

*The Book Of*  
**JOSHUA**  
**JOSHUA AND THE GIBEONITES**  
*Joshua 9:1-27*

## Introduction

### One Book, Two Authors

The book of Joshua is a historical record of events that happened 1400BC

- Penned by human author(s)
- Penned by the Holy Spirit

The account has

- Physical content (military people have studied the battle campaigns)
- Spiritual content (spiritual people have studied the spiritual lessons)

You can unlock the physical content from study

- You can only unlock the spiritual content through prayer
- That is why we pray before entering into a study

### Two Campaigns, What Reponse?

Israel had completed two successful military campaigns

- The impregnable fortress that was Jericho laid in ruins
- The proud city that was Ai had been burnt to the ground
- All the people lay slain

As a military strategy, it is was perfect

- A classic case of divide and conquer
- Joshua had invaded from the east and gone through the middle of the land
- The Southern Campaign **Joshua 10**
- The Northern Campaign **Joshua 11**

We (as spectators) watch from the side lines

- Intrigued, emotionally neutral
- The people in the land were on the pitch
- Emotionally and physically invested

**Question:** Here comes this invading army...what are we going to do?!

**Answer:** Attack or Deceive

## Two Reactions From Canaan Inhabitants

### Canaanite Coalition

**Joshua 9:1-2**

*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 towards Lebanon – the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite – heard of it, that they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord.*

The many inhabitants in Canaan were all descendants of Ham (Noah's son)

- Ham had sinned against his father in **Genesis 9**
- Something of this corruption survived to his descendants
- They were all united against God's people

This coalition of Hamitic tribes were drawn from three places:

1. *the hills* Southern region of the land
2. *the lowland* Lower central region of the land

3. *in all the coasts of the Great Sea towards Lebanon* Western / coastal region of the land

heard of it

**Question:** What did these kings and cities hear of?

**Answer:** They heard of the defeat of Jericho and Ai

- They heard of the crossing of the Jordan
- They heard of the defeat of Og and Sihon (Amorite kings on the east of the Jordan)
- They heard of the crossing of the Red Sea and the escape from Egypt

Their response was unanimous:

- Let's pool our resources
- Let's unite in one might force to fight against Israel

**Joshua 9:3-6**

*But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended. Old and parched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. 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."*

The people of Gibeon were Hivites

- They heard the same report as their cousins in neighbouring cities
- They wanted to save their lives like their cousins
- They determined deception was a better policy than attack

The people of Gibeon sent a delegation of people

- With the objective of cutting a covenant with Israel
- Such a legally binding treaty would secure them from destruction

**Exodus 34:15 (Berean Study Bible)**

*Do not make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you, and you will eat their sacrifices.*

Israel were forbidden by the Lord to make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land

- This did not forbid them from making a covenant with those outside the land
- Such covenants could be beneficial for resources

It would appear the Gibeonites were well informed of this fact, because

- They presented themselves as travelling from a distant land
- Not a nearby walled city
- Made their clothes, provisions and in appearance to match their false testimony

Here's Joshua in Israeli headquarters in Gilgal

- Gathered round a map of the land slowly moving his toy soldiers into position
- When a junior officer comes to report that, "A foreign group of emissaries have entered the camp, sir!"

Joshua grants this ragged group of apparent ambassadors an audience

- The Gibeonites take no time to spin their false testimony of origin
- Along with their true desire to cut a covenant

## Two Spiritual Attacks

**Ephesians 6:13**

*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

For the child of God

- Every battle is a spiritual battle
- We see the physical element
- But do we strive in prayer to see the spiritual element?

- Both the Canaanite Coalition
- And the Gibeonite Delegation
- Are illustrations of satanic attacks

The devil comes in two modes of attack

1. Dragon      Open Attack
2. Serpent     Disguised Attack

All the while Joshua and Israel are

- Physically taking ground from a people group
- Spiritually taking ground from the enemy (the devil)

The enemy has successfully taken control of a land promised to the children of God

- He has filled that country with sin and corruption
- The land was defiled with strongholds of pagan idolatry

The enemy is not going to taking defeat lying down

He mounts a two-pronged attack

1. A frontal assault -       Canaanite Coalition
2. A covert infiltration -     Gibeonite Delegation

The child of God will face frontal assaults

- Recognisable enemies
- Who pose a direct opposition to their faith

The child of God will face covert assaults

- Those who present themselves as friends
- Whose motives are sinister and unseen

### The Bad Gibeonite Character

That the Gibeonite deception is Satanic in nature

- Is clearly seen in the methods the delegation employed to achieve their goal

*they worked craftily*

- This is the first description of the devil in Scripture
- *Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field* **Genesis 3:1 NASB**

*pretended to be ambassadors*

- A false identity; the devil always comes in disguise
- *like a roaring lion* **1 Peter 5:8**
- *masquerades as an angel of light* **2 Corinthians 11:14**

