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We faced the unusual account of the Gibeonites this Sunday morning at MRC from Joshua 9-10v15.

We began by thinking about the theme we've encountered a number of times in this first section of the book that it's *the testimony about the Lord and his actions that has gone before His people* and causes opponents to melt. We heard about it (for example) with Rahab in chapter 2, the Amorite Kings in 5v1 and a number of times (as we'll see) through this section of the text.

We noted that this section is certainly not all plain sailing as a number of **Obstacles become apparent...**

As the message about who God is and what he's done spreads perhaps some people are a little less fearful than they have been as we see a some

→...challenges from outside

1. For the first time we begin to see some coalitions as Canaanite people's combine and team up against Israel. It's here in 9, again in 10 and then for a third time in 11.
2. The majority of the chapter is taken up with the cunning of the Gibeonites. Their tactic is, rather than coalitions, to deceive Israel with a ruse. Perhaps drawing from Deuteronomy 20, they attempt to convince Israel that they are not Hivite neighbours, but rather have travelled from a distance (seen by tatty clothes and mouldy bread for example). Israel are duped which leads us into

→...challenges from inside

They are duped ultimately because of v14. They do not enquire of the Lord. Perhaps due to Israel's complacency self-sufficiency and arrogance, coupled with the Gibeonite flattery they forget to ask God and form an alliance, by oath with them.

We noted that it's all too easy to wag the finger yet we so quickly can make a decision, forgetting to enquire of God, and yet then hope he will bless it to give us what we want.

We drew parallels with James 4 as we saw complacency and arrogance there as the Christians thought they were in control of their lives.

As the story unfolds and Israel find out they've been duped though, we then saw that

Obstacles become opportunities

As chapter 10 begins we get a glimpse of the local hatred for the Gibeonites who have formed an alliance with Israel and so are attacked by another coalition of kings. Will the oath they made with Israel count for anything?

The people at the end of chapter 9 want to kill the Gibeonites whilst the leaders, who understand the importance of an oath, protect them and make them servants, whilst here they protect them again from enemy kings. In this section we see God fighting for his people, that they might honour the oath they (wrongly) made to him. In this section we encountered unusual miraculous events - namely hailstones and the sun standing still to lengthen the day to give opportunity to finish them off. We noted various theories out there that speak of this, but especially to understand our own preconceptions and world view that we bring to the text. Do we even believe God exists and is active? If not we'll probably not believe that this can happen. Having said that it's unusual that all around the world in many ancient cultures there are non-Christian legends of an extra long day (and indeed some contemporary scientists claim our timing is out by about 24 hours). We noted finally that perhaps it's not so much, can we trust the evidence, but rather can we trust our own hearts?

We finished though by noting that the Gibeonites reappear in the bible, but as a part of the people of God (see Nehemiah 3 or 7 for eg). This prayerless oath that ought not have happened ends up with people being brought into Gods family. Gods sovereignty works in such a way that even through our culpable mistakes and messes He is extraordinarily and beautifully able to redeem them and weave out good and blessing.

Here are some possible questions to kick things off

Retell the story. What are the key elements? How is Israel threatened? Why do you think this section is included?

What do you make of Israels prayerless answer in v14? Why do you think they might have forgotten to pray? How do we do this?

What do you make of the hailstones and sin standing still? Is it literal? Why or why not? How does our worldview affect how we approach the text? Can we trust ourselves?

Are there things in your life (decisions, experiences, sins etc) from the past that you regret? Do you believe God is able to redeem them for good?