

## Deception...and Grace

Rather, the land you will soon take over is a land of hills and valleys  
with plenty of rain... Deuteronomy 11:11

Deception in the Promised Land. It just doesn't seem possible, does it? Just the name Promised Land carries with it the sound of truth, victory and abundance.

*Because the Promised Land is just so full of...promise.*

But in the very same place where God has positioned truth, victory and abundance in our lives, the enemy wants to keep us in a position of lies, defeat and spiritual lack. How can that be?

I was thinking about that a lot this week and I remembered that before the Promised Land was promised to Abraham, it had another name. The Promised Land was *Canaan* and that name brings about a whole different picture.

*Because Canaan was just so full of...Canaanites...Canaan was just so full of people.*

And these people served the wrong gods. So when the people of God came to take what was already given to them by the One Who holds it ALL, many enemies came against them to defeat them with the sword, and others, who we will meet today, came against them with lies.

The enemy comes in many different ways to shake us up. The Bible says the devil roams about like a roaring lion and is also referred to as a snake. Lions and snakes attack in different ways. When a lion is attacking, you know it. You see it, you hear it. When a snake attacks, it is cunning, it is quiet, it is often not seen until the final moment, but it is just as deadly. A sword versus a lie. Today we will see that both are destructive, but one is less obvious than the other.

Joshua 9 seems to be a smaller story in a bigger picture. It seems as if in the middle of a book on battles won, someone asked a question and maybe chapter 9 gives the answer **why**...

The Israelites were back on top. Ai had been destroyed and news of this second defeat, over an enemy that had just recently brought them down, spread quickly. Kings of multiple city states heard the news and knew that they were on the path Israel was taking. They came together to attack Israel as one, because let's face it,

when an enemy hears of the way God has been bringing down all of His enemies, they make a pact to work together. They knew they could not bring Israel's God down alone...

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

The enemy was coming in like a lion. ALL of the kings west of the Jordan, all the way to the coast of the Mediterranean, as far as Lebanon came together. I think it's important to SEE what that looks like.



Remember, Israel crossed over the Jordan and is headquartered at Gilgal. They have defeated Jericho and Ai along with the people of Bethel.

These nations had not been allies until the Lord's army came marching into their Promise. These nations had formerly been enemies, had fought each other, taken from each other, had different gods, lived different lives, but to fight against the work of the Lord, they came together. The Kingdom of God was advancing and they would do everything they could, even join us with their enemies to keep it from happening. Enemies came together in an attempt to stop the move of God.

The Hittites were from the area around Hebron. The Amorites were giants, known to be strong people.

The Perizzites were scattered throughout the land. The Jebusites were from the area outside of Jerusalem and the Hivites were from the area around Shechem. These city states feared what God had been doing to other city states in the area. The Bible tells us that folks as far out as the Mediterranean Sea had heard what God had been doing and were afraid. People all the way north to the land of

Lebanon feared and were afraid given what God had been doing as He advanced His Kingdom on earth.

I wanted to see at the least how many miles the Lord's renown had spread at this time among the people of the land, given these cities that were mentioned. I googled the distance from Jericho to Lebanon. The distance was 90 miles. I was getting ready to record it when I noticed that I had been given the distance from *Jericho, NY to Lebanon, VT*...Did anyone else NOT know there is a Jericho, NY AND a Lebanon, VT? After correcting the search, the distance did not change very much. It is recorded that folks in Lebanon, over 104 miles away, in an age without television, internet and phones, had heard what God was doing as He advanced into the Promised Land. When God moves, we have no idea how far the testimony will go. 104 miles 3000 years ago, to millions today. Only God moves like that!

Enemies coming together against the move of God is nothing new. It happened in the Old Testament all of the time, and it happened in the New Testament as well. Jesus Himself had to deal with multiple enemies. Christ came to earth to build the Kingdom of God. He came to sacrifice His life to restore us to full abundant life with Christ. The Kingdom was advancing. The Pharisees and Sadducees were two groups in Israel at that time who looked down on one another, fought with one another, two groups that were not united but came together to try to bring Him down. Enemies came together in an attempt to stop the move of God

**Enemies will come together in an attempt to stop the move of God in our lives.**

Which one of us has not experienced the same thing? God is on the move in our lives and fear comes along, says we will never be able to do what God has for us, but we stand. Guilt comes along and says we will never really be forgiven for *that* thing. But we stand. Unforgiveness comes along and tells us that person deserves to be left out, they don't deserve to be forgiven,

it just hurt too much, but we choose to forgive anyway, and we stand. But sometimes, these enemies come together. Fear, guilt and unforgiveness, all at one time, in an attempt to bring us down. Enemies come together in an attempt to stop the move of God.

But one enemy chose a different path.

