

Joshua 07-06-08b

We resume our study tonight in Joshua chapter 9. This is titled in your New King James Bible, The Treaty with the Gibeonites. Let's take a look at the text of this story. It came to pass when all the kings who were on this side of the Jordan, in the hills and in the lowland, and in all the coasts of the great sea toward Lebanon, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, heard about it, that they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord.

But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they worked craftily and went and pretended to be ambassadors. And they took old sacks on their donkeys, old wineskins, torn and mended, old and patched sandals on their feet, and old garments on themselves, and all the bread of their provision was dry and moldy. 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. Then the men of Israel said to the Hivites, Perhaps you dwell among us, so how can we make a covenant with you? But they said to Joshua, We are your servants. Joshua said to them, Who are you, and where do you come from? 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, and all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshmon, and to Og king of Bashan, who was in Ashtoreth. Therefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, Take provisions with you for the journey. Go to meet them and say to them, We are your servants.

Now therefore make a covenant with us. This bread of ours we took hot for our provision from our houses on the day we departed to come to you. But look, now it is dry and moldy.

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. Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions, but they did not ask counsel of the Lord. 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. 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. Then the children of Israel journeyed and came to their cities on the third day.

Now their cities were Gibeon, Shepherah, Baroth, and Kiriath-Yarim. 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. All the congregation complained against those rulers.

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. 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. 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.

And then it goes on from there with Joshua's speech. But that gives us a good starting place. This is where you get the hewers of wood and the haulers of water, the old King James.

So, you say, well, this is pretty straightforward, clever stratagem. And I ask myself, you know, I heard that story in Sunday school, I've heard it in church going on all through my life. I think, OK, observe, interpret, apply.

So now, what do I get from the story of the Gibeonites? I think, well, be not deceived. You know, obviously they didn't check with the Lord before they made a decision to enter into covenant. And you want to be careful before you enter into covenant.

What kind of covenants do we enter into today? You know, marriage, contracting for mortgages, one thing or another. So, obviously there's an application there. But, it occurred to me that there's probably a little bit more going on here than just what we learned in Sunday school.

So we go back, back, back, to chapter 9 and verse 1. It came to pass when all the kings who were on this side of the Jordan, and then you have three different general locations given. This is the hill country of central Palestine, the western foothills, the valleys or the lowlands, and the coastal plain that stretches all the way up to Lebanon. Now, these people decided that they would confederate and that they would all attack Israel.

But as you read the book of Joshua, you find out that this never happened. They're talking about it. They gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord.

But, as we're going to see when we go through, this never happens. There is no big pitched battle with all of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. It never took place.

It's a big threat. And they gathered and they took counsel together. It kind of reminds you of the Psalms.

Let us take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed. Do you remember that? Psalm, is it 2? It's either Psalm 2 or Psalm 8. I always get those two confused. Because I studied them both at the same time in Hebrew and had big papers on them.

Now I can't remember which is which. But they took this counsel. But this never happens.

Do you know why? Because Jericho and Ai drove a wedge right up the middle of the land. And these factions can never get together. There's going to be a southern campaign and a northern campaign.

But all of these peoples are not going to be able to unite. They've all got one accord. Sounds like it's going to be a big threat, big deal, but it never materializes.

Now, here's the first point of application for me. Many times we look into the future and we are intimidated. We think, look at the forces that have gathered against me.

Look at the odds. Look at the statistics. Look at the percentages.

Look at the polls. Look at the storm clouds on the horizon here. This is going to be an utter, unmitigated disaster that is about to descend upon me.

And many times, I think all of us can probably look back in our lives and we say, boy, I remember when I thought it was all going to cave in on my head. But I'm here, and guess what? It didn't. My anticipation, and even the anticipation of people who might have actually had it in for me, when they were out to get me, it just never materialized.

Something happened. This great threat and this great foreboding and this ill wind that was blowing never came to fruition. And it's important to remember that man can plan his way, but it is the Lord that is going to direct his steps.

The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord. And God is in control of history. God is in control of circumstances.

