

Major League Failures (Joshua 9)

league: A military, political, or commercial covenant or compact made between parties for their mutual protection and assistance against a common enemy; the prosecution or safeguarding of joint interests, and the like; a body of states or persons associated in such a covenant, a confederacy.

Intro.

- A. *Joshua* is the same name as *Jesus* (**ACT 7:45**); both mean “Jehovah is salvation.”
- B. Joshua was Moses' successor who brought natural Israel into their earthly inheritance, even as Jesus only could bring spiritual Israel (the elect of all nations) into their heavenly inheritance. **ROM 3:20-22; 8:3.**
- C. The Book of Joshua sets forth Joshua's second coming into earthly Canaan. c/w **NUM 14:6.**
 - 1. It was at this second coming when the enemies were destroyed.
 - 2. Christ's first coming *to earth* went unnoticed by the nations but it will not be so at His Second Coming. **MAT 24:30; 25:31-32.**
 - 3. Jesus Christ's first and second comings *into heavenly Canaan* bear similar marks.
 - a. Upon His death, the *soul and spirit* of Christ ascended to heaven. **LUK 23:43, 46.**
 - (1) At this point, the powers of darkness may have been troubled but not spoiled.
 - (2) The spoiling of the enemy would be reserved unto the resurrection of His *body*. **1PE 3:21-22; COL 2:15.**
 - b. Christ came *bodily* into heavenly Canaan TWICE after His resurrection. His first coming made no ripples in the Gentile nations.
 - (1) Christ ascended briefly to the Father immediately after His resurrection (**JOH 20:17**) to present Himself as the victorious God-man, *the firstfruits of them that slept* (**1CO 15:20**) and promptly returned to earth for a few weeks. **ACT 1:3.**
 - (2) Christ ascended bodily the second time into heavenly Canaan and by the sending forth of the Holy Spirit to advance His gospel, certainly made big ripples in the Gentile nations. **ACT 1:7-8; 17:6.**
 - c. A league of nations and devils will meet with sudden, total destruction at the return of Christ to earth. **REV 20:7-10.**
 - 4. Mind the irony of how central the Person and work of Jesus Christ figures in the bringing together of men of different nations.
 - a. *Unbelieving* Jews and Gentiles formed a league to destroy him. **ACT 4:26-28.**
 - b. Their action facilitated the bringing together of *believing* Jews and Gentiles to serve Him and promote His government. **1CO 12:13.**
- D. This chapter records the setting up of the “United Nations” of Canaan against God and His church, and the Gibeonites successful deceit and covenant of peace with Israel.
- E. The previous chapter (**JOS 8**) saw Joshua destroy Ai, make a faithful copy of God's law, and refresh Israel's covenant commitment with God.

Joshua 9.

- A. **vs. 1-2.** When the kings of the land heard about Joshua's success and Israel's progress into the land they formed a *League of Nations* to oppose the Lord's church. Not only had Israel invaded

the land but they were doing it in the name of their God Who tolerated the worship of no other gods and demanded that His law be obeyed.

1. Remember that an underlying purpose for United Nations type alliances is to oppose Jesus and destroy His church. **REV 20:8-9**.
 - a. Sin in its essence is revolt against God and a refusal to be in subjection to Him and to His law.
 - b. Depraved unregenerate carnal minded men such as these inhabitants of Canaan hate God and His holy law and that common hatred will unite them. **ROM 8:7**.
 - c. Interestingly, up to this point the kings of the land had been passive regarding Israel, but immediately after Israel's solemn renewal of their covenant with Jehovah, they were moved to unite together and fight against them.
 - d. Do not be surprised that when you are most determined to obey the LORD that the opposition from the adversaries of truth increases.
2. While in one sense, Jesus Christ, His church, and His gospel separate and divide men (**LUK 12:51-52**), they also unite discordant parties against them as their common foe. **MAT 16:1; LUK 23:12; ACT 4:26-27**.
 - a. Note how the adversaries abounded when God opened the door for the increase of His interests. **1CO 16:9; ACT 19:8-10; 22-29; 2TI 4:14-16**.
 - b. It matters not that the wicked unite and assemble themselves against the people of God and the truth of His word for God for in the end they will not be successful. **PSA 2; DEU 7:9-10; REV 20:8-9**.
 - c. On the other hand, it is a sad thing indeed when carnal men display more unity and accord than God's people. **MAR 3:25; 1CO 1:10**.

