

THE CRAFTINESS OF THE GIBEONITES

BIBLE TEXT : Joshua 9 :1-27

LESSON 174 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "We are in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do" (Joshua 9:25).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Joshua 9:1-27

¹ And it came to pass, when all the kings which *were* on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea over against Lebanon, the Hittite, and the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard *thereof*;

² That they gathered themselves together, to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord.

³ And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai,

⁴ They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles, old, and rent, and bound up;

⁵ And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them; and all the bread of their provision was dry *and* mouldy.

⁶ And they went to Joshua unto the camp at Gilgal, and said unto him, and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now therefore make ye a league with us.

⁷ And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites, Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you?

⁸ And they said unto Joshua, We *are* thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who *are* ye? and from whence come ye?

⁹ And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come because of the name of the Lord thy God: for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Against Israel

The Canaanites had heard of the victories of the Children of Israel. Perhaps they had heard, too, that the God of Israel had promised to drive out their enemies, which meant destruction to the Canaanites. They could submit like Rahab (**Joshua 2:11-13** ¹¹ And as soon as we had heard *these things*, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he *is* God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. ¹² Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have shewed you kindness, that ye will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: ¹³ And *that* ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death. **Joshua 2:18** ¹⁸ Behold, *when* we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee.), or rebel. They chose to rebel, so they banded together to try to check the Children of Israel. No doubt they had fought among themselves many times, but now they banded together. They had one thing in common — they were against Israel.

Those who rebel against God today do not succeed any more than did the Canaanites. They may band together and fight against God, only to their own destruction (**Psalms 2:2-4** ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, *saying*, ³ Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. ⁴ He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.). Some people yield to the power of God; others harden their hearts against the Lord. In this lesson we learn of a third class of people who try to find some other way to Heaven rather than God's plan.

Deceit

The people of Gibeon did not go to war with the others. They made peace by deceit. The Children of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, only a few days' journey from the Gibeonites. Into Israel's camp went some men as if they were ambassadors from a faraway country. They were wearing old shoes and clothing. Their food provisions were dry and moldy. Their wine bottles (perhaps made of skin) were torn and mended. One would think from their appearance that the men had come a long way.

How soon one sin leads to another! The Gibeonites deceived the Children of Israel by their looks and they did not tell the truth when they asked for peace to be made with them. This lesson reminds one that it is just as much a sin to deceive others by looks and actions as by words.

Upon another occasion the Lord told Samuel: "The LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (I Samuel 16:7). So it was with the Gibeonites and their dealings with the Children of Israel, who thought that the Gibeonites were telling the truth because of the

did in Egypt,

¹⁰ And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that *were* beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which *was* at Ashtaroth.

¹¹ Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We *are* your servants: therefore now make ye a league with us.

¹² This our bread we took hot *for* our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you; but now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy:

¹³ And these bottles of wine, which we filled, *were* new; and, behold, they be rent: and these our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey.

¹⁴ And the men took of their victuals, and asked not *counsel* at the mouth of the Lord.

¹⁵ And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them.

¹⁶ And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they *were* their neighbours, and *that* they dwelt among them.

¹⁷ And the children of Israel journeyed, and came unto their cities on the third day. Now their cities *were* Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and Kirjathjearim.

¹⁸ And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the Lord God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the princes.

¹⁹ But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn

outward appearance. But the Gibeonites did not deceive God, for He looked on their hearts.

Their Own Understanding

Perhaps the Children of Israel were proud to be so honored as to have foreign ambassadors call on them. They trusted their own wisdom instead of asking God what to do (Joshua 9:14). -

Even though the Gibeonites appeared to be telling the truth, the Children of Israel seemed to suspect some fraud and asked from what country they came. The Gibeonites did not tell. Lest they would be caught in their scheme, the Gibeonites began to enlarge their story, telling that their bread was fresh-baked the day they left, but was now dry and moldy. Their clothing was in worse condition than that of the Children of Israel after they had wandered in the wilderness forty years (**Deuteronomy 8:4** ⁴ Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.)).

The Gibeonites seemed to know a great deal about God. They had heard even of the miracles He had performed for the Children of Israel in Egypt, and the victories over the kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan river. They must have known, too, that God had not forbidden the Children of Israel to make peace with the inhabitants of far-off cities (**Deuteronomy 20:10-16** ¹⁰ When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. ¹¹ And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, *that* all the people *that is* found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. ¹² And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: ¹³ And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: ¹⁴ But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, *even* all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. ¹⁵ Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities *which are* very far off from thee, which *are* not of the cities of these nations. ¹⁶ But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee *for* an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth:), for they posed as such people. They professed a respect for God. They wanted peace at any cost and submitted to be servants of the Israelites. Then they asked for a league.

