

Israel had been taught, through several painful lessons, the need to listen to God. There was the initial loss at Ai followed by the Gibeonite deception. The consequences were long term, one of which they faced in our chapter for today. The leaders of Israel were to be commended for keeping their oath to be in alliance with Gibeon despite the protests of the people (Psalm 15:4<sup>i</sup>). Now that commitment would be tested.

<sup>1</sup> *As soon as Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, heard how Joshua had captured Ai and had devoted it to destruction, doing to Ai and its king as he had done to Jericho and its king, and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them,* <sup>2</sup> *he 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 warriors.* Joshua 10:1-2 The king of Jerusalem's name means Lord of Justice. It could also mean Leader of Retribution which is more fitting for what he is attempting to do. But he is about to meet the real Lord of Justice! He wanted to deal a crushing blow to Gibeon to warn the rest of his allies that they better not side with Israel as Gibeon had done. Gibeon's men were known to be warriors and their capitulation to Israel was a crushing blow to the region's alliances against Israel. Adoni-zedek greatly feared that he would be the next king to be hung in front of his city gates. Instead of following the example of the Gibeonites and recognizing that Israel's God was the God of gods, he turned to his allies.

<sup>3</sup> *So Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron, to Piram king of Jarmuth, to Japhia king of Lachish, and to Debir king of Eglon, saying,* <sup>4</sup> *“Come up to me and help me, and let us strike Gibeon. For it has made peace with Joshua and with the people of Israel.”* <sup>5</sup> *Then 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 their forces and went up with all their armies and encamped against Gibeon and made war against it.* Joshua 10:3-5 The kings of five cities of southern Israel gathered their armies and came against Gibeon. It is interesting to me that they were so well informed. They knew what had happened to Jericho and Ai, what had been done to their kings, how Gibeon made peace with Israel, and the name of Israel's leader, Joshua. Just as Jericho and Ai knew about Israel's deliverance from Egypt and the victories in the wilderness, Adoni-zedek probably knew about those victories too. Since we know that Rahab knew of those things, surely word had spread throughout the region.

<sup>6</sup> *And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, saying, “Do not relax your hand from your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the hill country are gathered against us.”* Joshua 10:6 Gibeon sent word to Joshua about the united armies that gathered against them. This is what I call a Holy Spirit set up. Joshua would have eventually led a battle against those cities, perhaps one at a time. But Adoni-zedek's fear hastened their demise. His "good idea" of punishing Gibeon was going to be their undoing. Gibeon's plea was for Joshua to push on in his war on the region. *“Do not relax your hand...”* In other words, keep pressing forward and take the land, but of course that meant to defend their new ally first. Instead of being a warning to the allies of the region not to make an alliance with Israel, Israel defending Gibeon should have been an encouragement to surrender and live. But the hearts of the people in that region were so hardened they

would not consider that option (Joshua 11:20<sup>ii</sup>). As we saw in the previous passage, they could have lived and had a future with Israel as the Gibeonites did.

*<sup>7</sup> So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. <sup>8</sup> And the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you."* Joshua 10:7,8 When Joshua got the news, he immediately gathered his forces and began to move toward Gibeon. He had acted before without the Word of the Lord with disastrous results, so now he was listening for God's instruction. God had given these kings and their armies into Joshua's hands. *"Not a man of them shall stand before you"* means that no one could be successful against Israel. Again, the Word from the Lord sounds like a done deal, *"I have given them into your hands."* When the Word of God tells us that "greater is He who is in you than He who is in the world," we can be sure the same is true for us in a spiritual sense. In Jesus we are victorious (1 John 4:4<sup>iii</sup>).

*<sup>9</sup> So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal. <sup>10</sup> And the LORD threw them into a panic before Israel, who struck them with a great blow at Gibeon and chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah.* Joshua 10:9,10 Encouraged and emboldened by God's promise, the army of Israel marched all night and surprised the armies that had come against Gibeon. The LORD assisted in the battle by throwing those armies into a panic. Many died there and the rest fled as Israel's army pursued them.

