



January 12, 2014
Joshua 9
“Don’t Be Deceived”
Pastor Gary Hamrick

In last week’s study we saw how one man’s sin had a ripple effect among the Israelites. Achan’s sin was the reason they experienced defeat in their battle against the small city of Ai. God’s favor was not with them because there was “sin in the camp.” But after God exposed the sin of Achan, and Joshua and the Israelites purged the evil from among them, they reengaged the city of Ai, defeating them soundly. And, unlike God’s strict orders that they should not help themselves with the plunder of Jericho, this time God told them to “Help yourself!”¹

Once the neighboring nations heard about this, the kings of those nations decided to wage war against the Israelites in a preemptive strike. But one group of people among those nations, the Gibeonites, realized that it would be suicide to join the international affiliation, especially when they considered how easy it was for the Israelites to win the victory over Jericho and Ai. So the Gibeonites created a proactive plan to request a peace treaty, which was in fact a peace treaty by deception.

In this study, we’ll learn the importance of seeking God’s wisdom in any and every situation, as well as the importance of keeping our word.

Historical Background

1. The Israelites were commissioned by God to drive out the seven pagan nations that had occupied the land, which was promised on oath to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

¹ **Joshua 8:27** - *“But Israel did carry off for themselves the livestock and plunder of this city, as the Lord had instructed Joshua.”*

- a. In [Deuteronomy 20:10-12](#), God gave permission for Israel to make peace treaties with distant neighbors.²
2. [Deuteronomy 7:1-6](#) - *“When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and rives out before you many nations – the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger than you – and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and from following me to serve other gods, and the Lord’s anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire. For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.”*
3. God knew that the pagan influence of these nations, if allowed to remain, would bring about the destruction of his people from within, which he was unwilling to allow because they were to be a *“people holy to the Lord [their] God.”*
4. It must have been the case that the Gibeonites, who were among the Canaanites that the Israelites were to destroy, knew this and decided, “If you can’t beat them, join them,” so *“they resorted to a ruse,”* according to [Joshua 9:4](#).
 - a. They dressed up in old, worn-out clothing, carried old, worn-out sacks, filled with dry, moldy bread, and splashed some dirt on their faces to make it look like they had traveled from a faraway place.
5. [Joshua 9:14-15](#) - *“The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord. Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath.”*
 - a. The ruse worked because they *looked* at the worn-out wineskins, *smelled* and *tasted* their moldy bread, but they did not inquire of the Lord!
 - b. They concluded, after *“sampling the provisions,”* that they could trust their own senses.

² *“When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you. If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city.”*

6. In [Joshua 9:16-27](#), we read that three days after they made a peace treaty with the very people they should have driven out of the land, the Gibeonites scheme was uncovered!
7. It would be natural for us to think, “Those lying, deceiving Gibeonites! Why did God allow them to live, and make gracious provision for them, when he killed Achan and his family?”
 - a. It’s important to understand that the onus of responsibility for living a godly life falls primarily on those who know better or should have known better.
 - b. Achan had a higher accountability to God because he was an Israelite who knew God, knew the commandments of God, as well as the specific instructions about not touching the plunder of Jericho, and yet he willfully, deliberately, intentionally disobeyed God.
 - c. The Gibeonites, however, were a pagan people, who knew about God – that he is powerful and mighty – but they didn’t *know* God or his commandments, so they did what pagan people do, they lied and deceived to save themselves.
 - d. God has greater mercy for the uninformed that do things out of ignorance, than for the informed that do things out of disobedience.
 - e. [1 Timothy 1:13](#) – *“Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.”*
 - f. Repeatedly in Scripture, God makes gracious provision for children.
 - g. God made Jonah go to the Ninevites, who are among the most ruthless, pagan people that ever lived, because there were 120,000 people who could not tell their right hand from their left hand, and God was concerned about them.
 - h. In the New Testament, Jesus was merciful toward prostitutes, tax collectors, and *“sinners,”* while at the same time he drove out the money-changers from the Temple with a whip, and scorned the religious leaders, which he called *“hypocrites... snakes... blind guides... and sons of hell.”*
 - i. People living in darkness do not share the same accountability as those who have been exposed to a greater light, at least not at first.
 - j. [2 Peter 2:21](#) – *“It would have better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.”*
 - i. There is more mercy for ignorance than for willful disobedience.
 - ii. The more you know, the more you are accountable.
8. The main point of this story is not what the Gibeonites did, as much as it is what Joshua and the Israelite leaders did not do.

