

THE GIBEONITE DECEPTION AND LIE: VICTORY OVER DECEITFULNESS

JOSHUA 09:14–27

Introduction

Deception and lies are two of the greatest threats to human relationships and society. Anything built upon deception and lies will crumble.

- => If a person borrows money and promises to pay it back, but is lying, what happens? The creditor is never repaid.
- => If a man or woman promises to love the other, but one is lying, what happens? A broken engagement or marriage.
- => If an employer promises to pay a certain wage, but is lying, what happens? A dispirited worker and perhaps termination.
- => If a business promotes a false product, what happens? Unhappy customers who remember the deception in their future purchases.
- => If a student deceives by cheating and lying his way through school, what happens? A lack of knowledge and inadequate preparation for the future.
- => If a leader lies and deceives, what happens? A misled public, a loss of integrity and a damaged segment of society.

Illustration after illustration could be given to show how deception and lies crumble relationships and society. In truth, no relationship or society can long survive deception and lies. Thus, deception and lies are of the greatest concern to God. This is seen throughout all of Scripture. This is the major subject of the present passage of Scripture: *The Gibeonite Deception and Lie: Victory over Deceitfulness and Lying*, Joshua 9:1-27.

- I. The great alliance of enemies formed against God's people: a picture of spiritual enemies who oppose believers (vv. 1-2).
- II. The deception and lie of one enemy, the Gibeonites, in seeking a peace treaty: a warning against deception and lies (vv. 3-13).
- III. The tragic weakness of God's people in facing deception and lies: a lack of prayer, of failing to seek the LORD (vv. 14-17).
- IV. The steps necessary to correct and overcome the deception and lies (vv. 18-27).

I. Joshua 09:14–17 The Tragic Weakness of God's People in Facing Deception and Lies: A Lack of Prayer, of Failing to Seek the LORD

There was the tragic weakness of God's people in facing deception and lies. They failed to pray, failed to seek the counsel of the LORD. Consequently, Joshua and his officials had no way to know that they were being deceived.

The result of the deception was tragic: a treaty of peace was signed with the deceitful Gibeonites. The leaders of Israel ratified the treaty. And note, the deception and lies were not discovered for three full days. The response of the Israelites was immediate. They sent military forces to all four cities of the Gibeonites: Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth and Kiriath Jearim.

Thought 1. As we walk throughout life, we are always facing the enemies of deception and lies, of exaggeration and half-truths. God does not want us deceived and misled. He does not want us...

- making commitments to people who deceive and lie
- giving money to deceitful organizations
- buying merchandise that is deceptively advertised
- following false, deceitful movements, whether religious or secular
- giving our loyalties to false ministers and deceitful workers
- being lured into a lifestyle that will defeat and destroy us
- being enticed into immorality, greed, covetousness, gluttony, anger, hostility, abuse, lawlessness, violence and other such behaviours

God wants to protect us from deception and lies, from being misled, defeated and destroyed. But there is only one way to guard against these things: we must seek the LORD! We must seek His presence and counsel, His guidance and knowledge. And we must constantly be seeking Him as we walk step by step, day by day. God's presence is constantly needed to guard against deceitfulness and dishonesty. God and God alone is our protection against the enemy who seeks to deceive and mislead us.

Luke 1:78-79 *Because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.*

John 16:13 *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

Psa 25:9 *He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.*

Psa 48:14 *For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.*

Psa 73:24 *You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.*

Isa 30:21 *Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”*

Isa 42:16 *I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.*

Mat 7:7 “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”

Mat 26:41 “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

John 15:7 “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.”

1 Chr 16:11 Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.

2 Tim 1:12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

1 Pet 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Psa 91:15 He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him.

Isa 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

II. ***Joshua 09:18–27 The Steps Necessary to Correct and Overcome Deception and Lies***

There were the steps necessary to correct and overcome the deception and lies.

