

March 8, 2020 - David Baumgartner

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[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. All right. It's good to see everybody here today on time.

It's good. We are in Joshua chapter 10. We'll be looking at the first 15 verses of that chapter. We realize that little by little, we see Israel taking possession of the promised land, the land of Canaan. And so far, we've seen some major battles. We've seen the battle of Jericho. It's a major battle. The battle of Ai didn't go so well at first, but it ended up good.

Not all of their progress in the land has come through battles. Last week, for instance, we were introduced to the city of Gibeon. And it's a major city.

They had resources. They had their own king. They had a territory. But they were also living in Canaan's land. And so they were on Israel's list of cities that needed to be destroyed.

[1:11] So we saw that Gibeon established a peace treaty with Israel. But as you may recall, they were deceitful at that. And they avoided destruction by pretending to come from a distant land, a distant country.

And so when Israel discovered the truth about them, the Gibeonites were placed in servitude to Israel. Well, if you look at this peace treaty that was established, that was not viewed positively by the Amorite kings.

And in our account this morning, we're going to see five Amorite kings team up to teach Gibeon a lesson. And Israel is going to come to Gibeon's defense.

But as we will also see, it's not just Israel. No, it's Israel's God who will come. And this, friends, will be a day like no other.

I guarantee it. Let's go ahead and please read with me Joshua chapter 10. It's on the back of your handout if you didn't bring your Bibles or your cell phone. Starting in verse 1.

[2:15] Now it came about that when Adonai Zedek, king of Jerusalem, heard that Joshua had captured Ai and had utterly destroyed it, just as he had done to Jericho and its king, so he had done to Ai and its king.

And that the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were within their land that 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 mighty men. Therefore, Adonai Zedek of Jerusalem sent word to Horem, king of Hebron, and to Pyram, king of Jarmuth, and to Jophra, king of Lachish, and to Debir, king of Eglon, saying, Come up to me and help me, and let us attack Gibeon.

For it has made peace with Joshua and with the sons of Israel. So the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, gathered together and went up, they with all their armies, and camped by Gibeon and fought against it.

Then the men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal, saying, Do not abandon your servants. Come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us.

[3:45] For all the kings of the Amorites that live in the hill country have assembled against us. So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the valiant warriors.

And the Lord said to Joshua, Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not one of them shall stand before you. So Joshua came upon them suddenly by marching all night from Gilgal.

And the Lord confounded them before Israel, and he slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and pursued them by the way of the ascent at Beth Horon, and struck them as far as Azekah and

Makedah.

And it came about that as they fled before Israel, while they were at the descent of Beth Horon, that the Lord threw large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died.

And there were more who died from the hailstorms than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword. Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel.

[4:57] And he said in the sight of Israel, O sun, stand still at Gibeon. O moon in the valley of Ajalan. So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies.

Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, when the Lord listened to the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel.

Then Joshua and all Israel with him returned to the camp at Gildan. Father, we are so grateful that you give us your holy word.

We pray that through the ministry of your spirit who dwells within us, that he will make these words come alive to us. That we would see the blessings for us today.

Lord, we thank you that we can gather here today and we can worship you. We glorify you for who you are and for all that you deserve. Thank you, Lord.

[6:10] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Well, what a text, huh? It sure is. Verse 1, we're immediately introduced to this man named Adonai Zedek.

He's the king of Jerusalem. His name may sound somewhat familiar to you. It's similar to another king of Jerusalem, Melchizedek.

Or as we call him, Melchizedek. He's the king of righteousness. This here, Adonai Zedek is the lord of righteousness. That's what it says. But friends, he is not that.

But he does become aware of two things. He becomes aware of Ai's destruction by Israel. And he becomes aware of Gibeon's peace treaty with Israel.

Notice verse 2. It says, he feared greatly because Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities. And since we know that Jerusalem is the closest city to Gibeon, this guy says something has to be done.

[7:19] And so it says in verse 3, Therefore, Adonai Zedek, king of Jerusalem, sent word to these four other kings. And he said, come up here and help me. Let us attack Gibeon.

Here's why. For it has made a peace treaty with Joshua and with the sons of Israel. We ought to be reminded here that Joshua's name now is known throughout the land.

