

## **Surely the LORD is Fighting For Us!**

### **Joshua 10-12**

Our enemies work to throw big obstacles in our way to trip us up and keep us from moving forward in accomplishing what God has for us. Consider the obstacles Israel faces in Joshua 10-12—an alliance of five kings and their armies from the South, an alliance of several kings from the North whose army is as numerous as the sand on the seashore, the Anakites who are giants! Do these pose any threat to Israel of stopping them from taking the land God promised them? Certainly not. Why? The LORD is fighting for Israel. When the LORD is with us, there is nothing too big for God to accomplish. Even though we are little and insignificant compared to the obstacles and enemies that stand in our way, we understand from these chapters that there is nothing too little for our almighty God to use in accomplishing His purposes.

#### **The Southern Campaign (Joshua 10)**

**Read Joshua 10:1-6**

##### **An alliance of 5 kings is formed against Gibeon (Joshua 10:1-6)**

When Adoni-Zedek, Jerusalem's king, hears about the total destruction of Ai and Jericho, about the demise of the kings of these cities, and about the peace treaty Gibeon made with Israel, he and his people are very much alarmed, and for good reason. Gibeon is a large and important city and its men are good fighters. Given Israel's military advances, the peace alliance Gibeon formed with Israel, and the fact that these two allies are living nearby, Jerusalem's security is severely threatened. Concerned that there be a domino effect and that Jerusalem will be next in line in the trail of fallen cities, king Adoni-Zedek organizes a powerful alliance with four other kings who mobilize all their troops, take up their positions against Gibeon and attack it.

Under attack, the Gibeonites send word to Joshua calling on Israel for help- "Do not abandon your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us! Help us, because all the Amorite kings from the hill country have joined forces against us." Joshua's previous failure to consult with God and the resulting peace treaty obligates Israel to fight for Gibeon.

##### **Joshua marches up to Gibeon from Gilgal (10:7)**

This was a 25 or so mile hike that took all night. In what condition would Israel's army be in to fight after such an exhausting march? Even though Israel had the element of surprise, they would be physically taxed.

However, it would not be the condition of Israel's army that would determine the outcome of the battle, but the work of the LORD in keeping with His promises.

### **The LORD Promises Joshua victory (10:8):**

“Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you.”

### **The Southern Alliance faces the God of Israel (10:9-27)**

#### **Read Joshua 10:9-27**

While Israel is certainly involved in fighting the Southern Alliance of five kings, God makes it very clear that He is in charge. The battle that is recorded next is one of the most unusual of all history and it is such because of the supernatural work of God on Israel's behalf.

### **While Israel has to fight, the battle is the LORD's**

#### **The LORD throws the Southern Alliance into confusion (10)**

The alliance that was formed against Gibeon and Israel is used to fighting in battle against one another. They only form an alliance because of the threat of a common enemy. They aren't used to working together. God makes matters worse by throwing them into confusion. As the result of God's work, Israel defeats the alliance in a great victory at Gibeon and pursues them, cutting them down along the way.

#### **The LORD hurls down hailstones from the sky (11)**

This is a miracle of God. It is a miracle in that the timing coincides with Israel's battle against the Southern Alliance. It is also miraculous in that the hailstones only hit and kill enemy forces and not the pursuing Israelite army. More of Israel's enemies die in battle from the hail than do from the swords of the Israelites. Surely the LORD is fighting for Israel.

#### **The LORD stops the sun (12-14)**

The LORD is handing over the Southern Alliance into Israel's hands. However, the Israelite army doesn't have enough time to kill off the enemy before nightfall. Desiring to finish the battle and secure a complete victory over the enemy, Joshua prays to the LORD with the following request, “O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.” In answer to Joshua's prayer, “the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies.” Joshua is given another full day of sunlight to destroy the enemy.

Those who deny miracles and look only to scientific study and observation for truth obviously stumble over this account. They make criticisms like, “The earth rotates around the sun, not vice versa. If anything stopped, it would be the earth, not the sun. This account can’t be true.”

It’s funny that these same people don’t seem to have a problem with our talking about sunrise and sunset. The sun doesn’t rise and the sun doesn’t set, but no one seems to have trouble with the local weather man when he talks about such things. Joshua isn’t saying that the sun goes around the earth any more than we are when we talk about sunrise and sunset. Joshua is speaking of things from the perspective of his physical observation. It appeared that the sun stopped from his vantage point.

How did God do this? What did God do to make this happen? Did this only affect where Joshua and Israel’s army is located or did everything change worldwide? There are many theories, but the fact is, we don’t know. We aren’t going to take the time to try to explain how God worked out all of the details of this miracle. To do so would only be speculative and would not be productive. All we know is that somehow, the daylight stayed in place for an extra day. Only God knows how He worked it out. We can take His word for it.

