

The Gibeonite Deception

Joshua 9: 1-16, 26-28

Conquest of the Promised Land

- A series of successes and failures
- Joshua chapters 1-6; series of successes
- Joshua 7 – defeat at Ai
- Joshua 8 (1st section) – victory at Ai
- Joshua 8 (last section) – renewal of covenant at Mount Ebal & Mount Gerizim



2. Joshua made peace with Gibeon, then moved through the Valley of Aijalon and defeated the five Amorite kings (Josh. 9–10).

1. Upon crossing the Jordan, Joshua camped awhile at Gilgal, then moved to take Jericho and Ai. Afterward he returned to Gilgal (Josh. 1–8).

3. From Makkedah, Joshua launched a southern campaign against Lachish, Hebron, Debir, and Gaza. Victorious, he returned to Gilgal (Josh. 10).

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- Joshua 8 (last section) – renewal of covenant at Mount Ebal & Mount Gerizim (see Deut. 11: 26-32, 27: 11-26)
- Joshua 9 – the Gibeonite deception

We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. ⁴ We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. ⁵ We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.

(2 Corinthians 10: 3-5; NLT)

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.
11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. 12 For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. (Ephesians 6: 10-13; NLT)

As followers of Jesus Christ ...

- we are in a spiritual battle at all times
- True Christian life is not a playground, but a battle ground

After the battles of Jericho and Ai ...

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)— they came together to wage war against Joshua and Israel. (Joshua 9: 1-2)

Satan's battle plan

- open war

- “roaring lion” (1 Pt. 5:8)

- deception

- “strategies of the devil” (Eph. 6: 11)
- “Satan disguises himself as an angel of light”
(2 Cor. 11: 4)

Academy Awards, not Military Awards

But when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, ⁴ they resorted to deception to save themselves. They sent ambassadors to Joshua, loading their donkeys with weathered saddlebags and old, patched wineskins. ⁵ They put on worn-out, patched sandals and ragged clothes. And the bread they took with them was dry and moldy. ⁶ When they arrived at the camp of Israel at Gilgal, they told Joshua and the men of Israel, “We have come from a distant land to ask you to make a peace treaty with us.”

(Joshua 9: 3-6; NLT)

Rules of War

“As you approach a town to attack it, you must first offer its people terms for peace. ¹¹ If they accept your terms and open the gates to you, then all the people inside will serve you in forced labor. ¹² But if they refuse to make peace and prepare to fight, you must attack the town. ¹³ When the Lord your God hands the town over to you, use your swords to kill every man in the town. ¹⁴ But you may keep for yourselves all the women, children, livestock, and other plunder. You may enjoy the plunder from your enemies that the Lord your God has given you. (Deut. 20:10-14; NLT)

Rules of War (cont'd)

“But these instructions apply only to distant towns, not to the towns of the nations in the land you will enter. ¹⁶ In those towns that the Lord your God is giving you as a special possession, destroy every living thing. ¹⁷ You must completely destroy the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, just as the Lord your God has commanded you. ¹⁸ This will prevent the people of the land from teaching you to imitate their detestable customs in the worship of their gods, which would cause you to sin deeply against the Lord your God. (Deut. 20: 15-18; NLT)



Joshua & Co asked the right questions

The Israelites replied to these Hivites, “How do we know you don’t live nearby? For if you do, we cannot make a treaty with you.”

(Joshua 9: 7; NLT)

They replied, “We are your servants.”

“But who are you?” Joshua demanded.

“Where do you come from?” (Joshua 9: 8; NLT)

They answered shrewdly

“Your servants have come from a very distant country. We have heard of the might of the Lord your God and of all he did in Egypt. ¹⁰ We have also heard what he did to the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River—King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan. ¹¹ So our elders and all our people instructed us, “Take supplies for a long journey. Go meet with the people of Israel and tell them, “We are your servants; please make a treaty with us.”” (Joshua 9: 9-11; NLT)

Hear! See! Smell! Touch!

“This bread was hot from the ovens when we left our homes. But now, as you can see, it is dry and moldy. ¹³ These wineskins were new when we filled them, but now they are old and split open. And our clothing and sandals are worn out from our very long journey.” (Joshua 9: 12-13; NLT)

For we live by faith, not by sight.