**<sup>3</sup> However, when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, <sup>4</sup>they resorted to a ruse: They went as a delegation whose donkeys were loaded with worn-out sacks and old wineskins, cracked and mended. <sup>5</sup> They put worn and patched sandals on their feet and wore old clothes. All the bread of their food supply was dry and**

moldy. <sup>6</sup> Then they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the Israelites, “We have come from a distant country; make a treaty with us.” Joshua 9:3-6

The Kingdom of God was advancing and all of the enemies came together, but not the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites were actually Hivites and they were next on the map. They didn't have time to get their swords out, they decided not to go along with the rest of their people and devised a plan, a scheme, the Bible calls is a ruse. Given what they say later in the chapter, these folks were not interested in being part of a move against God's people, they knew the only place they could save their lives was to be WITH the people of God. The people of Gibeon wanted to be in a treaty with the people of God.

The word treaty here is actually the word covenant. Covenant. The very enemy that God had told His people to bring down were asking to be in covenant with them. But God's people were already in covenant with Him. They knew the far reaching effects of covenant. God had never broken His covenant with them, and they were to be a people who would keep their covenants as well. Even if they were deceived...

When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are about to enter and occupy, he will clear away many nations ahead of you: the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. These seven nations are greater and more numerous than you. <sup>2</sup> When the Lord your God hands these nations over to you and you conquer them, you must completely destroy<sup>[a]</sup> them. Make no treaties with them and show them no mercy. Joshua 7:1-2

Amazing, isn't it? God had listed the very people who were on their way to bring them down. He said clearly no covenants with anyone from the land...no one...Hivites included. The Gibeonites not only devised a lie, they put the lie on. They dressed the lie. They spoke the lie. They came to the people of God with one intent. To deceive the people of God and save their own lives. The enemy knew what God had said and made every effort to not be among the fallen in the Promised Land.

The enemy knew what God had said. God's people were not to make treaties with those in the land, so they said they were from a distant land. They intentionally came with the purpose to deceive God's people, to shake them up and save themselves. They went right to the top.

**Lies don't have to shake us up.**

The Israelites said to the Hivites, “But perhaps you live near us, so how can we make a treaty with you?” <sup>8</sup> “We are your servants,” they said to Joshua. But Joshua asked, “Who are you and where do you come from?”

Joshua asked the right question, but he asked it to the wrong one. Rather than asking the enemy how he could be sure he was telling the truth, Joshua should have asked the Lord if the enemy was telling the truth.

Not consulting God had gotten Joshua in trouble again. The enemy's deception was only successful because the Israelites had not consulted God first.

The Israelites  
sampled their  
provisions but  
did not inquire of  
the Lord.  
Joshua 9:14

## Consulting God

### exposes the lies

The fail at Ai was a battle fail. They were engaged in a battle they could see with their eyes and they did not consult God. This fail was an alliance fail. They were being asked to go into covenant with another people. Both were fails, both should have been brought before the Lord. Both needed His Wisdom and not their own. We often run to the Lord in the 'battle' but we fail to run to the Lord with our 'alliances'. Every decision needs to be brought before the Lord. Every decision. We cannot trust our own thoughts; we can only trust Him.

Proverbs 3:5-7 in The Message says:

*Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; He's the one who will keep you on track. Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil!*

It is a minute by minute trusting from the bottom of our hearts. A minute by minutes not figuring it out on our own. A minute by minute consulting God on every decision and He will keep us on track.

With this decision, Israel got off track.

Rather than walking by faith, Joshua and the leaders walked by what they saw. Oh the danger of walking by sight and not by faith. There is only one way to walk victoriously, actively keeping our eyes on what we cannot see.

Three days after they made the treaty with the Gibeonites, the Israelites heard that they were neighbors, living near them. <sup>17</sup> So the Israelites set out and on the third day came to their cities: Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth and Kiriath Jearim. <sup>18</sup> But the Israelites did not attack them, because the leaders of the assembly had sworn an oath to them by the Lord, the God of Israel. Joshua 9:16-18

Joshua swore the covenant with them and three days later, when the people of God should have been taking the land in front of the, three days later when they should have been taking their inheritance from the Gibeonites, Israel realized that these folks were from a land close by, not far away. They had come with a lie, Israel had fallen and walked away from the truth.

It took only three days to recognize the lie, but it was a consequence they would live with for the rest of their lives as well as for generations to come.

Then Joshua summoned the Gibeonites and said, “Why did you deceive us by saying, ‘We live a long way from you,’ while actually you live near us? <sup>23</sup> You are now under a curse: You will never be released from service as woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God.” Joshua 9:22-23

Joshua called them out. He identified the lie, but as a man who feared God, he would keep the covenant he had made with the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites wanted to save their lives and they got that. Joshua said they would live, but they would be under a curse. They would never be released from service as woodcutters and water carriers for the house of God.

Joshua would go on to win battles. With the lie exposed, God would redeem even his shaken time. God’s people had failed big time, but God would make a way.

