

**Great Fear**  
**Joshua 9:1-27**

Joshua was afraid this would happen. After Israel's success at Jericho and Ai, all the various tribes in Canaan joined together to destroy Israel.

In the last chapter, Israel re-covenanted themselves with God at Mount Ebal.

- Altar of uncut stones
- Burnt offering
- Peace offering
- Torah

The Torah confirmed God had given them the land and the altar, burnt and peace offerings demonstrated their understanding that it was God who was their Victor.

**First: A Word about the Gibeonites. 1-13**

From this point on, Israel is no longer facing individual tribes but a United Nations of enemies.

What have they heard?

- Israel defeated Egypt
- Israel defeated 2 kings in the wilderness
- Israel miraculously crossed the Jordan River
- Israel defeated Jericho
- Israel suffered an initial defeat at Ai but then took the city
- Gibeon made a peace treaty with Israel

The kings of these nations didn't know about Achin's sin. All they knew was that Israel could be defeated.

Gibeon is a large city north of Jerusalem. It is near to Ai and in the land of Benjamin. It's people are part of a larger Hivite clan, a people with whom Israel was not supposed to make a treaty.

- a) Their Motive 3

This is why the Gibeonites lied about their origin.

- b) Their deceit 4-5

Since God had forbidden Israel to make treaties with those tribes who were to be driven from the promised land (cf. Exodus 34:11-12; Deuteronomy 20:10-18), it is clear that the Gibeonites somehow knew enough about Israel's law to know that they must claim to be from a distant land so that these prohibitions against treaty making would not apply.

So the Gibeonites met Joshua at Gilgal, where Israel first came across the Jordan.

V 6 - In exchange for peace with Israel, Gibeon promised to serve Israel's God.

- c) Israel's skepticism. V 7-8
- d) Their deceit expounded. 9-13

### **Second: Joshua's Mistake. 14-15**

The LORD had given Joshua explicit instructions as to how to discern his will in cases such as this. According to Numbers 27:21, Joshua should have gone to Eleazar the high priest, who would in turn consult the LORD using the Urim, a part of his priestly Ephod, enabled the priest to determine the will of the LORD.

**Numbers 27:18-22 -** *So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. 19 Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. 20 You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey. 21 And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the Lord. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation." 22 And Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and made him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation, 23 and he laid his hands on him and commissioned him as the Lord directed through Moses.*

Joshua should have applied the same test to these men.

Instead, Joshua's men physically examined the provisions these men presented, saw the provisions to be old and worn. Based upon this, they accepted their story as fact. But in actuality, the Israelites had been deceived, something that would not have happened, had they consulted the high priest.

### **Third: The Deceit Exposed. 16-21**

Somehow, someone brought the leadership important information about the truth of the Gibeonites. Joshua then sent men to the Gibeonite cities and the ruse was up.

But, because Israel had made a pact with them, the leadership kept the people from harming the Gibeonites.

V 21 – The Gibeonites became carpenters and well diggers, serving Israel.

### **Fourth: The Confrontation. 22-24**

Joshua confronts the Gibeonites who confess their wrongdoing and ask for his mercy. The Gibeonites who realized that God was going to keep his promise made to Abraham wanted to be at peace with Israel. They knew that this land was Israel's. They knew that YHWH was the Lord. When God made his national covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, the covenant of works was now published for all to see in the two table of the law. But the land promise was tied to that earlier covenant God made with Abraham.

The Gibeonites knew of this promise. They wanted to be part of it, even if it meant hauling water and cutting wood. They would gladly be servants in Israel if that's what it took to spare them from judgment.

### **Fifth: Gibeonite Salvation. 26-27**

Although the Gibeonites lied to gain Israel's favor, God respected their reason and accepted their confession and Joshua spared them, making them, it appears, carpenters and water carriers for the various places of worship, ultimately in Jerusalem.

*Psalm 84:10 - For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*

It's the only place in the book that it states that Joshua saved anyone...and it's Gentiles.

### **Sixth: The New Testament Explanation**

The Gibeonites didn't see beyond the Promised Land. They, unlike Abraham, never looked for a city whose builder and maker is God. All they saw was the immediate, but it was enough to move them to seek God's name and protection.

Of course, all of it – the salvation and the destruction we see in Joshua is indicative of another salvation and another judgement.

#### a) The destruction

*Revelation 20:11-15 - Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. 13 And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

“Do you really believe this?” Yes. And so do your atheist friends. Everyone believes in some sort of justice. No one thinks injustice should go unnoticed or unpunished. And that acknowledgement of some kind of judgment – no matter what form that judgement takes – is an echo of God's warning in Eden to Adam and Eve. We are so far from Eden that the particular words are distorted but the sound is still present and prevalent. It can't be and isn't ignored. And only an omniscient and omnipotent God can judge appropriately...rightly.

Scripture frames that judgement with Jesus at the center of the picture.

#### b) The salvation

Two weeks ago, we saw Jews and Gentiles stand around Mount Ebo and accept God's sanctuary through the burnt and peace offerings. It has always been God's intent to save everyone who calls on Jesus' name (Romans 10:13).

Paul explains it like this -

*Galatians 3:26-29 - ...in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

### **Conclusion:**

Even in the NT, the Jews still had trouble accepting Gentiles. But God didn't. And neither should we.

If you're going to sit at God's table, you have to sit with God's friends.

God's friends have to be your friends, or you can't be God's friend.

### **Community Groups:**

- 1 – Ask someone to tell the story in Joshua 9.
- 2 – Ask, “Is there anything anyone wants to add?”
- 3 – What part of the story might you not understand?
- 4 – What part of the story do you most like?
- 5 – Why did the Gibeonites lie to Israel?
- 6 – Why did the Hebrew leadership protect the Gibeonites when the lie was exposed?
- 7 – Why did Joshua forgive the Gibeonite deception?
- 8 – What NT principle reflects the Gibeonite inclusion into Israel?
- 9 – What can we learn from Joshua's ‘salvation’ of the Gibeonites?
- 10 – What do you think about the thought that even atheists believe in justice?
- 11 – How can that concept be utilized to point to Jesus?
- 12 – What Gibeonites do you know? Are you praying for them? How are you witnessing to them?