And God works things together for good. Let me ask you this. Why do not all of the Hittites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites fall over dead with cerebral hemorrhages? Why doesn't God just stop sustaining their heart rate and respiration? It seems He is fully capable of doing so, right? They are gathering together with one accord to fight with Joshua and with Israel, the big confederation, the axis of evil is forming here to come down and squash the threat.

Why doesn't God just take their breath away? Why doesn't He just stop their circulation and let Israel just walk over the corpses and sweep up the streets and take over? It goes back to this idea we saw in the first session tonight. God uses what man means for evil for good. The story of Joseph, you remember? You meant it for evil, God meant it for good.

And we say, oh yes, well that all worked out great. But think about it. Joseph's brothers

wanted him to go away and never come back.

They came with an eyelash and were just killing him outright. But they disappeared him. They meant it for evil.

They were sick of the sight of him and didn't ever want to see him again. So he was a slave, he'll go down to die in some far off forgotten place. We'll take a bloody rag to dab and it'll all be okay.

They meant it for evil. They intended it for evil. There was ten of them and one of him.

But Joseph understood and comes back and says, you meant it for evil, but God meant that for good. You mean getting thrown in the pit, being sold into slavery, being worded Potiphar, being imprisoned, God meant it for good. The deception, Potiphar's wife lying and smearing Joseph's reputation, he worked so hard building up his reputation, was about to kind of climb out of the slave pit there.

Slap, he's right back in again, in prison. He's even worse than before. He was just a slave, now he's a convicted felon.

God meant it for good. It's important to remember that when our Amorites and Canaanites and Perizzites and Hivites and Hittites gather together, God would not allow it unless he meant it for good. This is true for those who recognize themselves as called according to his purpose, who are trying to walk that narrow road and trying to get through that straight gate.

If you are that person, all of us can look at ourselves and say yes I am or no I'm not. If you are a narrow road, straight gate believer, God means everything for good. Do not be dismayed.

Do not be afraid. Do not fret yourself because of evil men. Don't get your undies in a bundle as they say over there in Britain.

Don't panic. Don't fall apart. Don't unravel.

Whatever it is, however dark and dismal it may look. You look at the report of the spies 40 years earlier. We are like grasshoppers.

There are giants in the land. They are going to overwhelm us. We can't take this land.

Well now the entire land is united ostensibly against Joshua and the people of Israel. And it seems like a horrendous fit. But remember, it's a threat.

It's not a potential. They have not come over the ridge line like movie Indians. You know how they magically get those Indians to all ride their horses right up over the ridge.

They haven't done that. They have gathered together. They are talking.

They are talking a big fight. Oh yeah, we are going to get that Joshua to come into our land. I'll show them and knock down our cities.

And those people and all bunch of wimps will show them. Big talk. Big smoke.

Big confederation here. Nothing. This never pans out.

It never happens. These people are scattered piecemeal and destroyed. Caleb is 197 years old.

He goes up and cleans them out of a mountain. One Israelite drives these guys out. And he is the oldest geezer in Israel.

We need to remember that the threats, the challenges, the foreboding storm clouds of this life, God means them for good. God intends it for good. Everything works.

We have it made. Nothing can happen that isn't good. When bad things happen, it's good.

When good things happen, it's good. It's all good. It doesn't mean we're going to be rejoicing and tripping the light fantastic every time something breaks and something goes awry and all.

But we have confidence. We can be settled. We can rest.

We can wait on the Lord. Be of good cheer. He will strengthen our heart.

Wait, I say, on the Lord. Wait. Don't borrow trouble from the future.

Sufficient unto the days of the world. Now all of that is wrapped up in this. So, notice.

Hittite, all of these people get together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord. It's a united front. Boy, the jig is up now.

We'd better start building a bridge back across the Jordan. But, in the meantime, you can say, well, what happens? What's going to happen when all these people come down on Israel and Joshua? Is there going to be a big deal? No. It's all set aside because the inhabitants of Gibeon hear what Joshua had done to Jericho.

