Deception through Distraction

Joshua 9:1-26

 There are many lessons in the Bible for the believer to grow by. I think about the story of Jacob who finds true love when he flees to his uncle’s house and is overwhelmed by the beauty of his daughter Rachael. Jacob is in awe of her beauty and he agrees to work for seven years for the right to marry her. To his surprise on the night of his honeymoon, his wicked uncle Laban switches places with his bride and gives him the “ugly sister” that no one wants and he wakes up disappointed and confused that he has entered a covenant with someone that he never wanted. Laban was deceitful but Jacob was distracted. (Gen.29)

In our story, the heathen tribes of Canaan divided into many little “nations” (city-states) with key cities as their centers. They usually fought each other, but when God’s people arrived, these petty kings united to oppose Israel. It is amazing how enemies unite against God! However, the people at Gibeon, the next city to be taken, decided to use deceit instead of force. (Satan is depicted as both a lion and a serpent). They dressed themselves to appear like men who had been on a long journey, with old sacks, patched shoes, and moldy food, and their plan worked.

God had commanded Israel to make no covenant with the nations in Canaan (Deut.7), but the Gibeonites knew that if they did get a covenant, Israel would keep it. They lied when they said they came from a far country. Note also that they said nothing about Israel’s victories at Jericho and Ai.

What Jericho could not do with walls, or Ai with weapons, the Gibeonites accomplished with deceit. Satan tries one device after another to defeat God’s people, and we must constantly be on guard.

* Joshua and his leaders failed to seek God’s mind in the matter
* The Gibeonites’ story sounded reasonable
* The food and clothing seemed to be old and worn out; and everything appeared to be in order

**No One Consulted God!**

1. We often sign before we can read the fine print (we write a check our --- can’t cash)
2. Three days later, Israel came to Gibeon but could not destroy them because of the covenant they made (a covenant speaks to the character of the persons forming it)
3. The people murmured because leaders made a poor decision (winning keeps your critics quiet).
4. The compromise was to make slaves of Gibeon (there is a difference between annihilation and acceptance)
5. Deceit can be far more effective than fighting and confrontation
6. Satan will try anything at his disposal to defeat the people of God
7. It is usually after a great victory that Satan begins his subtle attacks
8. After Jericho Achan sinned
9. Victory at Jericho produced defeat at Ai
10. Victory at Ai produced defeat at Gibeon

 3. Beware of deceptive relationships

 a. Judging after the flesh

* He will delight in obeying the Lord. He will not judge by appearance nor make a decision based on hearsay (Isaiah 11:3).
* Look beneath the surface so you can judge correctly (John 7:24)

 b. Depending on our own wisdom

* Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.

Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take (Proverbs 3:5-6)

1. Worldly alliances (2Cor. 6:14-18)
* 14Don’t team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? 15What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? 16And what union can there be between God’s temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said:

“I will live in them

and walk among them.

I will be their God,

and they will be my people.

17Therefore, come out from among unbelievers,

and separate yourselves from them, says the Lord.

Don’t touch their filthy things,

and I will welcome you.

18And I will be your Father,

and you will be my sons and daughters,

says the Lord Almighty.

Conclusion

The tragedy of this story is that Joshua was forced to defend his enemies because of his hasty covenant. Moses warned Israel in Deut.7 that friendship with these heathen nations would only lead Israel into sin, and that was what happened. The early demise of a kingdom that was to be a model of covenant promise to God and the blue print for the world to follow was hindered by shortsightedness. These recently liberated people never learned the lesson of obedience to God over self-deception.