

SERMON: God's Word Above His Name

GOOD Morning OIC AND WELCOME TO FATHER'S HOUSE

In this Message I will be continuing in the book of Joshua. I closed my last Message titled “Comfort Zones and The Comforter” with the following words: ... We can have true peace in the middle of the hardest battle by the Spirit of God. We have the Promise of Him as our Helper in temptation in **(1 Corinthians 10.13)**. The Comforter makes Jesus more real to us. His powerful Presence means even greater and greater testimonies that we belong to Jesus! Whenever Holy Spirit is present in power I often find myself whispering **Jesus' name!** **And, Oh that is so comforting to me!**

Today's Message is about the people of Gibeon confronting the Israelites. We will learn four powerful truths: 1) how the Older Testament Scriptures explain the unusual behavior and unexpected decisions by God when His Commands were not kept or obeyed by His Leaders. 2) how God's eternal love for Mankind required exterminating the people of Canaan, in order to attract the rest of the world to the God of the holy nation, Israel 3) how God's character placed *His Word above His name!* 4) how this is what God does today regarding His Son Jesus.

1. THE OLDER TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES – GOD'S UNEXPECTED ACTIONS

Reading **(Joshua 9.1-2)** *1 Now all the kings west of the Jordan River heard about what had happened. These were the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, who lived in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea as far north as the Lebanon mountains. 2 These kings combined their armies to fight as one against Joshua and the Israelites.*

To us in the 21st Century, it seems hard to believe that ancient society had messenger networks. Reading the Bible you find most of these were single messengers sent out by kings of the lands in the Ancient World. The five major powers were always expecting war. These were the Egyptian, Hittite, Mitanni, Assyrian, and Babylonian Empires. When God sent Abraham to create His Chosen People Israel, he sent him into the middle of these nations with their own conflicts. The return of Israel to the land God promised Abraham, Canaan, would concern all the kingdoms in the Mid-East. The messages of the Fall of Jericho and Ai created a crisis for them. Thus in **(Joshua 9.2)** *2 These kings {those west of the Jordan River} combined their armies to fight as one against Joshua and the Israelites.*

THE GIBEONITES FROM HIVITE TRIBES PLOT A DECEPTION

Reading **(Joshua 9.3-7)**: *3 But when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, 4 they resorted to deception to save themselves. They sent ambassadors to Joshua, loading their donkeys with weathered saddlebags and old, patched wine-skins. 5 They put on worn-out, patched sandals and ragged clothes. And the bread they took with them was dry and moldy. 6 When they arrived at the camp of Israel at Gilgal, they told Joshua and the men of Israel, “We have come from a distant land to ask you to make a peace treaty with us.” 7 The Israelites replied to these Hivites, “How do we know you don’t live nearby? For if you do, we cannot make a treaty with you.”*

2. EXTERMINATION OF CANNAN AND MISSION OF MERCY TO THE WORLD

Joshua's Mission entering the Promised land included conquering and exterminating all the peoples in it! To understand this let us go back to the instructions that God gave His leader Joshua in **(Joshua 6.17)** *Jericho and everything in it must be completely destroyed as an offering to the Lord. Only Rahab the prostitute and the others in her house will be spared, for she protected our spies.* Now let us also look back further in Israel's History in the wilderness and their character and how that behavior influenced God. God knew that the sins of the Canaanites would pollute these people Israel. The Israelites already showed little resistance to their former sins of idolatry that they had learned in Egypt. We saw this before they reached the Jordan River. Moses had received the Holy Laws of God on the mountain but the peoples' impatience led them to worship a golden calf. They called it their god, and celebrated a festival to it, calling it the LORD! Reading **(Exodus 32.5-7/TLB)** *5 When Aaron saw how happy the people were about it, he built an altar before the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a feast to Jehovah!" 6 So they were up early the next morning and began offering burnt offerings and peace offerings to the calf idol; afterwards they sat down to feast and drink at a wild party, followed by sexual immorality.*

7 Then the Lord told Moses, "Quick! Go on down, for your people that you brought from Egypt have defiled themselves," So from our side of looking at History, God could not trust His Chosen people to keep His Name Holy with the trials of great temptation by surrounding sinners.

