



Sunday, November 24, 2019
Pastor Don Denyes

Intro to Joshua 9

So many stories in the Bible are puzzling to us simply because we don't live in the cultural context in which the events took place. The role of an oath is one of those cultural matters that is difficult for us to fully comprehend because words carry such little importance in our culture today. We live in an age where words abound. Yet, ironically, we also live in a world where "spin" abounds, where words get twisted to mean something other than what was intended or understood. Worse yet, we also live in a world where words are viewed as meaningless by many—whether it's a tweet or a marriage vow.

Joshua 9 provides a helpful corrective to our current cultural view of words. In reality, words matter a great deal, especially those words spoken in the name of the LORD (v. 18). Not only that, but in learning the value of oaths, not only in a cultural context, but in a theological context, we see that we care a great deal about oaths. We care that God's oaths to us (covenants) mean something and that we can build our lives upon them. So, as we approach this study, and as we reflect on the gospel in our own lives, may we be people who learn to take oaths seriously.

Context

The broader context of this passage is Deuteronomy 7:2: "When the LORD your God gives them [the Canaanites, Hittites, etc.] over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them." This is what gives the Gibeonites cause to deal in deception with the Israelites, because they feared being annihilated. It also explains why deception was necessary, because all the peoples living *in* the promised land were to be devoted to destruction. Thus, by pretending to be outsiders to the land, the Israelites felt free to make a covenant with them.

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read Joshua 9:1-27

“They Believed the Lie”

- Unhappy Story of Failure (1-14)

- Surprising Story of Fortitude (15-27)

- Wonderful Story of Mercy

Compare: Rahab and Gibeonites

- Were part of enemy kingdoms

- Under a death sentence

- Heard about the LORD

- Desperate to be rescued (they lied)

- Embraced an oath

- Acted upon their belief

- Left their kingdoms to join God’s people

- Became part of and stayed with God’s people

Discuss

- 1) Have you or someone you've known ever hedged on the truth in order to avoid a bad situation? As you reflect on that now, what do you think about it?

- 2) Read Matthew 5:33-37. How does this passage inform your own view about keeping your word?

- 3) Read Joshua 9:14 again. How disciplined are you in seeking or applying the counsel of the LORD for guidance?

- 4) Pastor Don said we can think logically to the wrong conclusions. Can you think of a time that you've seen that happen—either in your own life or someone else?

- 5) How closely do you see your own story in the story of Rahab and the Gibeonites (see above)?