Now, you know where Gibeon is? Have you looked on your map to see where Gibeon is? It's about eight miles from where the Israelites are camped. They're just over the ridge. You can hike there in about two or three hours.

They're just over the second hill. There's Gibeon. And it's a big city.

It's bigger than Ai. It is comparable to Jericho. It may even be larger than Jericho.

It's certainly larger than Ai. The Bible says so. It's a substantial town.

And it is part of a confederation of towns. We find this out later in the chapter. But let's stick to where we are.

The inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai. They worked craftily. They went and pretended to be ambassadors from a foreign country.

All the old stuff. They act like, Oh, we've been traveling for years to get here. Look at how our stuff is all worn out.

Interestingly, the Israelites have been on a sojourn of 40 years. And their stuff is not all cracked and dried out. Remember that whole thing about the sandals never failed? These people make a trek of a few weeks and their stuff is all practically useless.

Look at this moldy bread. Look at these dry wineskins. So, they do all this.

Now, here's the question for you. Here's the pop quiz. Think.

Why do the Gibeonites think this will work? Why do the Gibeonites assume that if they have come from a distant land, Joshua will make peace instead of saying, Tell me again the route that you took. So, if we backtrack, we're going to find your city and we can plunder you guys. What part of the land are you in? Oh, good.

Glad we've got a little advanced party here that we can get information from. We'll just go sack you like we're going to sack everybody else. Why do the Gibeonites think this is going to work? What do they know? If you look at chapter 10 and verse 2, Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities.

Greater than Ai. And all its men are mighty. This is no little shrimpy, wimpy town full of short people who are easily intimidated.

I'm not saying anything bad about short people. I'm just saying that there's no reason for them to be particularly intimidated. They're a mighty city.

And they are part of a confederation. Look at verse 17 of our chapter. Children of Israel journeyed and came to their cities on the third day.

Their cities were Gibeon, Shapira, Beeroth, and Kiriath-Yarim. Beeroth has been excavated archaeologically. These are big towns.

And there's four of them. Four big fortified cities full of mighty men. And they say, forget about a military attack on Israel.

Did you hear about Jericho? Did you hear about Ai? Did you hear about Og, King of

Bashan? Did you hear about the guys on the other side of the Jordan? Forget it. This is the fear that God has instilled. This is why these big confederations and all of these plans are going to gang a glee here because you can't fight when your heart has melted like water.

And God has put the fear in them. He sent the hornet to drive the enemies out from before them. So these people are saying, we're all going to die.

These are some of the mightiest warriors. These are the warriors that the first set of spies came in and saw and said, we can't take this land. Guys like this.

And now the sandal is on the other foot, so to speak. Because it's the mighty warriors of Canaan land who are feared. And they say, the military option is out.

We can't beat these guys. Their God is to, from Egypt forward, they've got an unbroken string of supernatural success. Human might and the best that we can throw against them isn't going to prevail against this God of theirs.

He's too much. Forget about it. Now, they send these emissaries, the weary and worn wineskins and the dry bread and all the rest of that.

Now, why do they think this stratagem has any chance of success? Well, that's an interesting question. The law told the people of Israel what to do when they got into the land, right? And in Exodus 23, verse 32, turn to Exodus 23. When you come in and you see the inhabitants of the land, I will set your bounds from the Red Sea to the Philistia, the desert to the river.

I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand. You shall drive them out before you. You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods.

They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against me. If you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you. Exodus 34.12 Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going.

I am driving out before you. Exodus 34.11 Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I am driving out before you the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

The very same that have all confederated, that want to confederate themselves against Israel. Take heed, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land. Now, who is number 5 in that list? Number 1, Amorite.

Number 2, Canaanite. Number 3, Hittite. Number 4, Perizzite.

Number 5, Hivite. The Gibeonites are Hivites. Make no covenant with them, God says.

It's in the law. It's one of those 613 commands. Right? Where did those 613 commands get published recently? How would the Gibeonites know that they have no chance as Gibeonites, as Hivites, of contracting peace with Israel? How would they know that? Why didn't they just come and say, Hi, we're from Gibeon.

