

Sermon Outline

“AND THE LORD GAVE THEM REST”: A CHRISTIAN READING OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

GOD OUR WARRIOR FATHER (JOSHUA 10:6-15)

I. Introduction

II. The War on Gibeon

- A. By making peace with Israel, the Gibeonites had turned their backs on their fellow Canaanites.
- B. King Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem initiated this campaign because he was afraid of Gibeon’s military strength (Josh 10:2).
- C. 10:5: “Then the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, gathered their forces and went up with all their armies and encamped against Gibeon and made war against it.”
- D. We have here is a picture of spiritual warfare—believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will find themselves oppressed by the powers of evil through all kinds of means, everything from common temptation to outright military persecution.

***Question for reflection:** (1) Who waged war on the Gibeonites? (2) Why was war being waged on the Gibeonites?

III. Gibeon Calls on Israel for Help (Josh 10:6)

- A. God has different intentions for our suffering.
 - 1. While Satan makes us suffer to wear us down, God allows such suffering precisely in order that there would be a context for him to act.
 - 2. God allows suffering to enter our lives so that we can feel our need for him.
 - 3. The normal Christian life is *not* necessarily one of uninterrupted happiness—instead, we *should* expect struggle.
- B. Gibeon calls to the people of God for help.
—In so doing, they are indirectly calling upon the Lord God of Israel for his aid: “And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, saying, ‘Do not relax your hand from your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the hill country are gathered against us.’”

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is God’s intention in our suffering? (2) “The normal Christian life is *not* necessarily one of an uninterrupted sense of fulfilment or happiness—instead, we *should* expect struggle.” (3) How does Gibeon respond to the enemy threat?

IV. Joshua Answers the Call (Josh 10:7, 8)

- A. True to his earlier promise, Joshua answers the call of his servants: “So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor” (v 7).
- B. Regardless of how strong the soldiers of Israel were, victory belongs to the Lord.
 - 1. Just before Joshua sends the soldiers into battle, the Lord speaks to Joshua once again: “And the LORD said to Joshua, ‘Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you.’”
 - 2. Israel does not need to be afraid, because the Lord is with Israel—and the Lord will give all of Israel’s enemies into their hands.
—This is the gospel in the book of Joshua!
- C. Where are you discouraged today? Where is the adversary assaulting your faith today?
 - 1. God’s promise to you is the same: “‘Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you’” (v 8).
 - 2. This promise appears in another form in Romans 16:20: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”
 - 3. Abba has not changed—he is still the Warrior Father of his Church!
—Romans 10:13: “For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How does Joshua respond to the call of the Gibeonites? (2) What is the gospel in the book of Joshua? (3) Where are you discouraged today? Where do you feel the enemy is trying to break you down?

V. Israel Strikes the Enemy (Josh 10:9, 10)

- A. Encouraged by the Father, Joshua leads Israel into battle to keep the promise that they had made to Gibeon.
- B. “So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal” (v 9).
- C. “And the LORD threw them into a panic before Israel, who struck them with a great blow at Gibeon and chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah” (v 10)
- D. Just as Israel kept their promise to Gibeon, the Lord keeps his promise to Israel.
 - 1. The Lord fights for his people.
 - 2. The Lord throws the Amorite armies into a panic.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does the Lord do to the Amorites?

VI. Heavy Heavenly Artillery (Josh 10:11)

- A. Those Amorites who ran away are about to realize that heaven itself fights for Israel!
—“And as they fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Beth-horon, the Lord threw down large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died.”
- B. The Scripture adds, “There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword.”
—This tells us that the majority of the victory was won by God alone, without Israel’s help.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does the Lord do to the Amorites? (2) Were there more or less Amorites who died by the hailstones than the sword of Israel? What does this tell us about the Lord’s ability to fight his own battles?

VII. The Whole Cosmos Belongs to God (Josh 10:12, 13)

- A. In verse 12: “At that time Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, ‘Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.’”
1. Now, the Lord God of Israel demonstrates that he not only has mastery over the hail stones.
 2. He has mastery over all the earth itself.
 3. Joshua prayed that God would cause the sun and moon to stand still where they are.
- B. Joshua is using the language of *appearance* in his prayer.
1. Yes, the sun does not move around the earth.
 2. But Joshua was using the common idiom of the day.
 3. In those days, as it is today, people talk about the sun rising and setting.
 4. When people talk like that, they don’t necessarily mean that the sun actually moves.
 5. They are speaking from how things appear to them.
 6. Joshua is speaking in this common, ordinary way, using the *language of appearance* in his prayer.
- C. The more important point is what actually happens as a response to Joshua’s prayer. —“And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies” (v 13).
1. God (somehow) suspends the laws of creation for his people until they have defeated their enemies.
 2. This is a miracle on a similar scale to the parting of the Red Sea.
 3. Back there, God suspended the laws of nature over the waters.
 4. Now, God suspends the passage of time, to allow for the sun to continue shining so that the Israelite soldiers could finish off the enemy.
 5. By this, God signals that he has power over the whole creation.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does Joshua pray that God would do? (2) How does God respond to Joshua’s prayer?

