

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Joshua: God's Faithful Giving Of The Promised Land To Israel Part II: God's Giving Israel Victory Over The Canaanites, Joshua 5:13-12:24 E. Learning To Heed Scripture Over Influentially Errant Parties (Joshua 8:30-9:27)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We learned from Israel's Joshua 7 defeat at Ai to heed Scripture to avoid being deceived, but when we face deception from parties that highly influence us, we can find it very difficult to avoid being harmfully misled:

Consider the case of the letter to the editor of the April-June 2015, p. 9 Answers In Genesis magazine, Answers, by Geoff C. of the United Kingdom: he wrote to critique the previous issue's article by Dr. Russell Fuller ("Is Capital Punishment for Today?", Ibid., Jan.-Mar. 2015, p. 80-84) that supported capital punishment, and Geoff C. argued, "(D)oes . . . the death penalty . . . apply . . . as prescribed by the Mosaic Law? (see Exodus 21:17 and Leviticus 20:9-10). When confronted with a woman caught in adultery Jesus did not agree with the Pharisees' demand that she be stoned (John 8:1-11)." The critic thus implied that by not agreeing to let the woman caught in adultery be executed, Jesus opposed capital punishment opposite the teaching of the Law. However, Jesus was then under that Law (Galatians 4:4), so if He countered it, He sinned, and could not qualify to save us (Hebrews 7:26-28)!

Yet, the crisis of strong deception then arises as neither the credible Answers editor nor the credible author of the article in support of capital punishment countered Geoff C.'s critique, what typically occurs in such serious cases. Such silence can leave the reader thinking Jesus sinfully countered the Law, thus sabotaging his faith in Jesus Christ!

We hold that the Geoff C. critique must then be answered, and we will do so in the concluding part of this sermon, but this incident shows how potent deception even passively begun by influential parties can impact us.

Need: *So, we ask, "How can we offset being harmfully deceived by errant parties that are influential with us?!"*

- I. Right after the rebound from defeat at Ai, Joshua led all Israel to heed Moses' Deuteronomy 27:1-26 call to perform the reading and confirmation of the Law on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, Jos. 8:30-35.**
- II. Joshua's purpose in performing this ritual had obviously grown out of Israel's recent experiences at Ai:**
 - A. The man Achan in Israel had violated God's word by stealing from the Lord's booty in the victory at Jericho, leading to all Israel's initial tragic defeat at its next battle that the nation fought at Ai, Joshua 7:1-5.
 - B. Accordingly, God had led Joshua and all Israel to exercise discipline against Achan and his guilty family members (Joshua 7:13-26), thus equipping Israel to return to Ai and this time defeat it in Joshua 8:1-29.
 - C. These events at Ai clearly illustrated the value of heeding Moses' Deuteronomy 27 call that Israel perform the reading and confirmation of the Law at Ebal and Gerizim to remind her to **heed God's Word**.
 - D. Realizing how powerfully Israel's experiences relative to Ai reflected the importance of this lesson, Joshua led Israel right after she defeated Ai to Mount Ebal and to Mount Gerizim to perform this Deuteronomy 27 ritual.
- III. Yet, right after performing the ritual, influential, deceptive men approached Israel's leaders, and they heeded these deceivers versus closely heeding Scripture so that they were badly deceived, Joshua 9:1-27:**
 - A. Israel's defeat of Jericho and Ai so concerned the rest of the Canaanites, they united to fight Israel (Jos. 9:1-2), and one group of Canaanites, the Gibeonites, realized their only hope of survival was to take advantage of Israel's Law at Deuteronomy 20:10-18 that called her to make peace with friendly nations outside Canaan in contrast to God's requirement that Israel destroy all Canaanites, B. K. C., O. T., p. 348. The Gibeonites likely also knew that were Israel to swear the treaty using God's name, she always had to honor the treaty, Ex. 20:7.
 - B. Thus, the Gibeonites tried to deceive Israel's leaders into thinking that a delegation they sent to Israel had travelled long from a land far away from Canaan in order to gain a protection treaty from Israel, Joshua 9:4-6.
 - C. The Gibeonite ruse was very strong and influential with Joshua and Israel's elders (as follows), Joshua 9:7-13:
 1. The leaders of Israel were not initially easily swayed by the efforts of the Gibeonites to dress and bring worn out clothing and food with them as if they had traveled a long time to visit them from a distant land, for Israel's leaders actually told the Gibeonites that they could possibly be trying to deceive them, Jos. 9:7.
 2. Prepared for such initial distrust, the clever Gibeonites presented a series of additional strong deceptions:
 - a. They responded to this initial doubt by the elders of Israel by addressing Joshua, their leader (Jos. 9:8a), pretending to be forthright in going directly to Israel's human leader, suggesting they had nothing to hide.
 - b. Second, in going to Joshua, they told him, "We are thy servants" (Joshua 9:8b), pretending to be humble and thus believable, peace-loving men!

