

Open your Bibles. We have a powerful word from God today out of Joshua Chapter 9.
Title of the message, “The Enemy Schemes and God Overrules.”

You have a spiritual enemy who has schemes. He has devices, plans to deceive you. He desires to infiltrate and bring compromise to damage or destroy your life with God, from the inside out.

BUT – God can always overrule the enemy.

And so, even if we have been duped by the enemy the story is not over because God can overrule the enemy’s plans in your life – if you will join God in what *he* desires to do.

Today we’re going to see two distinct lessons – here they are.

Lesson #1) Don’t be SCHEMED by the Enemy
(but if you have been)

Lesson #2) God Can OVERRULE the Enemy’s Schemes
in your life, and USE them – **For GOOD**

Let’s pray. Lord Jesus, show us, make it come to life to us. Your Word is living and powerful and by your Spirit it comes to life, it becomes living and powerful in our hearts. Do that today. Show us, Lord, give us the warning of what the enemy desires to do and give us the hope and the confidence of what you can do Lord. We give you this time, we pray you speak powerfully, for your glory and in your name Jesus, amen.

The first lesson today is: *Don’t be schemed by the enemy.*

We have a fifteen part series called “The Spiritual Battle” that looks in depth at the key New Testament scripture on the spiritual battle – Ephesians 6:10-18. And you can watch or listen to this series on the phone app (search Wordbymail) or download it or order it for free at wordbymail.com.

I’d really encourage you to watch or listen to that series.

Remember, Ephesians is the New Testament “sister” book to Joshua.

What Joshua teaches by TYPOLOGY

Ephesians teaches by THEOLOGY.

These two books are very connected.

For today, one of the first things we learn in the spiritual battle is – sometimes the enemy comes at us like a LION, straight on like a freight train. And sometimes the enemy comes “Like a friend”... subtly slipping into our lives to bring damage and destruction – *from the inside*.

In 2 Corinthians Chapter 2, Paul is telling the Church to avoid having an unforgiving spirit and he explains the reason in verse 11.

2 Corinthians 2:11 (NLT)

11 so that Satan will not outsmart us. For we are familiar with his evil schemes.

Well today in Joshua Chapter 9, Joshua and his leaders are outsmarted by the enemy – they are completely duped by the enemy’s schemes.

Last message we heard about the astounding victory at Ai after Israel’s initial defeat in sin and all the kings in the Promised Land heard about the great victory as well.

Joshua 9:1 (NLT)

1 Now all the kings west of the Jordan River heard about what had happened. These were the kings of the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, who lived in the hill country, in the western foothills, and along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea as far north as the Lebanon mountains.

This describes the vast majority of the Promised Land. And so all the kings in the Promised Land have now heard about the miraculous victories of Joshua and the Israelites. And so we read in Joshua 9:2,

Joshua 9:2 (NLT)

2 These kings combined their armies to fight as one against Joshua and the Israelites.

ALL the surrounding kings join forces to fight against Israel.

By the way, this is exactly what Ezekiel 38 says will happen again in the end times when a group of nations surrounding Israel will join together (led by Russia) to attack Israel together. Which, if you look at Russia’s involvement in Syria just to the north of Israel, you will see the “staging” right before your eyes. But what these countries today don’t seem to understand is this has happened over and over and over again.

The first time was in Joshua’s day (1300 BC) when all the kings of Canaan combined their armies to fight as one against Israel... all the kings that is, except one.

After the victory at Ai Joshua had returned to Gilgal (Israel's current "base of operations") and the most logical city that Israel would attack next was Gibeon. Gibeon was a large city just twenty-five miles from Gilgal and it was right on the path of Joshua's battle plan to divide Canaan in half (divide and conquer strategy.)

But, after seeing what God had done for the Israelites so far, the enemy in Gibeon decided to take a "little different" approach.

Joshua 9:3-4(A) (NLT)

3 But when the people of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, 4 they resorted to deception to save themselves . . .

Please hear me – when you win some great victory for God (like moving into this facility for God's glory) be careful not to get spiritually arrogant (or over-confident) because the enemy has been taking out Christians a lot longer than you've been walking in victory.

In fact, the enemy might try to use that victory in your life to try to set you up for defeat by another method. We see this happen a lot right after a major spiritual victory. While we're walking around "high-fiving" ourselves, the enemy is setting us up to take us out.

This enemy (at Gibeon) *knew* of Israel's miraculous victories. So instead of the straight ahead approach they used the "subtle deception" approach, which works for the enemy just as well – sometimes better.

Joshua 9:4(B)-5 (NLT)

4 . . . They (Gibeonites) sent ambassadors to Joshua, loading their donkeys with weathered saddlebags and old, patched wineskins.

