

Trinity Home Teams

Sermon Notes / Feb. 1, 2026

The Book of Joshua / **Undiscerning Alliances P1**

Joshua 9:1-27

1. The Gibeonites confessed Israel's success and Yahweh's greatness. What was the deception? Why were they successful?
2. Why did Israel fail? Name at least 3 things you can apply from this passage in your life?
3. What does this passage tell you about the character of God?

"Undiscerning Alliances" is an unusual title for today's sermon. As we examine this passage, don't forget this story happens within the much larger story of the redemption of man by Almighty God.

Development of a military coalition (v1-2)

:As soon as all the kings who were beyond the Jordan in the hill country and in the lowland all along the coast of the Great Sea toward Lebanon, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, heard of this, ² they gathered together as one to fight against Joshua and Israel."

HOWEVER, compare **9:1** with **5:1**:

"As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel."

Where once the people of Canaan had cowered in fear at the mighty hand of the Lord working for the Israelites, the defeat at Ai, even though a resounding defeat, emboldened the Amorite and Canaanite kings. They believed that by joining forces, they might be able to defeat the Israelites. *Very different from Ch5.*

The full consequences of sin are seldom readily apparent; they can linger long after the sin has been dealt with and be more far-reaching than we can imagine.

The guile of the Gibeonites (Read v3-13)

See something different starting in v3. The Gibeonites were idolators like the other nations, but they understood who Yahweh actually was. They knew about the Exodus and all that God had done to rescue his people.

V4 says they "acted with cunning," a derivative of the word translated as "crafty" in Gen. 3:1-5. They weren't fighting with strength or intellect but deception.

They knew they could not stand against Israel militarily, so they devised another approach; "[the Gibeonites] on their part acted with cunning."

Truth mixed with error is the pattern of deceit; discernment is needed to distinguish between the two. The serpent lied: "You will not surely die."

The serpent told the truth: "when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Their confession of Israel's success and Yahweh's greatness was true enough, but it was not complete. They carefully omitted their knowledge of the destruction of Jericho and Ai to conceal the close proximity of their cities; their ignorance of these conquests would have corroborated their claim of having traveled from afar.

They acknowledged Yahweh: '*the name of the Lord your God.*' They assumed a subordinate role: '*We are your servants.*' They appealed for protection: '*Come now, make a covenant with us.*'

COMMENTARY: "The background of biblical covenants is international politics. The most obvious parallel was the treaty that a great king (suzerain) would impose upon a lesser king (vassal) on the basis of having liberated him from an invading army. Obviously, the vassal was in no position to negotiate the treaty but simply accepted its terms (stipulations), as well as the suzerain's pledge of support for obedience and threat of destruction for disobedience (sanctions)."

The gullibility of Israelite leaders (Read 14-17)

V14 is at the heart of this passage. It reveals the failure of the leaders of Israel to 'seek counsel from the Lord,' just as they apparently failed to seek Yahweh's counsel before the first battle of Ai.

Proverbs 3:5-6 "*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*"

Deuteronomy 20:10-18 ABBREVIATED: "*When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it. And if it responds to you peaceably and it opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall do forced labor for you and shall serve you. But if it makes no peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it. And when the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall put all its males to the sword... Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not cities of the nations here. But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall devote them to complete destruction...*"

COMMENTARY: "The mistake on Israel's and Joshua's part was not that they were deceived per se, but that they did not ask for the Lord's counsel. This is certainly a warning to all who read this passage: God is there to be consulted, and we ignore him at our peril."