they bound together in self preservation **wanting the benefits of the nation apart from the commitment of trusting the Lord.** Oh how many Gibeonites have made their home within the territory of God's people with their dry moldy bread, torn and tattered garments begging for alliance with out trusting in the Lord? **I'm afraid that we of the church have been far to accommodating to these folks with the miss guided sense of love but what love is it to leave those in our midst as pretenders when they could instead become full citizens of His love?**

It is safe to assume that the Gibeonites spent far longer in their preparation for deception than the Israelites spent seeking the Lord instead of relying on their own senses; such a discrepancy is always a recipe for defeat. Yet it only *took them three days to discover their mistake but a life time to live with it.* When I was an apprentice Goldsmith my boss and master Goldsmith Ron use to have a word for me when I would get in a hurry, "Dale" he would say, "*There is never time to do it right with you but there is always time to do it over!*" Vs. 7-13 **The 2nd lie they told was their fear for God which caused the Israelites to not inquire of the Lord.** "*So you've come from afar to get your life right with God have you? Well then you wouldn't mind if we took this before Him and wait upon His answer would you?"* Satan can not alter the destiny of those who have given their hearts to the Lord but he takes great delight in using his schemes to turn them away from obey the Lord so as to not effect others. The Lord spoke through Isaiah in 8:20 saying, "*To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*" In other words, **if it doesn't line up with the word of God don't believe it.** Oh how crafty Satan is to work in such away that our fleshly personal desires override our hearts desire to follow the Lord.

Though the Gibeonites clearly lied according to Joshua 9:9 they had some understanding of the Lord as they said, "*because of the name of the Lord your God; for we have heard of His fame. and all that He did in Egypt*" Unlike the nations in verse 1 the Gibeonites knew that it was

foolish to try to fight against the Lord and wanted rather to be on the right side of the fight, yet they didn't want to come and be humble before the Lord as did Rahab.

God is patient with man's sin and He is certainly willing to forgive those who repent but such a nature doesn't mean that He is some how less holy and unconcerned with our sin. Time had come for His judgment against the wickedness of the nations and cultures that continued unrestrained in their continual evil. In Jeremiah 8:6 the Lord said, *"I listened and heard, but they do not speak aright. No man repented of his wickedness, Saying, 'What have I done?' Everyone turned to his own course"*. That is why God gives us time with regards to our sin so that each of us will say, *"What have I done?"* Not, *"Look at what they have done"* but taking stock of our own sin *"repenting of our wickedness"* and if we do that He is faithful and just to forgive all our sin.

III. Vs. 14-27 Altered at the altar

Vs. 14-15 Here we are informed as to the reason for the Gibeonites success, Joshua and the nation didn't ask counsel of the Lord. Joshua took the *"scientific approach"* instead of the *"spiritual approach."* And depended on their own senses, to examine the "facts," which was very logical and convincing, but it was all wrong. This was the same mistake they made at their first defeat at Ai in chapter 7 and apparently hadn't learned to wait on the Lord and seek His direction. Had they waited but three days they would have learned of the Gibeonites deception. How much has been lost in our lives for the want of three days? *"I don't have time"*, we cry followed by three days later with the cry that many times has lasted years, *"I should have taken the time!"* The problem for Joshua and the leaders of the nation was not that they were deceived rather it was that they *"did not ask counsel of the Lord"*. Oh how many times have we like Joshua and the nation been deceived by our own flesh because we failed to bring our hearts before the word of the Lord? They took a look at the provisions for the Gibeonites the tattered clothes old wine skins and dry and moldy bread which tells us that they trust in their own senses more than they did the Lord. When you and I chose to walk by sight and not by faith we are certain to be deceived sooner or later. So because of this they made a treaty with a nation that the Lord had told them not to all because they did not take the evidence before the Lord and ask Him.

Vs. 16-20 Now the nation complained because they had been deceived and apparently didn't want to honor their treaty with the Gibeonites but two wrongs don't make a right so the leadership prevailed with honoring their commitment. The leadership had shown that they were not always men of **THE WORD** all that remained was to see if they were men of **THEIR WORD**. This could have been a costly mistake on three fronts:

1. **Past:** Because this covenant with Gibeon, it cost the soldiers in the plunder they would never get from these cities.
2. **Present:** Because of this they were obligated to protect them for here on out at their cost both in lives and financially.
3. **Future:** These Gibeonites and their neighbors could in the future influence the Jews with their pagan practices and lead them away from the Lord.

