

Joshua 9 - Thursday, May 3rd, 2012

(1) Now when all the kings west of the Jordan heard about these things—those in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the entire coast of the Great Sea as far as Lebanon (the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites)— (2) they came together to make war against Joshua and Israel.

- Right at the beginning, in these first two verses, we have a most interesting situation, and it's one for which may not be so easily seen at first.
- Notice that there are six "ites," if you will, that ally together in order to defeat the Israelites. This begs the question of why they would do this.
- I'm of the belief that it's because they had caught word and heard how that the Israelites defeated Jericho, then Ai, both of which were alone.

- In other words, they think Jericho and Ai fell to the Israelites because they hadn't formed an alliance together with other nations to defeat them.
- It's for this reason that all six of them ally together, which will actually end up being only five as we'll see in the next verses related to the Hivites.
- The reason this is so important to note is that no matter what the wicked plan as an attack against us, God will not allow it to succeed or prevail.

Isaiah 54:17 NIV no weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and this is their vindication from me," declares the LORD.

Proverbs 26:2 NIV Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an undeserved curse does not come to rest.

- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a moment as I take this a step further and suggest it not only won't prevail but it actually plays into God's plan.
- God will take this wicked alliance and their plans, and make it praise Him, and in so doing, will deliver five nations to the Israelites in one shot.
- This means that the Israelites won't have to fight a total of five battles to have five victories, they will kill five birds with one stone, if you please.

Psalms 76:10 KJV Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

- In all fairness to the Israelites, it would have been perfectly understandable to fret over the fact that it appeared to be six of them against one.
- However, having just defeated Ai by God's grace and mercy even though the odds are now seemingly against them, they know God is for them.
- The bottom line is that the fingerprints of the Lord are all over this, as the Hand of the Lord is on and in even this, and He will work it all for good.

Charles Spurgeon - "Nothing helps us to bear a provocation so well as humbly seeing the hand of God in it. Nothing brings God to His children's rescue like the reviling's of their enemies. Fathers cannot bear to hear their dear ones abused."

(3) But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, (4) they worked craftily, and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins torn and mended, (5) old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves; and all the bread of their provision was dry *and* moldy. (6) 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." (7) Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, "Perhaps you dwell among us; so how can we make a covenant with you?" (8) But they said to Joshua, "We *are* your servants." And Joshua said to them, "Who *are* you, and where do you come from?" (9) 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, (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. (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.'" (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."

- While this is quite clever on the part of the Hivites it's wicked, evil, and deceptive in their attempt to get Israel to make a peace treaty with them.
- By the way, not much has changed today. Israel is still to this day the recipient of the same wickedness, evil and deception to make peace.
- Notice how cunning they are in talking about what God did in Egypt, and not Jericho or Ai. Why? That would expose where they were from.
- Be that as it may, and suffice it to say, this is wrong on every level, for a number of reasons not the least of which is they were forbidden to do it.

Exodus 23:23-24 NKJV For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off. (24) You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their *sacred* pillars.

- I think it was this command of the Lord concerning the Hivites that is giving Joshua pause, and it's evidenced by his hesitation to believe them.

Colossians 3:15 NIV Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Charles Spurgeon – "Their wish to be spared was natural, their submission to Israel was commendable, but their crafty deception was unjustifiable."

- There's another important lesson that's woven into the fabric of the text as it relates to the tactics and devices the enemy will use to deceive us.
- Yes, our battle is not against flesh and blood, but the Devil knows this and will often times fill the heart of a person and use them to deceive us.
- If you were to put a caption on this particular passage, it'd have to be something along the lines of, taking a stand against the devils schemes.

Ephesians 6:11-12 NIV Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. (12) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

F.B. Meyer - "It is in this way that we are tempted still more by the wiles of Satan than by his open assaults; more by the deceitfulness of sin than by its declared war. And it is little matter for wonder that those who succeed at Jericho and Ai fall into the nets woven and laid down by the wiles of Gibeon. Better to meet Caiaphas than Judas. A black devil is less to be dreaded than a white one."

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

- Ouch! For what would be deemed obvious reasons this is a big boo boo. When we don't inquire of the Lord, the enemy is given a blank check.
- The question I have in regards to their not inquiring of the Lord, is why not? What was it that made them think they didn't need to seek the Lord?
- I have a thought as to why, and I would like to share it with you by virtue of the far-reaching ramifications in terms of how we do this in our lives.

- Notice how that the men of Israel sampled the provisions of the Hivites first, before they decided that there was no need to inquire of the Lord.
- Here's what I'm thinking, their decision was based on what they saw, felt, and tasted, instead of being based on the Lord's word concerning it.
- There's an interesting account in the book of Genesis where Isaac, like Joshua here, makes a decision based on feelings and not God's Word.

- It's recorded in Genesis 27, and as you're turning there, I'll give you the back-story so as to refresh your memory with how all of this goes down.
- Isaac is blind and near death so he seeks to give his blessing to his son Esau before he dies, but Rebekah catches wind of it, and tells Jacob.
- In order to deceive Isaac into giving the blessing to Jacob instead of Esau she makes venison like Esau and dresses Jacob up like Esau as well.