- c. When Joshua asked them who they were and from what country they had hailed (Jos. 9:8c), they not only repeated that had they come from a far land, but that they had done so from hearing of the reputation of their God, praising Him as being great, sounding like true believers in Israel's God, Joshua 9:9a.
 - d. Also, they cunningly provided just enough information to be believable: they told Joshua about God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt and the victories He gave her over Sihon and Og on the other side of the Jordan River, but they conveniently avoided making mention of Israel's recent victories at Jericho and at Ai lest doing so expose them as coming from nearby and knowing recent news, Joshua 9:9b-10; Ibid.
 - e. Then, in support of these very deceptive words, the men of Gibeon referred again to the visible evidence of their old clothes, bread, wineskins and shoes to make their deception complete, Joshua 9:11-13.
 - D. Joshua and Israel's elders sampled the provisions of the Gibeonites, and concluded that the delegation was indeed from a faraway country well outside of Canaan, so they made a peace treaty with them, Jos. 9:14a, 15.
 - E. However, they did not consult the Lord, allowing themselves to be swayed by the deception, Joshua 9:14b.
 - F. When Israel later discovered that these men had been Gibeonites who deceived them, Joshua and Israel had no choice but to honor their treaty as it had been sworn into effect by the use of God's name (Jos. 9:16-19 with Ex. 20:7). Thus, Israel did not slay the Gibeonites, but made them laborers in the tabernacle, Joshua 9:20-27.
- IV. Yet, Israel's leaders would have not been deceived had they heeded God in closely heeding Scripture:**
- A. The nation Israel had just observed the Mount Gerizin and Mount Ebal ritual that emphasized their need to heed Scripture (Jos. 8:30-35) and God had told Joshua in Joshua 1:8 to focus closely on Scripture to succeed.
 - B. Well, a part of that body of Scripture was Deuteronomy 13:1-4 that warned that even if a prophet or a dreamer of dreams performed an authenticating miracle, but with it he taught Israel to depart from the God of written Scripture, Israel was not to heed him, but put **written Scripture ABOVE even miraculous experience**, that such an event was a test from the Lord to see if Israel would actually heed His Word above potent experience!
 - C. Thus, had Israel's leaders heeded Deuteronomy 13:1-4, they would have realized that the visiting delegation had exhibited only **EXPERIENTIAL** evidences, that Israel's leaders should consult God via the **high priests' Urim and Thummim** (Ex. 28:30; Num. 27:21; Z. P. E. B., v. Five, p. 850-852) for the **TRUTH** on the visitors.

Lesson: Joshua and Israel's elders were deceived into making a treaty with the Canaanite Gibeonites because they heeded a powerful series of experiential evidences over closely heeding written Scripture!

Application: (1) May we trust in Christ to be saved in obedience to written Scripture at John 3:16 with Acts 17:30. (2) Then, may we subject every thought we have or that is presented to us from others, especially those who strongly influence us, to written Scripture to overcome harmful deception, 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

In our introduction, we noted how a critic of a pro-capital punishment article in Answers magazine argued that Jesus opposed capital punishment by not agreeing with the Pharisees' demand that a woman caught in the sin of adultery be executed in John 8:1-11. However, we observed that if Jesus opposed capital punishment, He opposed the Law, a sin, since He was under that Law at that time (Galatians 4:4). Then, He could not qualify to be our Savior, and the Christian faith would fall! So, to avoid deception that sabotages our faith, we answer the critique (as follows):

(1) We apply the lesson of this sermon by **closely** reading John 8:1-11 and note that Jesus wrote on the ground what must have been convicting words for the woman's accusers since they had entrapped her in her sin, and so stood to be executed themselves in trying to get her condemned of a capital crime, Deuteronomy 19:15-21. This led each of them to leave, and after they left, Jesus asked the woman if she still had any accusers present, and she said, "No . . ."

According to the Mosaic Law, then, she could not be condemned: Deuteronomy 19:15-21 called for two or three (a) **impartial** (b) **human** (c) **eyewitnesses** to condemn her! No such man was left to accuse her and Jesus was not **humanly** an **eyewitness**, so, **under the Law, what Jesus then was, she could not be condemned!**

Thus, Jesus did not condemn her, John 8:11b. However, in doing so, He did not counter capital punishment! All Jesus did was confirm that capital punishment was not to be administered in the case of this woman because the Word of God forbade that she be executed due to the Biblical disqualification of every human eyewitness against her!

(2) Also, much manuscript evidence indicates that John 7:53-8:11 was likely not part of John's original gospel anyway (Bruce M. Metzger, A Text. Com. on the Grk. N. T., 1971, p. 219-222), so no doctrine should be based on it. However, even **were** this passage to be **authentic**, we have shown that it reveals that Jesus **did NOT sin!**

May we trust in Christ to be saved. Then, may we CLOSELY heed Scripture when facing parties that highly influence us that we might avoid being harmfully deceived.