And so we see here these five nations in verse 5. They went up with their armies. They camped by Gibeon and fought against it. Verse 6.

Then the men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua to the camp at Gilgal saying, do not abandon your servants. Come up here and help us. And so as long as all these five kings that live in the hill country, they've assembled against us.

Joshua's name means the Lord saves. So friends, this is a good move. Do it. Verse 7 says, Joshua went up from Gilgal.

[8:21] He and all the people of war with him and its valiant waters. So I think this is a situation of five against two. Boy, who will win? Any guess?

I think there's three factors here that's going to ensure Israel's success in this battle. The first thing is this promise from the Lord.

Look with me, verse 8. And the Lord said to Joshua, do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not one of them shall stand before you. That's the perfect tense in Hebrew.

It emphasizes the certainty that Joshua's going to win. Secondly, notice verse 9. They acted quickly. So Joshua came up upon them suddenly.

And here's how. By marching all night from Gilgal. This is an uphill journey, friends. Some 20 miles. And it's probably at night.

[9:23] And they're probably carrying all their armor and their gear. But the strategy was a good one. And that's because it gave them the advantage of this surprise attack.

Here's the third thing we see. We see the Lord's active involvement. Look with me, verse 10. It says, the Lord confounded these five armies before Israel.

That word that's used there for confounded means to terrorize, to cause a panic. And it says that Joshua slew them. Or the Lord actually slew them with a great slaughter.

Now he's probably using Joshua and his armies to do that. I think it's really interesting. Notice Joshua gives the credit to the Lord. He slew them with a great slaughter.

And so Israel is just like a sword in the Lord's hand. Or maybe like a pen in your hand when you do something fantastic for the Lord.

[10:22] Verse 10, notice. Israel pursued them, it says, by the way of ascent of Beth Horan. In other words, they're going uphill. And struck them as far as Azekah and Makeda.

This chase here, if you look on a map, it covers some 30 miles. It says as far as Azekah. That's a city that's between the border of Philistia and Judah.

Notice here, they're chasing them uphill. And I'm sure by now, after marching all night, and after fighting all day, would anybody here be tired?

I would be. I'm sure by now they're really tired. But notice verse 11. And it came about as they fled from before Israel.

This is the Amorites here. They were at the descent of Beth Horan. So now they're going downhill. Here's what happened. It says, the Lord threw large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah.

[11:25] And they died. And there were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed. Can you imagine being hit by hailstones large enough to kill somebody?

I look to see, has that ever happened before? And so I got this print out here from Wikipedia and other reliable sources from the internet. They did say that back in 1888 that 246 people died in India from large hailstones.

So that's pretty amazing here. But get this. As of July in 1928, there were hailstones in Nebraska that were seven inches in diameter.

And the largest one, it was the largest hailstones recorded at that time until you get to recently, July 1910. In Vivian, South Dakota, the largest diameter hailstones known, 7.87 inches in diameter.

Some of them were saying that they were like bowling balls coming down on people. And boy, I would imagine that that would hurt. He would kill somebody.

[12:45] But the thing is, is that this account in Joshua is different. You know why? Notice here that none of the Israelites were killed.

None of the Gibeonites were killed. And so I think it just goes to show you how miserable it is if you have God as your enemy.

It is. Let me review here. So the Gibeonites established this peace treaty with Israel. You have these five Amorite kings. They're greatly displeased.

And so they formed this alliance against Israel. I'm sorry, against Gibeon. And then Gibeon pleads with Israel for help. And they did. And then God joins in.

And friends, he has artillery stored up for such occasions. You might want to write this verse down in the margin there. Job 38, verse 22 to 23.

[13:42] It says this. The Lord is chastising Job. And he's talking about, you know, where were you kind of thing when I made the heavens and the earth.

Have you entered the storehouses of snow? Or have you seen the storehouses of hail? Which I have reserved for the times of distress, for the day of war and battle.

The Lord has it stored up, friends. Stored up for the day of battle. And he comes to the aid of his people. But there's even more.

Look with me, verse 12. Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel. And he said in the sight of Israel, verse 12.

Oh, sun, stand still at Gibeon. Oh, moon, at the valley of Ajalon. Verse 13. So the sun stood still and the moon stopped.

[14:42] Until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies. Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day?