Just living in the Promised Land means nothing if we are not living in the truth, if we are not living closer to His presence, if we are not consulting him on it ALL. Being a citizen of Canaan did not make the Israelites successful. Conquering Jericho did not make the Israelites successful. Staying close to the Ark, consulting God, being people who were pressing in to the presence of the Lord is what made the Israelites victorious and successful in all they did (Joshua 1:7-9)

God redeems even  
our shaken times.

Israel’s sin was redeemed. God continued to walk with them as they continued to walk with Him. But what about Gibeon? What happened to them?

The take away here is that God’s grace is bigger.

God’s grace was bigger than Joshua’s decision making apart from Him.

...and...

God’s grace was bigger than the plans of the enemy.

God in His grace had a place for Gibeon. He assigned them a place as wood cutters and water carriers for the house of the Lord. God positioned them close to the place where His presence dwelt. He positioned them away from the people. He knew that the people were prone to worshiping other gods and infiltrating a pagan people into His people would corrupt His people, so He chose to keep them close, so they would be set apart, unable to infiltrate false Gods among His treasure, but also that they might see, hear and believe. Here they would be exposed to the worship of ONE TRUE GOD. A people who had worshiped many false gods would now see the freedom His people found in worshiping ONLY ONE.

That is grace. They didn't lose their lives. They saw what it looked like to live life to the full. The Gibeonites became servants. They lost their freedom, but they learned at the house of the Lord what being free truly means.

In Deuteronomy, we see that God had extended this same grace to other foreigners living in the land. God's plan has always been to see ALL brought in.

All of you stand today before the Lord your God: your leaders and your tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, <sup>11</sup> your little ones and your wives—also the stranger who *is* in your camp, from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water— <sup>12</sup> that you may enter into covenant with the Lord your God, and into His oath, which the Lord your God makes with you today, <sup>13</sup> that He may establish you today as a people for Himself, and *that* He may be God to you, just as He has spoken to you, and just as He has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Deut. 29:10-13

The Gibeonites worked at the house of the Lord for years to come. Even when Israel disobeyed and went into idolatry, the Gibeonites still stood at the altar, bringing the wood, bringing the water. Through all of the battles Israel fought and won, we never see the Gibeonites defecting, leaving to help another nation. They were satisfied with their position serving at the Lord's temple.

Grace is bigger. Grace is bigger than our past. Grace is bigger than our failures. Grace is bigger than the enemy. Grace is just plain bigger.

Throughout the Word, the Gibeonites are still with the people of God.

We see later that the city of Gibeon became a place where the ark dwelt.  
(1 Chron 16 and 21)

We find out later that at least one of David's mighty men...was a Gibeonite  
(1 Chron 12:4)

God spoke to Solomon at Gibeon (1 Kings 3)

Gibeonites had a part in repairing the wall of Jerusalem with Nehemiah. (Neh 3)

And over 500,000 Gibeonites, later believed to be called Nethinim, returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity with the Israelites. (Ezra 2 and 8) They could have stayed in Babylon, but the house of the Lord was being restored in Jerusalem. So they went back.

All of these show a strong suggestion that Gibeonites were devoted to the Lord and His House...because of all that time close to His House serving as wood cutters and water carriers.

**THAT IS GOD'S GRACE...GOD'S GRACE IS BIGGER.** God's grace knows no borders and always brings us closer to His presence.

GOD REDEEMS our failures, God uses what the ENEMY intended for evil for good. He always works this way. Always. The very ones who deceived the people of God were positioned to serve Him in the temple, near the presence of God. The ones who were outside of the camp were brought to the temple, it just doesn't make sense.

The last phrase of this chapter may be my favorite. We said at the beginning of this chapter that it's almost as if chapter 9 was put in the middle of battles to answer a question. It's almost like someone wanted others to know the 'why' behind a story. Joshua 9 ends by saying

**'And that is why they are there to this day'.**

Throughout the history of the children of God, story telling has been a key piece of their history. You can almost hear someone working outside of the temple, seeing someone carrying water into the temple of God and recognizing that this person is not a Hebrew. You can almost hear their thoughts, or maybe the conversation as he says to an elder in the tribe, 'Why are there Gibeonites serving at the house of the Lord? Why were they allowed to live in the land when all the other nations were destroyed?' The elder would go back at verse and being with...

***'Now when all the kings west of the Jordan heard about what the Lord had done...'***

and he would end the story with

***'And that is why...'***

It wasn't a pretty story. There was deception and decisions made apart from God, but God worked it all out for good. Gibeonites alive in the Promised Land, working at the temple, it just doesn't make sense.

We have now become God's people, we are now grafted into the family of God? We are now given access to Promise Land living? We now ARE the temple? Why would He position us there? It just doesn't make sense.

But let me tell you a story...it's broken, it's painful. There is deception but there is redemption. It's a story only God could write. It's a story of grace bigger than all of our sins. They may ask us why we stand, why we believe. To others it just doesn't make sense. But the answer is grace, just grace...

*...and that is why.*