PM Joshua 9 Appearances can be Deceptive

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Date: 01 November 2026

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[0:00] Please turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Joshua, Joshua chapter 9.!

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, they gathered together as one to fight against Joshua and Israel.
But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, they on their part acted with cunning and went and made ready provisions and made ready provisions and took worn out sacks for their donkeys and wineskins, worn out and torn and mended with worn out patch sandals on their feet and worn out clothes.
And all their provisions were dry and crumbly. And they went to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and to the men of Israel, We have come from a distant country, so now make a covenant with us.
For the men of Israel said to the Hivites, but the men of Israel said to the Hivites, Perhaps you live among us, then how can we make a covenant with you?
[1:54] They said to Joshua, We are your servants. And Joshua said to them, Who are you? And where do you come from?

They said to him, From a very distant country your servants have come, because of the name of the Lord your God. For we have heard a report of him and all that he did in Egypt, and all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Zion the king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan who lived in Ashtaroth.
So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country said to us, Take provisions in your hand for the journey, and go to meet them and say to them, We are your servants.
Come now, make a covenant with us. Here is our bread. It was still warm when we took it from our houses, as our food for the journey.
Today, on the day we set out to come to you, but now behold, it is dry and crumbly. These wineskins were new when we filled them, and behold, they have burst.
[3:19] And these garments and sandals of ours are worn out from the very long journey. So the men took some of their provisions, but did not ask counsel from the Lord.

And Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them, to let them live, and the leaders of the congregation swore to them.
At the end of three days, after they had made a covenant with them, they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they lived among them. And the people of Israel set out and reached their cities on the third day.
Now their cities were Gibeon, Hephira, Beiroth, and Kiriath-Jerim. But the people of Israel did not attack them, because the leaders of the congregation had sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel.
Then all the congregation murmured against the leaders. But all the leaders said to all the congregation, We have sworn to them by the Lord, the God of Israel, and now we may not touch them.
[4:38] This we will do to them. Let them live, lest wrath be upon us, because of the oath that we swore to them.

And the leaders said to them, Let them live. So they became cutters of wood, and drawers of water, for all the congregation, just as the leaders had said of them.
Joshua summoned them, and he said to them, Why did you deceive us, saying, We are very far from you, when you dwell among us?

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Now therefore you are cursed, and some of you shall never be anything but servants, cutters of wood, and drawers of water, for the house of my God.
They answered Joshua, Because it was told to your servants for a certainty, that the Lord your God, had commanded his servant Moses, to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you.
[5:48] So we feared greatly for our lives, because of you, and did this thing. And now, behold, we are in your hand.

Whatever seems good and right in your sight to do, to do to us, do it. So he did this to them, and delivered them out of the hand of the people of Israel, and they did not kill them.
But Joshua made them that day, cutters of wood, and drawers of water, for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord, to this day, in the place that he should choose.
Amen, and may God bless to us that reading from his word, and to his name be the praise. Please turn back with me in your Bibles, to the passage we read, Joshua chapter 9.
Joshua chapter 9. We shall be looking at this chapter of God's word, under the title, Appearances Can Be Deceptive.
[7:05] Appearances Can Be Deceptive. In his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul writes these words, Whatever was written in former days, was written for our instruction, that through endurance, and through the encouragement of the scriptures, we might have hope.

This evening, I'd like to look with you at the events that are recorded for us here, in Joshua chapter 9. They happened many hundreds of years ago.
They took place in a society that's very different from ours today. But as Paul says, all of God's word has been written for our instruction.
God is unchanging. He's unchanging in his character and actions. So we can learn from a passage like this, something of what he is like.
And men and women are basically the same. The same in their needs and aspirations. The same in their strengths and weaknesses.
[8:35] And so we can learn lessons from the failures and successes of God's ancient people, the Israelites.