*we have come from a far country*

- This was a lie, Gibeon was a city 25 miles to the south of Gilgal
- The devil a liar, the “*father of lies*”

### The Good Gibeonite Character

Their actions, though deceitful and wrong

- Betray something of the fear of God in them
- This will prove revolutionary later on

Rahab had reported to the two spies:

**Joshua 2:9**

*I know that the Lord has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you.*

Whether the inhabitants of the land acknowledged it or not

- They knew the Lord had given the land to Israel
- They knew judgement was coming

Somewhere in their psyche

- They knew attack would not work
- So, deception was the more prudent policy

## Suspicion

### Israel's Suspicion

The children were not without understandable suspicion

#### **Joshua 9:7**

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

There's something fishy going on

- The Gibeonites shuffle on their feet
- Knowing they are being sounded out
- They direct their attack solely on Joshua

#### **Joshua 9:8a**

*And they said to Joshua, "We are your servants."*

This was another lie

- They were not their servants
- They were their enemies

Satan will always strike at the head:

#### **Zechariah 13:7**

*"Strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered; Then I will turn My hand against the little ones."*

If the Gibeonites can get Joshua, the shepherd

The rest of Israel will be ensnared

### Joshua's Suspicion

#### **Joshua 9:8b**

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

Joshua knew something was up

- There was a sense within him that said, "Something isn't right."
- Instead of acting on that sense
- Instead of coming to the Lord in prayer about the matter
- He allowed himself to be swayed by their arguments

God has given us all

- A second sense
- A spiritual intuition
- A discernment of spirits
  
- This should never be dismissed
- This should always be heeded
- This should be a trigger to pray over the matter

### Illustration

Buying the Skoda Fabia

### Christian Suspicion

The Christian should always be growing in Christ

- One of the steps toward maturity
- Is rising sense of the spiritual
- A heeding of the voice of the Spirit

The difficulty is

- The direction and leading of the Holy Spirit
- Often is contradictory to the evidence of the eyes
- Sometimes to reason

### **Galatians 5:16**

*I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh*

Prayer will heighten your awareness of the leading of the Holy Spirit

- If you get a check in your spirit
- If your spiritual intuition says, “Who are you, and where do you come from?”
- Come to the Lord in prayer

## The Gibeonite Deception

### **Joshua 9:9-11**

*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, and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan – to Sihon king of Hesbon, and Og king of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth. 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.”*

The Gibeonites deceive with a two-fold lie

1. False testimony for the ears
2. False testimony for the eyes

### Audible Deception

*From a very far country your servants have come*

- No you haven't!
- You're from just down the road!

*because of the name of the Lord your God; for we have heard of His fame*

Next they sprinkle a little God-talk

- Make yourself sound spiritual to those who are spiritual
- The guard drops and the heart become inclined

There are many false ministers in today's world and the church

- Their message does not come from God
- Their intentions are selfish
- But they sprinkle their words with a little God-talk
- So many get sucked in

*all that He did in Egypt, and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites*

This is clever, they testify to hearing about past victories (months and years ago)

- They do not mention the recent victories over Jericho and Ai (last week)
- If they mention recent victories then Joshua would know they could not have come “from a very far country”

*now therefore make a covenant with us.”*

There is the seed of faith in the testimony of the Gibeonites

- Indeed, they have seen the hand of God move
- Indeed, they fear the judgement from that same hand
- But instead of approaching Israel in faith (like Rahab)
- They approach Israel trusting in their own schemes
- They weren't “seekers”
- They were “sneakers”

### Visual Deception

#### **Joshua 9:12-14**

*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 mouldy. 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. And the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not take counsel of the Lord.*

- Having employed the ears of the Israelites to win their hearts
- They employ the eyes of the Israelites to win their minds

*“But now **look**, it is dry and mouldy”, they say*

*“And these wineskins which we filled were new, and **see**, they are torn”, they say*

The Israelites are being led to believe based on what they can see

- “Seeing is believing” says the worldly proverb
- But the word of God says, *“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”* **2 Corinthians 5:7**

The persuasion of the Gibeonites

- Is designed to cause Joshua and Israel make a decision based on their own reason and judgement
- The child of God should make their decisions based on the counsel of God
- If no word from God is forthcoming – you wait on the Lord

## The Israeli Error

### **Joshua 9:14-15**

*And the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not take counsel of the Lord. 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.*

### Error of Prayer

#### **Benjamin Franklin**

*By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.*

The difficult lesson to learn from Joshua is

- By failing to pray, you are preparing to fail.

