

The Dangers Of Deceit

Joshua 9:1-27

Introduction

The children of Israel have made inroads in the Promised Land. They have defeated both Jericho and Ai. In this chapter the people of Gibeon deceive the leadership of Israel into thinking they are a distant people—living in a far land—who are no threat either to Israel or God’s plans of victory. The people of Gibeon will seek to enter into a Covenant with Israel—but the foundation of that Covenant will be based on lies and deception. **Can you have a healthy relationship based on a lie?**

In this chapter we see the enemies of God and God’s people building a broad coalition to combat the threat of Israel’s arrival and occupation of the land. We shouldn’t be surprised that the enemies of God will unite in a common cause to impede God’s plans. Why was it so easy to deceive the leaders of Israel? Once again—the leaders failed to pray—and failed to seek God’s guidance—God’s will—God’s heart in the matter. Jericho had walls and Ai had weapons—but Gibeon used fraud and trickery—duplicity and misleading appearances!

The Enemies Alliance Against The People Of God (vv.1-2)

Joshua 9:1 (NKJV) 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 toward Lebanon—the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite—heard about it, 2 that they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord.

The people of the land were divided among a number of nation-states or tribal groups occupying different areas.

The tribal peoples—were just that—tribal—independent under most circumstances unwilling to work with one another. But they will unite together to deal with the threat of Israel.

One of the things we should remember is that the enemies alliance is forged during the time when Israel consecrates and dedicates herself in the valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerazim (8:30-35). You will recall Joshua built an altar (8:30); offered sacrifices (v.31); inscribed a permanent memorial to the Word of God (he wrote on stones a copy of the law of Moses); placed the Ark of the covenant in the middle of the camp (v.33) and read “all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursing, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law” (v.34).

Don’t be surprised if hell joins forces with the world and your flesh—when you decide to get serious with God.

The alliance of the coalition forces of the Hittites, the Amorites etc. are formidable. **Think—determined opposition, a strong resistance against the people of God.**

The Dangers Of Deceit

Joshua 9:1-27

Paul warned the Corinthians to avoid alliances with evil (see 6:14-15) “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. . .”

Paul warns; “. . .Come out from among them. . .And be separate , says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you” (Numbers 33:51). The warning includes marriage, business, church and intimate relations. Separation—means breaking away—we are not to love the world (1 John 2:15-17)—but we are in the world—we are not to have fellowship with those who persist in sin (see 1 Cor. 5:11) and we are to cultivate Christlikeness in our own lives!

The Bible teaches that the Christian likewise is engaged in a spiritual battle.

The Enemies Strategy Of Deception And Lies (vv.3-13)

*3But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai,
4they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended,
5old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry and moldy.
6And 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.”
7Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, “Perhaps you dwell among us; so how can we make a covenant with you?”*

This is a great question; “How do we know that you aren’t one of the people of the land? How indeed are we to tell between friend and foe? How can we enter into an ill advised contract or covenant when we have already been instructed **not to enter into covenants with the people of the land?**”

The question is a call for proof of intention and identity!

Note how the people of Gibeon are called “Hivites” (mentioned in v.1). They are a part of the broad coalition that opposes Israel. The people of Gibeon were aware of the crushing defeats of walled city of Jericho and the armed and courageous community of Ai. Since walls and weapons could not stop Israel—the people of Gibeon will employ the strategy of deceit.

*8But they said to Joshua, “We are your servants.” And Joshua said to them, “Who are you, and where do you come from?”
9So 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,*

The Dangers Of Deceit

Joshua 9:1-27

Now we are given a descriptive account of just how Gibeon will lure Israel into a treaty of protection!

They lie about where they are from. They request a treaty.

They wrap the lie in religious language—they lie about honoring the LORD. We have come because of the name of the Lord your God! **Note—the lie—is based on a claim—we have heard what God did—what the God of Israel did—the power and testimony of God towards the people of Israel.**

10 and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan—to Sihon king of Heshbon, and Og king of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth.

The people of Gibeon live about 25 miles from where Israel is encamped at Gilgal (v.6). Gibeon was called a royal city—a fortress city and was larger than Ai. It's soldiers were known as fierce fighters (10:2)—and the Lord made it clear that no peace treaties were to be signed—not with the enemy—not with people dedicated to keeping the children of Israel from their inheritance.

And that is one of many reasons believers are not to be unequally yoked with the unbeliever.

The people of Gibeon represent the lies and deceptions people are willing to employ to insure their own survival and patiently **undermine God's plans for your life.**

11 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."'

What else do they lie about? They lie about their prestige and importance—they claim to be ambassadors—they claim they are willing to serve (we are your servants).

12 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 moldy.

13 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."

They lie about their food—they lie about their clothes—they present their cracked wineskins and show their worn out clothes and sandals.

The Dangers Of Deceit

Joshua 9:1-27

And in the midst of their lies—they invite the children of Israel to make a decision based on appearances!

Trust your eyes! Trust what you see! Trust what you hear!

The Tragic Weakness Of God's People In The Face Of Deception (vv.14-17)

14Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the Lord.

15So Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them to let them live; and the rulers of the congregation swore to them.

16And it happened at the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, that they heard that they were their neighbors who dwelt near them.

17Then the children of Israel journeyed and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim.

Why were the leaders of Israel so vulnerable to deception?

The first reason was their willingness to trust their own perceptions (they judged based on appearance). They trusted their own wisdom and their own instincts. Second they did not ask counsel of the Lord!