We're just over the hill there. We'd really like to make peace. We don't want to fight you.

We recognize you, God. Won't you please make a covenant with us? Why would they know that that wouldn't work? It splashed in big letters all over the cliffs, all over the rocks, up there at Ebal. And word travels fast, even in these rural communities.

30 miles north, all people can talk about is did you see that big splash of white up there on Mount Ebal? And you go up there and you read it and it's written in this Semitic language that everybody in the land can understand and read. And they said, well, we were thinking we'd just go over there and see if we can't make peace. We're lovers, not fighters.

Their God's too great. Hey, did you read the rocks? Their God has already told them no covenants. You're a Hivite, man.

Forget it. You're cooked. You might as well make peace with Baal or whatever.

Just go out there and fall on your sword. It's over. They say there's got to be a way.

There's got to be a loophole. There's got to be a way around this somewhere, somehow. Well, what God said was when you go into the land, you find this in Deuteronomy 7. The Lord your God brings you into the land.

Hittites, Kurdishites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites. Where are the Jebusites, by the way? Where's Jebus? Jerusalem. Who used to be the king in Jerusalem? Matt was making this point during the break.

Who used to be the king of Jerusalem? Who was the king of Salem? Melchizedek. Do you think these people have had access to truth going way back? Back to the days of Abraham? For the last 400 years, has there not been some information available? Do you think Melchizedek wrapped it up and went to Machpelah or somewhere and nobody ever heard of the God of Israel anymore? He was the king of Jebus. He was the king of Salem.

Information has been available in this land for 400 years. It started with Melchizedek, who I think is Shem, and it comes all the way down and God publishes the final version. He says, look, this is the God of Israel.

Here are His statutes and ordinances. Here are the blessings on those who recognize God, commit to God, and seek to serve and obey God. And here's what happens to people that don't.

And all the Canaanites of the land have to do is read that stuff on the rocks and say, you know, their God says no sacrificing to Molech. Their God says no homosexuality. Their God says no adultery.

Their God says no incest. Their God says no to almost everything we're doing as a culture. And you know, that kind of reminds me of what the old guy a couple of centuries ago was telling us.

Way back when Melchizedek was down there in Jebus, he was saying the very same thing. They've known this all along. Why are these people condemned? Why are these people under death sentence? Because they have heard and they have rejected.

By and large. That's why God says make no covenant, show no mercy, make no marriages, don't give daughters to their sons. They will turn you away from following me.

Deuteronomy 7.6 You are a holy people to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love on you or choose you because you were more in number.

You were the least of all peoples, but because the Lord loves you, because he would keep the oath which he swore to your fathers, he's brought you out with a mighty hand, redeemed you. Therefore know that the Lord your God, he is God, the faithful God, who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love him and keep his commandments. And he repays those who hate him, Deuteronomy 7.10, to their face to destroy them.

He will not be slack with him who hates him. He will repay him to his face. Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which I command you today to observe.

It just doesn't get any clearer than this. So, again, we're back to the question. What about the Gibeonites? Why do they think this is going to work? Deuteronomy chapter 20 gives us the answer.

Deuteronomy 20.10 This is God speaking to Israel. When you get into the land, you go near a city to fight against it, proclaim an offer of peace to it. When you go near a city to fight against it, proclaim an offer of peace to it.

It shall be that if they accept your offer of peace and open to you, all the people who are found in it shall be placed under tribute to you and serve you. Now if the city will not make peace with you, but war against you, then you shall besiege it. The Lord your God delivers it into your hands.

You shall strike every male in it with the edge of the sword. Women, little ones, livestock,

and all that is in the city, the spoil, plunder for yourself. You shall eat the enemy's plunder, which the Lord your God gives you.

Thus you shall do to whom? Verse 15. To all the cities which are very far from you, which are not of the cities of these nations, i.e., the Hivites. You can't do this with the cities that are near at hand, but with the cities that are far away.

Look at that in verse 16. To the cities of the people which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance, you shall smite nothing that breathes, but remain alive. You shall utterly destroy them, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, just as the Lord your God has commanded you, lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations, which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the Lord your God.

