

Sunday, May 16, 2021 pm

## Lessons From the Gibeonites Joshua 9

From time to time, we have been examining passages in the Old Testament. We have been looking at various individuals, and on occasion we have noted events and lessons we can learn from these.

Tonight, I would like to take a few moments to examine an event in the Old Testament, that is somewhat familiar, but not that well known. Tonight, we want to talk about the Gibeonites, as recorded in Joshua 9. We will begin with a brief examination of the account, and then glean some lessons from this account.

### I. The account

- a. Background – the land of Canaan was being subdued by Israel. Recount. Israel has conquered 2 great kings in the wilderness – Og, King of Bashan and Sihon, King of the Amorites (Numbers 21). They had miraculously crossed the Jordan (Joshua 3-4). They had miraculously conquered Jericho (Joshua 6), and after a failure, they had conquered Ai (Joshua 7-8). As a result, Israel KNOWS with certainty that God is with them as they prepare to conquer the land of Canaan.
- b. Joshua 9 records what happens next
  - i. Most of the kings and their cities joined together to fight against Israel and Joshua (9:1)
  - ii. (3) But the inhabitants of Gibeon, knowing what had been done (and that they could not win), concocted a scheme.
  - iii. (4-6) They pretended to be ambassadors from a far-off country. They put old sacks on their donkeys, old and patched sandals, old garments, stale bread, and went at Gilgal. They said they came in peace and desired to make a covenant with Israel.
  - iv. (7) The med of Israel said to Hivites, “Perhaps you dwell among us” – indicating they were suspicious at first.
  - v. (8-13) The Gibeonites said they would be their servants, but they had come from a very far country, “because of the name of the LORD” They had heard of all the things He had done and thus they were sent by their elders to make a treaty. They then presented their “evidence” – spoiled food, worn out clothes, etc.
  - vi. (14-15) The men of Israel took some of their provisions **but did NOT ask counsel of the LORD**. Therefore, Joshua made peace with them and a covenant to let them live. The rulers of Israel agreed and swore (an oath) with them.
  - vii. (17-18) – just a 3 day’s journey (sources say about 20 miles – 30km) they came to their cities. But Israel did not attack the cities because of the oath that had been taken before the LORD God of Israel.
  - viii. (18-20) The congregation (rightly) complained against their rulers. But the rulers realized they had sworn an oath and thus they stood by it. (We will see later that God DID recognize this oath).
  - ix. (21) They were permitted to live but became slaves (woodcutters and water carriers for the congregation)
  - x. (22-27). They explained what they had been clearly told what Israel was going to do to them. They then voluntarily surrendered to Israel and became their manual servants for the house of God.

### II. Lessons

#### a. *Some observations about the Gibeonites –*

- i. They were deceivers – which is in NO WAY approved of here (anymore than the lies of Abraham or Rahab are approval to lie in given circumstances). Any observations we make

does not nullify this fact. We are to be totally truthful in our dealings with others – Matthew 5:37, Ephesians 4:25 – speak truth to your neighbor.

- ii. They feared God – to their credit, they realized who YHWH was and knew they would be defeated. And even though they were part of the southern alliance (Hivites), they knew what their fate would be if they acted like the rest of the kings and nations that determined to defeat Israel (see vs. 1-2). Notice what they say in vs. 24.
- iii. They were willing to serve because it was better than the alternative – vs. 25 finds them surrendering. They know they are now servants of Israel (no attempt to overthrow or rebel). They are considered allies.

What are we willing to give up to serve God? One source contrasted this with the rich, young ruler – He had possessions and walked away; Here they surrendered and totally submitted. Romans 12:1-2 – we are called upon to present ourselves as living sacrifices to God.

**b. Beware of deceit –**

- i. In scripture we are continually warned against deceivers –
  1. Ephesians 5:6, *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*
  2. Colossians 2:4, *Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.*
  3. 2 Timothy 3:13, *But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.*
  4. 2 Peter 2:1-3 – there will be false teachers who will bring in destructive heresies.
  5. Elders in Ephesus – Acts 20:28-30 – the warning that even from “among yourselves” men would rise up speaking perverse things.
  6. 1 Peter 5:8 - We are warned that Satan walks about like a roaring lion.
  7. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 - We are warned His servants dress up like deceivers, etc. Deceivers work to sound convincing – Just like the Gibeonites. And the more deceitful they are, the better they will be at it.
- ii. So we are to be alert - also already noted - 1 Peter 5:8; Matthew 10:16 – be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.
- iii. Beware of the shrewdness of the enemy –
  1. the Gibeonites were very convincing. They did everything they needed to do to deceive.
  2. So do false teachers - Romans 16:17-18 - With deceptive and flattering words they will deceive the hearts of the simple. Also 2 Peter 2:3, etc.

**c. Do we inquire of the Lord and listen to Him?**

- i. Our text tells us of the downfall of Israel on this occasion. Note Joshua 9:14, *Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the Lord.* This incident could have been prevented had they only sought the LORD as they had done just prior to this (in finding out why they failed with Ai).
- ii. So how do we inquire of the Lord today?
  1. **Prayer** - James 1:5 calls for us to ask God for wisdom. Matthew 6:13 – do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.
  2. **We are to test the spirits** – 1 John 4:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:21 – hold fast to what is good. We may need to do a little investigating depending on the situation.
  3. **We need to KNOW God’s word** – that is how we inquire of God today. 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2:15.  
Titus 1:9-11 speaks of the task of elders in identifying and exposing deceivers.

d. **Keeping your vows** –

i. Understand, that the Gibeonites were deceivers –

1. What they did was dishonest and deceitful. Why that did not nullify the oath I do not know. It could have been made in the name of the LORD, and likely there was no provision for deceit in the treaty.
2. I do know God expected them to keep it – because centuries later, David has to avenge the murder of Gibeonites by King Saul (cf. 2 Samuel 21:1-9 records a famine in Israel for 3 years and it was because of the evil actions of Saul).
3. This says something about the seriousness of oaths.

ii. Joshua 10 records the results of this treaty.

1. Joshua 10:1-5 records kings hearing about what Gibeon had done and they amassed an army against that “great city”.
2. They call to Joshua for help (6). He brings his army with the promise of God (see vs. 8), and they defeat all these kings at the same time (God’s providential hand at work).
3. Israel had made a vow, and almost immediately it cost them. But they KEPT it and delivered the men of Gilead.

iii. Be careful in making vows –

1. Clearly, we need to be careful when we make vows. Ecclesiastes 5:2 – do not be rash with your mouth. 5:4-6 elaborates on this.
2. God expects us to keep our word, even (or should I say especially) when it hurts. Far too many today take vows lightly. They make promises and then excuses to get out of their commitments. This should NOT EVER describe the Christian. Psalm 15:4 speaks of one who swears to his own hurt and does not change.
3. Short of outright sin, you should keep your word. What a way to let your light shine. And even if you realize something is a sin, you should repent for making a rash vow.

And thus we can see some lessons we can learn from the Gibeonites. There are many today who are quick to follow along whatever the latest trend is. Spiritually they hear something new that sounds good, and they react, only to later find out they should have waited. Don’t be “*tossed to and from and carried about by every wind of doctrine.*” (Ephesians 4:14) Instead, be alert, wise and educated. Think about it!