

## What's the Message – Lesson 42

Today's lesson is entitled, "The deceit of Gibeon."

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. As before, we pray God will use this lesson to help you understand more clearly the importance of obeying God fully and completely, and encourage you to be a faithful follower of our Lord. Amen.

Last time we saw God made no exceptions to His rules. When He commanded Israel to dedicate something to Him, He meant all of it. And when Israel learned that lesson, they were able to conquer the city of Ai and open up the promised land to their conquest. But there was still another aspect of obeying God, and as usual, the Israelites had to learn this the hard way.

As we read in Joshua, chapter 9, beginning at verse 3: *But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they on their part acted with cunning, and went and made ready provisions, and took worn-out sacks upon their donkeys, and wineskins, worn-out and torn and mended, with worn-out, patched sandals on their feet, and worn-out clothes; and all their provisions were dry and moldy. And they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal, and said to him and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a far country; so now make a covenant with us."*

Reading further we see how they built on this image, and were successful in convincing Joshua and the people that their charade was accurate and truthful.

Then in verse 15, we read: *And Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them, to let them live.* It was only three days before Israel learned the truth, but that was too late to undo the covenant that had been made. The Gibeonites actually lived nearby, and were part of the people whom God had commanded the Israelites to destroy. But Joshua was compelled to abide by the oath that had been made. Gibeon would be spared and allowed to live, but they would be slaves to the people of Israel from then on.

As we read in verses 22 and 23: *Joshua summoned them, and he said to them, “Why did you deceive us, saying ‘We are very far from you,’ when you dwell among us? Now therefore you are cursed, and some of you shall always be slaves, hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God.”*

And there, Teacher, we have a summary of the ugliness of the ninth chapter of the book of Joshua. But what does this mean to us? Is there a lesson here that applies to our lives?

Yes, there are several lessons for us to learn here, but they can be summarized briefly in two parts: to begin, go back to the time when the Gibeonites first came to Joshua and pretended to be something they were not. Was Joshua suspicious? Yes, but he and Israel failed to do the one thing that should have been foremost. See chapter 9, verse 14, where the point is made that Israel *did not ask direction from the Lord!*

Think about this for a moment. They had been successful against Jericho and Ai in the first steps of reclaiming the land that God had promised to Abraham centuries before. Now they are about to embark upon the conquest of the bulk of the territory. Hadn't the Lord taken strong enough steps to impress upon them the importance of obedience? So why did they fail this time?

Is it because we are so like Israel, that when things seem to be going well, we take the credit and start to think we don't need any outside help? And it becomes, “Thank you very much God, but I will handle this one myself.” This lesson may be thousands of years old, but we still haven't learned it! When it comes to a major step in our lives, do we turn to God and ask for His direction and guidance before we act?

Secondly, this attempt at deceit was aimed in two directions. The first is the surface level of deceit aimed at Joshua and Israel. The direct and immediate consequences of that effort was to make the people of Gibeon and their descendants from that time forth slaves of the Israelites. But beneath the surface, the attempt was ultimately an effort to deceive God. And everyone who tries this will learn the painful truth, that God cannot be deceived. And those who attempt

such a foolish thing will learn there are subsequent consequences that are deep, wide, and long-lasting. Of this we shall learn more in our next lesson.

Next time we shall look into these subsequent consequences as we study the tenth and eleventh chapters of the book of Joshua.