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with God's Commandments on stone, he threw them toward the sinning Israelites in anger, shattering them. After Moses cut out new stone tablets, God wrote again His Holy Commandments in these new stones. Thus God had given specific commands for the stubborn Israelite people. Reading **(Exodus 34.11-14/NASB1995)** *11 "Be sure to observe what I am commanding you this day: behold, I am going to drive out the Amorite before you, and the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. 12 Watch yourself that you make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst. 13 But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim 14—for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God—"* So God had commanded the killing of all the pagan unclean people as Joshua conquered the Promised Land and He had commanded no covenants with these pagan peoples. So complete obedience would have ended Joshua's conquest of Canaan with no survivors in any cities which Israel occupied. But now, we read of the cunning Gibeonites in **(Joshua 9.7-11):** *7 The Israelites replied to these Hivites, "How do we know you don't live nearby? For if you do, we cannot make a treaty with you." 8 They replied, "We are your servants." "But who are you?" Joshua demanded. "Where do you come from?" 9 They answered, "Your servants have come from a very distant country. We have heard of the might of the LORD your God and of all he did in Egypt. 10 We have also heard what he did to the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River—King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan (who lived in Ashtaroth). 11 So our elders and all our people instructed us, 'Take supplies for a long journey. Go meet with the people of Israel and tell them, "We are your servants; please make a treaty with us."'"*

Now a familiar series of events unfolds. That is "all to familiar" with us when we do not ask for God's counsel. The God appointed leaders, Joshua and his soldiers, did not ask God if the Gibeonites were speaking the truth! Their well-acted-out deception convinced Joshua to allow the Gibeonites to live.

Note that God had limited the extermination of pagan cultures and society to the land of Canaan. Israel was not commanded by God to declare war on all sinful Mankind! God's intention was to draw Mankind to His Holy People Israel for salvation, going outward to all the nations. If God's people did not display His Character of Holiness, Mankind had no hope on Earth!!! Other nations would have nothing to attract them to regain relationship with their Creator.

God's Plan has always been, and always will be, Mission of Salvation to all the nations and ethnic groups in the world. God's goal was to exterminate Canaan to attract the Empires of the World such as the Hittite, Mitanni, Assyria, Babylonia, and Egyptian Empires to Salvation by Faith in the God of Israel. As the Apostle Paul wrote in (Romans 11.33/NASB1995) *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!*

As Christians you should not need this preacher to know how *keeping your oaths or vows* applies to us all. The most common Christian vow being *Marriage*. The New Testament tells us in **(2 Corinthians 5.19-21/NASB1995)** *19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. If we do not look anything like Christ in Holiness, why should any sinner listen to our pleas to come to God? As Jesus preached in (Matthew 5.13-15): “You are the **salt** of the earth. But what good is **salt** if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it **salty** again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ... The **SALT** is our lifestyle led by the Spirit to be like Christ. The **LIGHT** is the holiness in our lives so graced by God!*

A NOTE ON PERSONAL EVANGELISM & RECONCILIATION

Let us analyze and exegete the meaning of the words used by Paul, in **(2 Corinthians 5.19/NASB1995)**... *that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting **their** trespasses against them;* and in **(2 Corinthians 5.20/NASB1995)** *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.* This *reconciling the world to Himself* refers to Mankind falling away from relationship with God when Adam & Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. For the Bible says *“their” not “your” or “his” trespasses.* This fits the idea of *reconciling the world to Himself.* But, the wording of the plea **does not fit personal evangelism of reconciling a sinner because a sinner never was with God ever before!** Therefore as Christ's Ambassadors we make our plea to a sinner **“Come to God!”** We do not say be **“reconciled”** or **“come back”** to God.

GIBEONITES TRICK ISRAEL

Reading **(Joshua 8.9-15)** *9 They {the Gibeonites} answered, “Your servants have come from a very distant country. We have heard of the might of the LORD your God and of all he did in Egypt. 10 We have also heard what he did to the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River—King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan (who lived in Ashtaroth). 11 So our elders and all our people instructed us, ‘Take supplies for a long journey. Go meet with the people of Israel and tell them, “We are your servants; please make a treaty with us.”’ 12 “This bread was hot from the ovens when we left our homes. But now, as you can see, it is dry and moldy. 13 These wineskins were new when we filled them, but now they are old and split open. And our clothing and sandals are worn out from our very long journey.” 14 So the Israelites examined their food, **but they did not consult the LORD.** 15 Then Joshua made a peace treaty with them and guaranteed their safety, and the leaders of the community ratified their agreement with a binding oath.*