B. **vs. 3-15**. The citizens of Gibeon prudently foresaw the evil that was about to befall them and devised a clever plan to get Israel to make a league with them in an attempt to avoid their total destruction. **PRO 22:3**.

1. The Gibeonites were desperate and would be living proof of the truth of **JOB 2:4**.
2. They had counted the cost of resistance and had wisely determined that seeking a treaty of peace was their best option.
 - a. This principle is the basis of true Christian commitment. **LUK 14:31-33**.
 - b. The coming of Joshua/Jesus in judgment is the ultimate incentive for men to repent and to align themselves with Him. **ACT 17:30-31; 24:25**.
 - c. There is no better thing for the sons of men to do than to yield themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ and align themselves with His church and thus enter His kingdom.
 - d. All men may realize certain benefits by even an external submission to Christ and application of Scriptural principles in their lives. **DAN 4:27; 1KI 21:27-29; DEU 4:5-6**.
3. The Gibeonites portrayed themselves as ambassadors from a distant nation with all the necessary props to support their story. **vs. 4-5**.
 - a. They cunningly made mention of only the much earlier conquests of Israel, not the recent ones of Jericho and Ai (**vs. 9-10**) to give further credibility to their story.
 - b. They cunningly avoided naming a country of origin (**vs. 6, 9**) lest they give themselves away by admission or omission.
 - c. This is the way that lies are best sold: by giving them the maximum outward appearance of credibility.
 - d. This is the way that Satan takes advantage of us by getting us to yield to temptations to sin through *deceitful* lusts (**EPH 4:22**). He makes them credible by

- dressing them up as our friends or servants, substitutes for God's sufficiency, means of satisfying legitimate needs, appeals to our good side, etc.
4. When they first approached Joshua in his camp at Gilgal and sought a league of peace with Israel, they were viewed with suspicion. **vs. 6-8.**
 - a. Israel had not only just used deceptive tactics to defeat Ai (**JOS 8:15-16**) but fresh upon their minds was also the troubles that preceded the victory at Ai because of disobedience to God's word. **JOS 7:1-5.**
 - b. The wise Christian warrior who may use godly guile (**2CO 12:16**) knows the power of guile and will not assume the adversary to be guileless.
 - (1) The Gibeonites were *wily* characters. **v. 4.**
 - (2) wily: Full of or characterized by wiles; crafty, cunning, sly, artful.
 - (3) We should not be ignorant of our adversary's devices. **2CO 2:11.**
 - (4) We are to guard against *cunning craftiness*. **EPH 4:14.**
 - (5) We are to "...stand against the WILES of the devil..." (**EPH 6:11**).
 - c. God had told Israel to extend offers of peace to distant cities when they waged war in Canaan. **DEU 20:10-15.**
 - (1) But God had also told them that this was not to be done to the nearer cities whom God had determined were to be utterly destroyed; no covenant was to be made with them. **DEU 20:16-17; 7:1-2.**
 - (2) This distinction is characteristic of mature Christian discernment as touching *sins* and *liberties* (both of which can destroy us). We may have *no peace* with sin but only seek its destruction (**COL 3:5-6**) and *cautious peace* with liberties. **1CO 6:12; GAL 5:13.**
 - d. They were right to question these "ambassadors." c/w **MAT 3:7.**
 - (1) Potential converts should be taught and queried. **ACT 8:30-38.**
 - (2) We do well to question those unfamiliar "opportunities" which come upon us, for not everything that purports to have our well-being at heart is so. **ROM 16:17-18; 2PE 2:18-19.**
 - e. The Gibeonites seem to have had some knowledge of God's law concerning Canaanite cities and their inhabitants in their devising of this ruse for they were both near neighbors and also Hivites (**v. 7**) and thus clearly slated for destruction. **v. 24.**
 5. The Gibeonites reply saying, "...We are thy servants..." thus presenting themselves as those that were both humble and willing to be subservient and useful to Israel rather than being viewed with suspicion as possible enemies. **v. 8.**
 - a. This was their bait to entrap Israel. c/w **EZR 4:1-3.**
 - b. Again, remember that temptations often come in the form of things that may serve us or help us. **GEN 3:5.**
 6. Joshua was not satisfied with their vague and indefinite statement but asked them to clearly identify themselves concerning their nation and place. He was on his guard, but not sufficiently so. **v. 8.**
 - a. Remember that a key issue in contending for the faith is to not let evasiveness, vagueness or ambiguity slide by you. Demand specific details.
 - b. As Joshua made inquiry here as to where they had come from, so we do well to find out some background of those to whom we witness to get a better idea as to *where they are coming from*.
 - c. After hearing their explanation (in which they still avoided naming their people or country, **v. 9**) Joshua and the princes made peace with them without seeking counsel

