

Joshua 9:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they answered Joshua, and said, Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing.

Analysis

Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded... to destroy all the inhabitants—the Gibeonites' theological awareness is remarkable. They knew not merely Israel's military prowess but the divine mandate behind the conquest (הַשְׁמִיד, hisshamed—to utterly destroy). Their phrase **we were sore afraid of our lives** (וַנִּירָא מְאֹד לְנַפְשֵׁינוּ, vanirah me'od lenafshoteinu) reveals existential terror at God's holiness, not merely human armies.

Unlike Jericho's doomed citizens or Ai's defenders, the Gibeonites responded to revelation with action, choosing survival through servitude over pride unto death. Their knowledge of God's commands suggests either espionage or God's sovereign disclosure—similar to Rahab's confession (Joshua 2:9-11). Faith, however imperfect or mixed with deception, seeks refuge in God's people rather than fighting against His purposes.

Historical Context

The Gibeonite confederacy knew detailed Mosaic law, including the destruction mandate (Deuteronomy 7:1-2, 20:16-17) and the exception for distant cities willing to make peace (Deuteronomy 20:10-15). Their deception exploited this legal loophole by falsely claiming distant origin. This demonstrates how widely knowledge of Israel's God and His commands had spread through Canaan following the exodus and Jordan crossing.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What does the Gibeonites' accurate knowledge of God's commands teach about the responsibility that comes with divine revelation?
2. How does their choice to seek refuge through deception—rather than direct repentance—complicate our understanding of faith?
3. In what ways does God's acceptance of even flawed faith (when it leads to His people) challenge rigid religious formalism?

Interlinear Text

וַעֲנֹה	אֶת	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	וַיֹּאמֶר	כִּי	הֵגֵד
And they answered		Joshua	and said	Because it was certainly	
H6030	H853	H3091	H559	H3588	H5046
הֵגֵד	עֶבְדְּךָ	אֶת	אֲשֶׁר	צִוָּה	
Because it was certainly	his servant			commanded	
H5046	H5650	H853	H834	H6680	
יְהוָה	אֶת אֱלֹהֶיךָ	מֹשֶׁה	עֶבְדְּךָ	לִתְּתֶם	לָכֶם
how that the LORD	thy God	Moses	his servant	to give	
H3068	H430	H853	H4872	H5650	H0
אֶת	כָּל	וְלִהְשֹׁם יָד	אֶת	כָּל	הָאֲרָץ
H853	H3605	and to destroy	H853	H3605	H776
	of the land	H8045		all the inhabitants	of the land
				H3427	H776
מִפְּנֵיכֶם	וְנִיבְךָ	אֶת	מֵאֵד	לְנַפְשֵׁיכֶם	מִפְּנֵיכֶם
because	afraid	you therefore we were sore		of our lives	because
H6440	H3372	H3966		H5315	H6440
וְנַעַשׂ	אֶת	הַדָּבָר	הַזֶּה:		
of you and have done		this thing			
H6213	H853	H1697	H2088		