



“Open Church – Open Bible”

Clabon Bogan Jr. – Interim Pastor



Sunday Church School

June 6, 2021

“Joshua Commands the Sun to Stand Still”-- Joshua 10:1-15

Golden Text: Joshua 10:14

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Joshua 10:1-15

¹ Now it came to pass when Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem heard how Joshua had taken Ai and had utterly destroyed it--as he had done to Jericho and its king, so he had done to Ai and its king--and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them,

² that they feared greatly, because Gibeon *was* a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it *was* greater than Ai, and all its men were mighty.

³ Therefore Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish, and Debir king of Eglon, saying,

⁴ "Come up to me and help me, that we may attack Gibeon, for it has made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel."

⁵ Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, *and* the king of Eglon, gathered together and went up, they and all their armies, and camped before Gibeon and made war against it.

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⁶ And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal, saying, "Do not forsake your servants; come up to us quickly, save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the mountains have gathered together against us."

⁷ So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor.

⁸ And the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand before you."

⁹ Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly, having marched all night from Gilgal.

¹⁰ So the LORD routed them before Israel, killed them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them along the road that goes to Beth Horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah.

¹¹ And it happened, as they fled before Israel *and* were on the descent of Beth Horon, that the LORD cast down large hailstones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. *There were more* who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword.

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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 over Gibeon; And Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon."

¹³ So the sun stood still, And the moon stopped, Till the people had revenge Upon their enemies. *Is this not written in the Book of Jasher?* So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go *down* for about a whole day.

¹⁴ And there has been no day like that, before it or after it, that the LORD heeded the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel.

¹⁵ Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

TODAY'S AIM

Facts: to remember God hears the prayers of His children who love and serve Him.

Principle: to be assured there are no circumstances that are too difficult for God to overcome.

Application: to emphasize the importance of praying with confidence, believing that God hears us when we pray.

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One of the most disputed elements of the Bible is its many claims of miraculous events.

It is becoming more and more commonplace to reject the miraculous because scientific research cannot substantiate it.

- However, Christians believe the Bible is accurate in all that it proclaims.
- While many today scoff at the Bible, claiming it is anti-intellectual to believe what it says, it is not difficult at all for those who believe God exists and love Him with all their hearts.

In this week’s lesson, we will study a truly miraculous event that occurred in real history.

While it is not easily explained or even understood, it should not be considered out of the realm of reality either.

God can do all things, and He is not required to provide an explanation to human beings.

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Israel faced a daunting enemy in the five-nation federation led by King Adoni-tseh-dek of Jerusalem.

- This was well before David captured Jerusalem and made it Israel’s capital.
- In Joshua’s time, the Israelites had just entered Canaan in their effort to take possession of the land God had promised them.
- Jerusalem was a pagan city led by a king who did not worship God or respect His people.
- In a marvelous display of authority over natural forces and events, God delivered Israel and Gibeon, giving them a victory they would not have had on their own.

LESSON OUTLINE:

I. THE THREAT —Josh. 10:1-5

II. THE RESPONSE —Josh. 10:6-11

III. TOTAL VICTORY—Josh. 10:12-15

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I. THE THREAT —Josh. 10:1-5

- Since their crossing of the Jordan and entrance into the Promised Land, Joshua and the Israelites had been on a tear.
- Jericho had fallen, its walls collapsed by divine intervention as the people followed the Lord’s instructions in faith.
- After an initial stumble, the city of Ai was captured next.
- Following that, the people of Gibeon entered into a peace agreement with Israel, using an elaborate deception to accomplish it.
- Nevertheless, Gibeon were now allies and subjects of the Israelites.
- None of these events went unnoticed by the remaining inhabitants of the land.
- In particular, Adoni-zedec, the king of Jerusalem, heard the reports with growing concern and decided to take action.
- He was particularly alarmed at the news that Gibeon had allied with the Israelites.
- Gibeon was a substantial city, much larger than Ai, and could field a formidable fighting force.

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- Confronted with having the Gibeonites now on the side of the invading Israelites, Adoni-zedec knew his situation was precarious.
- Aware that he would be unable to withstand Joshua’s coalition (Josh. 10:3-4), the King sent out an urgent appeal to four other kings for immediate help.
- Hoham of Hebron, Piram of Jarmuth, Japhia of Lachish, and Debir of Eglon represented some of the most formidable powers in the region.
- Acting together, they could pose a serious threat to Joshua and his army.
- But rather than attempt a direct assault on the invading Israelites, Adoni-zedec asked the four leaders for help in attacking Gibeon.
- Part of the reason may have been a desire to punish the Gibeonites for the perceived betrayal in siding with the invaders.
- But the main reason would have been strategic; for the Gibeonites would be easier to vanquish, and eliminating them as Israel ally would be a key advantage
- They may have hoped that a decisive victory over Gibeon would even induce Joshua to call off or at least delay further conquests.

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- Adoni-zedec was not reckoning with the Lord’s orchestration of the Israelite conquest, even after the evidence of the Jordan crossing and Jericho’s collapse.
- That failure would be his undoing, but on a human level his strategy was sound and posed real danger to Israel.
- The four kings wasted no time answering Adoni-zedec’s call to arms, and in short order Gibeon found itself under attack by their mobilized forces.
- For the Gibeonites, this was a perilous situation of the highest order. Gibeon would not be able to stand for long against the combined assault of the forces of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon.