A failure to pray makes us vulnerable to deception. A refusal to seek's God's heart and God's will and examine God's Word—makes us vulnerable to deception. A refusal to walk in God's Spirit makes us vulnerable to deception. **Previous victories and experiences of recent dedications do not insure present freedom from deception.**

Three days travel revealed the lie (v.17).

When are we most vulnerable to deception? When we trust appearances without consulting the Lord!

The Lord desires to lead us and guide us and reward us. God loves truth. Jesus does not simply identify with truth—in one sense He claims to be the truth.

Satan is a liar. He is the Father of lies.

Blaise Pascal made the troubling statement; "We like to be deceived."

Satan targets our minds and our bodies and our will and our heart and our conscience. Satan's weapons include lies and suffering and pride and accusation.

The Dangers Of Deceit

Joshua 9:1-27

Satan's purposes include making us ignorant of God's will—or impatient with God's will or to act independent of God's will or to be indicted or disciplined or punished by God's will. Our defenses include the inspired Word of God; the imparted grace of God; the indwelling Spirit of God and the intercession by the Son of God (see Wiersbe's *The Strategy of Satan*; p. 94).

But weren't promises meant to be broken? What about promises based on a lie?

What now? What will Joshua do? What can we do when we discover that we have been lied to?

Necessary Corrections To Overcome Deception And Lies (vv.18-27)

18But 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 complained against the rulers.

19Then 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.

20This we will do to them: We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us because of the oath which we swore to them."

21And the rulers said to them, "Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation, as the rulers had promised them."

22Then Joshua called for them, and he spoke to them, saying, "Why have you deceived us, saying, 'We are very far from you,' when you dwell near us?"

23Now therefore, you are cursed, and none of you shall be freed from being slaves—woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God."

24So they answered Joshua and said, "Because your servants were clearly told 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.

25And now, here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us."

26So he did to them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, so that they did not kill them.

27And 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.

Note what happens in our text. Throughout the passage there is a repetition of something we might be tempted to overlook. It is keeping and honoring God's Word. The rulers of the congregation had sworn to them **by the Lord God of Israel**. They had taken an oath and entered into a Covenant (v.18). You will note that the people complained—against the rulers. Allowing the Gibeonites to live meant **that its riches would not necessarily be available to the**

The Dangers Of Deceit

Joshua 9:1-27

people of Israel. The leadership did not want to incur God's wrath and judgment by breaking their vow—they had **sword before the LORD.**

The leaders made plans for dealing with the deception by subjecting the deceivers to a life-style of servitude of the most base sort; gathering water and wood—the tasks of slaves. Joshua then proceeds to rebuke the deceivers and to make provisions to guard against further deception (v. 22).

The people of Gibeon feared for their lives (v.24). They willingly agreed to surrender and serve the people of Israel and were spared from the anger of the armies of Israel. What happened? Because they were servants in the tabernacle—this led them to worship the Lord and keep them from retaining their old idolatry and embrace the true worship of God.

The passage provides at least some clues on what to do—when we are the victims of deceit. We must recognize our role—in the con—in the deception. We must be willing to admit that perhaps we did not seek God's guidance or pray—through the decisions.

What else? We keep our word. We honor our commitments. Another way we might think about this is a commitment to protecting and honoring God's name and God's Word.

There was something more important than the deception—brought by the people of Gibeon. They would prove their loyalty to the Lord—and **remind the deceivers that God was a God who honored truth. God is a God who keeps His Word—His followers should keep their word. To dishonor God's name by breaking the treaty would invite God's judgment and wrath. First step—honor God—**

The second step—to overcome the lies and the deceit—avoid judgment. The children of Israel's loyalty lay with God—not the Gibeonites! Were the Gibeonites beneficiaries of that loyalty? Without a doubt.

The third step—to overcome deception and lies—rebuke—the liars—and guard against future deceptions. Joshua summoned the people and rebuked them publicly (see v.22). Joshua then executed judgment on the Gibeonite deceivers (v.23). They were assigned menial tasks. They were put in a position of subordination—NOT ALLY! **Their lies—proved they were enemies—not allies. Next—Joshua guarded against future deception—and evil influences—**by making them servants in the Temple (Tabernacle)—**the worship center—the heart of the Holy Presence of God. Why? To keep them from spreading their lies—their false worship—their false gods among the Israelites. This would result in the Gibeonites—eventual—conversion—change—they would become true worshippers of the God of Israel.**

Warren Wiersbe points out that there is nothing in the Scripture that points out that the Gibeonites ever created any more problems for Israel. In fact over 500 of them returned to

The Dangers Of Deceit

Joshua 9:1-27

Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity (see Ezra 2:43-58; 8:20). This would seem to indicate that they became true followers and worshippers of the Lord.

This is one of those circumstances—where Joshua makes the best—of a bad situation—**he guards against the evil influences of the deceit (Gibeon) and makes every effort to point these people to the true and living God. Day after day—they were in the presence of God.**

There are so many lessons it is hard to know where to begin. But let's start with this:

- 1. We are most vulnerable to deception on the wings of a great victory.**
- 2. We are most vulnerable to lies when we make decisions based on appearance.**
- 3. We are most vulnerable to lies when we fail to seek God for guidance.**

What do we do if we have heard lies—believed lies—made bad decisions based on lies?

Honor God. Protect and preserve His name. Avoid God's judgment and wrath—by keeping your word. Rebuke the deception—guard against future deception.

Conclusion

One of the unintended consequences of the hasty and foolish decision to enter into a covenant with the people of Gibeon is Joshua will be forced defend his enemies. "Moses warned Israel in Deuteronomy 7 that friendship with these heathen nations would only lead Israel into sin" (see *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines of the Old Testament*; p.220).