Genesis 27:18-27 NIV He went to his father and said, "My father." "Yes, my son," he answered. "Who is it?" (19) Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may give me your blessing." (20) Isaac asked his son, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?" "The LORD your God gave me success," he replied. (21) Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not." (22) Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." (23) He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him. (24) "Are you really my son Esau?" he asked. "I am," he replied. (25) Then he said, "My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing." Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank. (26) Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come here, my son, and kiss me." (27) So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed.

- I'm certain that for the most part you know where I'm going with all of this so I'll get right to the point. Isaac made his decision based on feelings.
- Even though the words he heard sounded like Jacob, the feelings he felt, the smells he smelt, and the provisions he sampled were like Esau.
- In other words, Isaac went against the word he heard, Jacob's voice, and made his decision to bless based on that which he felt, Esau's arm.

- The common denominator between a Joshua now and an Isaac then is that they based their decisions on their physical senses not God's Word.
- Would to God that we would be numbered amongst those found seeking the will of God, in the Word of God, so we make those godly decisions.
- Would to God that we would resist the temptation to make major life changing decisions based on our feelings and the emotions of the moment.

(15) 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. (16) 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. (17) 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. (18) 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. (19) 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. (20) 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." (21) 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."

- Wow, isn't this interesting! It's as if the Israelites abide by that old adage; "two wrongs don't make a right." It would be wrong to break their oath.
- If you were to ask me what I thought one of the lost jewels in the church today was, it'd have to be the keeping of ones word, no matter what.
- One might argue that they were tricked into making this vow so surely God would release them from it, wouldn't He? No He won't, here's why:

Psalms 15:1-5 NIV **A psalm of David.** LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? (2) He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart (3) and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellowman, (4) who despises a vile man but honors those who fear the LORD, who keeps his oath even when it hurts, (5) who lends his money without usury and does not accept a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.

- It's interesting to note that King Saul would eventually break this vow to the Gibeonites and sadly, it would bring God's judgment down on Israel.
- God's judgment comes by way of a famine upon Israel while under the rule of King David, who, interestingly, inquires of the Lord concerning it.

2 Samuel 21:1 NKJV Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, "*It is* because of Saul and *his* bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites."

Charles Spurgeon – "An oath is never to be lightly treated, nor a promise either, in deed the Christian man's word is his bond, and is everyway as binding as an oath."

(22) 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? (23) 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." (24) 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. (25) And now, here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us." (26) So he did to them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, so that they did not kill them. (27) 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.

- I can't help but believe that the Gibeonites were so relieved given that they'd just been spared of imminent death at the hands of the Israelites.
- No wonder they tell Joshua to do with them whatever seems good and right to him. If you really think about it, the alternative isn't very attractive.
- This echoes the Psalm of David in 84:10 when he says that he'd rather be a doorkeeper in the Lord's house than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

- Incidentally, there is a most fascinating detail that's recorded here, and one for which we're all prone to read through without taking any notice.
- It has to do with Joshua making them serve close in proximity to the Temple by cutting and carrying the wood and water for and to the Temple.
- Why is this detail so important? It speaks to the wisdom from, and the grace of, God in Israel being an influence, rather than being influenced.

- The world will say; "keep your friends close and your enemies closer," with the idea that you will need to constantly keep your eyes on them.
- Conversely, the Lord would say; "keep your friends close and your enemies closer," with the idea that you can constantly be a witness to them.
- We need look no further than Israel's future, which to us is Israel's history in order to see that this is exactly what happened with the Gibeonites.

- In 1 Chronicles 16 and 21 were told the Ark of the Covenant would stay at Gibeon on several occasions under the rule of David and Solomon.
- In 1 Chronicles 12:4 were told that one of the mighty men of David was a Gibeonite, and in 1 Kings 3:4, God speaks to Solomon at Gibeon.
- In Nehemiah 3:7 and 7:25 is my favorite, we have recorded how the Gibeonites would work to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem under Nehemiah.

- There's one last thing that I would like to point out before we bring the chapter and study in for a close. Notice how that there is this parallel.
- What I mean by that is there's this parallel between the Gibeonites here in Joshua chapter nine, and Rahab the prostitute in Joshua chapter two.
- One commentator said, Rahab and the Gibeonites believed and were accepted. Rahab and the Gibeonites kept their word and were honored.

- Another commentator wrote, Like the Gibeonites, Rahab was a native of Canaan. Like the Gibeonites, she knew God was giving Israel the land.
- Like the Gibeonites, she responded with fear before God's people, Israel. Like the Gibeonites, Rahab acted with cunning in order to be saved.
- Like the Gibeonites, Rahab sought that she and her family might find refuge among the people of Israel, instead of perishing with her people.

David Guzik of Calvary Chapel Santa Barbara California writes that; "The Gibeonites find salvation in the God of Israel much like Rahab did in Joshua 2. Both Rahab and the Gibeonites came to the God of Israel as sinners, Rahab as a harlot, and the Gibeonites as liars. Both Rahab and the Gibeonites were willing at risk to forsake their former associations and be counted among God's people. Both Rahab and the Gibeonites, after they found salvation through the God of Israel, had a rich history."