- of the Lord. **vs. 9-15.**
- (1) Joshua was at Gilgal which was Israel's encampment (**v. 6 c/w JOS 5:10**) where the ark of the covenant and the High Priest would have been.
 - (2) He should have asked counsel at the Urim as he had been directed. **NUM 27:21.**
 - (3) We are also encouraged to seek counsel from God when we need wisdom concerning situations that arise in our lives. **JAM 1:5 c/w PRO 3:5-6.**
 - (4) It is for the lack of godly counsel that many bad decisions are made. **PSA 119:24; PRO 15:22; 24:6.**
 - (5) It is sometimes a matter of one not wanting to hear godly counsel lest it oppose what is already determined in the heart. **1KI 22:8.**
- d. In retrospect, Joshua should have stopped their mouths after **v. 9** since they were still being evasive.
- (1) Allowing them to speak after that only gave them opportunity to further befuddle Joshua.
 - (2) Sometimes the most charitable thing to do when defending the faith is to stop the mouth of the person who is not dealing uprightly. **TIT 1:11.**
 - (3) Hindsight is so much clearer than foresight!
7. One must give them credit for their wit and wisdom as they proceeded to outwit Israel and Joshua. Christ even used an example of a wise unjust steward to provoke His disciples to faithfulness in everyday things. **LUK 16:1-12.**
- a. There is no indication that they had any other design than to avoid their own destruction. This is prudence. **PRO 27:12.**
 - b. They were cautious to not reveal all that they knew about Israel and their God (**vs. 9-10 c/w v. 24**). This is serpent wisdom. **MAT 10:16.**
 - c. They appealed directly to Joshua as ambassadors from a *far* country.
 - (1) There is an element of flattery and appeal to one's pride to be known and courted by those from far away.
 - (2) King Hezekiah was flattered by the attention and friendly overtures given him by the king of Babylon and he let down his guard and showed them all his treasures. **ISA 39:1-2.**
 - (3) When Isaiah took him to task for his unwise actions, Hezekiah said, "...They are come from a far country unto ME, even from Babylon" (**ISA 39:3**).
 - (4) Beware those that fawn over you and flatter you with their lips. **PRO 29:5.**
 - d. Their appearance was one of reduced circumstances, which could invoke sympathy. How often have churches and church leaders been snared by this ploy!
 - e. They constantly forwarded the sentiment that they were willing to be Israel's *servants* (**vs. 8-9, 11**), that there was a benefit for Israel in making a league with them.
 - f. They even gave a show of religion, "...come because of the name of the LORD thy God..." (**v. 9**).
 - g. They reinforced the impression that they were truly ambassadors from a far country by intimating that the leaders and inhabitants of their country were of one accord with them in their fear of the Lord God of Israel and their desire to serve Israel.
 - (1) They presented themselves as those that were backed by reliable authorities and popular opinion and were given the authority to make peace with Israel for their nation. **v. 11.**
 - (2) There is wisdom in presenting yourselves to others as their equals in station