Let us not forget that the Israelites had been slaves just forty years earlier. They were not trained in warfare and had only the alliance with Gibeon. They had conquered territory on the other side of the Jordan, and Joshua led the army before, but their victories were due to God keeping the promise He gave to Abraham (Genesis 17:8<sup>iv</sup>). The next verse shows us that, like the victory they experienced with Jericho, the battle belongs to the Lord (1 Samuel 17:47<sup>v</sup>).

*<sup>11</sup> And as they fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Beth-horon, the LORD threw down large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword.* Joshua 10:11 The fleeing armies went up over the ridge of Beth-horon and as they came down the other side the LORD caused large hailstones to rain down on them which killed more of them than were killed by Israel's swords. This is more evidence that the conquest of the land was God's judgment on their wickedness.

*<sup>12</sup> At that time Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, "Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon." <sup>13</sup> And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day.* Joshua 10:12,13 This is a favorite of atheists who want to disprove the Bible. Of course, they start with the presupposition that there is no all-powerful God, and that the Bible is completely literal and not written from the perspective of the viewer. In that sense they are more literalists than we are. We readily accept the fact that Joshua was speaking of the way things appear to him while we now know the earth is rotating around the sun. But critics would then say that the earth stopping its rotation would bring catastrophe to the planet, ocean tsunamis of unimaginable magnitude among other

catastrophes. But that is because they don't believe God is over all things and miracles are possible.

*There are five main interpretations in commentaries of what took place. The five main approaches are: the earth stopped rotating, the sun's light lingered, the sun's light was blocked, a special sign was involved, and lastly the passage is figurative. Howard's own position is to favor the figurative option, seeing the unique day's existence "not because of some extraordinary astronomical phenomenon but because the Lord listened to the voice of a man and fought for Israel." Alternative explanations abound, such as a solar eclipse on September 30, 1131 B.C. or the passage of the planet Mars within about 70,000 miles of earth around 1404 B.C., which is nearer the right date for Joshua.<sup>vi</sup>*

The sun was about to go down. This tells me a couple of things. When we have heavy hail, the clouds are so dark you can't tell where the sun is. These huge hailstones were not a natural event. They were literally heaven sent. If the sun set, many of the fleeing warriors would have escaped in the darkness.

Joshua could see what was happening, so he shouted out for all to hear for the sun and moon to stand still. We would say for time to stop moving forward. We see that in some sci-fi movies. Everyone is frozen except for the ones who caused time to stop. I really can't imagine how it happened, but for about an extra twelve hours it seemed time stood still as Israel's army finished most of what was left of the armies that came against Gibeon. Apparently, at the time of the writing of the book of Joshua, there was a history book called the Book of Jashir that recorded the very long day.

*<sup>14</sup> There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel. <sup>15</sup> So Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.* Joshua 10:14,15 What is so amazing is not that time seemed to stand still, but that God took orders from Joshua. Just so we don't go around ordering God to do things, the author says there was no day like it or since when the Lord heeded the voice of a man. There is a mistranslation of Isaiah 45:11<sup>vii</sup> which in the KJV<sup>viii</sup> says "command ye me." Newer translations look at the context and translate it "will you command me?" as if asking if anyone would be so impudent to give God orders. So, there are those folks who go around commanding God to do things. But when we look at the context of that verse, God is asking if we would be so arrogant as to command Him. And yet, Joshua, obviously led by the Holy Spirit and carrying out God's instruction did command God to extend the day until the enemy was almost entirely defeated.

In the New Testament we are told to ask, seek, and knock (Matthew 7:7<sup>ix</sup>), and to come confidently before the throne of grace to find help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16<sup>x</sup>). But that is very different from commanding God. We are also told that, "If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." 1 John 5:14 That is what Joshua did. But the Scriptures also warn us that when we ask and do not receive it is because we are asking according to our passions (James 4:3<sup>xi</sup>). We can be confident in our prayers when we know we are praying God's will.

God intervened that His will might be done in the judgment on the Amorites. We call such supernatural intervention a miracle. In this case it was a miracle for the cause of judgment but also of providing the new home for the tribes of Israel.