II. THE RESPONSE —Josh. 10:6-11

- The Gibeonites, who had been potential enemies not long before, were now allies of the Israelites because of the treaty agreed to by Joshua (9:15).
- As allies, they now could count on Israelite protection from other foes, and they quickly availed themselves of that promise.
- A message was sent to Joshua’s encampment at Gilgal; its contents were simple and direct: Come quickly and save us! We’re being attacked by combined forces

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- Joshua did not hesitate in his response. Even though the Gibeonite treaty had been based on a ruse (9:4-5, 15-16), the Israelites were bound to honor it, for they had sworn an oath before the Lord (V 18-19).
- So, Joshua immediately marched his entire army, including his elite fighting corps, up from Gilgal.
- Joshua does not appear to have entertained any misgivings or doubts about what he was doing.
- The Lord nevertheless spoke words of assurance to bolster the Israelites' courage and resolve.
- Perhaps He wanted to especially reassure Joshua that even though they had used poor judgment in agreeing to the Gibeonite treaty (including failure to consult Him), they were now doing the right thing in honoring that commitment.
- And it would serve to further the purpose of conquering and possessing the land that was rightfully theirs.
- The five-king coalition may have been fearsome, but God made clear that His people need have no fear of them whatsoever.

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- The enemy soldiers were already given over to Joshua’s control (V 8).
- Further, the enemy forces would be able to withstand their assault.
- No doubt encouraged by this promise, Joshua pushed his men to complete an all-night march to the vicinity of the coalition encampments.
- He took the enemy completely by surprise, descending on them suddenly and without warning.
- It was not primarily tactical surprise and strength that won the day, however.
- The enemy was thrown into disarray by direct action of the Lord, enabling Israel to gain a decisive victory at Gibeon.
- The enemy fled, and the Israelites pursued them for miles. The road west to Beth-horon and from there south to Azekah and Makkedah covered a distance of more than twenty miles, leading from the high country into the valleys.
- Israelite forces continued to cut the enemy to pieces along the entire pursuit.
- As if the Israelite pursuit were not enough trouble for them, the enemy forces found themselves cut to shreds by a massive hailstorm sent from God.
- More soldiers died from the hail than from Israelite action.

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III. TOTAL VICTORY—Josh. 10:12-15

- It appeared that the Canaanite coalition’s destruction was going to be total.
- However, time was running out; and as the day was wearing on, and when darkness fell, the pursuit would end.
- As a great general, Joshua knew that just a partial victory could pose great trouble and danger in the future.
- He knew his army needed to finish the job they had started that day, but at some point, it became evident that the pursuit could not be completed in the remaining hours of daylight.
- So, he went to the Lord to ask for more time; not whispering a private prayer, Joshua put his reputation on the line by voicing his request boldly
- Was he treating the sun and moon as pagan deities in addressing them directly: “Sun, stand thou still ... and thou, Moon”?
- That is hardly tenable in view of the prefatory statement that he was speaking to the Lord.

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- Joshua could very well have been phrasing his prayer as commands to the sun and the moon, but these would be understood as commands in the name of the Lord.
- He understood that the heavenly bodies were under God’s authority; and we encounter in the text one of the most extraordinary answers to prayer in all of Scripture.
□V 13 “And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed”
- The Israelites were thus able to complete their victory and finish off the enemy.
- The biblical writer, however, reveals his awe at the event by noting its inclusion in a source available at the time, the book of Jasher.
- This appears to have been an ongoing collection of historical poetry and chronicles; also cited in II Samuel 1:18.
- The writer’s high regard for the answer to this prayer is further seen in the repetition in Joshua 10:13: “the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.”

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- Some note that the pair of Hebrew words used for “stand/stood still” can mean “**cease**” or “**go silent**” and propose that what happened was a solar eclipse, providing an omen encouraging Joshua’s army and dismaying the enemy.
- Others simply write off the phrase as “poetic” and thus not to be taken literally; thereby evading its implications.
- The best understanding is the straightforward reading that the sun appeared to slow down in the sky and come to a halt, resulting in a day that was up to twice as long as normal (there is a bit of leeway regarding the precise meaning of “hasted not to go down about a whole day”).
- The event was not something repeatable like an eclipse, it was unique, without anything comparable in all history (V 14)
- This may be the only recorded incidence of a request to modify the ordained motion of the heavenly bodies, but God did it “for the Lord fought for Israel.”
- It shows us (and should comfort us) that there are no lengths to which God will not go to demonstrate His faithfulness to His people.
- The exact HOW God did this is not known, but the fact is HE DID!

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DEVELOPING THE LESSON

- 1. Five kings attack Gibeon** (Josh. 10:1-5). When the people of Gibeon heard that God had delivered the Israelites from Egypt and given them victory at Jericho and Ai (C 6—8), they devised a clever scheme that brought them under Israel’s protection (9:3-27). What happens when word spreads about the exploits of God?
- 2. Israel defends Gibeon** (Josh. 10:6-11). The Gibeonites sent word to Joshua, who was camped at Gilgal, and called on him to come to their aid immediately. Joshua responded by leading his fighting men to Gibeon. What fueled Joshua’s courage along the way?
- 3. The sun stands still** (10:12-15). What happened next is one of the most remarkable events in all human history. How is it important to know the account of how Joshua commanded the sun and moon to stand still so the Israelites would have more daylight to fight and secure a complete victory



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“ADVANCE YOUR KNOWLEDGE”



1. About what was the Canaanite king Adoni-zedec alarmed? What did the coalition of kings do rather than attack Israel directly?
2. What message did the Gibeonites send to Joshua? Why did Joshua decide to come to the aid of the Gibeonites?
3. What was the reason for the decisive Israelite victory at Gibeon? What direct action did God take in the battle?
4. What problem did Joshua face even as his army was winning on the field? What did Joshua ask for in his prayer?
5. How did God answer Joshua's prayer in an extraordinary way? How does the biblical writer show that this was an unprecedented answer by God?

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PROVERBS 27:17

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