

## Entering a new land #8

- *In uncharted territory we will make mistakes, be taken in, misinterpret what is happening around us. This can have consequences for the long term. We need to be on our guard!*

## Muddy waters!

- Life is messy:
  - Sunday certainties can easily be Monday ambiguities...!
- Reassuring that Scripture deals with the shades of grey in between the black and the white
  - there are hardly any plaster cast saints in the Bible - David was an adulterer, Noah a drunk, Peter denied the Lord and even spoke words straight from Satan, Paul argued with his co-workers...

## Coming in

- Looking from the Gibeonites' perspective
  - under the judgement of God, and facing destruction (seem to have known both Deuteronomy 7:1-5, and also Deuteronomy 20:15!)
  - unlike all the other Canaanite groups, realised you can't oppose God
  - so, like Rahab, sought protection from God's judgement amongst his people; entering into relationship with him - even if imperfectly!
- Found grace, favour in the coming:
  - they are among the "aliens who live among you" who are referred to right through the Old Testament
  - they are brought into the heart of worship, exposed day by day as they served as woodcutters and water carriers in the house of God, to what true worship was about - potential for them coming to know God, not just danger of them corrupting the people of God
  - is it really a curse to be in the house of God? Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. (Ps 84:4)
  - blessing of protection from God in the very next chapter, which we'll look more at next week (10:4,6,7...)
- Do we have the same urgency about the fate of those facing the judgement of God?
  - either for ourselves, that we will not cling on to any other help than his offered grace?
  - or for others, that we will strive with all our energies to rescue them from coming judgement?

## Looking out

- Reflections here too on what it means to be God's people in confusing times, when waters are muddy:
  - they make a mistake, they get it wrong, they should have asked God - but they didn't
  - what then?
  - what happens when we are operating in a context where it is hard to see what is going on, when we get the strategy wrong, when we are even deceived or taken in?
- Note commendation of integrity in keeping promises of the leaders, including Joshua (v.19,26)
- But, there is the clear and obvious thing:
  - should have asked God!
  - that this is actually harder than it sounds...

- hard to discern what God is saying - maybe the Israelites felt they were seeking to discern God's will, keeping the commands in the Law...?
- Made the mistake because what they thought was happening was not what was really happening
- How do we react when we don't know what is happening around us?
  - tendency to clamour for answers, rather than living with uncertainty, wanting to think we know rather than being prepared to **listen, wait, hold off on judgement...?**
  - how do we respond when we get it wrong? Not moral failure so much as strategy? How do we feel? How do we treat each other? eg Cafe? Holiday Club? Summer Focus? Ambivalent, uncertain....
  - tanks or jet planes were game-changers - no good creating better trench defences (Maginot Line?) when you can just drive round them, or better propellor planes, when Jets will always do better
  - many new technologies have been game-changers, and established competitors have found it hard to respond, often doing better what they'd always done rather than doing the new thing...
- In missional terms, are we answering the wrong questions?
  - are we not seeing what people are really getting at?
  - for instance, suggest people are not really asking truth questions, but experience questions...
- Conversation about **horoscopes** at Alpha the other week
  - one response would have been to explain why horoscopes were wrong and a bad thing - which they are!
  - but was that the question that was being asked, the issue that was being grappled with?
  - as the conversation developed it was clear it wasn't - it was to do with a search for purpose and hope, a context in which to live life - and a better response to that is not condemnation but invitation to meet Jesus, the one who gives purpose and context in which to live life... perhaps by examples from when we've found knowing Jesus has given us purpose, or hope in dark times...

## Conclusion/Discussion

- What are we missing, missionally?