

8. The southern conquest

5/3/2007

Even though we are wicked and dumb enough to sin against the Lord, He does not waste those opportunities and teaches us to do what is right in Him in future. Here in chapter 10, we find Joshua and his Israel army are going to face the southern enemies who decide to attack the people of Gibeon who conned Joshua and his elders to make a treaty with them in previous chapter.

Since the Israelites made a treaty with these Gibeonites, they chose to come to the rescue for them. Yes, the Israelites shouldn't have made a treaty with these people from the first place. But the Lord is going to use this opportunity to bring down the southern kingdoms who stand against the children of Israel.

A. THE SOUTHERN CONFEDERATED ARMY AGAINST THE GIBEONITES

Joshua 10:1-5 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, 2 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. 3 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, 4 "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." 5 Therefore 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 together and went up, they and all their armies, and camped before Gibeon and made war against it.

The king of Jerusalem, whose name means "lord of righteousness," heard what the Gibeonites had done and announced that these traitors had to be punished. If a great city like Gibeon surrendered themselves to the Jews, then one more barrier was removed against the advancement of Israel in the land.

It was important for the Canaanites to recover that key city, even if they had to take it by force. It also makes a good example to others not to surrender to the Israelites. The poor Gibeonites had made peace with the invaders, the Israelites, and were now at war with their former allies.

We find a parallel method that is used by satan to intimidate new born-again believers and others around. He sends out full blown spiritual, emotional, physical and financial attacks against them that they may lose their new gotten faith in Him. That is why it is so important for those who are in Christ to nurture these young believers in the Lord.

The sins we commit embarrass us, especially those sins that are caused by our running ahead of the Lord and not seeking His will. But we need to remember that no mistake is final for Christians. God can use even our blunders to accomplish His purposes. Somebody defined success as "the art of seeing victory where other people see only defeat."

B. THE PLEA OF HELP FROM GIBEON

Joshua 10:6 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."

These Gibeonites are a good example for people to follow today. When they knew they were headed for destruction, they came to Joshua and obtained from him a promise of protection. That's what God's people need to do when they find themselves facing the battles of life. We need to turn the whole burden over to Jesus and trust Him to keep His word, and He will.

How often we think that we can handle the difficult situations we face better than God and not ask for His help? We might ask for His help in our prayer, but we don't trust Him to take care of it. We often try to do it ourselves after we pray to Him. I am not saying that we should do nothing, but we often don't wait upon the Lord enough to hear from Him.

C. THE DEFEAT OF THE SOUTHERN KINGS OF CANAAN

Joshua 10:7-11 So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. 8 And 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." 9 Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly, having marched all night from Gilgal. 10 So 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. 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 the children of Israel killed with the sword.

We saw that in the last chapter, Joshua and all the people of Israel knew they made a bad vow to the Gibeonites, yet they did not turn their backs on that vow. Allowing these Canaanite kings to wipe out the Gibeonites would have been a convenient way to get out of a vow that should not have been made, but they will have none of it.

In light of facing a confederated army of the five kings, God assured Joshua not to fear them because He already gave a victory over them as His promise.

Fear is "UNBELIEF" and discouragement is from "LOOKING AT OURSELVES, NOT GOD". The enemy of God cannot stop the help that comes from God, but the unbelief we have in our hearts can.

God does His work, but He includes us in working with Him. Often God waits to see our initiative, our willingness to be a part of His plan, before He does what only He can do. We must take a step of faith before He takes us to the higher level.

God assisted the weary Jewish soldiers by killing the enemy army with large hailstones. The timely occurrence of the storm was itself a miracle, but an even greater miracle was the fact that the stones hit only the enemy soldiers like those laser guided missiles our military uses in Iraq.

D. THE SUN THAT STOOD STILL

Joshua 10:12-15 Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: "Sun, stand still over Gibeon; And Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon." 13 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. 14 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. 15 Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

The miracle of the hailstorm was nothing compared to the miracle of extending the day so that Joshua could finish the battle and secure a complete victory over the enemy. His men were weary and the task was great. If night came on, the enemy could escape. Joshua needed a special act from God to enable him to claim the victory the Lord had promised.