So guess what happened? The Gibeonites red the rocks. It splashed up there on a billboard at Ebal. And they said, look, you've got no hope as a Hivite of making any covenant peace treaty with these people.

The only loophole in their law is if you're from a distant city, they'll make an offer of peace. Well, we can't go sit on the outskirts of whatever they think the borders of the land are and hope that they think we live there. We're going to have to come to them and make out like we're one of those distant people.

And instead, see, God said, when you go out to that city, God said, as you expand and get to the borders and there are people very far from you and you get to their city, this is not on the borders and the fringes. When you get there, make an offer of peace. And if they agree, they will be servants.

He didn't say anything about except emissaries from afar. Did he? But the Gibeonites are clever. And this is why the book of Joshua says they're clever.

They said, you know, the only way we're going to make this work is to appear to be from afar and try to get them to do what their God told them they could do when they encounter somebody far away. They haven't gone far away yet. So we're going to have to hope that this is the part that they'll slip up on.

They'll be sloppy. Not paying attention to detail. And let's hope, on all hope, that they don't go consult with their God and he doesn't tell them where we're from or the jig is up.

So it's a gamble. They have to gamble that the Israelites will sloppily apply what God said and they have to hope that God doesn't betray their little deceit. This is why the rocks have the commands.

It is a proclamation to the land. Now, you know what this reminds me of? Maybe it

reminds you of it as well. What is God's official policy when He sends the Lord Jesus to this earth? To whom is He sent? I am sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

But you remember that episode when the Gentile woman comes up and says, Lord, my daughter, Naya to death. Jesus says, hey, you're outside the scope of my mission. You don't qualify for any grace.

You're out in the darkness which is outside. And she says, well, you know, she says, but I want you to heal my daughter. And Jesus says, you know, you don't take the bread for the children and give it to the little dogs.

And she says, look, even the dogs get to lap up some crumbs. And Jesus acknowledges her faith just like He acknowledges the faith of the Roman centurion and other Gentiles who come to Him. And if they have that much faith, sometimes they put the people of God to shame.

And God bends the rules for them. Now think about these Gibeonites. What do they believe about the God of Israel? He is going to give these people the victory.

They are convinced of it. They are mighty warriors. They are a big city.

They are a confederation of four big towns. But what are they convinced of? This God in Israel is the real deal. We don't have a chance against Him.

We have got to find a way to make peace. And we are proscribed for making peace. God's Word says we're on the outs.

We don't qualify for any peace. So we're going to have to fool our way in. And God honors that He's going to work it together for good because He's going to teach Israel a lesson about prayer and about going to God for guidance.

But at the same time, why doesn't God send the man with the sword that confronted Joshua and say, Hey Joshua, let me tell you who these people really are. Does God know who they are? Could God betray this little confidence trick at any moment? God doesn't speak. He doesn't say, I'm going to tell you now who these people are, slay them all and I'll deal with you later.

God says, hey, you didn't consult. And it is the deception that God uses to bring a blessing to the Gibeonites. What does that remind you of? When did somebody get a blessing through deception? Who's the namesake of this nation? Turnabout is fair play.

Israel becomes the people of God through deceiving somebody, appearing to be something that he's not, sticking the hair on his arms, and here's the game from the field, Dad. I'm ready for my blessing now. And now, here's Israel in the land about to take hold of those very same blessings.

Those are the blessings. That's the package that Esau gave up for the Mesopotamians. That's the package that Jacob got by deceit.

He ran a confidence scheme on his old man, and he got the blessings. Now, Israel is getting big-dealed in the very same way. It's a deceit.

We look like something we're not. We're telling you something that's not true, and we're getting past the official policy that inheritance goes to the eldest. And God allows it because they deserve it.

Why didn't Isaac pray before he blessed Jacob? He was kind of like, oh yeah, I'm going to do the old man thing, I'm on my death bed. He's not on his death bed, he's going to live another, what do we figure, 35 or 40 years after that? He wasn't anywhere near dying. He just got full of himself, got subjective, and he messed up.

