

They did not inquire of the Lord (Joshua 9:1-27 and Ephesians 6:10-18)

31-May-26

Joshua 9:1-27

The Gibeonite Deception

9 Now when all the kings west of the Jordan heard about these things—the kings in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the entire coast of the Mediterranean Sea as far as Lebanon (the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites)— **2** they came together to wage war against Joshua and Israel.

3 However, when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, **4** they resorted to a ruse: They went as a delegation whose donkeys were loaded with worn-out sacks and old wineskins, cracked and mended. **5** They put worn and patched sandals on their feet and wore old clothes. All the bread of their food supply was dry and mouldy. **6** Then they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the Israelites, “We have come from a distant country; make a treaty with us.”

7 The Israelites said to the Hivites, “But perhaps you live near us, so how can we make a treaty with you?”

8 “We are your servants,” they said to Joshua.

But Joshua asked, “Who are you and where do you come from?”

9 They answered: “Your servants have come from a very distant country because of the fame of the Lord your God. For we have heard reports of him: all that he did in Egypt, **10** and all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan—Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth. **11** And our elders and all those living in our country said to us, ‘Take provisions for your journey; go and meet them and say to them, “We are your servants; make a treaty with us.”’ **12** This bread of ours was warm when we packed it at home on the day we left to come to you. But now see how dry and mouldy it is. **13** And these wineskins that we filled were new, but see how cracked they are. And our clothes and sandals are worn out by the very long journey.”

14 The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord. **15** Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath.

¹⁶ Three days after they made the treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites heard that they were neighbours, living near them. ¹⁷ So the Israelites set out and on the third day came to their cities: Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth and Kiriath Jearim. ¹⁸ But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the assembly had sworn an oath to them by the Lord, the God of Israel. The whole assembly grumbled against the leaders, ¹⁹ but all the leaders answered, “We have given them our oath by the Lord, the God of Israel, and we cannot touch them now. ²⁰ This is what we will do to them: We will let them live, so that God’s wrath will not fall on us for breaking the oath we swore to them.” ²¹ They continued, “Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers in the service of the whole assembly.” So the leaders’ promise to them was kept.

²² Then Joshua summoned the Gibeonites and said, “Why did you deceive us by saying, ‘We live a long way from you,’ while actually you live near us? ²³ You are now under a curse: You will never be released from service as woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God.”

²⁴ They answered Joshua, “Your servants were clearly told how the Lord your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you the whole land and to wipe out all its inhabitants from before you. So we feared for our lives because of you, and that is why we did this. ²⁵ We are now in your hands. Do to us whatever seems good and right to you.”

²⁶ So Joshua saved them from the Israelites, and they did not kill them. ²⁷ That day he made the Gibeonites woodcutters and water carriers for the assembly, to provide for the needs of the altar of the Lord at the place the Lord would choose. And that is what they are to this day.

Ephesians 6:10-18

The Armor of God

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in

place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

There are **Bibles** in front of you

And a sermon **outline**

Please have your **Bibles opened** up at **Joshua chapter 9**

Let me pray first...

Context(Joshua 9:1-3)

So far in Joshua – with God's help

[Slide-Map]



- The Israelites have **crossed the River Jordan miraculously**
- They made camp at **Gilgal**

- They have taken the cities of **Jericho and Ai**
- And last week – we saw how the Israelites **renewed their covenant with God** – where God made them listen to the **blessings for obedience** and **curses for disobedience**

And God’s plan is for the Israelites to completely take over the Promised Land and replace the current occupants.

Now – before we continue with Joshua chapter 9

We need to backtrack for a moment...

Decades before the Israelites entered the Promised Land – God gave instructions to the Israelites

[Slide-Exodus 23:31-33]

Exodus 23:31-33 - I will give into your hands the people who live in the land, and you will drive them out before you. ³² Do not make a covenant/treaty with them or with their gods. ³³ Do not let them live in your land or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you.

God also gave these instructions

[Slide-Deut 20]

Deuteronomy 20:10-11;15 - ¹⁰ When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. ¹¹ If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you... ¹⁵ This is how you

are to treat all the cities that are **at a distance** from you and do not belong to the nations nearby.

