

## Joshua's Four Miracles (Part Two)

Wonders in the Valley of Aijalon

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This is Part Two of my sermon series on Joshua's four miracles. And in Part One, I began with a fairly long introduction explaining my supposition that the conquest of Canaan, led by Joshua, is a second type of our journey of sanctification after our baptism. I posited in that sermon last week—or last Sabbath, actually—that the wilderness wanderings function as one type of journey out of this world to the Kingdom of God.

But Hebrews 3 (we went through that fairly extensively) reveals that for almost all of those people who left slavery in Egypt under Moses, that journey ended in death due to their unbelief and disobedience. And so they never entered the rest. And of course we also found out that even under Joshua they really did not enter the rest either, not the rest that Paul was talking about there in Hebrews 4. And so there still remains a rest for us.

Now, the failure of the slave generation—I think we could call them—who came out of Egypt parallels Jesus' statement in Matthew 7, verses 13 and 14. You are very familiar with these.

**Matthew 7:13-14** "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."

That is very much like the children of Israel coming out of Egypt. Most of them—the many—did not enter into the Kingdom of God, into the Promised Land after that wilderness journey. They ended up dying out there. And I made sure to emphasize that the children of Israel had to act as pretty much grave diggers all the way through their 40 years because that generation had to die off before God let the new generation into the Promised Land.

So the conquest of Canaan provides a contrast, a kind of part two, a kind of do-over. Maybe God showing us a better way to go about reaching the Promised Land or conquering kind of our Christian fight. Because this conquest had as its actors, if you will, a new, more faithful generation of Israelites led by Joshua, who is a very clear type of Christ. They even have the same name, so it is kind of almost a one-on-one thing with the two of them.

The generation of Israelites we saw who were with Joshua were very highly commended by the writer of both Joshua and Judges (whether it was the same person or not I do not know), but in two places it shows very clearly that they followed the Lord as long as Joshua and those elders during that time lived.

After they had passed on and a new generation came up, then Israel started falling away from God. But that generation that entered the Promised Land under Joshua was a very good one among the generations of Israel.

I do want to go to Joshua 11 and concentrate on Joshua for a few minutes. We will just read verse 15. This is a highly complimentary verse about Joshua.

**Joshua 11:15** As the Lord had commanded Moses His servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses.

He was a very, very faithful servant of God. Also, we will go to chapter 24 of Joshua and pick up a little bit about Joshua and this generation that was with him.

**Joshua 24:29-31** Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. Israel served the Lord

all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the Lord which He had done for Israel.

So both Joshua and that generation are given very high marks for their faithfulness and their completion of the things that God had given them to do. Now we do know that they did not finish everything. They did not do it perfectly. And that is what you would expect from a human people. But they did enough that God was fairly pleased—pleased enough to commend them for what they had done.

But Joshua was the exemplar in all of this. He did everything that God had commanded him to do. He was faithful in the same way as Moses, and we could even say faithful as Jesus for that matter. I mean, notice what the book of John says about Jesus in John 6:38. It says this several times. I just picked this one out.

**John 6:38** "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

And we could go to Hebrews and where it is said, quoting a psalm, that He had come to do His will, O God. So we see that the similarity is there—not just in the name, but in the fact that Joshua did God's will just as Jesus later had come to do His will and accomplished it.

And if you think about it, the role of Jesus in His first coming was very much like a conquest as happened in Canaan 1,400 years before—except this time He conquered sin and Satan and this world. He overcame it all. And God was very pleased with what He had done.

Now, all that being said, Joshua is not a perfect type of Christ. It is impossible to be a perfect type of Christ. Only Christ can be perfectly Christ. We realize that Joshua made mistakes, particularly in Joshua 9 in the treaty with the Gibeonites. We will not go through all that. I am just going to assume that you know what happened—that the Gibeonites came, tricked them, making Joshua and the rest of Israel think that they had come from a long way away, and they made this treaty foolishly without consulting God.

So in this, we see Joshua's humanity—that he and Israel, all Israel, nobody saw through it as far as we know, but all of them were fooled by the play-acting and the lying of the Gibeonite ambassadors. It was a really neat trick, if you want to put it that way. I mean, the Gibeonites were only 10 miles away or 15 miles away from Gilgal, and they pulled this off—tricking all those wise people in Israel, making them think that they were from very far away.

In this way, I think we can see Joshua on the one hand—yes, he is a type of Christ—but on the other hand, he stands for human leadership in the church. He can be one that leaders in the church could look up to and take as an example of a faithful servant—one who does his job, does God's will in everything.

