

General Church Education



Treaty with the Gibeonites

Joshua 9

Lesson 11

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 4: The Lord Is the Hero

For ages 9-10

Treaty with the Gibeonites

Joshua 9

Teacher Background

After Joshua's victories at Jericho and Ai Israel's enemies joined forces to attack them. Hearing this, a group of Hivites from Gibeon went to the camp at Gilgal craftily disguised as distant travelers. Wearing old clothes and taking moldy bread, they pretended to have come far so that their new clothes and fresh food had spoiled. Joshua made a treaty with them without asking the Lord. Just three days later he discovered they lived nearby. The treaty could not be broken, but Joshua made them slaves to hew wood and draw water for the tabernacle.

The nations in the land of Canaan when the children of Israel arrived were descendants of the Ancient Church and the Most Ancient Church. When the Israelites were approached by people who appeared to be telling the truth, Joshua and the people hastily made a treaty before knowing the truth and consulting the Lord. When the truth came out the treaty could not be undone. The Gibeonites were preserved by the Lord's providence. They stand for motives that are not actually good, but can be put to good use by serving higher spiritual loves. The "far country" they came from was the Ancient Church. Their moldy "bread", spiritual good that was once fresh. Their "wine-skins", doctrines that were once true, now unfit to hold new truth. Their "garments", ideas for right living which had declined.

Key Ideas

- Israel was tricked by the Gibeonites because they didn't check with the Lord before acting.
- Things are not always what they may seem at first.
- The Lord wants us to be honest and tell the truth.

From the Writings

Every nation in the land of Canaan had in ancient times meant some good or truth of the Church, for the Most Ancient Church, which was celestial, had existed there. But subsequently the nations there turned aside into idolatrous practices, and therefore these same nations also mean forms of idolatry. But because the Hivites since ancient times meant interior truth, and because they were one of the more upright nations among whom the truth of the Church had not been completely annihilated the Lord preserved the Hivite Gibeonites by means of the covenant which Joshua and the princes made with them. For those Gibeonites were Hivites. See *Arcana Coelestia* 4431.2.

Those who made worship consist solely in external things are called 'sons of the foreigner' who were to serve the children of Israel. The Gibeonites belonged among those who were to be servants. The Lord's kingdom is such that everyone, no matter who or what kind of person, must perform a use. In His kingdom the Lord looks to nothing else than use. Even those in hell have to perform a use, though the uses they do perform are the lowest of all. Among those performing inferior uses are people in the next life whose worship has been wholly external, separated from internal. See *Arcana Coelestia* 1079.2

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Vocabulary

treaty—a formal agreement between groups of people

lowland—land at sea level that is flat

ambassadors—official representatives sent from one country to another

covenant—a two-way agreement

Five Nations Join Together to Fight Against Israel

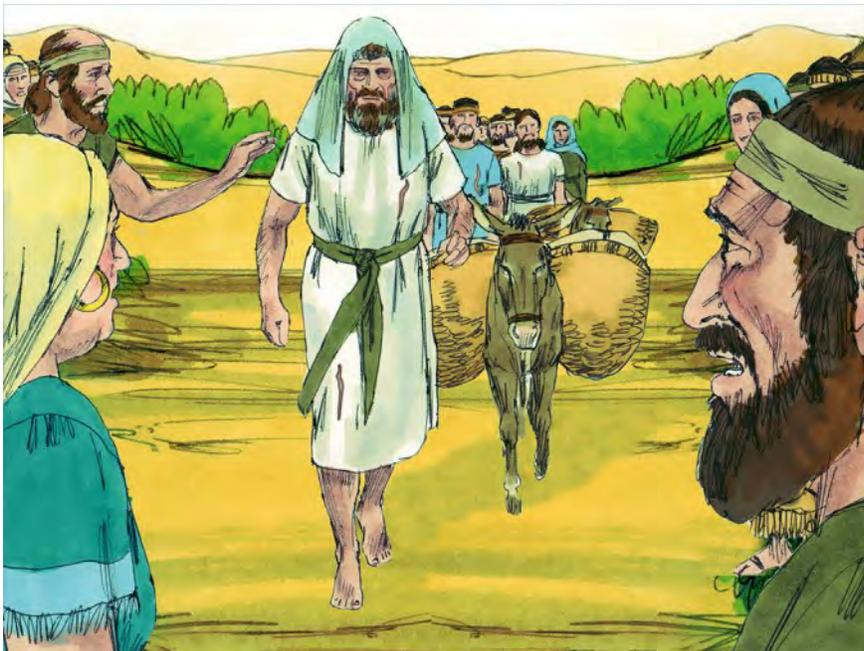
Joshua's army crossed the river Jordan and destroyed the cities of Jericho and Ai. When people heard about it, five enemy nations decided to join forces to fight back. They were worried that Israel would defeat them too, and they wanted to protect their families and their land.

The nations knew about Israel's invasion of their land ever since people had crossed the Jordan. Why didn't they attack the Israelites while they were crossing the Jordan? Why hadn't they helped Jericho and Ai? Why didn't all the people of the land join together to attack the invaders?

The most important answer is that the Lord made the people of the land afraid. They had heard of the Lord's great miracles and power. This fear made them weak.

The Gibeonites

One nation, the Gibeonites, decided not to join the other nations. They thought up a clever trick



to protect themselves and their lands. Learn how they fooled the Israelites into thinking they had come from far away by reading Joshua 9:1-6.

How could the Gibeonites look like they had come on a long, long journey? They gathered things that looked old and worn. They found old sacks, old wineskins that were torn and mended, old and patched sandals, and moldy old bread.

