

What is the significance of Gibeon in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Gibeon-in-the-Bible.html>

Gibeon is a city in Israel about five miles northwest of Jerusalem. In ancient times, it was a Hivite city; after the conquest of Canaan, Gibeon came under the control of the tribe of Benjamin and became a Levitical city.

Gibeon (“Hill City”) was slated for destruction along with all the other cities of Canaan as God judged the pagans by means of the people of Israel. After the Israelites, under Joshua, destroyed the inhabitants of Jericho and Ai, the people of Gibeon grew fearful. They foresaw the advancement of Joshua and his army in their direction, and they concocted a scheme to deceive their would-be attackers. Rather than fleeing or facing Israel on the battlefield, the people of Gibeon sent a delegation to Joshua, hiding the fact that they were Canaanites. Clothed in ragged clothing and toting worn-out sacks and wineskins with stale provisions, the Gibeonites approached Joshua, encamped at Gilgal, begging for peace (Joshua 9:3-5). The men of Gibeon claimed to be from a distant country and asked to enter a treaty of peace with the Israelites (Joshua 9:6). Rather than seeking God’s will, Joshua took the delegation at its word and made a covenant with them (Joshua 9:14-15).

Three days later, Joshua and the Israelites learned they had been deceived—the Gibeonites were near neighbors in Canaan; however, as they had sworn peace with the people of Gibeon, they were prevented from taking Gibeon by force (Joshua 9:16-18). A short time later, the Israelites were compelled to defend those who had deceived them when warring Amorite kings launched an invasion against Gibeon (Joshua 10). There is always a price to pay when God’s commands are ignored.

Joshua's treaty with Gibeon, ill-advised though it was, was binding. Much later, King Saul "in his zeal for Israel and Judah" tried to annihilate the Gibeonites, violating the peace treaty (2 Samuel 21:2). As a result, God sent a three-year famine to Israel. David, who was king at the time, inquired of God as to why, and God answered, "It is on account of Saul and his blood-stained house; it is because he put the Gibeonites to death" (2 Samuel 21:1). David made amends, and the famine ended. Gibeon was also the scene of a battle between the armies of David and Ish-bosheth. David's army, under Joab, defeated Ish-bosheth's army, led by Abner (2 Samuel 2:12-17).

Many centuries later, a false prophet from Gibeon named Hananiah publicly stood against the prophet Jeremiah and proclaimed a lie in the name of the Lord (Jeremiah 28). Like the deceivers with their tattered clothing and moldy provisions, Hananiah's message of hope was intended to mislead the Israelites in Babylonian bondage. Ultimately, God struck Hananiah dead for deceiving His people with lies.

One may wonder how Joshua and the Israelites could have been so deceived by the delegation from Gibeon, but we are witnesses to deception on a much wider scale taking place within the church today. Many seminaries, charged with educating the next generation of pastors and church leaders, have replaced sound biblical teaching with spurious theories that cast doubt on Christian morality and the integrity of the Bible. Rather than condemning sin, many churches are embracing sinful lifestyles in the name of tolerance. The deception of the Gibeonites continues. The mistake of the ancient Israelites was that they "sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord" (Joshua 9:14). May God's people today not make the same mistake.