5 They put on worn-out, patched sandals and ragged clothes. And the bread they took with them was dry and moldy.

Please remember, your spiritual enemy is both a deranged lion and a subtle serpent. In fact, in the Bible, Satan's approach is much more often the subtle deception approach than it is the deranged lion approach.

So this enemy puts on the full deception costume. And then continuing in Joshua 9:6-13,

Joshua 9:6-13 (NLT)

6 When they arrived at the camp of Israel at Gilgal, they told Joshua and the men of Israel, "We have come from a distant land to ask you to make a peace treaty with us."
(actually 25 mi)

7 The Israelites replied to these Hivites, "How do we know you don't live nearby? For

if you do, we cannot make a treaty with you.” (Moses had commanded – NO treaties in the Promised Land)

8 *They replied, “We are your servants.” “But who are you?” Joshua demanded.*

“Where do you come from?”

(And watch – because Joshua never gets answers to these questions)

9 *They answered* (or avoided answering), **“Your servants have come from a very distant country** (not true). **We have heard of the might of the Lord your God and of all he did in Egypt.** (true)

10 *We have also heard what he did to the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River— King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan (who lived in Ashtaroth).* (Also true)

11 *So our elders and all our people instructed us, ‘Take supplies for a long journey* (Not true). **Go meet with the people of Israel and tell them, “We are your servants; please make a treaty with us.” ’**

12 *“This bread was hot from the ovens when we left our homes. But now, as you can see, it is dry and moldy.* (Definitely not true)

13 *These wineskins were new when we filled them, but now they are old and split open. And our clothing and sandals are worn out from our very long journey.”* (Also not true)

Wow- That is going to some serious extremes in order to sell a lie to God’s people. How far is your spiritual enemy willing to go to sell you a lie to get you to let him *into your life*? I promise you, your spiritual enemy is willing to put on a long and elaborate con in order to set you up to ultimately lead you down his dark path.

And notice as we went through those verses the enemy mixed the truth with lies.

The enemy doesn’t mind you having SOME of the truth as long as he can direct your CHOICES with his lies.

And also notice please that the enemy here is masquerading as a friend. This enemy has gone to elaborate measures in order to *look* and *act* like a friend in order to gain Joshua’s trust and get inside his life.

Please grasp the shocking significance of 2 Corinthians 11:14-15.

2 Corinthians 11:14–15 (NLT)

14 . . . Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

15 So it is no wonder that his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness . . .

It's *no wonder* that the servants of the enemy disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Is that "no wonder" to you? Because for many years that was a big "wonder" to me.

So now Joshua and the Israelites are going to show us perfectly what not to do when dealing with the subtle schemes of the enemy.

Joshua 9:14 (NLT)

14 So the Israelites examined (sampled) their food, but they did not consult the Lord.

If you want to guarantee that you will someday be duped by the enemy and led down his dark path then trust in and depend on your own understanding and do not consult the Lord. That is a sure-fire way for the schemes of the enemy to take up residence in your life.

Unbelievably on the heels of the incredible object lesson last message at Shechem (with the two mountains) here verse 14 says, ***The Israelites examined the Enemy's so-called "Evidence" - but they did not consult the Lord.***

They trusted in their own understanding. They relied on their own logic, their own reasoning and they did not consult the Lord. And so they invited the enemy *right into their lives*.

Joshua 9:15 (NLT)

15 Then Joshua made a peace treaty with them (the enemy) and guaranteed their safety, and the leaders of the community ratified their agreement with a binding oath.

Now that is *what not to do* with the enemy.

Joshua and his leaders have been duped. They've been schemed by the enemy. But because I need to get to the second lesson today, I can only summarize how to not get duped by the enemy like Joshua does here.

Here is the greatest and clearest way to not get duped by the enemy. **Memorize and deeply commit to follow.**

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.

6 Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.

And if God has not shown you which path to take then *wait until he does*.

Trust him – Seek his will – and wait until he shows you which path to take.

Because you will either find out *before* you make a deal with the enemy or you find out soon after.

Israel found out soon after.

Joshua 9:16-21 (NLT)

16 Three days after making the treaty, they (Israel) learned that these people actually lived nearby! (That didn't take long.)

17 The Israelites set out at once to investigate and reached their towns in three days. The names of these towns were Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath-jearim.

18 But the Israelites did not attack the towns, for the Israelite leaders had made a vow to them in the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. (and . . .) The people of Israel grumbled against their leaders because of the treaty.

(That's how it works leaders make mistakes, and the people grumble – both are human nature.)

19 But the leaders replied, “Since we have sworn an oath in the presence of the Lord, the God of Israel, we cannot touch them.

20 This is what we must do. We must let them live, for divine anger would come upon us if we broke our oath.

21 Let them live.” So they made them woodcutters and water carriers for the entire community, as the Israelite leaders directed.