But human leaders—even Joshua—they are not perfect. They make plenty of mistakes. Any of you who have been in the church for two weeks or several years know this is true—that leaders in the church make mistakes fairly often. And we can see that our present condition across all the churches of God is a sad testament to the mistakes that have been made. So, you are not going to ever get a perfect leader, and certainly not from me. I know my mistakes, and I do my best to overcome them.

But all the other leaders are just like me. We are all selfish at times. We are obtuse at times. We are ignorant at times. We just make bad mistakes now and again, and we have to learn from them—just as you learn from your mistakes.

I have pulled out four lessons here from Joshua 9 about leaders in the church and something that we need to think about from time to time. And leaders, of course, have to learn these things and overcome them.

The first point I have on this is that human leaders are fallible. They do make mistakes. They are not perfect by any means. Even the best of them slips up on occasion or can be deceived. We do not like to see that. We do not like to be the one that gets run over when that happens or what have you. But it happens.

I have never met a leader in the church who did not make mistakes, and I have never met a good leader in the church who did not own up to them and say that they had. So we just have to understand that the leaders that God chooses are pretty much just as fallible as anybody else.

Second, human leaders sometimes give more credence to outward appearance and slick words than to reality—which is one of the big lessons that Joshua had to learn here. He got fooled. In verses 3 through 13 in Joshua 9, the Gibeonite ambassadors set the Israelites up pretty well. I mean, they dressed in old clothing. They had moldy bread. They had all those things that would convince the Israelites that they had come from a long way.

And they did not really question them enough. They did not investigate and just accepted their story, at face value. I mean, I am sure the Israelites were nice people, and they desired to help these vagabond-looking ambassadors. And they did one of two things: they took things at face value, or they just simply believed what they heard without checking into it.

And human leaders in the church do the same thing. I give them credit for their desire to help and do things well, but oftentimes in the transmission of what happened or what was going on, they take things at face value, or they believe the first person through the door is telling them what is going on. We are told in Proverbs 18:17 that you are not supposed to do that. The first person who gives his case is not to be solely believed. It should be investigated thoroughly.

So that is something that Joshua and the elders of Israel did not do. And clearly this was to their detriment. It was a huge error.

Third, human leaders sometimes fail to seek God on significant matters. God points this out in Joshua 9:14. This was the big problem. This was something that Joshua especially should have done. He should have immediately taken it to God, like Moses seemed to have always done. But he did not.

This happens in leadership more when a leader has been on the job for a while and the leader is accustomed to making quick decisions. And so somebody brings something to him, and he decides on it—makes a

decision—before he consults God on the matter. And so the error, then, happens and that is a bad thing. I mean, it is making decisions before you get all the facts again. This time, you are going to God for the facts and for His advice on the matter—maybe inspiration to show us a scripture, or at least to take some time to look into it.

So this is a black mark on Joshua at this point that he did not consult God. Clearly he did not do this again. But it is something that the leaders in the church need to keep at the forefront of their minds: in any situation, one consults God first.

Fourth—and this is kind of the saddest one of all—the human leaders and the congregation must live with the consequences of their bad decisions. This is in Joshua 9:18-27. They had made an oath to the Gibeonites. They had made a treaty with them, saying that they would be their servants. And then they found out that they had been hoodwinked. But because they had made the oath, they would not go back on it. Which was worse: going back on the oath or just living with it?

And the best thing to do—because God is a God of covenants—they said, we will not go back on this oath. We will go ahead and take the consequences of this decision. And in this case—and in other cases in which human leaders make bad decisions in the church—the consequences can last for generations. And in this case with the Gibeonites, it lasted almost 1,000 years. You could say that it at least lasted through the conquest—had repercussions which we will see—but it lasted all the way through David's reign and down, I guess we could say, all the way to the fall of Jerusalem, when basically that covenant went kaput because both the Gibeonites and the Jews—the Israelites—were gone as nations.

I mean, good on Israel that they kept the oath. But it did come back to bite them. Because after somebody makes a mistake, God does not just wave a wand and it all goes away. He makes us live with the consequences of our decisions and uses them then to correct us and train us. He wants us to learn from our mistakes, not to have Daddy come and make everything better. So, He made Joshua and Israel—and Israel for many generations—live under this covenant with the Gibeonites. And it keeps coming back up through Israelite history that the Gibeonites ended up being a bit of a thorn in their

side. They were one of the nations that they were supposed to kick out. But because of this trick, they could not.