This is the last miracle recorded in Joshua and certainly the greatest. Joshua prayed for God's help, and the Lord answered in a remarkable way.

This chapter contains the account of the long day of Joshua. "Did Joshua make the sun stand still?" is a question which is asked by skeptics and believers alike. Following are some explanations of the long day of Joshua which have been proposed:

1) It is the practice of some to avoid giving any interpretation.

They ignore it entirely as if it were not worthy of comment.

2) Some treat the language as poetic.

This is to adopt a non-literal interpretation which dismisses the miraculous from the incident entirely.

3) Some adopt the position that God stopped the entire solar system.

4) Some adopt the position that God blacked out the sun rather than let it continue to shine.

5) The best explanation, it seems that God slowed down the earth.

Why is that having the sun in the sky all the day and night strange to any believers of Jesus Christ when we believe that God created the entire universe from nothing with His command? The Lord is God and nothing is too hard for Him. Day and night belong to God according to Psalm 74, and everything He has made is at His disposal.

Why try to explain away a miracle? What do we prove? If it can be explained with our logic, that wouldn't be considered a miracle, because the concept of a miracle itself is going against our logic. Certainly not that we're smarter than God. Either we believe in a God who can do anything, or we don't believe anything that God did in the Bible, like other non-believers.

Certainly there's room for honest questions about the nature of the miracles. But for Christian believers, there's never room for questioning the reality of God's miracles.

E. FINISHING THE BATTLE

Joshua 10:16-27 But these five kings had fled and hidden themselves in a cave at Makkedah. 17 And it was told Joshua, saying, "The five kings have been found hidden in the cave at Makkedah." 18 So Joshua said, "Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and set men by it to guard them. 19 And do not stay there yourselves, but pursue your enemies, and attack their rear guard. Do not allow them to enter their cities, for the Lord your God has delivered them into your hand." 20 Then it happened, while Joshua and the children of Israel made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, till they had finished, that those who escaped entered fortified cities. 21 And all the people returned to the camp, to Joshua at Makkedah, in peace. No one moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel. 22 Then Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings to me from the cave." 23 And they did so, and brought out those five kings to him from the cave: the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon. 24 So it was, when they brought out those kings to Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the captains of the men of war who went with him, "Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings." And they drew near and put their feet on their necks. 25 Then Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage, for thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against whom you fight." 26 And afterward Joshua struck them and killed them, and hanged them on five trees; and they were hanging on the trees until evening. 27 So it was at the time of the going down of the sun that Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees, cast them into the cave where they had been hidden, and laid large stones against the cave's mouth, which remain until this very day.

Knowing that the five kings were trapped in a cave, Joshua temporarily left them and led his men in the "mopping up" operation. Joshua would not allow anything to keep him from completing Israel's victory. If they tried to deal with these five kings at that point, it might have brought a closure of the chase of the enemy to his soldiers. Joshua wanted a job done completely, not a half way.

The people of Canaan have no doubt that God is with Joshua and the nation of Israel. Their respect is so great that no one moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel. Just like Israel, the church should be feared in the sense that it should be a place where people know God is the Lord over them. Too many churches present a "harmless" God who demands no obedience from His people and they don't want to see God as the God over everything including their lives.

From v28-v42 the texts show us the systematic conquest in the southern land by Joshua and the Israelites.

F. APPLICATIONS

As we review the whole episode of Joshua and the Gibeonites, we can't help but be both warned and encouraged.

1) Warning: These events warn us to be alert and prayerful, otherwise the enemy will deceive us and we will start walking by sight instead of by faith. Then we'll find ourselves making decisions that are wrong and getting into alliances that are dangerous.

2) Encouragement: God can take even our blunders and turn them into blessings. This isn't an excuse for carelessness, but it is a great encouragement when you've failed the Lord and His people.