

LESSON 8

DECEIVED BY THE ENEMY



Scripture Text: Joshua 9

The physical enemies of Israel typify spiritual enemies of a Christian. Israel failed to destroy some of the inhabitants of the land. Do we sometimes fail to eliminate some of the habits, customs, influences, interests, or associates of our former lives? Do we fail to cut some strings that tied us to the world? What effect does this have? How much does this plague our lives? Limit our influence? Keep us from complete freedom in Christ?

Joshua took the wrong course by not asking counsel of the Lord. We, too, will fail unless we follow God's leading for us. To know His leading, we must ask for it through prayer with a true desire to know.

MEMORY VERSE: *And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.*

—*Joshua 9:14*

DAILY READINGS:

- Mon.—Psalm 83** Looking to God for victory over enemies.
- Tue.—1 Samuel 16:1-13** God directs in choosing a king.
- Wed.—1 Samuel 23:1-14** God gives counsel to David.
- Thu.—1 Samuel 30:1-20** God again gives counsel to David.
- Fri.—Acts 27:1-26** God instructs Paul.
- Devotional Reading: Jeremiah 23:15-32** Prophets denounced.

The Gibeonites' Deceptive Scheme

Joshua 9:1-6 News of the complete destruction of Jericho and Ai spread to the people of Canaan, striking fear to their hearts. They had heard of the miracles in Egypt and the defeat of Sihon and Og. Most of the nations west of the Jordan, six of them, banded together to fight Joshua and drive Israel out. It was the same then as it was in Jesus' day and today; enemies join hands in an attempt to defeat the people of God. This is a losing battle.

But the people of Gibeon—people who should have been destroyed but were allowed to remain close to them—fearing defeat, had a different plan. By deceit and lies mixed with some truth, they would obtain a league with Israel and thus save their lives. The deceit: pretense of being ambassadors and old clothing and materials. The lies: that they came from afar and started with new clothing and fresh materials. The truth: that they came because of what they had heard about the Lord and that their elders sent them to make a league. We should never underestimate the deceptive power of the devil.

Joshua Makes a League

Joshua 9:7-15 *And the men of Israel said . . . Peradventure ye dwell among us . . . ?* Here, the Lord tried to warn them. The men with Joshua **took of their victuals**. In that part of the world, eating together is a bond of friendship. **Asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord**. This is always a tragic mistake. The Lord had put into their minds the thought that they may be enemies from close by. But they did not follow up on the thought, and the

Gibeonites avoided it by turning to Joshua. So now, Joshua and the princes made a league and bound it by oath. They would let the Gibeonites live. They had not sought the mind of the Lord and had made a terrible mistake.

How did it happen that Joshua found himself in this predicament? He **asked not counsel** of the Lord. How do we get into some of the messes we do sometimes? We ask not the counsel of the Lord. Why is so much of the nominal church so far from the New Testament pattern? Instead of taking counsel of the Lord, there is compromise with the enemy. God would tell us. He even tries to tell us, as He put a question in the minds of the men of Israel. But other voices clamor, and we do not listen to Him. Wouldn't He guide us in the right path, both in major decisions and in the small details of everyday living, if we listened? The standard and joy of the saints is holiness, complete submission to the Lord.

Discovery of the Deception

Joshua 9:16-18 At the end of three days—word came that the men of Gibeon were neighbors in Canaan. They were Hivites, classed among the nations God had said to destroy (verse 24; Exodus 34:10-16; Deuteronomy 7:1-6). Some men of Israel went and found the report to be true. The princes were criticized by the congregation for making the hasty league. There are always some who criticize those who are doing what needs to be done. Would they have done better?

Why do we find no evidence of chastisement of Joshua for his failure to obey the command to utterly destroy these people? There may have been private dealings we are not told of. But we do know Israel suffered much trouble from these people in years to come. Dare we question God? He always does right; He knows the heart.

Honoring the Agreement

Joshua 9:19-27 The princes argued that they could not break the word which they had sworn by the Lord God of Israel. Instead, they would make the Gibeonites and their descendants **bondmen**, slaves, to hew wood and draw water **for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord**. (Much wood and water was needed for the many sacrifices and other tabernacle services.) The Gibeonites submitted without resistance, happy to escape the death they had feared.

Did not the men of Gibeon lie? Is a contract binding when based on a lie? We in this day say no. Israel said yes. They made it in the name of God. That bore more weight than any other consideration. Whatever others did, their integrity must remain unbroken. The Gibeonites were heathen. When they spoke of God, it was "thy God," not "our God." Israel must live to a higher standard.

JUST A THOUGHT

**By the time a man realizes what a drip he has been,
it is often too late to fix the faucet.**

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