So to wrap all this up: until Christ returns, we will not have a leader over us on earth who does not make errors in judgment, big or small. And we are all very far from the character of Jesus Christ, and we all have growth to do as we serve God. And sometimes we make mistakes.

We just have to make sure that we sincerely try our best to do what is right and to ask the questions, make the investigations, and, of course, most of all consult God on how these things should be handled. I do want to note here that one error—even a big one like the kind that Joshua made—did not disqualify him. God knows that we have feet of clay—that we are very human, carnal. We make bad decisions.

Even though it was a black mark and it complicated things, God, however, is not so petty that He would cast a faithful servant away for a single mistake. I mean, if you look at Joshua's resume, a single error is on one side of the ledger, and a full resume of faithful accomplishments is on the other. So I would say that his record is pretty good. This one in Joshua 9 stands out, but it was not enough, as I said, to disqualify him. God did not come down and say, "Joshua, you're dead. I'm raising Caleb up to your position." No, He did not do that. He said, "Okay, Joshua, you live with this." And that is what happened.

And Joshua 9 then is a bridge, you might say, to what we are going to see in Joshua 10. So as I said, this is Part Two of my sermon on the four miracles in Joshua. And my aim in all this (just in case you did not know) is to highlight what God is willing to do to aid us in our Christian fight. He will go above and beyond. And if we look at the conquest in terms of our Christian fight—our desire to go through life and conquer and prevail over all the obstacles that come against us so that we could be made more like Christ—then I think that these miracles will be helpful to you to boost your faith.

Let me just do a quick summary of the first two miracles because we are on the last two, and I think we need a running start for the first two.

The first two miracles that we saw last Sabbath were the crossing of the Jordan and the fall of Jericho. They taught particular lessons about the lengths God is willing to go through to help His people.

Now the first miracle, the crossing of the Jordan, represents God's providence in commencing their conquest of the Promised Land. God did everything for them to cross over from the land of Jordan—over the Jordan River—into Canaan. And then they camped at Gilgal. But all along the way He was showing them some very specific things, and there were four of them. I will just go through this quickly.

The first was He taught them—by exalting Joshua as their leader—that he was God's choice after Moses. So all of that happened—all the crossing of the Jordan happened—and it seemed to be from everybody watching that Joshua was the one that was leading it. And this made a great impression on the people of Israel that Joshua was indeed their new Moses. Just like Moses led Israel across the Red Sea, Joshua led this next generation of Israel across the Jordan.

The second one: He assured Israel that God was with them. What else would a great wall of water 19 miles away and dry land under your feet as you cross the river going to show than that God was there and He was working for them?

And if He would do this spectacular miracle, He would certainly drive out their enemies. He has the power to do that. He can do this too.

And that kind of bleeds into number three, which is to witness God's might in the world. They needed to see it. And the people of Jericho and the rest of the Canaanites—and all those people up the river who no longer had water in the river—needed to see that God was sovereign, and He was mighty. And He would bring His people into the land, and everything that had been predicted about Israel coming into the land of Canaan and taking possession of it would come to pass because they had a sovereign, mighty God who could work it all out.

The fourth one then follows from the third one. And that is, by knowing that you have such a God, you would learn to fear God forever—that this was a God who was worthy of worship and all respect. If He could do these things and is willing to provide everything for His people, then He is one to fear.

All of those are spiritually applicable to our own lives and they are especially necessary at the beginning of our conversion. Obviously going through the Red Sea, going through the Jordan are types of baptism. And they come out of the waters, as it were, a new people.

It is the same for us: we come out of the waters of baptism with new life—our past sins forgiven—and we start trying to live the life of Christ, trying to put off the old man and put on the new. And all of these things—knowing that Jesus is our leader, being assured that God is with us, having God's witness of being mighty and miraculous and helpful to us—would make us want to fear God forever and follow His way.

So these are very important lessons that we should learn right at the beginning of our conversion.

Now, the second miracle in Joshua is the fall of Jericho. And I attached to this Achan's subsequent covetousness. This miracle features multiple repetitions of divine instruction. If you go through Joshua 6, you see that what they are supposed to do is repeated over and over again. And then it told us what they did and all that. So we keep getting more and more repetitions of this is the way Jericho would fall. And it was going to fall that way because the Israelites did certain things for seven days, and they did them to a T.

