

Word Notes Sunday 02/11/14
Tony Hodge – Joshua 9 The Gibeonite Deception

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

Key Text: Joshua 9

The LORD had told Israel not to make any treaty with the inhabitants of Canaan. It is clear that this was to be a complete and absolute victory – nothing should be able to stand against the promises of God nor should any pagan religious practices remain to seduce God's people away from the relationship He wanted with them. So why did they fall for this subterfuge by the Gibeonites?

Israel:

- Had been a slave nation – used to being cowed.
- They had been in the desert for a generation. Skirmishes but not a warring nation.
- Were they “naïve”?

Gibeonites:

- From a fortress city – used to being secure.
- Aware of sly attack and subterfuge as the only way to defeat a fortress.
- Used to indirect working with neighbours.

But the main problem was not any of these things! They may well have been taken in by these clever Gibeonites, posing as something they were not but ultimately the failure was not in being fooled it was in not enquiring of the LORD what they should do – verse 14 they relied on the physical rather than the spiritual.

Why did God hold them to this contract made through lies? Wouldn't it be null and void? Two reasons: An oath is an oath, even if made under deception. God's Word is His Word and Joshua and the leaders of the assembly ratified this oath saying later they had “given it by the LORD”.

The Gibeonites had acted out of fear of God and faith that if they secured an agreement it would be honoured. NB that years later they are still serving faithfully in the Temple and at a Tabernacle in Gibeon.

Lessons to learn

- It can be very difficult to say no to what looks like a good thing.
- Joshua was faced with some people who wanted to make a treaty. Isn't peace better than war? But knowing where God wants us to commit rather than saying yes to anything that looks good is a very important lesson.
- Be careful about oaths and agreements, contracts etc. “I didn't know” is no excuse. In the spiritual sense: be careful what you commit to - over commitment is no commitment, wrong commitment ties you into things that hinder God.
- Do not be naïve. Be wise to the enemy's wiles. The enemy prowls like a hungry lion. We are not unaware of the devil's schemes.

Application (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

At what point does a decision become major enough that you seriously “enquire of the Lord” and wait on His answer?

In what ways do you seek God's direction and counsel? What role is there for leaders, spiritual fathers & mothers, brothers & sisters? Perhaps some might like to share examples from their own experience.

Jesus promise to Peter and all the disciples was that “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matt 16:19 & Mk 18:18-20):

1. How is that similar to Joshua and the leaders agreeing to make a treaty with the Gibeonites?
2. What implications are there for us as we pray and minister to others?

Witness (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

Christmas is coming – it's not too early to think about some outreach you might do as a cell. Discuss.