

I've Been Deceived!

Now What Am I To Do?

Joshua 9 - March 9, 2014 - by Dr. Craig P. Scott

Betty Ann and I cared for a elderly gentleman named Sal Zello for many years. He was a member of this church, with no immediate family. His wife died years before, and they had no children.

In the early stages of his care, I learned about a man who visited Sal. This so called friendship began with a sales call. Sal befriended him and signed a contract to have his house sided and roofed.

The house needed the work, and the price was within reason, so I did not say much. But, even after the remodeling, this man kept on visiting Sal. Over time I learned that Sal gave him money - a lot of money. And then I noticed that some of Sal's accounts needed replenishing.

I went to Sal to find out what was going on. Apparently this gentleman had frequently visited Sal with sad stories of how poor he was. Sal felt sorry for him and gave him money.

I never learned how much was given. But worse than this, I learned Sal was convinced to sign a loan for a snowmobile, trailer, snowsuit, and boots. Now the man was nowhere to be found and Sal was holding the credit contract for something he didn't have.

He was deceived. The loan was a dreadful amount of money, with high interest. If nothing were done it would jeopardize Sal's ability to live in his home, pay his bills, buy his meds and even eat.

Sal finally admitted he was deceived and asked what he could do. We had little information on this man. We had a first and last name but we did not have a phone number for him. The company he worked had gone out of business or never existed. We did not have a home address. Sal thought the man lived in Meriden, but was not even sure about that. In all our searches we came up empty.

I told Sal we were going to the police. Even though it was a borderline crime commonly committed with the elderly. It is hard to prove evil intent in a court of law. But the police had compassion and agreed to set up a little sting operation.

We suspected the man would come back for more money. So Sal was told to contact me when he calls. In turn I would call the detective.

Sure enough, about a week later the man called. He said he would be there at 1 pm. So, I called the detective who engaged the man before entering Sal's house. Though no arrest was made, the man returned the snowmobile, trailer and clothing to the police station. We were then able to sell the items and pay off the debt.

When someone is deceived, it does not always end up as good as this. Sal was fortunate.

People have been deceived throughout the ages; they have been deceived by their friends, deceived by their spouses, deceived at work, and deceived by their children. Many times I have heard stories of fiancés deceiving their mates with flattery and false promises. Then after the marriage a whole different animal appears.

One husband deceived his wife about his gambling habit. What he did not tell her was the mountain of debt that was accumulating from his bad bets. It finally got so bad that they were about to lose everything. In time he confronted the problem but the consequences have never gone away. They will be paying on this debt for the rest of their lives. Though he does not gamble any more, he is always battling with his desires. If he is not careful his oversize dreams can still lead him into risky business deals and overspending.

Many times I have heard heart-breaking stories of children deceiving their parents, or parents deceiving their children. Just think of all the deceivers listed in the Bible.

1. Jacob was a deceiver. His name even means, “trickster.”
2. Laban, his father-in-law was also a deceiver who always changed Jacob’s wages. Laban, even deceived Jacob into marrying his first-born daughter, Leah instead of Rachel.
3. Ahithophel deceived and betrayed King David. David though he was a trusted friend and loyal counselor only to learn that underneath all his words was seething hatred.
4. Judas walked with Jesus. He lived with the disciples. He was the trusted treasurer of the funds for the needy. Yet, he was able to deceive the disciples, he even stole some of the funds for the poor and in the end betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.
5. Jesus told us false prophets and teachers would come.

Matt. 24:11 - “. . . many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.” So we should not be surprised to find deceivers of the gospel message.

Col. 2:8 “Beware lest any man **spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit**, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

6. Worse yet, we are subject to even deceiving ourselves into thinking something is true when it is not true at all.
 - a. Jer. 17:9 - “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”
 - b. We can be deceived about our own faith -

James 1:26 - “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, **but deceiveth his own heart**, this man’s religion is vain”.

- c. We can be deceived about our sinfulness -
 - 1 John 1:8 - "If we say that we have no sin, **we deceive ourselves**, and the truth is not in us."
- 7. The greatest deceiver of all is Satan.
 - a. He deceived Eve in the garden.
 - 1Tim. 2:14 - "And **Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived** was in the transgression."
 - b. Satan is deceptive and also has deceptive workers
 - "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light" - (2 Cor. 11:13-14).

Deception happens. Every one of us may have been deceived or may have deceived someone in our lifetime.

This morning we will be looking at a true story of deception followed with real consequences. They are the type of consequences that do not easily go away. Sometimes we must live with the consequences for the rest of our lives. They can even continue on for generations.

In this passage we can learn what we can do to protect ourselves from deception. Second, if necessary, we can learn how to live with the consequences of deception.

The context of this account happens after the Jordan River was crossed, Jericho fell, Ai was taken and the land and the nation dedicated to the Lord.

In Joshua 9:1-2 the inhabitants of the Land were in turmoil. The Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites gathered together to fight against Israel. They were previously uneasy neighbors and at times mortal enemies, but the threat of Israel wiping them out caused these loosely knit city-states to join in battle against Israel. That is, with the exception of the Gibeonites (Joshua 9:3-4).

Gibeon was considered a royal city (Joshua 10:2). It was made up of four cities - Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth and Kirjath-jearim. They conspired to deceive Israel into making a covenant with them (Joshua 9:4).