Then of course at the end of one of these sets of instructions is the stern warning against taking anything from Jericho—that the things in Jericho, everything, was devoted to God. And so that meant the people were to be killed, all the animals were to be killed. The only things that were to be taken were the metals—gold, silver, and some of the other metals—but they were to be used in the Tabernacle. They were for God's treasury, not for anybody

else. They were devoted things. So everything else was doomed to destruction. And then there were certain devoted things that were supposed to be taken by the Levites.

So this miracle provides two lessons. The first is obey God carefully: take down, study, follow to a T, as I mentioned, everything God says. Another way we could put it is in terms of Jesus Christ: follow in His footsteps exactly. And the result, if we obey Him—if we hear His voice and do what He says—is that He will fight our battles for us. No matter how strong the fortress is, how long it could hold out against us, if we do what He says, He is going to come through and give us the victory.

But He also warns us that we are not supposed to take anything out of this world. I have it here in my notes—do not secretly, hypocritically take to yourself the enemy's things: its ideas, its behaviors. God wants a holy nation. And He does not want them contaminated by the things that are in the world. And those things He has doomed to destruction. They are not going to last. Why take them to yourself and hide them under your tent if God is just going to destroy them? They will do us no good.

And the story of Achan shows us that when we do take the things that are doomed to destruction to ourselves, then they tend to undermine both ourselves and those around us. It gets into an idea that the contamination of sin spreads—that it does not just stop with the person who is covetous or a thief or a murderer or a liar or whatever. These things begin to affect not only themselves but their spouses, their children. And as we see in the example of Achan, his whole family was put to death because of his sin. God did not want the contamination to spread any further.

So we need to be very aware of what we take from this world and incorporate into our lives—that would be the culture, the things, the ideas, the philosophies of this world. We need to put them through their paces to find out if they actually do have anything profitable. And ultimately they probably will not.

Let us get to the third one. This is new stuff. We have finished the review.

Let us read Joshua 10, verses 1 through 11. This is the third miracle, which is of the hailstones falling from heaven. I know my New King James says the sun stands still here above 10:1, but actually that does not happen until verse 12 and beyond.

**Joshua 10:1-6** 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, 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. 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, "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." Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, 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. 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."

So here we are beginning to see the first time when this treaty with Gibeon has made a problem.

**Joshua 10:7** So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor.

Let me just give you a little lay of the land here. Gilgal is in the north of the Dead Sea and west of the Jordan River. And there is a fairly steep way—road passage, whatever—up from Gilgal to Gibeon, and you gotta go up. I do not know if you remember from Jericho: you had to go a really quick elevation to get up into the mountainous area. And Gibeon was about 15 miles to the west of Gilgal—but you had to go up and around to get to it. It

was not a straight shot. It was not just a paved highway there. They had to lug all their equipment and everything up a pretty steep incline and go over to the west and a little bit south to get to Gibeon. So it was not an easy thing to do. It was pretty much the same road that the man who was taken by robbers and beaten up had to take when the Good Samaritan came around.

**Joshua 10:8-9** 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." Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly, having marched all night from Gilgal.

So it was a surprise attack. They were not expecting a large army from Gilgal to reach them for some time, but Joshua said, "Hey, the Lord's with us. Let's go!" And so they marched through the night to get there by early morning. The idea was that if they would get there at sunrise, they would have the sun behind them, and they would be attacking down into a blinded Amorite force.

**Joshua 10:10** 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.

Now we need to explain this. There are two places: just to the west of Gilgal, which is called Upper Beth Horon, and then a little further west there is Lower Beth Horon. Upper Beth Horon and Lower Beth Horon were connected by a mountain pass—narrow and very treacherous because it was a quick descent: the pass of Beth Horon. And this is where the Israelite army drove the Amorites. Now he mentions Azekah and Makkedah. Azekah and Makkedah were basically—on a map, you would see that it is probably about 14 or 15 miles south of Lower Beth Horon, maybe a little bit west. But to get to it, you had to go down the pass of Beth Horon and then around to get to Azekah and Makkedah. So the full length from Gibeon to Azekah and Makkedah was about 20 miles because they had to go in this roundabout way. And the first part, down the descent of Beth Horon—was very steep and treacherous. And then you were going through the valley of Aijalon. That is why it was so roundabout—because you were following the valley of Aijalon, which was the easier route than going up into the highlands around there.

So obviously, as an army is being chased from behind they will take the path of least resistance, and that is what they did. They went down the valley of Aijalon all the way as far as Azekah and Makkedah. Azekah, by the way, is the southernmost of those two cities. They would get to Makkedah first before they got to Azekah.