[Slide-Deut 20]

Deuteronomy 20:16-18

¹⁶ However, **in the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you** as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. ¹⁷ Completely destroy them... ¹⁸ Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the Lord your God.

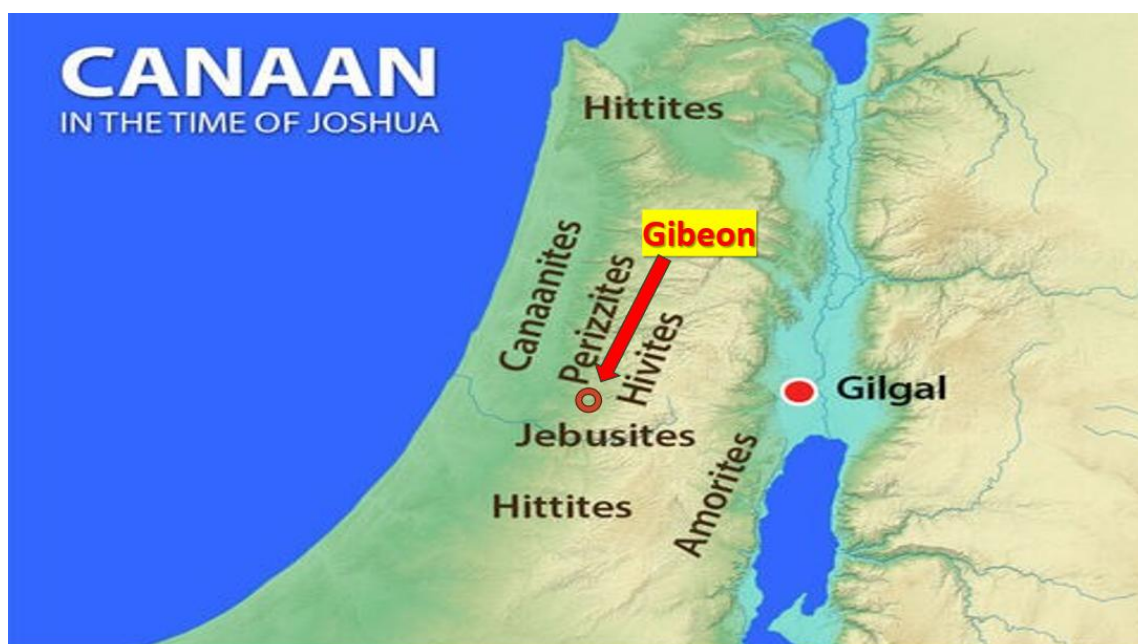
So the bottom line is – The Israelites were NOT to spare any cities in Canaan but cities further away – they can make peace with.

(pause)

Now we can look at Joshua chapter 9

We pick up the story in vv1-2

[Slide-Map]



When the Kings in Canaan – (the Kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites) heard about what Joshua and the Israelites had done to Jericho and Ai – they joined together to wage war!

[Slide-Gibeon]

But there is one group of people from **Gibeon** – the **Gibeonites**– even though they have strong fighting men (10:2) – they have also heard about what happened to Jericho and Ai – and they realize it’s hopeless to try and fight the Israelites – they know they will never win against Israel’s God!

So they come up with a **crafty plan**...

[Slide-1st Point]

My 1st point this morning is – “**We are vulnerable to deception when we fail to seek God’s Wisdom**” – that’s verses 4 to 15

We are vulnerable to deception when we fail to seek God’s wisdom (Joshua 9:4-15) and Ephesians 6:10-18

The Gibeonites turn up on Joshua’s doorstep – with worn-out sacks and old cracked wineskins (v4) – and worn sandals and worn-out old clothes – and dry mouldy bread (v5)

And they say to Joshua (v6) “***we have come from a distant country; make a treaty with us***”

The Gibeonites seem to already know that the Israelites are not to make treaties with any of the cities in Canaan but they also seem to know that the Israelites were permitted to spare and make peace with cities located “***very far***

from them” (see Deut 20:10-18); doubtless for this reason the Gibeonites stress that they are from “*a distant land*” (9:6, 9)

The **Gibeonites offer a believable story** (vv9-10) – they heard what the Lord God did in Egypt and how Joshua and the Israelites wiped out Sihon and Og on the East side of the Jordan (Numbers 21:21-35). But what really moved the Gibeonites was what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai (9:3). But craftily (9:4) they don’t mention Jericho and Ai to Joshua. After all, they are supposed to be from a “*distant land*”(9:9) and so couldn’t possibly have heard of these conquests.

