

Sunday Night Message

February 4, 2018

Joshua 10 – *The Longest Day*

Series – Joshua

Text – Joshua 10

Introduction

After the Israelites made peace with the Gibeonites, the other cities nearby joined forces to attack the City of Gibeon, and because the Israelites had made a covenant with the Gibeonites, they were obligated to go and help them. The battle that took place that day, and in the following days provided an opportunity for Israel to destroy and take many cities within the land of Canaan. These battles were known as the Joshua's Southern Campaign. This war was predominantly with Amorites. (see Genesis 15:12 – 16)

There are two significant, miraculous events that take place in this battle:

- 1 God sends down giant hailstones to kill the Amorites that were fleeing from the slaughter at Gibeon.

I love MacArthur's comment on this event:

The hailstones were miraculous. Note their: 1) source, God; 2) size, large; 3) slaughter, more by stones than by sword; 4) selectivity, only on the enemy; 5) swath, "as far as Azekah"; 6) situation, during a trek down a slope and while God caused the sun to stand still; and 7) similarity to miraculous stones God will fling down during the future wrath (Rev. 16:21).¹

- 2 God caused the sun and the moon to stand still, which actually meant that the earth stop rotating for several hours ("about a whole day"). He did this at the request of Joshua so that Israel could finish the battle, and chase down their fleeing enemies.

Some would try to explain away this miracle away as an eclipse or a special extension of daylight hours due to a refraction of the sun's rays; but, why is it so hard to believe that an omnipotent Creator-God could stop the movement of the Sun or the Moon or the Earth. This especially significant since the Canaanites worshipped the sun god and the moon god.

In his discussion of this problem in *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, Bernard Ramm highlights four possible interpretations.

¹ MacArthur, J., Jr. (Ed.). (1997). The MacArthur Study Bible (electronic ed., p. 315). Nashville, TN: Word Pub.

1. *The words are poetical.* The people of those days often wove references to the heavenly bodies into accounts of their victories, as in Judges 5:20, where Deborah and Barak claim that the very stars fought against their enemy, Sisera. According to this explanation, this is what Joshua was doing and what the text reports. Joshua saw his opportunity escaping and called on God for strength. God answered by refreshing his soldiers so much that they were able to do a day's fighting in less than half that time. So it was as if (or it actually seemed to them as if) the day had been lengthened. The Bible does use poetical language, of course. But it seems to most interpreters that this is not really the case here. Besides, there is the miracle of the hailstones. If they are poetical, what are they supposed to represent? If they are not, then why should the stopping of the sun not be taken literally too?

2. *The sun and moon (or earth) actually did stop.* People who believe in an omnipotent God do not have difficulty accepting the possibility of even this great miracle. Omnipotent means "all-powerful," and if God is all-powerful, then he can as easily stop the sun and moon or earth as do anything. Perhaps this *is* what happened. Still, the scope of the miracle seems so great that even such a conservative commentator as Francis Schaeffer argues that God merely lengthened the hours of sunlight by some means. He compares it to the lengthening of the days of summer or summer days in extremely northern countries like Norway, when the sun does not set.

3. *A miracle of refraction of the sun's rays made it seem as if the sun and moon were out of their regular places.* This may be the kind of miracle Francis Schaeffer is thinking of. Ramm cites two articles by R. Short and J. Lowell Butler that argue this point scientifically. They believe that the miracles of Joshua 10 were due to "a special and rare mirage in the earth's atmosphere which is similar to one or more of the natural mirages, but [was] of a magnitude, altitude and character that would be the result of a divine miracle only."

There are two unverified claims that might have bearing here. First, some writings about this miracle report that there are Egyptian, Chinese, and Hindu records of a long day. Second, there are unconfirmed reports that "it is common knowledge among astronomers that one full day is missing in our astronomical calculations and that Professor Pickering of the Harvard observatory has traced it back to the time of Joshua." From time to time I have seen claims like this myself, but I have never found any trustworthy documentation of them. Ramm likewise reports that he has been unable to verify them to his satisfaction.

4. *Joshua did not ask for a longer day but rather for a release from the day's great heat.* The Hebrew verb *dom*, which most of the English versions translate as "stand still," usually means "be silent, cease, or leave off." Because of this, E. W. Maunder of Greenwich and

Robert Dick Wilson of Princeton suggested that Joshua, in the heat of the day, requested that the sun cease shining and that God's answer was the hailstorm that not only brought refreshment to his soldiers so they could do the work of a full day in half a day, but also brought destruction to his enemy.²

I The Coalition Against Gibeon (vs. 1 – 5)

This alliance was led by Adonizedek, the king of Jerusalem, and initially included the cities of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. (See Map) Later, other cities will become part of this campaign, and will also be destroyed.

Note – This is the first mention of Jerusalem in the Bible.

II The Call for Help (vs. 6 – 10)

The Gibeonites called out to Joshua, and Joshua called out to God (v. 8)

III The Contribution of God (vs. 11 – 15)

God fought for the Israelites by sending down the hailstones and making the Sun and the Moon stand still.

Note – *The Book of Jasher* is mentioned also in 2 Samuel 1:18. This book is believed to be a compilation of Hebrew songs extolling Israel's victories in battle. Some believe it to be the same as *The Book of the Wars of the Lord*. (Numbers 21:14)

IV The Capital Punishment of the Kings (vs. 16 – 27)

Joshua wanted the people to know that the Lord was now blessing every move that they made. To put their feet on the necks of the kings was a demonstration of complete conquest. God was completely destroying all of the enemies of His people, which is the same thing that He will someday do to our enemy, the devil.

