

## Discussion Questions

### Old Testament

- The inhabitants of Gibeon tricked Joshua into making a treaty with them. Why did Joshua honor the treaty once he learned it was a trick?
- During the battle with the Amorites, God made the Sun and the Moon stand still. What was the point of this occurrence; and are we to take this story literally? (i.e. did the Sun and Moon actually stop moving, or is this just a figure of speech?)

### New Testament

- The rich man who went to Hades wanted to warn his brothers about this place of torment. Why was his request denied?

## Notes and Commentary

### Old Testament

The inhabitants of Gibeon tricked Joshua into making a treaty with them. Why did Joshua honor the treaty once he learned it was a trick?

**Joshua 9:3-21 (WEB).** [3] *But when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and to Ai, [4] they also resorted to a ruse, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks on their donkeys, and wine skins, old and torn and bound up, [5] and old and patched shoes on their feet, and wore old garments. All the bread of their provision was dry and moldy. [6] They went to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal, and said to him, and to the men of Israel, "We have come from a far country. Now therefore make a covenant with us." [7] The men of Israel said to the Hivites, "What if you live among us. How could we make a covenant with you?" [8] They said to Joshua, "We are your servants."*

*Joshua said to them, "Who are you? Where do you come from?" [9] They said to him, "Your servants have come from a very far country because of the name of Yahweh your God; for we have heard of his fame, all that he did in Egypt, [10] and all that he did to the two*

*kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon and to Og king of Bashan, who was at Ashtaroth. [11] Our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spoke to us, saying, 'Take provision in your hand for the journey, and go to meet them, and tell them, "We are your servants. Now make a covenant with us."' [12] This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we went out to go to you; but now, behold, it is dry, and has become moldy. [13] These wine skins, which we filled, were new; and behold, they are torn. These our garments and our shoes have become old because of the very long journey." [14] The men sampled their provisions, and didn't ask counsel from the mouth of Yahweh. [15] Joshua made peace with them, and made a covenant with them, to let them live. The princes of the congregation swore to them. [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. [17] The children of Israel traveled and came to their cities on the third day. Now their cities were Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kiriath Jearim. [18] The children of Israel didn't strike them, because the princes of the congregation had sworn to them by Yahweh, the God of Israel. All the congregation murmured against the princes. [19] But all the princes said to all the congregation, "We have sworn to them by Yahweh, the God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them. [20] This we will do to them, and let them live; lest wrath be on us, because of the oath which we swore to them." [21] The princes said to them, "Let them live, so they became wood cutters and drawers of water for all the congregation, as the princes had spoken to them."*

Modern contract law permits a contract to be voided in instances of fraud.<sup>1</sup> Some people like to extend the principle to justify failure to honor a contract for no other reason than it was a bad deal. For example, it has been widely reported that many people bought and mortgaged real estate in the first decade of the 21st century. The deals seemed pretty good at the time. But when the real

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<sup>1</sup>In American law, there are typically five elements for a cause of action for fraud: (1) A false statement concerning a specific material fact; (2) The defending party's knowledge that the statement is false; (3) The defending party's intent that the other party act on the statement; (4) The defending party's reliance on the statement resulting in his injury; and (5) Damages.

estate market collapsed several years later, many of these people who had the ability to honor their obligations, refused to do so, because they felt they had made a bad deal. Properties went into foreclosure, even when owners had the ability—but not the desire—to pay. The Israelites' feelings on honoring contracts (for example a treaty) was considerably different, as this story illustrates.

**[Jamieson Fausset Brown Bible Commentary]**<sup>2</sup> The moral character of the Gibeonites' stratagem was bad. The princes of the congregation did not vindicate either the expediency or the lawfulness of the connection they had formed; but they felt the solemn obligations of their oath; and, although the popular clamor was loud against them, caused either by disappointment at losing the spoils of Gibeon, or by displeasure at the apparent breach of the divine commandment, they determined to adhere to their pledge, "because they had sworn by the Lord God of Israel." The Israelitish princes acted conscientiously; they felt themselves bound by their solemn promise; but to prevent the disastrous consequences of their imprudent haste, they resolved to degrade the Gibeonites to a servile condition as a means of preventing their people from being ensnared into idolatry, and thus acted up, as they thought, to the true spirit and end of the law.

**[Keil and Delitzsch Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament]** But how could the elders of Israel consider themselves bound by their oath to grant to the Gibeonites the preservation of life which had been secured to them by the treaty they had made, when the very supposition upon which the treaty was made, viz., that the Gibeonites did not belong to the tribes of Canaan, was proved to be false, and the Gibeonites had studiously deceived them by pretending that they had come from a very distant land? As they had been absolutely forbidden to make any treaties with the Canaanites, it might be supposed that, after the discovery of the deception which had been practised upon them, the Israelitish rulers would be under no obligation to observe the treaty which they had made with the Gibeonites in full faith in the truth of their word. And no doubt from the stand-point of strict justice this view appears to be a right one. But the princes of Israel shrank back from breaking the oath which, as is emphatically stated in Jos 9:19, they had sworn by Jehovah the God of Israel, not because they assumed, as Hauff supposes, "that an oath simply regarded as an outward and holy transaction had an absolutely binding force," but because they were afraid of bringing the name of the God of Israel into contempt among the Canaanites, which they would have done if they had broken the oath