The Gibeonites' story sounded convincing. Israel examined the evidence, but they **failed at the crucial point** in v14:

"They did not inquire of the LORD."

It was not that Joshua and the elders did not ask the right questions; they were suspicious alright (vv7-8 – “*perhaps you live near us... Where are you from?*”). It was not that they were sloppy in their investigation but that they were **alone in their decision making.**

It wasn’t that they didn’t ask questions but that they didn’t pray.

As James 4:2 says “*They did not have because they did not ask*”

Back in Numbers 27:21 – when Joshua was first anointed as leader – **He was told** – *he must stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim and Thummim before the Lord!*

[Urim and Thummim – two stones – either lit up – or had symbols for Yes/No – True/False]

Having failed to inquire of the Lord – then – v15 - *Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified this decision by oath.*

Application

For us...

- Appearances can be misleading.
- Human wisdom is limited.
- All decisions should be made prayerfully and in submission to God's Word.
- Or do we only ask God for guidance when we're not sure what to do?
- We need to be careful when we start thinking "***there is no need to consult the Lord on this matter-it's SO obvious?***". Not that we need to ask the Lord whether we should get a haircut at 4pm. But we must beware of that subtle thought that I assumes "***I have this under control!***"
- Joshua 9 warns God's people against cocky independence. As we face our various trials we need wisdom to know how to deal with those trials. Wisdom is available from a giving God, and we are to ask for it (James 1:5).
- There are many examples of when we should seek God's wisdom
 - Marriage/relationships
 - Starting a family
 - Career/employment options
 - Study options
 - Major purchases – house, car, caravan
 - Retirement options
 - Ministry decisions

- Church leadership decisions

All too often we rely on our own experience or logic instead of prayer and scripture!

The Gibeonites succeed over Joshua and the Israelites – not with swords – but by deception. The Israelites acted on what they saw in front of them – rather than seeking the Lord.

As Christians we too can be deceived by what seem like charismatic words and logic...

I'll give **two quick examples**

Some people say - the Bible says "***God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him***" (1 John 4:16) – therefore they say "***If God is for love, He would not be against people being in a loving same sex relationship***". It sounds reasonable doesn't it? But God's love never cancels out God's other instructions in the Bible. There are many passages in the Bible that prohibit same sex relationships (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10)

The second example comes from Genesis chapter 1. Some people argue that when God created "light and darkness," we do not conclude that dawn and dusk do not exist. Likewise, when God created "dry land and sea," we do not deny the existence of beaches, wetlands, or tidal flats. Therefore, they argue that when Genesis 1:27 says God created humanity as "male and female," it should

not be understood as describing only two distinct sexes, but rather as identifying two ends of a spectrum with many gender identities in between. On this view, the diversity of gender identities is part of God's good and varied creation. One theologian [Robyn Whitaker] has written that "the full spectrum of genders is all part of God's diverse and beautiful creation".

The problem with this sort of thinking is that it is reading into the Bible what is not there! We only have to read further on in Genesis to see that males are circumcised and females give birth to children – showing how males and females are different. There is no mention in the Bible of any other types of human beings or genders!

If we don't read and know our Bibles and if we don't pray for God's wisdom – we will be **deceived**.

Joshua acted independently of God and was deceived – whereas Jesus always acted in complete dependence on His Father.

In Jesus we have someone who is NEVER deceived! He knows where we come from, where we are going; He knows what we think! He knows everything!