He's going to get up and walk around. He's going to be fine. He's going to live for decades.

Well, that's kind of what's going on here. So, isn't it fascinating, though, that here are these people who are condemned. These are the heathens.

These are the infidels. These people are under absolute sentence of death from God. They are without hope and without God in the world.

Just like the Gentiles in the New Testament age when the church begins, and because of Israel's faithlessness, they are broken out of the tree of God's blessing and the fruitfulness of God's plan, and the wild olive branch is grafted in. Those whom Israel despised, those whom Israel thought they were never going to be blessed by God, end up, you know, the stone that the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. That's the story of Jesus Christ himself.

And we, as Gentiles, heirs of no covenant promises, wind up enjoying the promise of the Spirit and all of these wonderful inheritance things even before Israel gets to it. Well, the Gibeonites sort of foreshadow that principle and they embody that principle. And why do they do this? Why is this deceit, if you will, honored by God? Why does God allow them to be spared through this lie? There is a glimmer of faith.

They recognize who God is. They believe. In some cases, their faith is stronger than the Israelites.

They are more sure that God is going to give them the land than the Israelites are, so to speak. And God says, you know what? If you're that convinced, I'm going to give you a pass. I'm going to hand out a free ticket here to escape the coming judgment and you're in.

You'll be spared. God honors faith in His Word. These people have read His Word, splashed on the rock, and they've applied it.

They're better at making application of God's Word than the Israelites are. And they have parsed its details. They know exactly what it says.

They know what it says about the inhabitants of the land and those who are outside. So that's what's going on here. So they've read Deuteronomy chapter 20.

And so, whatever else was written on the rocks, was it the 613 commands? Was it all of the book of Deuteronomy? All of Exodus? Whatever it was, I can promise you Deuteronomy chapter 20 was on the rocks because that's what the Gibeonites are holding onto as the mask they have lashed themselves to in this storm of judgment coming through the land. And God honors it. It's an amazing thing.

And it just goes to show you the exact same thing we saw back in Deuteronomy chapter 7. The Lord your God, Deuteronomy 7 and 9. He is a faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations to those who love Him, to those who keep His commandments. He repays those who hate Him to their face. But God is a God of compassion.

It is not the will of God that any should perish. And these people, in the depths of their Hivite culture, have recognized that something greater than them has moved into the land. And they recognize it.

They go toward it instead of away from it. So, back to Joshua chapter 9 now. They show up and they've got all of these oldy moldy foods and clothing and so on.

And the key here is when... This is the first instance that they have encountered somebody to make a treaty. There are no previous treaties with Israel and anybody since they left Egypt. They haven't made a treaty.

They tried to make a treaty for a safe passage through lands. Didn't happen. They had to fight those people.

There has been no peace treaty with Israel and anybody that you could say, well, it was sort of a little treaty with Rahab and her family. But we're talking about contracting with nations. That has absolutely not happened.

So this is a new thing. These people come in and they flatter them. They say, we've heard about you.

You're the BNOC. You're the big nation on campus here. You've come in, you're blowing everybody away.

You're achieving all these victories. God has accomplished all these things. And so we've

come a long way because we want to make peace with you.

So the men of Israel took some of their provisions, looked them over and said, well, yeah, it's real crusty bread. It makes sense to me that these people have come from my human wisdom. I say, well, that's certainly how it appears.

And this puts you in mind of Eve in the garden. When a deception comes, what did Eve do? She calculated. Well, she saw that the tree was desirable to make one wise and that it was attractive and that it had these features.

She rationalized. She concluded. And she decided.

And she did eat. The elders of Israel take some of the food, but they did not ask counsel of the Lord. And if you look at your, I think your New King James has a footnote here.

What is the literal translation of that? They did not inquire at the mouth of the Lord. They didn't let God speak on this subject. What a simple thing.

Did they have Levites? Did they have Urim and Thummim? Could they go and say yes or no? O Lord, shall we... This is the first time they've been approached with an offer like this. Observation, interpretation, application. Many times in our sojourn through this life, we get into new situations.