The leaders of Israel examined the evidence with their eyes

- For many that is showing due diligence
- However, this is taking the ‘scientific approach’
- Not taking the ‘spiritual approach’

This is a repeat of the mistake made at Ai

- Failing to take counsel from God
- We take counsel from His Word and His Spirit

### Illustration

Meeting again / building

- Scientific approach – guidelines and personal convictions
- Spiritual approach – seek the Lord in prayer
  
- Times of clear guidance - which require action
- Times of silence - which require waiting on the Lord

We need to adjust our ways of doing things if we are to progress in the faith

### Error Of Haste

Joshua acted hastily, and that was a mistake

- Joshua made peace with the Gibeonites
- Joshua aligned Israel with the Gibeonites by way of covenant

### **Hebrews 6:12**

*imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

The Christian is to operate by *“faith and patience”*

- Not in sight and haste

- Joshua was living in enemy territory and needed to act with caution
- The church of Jesus Christ is living in enemy territory, we too need to act with caution

## A Godly Conclusion

### The Truth Will Out

#### **Joshua 9:16-21**

*And it happened at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were their neighbours who dwelt near them. Then the children of Israel journeyed and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-Jearim. 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 murmured against the rulers. 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. 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. And the rulers said to them: We will let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation, as the rulers had promised them.*

### Wait & See

There are times when you seek the face of God

- And He does not answer immediately
- In such cases you need to wait
- That's hard, waiting is not easy

It's amazing how your perspective can shift after a few days of holding a matter before the Lord

- Joshua and Israel's perspective certainly shifted after a few days

### What To Do

Now Joshua and the leaders were faced with two questions:

- The Gibeonites have been dishonourable to us, shall we be dishonourable to them – and kill them?
- The people are murmuring against us, what shall we do?

In both cases the answer was the same

- Let's honour the Lord God
- In both cases you set an example of true godliness
- In both cases you draw the minds of the people toward God

Jesus exalts his children to be people of their word:

#### **Matthew 5:37**

*"But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.*

Years later King Saul violated this covenant (**2 Samuel 21**)

- God judged the nation severely as a result - three years of famine
- God took Israel at their word most seriously
- God takes you at your word most seriously

### Woodcutters & Water Carriers

The Gibeonite deception succeeded

The people survived, but with a life of servitude

Woodcutters	-	Wood for fire and heat
Water Carriers	-	Water for washing and plumbing

The Gibeonites were the first plumber and heating engineers!

## A Redeemed People

#### **Joshua 9:22-25**

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

*So they answered Joshua and said, "Because it was certainly told your servants 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. And now, here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us. So he did to them, and delivered them out of the hand of Israel, so that they did not kill them. 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.*

## Calling To Account

Joshua calls the Gibeonites to account

- He challenges them as to the reason for their conduct
- He pronounces a curse on them

The response from the Gibeonites is telling

- They knew the commandment of the Lord
- That the death penalty had been prescribed for all the inhabitants of the land

Having counted the cost

- They realised they could not defeat the might of Israel's army or their God
- They recognised that life, even as a slave, is better than death
- So, they yielded themselves to the will of Joshua
- Joshua, we are told, "*delivered them out of the hand of Israel, so that they did not kill them*"

This is the rationale of every Christian

- Everyone is born with a death penalty over their head (because of sin)
- The wise person counts the cost
- They realised they cannot escape God's wrath against sin
- They yielded to Jesus as His bond servant
- Jesus, who was prefigured by Joshua, delivers them from death

## Fear Of God

The Gibeonites knew the command of God

*it was certainly told your servants 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;*

The Gibeonites feared the command of God

*therefore we were very much afraid for our lives because of you*

Their action were motivated

- By faith in the word of God
- By fear of the word of God

### **Proverbs 9:10**

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

The Gibeonites had the beginning of wisdom "*The fear of the Lord*"

- What they lacked was, "*knowledge of the Holy One*"
- What better place to get it than the Tabernacle of God?

They were put to work

- Supplying wood for the sacrifices
- Supplying water for the bronze laver

Everyday they would be exposed to the sacrifices that prefigured Christ

Everyday they would be exposed to the teaching and instruction of the priests

## A Transformed People

The wonderful thing is:

- Instead of the children of Israel being led astray by the foreign God's of the Gibeonites
- The Gibeonites were led to the true God of the Israelites

In later years, the Gibeonites came to be known as the Nethinim

- They served alongside the priests in Solomon's Temple (**1Chronicles 9:2**)

- Gibeon became a priestly city – the ark stayed there (**1 Chronicles 16:39-40**)
- At least one of David's mighty men was a Gibeonite (**1 Chronicles 12:4**)
- After the Babylonian captivity over 500 Gibeonites returned to Jerusalem and help rebuild the wall

These were people who became devoted to God

- Though cursed, they came into the house of blessing
- They served alongside the High Priest
- They served alongside the King

We, though cursed, have come into the house of blessing

- We serve alongside our High Priest and King, Jesus

The Gibeonites grew to echo the heart of King David

**Psalm 84:10**

*For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand outside. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*