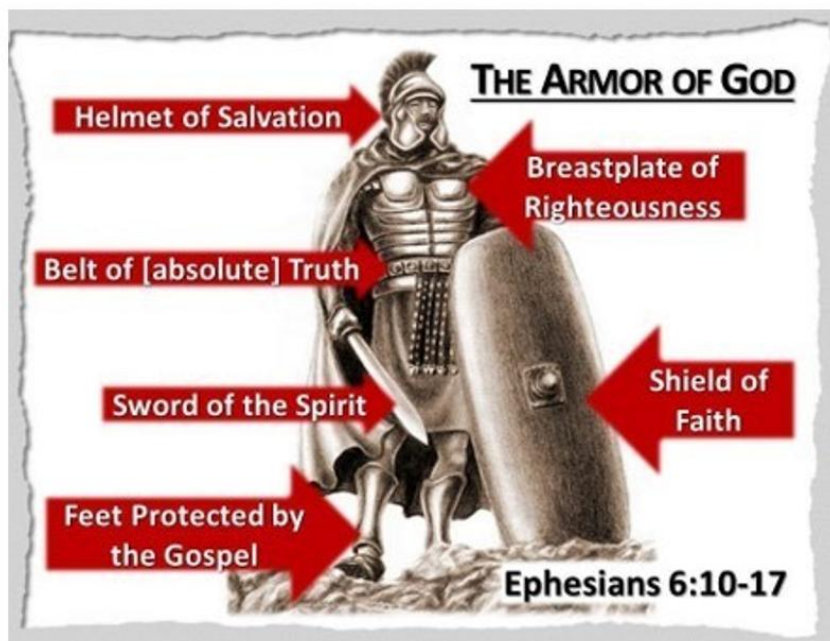
In our NT reading from **Ephesians 6**, the Apostle Paul reminds believers that they are in a spiritual battle and must stand against: "*the devil's schemes*" (Ephesians 6:11)

This deception by the Gibeonites is a good Old Testament example of what a "**scheme**" looks like. Israel's leaders thought they could discern the situation themselves, but they were outwitted.

Joshua 9 reminds us that God's people can easily be deceived if they fail to seek God's wisdom. In Ephesians 6, Paul tells us to put on the **whole armour of God** so that **we can stand against the devil's deceitful schemes**. Like the Israelites, we need God's truth and wisdom if we are to avoid being deceived.

God's armour includes:

[Slide-Armour]



- **Belt of Truth (v14)** — the **Gibeonites'** deception succeeded because **they hid the truth** – and because **Joshua and the Israelites did not seek the truth** from God.
- **Breastplate of Righteousness (v14)** - Israel acted independently rather than depending on God. Righteousness means living in a right relationship with God and seeking to do His will. A righteous response would have been to ask, "**What does God want us to do?**"
- **Feet protected by the Gospel of Peace (v15)** – the Israelites rushed into a peace treaty that God had not commanded them to make. True peace comes from following God's way, not our own way!

- **Shield of Faith (v16)** – The Israelites' faith should have prompted them to depend on God rather than on their own assessment. When things seem obvious, faith still needs to ask, "***What does God say?***"
- **Helmet of Salvation (v17)** - The helmet protects the mind. Remembering that they were God's redeemed people with a special calling would have shaped Israelites thinking and decisions. We need to keep our mind focused on who we are as God's people and focus on God's purposes not ours!
- **Sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) (v17)**— God's Word and guidance should have directed Israel's decision. God's instructions concerning the people of Canaan were already known to the Israelites! They chose to ignore His instructions!
- **Along with the God's Armour – there is Prayer (v18)** — Prayer is the means by which believers seek God's wisdom and guidance. Had Joshua and the leaders prayed, the deception would have been uncovered. Before every decision, we must ask God for wisdom rather than relying solely on what seems right.

When was the last-time we inquired of the Lord? How did the Lord answer?

Here are some ways God answers:

- Through words from Scripture when reading the Bible
- Through answers to our prayers – with an audible voice or change of circumstances
- Through wise Christian counsel from Godly Christians
- Through circumstances guided by God's sovereignty

- Through God's quiet voice
- Through prompting/leading by the Holy Spirit

So, the **1st point** is "***We are vulnerable to deception when we fail to seek God's wisdom***"

The **second and third points** are much shorter!