- or as the ambassadors of such. Equals will tend to listen and work with those of equal station or position. Appearances can be very important in this world.
- h. They got the covenant they sought after!
 - i. Sadly, this is not unlike the way some marriage covenants are struck.
8. The Gibeonites made an appeal to Joshua's senses by directing his attention to the aged and worn condition of their food, drink, and apparel to corroborate the story they had given of themselves. **vs. 12-15.**
- a. Their story was plausible to the ears and supported by the evidence of the eyes even though it was false and feigned.
 - b. The men of Israel took of their victuals and examined them to verify their story rather than seeking God's counsel in this matter. They walked by sight and relied upon the testimony of their own senses.
 - c. They were judging these Gibeonites according to *outward appearance* only, according to their own senses and understanding and ended up *making peace with something that God had cursed*. The God Who knows men's hearts should have been consulted. **1SAM 16:7 c/w NUM 27:21.**
 - (1) Mind that Joshua had just prior to this read ALL the law of Moses to Israel (**JOS 8:34-35**), which would have included **NUM 27:21** et. al. *Reading and hearing* are the easy parts of duty; *remembering and doing* is how we succeed. **JAM 1:22-25.**
 - (2) Appearances can be deceiving and we are warned in Scripture to judge by more than appearances. **JOH 7:24; MAT 23:27-28; 2CO 5:12; 11:12-15; 1JO 4:1-6.**
 - (3) On the other hand it is noteworthy that they did not turn these men away because of their apparel. **JAM 2:2-5 c/w LUK 7:24-26.**
9. One might wonder if the Gibeonites perhaps would have found mercy of God, as Rahab had done, by honestly and humbly confessing the Lord as the true God and submitting to Him with honest hearts, but it appears that their motivation was primarily self-preservation. **v. 24.**
- a. What Rahab had done was an act of faith. **HEB 11:31.**
 - b. She had confessed Israel's God as the true Creator, thus renouncing her idolatrous past and surroundings, conceded God's justice in the destruction of her sinful city, and actually facilitated that. **JOS 2:9-11.**
 - c. There is more hope for a humbled harlot than a proud Pharisee. **MAT 21:31-32.**
 - d. Blessed is the sinner who confesses God's justice in destroying him and thus forsakes what merited the judgment. **PRO 28:13.**
10. Joshua and the princes of Israel made a treaty with Gibeon. **vs. 14-15.**
- a. It appears that it was made that same day that they came. The Gibeonites would have been in haste to have it confirmed lest they should be discovered.
 - b. It appears they were not required to specifically answer Joshua's questions in **v. 8.**
 - c. There is wisdom in avoiding hasty decisions particularly when another is pressuring you to do so.
 - d. The N.T. church has no liberty to make non-combative treaties or alliances with other faiths, no matter how *far off* they may be from representing a threat to the doctrine and values of the religion of Jesus Christ.
 - (1) There is one faith and it is to be contended for, and all those that are involved with other faiths are called to come out of them and become part of

the true faith. **JUDE 1:3; 2CO 6:14-18; REV 18:4.**

- (2) It is for this reason that dedicated Christians have been reproached for centuries as being an intolerant non-conformist sect.

C. **vs. 16-21.** The subterfuge and deceit of the Gibeonites is found out as well as the folly of Joshua and the princes' hasty action.

1. Such is often our lot when we, without due consideration or counsel, make peace with that which we should have scrutinized and resisted, and shortly find ourselves with an albatross around our necks.
2. Gibeon turned out to be surprisingly close (**JOS 10:9**) and often so is sin when we plunge ahead hastily in life without giving due consideration to God's word. **PRO 19:2.**
3. Sooner or later the hidden things of darkness will be made manifest. **1CO 4:5; PRO 12:19.**
4. The children of Israel did not smite the Gibeonites because Joshua and the princes of Israel had sworn an oath and made a covenant with them in the name of the Lord God of Israel.

v. 19 c/w LEV 19:12.

