

## Joshua 9 “Honor your word!”

Joshua 8 the “Curse was Reversed” and Israel experienced Victory over Ai.

- We saw God’s Call TO Joshua and THROUGH Joshua
- We saw the VALLEY before there was VICTORY
- We saw Israel gather at Ebal & Gerizim the place of the Curse & Blessing.

**Final Application : Look to Jesus our King who hung on a tree to become our curse so that we could live in His Blessing.**

I love how David Jackman opens his commentary on Joshua chapter 9 “Whoever longs for a quiet life has been born in the wrong generation.” These words are attributed to Trotsky, as the Russian revolution appeared to sweep everything away before its advance. But has there ever been a generation that has not known conflict as a given of everyday life? Certainly no Christian can expect to be immune from the conflict “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places,” all of which are “the schemes of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11-12). That is why the Prince of Peace told his disciples, “Do not think I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34). There is no easy ride for the people of God in this fallen world, for it lies in the powerful grip of the evil one (1 John 5:19). Realism recognizes that conflict is endemic to human life and unavoidable for a Christian disciple. **PRAY**

In broad terms chapters 1- 4 detail preparations for the conquest culminating in the miraculous crossing of the Jordan, and chapters 5 – 8 record the initial victories, starting with the consecration of the nation, the miraculous fall of Jericho, the victory of Ai, and the covenant renewal at Mount Ebal. Now we launch into the third section (chapters 9-12), which takes us further in to the conquest and culminates in the list of defeated kings in chapter 12.

**Joshua chapter 9** 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*,<sup>2</sup> that they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord.

Enemies become friends when they have a common enemy... They probably believed Israel was invincible but their defeat at Ai shows them they could be beaten. The whole land is in arms against Israel...

That is what is happening again in the middle East. Enemies are coming together to fight their common enemy ISREAL! B\In our text today the bottom line is that this part of the world has long been under the devil's control. *Over centuries the sins of the Amorites had multiplied, and now the pot was overflowing with wickedness...* and wickedness is always an assault against the righteous Character of Almighty God.

God's judgment upon the wicked land will not go without diabolic resistance... **spiritual warfare!** And Hughes says, *"He is giving them the land, but it is not presented on a plate. This in itself is a depiction of the Christian life in our still fallen world, where there are no spiritual advances, personally or corporately, without challenge and conflict."*

<sup>3</sup> But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, **Gibeon was only 25 miles from Gilgal.** <sup>4</sup> they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. Clever... They could have defended themselves like the others but their thinking is surely outside of the Canaanite box! And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended, <sup>5</sup> old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry *and* moldy. <sup>6</sup> 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." <sup>7</sup> Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you dwell among us; so how can we make a covenant with you?" <sup>8</sup> But they said to Joshua, "We *are* your servants." And Joshua said to them, "Who *are* you, and where do you come from?" <sup>9</sup> 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, **Those close by are to be destroyed . A peaceful surrender leading to servitude is an option for the more distant cities, which explains why the Gibeonites claim, "We have come from a distant country" (verse 6) and then produce their evidence to prove it.**

<sup>10</sup> 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. Notice that they were clever enough not to mention Jericho or Ai, which were local and might have spoiled

their ruse. <sup>11</sup> 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.”

<sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> 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.”

**What will Joshua and Israel decide to do? That is the issue poised at the end of verse 13. Will they go on the evidence of what they see and what they hear, what their senses and logical deduction seem to tell them? Or will they follow what the Law given to Moses prescribed? Numbers 27:21 is very specific in the instructions directly to Joshua about what he is to do when the Book of the Law does not cover the detail a particular circumstance. *“He [Joshua] shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD.”* That will provide the authoritative direction. But verse 14 of our text is the sad reality and constitutes the turning point in the story. The men “took or sampled” (NIV) some of the provisions, but did not ask counsel from the LORD.” Here they walk by sight and not by faith, as we so frequently do ourselves.**

*They moved forward entirely depending on their own senses and logic, their own wisdom, but they did not follow the Lord’s word and ask the Lord’s counsel.*

How often the Lord is waiting for us to seek him, to pray that he will direct our steps and govern or decision-making through the light of his Word and the grace of his providence. Yet how often we snatch our lives back into our own control. We sample the moldy bread, and we act foolishly because we have been deceived by what we see and what people say.

<sup>14</sup> Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions; but they did not ask counsel of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> 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. It is a mark of godliness to hold to an oath, even when it is difficult. **Oaths are binding (Lev 19:12; Num 30). Real issue is the sanctity of God's name.**

<sup>16</sup> And 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. **Some lies are found out quickly. [Others are taught in schools as "truth.]"**<sup>17</sup> Then the children of Israel journeyed and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities *were* Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath Jearim. <sup>18</sup> 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 complained against the rulers. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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." Now that's a commitment! Ps 15:4. Once the oath was made, God expected them to keep it.