[Slide-2nd Point]

2nd point – ***As God's people we must keep our word, even if it is costly*** – verses 16 to 21

As God's People we must keep our word, even if it is costly (Joshua 9:16-21)

V16 – three days after making the treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites found out that the Gibeonites actually lived nearby – and had deceived them. The Israelites headed towards Gibeon and the neighbouring cities (v17) – but they did not attack them – because of the oath they had sworn!

Instead, they honoured the oath they had made – even though the whole assembly of Israel (v18) grumbled against the leaders.

The leaders rightly reasoned that they had made the oath before the Lord God of Israel (v19) – and they feared God's wrath would fall on them (v20) if they broke the oath they swore to the Gibeonites

Instead – they made the Gibeonites servants – as woodcutters and water carriers (v21)

Application

For us...

It is important for us as Christians to keep our promises even when it is difficult.

Why?

- We are made in God's image – and we are His image-bearers reflecting His character. If we break our promises or oaths – we dishonour His Holy Name and character!
- God is a covenant keeper – He kept His promise in sending a Saviour in Jesus – therefore, God's people should also be covenant keepers – and keep their promises!
- When people see us keep our promises – it is a good Christian witness and sets us apart from the world – where promises are broken all the time (e.g. Government election promises are often broken!)
- Integrity as a Christian is paramount – Christians are often accused of being hypocrites
- Christian integrity means sticking to God's Word and sticking to our Word – so our Yes is Yes – our No is No!
- Some examples of Christians keeping their promises are:
 - A Christian contractor discovers a job will cost more than expected because the customer withheld information. They still honour their original quote!
 - A husband and wife discover faults and struggles they never anticipated, yet they remain faithful to their marriage vows.

- Someone volunteers for a ministry role at church and later realizes it requires more hours of work than they expected. They continue in the role because they gave their word.

Christians must be careful about making promises, but once made, they must seek to keep these promises—even when they become difficult or costly. (Psalm 15:4)

God made a promise to save us from sin and death – He kept His promise even though it cost Him His Son!

[Slide-3rd Point]

3rd point – **God can work through our wrong choices to accomplish His purposes** – verses 22-27

God can work through our wrong choices to accomplish His purposes (Joshua 9:22-27)

Joshua made a serious error by not inquiring of the Lord!

Yet God still worked through this wrong choice.

God worked through Joshua to bring both **judgment and mercy** to the Gibeonites

Judgment:

- The Gibeonites' deception is exposed and punished.
- They become servants: serving as woodcutters and water carriers for the assembly, to provide for the needs of the altar of the Lord.

Mercy:

- Their lives are spared; they are not wiped out!

- Instead they are brought into Israel's community.

And in God's grace – there was also a

Spiritual benefit:

The Gibeonites are assigned to serve at the place of worship and near the altar. In doing so they come into close contact with the worship of the One True God. Their physical rescue leads to spiritual privilege. They will hear the Word of God and His Law each day as they serve at the altar of the Lord!

Application:

God's grace works like this all the time.

If we think back to the story of Joseph in Egypt - Joseph's brothers sold Joseph into slavery. Their actions were sinful and wrong, yet God used even their evil choices to save many lives during a famine (Genesis 50:20). Their sin was real, but God's purposes were greater.

Likewise Joshua's failure to inquire of God reminds us that even God's people make serious mistakes. But God is not defeated by our failures. The greatest example is the cross. Human beings rejected and crucified Jesus, yet God used that very act to accomplish our salvation. If God can bring salvation through the cross, He can work through our sins and failures as well.

Our sins and mistakes are real, but God's grace is greater.

The Cross of Jesus proves it!

Let's pray...

Heavenly Father, thank You that You are wise, faithful, and full of mercy. Please help us to seek Your guidance instead of relying on appearances or our own

understanding. Give us discernment, integrity, and humble hearts that trust You in every decision. Thank You that through Jesus You bring outsiders near and make us part of Your people by grace. Help us to walk faithfully with You this week.. Amen.