It is interesting to me that they understood God's command to destroy the inhabitants of Canaan. It is also interesting that the Gibeonites understood that any covenant made with Israel would be honored. Israel's word would be true even if others did not act in good faith. Which means they understood something of the nature of Israel's God Who required honesty and truthfulness, even when others were not.

They went to extreme lengths to deceive (Josh 9:4-5): Old sacks; wine in old torn and repaired wineskins; patched and repaired sandals; frayed clothing and dry and moldy food.

Their language was carefully chosen to deceive (Joshua 9:9-10). They only mentioned old battles. They left out any mention of Israel crossing the Jordan, taking Jericho and Ai. They must have been very convincing.

“No one suspected the beneath the clever disguise was concealed a band of Hivites. . . . Had it not been for their disguise they would not have been permitted to come within the circle of tents. A cry of horror would have passed from lip to lip, drowning any attempt of theirs to speak; but their story was so reasonable, their references to Jehovah so reverential, their appearance so in keeping with the account they gave of themselves, that they threw Joshua, princes and people completely off their guard.” - F. B. Meyer, Joshua, Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1977. pg 114-115.

Is this not how we are deceived today? Deception sometimes is more dangerous than some of Satan’s open assaults.

In this case it is Satan’s ploy to leave a leavening influence in the midst of the Land. Remember Rahab? She was a genuine believer. She and her family were incorporated into the nation of Israel. No doubt, Satan saw this as a weakness. Get Israel to pledge a vow and they will keep their word.

Through the Gibeon ruse, he would trick the nation into bringing the leavening influence of the Canaanites into their midst. They would be the tares among the wheat. Eventually, their leavening influence would infect the nation of Israel.

And Joshua and the Princes fell for it (Joshua 9:15).

“And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation swore unto them.”

Then they found out they were deceived (Joshua 9:16). How many marriages have been made under false pretense! Oh the contracts that some of us have signed! Oh the commitments that we have made without prayer or listening to the warnings around us!

Joshua 9:14 - “And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD.”

They looked on the outward - their words, their dress, their countenance, their history, BUT . . . They had not consulted the Lord.

“And the men took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the LORD.”

So what do you do in cases like this?

Confront the deceiver: Challenge their deception. Joshua confronted them - Joshua 9:16b-17, 22

“And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them. ¹⁷ And the children of Israel journeyed, and came unto their cities on the third day . . . ²²

And Joshua called for them, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us . . . ?”

Always keep your word. Joshua and the nation kept their word - Joshua 9:18-19

“And the children of Israel smote them not, because the princes of the congregation had sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel. And all the congregation murmured against the princes. ¹⁹ But all the princes said unto all the congregation, We have sworn unto them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them.”

What else can we learn?

Never Trust Your Own Judgment

Always wait and pray. “Before entering into an alliance; taking a partner in life; going into a business with another; yielding assent to any proposition which involves confederation with others, be sure to ask counsel at the mouth of the Lord.” Ibid, p. 119.

But Israel was now faced with a serious dilemma.

To destroy Gibeon would bring God’s anger (Joshua 9:20) as it did 400 years later when King Saul broke this solemn league (2 Samuel 21:2). The good news is, God can overrule our mistakes and sinful choices. He can bring blessings even out of our sinful choices.

Israel turned to the Lord. Then God showed them how to handle this situation. Instead of allowing the Gibeonites to intermarry with Israel and freely spread their pagan culture throughout the nation. They dedicated them completely to the Lord. Through this, God turned this dilemma into a blessing.

The Gibeonites lived. They became hewer of wood and carriers of water in the temple. However, they were not free like Rahab and her family. They were dedicated to God and to His service. Instead of their lives becoming a destructive influence to the nation, they were used to promote the prosperity and wellbeing of the soul.

God do the same with whatever situation we find ourselves in. If we end up in an unequally yoked marriage and he or she is please to dwell with you. Run to the Lord and seek His wisdom. He can even use this situation for His glory and for you and others spiritual health and wellbeing. Dedicate this situation to the Lord and keep it there.

If you find yourself in a situation where there is a loss of trust, a loss of funds, a changed personality. Dedicate this to the Lord. Run to the Lord and seek His counsel. Honor your commitments and God can do amazing things.

Another little insight: after Israel chose to do right and honor their commitment. God turned Israel’s poor choice into a blessing by using Gibeon to draw the enemies of Israel into the open (Joshua 10:1-5) making it easier for Joshua to conquer the Land.

Perhaps, this is what God will do for you. Yes, you have been deceived, yet God can turn this tragedy into triumph when we come to Him and obey.

One final thing on deception: It is one thing to stumble and be deceived. It is another thing to be the deceiver. Deception is one of the tactics of Satan. He deceived Eve; he appears as an angel of light and his minions are deceivers.

For a Christian to be a deceiver, he is no longer walking in fellowship with the Lord. He is operating in the flesh or is influenced by Satan. And worst, he is functioning like the unredeemed. Christians should never engage in deception. They are children of light. They are children of truth.

Deception is a sign of an unregenerate life. Therefore, it is possible to deceive ourselves we are God's children when we are not.

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. ²³ For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: ²⁴ For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. ²⁵ But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. ²⁶ If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. ²⁷ Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:22-27).