OOPS...I FORGOT TO PRAY

In (Joshua 8.15) Joshua's peace treaty or covenant was disobedience to God's Command in (Exodus 34.12/NASB1995) *...make no covenant with the inhabitants of the land into which you are going, or it will become a snare in your midst.* Of course, Joshua did not know he was acting disobediently because he believed the Gibeonites' trick or deception that they came from outside Canaan. But Joshua forgot to pray! If I forget some food while shopping at the grocery store I may say to Jesus: "Oops, I forgot to pray!" But, if I forget to pray about the BIG CORNERS IN MY EVERCHANGING LIFE...well, "oops" is not fitting!

PRAYER TIPS FROM PASTOR BRUCE

- 1) Talk with Jesus all day long, when possible. Talk to Him about Ohtani's homerun or the falling Yen. He did not become "human" to have no interest in your human experiences!
- 2) Whether short time or long, have daily time in your *prayer closet alone with Him.*
- 3) Pray as you go! If temptations happen on the train or street, you cannot wait for your prayer closet. Christians used to everyday conversations with Jesus are quick to **call for Help!**

THE TRUTH COMES OUT!

Reading (Joshua 9.16-18) *16 Three days after making the treaty, they learned that these people actually lived nearby! 17 The Israelites set out at once to investigate and reached their towns in three days. The names of these towns were Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim. 18 But the Israelites did not attack the towns, for the Israelite leaders had made a vow to them in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel.* Traveling to Gibeon revealed the deception! The Gibeonites were in Canaan! Now, the Israelite Leaders showed true leadership over the people who would grumble when the soldiers refused to kill the Gibeonites.

3. GOD'S CHARACTER – HIS WORD ABOVE HIS NAME

The Israelite Leaders were thinking of **GOD'S CHARACTER MORE THAN HIS RULES!!! EVEN HIS COMMANDS.** **Reading (Joshua 9.18-21)** *The people of Israel grumbled against their leaders because of the treaty. 19 But the leaders replied, "Since we have sworn an oath in the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel, we cannot touch them. 20 This is what we must do. We must let them live, for divine anger would come upon us if we broke our oath. 21 Let them live." So they made them woodcutters and water carriers for the entire community, as the Israelite leaders directed.*

The Leaders realized the weight of an oath in the Presence of God in (verse 19) : **"Since we have sworn an oath in the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel, we cannot touch them.**

OATHS IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD UNDER THE OLDER COVENANT

When the leaders said *in the Presence of the LORD they, or likely Joshua who replaced Moses, must have approached the Ark of the Covenant and made the oath with the Gibeonites.* God had promised Moses that He would dwell between the cherubim or angel figures at the Ark. We see this in (Exodus 25.22) *I will meet with you there and talk to you from above the atonement cover between the gold cherubim that hover over the Ark of the Covenant. From there I will give you my commands for the people of Israel.*

They made the oath in God's Presence, but because they did not ask for counsel, He did not speak to them about the Gibeonites.

GOD'S WORD ABOVE HIS NAME

(Psalm 138.2/KJ21) *I will worship toward Thy holy temple, and praise Thy name for Thy lovingkindness and for Thy truth, for Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name.*

This Bible verse supports or reveals why God acted in a way that first seemed strange. His authority and plan to exterminate the evil from the Promised Land seemed an obvious next step decision by Him. But NO! The words: *Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name* means here we see with Joshua and the Gibeonites a specific revelation of God's Character. When His appointed leadership made an oath in His Presence, this Peace Treaty, it was the same as if God had spoken it Himself, His Word. That Oath, Peace Treaty, is thus lifted in Heaven above the previous commands on His Name...in some way, *magnified Thy word above all Thy name*. **So God gave His Word to the Gibeonites. He could not break it! We will see that this will be put to the test in Joshua Chapter 9 as God sends the Israelites to protect the Gibeonites as if to save His own people.**