Virgin territory. We've never been there before. It's unmarked ground.

There are no signs. There are no fences. There is no stripe on the road.

There is no mile marker. It's uncharted territory. It's watering.

You think I can go in any direction. I see no guidance here. It's a new decision point.

You can't rely on experience. And we're tempted to say, well, let me make the best sense out of this I can from a human perspective. What is the best course of action when we find ourselves in that situation? Inquire at the mouth of the Lord.

If you're not sure, pray for guidance. I always think about this. Do you really think that God is up in heaven hoping that he can get a good chuckle because we walk around and bump into things because we don't know what we're doing? Is it God's will for us to be confused? Is it God's will for us to be muddled? Is it God's will for us to bumble around and make mistake after mistake and not really know where we're going? You think about a parent and a child.

Does a parent get joy out of seeing their child uncertain and insecure and tentative and I don't really know if I should do this or not? What brings joy to a parent's heart? When your child has learned principles and has gained knowledge that they've been inculcated with and they encounter a situation and they apply what they know and they confidently

go in the right direction because they've been taught, they've been prepared and they draw on that preparation, they draw on that wisdom and they do the right thing. And you say, ah, you didn't have to flounder, you didn't have to bump into things, you didn't have to bloody your nose and skin your knee on that one because you paid attention. You listened to what I told you and you did it.

I told you when you were in the car and you did this, don't keep going, pull over and ask or whatever it may be and you did that. I'm so proud of you for applying what you came and asked me and I told you and that's exactly what you did. This is what God looks for from us.

It is not the will of God that we wander around uncertain and not knowing what His will is. It's God's will that we know His will. He wants us to know it and to treat it as fact and to apply it.

God wants Israel to know the right thing to do but you've got to come and ask in a new situation that's never come up before. Oh Lord, it seems like these people are from a far country. Is this something we should do or not? Simple question.

They could have done it in 15 minutes. Call for the priest. All Joshua had to say was call for the priest.

But a bunch of men get together. A bunch of men in Israel. Notice they don't even say they're elders.

The men of Israel took some of their provisions and they're all talking and saying well that's pretty moldy and look at that wineskin and sandals. This is government by committee. This is majority rule.

This is the wide road, broad gate mentality. Everybody I've talked to says yeah this is a great thing to do. We're all of agreement here.

We're all like minded. A multitude of counselors there is safety. So yeah that makes sense and that's what they do.

And what got left out? There is clear explicit guidance from God about what to do in these situations and they are not at the borders of a far city. And this is something God did not specifically address. What if an ambassador comes from a far city? Then what? That's when you go ask.

If you can't find an answer from the application of God's word that you already know time to hit your knees. Time to start praying. Time to ask God to clarify.

And that expression of attitude that we want to do God's will. We want to seek his will first. God will honor that.

He doesn't want us blundering. He doesn't want us making mistakes. But many times he will check to see if we are really serious about doing his will or not.

And they flunk this test. But God works it together for good. You can't lose in God's plan.

Even when you screw up it works together for good. God will use your screw up to bless someone. He is an amazing God.

And it doesn't mean we want to run around screwing up so people can get blessed. But we don't have to agonize when we fail because God works all things together for good. And the giving eyes are going to get a blessing.

They are going to become hewers of wood and haulers of water. They are going to participate and support the worship life of Israel. What do they use wood and water for in Israel? Sacrifice.

These condemned Gentiles are going to wind up being as close to God as most Israelites can ever get. It's the grace of God because they honor his word. They looked at it, they believed it, and they said I've got to run toward this God and his people instead of away.

It's a wonderful expression of God's grace. God is not so inflexible and legalistic that when he says all Hivites must die he says not these Hivites. Here are some special people.

We are going to see as we go forward that God is going to grace them out in an even greater way in the coming weeks and months right after this event. That's where we will pick up next time. But let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father thank you for the revelation of your character and your grace in the pages of scripture. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths on our hearts. Help us to live in a way that is pleasing in your sight.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.