Then the Gibeonites went to Joshua and told him they had come from a far, far country. They said they had heard about the Lord God of the Israelites and all the wonders He had done.

So Joshua made peace with them. He made a covenant with them, promising to protect them from harm. He allowed them to keep their homes and lands.



Read Joshua 9:7-15.

Three days after this the Israelites discovered they had been tricked! They discovered that the Gibeonite cities were actually nearby.

Read Joshua 16-23.

When Joshua asked why they had done this, the Gibeonites answered,

Because your servants were clearly told that the Lord your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you; therefore we were very much afraid for our lives because of you. (Joshua 9:24)

Joshua Kept His Word

Joshua was angry about being tricked, but the covenant could not be broken. So the Israelites made the Gibeonites slaves. They had to cut wood and fetch water for worship in the tabernacle. Through this, the mistake made by agreeing to protect the Gibeonites was turned into an opportunity for useful service. The children of Israel kept the promise they had made, and many years later got Israel into trouble when the promise was broken.

Joshua's Mistake

Joshua's mistake was serious. He saw the Gibeonites' old clothing and patched shoes and believed their story. He had forgotten to do something very important—to ask the Lord what he should do. If he had asked, the Lord would have told him the truth, and he would not have made an agreement with the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites stand for doing good things for selfish reasons. The things they did could serve heavenly goals, just as the Gibeonites could help the Israelites worship the Lord.

Lesson 11 • Treaty with the Gibeonites

Everyone makes mistakes. When we do this, we should admit what we have done and look for a new path forward. Joshua's mistake brought the children of Israel help so they could worship the Lord. Fetching water for the tabernacle is like gathering true ideas. Hewing wood is like doing good deeds, like opening a door for someone, or feeding a hungry person. We need to know how to do things to be helpful.

The Lord, Our Guide

It is not enough to trust only in ourselves. We must trust the Lord and ask Him what to do before we act. This might mean we stop to ask whether what we are doing is right or wrong. It may also mean asking a parent or teacher before we do something. If we do this we will not be fooled, as the Israelites were, because the Lord will show us what is right and wrong. Even though Joshua found a way to work with the Gibeonites, we will see, in the next lesson, that his mistake had serious consequences.

Discussion Questions

- What did the Gibeonites tell Joshua about themselves?
- How did they make Joshua believe them?
- Why did they do it? What were they worried about?
- Have you ever been fooled by appearances? What are some ways in which people try to give others a false impression?
- Since Joshua could not break his promise to the Gibeonites, what did the Israelites do with them?
- Was Joshua an honest man?
- What was Joshua's mistake? How did his mistake affect people in the future?
- Why was it important for Joshua to keep a promise he had made, even when his promise was found to have been made without knowing the truth?
- What happens if we pretend to be different than we really are?
- We can pretend to be different than we really are in this world, but what about in the spiritual world? There we can't look different than we are or say things we don't really believe. What would it be like if this world was like the spiritual world?

Activity Overview | Treaty with the Gibeonites

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

The Lord is my strength and shield;
My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped. Psalm 28:7

Projects

Choose one or two activities.

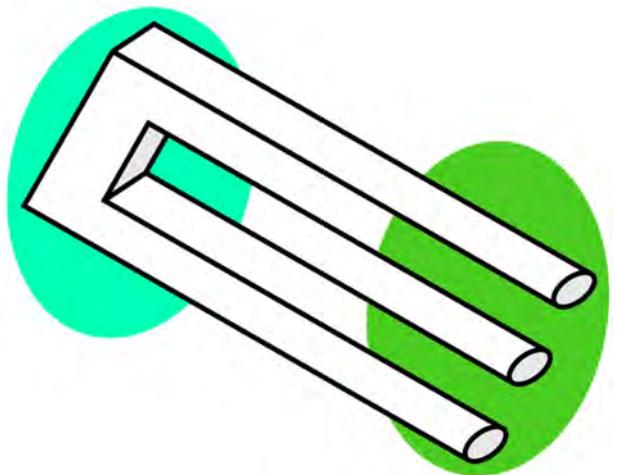
- Things Aren't Always What They Seem
- What Surrounds You?
- Picture to color—The Fate of the Gibeonites (Joshua 9)

Additional Activity Ideas

- Act out the story of the Gibeonites deception.
- Bake bread. Enjoy eating it warm. Bread corresponds to the Lord's goodness or love. Think about how the Lord's love feeds and sustains us.
- The Gibeonites pretended to have come so far that their fresh bread molded during the journey. Compare fresh bread with dry or moldy bread. The Gibeonites descended from people who at one time had known the Lord. Now they only had a distorted (moldy) ideas of Him. Compare a time when you felt close to the Lord with a time when he felt distant.
- For additional fill-in-the-blank review questions, go to <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-israels-treaty-with-gibeon-review-questions-joshua09.pdf>.

Activity 1 | Things Aren't Always What They Seem

Joshua found out that the Gibeonites were not what they seemed to be. Look at the pictures below. What do you see? Check again. Do you see anything else?



Activity 2 | What Surrounds You?

The Gibeonites deceived Joshua by changing their appearance. In this world we can appear differently on the outside than we are on the inside, but in the spiritual world we will not be able to do this. Our surroundings will be a mirror of what we are like inside. Draw pictures to show the kinds of things surrounding a good person, and the kinds of things surrounding an evil person. For more on a person's surroundings in heaven see *Divine Love and Wisdom* 322-326.

Things surrounding heavenly people are an image of what they love.

Things surrounding selfish or evil people are an image of what they love.

