

A Great Miracle: The Day the Sun Stood Still

Joshua 10:1-15

Joshua 10:1-15 - *“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.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.

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 until 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.”

Background Notes

In Joshua 9 the Gibeonites had tricked Joshua and the Israelites into making a covenant with them. The Gibeonites knew that God had told His people to make a clean sweep of the Land. Israel was not to co-exist with any of the enemies in the

Land. God knew that if these pagan nations were not driven out, but were allowed to stay, they would contaminate and pollute His people with their gross idolatry and immorality.

In Deuteronomy 20 God had told Israel that they could make peace treaties with people **outside** the Land, and somehow the Gibeonites had found out about this policy. They sent a delegation to Joshua, making it appear that they were from a very far country, and Joshua and the children of Israel were tricked into signing a peace treaty with them. They made the covenant before the Lord, and therefore it had to be honored.

As a result, in Joshua 10 the Gibeonites called on Israel to come and honor the treaty, because five kings of the Amorites had ganged up on the Gibeonites. Verse 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.”*

The Lord promised victory, so Joshua and the army of Israel went up and attacked the five kings and their armies. Thus Joshua not only honored the covenant, but he also took advantage of conquering five enemy kings at once. Israel attacked the enemy at dawn after an all-night march of about 25 miles uphill! Let me tell you, those Israeli troops were in good shape. The surprise attack routed the enemy, and the Lord fought for Israel by sending hailstones that killed a number of enemy troops.

As the battle continued, more daylight was needed to finish the fighting, and so we have one of the great miracles of the Bible: *“So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the people had revenge upon their enemies...Is it 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.”* Quite a miracle!

The book of Jasher, by the way, is not a book of Scripture (I'm sure you're aware of that), and it's not extant today. It contains stories and songs about Israel. It's also mentioned in 2 Samuel 1.

We don't know exactly what happened in this miracle or exactly how God did it. A number of explanations have been given, and it seems to me that most of them been attempts to “help God out” so that it doesn't have to be such a great miracle. One explanation is that certain atmospheric conditions resulted in the refraction of the sun's rays so that daylight was prolonged after sunset. Another explanation is that Joshua was only requesting relief from the heat of the sun when he asked the sun to keep still or keep silent, so God sent a cloud to cover it! Hey! Why not just say that it's a great miracle, and not try to figure it out? After all, verse 14 says *“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.”* This is a great miracle here!

Now God could have had the sun delay its path in the sky, and the moon hold its position low in the sky over the Valley of Aijalon in a number of different ways. He's God! He can do miracles! I'm going to wait until I get to heaven to see how God did it. He did it! -- and that's the important point.

Some years ago a story got started that the computers at NASA had “found the missing day” in the universe! Apparently, some well-meaning Christians published this story with exaggeration to try to back up this miracle of Joshua 10. Well folks, that NASA story is just a story, so don’t spread it! It’s been checked out and found to be unreliable. We just don’t have enough data to plug into a computer to find a missing day in the universe – but that’s not to say that there isn’t a missing day, and that there wasn’t this long day in the book of Joshua!

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. The Lord can use natural events to help His people.

The hailstorm (v11) was a natural event that God used to help His people. God does the same for His people today. You know, when we get to heaven we’re going to be able to look back and see all the natural events that God used to protect us and guide us and help us in many ways.

Not too long ago I had a flight delay because of bad weather – a natural event! But as a result, I was able to get some important reading and writing done in the airport, work that I wouldn’t have accomplished if we hadn’t had that bad weather.

I think the specific teaching here is the help that God will give us in spiritual warfare. We have many lessons about spiritual warfare in the book of Joshua. All the enemies in the Land represent forms of spiritual opposition that we face as we seek to possess the spiritual land of spiritual blessings that God has given us in Christ. So here in Joshua 10, we have specific teaching on how God helps us in spiritual warfare. He can use natural events and supernatural events to fight for us in spiritual warfare.

A few years ago when I was working with the Young Life ministry to high school students, some Christian teens told me that one of their teachers was a witch. They didn’t mean that she looked like a witch! No -- she was actually holding séances and getting some of the kids involved in witchcraft. Well, we began to pray about this matter and a few weeks later, she was transferred. This was a natural event. The Lord can use natural events to help His people.

2. The Lord can use supernatural events to help His people.

The Lord not only uses natural events to help us, but He sometimes uses supernatural events as well. He uses miracles! Yes, God can still do miracles!

We may not see the sun stand still, or see some of the other dramatic sign miracles that are recorded in the Bible, but let’s not limit God! Let’s not put God in our little “box” and say that He can’t do miracles today.

Let's think of how God can do miracles in a context of spiritual warfare, which is the primary teaching here. You know, every time a person becomes a Christian, a miracle takes place – it's a supernatural event. Sometimes God uses a miracle to rescue and redeem a person out of Satan's clutches. I have had students who were addicted or involved in drug use before they became Christians. When they accepted the Lord and turned their life over to Him, some of them have been delivered from addiction – immediately! Now that's a miracle! It doesn't happen in every case, but when it does, we've got to say, "That's a miracle!" It's a supernatural event. The Lord can use supernatural events to help His people.

Practical Application

Your prayers can save the day!

Verse 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."* What an amazing answer to prayer! The day was prolonged! It was literally saved – an answer to Joshua's prayer! Remember that the Canaanites worshipped the sun and moon as deities, but the LORD, the Creator, the One True God, showed his power over the sun and the moon.

Do see the play on words in the practical application? "Your prayers can save the day!" God still answers prayer! God knows everything, and He has determined everything -- but still God answers prayer. How it all works together, we don't know, but it does.

Notice in verse 12 that Joshua consulted the Lord first before he made this very unusual prayer, and God answered. Are you facing any problems right now? Do you know any fellow-believers who are facing big difficulties right now, who are in desperate need of special help? Are you praying for them? God answers prayer! Your prayers can save the day!