These things have been written to teachers. They should help us endure, persevere in the Christian walk.
And they should encourage us and give us hope as we remind ourselves that the God who was so gracious to the Israelites is able and willing to treat us in the same way.
One of the major lessons of this book of Joshua is that no spiritual advance is made without conflict. No spiritual advance is made without conflict. The Israelites were God's chosen people. They were taking possession of the land of Canaan which God had promised to give to them.
[9:56] He had promised the land to their ancestor Abraham many years before. The Israelites in conquering the land were acting as the agents of God's judgment on the pagan peoples who were living there because they were given over to idolatry and immorality.

that was one reason why the Israelites were under strict instructions not to spare the peoples they conquered.
Another reason was that as the people of God the Israelites were called to be holy. And if the pagan peoples continued living alongside them there was every possibility that the Israelites would be tempted by their lifestyle and practices and find themselves exposed to constant temptation.
In the light of that the occupation of the land had a very definite spiritual dimension. But that didn't mean that God handed the Israelites everything on a plate.
As we saw this morning they had to fight. They had to work. They had to pray. They had to obey.
[11:32] They had to learn in practice that no spiritual advance can be made without conflict. And that is still true.

As Christians we face real spiritual enemies. We are engaged in a spiritual conflict. The Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians chapter 6 we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the rulers against the authorities against the cosmic powers over this present darkness against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
Sometimes Satan's strategy is all out attack. He launches what we could call a full frontal assault. That was the case in the first two verses of chapter 9 here. we read how all the kings west of the Jordan came together to make war against the Israelites when they heard that they had conquered

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the town of Ai.
They massed their forces and there was no mistaking their hostile intent. but the rest of the chapter is about a quite different form of attack.
[13:14] It's a form of attack which is much more subtle and in some ways potentially much more devastating.

Satan sometimes attacks us like this too. So let's look at verses 3 to 13 under the heading How the enemy attacked.
How the enemy attacked. Gibeon was a city in central Canaan. It wasn't far north of present day Jerusalem in what is now known as the West Bank.
its citizens had heard about the Israelites successful military campaign and they had taken fright. They decided there was no point in taking the Israelites on in battle. After all that hadn't worked for the citizens of Jericho or the citizens of Ai.
[14:26] So the Gibeonites decided on plan B. they wouldn't go to battle. They would resort to a ruse.

If the Israelites couldn't be defeated in battle perhaps they could be undermined by trickery. Their plan was simple.
They would send a delegation to make a treaty with the Israelites. They would pretend that they lived at a distance, that they lived beyond the borders of the land of Canaan.
Perhaps the Israelites would be willing to make a treaty with them since they didn't pose an obvious threat. Israel would make a pact with them.
The Israelites might feel honour bound to honour that pact even if they discovered that they had been taken in. And so the Gibeonites put a delegation together.
[15:43] together. They provided them with old clothes and worn patch sandals. And they loaded their donkeys with worn out sacks and old wine skins.

It looked as if they had come on a very long journey. And to add an especially authentic touch, the Gibeonites gave the delegation dry, mouldy bread.
If they said the bread had been fresh the day they left their home, there was no way the Israelites could fail to be taken in.
So that's what they did. The ambassadors came to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal and said to him and the men of Israel, verse 6, we have come from a distant country, so now make a covenant with us.
And they were very careful to point out their mouldy bread their cracked wine skins and their worn out clothes and sandals.
[17:16] Their strategy had basically two aspects. First of all, there was the use of disguise. They claimed to be what they were not.

And it has to be said, they made a very good job of it. They really looked the part. As the Israelites listened to what the Gibeonites had to say, everything they saw with their eyes appeared to confirm what they were hearing with their ears.
The Gibeonites bread was mouldy. There was no denying that. Their wineskins were cracked and their clothes and sandals were worn out.
The evidence was there for all to see that they were telling the truth. And seeing is believing, isn't it? That's what people tell you. Seeing is believing. Put it another way, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.
[18:40] All the Israelites had to do to confirm that the bread the Gibeonites brought with them was dry and mouldy, was to taste a little bit.