- a. Even though the Gibeonites had deceived Israel, that did not justify Israel breaking their oath to them. **ECC 5:4-5; NUM 30:1-2; PSA 15.**
 - (1) Two wrongs do not make a right. We are not to render evil for evil. **1PE 3:9.**
 - (2) Furthermore, the deception practiced by these Canaanites did not excuse Israel's hasty action in entering into a league with them. They had been foolish in not seeking God's counsel and in so rashly committing the nation, and now they must suffer the consequences of the same. Israel must live with "buyer's remorse."
 - (3) Consider also that Israel could have made them a *conditional* promise based on the truthfulness of their claims.
 - (4) Mind that *covenantbreakers* are still under God's judgments. **ROM 1:31.**
 - b. There is an element of *poetic justice* to be found in this story of these Gibeonites successfully deceiving the men of Israel. In **GEN 34** is recorded the story of Dinah, the sister of the sons of Jacob, who was defiled by Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite.
 - (1) When Hamor sought to do the honorable thing and make Dinah Shechem's wife, the sons of Jacob deceived him and pretended to go along with it, provided that the Hivites participate in a ritual of their religion, namely circumcision. **GEN 34:13-19.**
 - (2) When they were incapacitated by the surgery, Jacob's sons slew all the men of their city and took all the spoil thereof for themselves. **GEN 34:25-29.**
 - (3) The descendants of those that had so wickedly deceived the Hivites were now in turn deceived by them and reaping the consequences of that deception.
 - c. It may be that the above is the reason that the Hivites of Gibeon were the only city where the Lord did not harden their hearts to come against Israel in battle. **JOS 11:19-20.**
5. The account of the Gibeonites illustrates a basic fact about church: some people get into the church for less than sincere reasons.
- a. The O.T. church saw its share of members who joined for practical advantages, not because of devotion to Israel's God. **EXO 12:38; EST 8:17.**
 - b. The N.T. church would likewise see its share of members who joined for various reasons other than sincere devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

- (1) Some may join the church on a wave of emotion or because they may realize some other benefit from church membership. Their motives may not be particularly evil and they may merely be such as were called but not chosen. **MAT 22:11-14; 13:20-21.**
 - (2) Yet there are others who knowledgeably misrepresent themselves and their motives, having their own agenda and ulterior designs. **JUDE 1:4; ACT 8:18-23; 15:5; GAL 2:4; 2PE 2:1-3.**
 - (3) All tares will eventually be separated out from the wheat. **MAT 13:40-42.**
6. Israel did not smite the Gibeonites because of the league that had been made but they murmured against the princes. **v. 18.**
 - a. It is unlikely that they murmured because they were excused from having to risk their lives in combat against a great city of mighty men! **JOS 10:2.**
 - b. The murmuring was likely owing to the fact that they could not smite the Gibeonites, make servants of the women and children, and take the spoils of war.
 - (1) They would have *taken joyfully the spoiling of the Gibeonites' goods*.
 - (2) How many murmur against Christ when they find His leadership does not mean financial gain?
 - (3) It was to the credit of the Hebrew believers in Jesus Christ that they *took joyfully the spoiling of THEIR OWN goods*. **HEB 10:34.**
 - (4) If the loss of servants was a source of their murmuring, it was ill-founded: these Hivite cities were slated for utter extermination (**DEU 20:16-17**).
How often do we complain about unfulfilled false expectations!
7. Though pressured, Joshua and the princes did not sacrifice principle for popularity. **v. 19.**
 - a. Previously, Israel had plundered these people unjustly after they had broken their word to them. **GEN 34:27-29.**
 - b. Joshua and the princes, fearing God, refused to perjure themselves and discredit their God in the estimation of the Gentiles. Later generations did not. **ROM 2:23-24.**
 - c. This sharply contrasts King Saul who too easily yielded to the will of the people when the right thing to do was oppose them and obey God. **1SAM 15:24.**
 - d. Hundreds of years after Joshua, Saul's attitude and subsequent actions resulted in a grievous violation of the rights of these Gibeonites, against whom apparently some in Israel still had ill designs. **2SAM 21:1-2.**
 - e. We may bless God that our Joshua honors His commitment to Gentiles in spite of the chafing of His Jewish brethren. **ROM 9:23-26; 10:19-21.**
8. The princes proposed a solution that would spare themselves from the wrath of God but would bring some value out of this situation to Israel and penalize them for their deception, namely, let them live, which would fulfill their oath, but let them do the menial labor for the congregation of Israel. **vs. 20-21.**
 - a. David once made an oath to spare the life of Shimei, whose cursing of David was a breach of the Law (**2SAM 19:21-23 c/w EXO 22:28**), yet he urged that Solomon not consider himself bound by David's oath. **1KI 2:8-9.**
 - b. God swore that a seed of David would be the Messianic king (**2SAM 7:12-17**) and also swore that the Davidic regal line would be cut off at Jeconiah (**JER 22:30**) yet kept his promise to David by Christ being born of Mary who descended from Nathan, not Solomon (**LUK 3:23-31**) yet was the legal child of Joseph who was a descendant of Solomon. **MAT 1:7-16.**
 - c. Better that we should figure out how to live with our oath than to break it.