9. The Gibeonites didn't get off Scot-free, and while it's true they got to live, their deception came with a price, because they were forever relegated to be servants.
 - a. We can see God's mercy in this in that sinners who didn't know better, would become servants in the House of the Lord, and their being near the things of God would provide opportunity for them to know him.
 - b. Just as God was merciful to Rahab and her family because she showed kindness to Israelite spies, so God was merciful to the Gibeonites who, in their deception, believed their only hope of survival was to join God's people rather oppose them.

The Importance Of Seeking God's Wisdom

10. [Joshua 9:14](#) is the tragic description of Joshua and the Israelite leaders, who made a decision based on what they saw, smelled, and tasted.
11. Even though God has given us our senses and a brain, as well as the ability to reason using our senses, reason alone is not sufficient to discern the important matters life.
12. We need the wisdom of God, so we must inquire of him!
13. In [2 Corinthians 5:7](#), Paul instructed Believers to walk *"by faith not by sight,"* because there is something unreliable about our senses.
14. Don't forget that the most obvious thing is not always the right thing!
15. The Bible teaches that Satan can deceive us!
 - a. The deception of false prophets.
 - i. [Luke 21:8](#) - *"... Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,'..."*
16. The Bible teaches that others can deceive us!
 - a. The deception that bad influences aren't really bad.
 - i. [1 Corinthians 15:33](#) - *"Do not be misled; 'Bad company corrupts good character.' "*
17. The Bible teaches that we can deceive ourselves!
 - a. The deception of thinking certain sins aren't really that bad.
 - i. [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#) - *"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers not idolaters nor male*

prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

18. The deception of thinking there are no consequences to sin.
 - a. **Galatians 6:7** - *“Do not be deceived; God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”*
19. The deception of hearing God’s word but not doing what it says.
 - a. **James 1:22** - *“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”*

What Can We Do?

20. Devote yourself to prayer.
 - a. **Colossians 4:2** - *“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.”*
21. Ask God for Wisdom.
 - a. **James 1:5** - *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”*

The Importance Of Keeping Your Word

22. It’s quite challenging to think about Joshua, who even though he was deceived, he didn’t use that as an excuse to break his word.
23. It would easy for us to say, “Well, you people deceived me, so that nullifies my promise!”
24. Joshua realized he had gotten himself into this mess because he had not inquired of the Lord so breaking his word would only have made it twice as wrong!
25. Joshua took responsibility of making a hasty decision and an impetuous promise, and in doing so he kept his word, which seems like an antiquated principle in the day in which we live.
26. As far as God is concerned, the old adage is as true today as it was in Joshua’s day: “Your word is your bond.”
 - a. The only exception to keeping your word would be if you would have to sin or break the law to keep it.

27. [Psalm 15:4](#) – “... who keeps his oath even when it hurts...”
28. [Ecclesiastes 5:5](#) – “It is better not to vow than to make a vow and not fulfill it.”
29. [Matthew 5:37](#) – “Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”
30. [2 Samuel 21](#) gives the account of the consequences God imposed on the nation of Israel for breaking this commitment with the Gibeonites (King Saul tried to annihilate the Gibeonites).

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Joshua 9](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. In what ways have you found it to be true things are not always as they appear?
4. Allow the people in your group to share experiences they’ve had when the “resorted to a ruse” in an effort to avoid negative consequences.
5. Read and discuss [Joshua 9:14-15](#).
 - a. Spend time talking about times when you’ve relied on your senses to your shame or regret.
6. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary’s remarks about our natural reaction to the way God treated the Gibeonites versus his judgment on Achan and his family.³ (See #7 above)
 - a. How has your thinking changed regarding the “onus of responsibility for living a godly life falls primarily on those who know better or should have known better”?
 - b. What is your reaction to God’s greater mercy for the uninformed who are ignorant of God’s will and ways?
 - c. Read [1 Timothy 1:13](#) and discuss Paul’s testimony to God’s grace in his life.
 - d. How has the fact that God has a special gracious provision for children ministered to you or someone you know?

³ Refer to the January 5, 2014 study guide for Pastor Gary’s message about Achan’s sin.

- e. Read and discuss [2 Peter 2:21](#). (See #7j above)
- 7. What are some of the ways you walk “*by faith not by sight*”? (See #12 above)
- 8. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary’s observation that the main point of this story is not what the Gibeonites did, as much as it is what Joshua and the Israelite leaders did not do.
- 9. Read and discuss the Scriptures that outline the ways we can be deceived, by Satan, others, and ourselves. (See #15 through #19 above)
- 10. How have you found that devoting yourself to prayer has helped you find the wisdom of God in all kinds of situations?
 - a. Read and discuss [Colossians 4:2](#) and [James 1:5](#).
- 11. Would others say that you are someone who keeps your word/promises?
 - a. Read and discuss [Psalm 15:4](#) and [Ecclesiastes 5:5](#).
- 12. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person:

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).