You and I make bad decisions all the time and some of those decisions are based upon deliberate deception on the part of others but our error is that we didn't seek the Lord and wait to hear from Him. Had Joshua and the leaders listened to the public outcry to wipe out the Gibeonites they would have compounded their error by not listening to the Lord twice. *"Hey fellows we screwed up the first time by not asking the Lord what He thinks we aren't going to mess up again by disregarding our word to Him even though we were tricked into it."* The psalmist says in Psalm 15:4 *"he honors those who fear the Lord; he who swears to his own hurt and does not change"*. **Not seeking the word of the Lord is a mistake not honoring our word to the Lord is a greater mistake.** The very least anyone should say of a believer is that they are people of integrity; I'm afraid we have too many of professing Christians who are far too comfortable in politics. The nation didn't want to honor their oath because the deception but the fault lay not with the Gibeonites alone but with those who refused to seek the Lord. The sin of a wrong decision or action can be forgiven but the consequences of one may last to generations.

Now in 2 Samuel 21:1-9 you will recall that Saul the king of politics had caused a *"famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered, "It is because of Saul and his bloodthirsty house, because he killed the*

Gibeonites.” Four hundred years later Saul broke the treaty and years later the nation of Israel under the reign of David long after Saul is dead is suffering under the effects of breaking their word. **Time does not diminish our obligation friends.** Hear is what we see based upon this: God expected Israel to honor their covenant *{even if they were tricked into it} {even if it wasn't David's fault}*, *{even if it many years had passed}* so why all the fuss now? Well God doesn't sweep anything under the carpet and He had been waiting for the opportune time to deal with all concerning the matter.

Now of further interests is that the Gibeonites were to be servants in the area of gathering the wood and water for the temple sacrifices. Oft times God will use our foolish decisions to forever gather fuel for our devotion, He will use our relationships with people we shouldn't have been hanging with to wash our hearts.

Vs. 21-27 God leads Joshua into making these tricksters' blessed by being servants in the temple. They would serve not only the Lord but in the temple specifically in the area of the sacrifice. How gracious is the Lord not only to allow them to live but to cause them to be continually around what God was doing for them, to point them to His mercy and grace instead of their deception. And these Gibeonites say, *“here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us.”* They say, **“We are part of Israel and we get to serve the Lord in the temple cutting wood and bringing water. Gathering fuel for our devotion, hanging out with those who wash our hearts, praise the Lord!”** It is important that we note that they did this out of a love for the God of Israel, not out of being forced too as we are told in Joshua 10:2 that *“it was said of Gibeon that all its men were mighty.”* These fellows understood what should have happened to them and were blessed not at what they had to do but rather they were indebted to the Lord. David uttered the words in Psalm 84:10 that best fit them, *“For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.”*

How about it saints can you rejoice in the Lord no matter what you are called to do even if it is a menial task? This affiliation with Israel according to 10:4 made them an object of hatred amongst the surrounding nations. According to 1 Chronicles 16:39-40 and 21:29 Gibeon becomes a priestly city; the Ark of the Covenant stayed at Gibeon often in the days of David and Solomon. Further more according to Nehemiah 3:7 and 7:25 Gibeonites were among those who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem with Nehemiah. There may be no escape for the consequences of our failure to seek the Lord in this life but there is always an escape from the penalty of our failure in the Lord. As true as this is God proves Himself time and again to be able to be glorified through the circumstances and such is the case with Israel and the Gibeonites. As they became wood barriers and water carriers for the temple, their lives were to be a life of servitude. When in later generations the Jews chased after foreign gods the Gibeonites remained at the altar of His grace. Never one time in the Bible do we ever read of the Gibeonites ever defecting to the enemies of Israel they remained loyal servants. Ah but not for just any old master but for the Master of their souls whose goodness and grace is famous to all of us **“wood barriers”** and **“water carriers”** in His house! Later on in the book of Ezra we are told that the Gibeonites go under the name of Nethinims **“sent ones”** of **“given ones”**. Listen up friends as 100's of years later after King David and his son Solomon reined as king of the nation, after the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, when Ezra the Priest and Nehemiah the governor came back to repatriate the land we are told that around 400 of these descendants of the Gibeonites remained living near the temple having with stood the captivities to serve as **“wood cutters”** and **“water barriers”** in the temple. Oh dear ones perhaps you have been a **“pretender” faking it for years going along with the church thing wearing the right outward clothing but without inward transformation.** Well here is the rest of the story as years later these Gibeonites are called **“sent ones”** **“given ones”** and what started out as punishment for their deception became a blessing of their commitment as they carried wood and water for the altar of the Lord. **The moral of the story is that it may take many years but you can't carry the wood of the Word and the water of the Spirit to the altar of the Lord without it altering you!**

You see I've been chopping wood for the altar of His sacrifice and washing folks with the water of His word for well over 30 years now and He has never treated me as anything less than His son whom He adores. Why I even live with Him and eat at His table and what was at one time a labor is now a joy and privilege and I would never want to do anything other than serve in His house!

