

## **The Day The Sun Stood Still**

### **Joshua 10:1-14**

#### **Introduction**

Chapters 9-10 record the deception by the Gibeonites (9:1-27) and the destruction of the southern kings in the promised land by Joshua.

The chapter begins with the story of a coalition of forces that join together to punish Gibeon for making a peace pact with Israel (sound familiar?). Five kings are mentioned; Adoni-Zedek—the king of Jerusalem and four others (vv.1-5). The Gibeonites issue a plea for help (vv.6-7); a promise is made to Joshua for victory (v.8) and then a provision is made by God Himself as He sends a hail storm upon Israel's enemies and then miraculously extends the day to ensure the total victory of the armies of Israel (**vv.9-14**).

#### **This was the day the sun stood still.**

Scholars and skeptics point to this passage and spend much time debating whether or not this could possibly be true. Did God allow the earth to cease its orbit or the Sun its rotation? What happened?

Next is a record of seven battles (vv.15-39) and then a summation of the total extent of Joshua's victories in the southern region (vv.40-43).

Remember the great theme of the book of Joshua—victorious living. In this chapter we are given a glimpse of victory in part through loyalty. I think there are two kinds of loyalty—healthy and unhealthy. What is loyalty? In one sense loyalty is a sense of duty or obligation or support. Loyalty are strong feelings of support or alliance. **The inhabitants of the land are not loyal to the God of Israel.**

In one sense this chapter constitutes a test for Joshua and the children of Israel.

Throughout the chapter there are glimpses of loyalty—Joshua is loyal—he will keep his Word—his promises—His commitments (vv.1-7). Joshua is loyal in prayer (vv.8, 12, 14; vv.8-15). Joshua is loyal—in pursuing—complete victory total victory over the enemies of God (vv. 16-27).

Dwight D. Eisenhower:

“You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

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Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle hardened. He will fight savagely. I have full confidence in your courage and devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

Good luck! And let us beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.”

Joshua is loyal in waging constant warfare against the enemy—uncompromising—faithful (vv. 28-29). This loyalty will result in a large portion of the Promised Land—being secured—which again becomes a type and picture of victory—over the spiritual enemies of darkness (vv.40-42). What else will the loyalty of Joshua accomplish? A base camp—for physical and spiritual renewal (v.43).

### **Gibeon’s Cry For Help (vv.1-6)**

*Joshua 10:1–14 (NKJV) 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,*

We need to note that this is the first time this city is referred to as Jerusalem. The city is obviously old and it will play a central role God’s plans and purposes for the coming Messiah. I think it could be argued that the City of Jerusalem is the most important city in the world. In Israel’s future David will secure this city as His Capital; it will be the place where Solomon will build the Temple—and of course it will be the place where Jesus will die and come back to life. The place where Jesus rules—is called the New Jerusalem. In antiquity the first non-Biblical sources that reference this city are the Tell-el Amarna letters (1400 B.C.) where records call this city *Urusalim*—“city of peace”. In the Semitic language—the two words used by Abraham for this place was called *Jireh* (*Gen. 22:14*) and *Salem* (*Gen.14:18*)—combined *Jireh Salem*. The name appears some 600 times in the Bible and is called by other names as well.

In the Bible the name Jerusalem—invokes deep emotion on the part of the Lord—and will be a source of great joy—great sorrow and great pain. When Jesus was warned about Herod’s threat against Him Jesus said, “It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem”. No city on earth has as many prophecies as Jerusalem.

The king of Jerusalem ‘heard’ how Joshua had taken Ai—utterly destroyed it—Jericho—destroyed it—and Gibeon’s surrender without a fight.

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*2that 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.*

Gibeon was a large city with considerable resources and brave men.

*3Therefore 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.”*

*5Therefore 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.*

The King of Jerusalem sent an urgent message to four other kings in the surrounding region. Gibeon has made peace with Joshua and Israel. This capitulation and surrender would spell disaster for everyone in the region. The kings needed to take immediate action.

*6And 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.”*

Fear. The coalition forces were afraid of Gibeon. Gibeon was afraid of the coalition forces. But the odds were not in favor of Gibeon.

We can see how important it is to be on the right side—at the right time!

We don't always know! But we should be able to ask this simple question—“Where does the Lord stand in all this? What does the Bible say about where I should stand? When Abraham Lincoln was asked if God was on the side of the North—or the side of the South Lincoln replied that we should make sure we are on God's side!

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

What was the nature of the peace pact with Gibeon? Did it include a mutual defense pact?

Remember the peace treaty was secured by deception and lies! Why not just allow the coalition forces to destroy Gibeon? Once again—loyalty to his word.