(2 Cor. 5:7)

Aimed at “Eyes and Ears” of Joshua and Co

“We have come from a distant land to ask you to make a peace treaty with us. . . . So our elders and all our people instructed us, ‘Take supplies for a long journey. Go meet with the people of Israel and tell them, ‘We are your servants; please make a treaty with us.’” This bread was hot from the ovens when we left our homes. But now, as you can see, it is dry and moldy. 13 These wineskins were new when we filled them, but now they are old and split open. And our clothing and sandals are worn out from our very long journey.” (Joshua 9: 6, 11-13; NLT)

Joshua & Co carried out a test ... but neglected the most important thing

So the Israelites examined their food, but they did not consult the Lord. Then Joshua made a peace treaty with them and guaranteed their safety, and the leaders of the community ratified their agreement with a binding oath.

(Joshua 9: 14-15; NLT)

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(Joshua 9: 14-15; NLT)

The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord. (v. 14; NIV)

So the men took some of their provisions, but did not ask counsel from the Lord. (v. 14; ESV)

WRONG decision often looks/feels like the RIGHT one

- “It can’t be wrong, when it feels so right” – *You Light Up My Life* by Joe Brooks, 1977
- “Right” decision often does not look the best, easiest, or most obvious
- “Right” decision often is the hardest, ugliest, and least obvious choice
- RIGHT decision can often look and feel like the WRONG one

Implications of “they sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord”

- Had they inquired of the Lord, they would have known they were being tricked
- Would have realized that provisions could be purchased on the way
- Why keep moldy bread that can't be eaten?
- Why carry cracked wineskins that can't hold liquid?
- Had they paused to pray and reflect, they would have figured it all out!

Be careful about making “alliances” /
“covenants” / “treaties”

- Don't neglect to ask the Lord Jesus what He thinks about the alliance you're about to make

Decisions/Choices have consequences

Three days after making the treaty, they learned that these people actually lived nearby! ¹⁷ The Israelites set out at once to investigate and reached their towns in three days. The names of these towns were Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim. ¹⁸ But the Israelites did not attack the towns, for the Israelite leaders had made a vow to them in the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. (Joshua 9: 16-18a; NLT)

The people of Israel grumbled against their leaders because of the treaty. ¹⁹ But the leaders replied, “Since we have sworn an oath in the presence of the Lord, the God of Israel, we cannot touch them. ²⁰ This is what we must do. We must let them live, for divine anger would come upon us if we broke our oath. ²¹ Let them live.”

(Joshua 9: 18b-21; NLT)

- Don't compound a previous mistake by adding another one

What then should Joshua & Co do with the Gibeonites?

“As you approach a town to attack it, you must first offer its people terms for peace. ¹¹ If they accept your terms and open the gates to you, then all the people inside will serve you in forced labor.” (Deut. 20: 10-11; NLT)

What then should Joshua & Co do with the Gibeonites?

“Therefore, obey the terms of this covenant so that you will prosper in everything you do. ¹⁰ All of you—tribal leaders, elders, officers, all the men of Israel—are standing today in the presence of the Lord your God.¹¹ Your little ones and your wives are with you, as well as the foreigners living among you who chop your wood and carry your water. ¹² You are standing here today to enter into the covenant of the Lord your God. (Deut. 29: 9-12; NLT)

How Joshua & Co moved forward despite their mistake

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.”

(Joshua 9: 22-23; NLT)

- The Gibeonites can live ... but not as they were living before

Gibeonite's response

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.” (Joshua 9: 24-25; NLT)

How this episode ends

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. (Joshua 9: 26-27; NLT)

What have we learned ?

- As followers of Jesus Christ, we are always in a spiritual battle
- Satan and his minions may openly attack us (roaring lion) or deceive us (angel of light)
- We need to stay alert; we need to put on the spiritual armor that God has provided for us
- We need to stay together and fight the battle together

What have we learned ?

- We must inquire of the Lord and seek His mind before making decisions
- Don't commit a second mistake to try to remedy the first one
- Even after making a wrong decision, return to the Lord and His Word to find a way forward
- God is holy and righteous; He is also merciful and gracious

