

Hymns: 11 How Great Thou Art 42 Heavenly Sunlight
1 A Mighty Fortress is Our God 31 Victory in Jesus

Scripture: Psalm 8
Big idea: The LORD is my strength

Our scripture text for today is: **Joshua 10:1-27**

Introduction

On Monday, August 29th three weeks ago, the first NASA moon mission **in 50 years** called Artemis scheduled to launch from Kennedy Space Center was scrubbed due to technical problems related to engine cooling.

Attempts to reschedule the launch were foiled by hydrogen fuel leaks (remember the Hindenburg?). As a testament to the ill effects social engineering and political meddling can have on engineering projects, projections for the next launch attempt are near the end of September, mid-October, or even later. We'll have to keep you posted on that. It boggles my mind. Back when they landed on the moon they had punched cards and very primitive technology, and here they can't get this rocket of fifty years later with all of our technologies.

Back in 2009, Betsy and I were living in Titusville, Florida – just across Indian River from the launch area. Next door to where we lived, sat an outdoor museum to honor the US manned space program. That year we witnessed space shuttle launches and returns with the signature sonic booms. What struck us though was how the small city of Titusville was **stuck in time**. To make matters worse, they were celebrating the 40th anniversary of the first moon landing. It was like living in the Twilight Zone as that brief moment of glory overshadowed all else. The place was frozen in time.

Today we're going to look at Joshua 10 and read about one of the strangest miracles in all of scripture. It involves the solar system and perhaps even time itself. Hang on to your hat, we're about to blast off!

Josh.10

*[1] Now it came to pass, when Adoni-zedek king of **Jerusalem** had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her 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, as one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all the men thereof were mighty.

Now that's a really good summary, but let's get grounded just a little bit more – get our feet on the ground before we launch into this.

Joshua was appointed by the LORD to take Moses' place and lead the Israelites across the Jordan River and into the Promised Land. He was to kill all of the people in the Promised Land. They were wicked. They were going to be judged, and this was their judgment. The Israelites were to then to inherit this land.

They crossed over the Jordan River on dry ground and settled at a place about five miles north of the Dead Sea. They settled there in a place called *Gilgal*, which was a suburb of Jericho. They got their hearts right with the LORD and then followed the LORD's direction. He knocked down the walls. They went in and took the city. Jericho was the first city that they conquered in the Promised Land.

As we read, the next city to the west was called Ai. They tried to conquer that city in their own strength and they failed miserably. They tried again with the LORD's help, and they conquered Ai.

Next, they were visited by a group of people in tattered clothes and with moldy food who were trying to fool them into believing that they had come from a far distance. These were the Gibeonites. They didn't say that at the time.

The Gibeonites knew that the LORD had told the Israelites that they were to conquer this land and kill all of the people. That was their judgment for their wickedness. But these people did not want that to happen to them, so they instead tried to convince Joshua that they were from a far country. The Israelites were permitted to make a treaty with someone from a far country but not with anyone in the Promised Land.

Joshua was fooled by that. This was another failing of Joshua. He should have consulted the LORD, but he didn't. Three days later, he learned that these Gibeonites were just the next city west of where he had conquered. He couldn't go back on the oath they made in the name of the LORD, so he made them slaves instead. They were happy to be slaves rather than dead.

That's what was described in the first verse to start this chapter. Then in verse two it tells us that neighboring kings feared greatly because Gibeon, the city that surrendered, was a great city, a monarchy, was greater than Ai, and all the men there were mighty. So this city with a mighty army surrendered to Joshua.

[3] Wherefore Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem

Also note that verse 1 contains the first reference in the Bible to *Jerusalem*. There is an earlier reference to the same place but with the name *Salem*. You may recall Salem was the place where Abraham took his tithes and gave them to a man named *Melchizedek* called the king of Salem.

sent unto Hoham king of Hebron, and unto Piram king of Jarmuth, and unto Japhia king of Lachish, and unto Debir king of Eglon, saying,

[4] Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel.

They surrendered. They made peace. They became slaves. But these kings were fellow

Canaanites with the Gibeonites. Therefore, the alliance they made with Israel broke an alliance of kindred spirits. The kings decided to come back, take the territory, and take the city of Gibeon back.

[5] Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, the king of Eglon, gathered themselves together, and went up, they and all their hosts, and encamped before Gibeon, and made war against it.

Now what will the Gibeonites do?

[6] And the men of Gibeon sent unto Joshua to the camp to Gilgal,

Recall that Joshua was in Gilgal – about twenty miles east of Gibeon but three days journey. Gibeon was up in the mountains, so the Gibeonites went down, probably with horses, in order to get the word to Joshua quickly.

saying, Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us: for all the kings of the Amorites

The Gibeonites likely were also Amorites.

that dwell in the mountains are gathered together against us.

The Gibeonites gave everything to Israel, so now it's Joshua's job to defend it.

[7] So Joshua ascended

up the mountain

from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him,

And if you recall, that's a lot of people. They had an army of half a million troops.

and all the mighty men of valour.

He took the elite troops also.

[8] And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before [you].

The LORD is assuring Joshua they will win the victory here.

[9] Joshua therefore came unto them suddenly, and went up from Gilgal all night.