No Repentance

The Gibeonites' only chance for life was to make peace, with the Children of Israel. After the Israelites had entered their cities it would have been too late. The way to avoid judgment is to meet it with true repentance. We do not read that the Gibeonites renounced their gods and cast themselves upon the mercy of God. By deceit they made a treaty which permitted them to live. That was all they asked for — to live. The evil they did was not justified by the good. Even though they were permitted to live, they would still have to stand before God to account for the deceit and lies in their lives.

All sinners today stand in the place of the Canaanites. God's judgment and destruction lie ahead of them. What will they do? Some will rebel as did many of the Canaanites who were eventually destroyed. Some will imitate the Gibeonites. By deceitfulness and lies they will try to climb up "some other way" (**John 10:1** ¹ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.)). Such people Christ called thieves and robbers, and they will never go to Heaven.

Other sinners are like what the Gibeonites pretended to be: their souls are thirsty because sin has failed to satisfy. Their bread is

unto them by the Lord God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them.

²⁰ This we will do to them; we will even let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath which we swore unto them.

²¹ And the princes said unto them, Let them live; but let them be hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation; as the princes had promised them.

²² And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We *are* very far from you; when ye dwell among us?

²³ Now therefore ye *are* cursed, and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.

²⁴ And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the Lord thy 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 sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing.

²⁵ And now, behold, we *are* in thine hand: as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do.

²⁶ And so did he unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, that they slew them not.

²⁷ And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord, even unto this day, in the place which he should choose.

moldy and dry: there is always a spiritual famine in the world. Their garments are old: their own "righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). They have heard the news of the power of God to deliver and to give victory. They are willing to make peace with God on any terms. They realize it is their only chance to have eternal life. These sinners will become willing servants of God, renounce their idols and come in repentance. The only way a person can be saved from eternal destruction is to call upon God for mercy and receive forgiveness for his sins.

A Covenant

The Children of Israel did not ask counsel of God. They trusted their own judgment. A covenant was made between them and the Gibeonites. Then they discovered their mistake, for the Gibeonites were nearby Canaanites instead of ambassadors from a far-off country. Deceit and lies may be hidden for a time, but sooner or later they will be discovered. "A lying tongue is but for a moment" (Proverbs 12:19), and the truth will be revealed.

When the Children of Israel journeyed three days, they came to the four cities of the Gibeonites. A treaty had been made to let them live, so the Gibeonites were not destroyed. It was a covenant of life: The Israelites knew that God holds sacred an agreement that is made. An oath is not to be jested about or mocked at. God will hold us to a strict account in our covenant with Him.

May children learn from the lesson to be careful about making vows. God would have one to consider what he vows, with a purpose in his heart to pay, instead of making hasty, thoughtless, and reckless vows. God is not pleased with a vow that cannot be kept. It would be better if the vow had not been made than to have been made and broken. "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee" (Deuteronomy 23:21). This lesson is not for the purpose of discouraging one from making vows and consecrations. God requires all Christians to consecrate their lives continually unto Him.

Some people would try to excuse themselves by saying that they were deceived or that it was a rash vow or covenant. Yet no excuse is accepted by God. He holds one to the oath that has been made. A covenant with God is an everlasting one (**Isaiah 55:3** ³ *Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David*). Christ offered one sacrifice for sins forever (**Hebrews 10:12** ¹² *But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God;*). It is not made for a convenient season but is everlasting and forever. One who has made an agreement with God, a covenant of life, should hold it sacred lest by breaking it he would cause the wrath-of God to fall upon him. Even many years later, when Saul slew the Gibeonites (which was breaking the covenant) God sent a famine for three years among the Children of Israel (**2 Samuel 21:1** ¹ *Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites*).

Not Brethren, but Bondmen

The Gibeonites had purchased their lives with a lie. They probably lost their cities, for they became a part of the inheritance of the tribe of Benjamin (**Joshua 18:25-28** ²⁵ *Gibeon, and Ramah, and Beeroth,* ²⁶ *And Mizpeh, and Chephirah, and Mozah,* ²⁷ *And Rekem, and Irpeel, and Taralah,* ²⁸ *And Zelah, Eleph, and Jebusi, which is Jerusalem, Gibeath, and Kirjath; fourteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the children of Benjamin according to their families.*). They lost their liberties, for the

Gibeonites were made bondmen or servants — "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Joshua 9:23). The Gibeonites made no excuse for themselves. They told the Israelites to do to them as seemed right. They were in the hands of the Children of Israel and at their mercy.

The Children of Israel had trusted in their own wisdom, which was not sufficient. They suffered for their failure to ask God's advice, and for their haste. Because they spared the Gibeonites, the Children of Israel were required to fight to protect them (**Joshua 10:6** ⁶And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal, saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us.).

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why did the Gibeonites want to make a league with the Israelites?
- 2 What wrong did they do?
- 3 Why did they deceive the Children of Israel?
- 4 When was the deceit uncovered?
- 5 Instead of brethren of the Children of Israel, what did the Gibeonites become?
- 6 What mistake did Israel make?
- 7 How can asking God's advice be a help to us?