

“Those Crafty Gibeonites”

Joshua chapter 9

Scripture Ref: Ex 23:23; 2 Sam 21:1; Rom 8:28

- 1. PAY ATTENTION: What was revealed....**
 - a. ... about God?**
 - b. ... about yourself?**
 - c. How will you apply what you learned?**
- 2. So far, Israel has come across the Jordan, and two cities have fallen – Jericho and Ai – Gibeon is next on the list!**
 - a. And the other inhabitants of Canaan are very much aware...**
 - b. and so they decide “hey, we’re not gonna sit here and wait to be attacked, we need to bring the fight to them.”**

9:1 And it came to pass when all the kings who were on this side of the Jordan, in the hills and in the lowland and in all the coasts of the Great Sea toward Lebanon -- the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite -- heard about it, 2 that they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord.

- 3. Classic, strategic response – best defense is a good offence.**
 - a. But one city decides on a different strategy...**

3 But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, 4 they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended, 5 old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and moldy. 6 And they went to Joshua, to the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a far country; now therefore, make a covenant with us."

- 4. I have to hand it to the Gibeonites – these guys are smart!**
 - a. But not only smart – they were well informed... How did they know that God had commanded them to not make any covenant with them**

Ex 23:32 You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. 33 They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me.

- b. Somehow they knew this, and somehow they surmised that if they said they were from a far-away land, that the Israelites could make a covenant with them.**

- c. **Fact is – they had nothing to lose. If they fought, they would all be killed.**
- d. **If their plan failed, they would all be killed.**
- e. **But if it succeeded, they might just live.**

7 Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you dwell among us; so how can we make a covenant with you?"

8 But they said to Joshua, "We are your servants."

And Joshua said to them, "Who are you, and where do you come from?"

9 So they said to him: "From a very far country your servants have come, because of the name of the LORD your God; for **we have heard of His fame**, and all that He did in Egypt, 10 and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan -- to Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth. 11 Therefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, 'Take provisions with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say to them, "**We are your servants**; now therefore, make a covenant with us.'" 12 This bread of ours we took hot for our provision from our houses on the day we departed to come to you. But now look, it is dry and moldy. 13 And these wineskins which we filled were new, and see, they are torn; and these our garments and our sandals have become old because of the very long journey."

- 5. **Now, there is some truth in what they said. They had heard of the Lord, and what God had done in Egypt, and to Sihon and Og, and Jericho and Ai...**
 - a. **And whether it was a true respect and recognition of God, or simply a desire to not be killed**
 - b. **It brought these people to a place of saying “we need to be joined to these people and their God, instead of destroyed by them”**
 - c. **KEY THOUGHT – remember that...**

14 Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the LORD. 15 So Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live; and the rulers of the congregation swore to them.

- 6. **So the Israelites looked over their things, examined the evidence, and made a decision based on the evidence.**
 - a. **Sounds pretty logical to me, no?**
 - b. **NO – because “...they did not ask counsel of the LORD”**
 - c. **They walked by sight, not by faith**
- 7. **This could be one of the most common things that Christians, Christian leaders, do – look at the facts, apply logic and reason, and make a decision**

- a. While there is nothing inherently “bad” or “sinful” about this type of decision making process...
 - b. Christians must be aware of several things...
 - i. We cannot see the future, God can
 - ii. We cannot see the spiritual underpinnings of a situation, God can
 - iii. We cannot see the forward plan of God in a situation, God can.
8. IOW – sometimes logic and reason must take second place to the leading of the Lord.
- a. From a practical perspective, this simply means seeking the Lord in our decisions.
 - b. Simply asking “God, you can see all the different perspectives of this situation, will you show me YOUR will?”
 - c. And then – LISTEN.
9. Will we always do it perfectly? NO.
- a. Will we always hear Him? NO.
 - b. But – I believe that God has a perfect will in every situation
 - c. And He desires us to seek Him for it.
 - d. What can happen if we don’t?

