

The Book of Joshua

Lesson 8: The Sun Stands Still: Victory in the South -- Joshua 10:1-43

Word travels fast in a frightened land. Adonizedek, king of Jerusalem, has heard two things that turn his blood cold. First, that Israel has taken Ai and burned it as it did Jericho. Second, that Gibeon, the great city nearby, has made peace with these newcomers and gone over to their side. 'They feared greatly,' the text says, 'because Gibeon was a great city,' bigger than Ai, and full of mighty men. So Adonizedek does what frightened kings do: he gathers allies. He sends to four other Amorite kings, and the five of them march up together, not against Israel first, but against Gibeon, to punish the city that dared to seek peace. The men who lied their way into Israel's protection are about to discover what that protection is worth.

And so a strange messenger comes running to Joshua at Gilgal. It is from the Gibeonites, the very people who deceived him only days before. 'Slack not thy hand from thy servants,' they beg; 'come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us.' Joshua could have shrugged. They tricked him; let them face their own kings. But a vow had been sworn in the name of the Lord, and Joshua had given his word. So 'Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour.' He marched all night, twenty miles uphill in the dark, to rescue the people who had fooled him. And waiting for him at the top was the voice of God: 'Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.'

What follows is one of the great days in all of Scripture. Israel falls on the Amorites with a sudden slaughter, and the Lord Himself enters the battle: 'the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them,' and 'they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.' Heaven is fighting for Israel. And then, with the enemy fleeing and the daylight running short, Joshua does something no one had ever done. He prays out loud, in front of the whole army, and commands the sun: 'Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.' And it did. 'The sun stood still, and the moon stayed.' There was no day like it before or since, the text says, a day when the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel.

Take care how you hold this chapter. It is not a warrant for human violence, vengeance, or holy war in our day; the Christian's battle is spiritual, fought with the armor of God, not the sword of iron (Ephesians 6:10-18). This was a unique and unrepeatable act of covenant judgment, God's own justice falling at last on nations whose wickedness had filled up its measure, executed by His direct command at one precise hour in His unfolding plan. But within that solemn frame shines a glory we are meant to see: the God who flung the sun into the sky can hold it where He pleases, and the same God who fought for Israel keeps His promises to His people still. As we walk through Joshua 10, lift your eyes from the dust of the battlefield to the One who

commands both the stars and the storm, and ask Him to teach you to trust the God who fights for those who are His.

Group Discussion: On the long day at Gibeon the text says something staggering: 'there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel' (Joshua 10:14). Set aside for a moment the debates about how the miracle worked. What does this whole chapter teach us about the kind of God we serve, a God who keeps His promises, fights for His people, and rules over the very heavens?

Personal Reflection: Joshua marched all night to rescue the people who had deceived him, simply because he had given his word and because God told him not to fear. Where in your life right now do you most need to hear the Lord say, 'Fear not, for I have already gone before you'? What battle are you facing that you have been trying to fight in your own strength?

Read Joshua 10:1-43

Study Questions

1. When Adonizedek hears that Gibeon has made peace with Israel, five Amorite kings unite to attack the city, and Gibeon sends a desperate plea to Joshua: 'come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us' (Joshua 10:1-6). Joshua had been deceived by these very people, yet he marches all night to rescue them. What does Joshua's faithfulness to his oath, even toward those who tricked him, reveal about the seriousness of a word sworn before God?
2. Before the battle, the Lord tells Joshua, 'Fear not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee' (Joshua 10:8). Where in your own life are you most tempted to fear an enemy or obstacle that looms large in front of you? What would change if you truly believed God had already gone before you?
3. As the Amorites flee, 'the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them... and they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword' (Joshua 10:11). Why is it important that the text gives more credit for the victory to the hailstones from heaven than to Israel's swords, and what does this teach about who truly wins God's battles?

4. Joshua prayed out loud, in front of the whole army, before he commanded the sun and moon (Joshua 10:12). When you face a daunting moment, are you more likely to pray boldly and publicly trusting God, or to quietly strategize on your own? What holds you back from bold, expectant prayer?
5. At Joshua's word, 'the sun stood still, and the moon stayed... So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day' (Joshua 10:13). Sincere believers have discussed exactly how this happened, but the text keeps the emphasis elsewhere. How does this miracle display God's absolute power over the creation He made, and why should that truth strengthen our faith rather than trouble it?
6. The text says this was a day when 'the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man' (Joshua 10:14). Joshua had walked closely with God for decades. Think about your own prayer life: is it the prayer of someone who walks closely and obediently with God day by day, or have your prayers grown distant and formal? What is one step toward a more living dependence on the Lord?
7. Five times in this chapter we are told some form of 'the Lord fought for Israel,' and 'the Lord discomfited them' (Joshua 10:10, 14, 42). Yet Israel still marched, still swung swords, still chased the enemy through the night. How does this chapter hold together God's sovereign action and human effort, and what does that teach us about working hard while trusting God completely?
8. Joshua refused to let his soldiers rest while the enemy still fled; he pressed the pursuit to the very end and would not stop short of complete victory (Joshua 10:19-21). Where in your own walk with God are you tempted to stop short, to settle for a partial obedience or an unfinished work? What does it look like to 'pursue' to the finish in your life?

9. This chapter records the destruction of the southern cities as the Lord fought for Israel, an act of covenant judgment on the entrenched wickedness of the Canaanite nations, by God's direct command at a unique moment in His plan (Joshua 10:40–42). How are we to understand the conquest rightly: not as a warrant for human violence or holy war today, but as God's just and unrepeatable judgment, while holding firmly to His patient grace and to the truth that our warfare now is spiritual (2 Corinthians 10:3–5; Ephesians 6:10–18)?

10. Look back over the whole long day at Gibeon, from Joshua's night march to the sun standing still to the Lord casting down stones from heaven. Name one specific way this chapter is strengthening your trust in God. What is the Lord teaching you about His power, His faithfulness to His promises, and His willingness to fight for those who are His, that you need to carry into this week?

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Exodus 14:13–14, the Lord fights for Israel at the Red Sea while they hold their peace, the same God fighting the same way for His people; Psalm 18:13–14, the Lord thunders from heaven and casts down hailstones and lightnings upon His enemies, echoing the great stones at Gibeon; Habakkuk 3:11, the sun and moon stand still in their habitation at the light of God's arrows, a poetic remembrance of this very day; 2 Corinthians 10:3–5, we do not war after the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are mighty through God, showing how the believer's battle is now spiritual; Ephesians 6:10–18, put on the whole armour of God and stand against the powers of darkness, the Christian's true holy war.

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