We accept by faith that this miracle did in fact happen. Hebrews 11:1- “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” We have never seen a day like this before and we probably won’t see another like it in the future—even the author realizes that it is unusual for God to answer a request of such cosmic proportions—“There has never been a day like it before or since when the LORD listened to a man.” The fact that we haven’t and can’t see the sun and moon stand still doesn’t shake our confidence that this did occur in answer to Joshua’s prayer—we accept the Biblical record by faith.

We have good reason to believe these event occurred just as God said it did. Nothing is too hard for God—“Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you” (Jeremiah 32:17). The day and night are God’s—“The day is yours, and yours also the night; you established the sun and moon” (Psalm 74:16). As the Sovereign Creator, who miraculously created all that is out of nothing, isn’t God able to suspend the very laws He built into creation in a miraculous way? Certainly He is.

Our critics say, “You foolish Christians. How can you believe in the miraculous? How can you believe in what defies the observable scientific laws? How can you believe something you can’t see and observe?” Oh that they would at least be honest. Secular scientists want to give the impression that it is only we who rely on faith and trust the reality of things which we can’t see.

The fact is, everyone has faith in something. Everyone believes something they can't physically see. The evolutionist is not able to physically observe how this world came into being. They have faith in things that they can't physically see.

At least with us, we are honest about how we come to our conclusions. We believe that the sun stood still for a day based on our faith in the Word of God. We trust the revelation God has given us and believe the events happened in Joshua 10 just as God's Word says it did.

God miraculously gave Israel another day's worth of sunlight to complete their victory over the Southern Alliance. Surely the LORD is fighting for Israel.

### **The LORD gives Israel victory (15-21)**

The five kings of the Southern Alliance hide in and are trapped in a cave where a guard is posted. The Israelites don't stop once they have captured the five kings. They march on, destroying as many of their enemies as possible before they can reach their fortified cities. Very few of the enemy army get away—at least for now. The enemy armies are completely destroyed almost to a man. After defeating the armies of the Southern Alliance, Joshua comes back to get their kings.

### **The five kings are killed and their death is used as an object lesson of what God will do to all of Israel's enemies (22-27)**

Joshua has the five kings of the Southern Alliance brought out of the cave in which they were trapped. He then has the kings lie face down and his men put their feet on their necks. This humiliating posture serves as a sign of total subjection and complete defeat for the enemy and victory for Israel. What happens to these kings is an object lesson of what God is going to do to all the armies that oppose Israel. Given what the LORD will do, Israel is able to respond with strength and courage as opposed to being afraid and discouraged. They can trust God for victory.

After the kings are killed, hung on a tree for a day, and buried in the cave in which they were hiding, rocks again are placed as a memorial of God's work on Israel's behalf.

### **The remaining southern cities are destroyed (10:28-43)**

**Read Joshua 10:28-43**

God delivers the rest of the Southern region into Joshua's hands. Because the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel, Joshua and his army are able to destroy the Southern cities in one campaign (v. 42). Seven cities are mentioned, including 3 of the cities of the Southern Alliance. Notice the emphasis in this passage on the following:

**The LORD hands Israel's enemies over to them**

**No survivors are left; all are destroyed as the LORD commanded**

These city-states of the Canaanites have reached the limit of God's patience. When people reached the limit of God's patience in Noah's day, He sent a flood to destroy all of mankind with the exception of Noah and his family. When people reached the limit of God's patience in Sodom and Gomorrah, God rained down burning sulfur to destroy these cities. In the case of the territory of the Canaanites, God uses His people to bring judgment and destroy these people for their wickedness and their rejection of Him.

When we consider God's severity with the Canaanites, total destroying their cities and their people, it helps us realize how perverted and detestable their lifestyle was in the eyes of God. God's severity with the Canaanites serves as a sobering reminder of how detestable blatant sin, perversion, idolatry, and utter rejection of God are in the eyes of God. It causes us to wonder how detestable our society has become in the sight of God. When will His patience run out with our nation? Praise God that He is patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. However, we must realize that God is also just and sin will eventually reach the level where He must act in judgment.

As we consider the growing perversity and detestable behavior in our culture, the questions for us as believers are: Will we refuse to compromise, openly identifying ourselves with God and taking a stand for godliness? Or Will we be dragged down along with the rest of our perverted society?

If God is so concerned that His people not assimilate the perverse lifestyle of the Canaanites that He has them completely destroyed, how concerned then ought we to be in not assimilating the perverse lifestyle of the pagans around us? Surely God would have us to be careful to trust Him to keep us from taking part in the kinds of things for which the judgment of God is reserved?

**The Northern Campaign (11:1-15)**

**Read Joshua 11:1-15**

### **The Northern kings form an alliance to fight against Israel (11:1-5)**

When the kings of the North hear what Israel did in the South, they form a massive alliance in hopes of defeating Israel. The description of the vast size and advanced technology of this army is impressive. The size of the enemies' forces is described as "huge...as numerous as the sand on the seashore." Besides an extremely large army, they also have a large number of horses and chariots. I think this specific description of the enemy is designed to communicate that this is an impossible situation humanly speaking and Israel is facing impossible odds.