VIII. God Beyond Our Minds

- A. This is one of those occasions in Scripture where we are actively called to put our faith in God’s Word.
1. Some read of God’s act in Joshua 10 and say that such a thing cannot possibly happen.
 2. But this is where we need to ask ourselves: “How do we know that this miracle could not possibly have happened?”
 3. One of the key arguments against miracles is that they don’t usually happen or that they are scientifically impossible.
 4. But that argument doesn’t prove much because that’s precisely what miracles are—*they are highly unusual, spectacular phenomena that override all known natural laws.*
 5. Miracles occur when God overrides the laws of nature which he himself set in place in order to achieve an event that calls attention to himself.
 6. Miracles are miracles precisely because they are unusual.
 7. Therefore, to say that the miracle in Joshua 10 couldn’t possibly have happened because it is “unusual,” “improbable,” or “impossible” really misses the point, precisely because miracles are when God shows that he alone can do the impossible.
- B. What is at the *heart* of this sort of unbelief?
1. Our unbelief is a symptom of our tendency to question God’s wisdom and then reject his rule over our lives (if we are unbelievers) or at least particular parts of our lives (if we are already Christians).
 2. This is important for students to know.
 - a. Atheist writers, scholars, and teachers question God’s works not because they were actually there to know for certain that the event did not happen (!)—They question because they have *chosen* to disbelieve.
 - b. They have chosen to disbelieve because they think that their puny human minds can decide what Ultimate Reality is.
 - c. So the issue is not first and foremost an issue of proof—it’s an issue of commitment.
 - d. Unbelievers will not accept the miracle in Joshua 10 or any miracle for that matter because they have essentially committed themselves to a position of perpetual skepticism.
 3. Since we are the children of God, our heavenly Father does not want us to begin with our minds but with the Word of God and with the mind of Christ.
—The mind of Christ is a mind of obedient acceptance of God’s Word.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Why do some people think that the miracle in Joshua 10 couldn't possibly have happened? (2) One of the key arguments that people raise is that these things don't usually happen and that they are scientifically impossible. Why does this argument not prove anything? What is the nature of a miracle? (3) What is at the *heart* of this sort of unbelief? (4) What is the antidote to this unbelief?

IX. A Matter of Historical Reliability (Josh 10:13)

- A. In the next verse, we read: "Is this not written in the Book of Jashar?"
- B. This Book of Jashar is a reference to a historical record, which Joshua or some other compiler of the book relied on to write the narrative.
- C. The fact that a reference is made to a historical record shows that the author of Joshua had no problem with later generations seeking to verify what had actually happened.
- D. Seeking to verify that a particular miracle happened is not the same as disbelieving in the reality of miracles.
 - 1. Verification is part of discernment, a duty which God has entrusted to his maturing children (cf. Rom 12:2; 1 Jn 4:1).
 - 2. On the one hand, we should not be like the secularists who...
 - a. deny that God can act in such ways
 - b. arrogantly decide *how* God must act in order for us to be convinced.
 - 3. On the other hand, we should not be gullible either, believing every story about miracles that we hear.
—The Lord Jesus teaches that Satan can perform seemingly miraculous acts to deceive people and turn them away from the one true God.
- E. In this case, if the original readers of Joshua would consult this book of Jashar, they would learn that such an event really did happen that day: The sun really did appear to stop in the skies "for about a whole day."
 - 1. How God did this miracle, we don't know.
 - 2. We do know that he did it and that is all that really matters for us.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is the significance of the mention of the Book of Jashar? What does that tell of the historical reliability of the book of Joshua? (2) What would the original readers of Joshua have learned if they consulted the Book of Jashar?

X. The Lord Heeded the Voice of His Prophet Joshua (Josh 10:14)

- A. The main lesson of this event seems to revolved around verse 14: “There has been no day like it before or since, *when the LORD heeded the voice of a man*, for the LORD fought for Israel.”
- B. This seems to be the main lesson that the Scripture wants us to heed.
1. David M. Howard: “The sun and moon ‘obeyed’ God’s commands, and, remarkably, God ‘obeyed’ a man’s request (v 14)” (*Joshua*, 249).
 2. God was not obligated to do anything that Joshua asked (or demanded?).
 3. The fact that he performed as Joshua said is remarkable.
 4. At the very least, this affirms to us that God is free to do whatever he wishes.
—God can agree to our requests if he wishes, even the bold ones.
He certainly did that in this case.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What seems to be the main lesson in the miracle account in Joshua 10? (2)

XI. The Lord Heeds the Prayer of His Son Jesus Christ (Jn 17:20-26)

What assurance do I have that God will be our Protector Father, our Defender King forever? What assurance do I have that God will keep me to the end? My assurance does not rest only on how God reveals himself in Joshua 10. And it is not just that I have this prayer of Joshua. I am assured that God will continue to keep me and fight for me because Jesus himself asked God to do those things for us. Jesus’ prayer will always be answered, because he is the perfect Son of God who always prays according to God’s will.

²⁰ “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.²⁵ O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me.²⁶ I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does Joshua’s prayer anticipate? (2) What assurance do we have that God will continue to be our Father and Defender King? (3) Will you receive Jesus’ prayer for yourself? (You do that by resting your whole life on it.)