16 And it happened at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were their neighbors who dwelt near them. 17 Then the children of Israel journeyed and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim. 18 But the children of Israel did not attack them, because the rulers of the congregation had sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation complained against the rulers.

10. The first thing – unrest in the congregation. The people saw that the rulers had made a blunder... and they didn’t like it!
- a. Think – how many situations have blown up in our lives because we didn’t seek the Lord?
 - b. How many families and marriages are stressed and in unrest because the husband didn’t seek the Lord?
 - c. How many churches are in unrest? (no pressure here!)

11. So what did the rulers do?

19 Then all the rulers said to all the congregation, "We have sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them. 20 This we will do to them: We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us because of the oath which we swore to them." 21 And the rulers said to them, "Let them live, but let

them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation, as the rulers had promised them."

12. I like these guys... because instead of trying to pacify the congregation by going back on their word and attacking the Gibeonites...

- a. **They DID THE RIGHT THING. They stuck to their agreement, even when it was based on a lie, even when the people didn't like it**
- b. **(how many politicians and leaders could take a lesson here)**
- c. **They did not make their sin worse by adding another sin...**
- d. **And guess what – God honored their agreement.**

13. Some four hundred years later, we see...

2 Sam 21:1

Now there was 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."

14. Now, that does not mean that Joshua let the Gibeonites off scott-free.

22 Then Joshua called for them, and he spoke to them, saying, "Why have you deceived us, saying, 'We are very far from you,' when you dwell near us? 23 Now therefore, you are cursed, and none of you shall be freed from being slaves -- woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God."

24 So they answered Joshua and said, "Because your servants were clearly told that the LORD your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you; therefore we were very much afraid for our lives because of you, and have done this thing. 25 And now, here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us." 26 So he did to them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, so that they did not kill them. 27 And that day Joshua made them woodcutters and water carriers for the congregation and for the altar of the LORD, in the place which He would choose, even to this day.

15. Look at the response...

- a. **...the LORD your God commanded His servant Moses**
- b. **...we were very much afraid for our lives because of you**
- c. **...here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us.**

16. Interesting, because the Gibeonites were not weak people – chapter 10 tells us that Gibeon was a great city, and all its men were mighty.

- a. **Not only that, but Gibeon was at risk for this move, as the Canaanite kings decide to attack Gibeon for its stand.**

- b. Yet they were willing to recognize the greatness of God, and the power of God WITH the Israelites, and totally submit themselves to the Israelites.
 - c. I think that in spite of their deception, it says something about these people.
 - d. Not that they were “good”, but for some reason, they were able to see the truth of the situation, the truth of God...
 - e. In some ways – there were very similar to a person who comes to the Lord today...
17. The Gibeonites are not much different from many of us...
- a. Fact is, very few (if any) come to the Lord with pure motives...
 - b. All of us came as sinners
 - c. Many had made a mess of our lives
 - d. Many were facing terrible consequences of our sin
 - e. Many even had ulterior motives!
 - f. But God loves to take broken, mixed up, even conspiring people...
 - g. And bring them into a legacy of godliness

Rom 8:28 ...all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

18. Look at the Gibeonites after Joshua 9.
- a. The Gibeonites became servants at the tabernacle, just as Joshua had commanded.
 - b. The Israelites protected Gibeon when they came under attack
 - c. Gibeon becomes a priestly city; the Ark of the Covenant stayed at Gibeon often in the days of David and Solomon (1 Chronicles 16:39-40 and 21:29).
 - d. At least one of David’s *mighty men* was a Gibeonite (1 Chronicles 12:4).
 - e. God spoke to Solomon at Gibeon (1 Kings 3:4).
 - f. Gibeonites were among those who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem with Nehemiah (Nehemiah 3:7 and 7:25).
 - g. These are examples of the great things God can do with people who are sinners, but come to Him in humility and love.