I am setting up actually not just this particular miracle, but also the miracle of the sun standing still because they both take place on this day. Actually, we could say that they are happening concurrently. They are not one miracle. There are two distinct miracles. And we will see that in a minute.

We are still reading here—one more verse.

**Joshua 10:11** 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 those whom the children of Israel killed with the sword.

Now you can kind of picture in your mind what is going on here. But before we get into that, I want you to understand what is going on here—and especially in the second miracle: the fall of Jericho; this miracle: the hailstones; and then the final one: the sun standing still. They are all connected.

So this third miracle has a connection to the second miracle, and it kind of acts as a bridge to the fourth miracle. But they are all connected. All the final three miracles have a similar theme. And it is very important to you because this is talking about our Christian fight, remember? The theme is God Himself defeated Israel's enemies. And in the same way we can say God Himself defeats our enemies. This is just three different ways it happens.

Now they have three distinct lessons we are to learn from them. But one of the overall lessons is that God is a divine warrior. Is that not how He sets Himself up in this book? Before they take Jericho, what happens? We did not go over it, but the Commander of the Lord's armies appears to Joshua and says, "Take off your shoes, for this is holy ground." Who is that? The

one who fights for Israel? Obviously, it is Yahweh—it is Jesus Christ in His Old Testament form. And He is telling Joshua by appearing before him: "Look, I'm the One that's the true leader here. Follow Me. I will fight your battles for you. My armies are ready."

So the three miracles that happen after that are these manifestations of God—of Yahweh—as the divine warrior for His people.

So in Joshua 6, when we saw the fall of Jericho, the lesson we learned was follow God's instructions explicitly. That is what you do when you have a great general. If you want to win, you follow the general's instructions to a T. You do not deviate from what his commands are.

And we will get into what the lessons are in these last two. But the lessons overall deal with God's judgment of the wicked. That is what the Canaanites represent: the wicked, the wicked things that we encounter, the godless things that we encounter throughout our Christian fight.

Now the money verses, if you will, for this passage are verses 10 and 11—and particularly phrases in them that point this fact out: that God is our warrior, and He will fight our battles. That is in verse 10: it says "the Lord routed them before Israel." And in verse 11, it says "the Lord cast down large hailstones from heaven, . . . and they died. . . . more died from the hailstones than with the sword."

So God's weapon—the hailstones—did more damage than the swords of the Israelite soldiers. He was the one that took the foremost part of this attack on the Canaanites. He led the warriors down the line and down Beth Horon. And He was the one that dropped all the hailstones on the Amorites.

These two phrases in these two verses make the statement that the victory at Gibeon and along the road is overwhelmingly God's. Yes, the Israelites participated, but God did the damage. God did the fighting. I mean, Joshua may have led the warriors and the mighty men of valor, but God's presence and God's actions were the main source of victory.

Now, why? It is always a good question to ask, why. We have a bit of trail to follow on this one, but it is an interesting trail to follow to get an answer.

And we have to start at the beginning, in Genesis 3, verses 14 and 15. Now, of course, this is the first prophecy. This is the curse on the serpent that we are talking about. But I want you to pick up an idea from this.

**Genesis 3:14-15** So the Lord God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this [you have deceived the woman and caused Adam to sin], you are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

You may not see it here, but the reason you may not see it is because bruise is a bad translation here. It is better as crush. The word means to compress, a downward pressing motion, like you would crush an olive in a mill or grapes or that sort of thing, or just to apply a lot of pressure so that whatever you are applying it to goes splat. That is the idea of this Hebrew word. I know that was really colorful, right?

And the serpent of course stands not just for Satan but also for those who follow him—all his legions, all his minions, all the wicked, the sinners, the law-breakers, the evil men—those who come under God's judgment because of disobedience and lack of repentance. Remember, Paul says very simply in Romans 6:23 that "the wages of sin is death." Those who sin and will not repent deserve to be crushed—just like Satan the Devil.

So in the prophecy here, God will ultimately crush the head of Satan, as He will all those who refuse to repent. That is it. You find that in Revelation 20. They are, if you want to use the term from Joshua 6, doomed to destruction for their opposition to God and His ways and His people—unless they repent.

And, will they or will they not? Right now it looks like there will be very little of that among those who are minions of Satan. It does say we will judge angels. I do not know what that means, but it seems like there will be some that go into the Lake of Fire—maybe many. I do not know. God has not told us.

