

## Joshua 9:1-27

Since they had entered the land of Canaan, Israel had experienced something of a spiritual roller coaster ride. This was to continue. No sooner did the Israelites reach the high point at the end of chapter 8 than they fell into the Gibeonites' deception.

### Summary

**In Joshua 9:1-27, Joshua made a covenant with the Gibeonites with a binding oath which affected Israel's subsequent actions, showing that when we take an oath, God expects us to keep it even though we may have made the oath to our own disadvantage.**

#### **1. Sinful Oath vv. 1-15**

An extensive Canaanite coalition was formed against Israel (9:1-2).

With the fall of Jericho and Ai, the other Canaanite cities could not afford to do nothing and wait for the Israelites to arrive at their city walls.

The Gibeonites heard the same reports about Jericho and Ai as had the other nations, but they opted for cunning deception rather than aggressive opposition (Josh 9:4-5). Suitably disguised, the Gibeonites came to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and asked that he and Israel make a covenant with them (Josh 9:6-13).

Israel also sinned in this incident. They presumed that they could evaluate the evidence, size up the situation, and make a decision regarding this treaty without seeking the counsel of God (Josh 9:14).

Consequently, 'Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live, and the leaders of the congregation swore to them' (Josh 9:15).

God answers prayer and uses it to guide believers regarding His will but we are often far too quick to neglect this means of grace (James 4:2)

#### **2. Binding Obligation vv. 16-21**

Both Gibeon and Israel sinned when they formed their alliance, BUT even though the oath was made sinfully, it was still binding.

Why did the Israelites keep this oath, and why did the Lord honor it?

Because it was an oath sworn in the Lord's Name (Josh 9:15, 18, 19).

Later in history, there was a famine in the land that lasted for three years. The Lord revealed to King David that he was punishing Israel because Saul had broken the covenant with Gibeon and sought to destroy them (2 Sam. 21:1-9).

God takes oaths seriously even if we were wrong to have made them.

Israel swore to their own detriment, but God honors those who honor their oaths (Psalm 15:1-4).

This is what the Son of God did for His people in the covenant of redemption.

The Son entered into a bond and swore to secure the salvation of His people even though it meant suffering and death for Him.

Christians must also take seriously the oaths that they take. Marriage vows have become cheap in our day and culture. When you become a church member you take oaths. Sadly today, these too are often treated lightly but what you have promised, you have promised in the sight of God, and you should take those oaths seriously.

### 3. Gracious Outcome vv. 22-27

God, in His grace and mercy, overcame the sin of the Gibeonites and the sin of Israel.

**First**, the Gibeonites were allowed to live (**Josh 9:21**).

**Secondly**, not only were the Gibeonites allowed to live, but they were also allowed to serve (**Josh (9:22-27)**). They were cursed, and would have to perform the most menial tasks, but the curse was also a blessing; they served God at the tabernacle. With God there are no menial tasks. Every opportunity to serve him is a great privilege (**Psalms 84:10**).

When the Israelites returned from exile in Babylon, there were Gibeonites among them, helping to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in service to the Lord (**Neh. 3:7; 7:25**)

The curse upon and continued presence of Gibeon in their midst, however, highlights the difficulty Israel faced with the continuing presence of Canaanites in the land.

When the conquest was complete, God's people would still face the pressure of ungodly influences. How were/are believers to live side-by-side with unbelievers?

How does Joshua resolve the dilemma of the Gibeonite presence?

He begins by pronouncing a curse upon them. They are Canaanites and they had devised and perpetrated an elaborate deception. That could be ignored.

Nevertheless, Israel had sworn an oath to them in the Name of God, and that could not be ignored, either.

To resolve this dilemma, Joshua allows them to live in Israel as resident aliens, but connected to Israel and to the Lord by covenant.

God is so gracious and so merciful and so powerful that He overrules folly and sin and from it accomplishes his sovereign plan and purpose.

God can take the most unlikely people and make them trophies of his grace. That is our hope for our unbelieving family, friends, coworkers and neighbors.

In our culture, oaths are made and broken every day but as a Christian, your word is your bond, not just to the person to whom you gave it, but to God.

You may have made an oath to your own disadvantage, but God expects you to keep it. He will give you the strength to keep it because He keeps His Word to you in Christ. His mercy will triumph over your pain and bring glory to Him in spite of your sin. That is the wonder of God's amazing grace.