And that's exactly what they did. As we read in verse 14, so the men took some of their provisions. They sampled the Gibeonites provisions and taste as well as sight confirmed the Gibeonites story. It all rang true. The evidence was compelling. The only problem was that it was a gigantic hoax.
The Gibeonites used disguise. The other aspect of their strategy was flattery. There was flattery at a personal level.
When they arrived in the camp of Israel, they said to Joshua, we are your servants. They made themselves vulnerable.
[19:59] They gave the impression they were entirely in the hands of the Israelites. And that no doubt made the Israelites feel they were in a position of power.

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They were in the driving seat. That must have made them feel good. But more significantly, not only was there flattery at a personal level, there was flattery in respect of religious allegiance.
Look at what they say in verse 9. From a very distant country your servants have come. They said, why? Because of the name of the Lord your God.
For we have heard a report of him on all that he did in Egypt and all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sion king of Heshbon and to Og king of Bashan who lived in Asheroth.
We have heard all about what your God has done and we are deeply impressed. He is not just another tribal God. know he is of a totally different order altogether.
[21:22] Sentiments like these must have impressed the Israelites. Here were people who were prepared to recognize Israel's God and to acknowledge his greatness.

These people weren't anti-God, far from it. They appeared to have real spiritual insight. Surely it would be easy to win them over to the worship of the one true God.
No way could these people be up to no good. Disguise and flattery. Two tactics the Gibeonites used very effectively.
And these are tactics that Satan still uses. The Bible tells us that Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light.
He can make sin out to be in our very best interests. Why not sail a little close to the wind just from time to time after all you want to live life to the fool don't you and you only live once.
[22:48] Your career is making heavy demands on you and your family need you too. Why don't you soft pedal on your Christian commitment just for a little while most folk seem to do that.

opt for an easy life. When you're with your friends don't make too much of the fact that you're a Christian.
Blend in with them. They'll like that and it'll make life so much easier for you. You see Satan wants us to compromise ourselves.
He's the father of lies and disguise is an important weapon in his armory. And what about the tactic of flattery?
That can be used in different ways. For example it may be flattering for a church to be invited to take part in a united religious gathering.
[24:00] but if there's no shared commitment to the biblical gospel should the church accept that invitation?

If a young Christian woman becomes friendly with a non-Christian man she may well be flattered to hear him say how he respects people who have a real faith.
but is that enough for her to go on to form a relationship with him? Can we honestly say that we are never influenced by flattery?
Disguise and flattery were the means the Gibeonites used to undermine Israel. and they are means by which the devil may attack us too and we can so easily be taken in.
How the enemy attacked. Let's note secondly in verses 14 and 15 how Israel failed.
[25:21] how Israel failed. We see from verse 7 that right from the start the Gibeonites were suspicious of the the Israelites were suspicious of the Gibeonites.

They said perhaps you live among us then how can we make a covenant with you? And in verse 8 Joshua made a special point of asking them who are you and where do you come from?
It seems that there was a degree of niggling doubt but sadly for both Joshua and the Israelites seeing was believing.
The key verse is verse 14 so the men took some of their provisions but did not ask counsel from the Lord.
The men took some of their provisions but did not ask counsel from the Lord. The Israelites judged by appearances they didn't seek the Lord's guidance they didn't pray no instead they lived by their wits.
[26:56] Remember the words of Proverbs 3 verses 5 and 6 these well known words 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 the Israelites problem here was that they did lean on their own understanding they didn't trustfully commit matters to God and look to him to make their paths straight I wonder how often we make the same mistake the American commentator Dale Ralph Davis writes our need is no different from