Let us go to Genesis 15. Just take from Genesis 3:15 that there is a coming judgment on those who are sinners, and God will crush their heads. Verse 12 and we will go all the way to 21. This is God's covenant with Abraham.

**Genesis 15:12-21** And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and a great darkness fell upon him. [Horror and great darkness give us an indication of sin and wickedness and terrible things.] Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge [He did that in the exodus]; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." [Hmm, same people that are in Joshua 10.] And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there was a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. [This was God accepting the covenant.] On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites [again], the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

Interesting—the Jebusites also were in this. They were the people of Jerusalem. By the way, in Joshua 10 was the first mention of Jerusalem as Jerusalem in the Bible. Before it had just been called Salem. I believe it is the same place when Abram met Melchizedek at Salem.

Many years before, 400-plus years before, the Canaanites had gotten God's attention for their iniquities. And by Abraham's day He was saying, "These guys are horrible. They need to be judged." But He gave them 400 years to get their act together. But they did not. They obviously failed.

They continued to be idolaters and, as President Trump would say, "Just bad people. They are bad people." And the children of Israel—after being in

Egypt for 400 years and having four generations of them in slavery—would come up out of Egypt, released by God, and they would conquer the Canaanites' land as a major part—listen to this—of God's judgment on the Amorites. He was punishing the wickedness of the Amorites through the conquest of Canaan. That was part of the reason—a good part, a major part of the reason He was doing this through Joshua. He was trying to clear the land of the Amorites and all their sinful things so that it would not affect His people.

So the battle at Gibeon—down Beth Horon all the way down to Azekah—was an act of divine judgment on the Amorites. God took the lead. He used His people Israel. He had purposes for doing that, but He was the one that was out in front executing judgment on the Amorites because of their wickedness.

Let us go to Habakkuk. I am going to go there quickly and start speaking before you can get there. Just kidding. That is right before Zephaniah. Habakkuk 3, verses 11 through 14. This is part of Habakkuk's prayer to God. He saw Babylon coming, and he knew it was a terrible thing because these Babylonians were the worst of the heathen. And it reminded him of God's judgment upon the Amorites at Gibeon. And so he makes this part of his prayer: God, please do what You did at Gibeon. It did not happen that way. But this was on his mind.

**Habakkuk 3:11-14** The sun and moon stood still in their habitation; at the light of Your arrows they went, at the shining of Your glittering spear. [Notice this, all these Yous] You marched through the land in indignation; You trampled the nations in anger. You went forth for the salvation of Your people, for salvation with Your Anointed. You struck the head from the house of the wicked, by laying bare from foundation to neck. You thrust through with his own arrows the head of his villages. They came out like a whirlwind to scatter me; their rejoicing was like feasting on the poor in secret.

The word struck in verse 13 is *machats*, and you know what it means? To smash, to beat to pieces, to crush, to scatter, or shatter. It is a synonym of the word that was used for bruise (should be crush) in Genesis 3:15.

This section in Habakkuk is undoubtedly a reflection on what God did in Joshua 10. And the prophet shows God as a warrior leading soldiers to execute judgment—marching through the land in His wrath and trampling the nations in His anger. So these verses, or these phrases, express God's judgment, delivering His people with a great victory over the iniquitous Canaanites—specifically these Amorites. And He did this by crushing the heads of the Amorite soldiers with large hailstones—literal, is He not? He took them from His own arsenal.

I did a little study on hailstones while I was going through this. They are all over the place. He must have a huge arsenal of hailstones just ready to go at any moment. I am going to give you these verses. I do not know if you will write them all down, but just be aghast at how often this is mentioned: Exodus 9:18-26—there was a plague; Job 38:22-23; Isaiah 28:2; Isaiah 30:30; Ezekiel 38:22; and Revelation is full of it—Revelation 8:7, Revelation 11:19, and Revelation 16:21. They are all verses or passages that talk about God using hailstones as a means of judgment to crush the heads of the wicked.

Now, what does this teach us? Well, it teaches us a very simple principle: God will judge the wicked. You know, a lot of us have this refrain that goes through their mind a lot, like Asaph in Psalm 73: Why do the wicked prosper? Why do they get away with things? Why do they go to their deaths in peace? Why do they have so much? Why do they enjoy all these things that life can offer? And poor little old me has nothing.

Well, this is the answer: God will crush the head of the wicked. It is a firm promise. We do not need to think that He will fail in that. When we are in contention with any kind of evil forces, God will either crush them Himself—when the time is right, with no help from us, or while we are standing strong in faith and obedience against them, He will take the lead in bringing judgment upon them. That is what He did in Joshua 10. His people were willing to do the work, but God took the lead and did the major work of judgment.