Deut. 10 verse 20... You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take **oaths in His name. *Wow, make oaths in the name of God... that's serious... it was meant to be.***

Jeremiah tells us that as you used to swear by the name of Baal now you swear by "His name". This is a sign of being spiritually mature

**You better keep your vow or oath!**

**Numbers 30 verse 2...** If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

**Leviticus 19:12** "And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I *am* the LORD."

**Deut. 23** says, you make a vow and don't fulfill it... **You are sinning big time.**

Man looks for loopholes and abuses the rules...

As Hughes points out "For example, some rabbis had begun to teach that an oath was not binding if it omitted God's name or did not imply it. Therefore, if you swore by your own life or someone else's life or the life of the king (as Abner did in 1 Samuel 17:55) or by your health (Psalm 15:4 KJV) or by some object, but avoided mentioning or alluding to the name of God, you were not bound. **Loop holes; ways around what God said... the heart is desperately wicked isn't it?**

The Mishnah devotes one whole section called "Shebuoth" (oaths) to an elaborate discussion of when oaths are binding and when they are not.


Bottom line was they created a way to lie... when it suited them.

**The results were disgraceful.** There was an underlying epidemic of frivolous swearing. Oaths were continually mingled with everyday speech: **"By your life"** – **"By my beard"** – **"May I never see the comfort of Israel if..."**

Playing games with the truth... Don't mess with truth... Integrity lost its meaning. Evasive swearing became a fine art. The height of accomplishment was, while lying, to convince another you were telling the truth by bringing some person or eminent object into reference. For instance, one rabbi taught that if one

**"swore by Jerusalem"** one was not bound; but if one

**"swore toward Jerusalem"** it was binding – evidently because that in some way implied the Divine Name. All of this produced a moral schizophrenia: **"I'm not really lying, but I'm also not telling the truth."** The use of oaths was like children's **"I had my fingers crossed."**

 **To a God of truth... this was an abomination.** John 8:44  
You are of *your* father the **devil**, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a **lie**, he speaks from his own *resources*, **for he is a liar** and the father of it.

[How about us?] In today's world, we have lost the sanctity of a commitment. You better be people of your word. If you say you're going to do it, DO IT!

<sup>21</sup> And 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." <sup>22</sup> Then 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? <sup>23</sup> Now therefore, you *are* cursed, and none of you shall be freed from being slaves—woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God." <sup>24</sup> So 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. <sup>25</sup> And now, here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us." <sup>26</sup> So he did to them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, so that they did not kill them. <sup>27</sup> 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.

The note at the end of verse 27 that the Gibeonites continued in Israel "to this day" is a significant pointer to the future. Promises made in the name of Yahweh are never to be broken, as Israel's first king, Saul, was to demonstrate. In 2 Samuel 21:1-2, King David, suffering from three years of famine in Israel, discover that this is "bloodguilt on Saul and on his house, because he put the Gibeonites to death" (v. 1b). In his zeal for his country, Saul attempted to remove them and so to break the oath sworn by Joshua. ***But an oath sworn in the name of Yahweh can never be broken, not even by an anointed king.*** The Gibeonites continued in Israel through the generations, even beyond the Babylonian exile, so that when the walls of Jerusalem were being rebuilt centuries later under Nehemiah, we find among the list of the builders "Melatiah the Gibeonite and ... the men of Gibeon" (Nehemiah 3:7).

## The Gibeonites after Joshua 9.

- a. The Gibeonites became servants at the tabernacle, just as Joshua had commanded.
- b. Gibeon becomes a priestly city; the Ark of the Covenant stayed at Gibeon often in the days of David and Solomon (1 Chronicles 16:39-40 and 21:29).
- c. At least one of David's *mighty men* was a Gibeonite (1 Chronicles 12:4).
- d. God spoke to Solomon at Gibeon (1 Kings 3:4).
- e. Gibeonites were among those who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem with Nehemiah (Nehemiah 3:7 and 7:25).
- f. These are examples of the great things God can do with people who are sinners, but come to Him in humility and love.

No evidence in Scripture that their descendants caused problems. On the contrary, their faithfulness is testified to: the Nethinim (“devoted persons”) were their descendants and had a place of honor in the service of the temple centuries later (1 Chr 9:2; Ezra 2:43-58; 8:20; Neh 7:60).

The very thing the enemy planned to destroy is preserved and enhanced by God’s overruling providence. This does not provide an easy excuse for our failure and sinful self-confidence, but it gives wonderful hope to those of us who are only too conscious of our past mistakes and weaknesses.

This is the glory of Yahweh. He cannot be outmaneuvered by human cunning or hindered by human fallibility.

Think of those ninety-five sons of Gibeon rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 7:25). What privileges came their way because their lives were refocused on the tabernacle, the place of sacrifice and communion with God, the manifestation of his living presence among his people! In David Howard’s words, “They appear to have been fully assimilated among the Jews, as much recipients of God’s grace.” Neither the Gibeonites nor the Israelites came out of the story untainted, but the grace of God superabounds over all human sin and failure. He is the hero of the story.