Israel was stuck – they could not go back on the treaty or God would judge them And so they made the Gibeonites wood-cutters and water bearers. Now the Spiritual enemy has an “inside edge” to try to *dismantle Israel spiritually.*

But there is a second lesson. We don't have a lot of time to develop it so please listen carefully as I go through it. I want to show you an example of the real spiritual enemy using people for his own intended purposes.

Why do you think the Gibeonites did what they did? Because they didn't want to be killed, right?

But what do you think the spiritual enemy's plan was? Well, if we follow Israel's history we can easily see what the spiritual enemy's plan was. His plan was to bring the pagan, idol worshipping culture of the Canaanites into the religious culture of Israel. We know that because that becomes the number one attack plan of the enemy throughout the Old Testament and beyond. And so certainly that was the enemy's plan here.

But as we finish reading, it seems clearer to me that the spiritual enemy of Israel was using the Gibeonites to do his bidding and to bring about his desired results.

Let's try to see this in the closing verses here.

Joshua 9:22-27 (NLT)

22 Joshua called together the Gibeonites and said, “Why did you lie to us? Why did you say that you live in a distant land when you live right here among us?

23 May you be cursed! From now on you will always be servants who cut wood and carry water for the house of my God. (notice – *for the house of my God*)

24 They replied, “We did it because we—your servants—were clearly told that the Lord your God commanded his servant Moses to give you this entire land and to destroy all the people living in it. So we feared greatly for our lives because of you. That is why we have done this. (they believed what they heard about God)

25 Now we are at your mercy—do to us whatever you think is right.” (A sign of [at least] remorse, maybe even repentance)

26 So Joshua did not allow the people of Israel to kill them.

27 But that day he made the Gibeonites the woodcutters and water carriers for the community of Israel and for the altar of the Lord—wherever the Lord would choose to build it. And that is what they do to this day.

Now, follow me close on this.

The spiritual enemy *desired to use the Gibeonites* to infiltrate Israel with their pagan practices. But – in a wonderful twist of God's sovereignty – God is going to redeem the Gibeonite's deception and Joshua's mistake.

“To redeem” means “*to buy back*” and God can redeem (buy back) the actions of a person who has been inspired (even used) by the enemy – in your life. God can easily turn the enemy's plans for evil into his own plans for good.

So watch this.

The spiritual enemy desired to *use* the Gibeonites to bring down Israel from the *inside*. But the Gibeonites end up being the woodcutters and water bearers *for the altar of the Lord*, thereby sustaining the true worship of the one true God of Israel.

The spiritual enemy desired to damage Israel's worship through this deception. Instead God used the enemy's plan to strengthen and sustain the very thing the enemy wanted to damage.

AND the Gibeonites were actually redeemed by God as well, much like Rahab from Jericho. In the next chapter the most famous battle in the Book of Joshua is fought *on behalf* of the Gibeonites and as the Old Testament continues, the Gibeonites continue to show up standing with Israel, not against them.

In fact, in Nehemiah, when Nehemiah is rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem after the captivity in Babylon (800 years later) we read in Nehemiah 3 the Gibeonites were given a section of the wall to rebuild. And in Nehemiah 7 ninety-five Gibeonites are listed as standing with Nehemiah to rebuild the wall.

What the enemy meant to bring harm to God's people, God redeemed for the people's good and his glory.

And so I am sure of this one thing. Most of the people who have been used by the enemy in my life and in this church were not aware that they were being used by the enemy. Most often the enemy capitalized on a fleshly emotion (like he did here with the Gibeonites) and then he got those people to try to do damage to me personally and to this church.

But please know this today. My family and I stand in this town as a testimony that God can redeem the worst attacks of the enemy. And we will always be a testimony here to the truth that what the enemy meant for evil God can redeem for our good and for his glory. And sometimes, God will even redeem the people that the enemy used against us.

And please hear me. The enemy wants to deceive you. He wants to discourage you and he wants to eliminate your service to God – and he will use people around you to try to do that.

Today we've learned two critical lessons.

Lesson #1) Don't be SCHEMED (duped) by the Enemy (*but if you have been*)

Lesson #2) God can OVERRULE the enemy's schemes in your life – and USE them for ***YOUR Good***, and for ***HIS Glory***

Let's pray. *Lord Jesus it's for your glory, it's for your glory Lord. We stand for your glory. We stand for your glory, Lord. And may we continue to stand for your glory raising up a light in a dark place. Raising up a banner of victory in the spiritual war. Standing on the rock that can never be shaken and never be moved. And Lord we acknowledge together that the enemy can only win in our lives if we quit. And so, Lord. Strengthen us. May we never quit. May we always stand as a testimony to your*

supernatural, miraculous ability to bring good and your glory even out of the enemy's attempts to destroy us. Lord, let that ring in our minds today. And we thank you for it. In your name, Jesus, amen.