So this is something that we should consider and take as a caution: that we should not take it upon ourselves to judge the wicked. That is God's

prerogative. It is God's job. No good will come of taking God's prerogative from Him. He is the Judge of the living and the dead—not us. As the apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:10-13, our job is to stand, "and when you've done all, to stand." Do not give up ground. That is not what we are talking about here. You need to be righteous and firm, but let God do the judging. You do not need to do it for Him.

Let us go on to Joshua's long day back in Joshua 10. We will just read three verses here, 12 through 14. I am going to read one word here, "Then." This is one of those tricky Hebrew particles. It is supposed to give us the idea of something happening. Maybe not *next*, but it kind of tells us that there is a time.

We could actually even translate this "at that time." Or we could translate it "then." But what it is showing here was specifically that this in verses 12 to 14 was happening concurrently with what was happening in 9 through 11. And we do not know exactly which time it actually occurred. You know, we cannot say that Joshua did this as soon as he arrived in Gibeon, or whether it was a little bit later as the battle progressed. We do not know. But I think we are supposed to see them concurrently.

**Joshua 10:12-14** Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel [See, even that statement is very broad. It was just in that day—the same day. So we do not know exactly where to place it.], and he said [I should also explain here that that word he could be He—capital H-e. It is a little bit uncertain in the Hebrew whether it was Joshua that actually was saying this or God. I actually like it a little bit more if it is God.] in the sight of Israel: "Sun, stand still over Gibeon; and Moon, in the valley of Aijalon." 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. 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.

Now commentators spill copious amounts of ink and waste a lot of time trying to explain this miracle using reason. They seem to forget what miracles are—because by definition, miracles are inexplicable by human means or through human reason. We just have to accept the simple fact that we do not know how this was accomplished.

It seems impossible that God would stop the earth from spinning and allow the sun to shine. I mean, what would it do to the earth if the sun was shining on one part for a day and not spinning away from that? I do not know. I am just thinking there is a lot of ideas here that you would have to sift through to get any idea of how this was done.

And commentators for centuries—millennia now—have kind of thrown up their hands and said we do not know what happened here. The text is too sparse. It contains no explanation of the astronomical or chronological means by which it occurred. So I am telling you right now, I do not know.

It only gives bare facts: God did something to prolong the day for the Israelite army to achieve total victory. In fact, the text itself says this day was unique: no day before, no day after it has been like this. We do not know how God did it. But this extension of daylight was necessary because of that route from Gibeon through the pass of Beth Horon and down through the valley of Aijalon to Azekah was about 20 miles.

It is tough as a soldier with gear and all that to hike 20 miles in daylight. I mean, that is a good pace. You know, sunup to sundown, 12 hours you are fighting in front of Gibeon, and then the army flees. And who knows how long it is? I mean, it is like running most of a marathon to Azekah from Gibeon.

And Joshua looked at that and said, "God, we need more time." Now, he was a good general because he understood that the armies of the five kings were all there at once. And if they could accomplish a complete victory over those five kings and their armies, they would actually conquer most of the south where Judah was eventually ensconced there in southern Israel, with just one

battle. They would not have to go down because if they let them go, they could get into their fortifications, and they would have to besiege all five cities.

Now they did not take Jerusalem—that was a Jebusite city for a long time until David's day—but they did take all the other cities because they were not defended because all the soldiers died along the way through the pass of Beth Horon and down the valley of Aijalon.

So that is what Joshua saw. He saw that if they could defeat them that day, it would be a strategic victory to help them secure the whole south of the land of Canaan. And so that is why he cried to God and said, "You gotta do this for us. You gotta give us more time somehow." And God says—as I interpret it here—that He made the sun stand still and the moon stand still in the valley of Aijalon.

So what he asked for was time. And what he got was time. Of course, they had to go down to Azekah to make good on all this. But it worked. God did something to make it happen. I do not know what it is.

Now the big point—as in the text—is that "the Lord fought for Israel." That is what it is. It says at the end of verse 14: "for the Lord fought for Israel." And that had been the case in Jericho and at Gibeon and now in this pursuit down to Azekah.

Like I said earlier, these are three different occasions—each set off with a miracle. The first one was at Jericho, and God showed His people that He could defeat a fortified city through a siege—weirdest siege ever, but He did it. He made the walls come down flat.