Wow. Wow. Let's go ahead and close in prayer. No. No. Just kidding. You realize throughout the ages, my friends, this passage or this section of scripture has been considered one of the most difficult passages in the Bible.

And as you would expect, there are people, those who reject the Bible will use this passage here. And that's because the account is just too unbelievable.

The implications of God stopping the earth's rotation for a whole day. Consider that. That would be catastrophic for the entire planet.

So, how are we to understand this? What does the Bible really say here? I'd like to give you three observations. The first one is this.

[15:50] Look with me, verse 12. Notice it says, Joshua spoke to the Lord. Now, just to stop right there, we don't know what Joshua said to the Lord.

But I'm going to say, since he's speaking to the Lord, what would we call that? It's a prayer. Then, notice he utters this exclamation. Oh, sun, stand still.

Oh, moon, stand still. This is not a prayer to God, as some people suggest. Unless, of course, Joshua thinks that the sun and moon are God.

Which I'll guarantee you, he does not believe that. No. Rather, he's expressing his desire. And he's expressing it out loud. It says, he said it, in the sight of others.

I want to ask you, what's his desire? Well, his desire is that the daylight would be prolonged so that Israel could completely vanquish their enemies.

[16:47] As opposed to some of them escaping through the darkness of night. That's the first thing you notice. Second thing, notice what the text in 13 says.

It says, they, referring to the sun and moon, stopped until Israel avenged themselves. In other words, until they finished the job.

That could have been an hour. That could have been a couple hours. The main point, it's not necessarily a 24-hour period. Well, who said it was 24 hours?

But notice in verse 13, Joshua refers to this book of Jashar. It's Jashar who said about a whole day. Not Joshua.

Jashar. Who's Jashar? We don't really know. It's believed that this is an account of Israel's wars.

[17:46] But it's written in a form of poetry, put to music. And the thing is that this book never became part of the Jewish Bible. And that's because it was simply lost.

And so, when we see this the whole day, that might be poetic hyperbole. An exaggeration of this event, as poetry and songs tend to do.

But here's the main point. We really don't know how long the sunlight was prolonged. It may have been an hour. It may be several. You know, consider, we extended the sunlight today, didn't we? Yeah, we just manipulated our clocks for daylight savings time. We didn't plan that, by the way. It just kind of happened to be today. But friends, this is different.

And that leads to the third point. Something special really did happen in Joshua's day. And this is confirmed, if you look with me, in verse 14.

[18:49] Verse 14 says, There was no day like that before it or after it. And here's why. When the Lord listened to the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel.

This is an extraordinary day, brothers and sisters. And here's why. I believe it's because the Lord granted the desire of Joshua's heart, even though he didn't ask the Lord for it.

That's what I believe happened. This passage, it illustrates that God will use anything and everything to bless those on whom his favor rests.

On those in whom he takes great delight. And as believers, you and I should be reminded, God does have everything at his disposal, doesn't he?

He does. And his favor is upon those in whom he delights. Everything in nature is at his disposal for those in Christ to bless us.

[19:59] I want you to consider this. On the night of Jesus' birth, the angels announced to the shepherds, glory to God in the highest, and peace among men on whom his favor rests, on whom he is pleased.

Jesus, who's the Prince of Peace, is God's gift of peace to humanity. And it's so unfortunate that not all of humanity accepts that.

But it is for those on whom God is pleased. And so our passage ends here in verse 15. Joshua and all of Israel returned with him to Camp Gilgal.

So what do we see here? I see four encouragements from Scripture. If you would just follow along with me in your handout. All of these things are from the prophet Isaiah here.

Notice the first thing. Here's an encouragement to you and I. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near.

[21:05] That's an encouragement. In chapter 9, we saw the Gibeonites make this peace treaty with Israel. I want to ask you, who was Israel to them at that time?

Well, in chapter 9, verse 3, they were the enemy. They had heard of Israel's conquest of Jericho and Ai.

As Mark shared last week, though, we saw they used trickery, pretending to be from a distant land. I don't want to commend their deceitfulness, but I suppose for them, it was a matter of life and death.

They saw no other way. And even though they're slaves to Israel right now, don't you think that's a better alternative? What was the alternative? Death.