*8And 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.”*

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The Lord gives a fresh word—at just the right time. The Lord was willing and able to supply Joshua with guidance and assurance! **This guidance and assurance gave Joshua renewed courage and energy for the task at hand. It will also result in one of the most unusual days of battle in recorded human history.**

Now we see that strange combination of forces—God’s Word—God’s promise —Joshua’s dependence on God and then effort on the part of Joshua! God promised that Joshua would do great and mighty things—and yet Joshua had the responsibility in obedience to do great and mighty things.

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

*10So 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.*

*11And 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.*

### **Joshua’s Powerful Prayer (vv.12)**

*12Then 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.”*

What is Joshua praying? It is noon—and the hot sun is overhead. In order to fulfill God’s plans—and defeat God’s enemies—Joshua needs more time!

### **Jehovah’s Answer To Prayer (vv.13-14)**

*13So 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.*

What happened? The sun stood still—and the moon stopped. How is that possible? Did the Lord somehow allow the earth’s rotation to cease for a period of some 24 hours? Scientists say that if that happened the results would have been both cosmic and catastrophic!

Verse 13 literally reads; “The sun did not hasten to go down for about a whole day”. The Hebrew word *dom*—stand still (*dumb*) silent—can mean hidden or silent—as in the violent thunderstorm—the sun was hidden—but can God—cause the universe in one sense to stand still without catastrophic consequences?

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There are alleged reports of a long day in Egyptian, Chinese and Hindu sources—but these are hard to substantiate.

What do we know? We know that Joshua pursued the Amorites after a long—overnight forced march from Gilgal—near Jericho. The army marched over 30 miles over rough and hostile terrain. The enemy fled westward—to Beth Horon and then turned south in the Valley of Aijalon (v.12; Deerfield). The men—had marched all night—uphill and were exhausted.

Some scholars suggest this all took place in the month of July—but God sent a hailstorm—a violent hailstorm—that followed the fleeing Amorites—and that more died from those flying stones—than Jewish spears or arrows or slings.

God heard Joshua's prayers—and answered with a miracle. Some point out that given the hailstorm (v.11) it would have been difficult to see the sun as stopped in the sky. Again some suggest the word dom—means—silent—that is the mid-day sun was silenced—hidden by the clouds—and that Joshua's long day—is not a long day after all—but a long night.

What happened? Did Joshua simply pray—early in the morning while the moon was in the western sky and the sun in the east—that God would intervene on their behalf? God answered and sent a hailstorm—not just any hailstorm—but one so violent and specific that it destroyed much of the fleeing enemy? This had the net effect of prolonging the darkness and shielding the men from the burning rays of the sun—therefore the sun was silenced (in the middle of the sky) and the moon did not hasten to come” (see *Hard Sayings; Kaiser, David, Bruce, Brauch p. 188*).

*14And 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.*

Whatever happened we see—three things we know for sure—Gibeon needed help—Joshua in loyalty and faithfulness to God—obeyed God—and then—God's supernatural intervention.

Was this refraction—of light—or did the earth—really—somehow shift it's axis—or suspend that axis—I don't know! But I do know that we are left with the impression from the text—that something happened—a day like no other day—where the Lord heeded the voice of a man—and the Lord fought for Israel.

Research papers have been written—that offer literally a dozen different explanations of what might have happened! The explanation that makes the most sense to me—is that God—in answer—to Joshua's prayer—somehow—caused the rotation of the earth—to slow down—so that the earth's rotation—took place over a 48 hour period rather than a 24 hour period—and that slowing down—caused celestial phenomena that worked in Israel's favor—Israel's enemies—judgment.

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The evidence for slowing down—is found in verse 13—“and so the sun stopped in the middle of the day—and did not hasten to go down—for about a whole day” (12 hours? 24 hours?). Some scientists have speculated that solar storms—may have the power to exert some kind of force over the rotation of our planet—“The length of day on any planet is governed by the time it takes to complete one full rotation. The faster it rotates—the shorter the day. So the earth must have slowed down fractionally” (see again Donald K. Campbell p. 82).

Donald K. Campbell also points out that the sun and the moon—were both principal pagan deities worshipped by the pagans—and that it may have seen to the enemies of Israel—that when Joshua prayed to his God—that the pagan powers—were compelled to comply!

**The secret to Joshua’s success and Israel’s victory—wasn’t simply loyalty—but loyalty and prayer—and is revealed in the words—“the Lord fought for Israel.”**

**Remember what we have already learned: it takes time to subdue our enemies—it rarely happens all at once—but is a gradual process.**

**And we now learn—that God’s help and human effort—need not be at odds! The Lord will help—and use our efforts to fulfill—his will—accomplish his plans—fulfill his end—and fight—for those who fight for Him!**

Does Jehovah fight for Israel? The answer is yes. Does Joshua fight for Jehovah? The answer is yes. Joshua and Jehovah both have a role to play. “The people were expected to fight, but God gave the victory. Certainly there are occasions when we can do nothing but wait for God to act; but usually we are to do our part with dependence on God to do his” (see *Joshua Leader under fire*; Donald K. Campbell p. 80).

