

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes

2-15-23

Joshua 9

The Southern Kings Gather Together Against Israel – Verses 1-2

1 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)— 2 they came together to wage war against Joshua and Israel.

9:1-2 As the news about their victory became widespread, the Israelites experienced opposition in two forms: direct (kings in the area began to unite against them); and indirect (the Gibeonites resorted to deception). We can expect similar opposition as we obey God's commands. To guard against these pressures, we must rely on God and communicate daily with him. He will give us strength to endure the direct and indirect pressures and wisdom to see through deception.

The Gibeonites Approach Joshua And Israel In Another Way – Verses 3-6

3 However, when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, 4 they resorted to a ruse: They went as a delegation whose donkeys were loaded with worn-out sacks and old wineskins, cracked and mended. 5 They put worn and patched sandals on their feet and wore old clothes. All the bread of their food supply was dry and moldy. 6 Then they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the Israelites, "We have come from a distant country; make a treaty with us."

9:3-4 They worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors: The Gibeonites will try to deceive Israel into making a peace treaty with them, though Israel was forbidden to make peace with any of the tribes of Canaan (Exodus 23:23-24).

9:4 They worked craftily: Notice the methods of deception used by the Gibeonites. They were clever (craftily), they misrepresented themselves (pretended), and they even gave false "evidence" as part of their deception (old sacks...old wineskins...old and patched sandals...dry and moldy bread).

9:6 From a far country: Beyond their deceptive appearance, the Gibeonites simply lied. They said, "We have come from a far country" when of course they had not. All their other devices simply lead to strengthen the deception offered.

The Gibeonites Explain Their Story To Joshua And The Leaders Of Israel – Verses 7-13

7 The Israelites said to the Hivites, "But perhaps you live near us, so how can we make a treaty with you?" 8 "We are your servants," they said to Joshua. But Joshua asked, "Who are you and where do you come from?" 9 They answered: "Your servants have come from a very distant country because of the fame of the Lord your God. For we have heard reports of him: all that he did in Egypt, 10 and all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan—Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth. 11 And our elders and all those living in our country said to us, 'Take provisions for your journey; go and meet them and say to them, "We are your servants; make a treaty with us."' 12 This bread of ours was warm when we packed it at home on the day we left to come to you. But now see how dry and moldy it is. 13 And these wineskins that we filled were new, but see how cracked they are. And our clothes and sandals are worn out by the very long journey."

9:7-13 From a very far country your servants have come: Plainly, the Gibeonites lied to Israel. But despite their lies, they have a proper admiration and honor for the God of Israel. Because of the name of the Lord your God; for we have heard of His fame shows that it is because God fights for Israel, they know it would be useless to oppose the nation.

Joshua And The Leaders Of Israel Accept The Deception Of The Gibeonites – Verses 14-17

14 The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord. 15 Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath. 16 Three days after they made the treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites heard that they were neighbors, living near them. 17 So the Israelites set out and on the third day came to their cities: Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth and Kiriath Jearim.

9:14-17 When the leaders sampled these men’s provisions, they saw that the bread was dry and moldy, the wineskins were old and cracked, and the clothes and sandals worn out. But they did not see through the deception. After the promise had been made and the treaty ratified, the facts came out—Israel’s leaders had been deceived. God had specifically instructed Israel to make no treaties with the inhabitants of Canaan (Exodus 23:32; 34:12; Numbers 33:55; Deuteronomy 7:2; 20:17-18).

9:14-17 As a strategist, Joshua knew enough to talk to God before leading his troops into battle. But the peace treaty seemed innocent enough, so Joshua and the leaders made this decision on their own. By failing to seek God’s guidance and rushing ahead with their own plans, they had to deal with angry people and an awkward alliance. Once again, they had forgotten to go to God; yet how often we do the same. A new situation arises, and we forget to seek God’s wisdom and guidance. When we learn the lessons of the past and apply them to today, we save ourselves a lot of trouble.

Israel’s Oath To The Gibeonites – 18-20

18 But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the assembly had sworn an oath to them by the Lord, the God of Israel. The whole assembly grumbled against the leaders, 19 but all the leaders answered, “We have given them our oath by the Lord, the God of Israel, and we cannot touch them now. 20 This is what we will do to them: We will let them live, so that God’s wrath will not fall on us for breaking the oath we swore to them.” 21 They continued, “Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers in the service of the whole assembly.” So the leaders’ promise to them was kept.

9:19-20 Joshua and his advisers had made a mistake. But because they had given an oath to protect the Gibeonites, they would keep their word. The oath was not nullified by the Gibeonites’ trickery. God had commanded that oaths be kept (Leviticus 5:4; 27:2, 28), and breaking an oath was serious. This encourages us not to take our promises lightly.

A Glorious Punishment For The Gibeonites – Verses 22-27

22 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.” 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.” 26 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.

9:22-23 Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation: Joshua could not kill the Gibeonites, but he could control them by making them perpetual workmen for the tabernacle service. They would serve in menial ways such as cutting wood for the sacrificial fires of the tabernacle and carrying water used in its service.

9:24 So they answered Joshua and said: Significantly, there seems to be no complaint from the Gibeonites. They simply say, “here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us.” Essentially, they were happy with the prospect of being incorporated into Israel, and being made servants of the Lord, even if it was in menial service. It is essential to see that they did this out of a love for the God of Israel, not out of weakness. Indeed, it was said of Gibeon that all its men were mighty (Joshua 10:2).

9:24 Because your servants were clearly told that the Lord your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land...we were very much afraid for our lives because of you, and have done this thing: The Gibeonites were not thrilled so much at being woodcutters and water carriers, but in knowing they could be those things for the Lord — and in knowing where they would be if they were not serving the Lord.

9:24-27 Do we have the same heart? Can we rejoice in any kind of service, if we see we are in the presence of the Lord as we do it? The Gibeonites found salvation in the God of Israel much as Rahab did in Joshua 2.

The Gibeonites became servants at the tabernacle, just as Joshua had commanded. At least one of David’s mighty men was a Gibeonite (1 Chronicles 12:4). God appeared and spoke to Solomon at Gibeon (1 Kings 3:4-5). Gibeonites were among those who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem with Nehemiah (Nehemiah 3:7 and 7:25). Prophets such as Hananiah the son of Azur came from Gibeon (Jeremiah 28:1). These are examples of the great things God can do with people who are sinners but come to Him in humility a