But perhaps there's even more here, because if you look with me in verse 24 of chapter 9, they acknowledge Israel had a God. Back in Deuteronomy 4, we read about Moses is talking to Israel about his statutes and rules.

[22:17] And look at what he says. Other people, he's talking like the Gibeonites, will be impressed with Israel, so much so that they will say, what a great nation is there that has a God so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on him.

In a way, I think that it could be said that the Gibeonites saw their need. They saw themselves as being helpless and hopeless.

And then said, these Israelites, they have a God that's near to them. They have a God that answers them whenever they call. I want to ask you, brothers and sisters, isn't that what you and I want people to see in us?

Isn't it? When people say, I want to know your God because I see what he does for you. I see how you interact with him.

Or when others ask you to pray for them, it's because they sense that you have a relationship with God and they don't. What a wonderful thing to see.

[23:30] Seek the Lord, and we can say, seek the Lord while he may be found. Secondly, here's another encouragement. Fear not, for you will not be ashamed.

The Gibeonites were targeted by these five pagan nations because they sought this peaceful relationship with Israel, who has a God, by the way.

I want to ask some of you, think back at your conversion. Were there some people displeased that you were drawing closer to the Lord?

Yeah. Some of them were not happy. Maybe they said to you, you're not going to party with us? We're greatly displeased at that.

That happens too. And there may be a temptation at that point to say, yeah, I don't know what got in me. I'll party with you. I'll do whatever.

[24:28] Look at what it said in Mark's gospel account. Jesus said, whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in glory with the glory of his Father and with his holy angels.

Seek the Lord while he may be found. Do not be ashamed of him. And third, call upon his name. Make known his mighty deeds among the people.

The Gibeonites asked for help, didn't they? And they got it. God came through in a big way. You just consider these miracles, these hailstones, the sunlight being prolonged.

I think it's really interesting that the great Canaanite God, Baal, was supposed to be the great God of storms, of rain, hail, and lightning and snow and floods.

Well, he's not doing a very good job here because the Lord is in control. Notice it says, more died from the hail than even from the sword. But friends, these miracles that we just saw, these are not unique here.

[25:44] No, there's plenty of them in the scriptures. And I want to ask, why do we need to explain away a miracle? What does that prove?

Let me quote what C.S. Lewis says, the mind which asks for a non-miraculous Christianity is a mind in the process of relapsing from Christianity to mere religion.

It's true. Listen to what the psalmist says, great are the works of the Lord. They are studied by all who delight in them.

Splendid and majestic are his work and his righteousness endures forever. I want to invite the musicians to come up as they do this last one here, this fourth point.

Isaiah 26, trust in the Lord forever for in God the Lord we have an everlasting rock. this is a great passage here because it really magnifies Joshua as one in whom the Lord took great delight.

[26:59] You realize that Joshua is a type of one who would come later and have such power that even the winds and the sea obeyed him.

To whom am I speaking? Jesus. In the New Testament we have the true Joshua. His name is Jesus and God took great delight in him.

There was this time in Matthew 17 it's recorded that at the transfiguration Peter observes this and he says let's make some tabernacles so that we can stay here probably the rest of our lives and it says that while he was still speaking behold a bright cloud overshadowed them and behold a voice out of the cloud saying this is my beloved son with whom I'm well pleased listen to him listen to him he's the rock and for those of us in Christ we know the greatest miracle of all that the Lord saved us by raising him Jesus Christ from the dead and I think it's just a reminder here that God takes great delight in those who have trusted him you realize that as believers we have the righteousness of Jesus Christ what an amazing thing that we have that when

Jesus Christ died there's this great exchange that takes place we gave him our sins he gave us his righteousness and that happened because of the resurrection pretty soon we'll be celebrating resurrection Sunday and I just hope that the whole world just catches fire just to the Holy Spirit because let it be like a day like no other let that day be even today as we go out heavenly father thank you Lord that we have these words that are reliable and true and that through them Lord and through careful study of your word that we can see Lord that you can be dependent upon you sent Jesus Christ to redeem us to save us and in him we find our safety our security we find life itself thank you

Lord that you show up in a big way you still do today Lord because without you we would be nothing we would be facing an eternity without Christ with no hope but because of you Lord we can walk and be encouraged in this life and to experience all the joy you have waiting for us in Christ's name we pray amen