## **Conclusion**

I came across this amazing story in “The Miracle of the Fog” published by Good News Publishers).

Just before V-E Day of World War II a soldier named Joel wrote his mother in New Jersey about the miraculous deliverance of his platoon.

Our outfit has been taken off the army’s secret list so now you will will hear a little our our activities. We are a part of the Third Army under General Patton. My platoon was pinned down by German mortar and artillery fire. They were given the order to move, but couldn’t because the Germans had full view of them from a hill and were zeroing their fire in on them perfectly. Tom is the most conscientious Christian boy I have ever met in the service. He knew something had to be done to save the 50 men. He crawled from his foxhole and looked things

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over. Seeing how things were, he lay down behind a tree and earnestly prayed God to help them out of this situation.

This is true, Mother . . .after he prayed, a fog or mist rolled down between the two hills and the whole platoon got out of their foxholes and escaped. They reorganized in a little town behind the lines where there was a church building. They all went in and knelt down to pray and thank the Lord. Then they asked the kid to take the service. That is true—Ma, and it just shows how much prayer can mean—if that wasn't an answer to prayer, I don't know what is. You can bet Tom is respected by his buddies.”

## **PART 2 (next week)!!!**

### **The Battle Campaigns (vv.15-39)**

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

*16But these five kings had fled and hidden themselves in a cave at Makkedah.*

*17And it was told Joshua, saying, “The five kings have been found hidden in the cave at Makkedah.”*

*18So Joshua said, “Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and set men by it to guard them.*

*19And do not stay there yourselves, but pursue your enemies, and attack their rear guard. Do not allow them to enter their cities, for the Lord your God has delivered them into your hand.”*

*20Then it happened, while Joshua and the children of Israel made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, till they had finished, that those who escaped entered fortified cities.*

*21And all the people returned to the camp, to Joshua at Makkedah, in peace. No one moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.*

*22Then Joshua said, “Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings to me from the cave.”*

*23And they did so, and brought out those five kings 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.*

*24So it was, when they brought out those kings to Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the captains of the men of war who went with him, “Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings.” And they drew near and put their feet on their necks.*

*25Then Joshua said to them, “Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage, for thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against whom you fight.”*

*26And afterward Joshua struck them and killed them, and hanged them on five trees; and they were hanging on the trees until evening.*

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*27So it was at the time of the going down of the sun that Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees, cast them into the cave where they had been hidden, and laid large stones against the cave's mouth, which remain until this very day.*

*28On that day Joshua took Makkedah, and struck it and its king with the edge of the sword. He utterly destroyed them—all the people who were in it. He let none remain. He also did to the king of Makkedah as he had done to the king of Jericho.*

*29Then Joshua passed from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, to Libnah; and they fought against Libnah.*

*30And the Lord also delivered it and its king into the hand of Israel; he struck it and all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword. He let none remain in it, but did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho.*

*31Then Joshua passed from Libnah, and all Israel with him, to Lachish; and they encamped against it and fought against it.*

*32And the Lord delivered Lachish into the hand of Israel, who took it on the second day, and struck it and all the people who were in it with the edge of the sword, according to all that he had done to Libnah.*

*33Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua struck him and his people, until he left him none remaining.*

*34From Lachish Joshua passed to Eglon, and all Israel with him; and they encamped against it and fought against it.*

*35They took it on that day and struck it with the edge of the sword; all the people who were in it he utterly destroyed that day, according to all that he had done to Lachish.*

*36So Joshua went up from Eglon, and all Israel with him, to Hebron; and they fought against it.*

*37And they took it and struck it with the edge of the sword—its king, all its cities, and all the people who were in it; he left none remaining, according to all that he had done to Eglon, but utterly destroyed it and all the people who were in it.*

*38Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir; and they fought against it.*

*39And he took it and its king and all its cities; they struck them with the edge of the sword and utterly destroyed all the people who were in it. He left none remaining; as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir and its king, as he had done also to Libnah and its king.*

In a sense there are seven battles recorded:

1. The first battle is against the enemies of Gibeon (vv.1-14).
2. The battle against Makkedah (vv.15-28).



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3. The battle against Libnah (vv.29-30).
4. The battle against Lachish (vv.31-33).
5. The battle against Elon (vv.34-35).
6. The battle against Hebron (vv.36-37)
7. The battle against Debir (vv.38-39)

### **The Breath And Scope Of Victory (vv.40-43)**

*40So Joshua conquered all the land: the mountain country and the South and the lowland and the wilderness slopes, and all their kings; he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel had commanded.*

*41And Joshua conquered them from Kadesh Barnea as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even as far as Gibeon.*

*42All these kings and their land Joshua took at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel.*

*43Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.*

## **Conclusion**