There is no way Joshua's smaller army that is without the resources of horses and chariots is going to be able to pull this off. The only way Israel will win is if God wins the battle for them.

They can't do it. They will have to trust God. What a great place to be! God does the same with us. He puts us in impossible situations where we don't have the resources to pull it off. Why does He put us in these situations? He wants us to acknowledge how desperately we need Him!

### **God promises and gives Israel victory over a much larger and better equipped army (11:6-15)**

The size and resources of the enemy's army is immaterial given the fact that God is on Israel's side. He assures Joshua that he need not be afraid of the enemy. He promises that by the same time tomorrow, He will hand all of them over to Israel, slain. In this battle, there is a unique instruction given to Joshua that we have not yet seen up to this point. He is to hamstring the enemy's horses and burn their chariots. Why is he to do this? God wants Israel to continue trusting Him. He doesn't want them to trust horses and chariots.

As God promised, the LORD gave this northern alliance into the hand of Israel. As the LORD instructed, no survivors were left, all that breathed were totally destroyed. As the LORD instructed, the enemy's chariots were burned and their horses hamstrung. Joshua left noting undone of all that the LORD commanded. Joshua obeys God totally. God helps us to trust Him so that our lives might be marked by the same kind of unwavering obedience.

## **Summary of Israel's Victories (11:16-12:24)**

We have in this section a summary of Israel's conquests of the southern and northern cities—the territories they took and the kings they defeated. Joshua 12 gives us a detailed list of the names of all of these defeated kings. Joshua waged war a long time (11:18), but now the conquest is complete. The power of the enemy has been broken and Israel has established control.

There are two things mentioned in this section of Joshua that I would like to highlight.

### **Gibeon is unique, being the only people to seek peace with Israel**

#### **Read Joshua 11:18-20**

Bigger cities than Gibeon are destroyed. Gibeon deserved to be destroyed like all the rest, but God chose to show the people of that city-state grace and did not harden their hearts.

Seeing how Gibeon was spared, it would have been wise to seek peace like they did, but no other city did. The other cities chose fighting rather than faith, battle rather than belief. Their choice to continue fighting is due to God's hardening of their hearts to fight Israel, so that He can destroy them.

This hardening of the heart reminds us of what God did with regard to the Pharaoh in Egypt. The Canaanites are not innocent parties here. Long before this, they chose to reject God and live in detestable sin and idolatry. Kenneth Gangel writes, "This provides an example of what we call 'judicial hardening.' The Canaanites had exhausted their opportunities for grace and had continued in their sinful practices. So God hardened them against Israel in order that they would go against them in battle and God could inflict His righteous judgment on them."

### **The defeat of the Anakites is significant because they are giants**

#### **Read Joshua 11:21-23**

Special attention is given to the destruction of the Anakites and their towns. Why? The Anakites are the "giants" that terrified the spies some 40+ years earlier. Israel wipes them out. How? The LORD is with them.

The land is at rest from war—the conquest part of Israel's work is complete. There are still parts of land not yet taken over (13:1), but Israel is clearly in charge. There will be no more wars that approach the magnitude of what Israel has been through.

With Israel in control of the Promised Land, there is finally some peace and quiet that will allow them to distribute and begin settlement of the land.

**How does this passage apply to us today?**

**Knowing our powerful God is with us and is fighting for us, we are assured of victory and inspired to display strength and courage before our foes**

Israel's enemy had giants, horses, alliances, large armies and chariots. However, these were no match for the God who had the power to bring hail and to extend the daylight for Israel's army. Our spiritual enemy, Satan, is determined to discourage us or destroy our effectiveness in God's service. We might also have a physical enemy, someone who is out to get us. While these enemies might be large and intimidating, God is with us and is fighting for us. No enemy can match or rival His power. Surely the LORD will fight for us and give us the victory as we trust and obey Him. We don't need to fear, but can proceed with strength and courage.

**When God puts us in an impossible situation, we can trust Him to see us through**

Joshua and Israel's army were put in situations that they couldn't manage on our own. It would have been impossible for Israel to win over their adversaries on without God's help and presence. Likewise, God allows us to be put into impossible situations that we can't pull off on our own. He will sometimes put us in situations where we are in the dark, where we are powerless, where we don't know what He is doing or how we will manage to get through a situation. When this is the case, will we put our faith in God and His promises as Joshua did? Will we trust Him? Will we take God at His Word, trust His promises, rely on His presence, and follow His directions even when we can't yet see how it will make any difference?

**Thank God for His grace in choosing to deliver pagans like us who are deserving of the judgment the Canaanites received**