Throughout this particular point, note the emphasis upon keeping and honouring one’s word. Three steps are taken to overcome the deceit of the Gibeonites.

1. The first step taken to overcome the deception and lie was critical: the step of protecting and honouring God’s name (vv. 18-19). God’s name was the major concern of the officials. Note that the Israelites grumbled against Joshua and the cabinet because they had allowed themselves to be deceived. However, the cabinet was not going to attack the Gibeonites. The reason is striking: they had sworn to the peace treaty, given their word *in the name of the LORD*. God’s name and honour were at stake; consequently they could not retaliate against the Gibeonites. They had to honour God’s name by doing exactly what they had promised, that is, keeping the peace agreement. By keeping their word, they proved their loyalty to God. They demonstrated that God is a God of truth, a God who keeps His word and promises — a God who expects His followers to keep their word and promises also. The LORD’s people are to be moral and just in all their dealings; consequently, this message had to be conveyed both to the Israelites and to all other peoples. But this was not all.
2. The second step necessary to overcome deception and lies was also critical, that of avoiding God’s wrath and judgment (20-21). Joshua and the officials had made an *oath* in God’s name. Consequently, the treaty had to be kept because it was God’s treaty, a peace treaty made in His name. Thus, their loyalty was due God, not so much

the Gibeonites. If Joshua and the leaders broke the covenant, they would face the wrath and judgment of God, for they had given their word in the name of the LORD. Therefore they had to honour God's name by keeping their word. To dishonour God's name by breaking the treaty would have put them under the judgment of God.

For this reason, the leaders determined not to break their word but to let the Gibeonites live. But note: they laid plans for dealing with the deception, laid plans to protect the Israelites from future deception and defeat at the hands of the Gibeonites. They appointed the Gibeonites to handle the menial duties for the house of God (Tabernacle). Thereafter, the Gibeonites would be the woodcutters and water carriers for the Tabernacle.

3. The third step necessary to overcome deception and lies is that of rebuke and of guarding against future deception (vv. 22-27).
 - a. Joshua summoned the Gibeonites and rebuked them publicly (v. 22).
 - b. Joshua then executed the judgment against the Gibeonite deceivers (v. 23). They were always to serve in the menial duties of the Tabernacle. They were always to be in a position of subordination, never elevated to the position of an ally. The deceivers were not in fact allies, but rather enemies. Their deception and lies had proven they were enemies, scheming to mislead God's people. Consequently, they had to suffer the judgment of subjection and service (v. 23).
 - c. The Gibeonites explained why they had deceived the Israelites: because they had feared for their lives. Note that they willingly, voluntarily surrendered to serve the people of God. Because of their willing surrender, Joshua was able to save them from the angry soldiers (vv. 24-26).
 - d. Now note the protection against future deception and the evil influence of the Gibeonites (v. 27). They were made servants in the Tabernacle itself, the very worship centre of God's holy presence. This meant that the Gibeonites would focus their lives — all their attention and work — upon the LORD and His worship. This would keep them from spreading their false worship and idolatry among the Israelites. And it would mean that eventually the Gibeonites would become worshippers of the true and living God, the LORD God Himself.

Warren W. Wiersbe points out that there is nothing in Scripture to indicate that the Gibeonites ever created any problem for the Israelites. In fact, over 500 of them returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity (Ezr 2:43-58; 8:20). This would seem to indicate that they had become true followers and worshippers of the LORD. (Warren W. Wiersbe. *Be Strong*. pp. 111-112)

The point to see is this: by assimilating the Gibeonites into the society of Israel, God's people had to protect themselves against any evil influence of the Gibeonite's. This the Israelites did by focusing the very lives and work of the Gibeonites around

the Tabernacle. Instead of these evil deceivers influencing God's people, God Himself would confront the Gibeonites with His very presence in the Tabernacle. Day by day, they would be confronted by the presence of God. The righteous influence of God would be influencing them instead of their confronting the people of God with their evil influences and false worship. This was the way Joshua and the leaders protected God's people against any future deception and lies of the Gibeonites.