- D. **vs. 22-27.** Joshua berates them for their deception but honors the agreement he made to spare their lives. He also imposes perpetual servitude upon them as a curse for their beguilement.
1. These Canaanites being made perpetual servants would bear the Canaanite curse of **GEN 9:25**.
 2. The princes had recommended that the Gibeonites be made "...hewers of wood and drawers of water unto all the congregation..." (v. 21) but Joshua restricts that burden to being primarily "...for the house of my God" (v. 23), although v. 27 indicates not exclusively.
 - a. Hewers of wood and drawers of water were a lowly class in Israel. **DEU 29:10-11**.
 - b. Being the lowliest of servants of the house of God is better than being without the house of God (**PSA 84:10; JAM 1:9**), or dead (v. 24).
 - c. The Gibeonites became bondservants to the priests and the Levites doing the menial tasks for them. v. 27.
 - d. The descendants of these Gibeonites, called *Nethinims* (dedicated or devoted persons) were given a place to dwell with the Levites (who were the original Nethinims, **NUM 3:9; 8:19**), and a place of honor in the service of the temple. v. 27 c/w **1CH 9:2; EZR 8:20**.
 - e. The Gibeonites therefore became *servants of servants of the line of Shem*, a letter fulfillment of **GEN 9:25-26**.
 - f. Under the N.T. all church members are *priests* of God's house (**1PE 2:5**) and *Nethinims* of one another in love (**GAL 5:14; MAR 10:43-45**) being made *servants of the great servant*, Jesus Christ. **MAT 12:18**.
 3. It is interesting that the Gibeonites actions were based on information gotten from the word of God (v. 24); they had not personally witnessed the proofs of God's power to judge sinners.
 4. They also submitted fully to the judgment of Joshua without complaint or disagreement. v. 25 c/w **JDG 10:15; 1SAM 3:18**.
 - a. This should also be our response to the providences as well as the judgments of God. **MAT 11:26; EZR 9:13; PSA 103:10**.
 - b. "It is in precisely such a spirit and attitude that sinners are to come before God in Christ---convicted of their sins, convinced of the verity of God's threatenings, casting themselves upon His good pleasure, hoping in His mercy, submitting unreservedly to His will, ready to take His yoke upon them." (A.W. Pink)
 5. "And so he did unto them and delivered them..." (v. 26). How blessedly is our Joshua here foreshadowed: "Though the guilt of these men was established and though they belonged to an accursed race, yet he spared their lives, and that on the ground of a covenant made by oath! Thus he did what was both 'good and right': yea, he went beyond what they 'asked or thought,' showing them favour and conferring honour upon them, by appointing them to minister unto the 'altar of the Lord'; and thus they would be taught the worship of the true God and delivered from idolatry. It is striking to note that the only ones who acknowledged what they heard about the Lord (2:10; 9:24) were delivered from His judgments." (A.W. Pink)
 6. In the end Israel received the cities of the Gibeonites as an inheritance without having to smite the inhabitants or break their oath to them. v. 17 c/w **JOS 18:14, 25-26**.
 - a. The congregation of Israel suffered no injury in restraining their desire to plunder the cities of the Gibeonites and by obeying the word of God for all these things were added unto them. **MAT 6:31-33**.
 - b. God confirmed their decision by giving them a glorious victory when they came to Gibeon's defense in **JOS 10**.