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Israel's we need not only the power of God to overwhelm our obvious enemies but also the wisdom of God to detect our subtle enemies unfortunately the church too often craves God's power while it ignores God's wisdom wisdom that's true isn't it we live by our wits we make decisions without reference to God we don't pray and by our prayerlessness we show we're not living in dependence on the Lord we need to learn and relearn to acknowledge the Lord in all our ways Dale
Ralph Davis again no proposed course of conduct can be so clear to a Christian as to excuse him from the duty of seeking direction from above we must beware of that subtle unbelief that assumes I have this under control we need to ask for the Lord's guidance in all the major crises of life taking these matters to him in prayer and committing them to him more generally we need to commit ourselves afresh to God each day asking for his discernment and wisdom and protection we need to ask for grace so as not to be conformed to the pattern of this world but rather be transformed by the renewing of our minds the
Christian evangelist John Lennox tells how at his wedding brethren evangelist gave the address and he based his address on the first four words of Genesis 1 verse 1 in the beginning God before creation came into being God was there in the beginning but this evangelist applied these words much more widely he told John and his wife his new wife that they were setting out on a new adventure as a married couple this is for you a new beginning and it's important that you should begin it with God in the beginning God and he said that must characterize your lives throughout your time together as a couple you must include
God and John Lennox bears witness to the fact that they have sought to do that and they have reason to thank God for the way he has guided them at different times in the beginning God the Israelites leaned on their own understanding they got it wrong and as a result they landed themselves with a problem which dogged them for many generations how the enemy attacked by disguise and flattery how Israel failed they did not ask counsel from the Lord thirdly and finally in verses 16 to 29 how God overruled how
[32:24] God overruled God it took only three days for the Israelites to discover that the Gibeonites had deceived them verse 16 at the end of three days after they had made a covenant with them they heard that they were their neighbors and that they lived among them only three days but it was three days too late knowing what they now knew the Israelites set out to see where in fact the Gibeonites lived and surprise surprise they reached Gibeon within three days most of the Israelites were in favor of ignoring the treaty and attacking the city but the leaders didn't support that course of action they had given the

Gibeonites a solemn oath a solemn pledge in the name of the Lord their God that they would not harm them to go back on the pledge would be not only to break their oath but also to bring dishonor on God's name the leaders didn't want the Canaanite peoples to have reason to say you can't trust anything these Israelites say even when they invoke the name of their God so what kind of God must he be the leaders were right many years later King Saul sought to annihilate the Gibeonites and God showed his displeasure by inflicting a famine on Israel for three successive years two wrongs don't make a right it's pointless to try and cover up one sin by committing another instead of slaughtering the
Gibeonites the leaders had another plan let them live they say in verse 21 they suggested that the Gibeonites become cutters of wood and drawers of water for the entire community so the Gibeonites were given the task in perpetuity of cutting down wood to keep the altar fires burning in the tabernacle and of drawing water for the cleansing rituals that's remarkable isn't it in that way God overruled Israel's mistake for good Satan's plan was no doubt to bring sin in by the back door but instead God overruled
Satan's schemes and in his purposes the Gibeonites were to help maintain the true worship of the one true God by God's grace the Gibeonites deception did not prove an unmitigated disaster isn't that encouraging God can overrule even our sin for our good in the accomplishment of his purposes sin needn't be a dead end if we fall into sin thoughtlessly or even deliberately the situation can be redeemed provided we acknowledge our sin and bring it to God we may have to live with the consequences of our sin just as the
Gibeonites were in many ways a thorn in Israel's side for countless generations but God doesn't write us off and he can work it out for good that's not to trivialize sin all sin is serious in God's eyes and the consequences can be painful especially if we sin willfully and deliberately on this particular occasion the Israelites didn't sin with what we could call a high hand they had a momentary lapse

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and they instantly regretted it but it is possible for us to know God's will and quite deliberately rejected that is more serious and the way back may be even more painful but there is a way back let me encourage you as
[37:53] I encourage myself with that fact we may be conscious of specific sins in our lives it may be something in the past or it may be something we are grappling with in the present whatever it is God can rescue us from being trapped by it if we come to him in repentance and faith there's a way back to God from the dark paths of sin there's a door that is open and you may go in at Calvary's cross is where you begin when you come as a sinner to Jesus you and I need to come back again and again to Calvary which after all is the supreme demonstration of how God overrules evil for good whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction that through endurance and through the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope does this passage have something to teach you and me does it encourage us and give us hope as we see how the enemy attacked how

Israel failed but how God overruled shall we pray

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