Thought 1. How can we overcome deception and lies? How can we guard ourselves so that we will not be deceived or misled? By taking the very same three steps that Joshua and the Israelites took.

(1) We must seek to protect and honour God's name. When we honour our word, we honour God. When we keep our promises, we honour God. And when we honour God, God dwells with us. He gives us His presence and guidance. He counsels us and protects us against deceitfulness and dishonesty. His Spirit guards and protects us, giving us clear insight into deception. God enables us to see when people are attempting to deceive us. He gives us insight to see lies, and He gives us the power to conquer deception and lies.

Simply stated, when we keep our word, we honour God. And when we honour God, God gives us His presence and guidance. He protects us against deception.

Mat 5:16 *"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*

Luke 1:78-79 *Because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun [Christ] will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.*

John. 15:7 *"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."*

John 16:13 *"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."*

Eph 4:25 *Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body.*

Eph 6:10-14 *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place.*

Psa 48:14 *For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.*

Prov 12:19 *Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.*

Isa 25:1 *O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvellous things, things planned long ago.*

Zec 8:16 *These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts.*

Mala 2:6 *True instruction was in his mouth and nothing false was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many from sin.*

(2) We must seek to avoid God's wrath and judgment. If we fail to keep our promises, we ourselves become liars — false promisers. Failing to keep our word means that we have lied. We were not truthful, and we deceived some person. The person took our word, our promise and acted upon it. That is, the person made a promise or did some-thing or built something or purchased something based upon our word. But all to no avail. For what he acted upon was our false promise, our lie.

God condemns all liars, every single person who fails to keep his word or promise. Integrity, truthfulness is one of the foundation stones of society and of relationships. Without truthfulness, everything is based upon falsehood and lies and deception. And the result is most tragic: relationships in society crumble. Relationships in society cannot exist apart from truthfulness. For this reason, God's judgment will fall upon all deceivers and liars.

Rev 21:8 *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.*

Col 3:9 *Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices.*

Psa 63:11 *While the mouths of liars will be silenced.*

Psa 5:6 *You destroy those who tell lies; bloodthirsty and deceitful men the LORD abhors.*

Psa 101:7 *No one who practices deceit will dwell in my house; no one who speaks falsely will stand in my presence.*

Prov 12:22 *The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful.*

Prov 19:5 *A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours out lies will not go free.*

Prov 21:6 *A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapour and a deadly snare.*

(3) We must rebuke those who deceive us, and we must guard against future deception. We must set up a wall of protection against all deception and lies,

lest we be misled and base our lives upon falsehoods. If we base our lives upon deception and falsehood, our lives will crumble, be defeated and destroyed.

Note this fact: the only sure protection is God Himself. Just as the Gibeonites had to be focused upon the LORD, so we must be focused upon the LORD. We must continually walk in the LORD, keep our minds upon Him, continually seeking His presence and guidance. As we walk in the LORD, He promises to look after us, to guard and protect us against the enemies of deception and lies.

Lk 21:18 “But not a hair of your head will perish.”

1 Pet 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Exo 14:14 The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.

2 Chr 16:9 For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.

2 Sam 22:2 He said: “The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer.”

Psa 5:11 But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.

Psa 18:2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, and my stronghold.

Psa 31:2 Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me.

Psa 31:20 “In the shelter of your presence you hide them from all human intrigues; you keep them safe in your dwelling from accusing tongues.”

Psa 32:7 You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

Psa 34:7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.

Psa. 64:2 “Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked, from the plots of evildoers.”

Psa 91:2 I will say of the LORD, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”

Psa 91:4 He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

Psa 119:114 You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.

Psa 143:9 “Rescue me from mine enemies, LORD, for I hide myself in you.”

Nahum 1:7 The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him. ■