I imagine that Gibeon was reassured that they had made the right choice in aligning with the God of Israel. If they had chosen to resist Israel, those hailstones would have been on their heads. **Are you on the right side in this cosmic battle over the souls of**

men? Have you chosen the all-powerful and good God who loves you and does not want you to perish? When you join his side, it does not mean that you will not have battles. If you join his spiritual army you will have to fight the forces of darkness that would hinder you (Ephesians 6:11,12<sup>xii</sup>). But you can know you are on the winning side, and you will see Him act on your behalf in amazing ways.

Jesus is preparing a place for us too (John 14:1<sup>xiii</sup>). That place is completely free of all evil, for the Bible predicts that the armies of this world will unite to try and stop Him (Revelation 19:19<sup>xiv</sup>). But nothing can stop our God. That place is free of all evil, even the evil within us, and will be our home more so than any place you ever experienced in this life. The closest thing here is a group of believers who love Jesus and one another (John 13:35<sup>xv</sup>). **If we want a greater experience of heaven to come, we need to be ruthless in dealing with that rebellion that remains in our own hearts.**

*We need to constantly relearn that lesson in our lives, whenever we face situations of danger, difficulty, or complexity. God's back is never turned. Nothing can slip into your life without his knowledge. Nothing can happen to you with his eyes closed. "Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:4). We can sleep because he never does. Divine sovereignty embraces a wisdom that is infinite, a power that is total, and a rule that is absolute. One of the great foundations of our faith is that we know that nothing occurs outside the sovereign will of God, who works all things together for the good of his people (Romans 8:28). What look like impossible circumstances to us are within his knowledge and control; in fact he is actively working out his good and perfect will through them.*<sup>xvi</sup>

*<sup>16</sup> These five kings fled and hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah. <sup>17</sup> And it was told to Joshua, "The five kings have been found, hidden in the cave at Makkedah." <sup>18</sup> And Joshua said, "Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave and set men by it to guard them, <sup>19</sup> but do not stay there yourselves. Pursue your enemies; attack their rear guard. Do not let them enter their cities, for the LORD your God has given them into your hand." <sup>20</sup> When Joshua and the sons of Israel had finished striking them with a great blow until they were wiped out, and when the remnant that remained of them had entered into the fortified cities, <sup>21</sup> then all the people returned safe to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah. Not a man moved his tongue against any of the people of Israel. Joshua 10:16-21* The five kings hid in a cave but were found out. Joshua had large stones placed over the mouth of the cave and placed a guard there while the army continued to pursue the enemy. Joshua reminded the army that God had given them the victory, so they pursued the remnant of the coalition all the way to their cities. Some had escaped, but with their forces diminished, the cities would be an easy conquest as the end of the chapter describes. Then they returned to their camp where the five kings were trapped.

*<sup>22</sup> Then Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the cave and bring those five kings out to me from the cave." <sup>23</sup> And they did so, and brought those five kings out to him from the cave, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon. <sup>24</sup> And when they brought those kings out to Joshua, Joshua summoned all the men of Israel and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, "Come near; put your feet on the necks of these kings." Then they came near and put their feet on their necks. Joshua 10:22-24* Joshua had the kings taken out of the cave and lain on the ground before his army. Then he had the commanders put their feet on the neck of the kings. It was a sign of complete authority over them. In Scripture

"putting under the feet" is a term used in those times to express complete authority. Jesus quoted Psalm 110 in which it is declared that God will put all His enemies under Jesus' feet (Psalm 110:1<sup>xvii</sup>). The greatest enemy is death, which Jesus has already conquered for us (Revelation 1:18<sup>xviii</sup>).

*<sup>25</sup> And Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous. For thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight."*

*<sup>26</sup> And afterward Joshua struck them and put them to death, and he hanged them on five trees. And they hung on the trees until evening. <sup>27</sup> But at the time of the going down of the sun, Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves, and they set large stones against the mouth of the cave, which remain to this very day.* Joshua 10:22-27 Then Joshua commanded the people what God had commanded of him. *"Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous!"* He declared that the LORD would do the same with all the enemies they fought. They had yet to take on the northern alliance. Then the kings were executed by Joshua. Their dead bodies were then displayed hanging from a tree (Deuteronomy 21:22,23<sup>xix</sup>), and that evening buried in the cave in which they hid.