The treaty must stand! So Joshua stands by the Peace Treaty Oath. But he asks a strange question that seems obvious to us. Reading in **(Joshua 9.22-25)**: *22 Joshua called together the Gibeonites and said, "Why did you lie to us? Why did you say that you live in a distant land when you live right here among us? 23 May you be cursed! From now on you will always be servants who cut wood and carry water for the house of my God." 24 They replied, "We did it because we—your servants—were clearly told that the LORD your God commanded his servant Moses to give you this entire land and to destroy all the people living in it. So we feared greatly for our lives because of you. That is why we have done this. 25 Now we are at your mercy—do to us whatever you think is right."*

Could it be that Joshua's Holy job to execute all Canaanites had him forget that they are human beings? Was Joshua only seeing everything in this simple soldier view of killing the enemy? We will never know! But God has put in all His Created living beings a desire to stay alive. The Gibeonites believed that God would fulfill His Word in **(Joshua 9.24)** *the LORD your God commanded his servant Moses to give you this entire land and to destroy all the people living in it.* Maybe we cannot call it *faith*, but they acted upon what they believed about the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! Their answer to Joshua in **(Joshua 9.24b)** seems obvious to me: *So we feared greatly for our lives because of you.* As the wisest man Solomon wrote in **(Ecclesiastes 9.4)** *There is hope only for the living. As they say, "It's better to be a live dog than a dead lion!"* Then the Gibeonites say in **(Joshua 9.24b)** *Now we are at your mercy—do to us whatever you think is right.* What Joshua thought right was **(Joshua 9.26-27)** *26 So Joshua did not allow the people of Israel to kill them. 27 But that day he made the Gibeonites the woodcutters and water carriers for the community of Israel and for the altar of the LORD—wherever the LORD would choose to build it. And that is what they do to this day.* To men expecting death, this seemed not a curse but the blessing of life! As a tribe in Canaan, they accepted their role as servants under the protection of Israel as **(Joshua 9.27)** *says: And that is what they do to this day!* The last chapters of the Book of Joshua were probably written by the High Priest Phineas about 100 years later or 1300B.C. That is why **(Joshua 9.27)** *says, And that is what they do to this day!*

4. GOD'S WORD ABOVE HIS NAME- JESUS' NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES

As Christians our fellowship is with Father God and the Son of God, *the Word become Flesh*. The Scripture says in **(Psalm 138.2/KJ21)** *I will worship toward Thy holy temple, and praise Thy name for Thy lovingkindness and for Thy truth, for Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name.* This implies God's Oaths and Promises are magnified above His name. Jesus is the Truth. Since

Christ came, God has magnified the Name of Jesus, the Word of God, above all other names! In a sense above His Name, Father God, for the New Testament in the Bible states as the Apostle Peter preached in **(Acts 4.12)** *There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name {the name of Jesus} under heaven by which we must be saved.*” This is God's Plan for Jesus' Name to be above His in that meaning. Jesus also made this clear to the Jews who wanted to skip over Him to God the Father. Reading **(John 3.35-36/NASB1995)** **35** *The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. 36 He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*” and **(John 10.29-30)** **29** *for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand. 30 The Father and I are one.*” Thus the oneness of the Father and the Son of God makes it clear since Jesus came that the Father chose to elevate Jesus Name above any previous name for God: such as YHWH(LORD GOD), Adonai, Elohim, etc.

As the New Testament declares in **(Philippians 2.5-11)**: **5** *You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. 6 Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. 7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, 8 he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. 9 Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

JESUS GIVES TO GOD THE FATHER ALL OF HIS SHEEP AND HIS KINGDOM AT THE END OF TIME

Whatever mysteries we feel are in the Father-Son of God relationship will all be made clear to the whole Universe. This written by the Apostle Paul in **(1 Corinthians 15.23-28)** **23** *But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back. 24 After that the end will come, when he {JESUS} will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power. 25 For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. 26 And the last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For the Scriptures say, “God has put all things under his authority.” (Of course, when it says “all things are under his authority,” that does not include God himself, who gave Christ his authority.) 28 Then, when all things are under his authority, the Son will put himself under God's authority, so that God, who gave his Son authority over all things, will be utterly supreme over everything everywhere.*

And yes, the Bible says everything everywhere....and so shall it be! Let us rejoice that we are the Sheep in Jesus' Pasture. If you are not, please pray with us all now and ask for prayer at the Lift Sign.

Let Us Pray, **{Holy Communion}**

REFERENCES

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