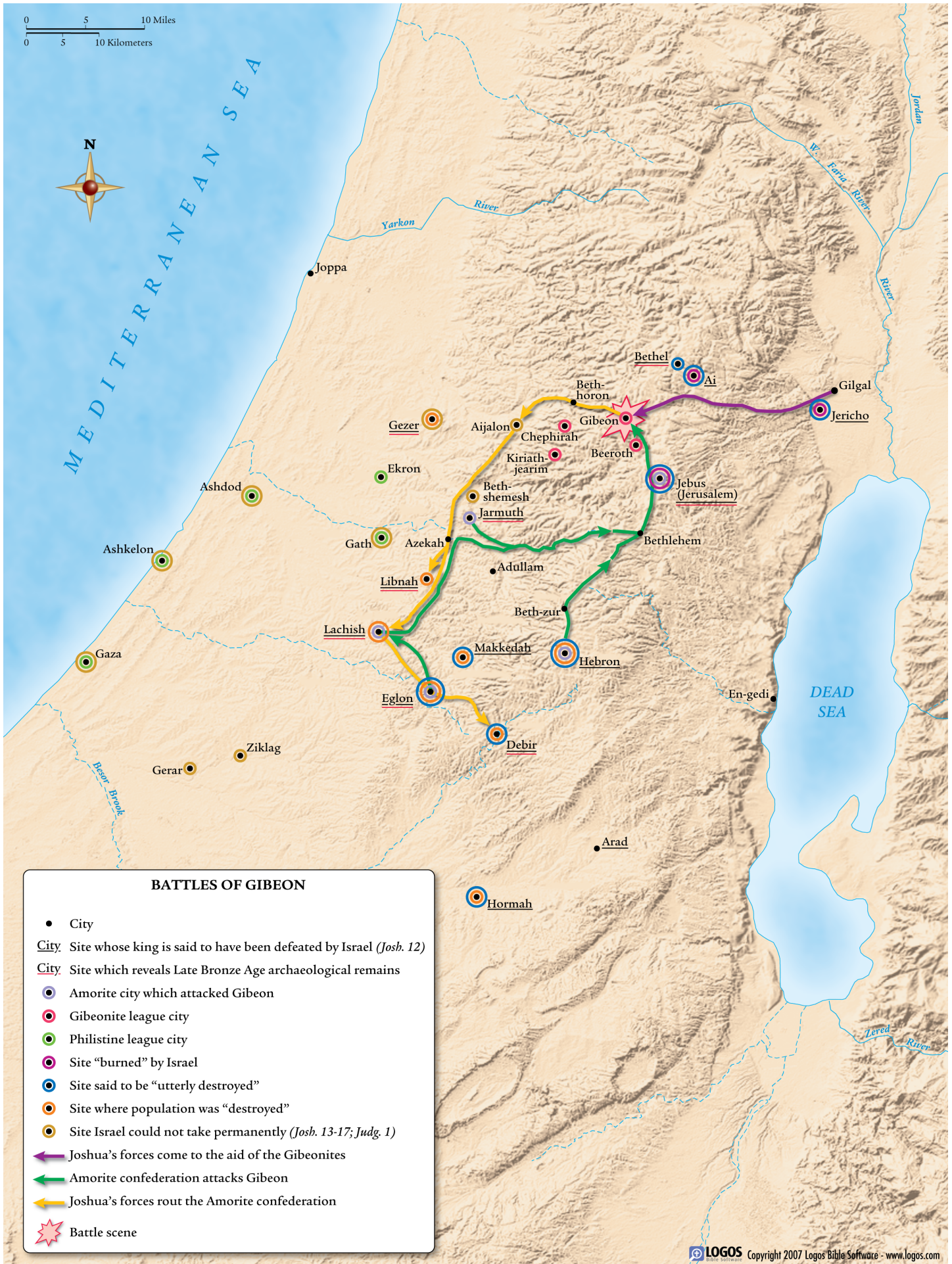
Notice that they took the bodies down. (Deuteronomy 21:22 – 23)

V The Conclusion of the Campaign (vs. 28 – 43)

Note – Kadesh-Barnea, Goshen (not the Land of Goshen in Egypt), and Gaza are all in southern Palestine. What God is saying is that Israel conquered everything from Gibeon to the south. All of the area south of Gibeon and west of the Dead Sea now belonged to Israel.

This chapter illustrates the way God works with His people in the fulfillment of His will. God revealed His will, and the Israelites went to work fulfilling it. Opposition comes along, which is designed by the enemy to stop us; but God divinely assists us and eliminates the opposition.

² Boice, J. M. (2005). *Joshua* (pp. 81–82). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.



0 5 10 Miles
0 5 10 Kilometers



MEDITERRANEAN SEA

DEAD SEA

BATTLES OF GIBEON

- City
- City Site whose king is said to have been defeated by Israel (*Josh. 12*)
- City Site which reveals Late Bronze Age archaeological remains
- ◉ Amorite city which attacked Gibeon
- ◉ Gibeonite league city
- ◉ Philistine league city
- ◉ Site "burned" by Israel
- ◉ Site said to be "utterly destroyed"
- ◉ Site where population was "destroyed"
- ◉ Site Israel could not take permanently (*Josh. 13-17; Judg. 1*)
- ← Joshua's forces come to the aid of the Gibeonites
- ← Amorite confederation attacks Gibeon
- ← Joshua's forces rout the Amorite confederation
- ★ Battle scene