which they had sworn by this God, and had destroyed the Gibeonites. They were bound to observe the oath which they had once sworn, if only to prevent the sincerity of the God by whom they had sworn from being rendered doubtful in the eyes of the Gibeonites; but they were not justified in taking the oath. They had done this without asking the mouth of Jehovah (Jos 9:14), and thus had sinned against the Lord their God. But they could not repair this fault by breaking the oath which they had thus imprudently taken, i.e., by committing a fresh sin; for the violation of an oath is always sin, even when the oath has been taken inconsiderately, and it is afterwards discovered that what was sworn to was not in accordance with the will of God, and that an observance of the oath will certainly be hurtful (vid., Psa 15:4).

**[Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible]** Though they spared their lives, yet they seized their liberties, and sentenced them to be hewers of wood and drawers of water to the congregation. By this proposal the discontented congregation was pacified; for those who were angry that the Gibeonites lived might be content when they saw them condemned to that which, in the general apprehension, is worse than death, perpetual servitude...

**During the battle with the Amorites, God made the Sun and the Moon stand still. What was the point of this occurrence; and are we to take this story literally? (i.e. did the Sun and Moon actually stop moving, or is this just a figure of speech?)**

**Joshua 10:12-14 (WEBME).** [12] *Then Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel, "Sun, stand still on Gibeon! You, moon, stop in the valley of Aijalon!"* [13] *The sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the nation had avenged themselves of their enemies. Isn't this written in the book of Jashar? The sun stayed in the midst of the sky, and didn't hurry to go down about a whole day.* [14] *There was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD listened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel.*

**[Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible]** Notice the great faith of Joshua, and the power of God answering it by the miraculous

staying of the sun, that the day of Israel's victories might be made longer. Joshua acted on this occasion by impulse on his mind from the Spirit of God. It was not necessary that Joshua should speak, or the miracle be recorded, according to the modern terms of astronomy. The sun appeared to the Israelites over Gibeon, and the moon over the valley of Ajalon, and there they appeared to be stopped on their course for one whole day. Is any thing too hard for the Lord? forms a sufficient answer to ten thousand difficulties, which objectors have in every age started against the truth of God as revealed in his written word. Proclamation was hereby made to the neighbouring nations, Behold the works of the Lord, and say, What nation is there so great as Israel, who has God so nigh unto them?

## New Testament

**The rich man who went to Hades wanted to warn his brothers about this place of torment. Why was his request denied?**

**Luke 16:19-31 (WEB).** [19] *"Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, living in luxury every day. [20] A certain beggar, named Lazarus, was laid at his gate, full of sores, [21] and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Yes, even the dogs came and licked his sores. [22] The beggar died, and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried. [23] In Hades, he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far off, and Lazarus at his bosom. [24] He cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue! For I am in anguish in this flame.' [25] 'But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that you, in your lifetime, received your good things, and Lazarus, in the same way, bad things. But now here he is comforted and you are in anguish. [26] Besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, that those who want to pass from here to you are not able, and that no one may cross over from there to us.' [27] 'He said, 'I ask you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house; [28] for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, so they won't also come into this place of torment.' [29] 'But Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them.' [30] 'He*

said, 'No, father Abraham, but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' [31] "He said to him, 'If they don't listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if one rises from the dead.'"

**[Barnes' Notes]** God gives us sufficient warning to prepare for death. He has sent his Word, his servants, his Son; he warns us by his Spirit and his providence; by the entreaties of our friends and by the death of sinners; he offers us heaven, and he threatens hell. If all this will not move sinners, what would do it? There is nothing that would.

God will give us nothing farther to warn us. No dead man will come to life to tell us of what he has seen. If he did we would not believe him. Religion appeals to man not by ghosts and frightful apparitions. It appeals to their reason, their conscience, their hopes, their fears. It sets life and death soberly before people, and if they will not choose the former, they must die. If you will not hear the Son of God and the warnings of the Scriptures, there is nothing which you will or can hear. You will never be persuaded, and will never escape the place of torment.

**[The People's New Testament]** Neither will they be persuaded, etc. This was demonstrated in the case of Jesus himself. The Jews refused to accept Christ, though Moses and the prophets testified of him. They asked for a sign, and "the sign of the prophet Jonah" (Mt 12:39 16:4; Lu 11:29,30), his resurrection from the dead, was given. Still they refused to repent. Unbelief is due, not to a lack of evidence, but to a rebellious heart. The seat of skepticism is in the moral nature.

## Random Quotes

- "One cannot conceive anything so strange and so implausible that it has not already been said by one philosopher or another." — *Rene Descartes (1596 – 1650), 'Le Discours de la Methode,' 1637*
- "One of the few good things about modern times: If you die horribly on television, you will not have died in vain. You will have entertained us." — *Kurt Vonnegut (1922 – 2007), "Cold Turkey", In These Times, May 10, 2004*

- "Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former." — *unknown*
- "You know the speed of light, so what's the speed of dark?" — *unknown*

**Notes:**

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