At the descent of Beth Horon, it was a running battle, from Gibeon all the way down to Azekah. And this one—the sun's standing still—it is the same battle, but the object is a complete victory. So there was a siege, a pursuit, and complete victory. And God showed Himself strong in each one of those situations.

You could say that the final one was a finishing action or a mop-up in which a great victory was achieved. And they made a big step in conquering the

land of what became known as the land of Judah. So the emphasis in the text, however, is on two points, and I want to give those.

1. Joshua prayed. It does not use the word pray, but it does say that Joshua spoke to the Lord. Joshua prayed for God to help and He responded extravagantly to his plea. And the sun and the moon stood still—at least that is how it appeared to those who were there that day.

Obviously, the lesson here is that God hears and answers human prayer. He provides what we need to overcome—and in this case to completely overcome. It may have seemed astounding to the author of Joshua that God would listen to the voice of a human being and react so miraculously, because it is a wonder: why would the God of the universe listen to us? David said later, "What is man that You are mindful of him?" So it is a wonder.

But the story shows God's willingness to provide for us. All we have to do is ask. The great God of all the universe is willing to listen to puny men and women and give them what they ask for—as long as the reasons are good and it is good for them.

2. The emphasis is that God's response to Joshua was a gift of light to extend time. His response was a gift of light to extend the time—the time required to overcome the enemy. In Joshua's day, in that situation, time was necessary to accomplish the rout of the Amorite armies.

Now in our day, God often supplies what light represents. He does not extend our day—you know, I needed to get this report done at work, so please stop the sun and the moon. No, that is silly. God supplies what light represents: knowledge, understanding, wisdom, insight, revelation. Or it may be additional faith in Christ, who is the true Light. He certainly provides that light to us in spades—the example of Jesus Christ.

In any case, He supplies what we need to overcome the obstacles that stand in the way of winning our battle against sin and our development in God's way of life and in the mind of Christ. He wants to help us in every way, and

so He is going to shower us with light—whether that is knowledge, revelation, or with extra time as He did here. Remember what Paul said in I Corinthians 10:13? We ought to go there.

**I Corinthians 10:13** No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

He is willing to give you whatever it takes to win that confrontation, to win against that temptation—to provide you a way of faithful escape from that temptation for you to bear it and overcome it. We just need to believe Him that He will provide us when we ask. And we *should* believe it. We have the promise from our general, Jesus Christ, that He will do this.

As a matter of fact, He mentions it three times in His final message to His disciples at the Last Supper. Let us go there. I want to read all three of these. They are not very long, but they should give us great faith.

**John 14:12-14** "Most assuredly, I say to you [verily, verily I say to you, truly, truly—He is not telling us a lie. He is saying this is absolutely real, I will do this.], he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will also do; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."

**John 15:7-8** "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

The implication here is that He gives us these things so that we can bear fruit.

**John 15:16** "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you."

**John 16:23-24** "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

**John 16:26** "In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God."

This threefold promise during His final message to His disciples still stands for God's elect. It is wide open. He says, whatever you ask—and ask what you desire in Jesus' name—and it will be done for you. In what He says here, the only qualifications are that we abide in Him and in His word.

He wants us to win the Christian fight and is more than willing to give us whatever we need—whatever we ask—to make that happen. The awesome miracle in the valley of Aijalon is proof that He will—maybe *literally*—move heaven and earth to give His people the victory.

Let us go to Romans 8, verse 26. Our conquest is not of a land of antagonistic Canaanites, but of our sinful nature. And it is a grueling battle every day to put the flesh to death and put on God's righteousness—to become as best we can the new man like Jesus Christ, put on the mind of Christ.

God shows us in the miracles of Joshua that He is with us in the same way. He is in us by His Spirit, and He provides what we need.

**Romans 8:26-30** Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

He is telling us this is the way that it is going to go. And if you are on the same mission that He has put down for us to do, this is the way it is going to be. And He is going to see us all the way through. And so Paul says,

**Romans 8:31-39** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us [if we are going along on the plan, His purpose for us], who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So He is with us all the way along the track that we need to run. And He provides for us. He gives us instruction. He beats down our enemies. And He answers our request for help with awesome, miraculous gifts in intervening for us when we just need a little bit extra.

I do want to finish in Joshua 21, verses 43 through 45.

**Joshua 21:43-45** So the Lord gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. The Lord gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.

Knowing this, we—like Joshua—can leave nothing undone of all that the Lord commands us. Go forward. Conquer.