Most of us are in a similar position to Israel in this passage. We have faced trials in our lives and fight spiritual battles. We are standing in victory because the Lord fights for us. But we need to be strong and courageous for the battles that lie ahead. The enemy of our soul will do all he can to make us ineffective, discouraged, and fearful. **Never forget that the battle belongs to the Lord!** We look to our Commander, follow His directions, arm ourselves with the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17<sup>xx</sup>), and persevere until He brings us to the home He has prepared for us.

In Revelation it is predicted that people will try to hide from the wrath of God in dens and caves of the earth (Revelation 6:15,16<sup>xxi</sup>), but there is no hiding from God (Hebrews 4:13<sup>xxii</sup>). The first couple that sinned hid in the garden (Genesis 3:8<sup>xxiii</sup>). But instead of the wrath they deserved, they were shown great grace, even given coverings for their nakedness (Genesis 3:21<sup>xxiv</sup>). They had another chance recognize the Word of the Lord is given for their good. We are all recipients of those numerous chances, but those who end up hardening their hearts toward the goodness of God will find their hiding place is discovered, and they must face the real Lord of Justice. Though He is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9<sup>xxv</sup>), He will not force us to accept His grace. And should we refuse His grace, we will have to receive His justice. Either we accept that He took the justice we deserve, or we will have to receive it ourselves. God will always be just, and we wouldn't want it any other way (Psalm 36:6<sup>xxvi</sup>).

Questions:

- 1 What lesson had been driven home?
- 2 What is ironic about the king of Jerusalem's name?
- 3 Why did he gather a coalition against Gibeon?
- 4 Why didn't they surrender to Israel?
- 5 How did God assist in the battle?
- 6 Do miracles really happen?
- 7 Are we to command God? 8 Why could Joshua do so?
- 9 How can we get a taste of what is to come?
- 10 Why do we need to be strong and courageous?

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<sup>i</sup> **Psalm 15:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; who swears to his own hurt and does not change;

<sup>ii</sup> **Joshua 11:20 (ESV)**

<sup>20</sup> For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

<sup>iii</sup> **1 John 4:4 (ESV)**

<sup>4</sup> Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

<sup>iv</sup> **Genesis 17:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God."

<sup>v</sup> **1 Samuel 17:47 (ESV)**

<sup>47</sup> and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand."

<sup>vi</sup> Jackman, *Preaching the Word - Joshua: People of God's Purpose*.

<sup>vii</sup> **Isaiah 45:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him: "Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands?"

<sup>viii</sup> **Isaiah 45:11 (KJV)**

<sup>11</sup> Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.

<sup>ix</sup> **Matthew 7:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

<sup>x</sup> **Hebrews 4:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

<sup>xi</sup> **James 4:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

<sup>xii</sup> **Ephesians 6:11-12 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

<sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

<sup>xiii</sup> **John 14:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

<sup>xiv</sup> **Revelation 19:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.

<sup>xv</sup> **John 13:35 (ESV)**

<sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

<sup>xvi</sup> Jackman, *Preaching the Word - Joshua: People of God's Purpose*.

<sup>xvii</sup> **Psalm 110:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."

<sup>xviii</sup> **Revelation 1:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

<sup>xix</sup> **Deuteronomy 21:22-23 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> "And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree,  
<sup>23</sup> his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.

<sup>xx</sup> **Ephesians 6:17 (ESV)**

<sup>17</sup> and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

<sup>xxi</sup> **Revelation 6:15-16 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains,

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<sup>16</sup> calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb,

<sup>xxii</sup> **Hebrews 4:13 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup> And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

<sup>xxiii</sup> **Genesis 3:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

<sup>xxiv</sup> **Genesis 3:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

<sup>xxv</sup> **2 Peter 3:9 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

<sup>xxvi</sup> **Psalms 36:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; your judgments are like the great deep; man and beast you save, O LORD.