Joshua left immediately and traveled this twenty miles up into the mountains in one night. We can note the military tactics as he's coming:

1. Suddenly – a surprise attack.
2. At night.
3. With overwhelming force.
4. With the blessing of the LORD.

[10] And the LORD discomfited them before Israel,

The enemy was already fearful. Now he's making the soldiers of the five kings afraid. *and slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, and chased them along the way that goes basically west and south toward the Mediterranean Sea.*

...

[11] And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel, and were in the going down [south], that the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah,

a city around there

and they died: they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.

So the LORD helped the Israelites in two ways:

1. He put fear in their hearts.
2. He killed them with hailstones as they fled.

The sent down ice bombs from the sky and crushed these remaining soldiers that were fleeing. They were destroyed.

[12] Then spake Joshua 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 thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.

just a short distance beyond Gibeon

[13] And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.

[14] And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel.

Now if we turn in our Bibles to the book of Jasher we'll find there is no such book. It's a lost book. While it's referenced here, it's okay. We still have the story. If we ever found the book it would elaborate more on this, and we would have more to discuss here.

We get the picture. Joshua is pursuing these armies and needs more time or daylight to annihilate them. He asks the LORD to stop the sun and the moon. There's been a lot of speculation about exactly what happened here. How was it actually done. God could have just said it.

Nothing (not against His nature) is too hard for God (Jeremiah 32:17). But if you stop the sun and moon, the seas will go crazy. Obviously, if God can stop the earth he can also stop the waters on the earth. There have been many novel ideas regarding what mechanisms or natural means God may have used to accomplish this.

Aside from saying God just did it, consider that perhaps He played with time itself. The Bible says that God put the sun, moon, and stars in the sky to assist man with telling time (Genesis 1:14-16).

It could have been that the courses of the solar system proceeded as usual, but time itself "dilated" as described in the theory of relativity and stopped for those involved in the battle. This would have made the perception of the sun and moon stopping relative to the participants' experience.

An even simpler approach might have been for God to slow the speed of light just the right amount before Joshua made his request since the LORD knows our requests before we make them (Matthew 6:8). He couldn't have made it so slow as people on earth could have noticed in interactions with each other.

The speed of light is approximately 186,000 miles per second. That's fast! The sun is approximately 93,000,000 miles from earth. That means it takes 500 seconds for light from the sun to reach the earth. That's eight minutes and twenty seconds. In other words, an explosion on the surface of the sun will be seen on earth eight minutes and twenty seconds later.

Similarly, the sun is seen from the earth in a position where it actually was 500 seconds earlier. So if you can slow the speed of light, that number of 500 seconds would increase to a larger number and give you more daylight. But regardless of what mechanism God might have used, the Bible said He did.

Now let's get back to these five kings.

[15] And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp to Gilgal.

[16] But these five kings fled, and hid themselves in a cave at Makkedah.

That was the farthest extent that the troops had penetrated.

[17] And it was told Joshua, saying, The five kings are found hid in a cave at Makkedah.

[18] And Joshua said, Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave, and set men by it

that's the soldiers – the guard

... to keep them:

[19] And ... pursue after your enemies, and smite [those who have not yet been killed and prevent them from returning to] their cities: ...

[20] And it came to pass, when Joshua and the children of Israel had made an end of slaying them with a very great slaughter, till they were consumed, that the rest which remained of them entered into fenced cities.

[21] And .. the people returned to the camp to Joshua at Makkedah in peace: none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.

In other words, no one remained to oppose Joshua. They were either dead or too afraid to say anything.

[22] [And] said Joshua, Open the mouth of the cave, and bring out those five kings []to me out of the cave.

[23] And they did so, and brought forth those five kings unto him out of the cave, ...

[24] ..., when they brought out those kings []to Joshua, ... Joshua called for all the men of Israel,

Everyone is watching this now.

and said unto the captains of the men of war which went with him, Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings. And they came near, and put their feet upon the necks of them.

[25] And Joshua said unto them,

Here comes their fight song.

Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage:

for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.

Joshua is giving them an object lesson. This is what we do to our enemies.

[26] And afterward Joshua

smote them,

and slew them,

and hanged them on five trees:

and they were hanging upon the trees until the evening.

[27] And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, which remain until this ... day.

That's some strange stuff:

- Things in the heavens.
- All of these battles and victories.

And did you notice kings stricken, smitten, hanged a on tree, removed from tree, placed in cave, stones closed the cave, guard outside? That's a really interesting correlation to what happened to Jesus.

Application

The Bible says that the Creator of the universe is none other than the Son of God. But he didn't just create things and leave creation to it's own devices. He's an active participant.

[14] In whom [speaking of Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

[15] Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

[16] For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

[17] And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Colossians (1:14-17)

He's holding everything together. Physicists call this force that holds positively charged protons tight against each other a "strong force." We know where this force comes from. Without it, every atom would explode.

Just this past few weeks, a number of men we knew died suddenly and unexpectedly – including one godly man from our church. That feels a bit shocking as it forces us to consider our own mortality. The great thing for those who know this Maker of time and eternity is He is the master of **our** time and eternity. The Apostle Paul put it this way:

[12] ...for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. (I Timothy 1:12)

Benediction

*The LORD bless thee, and **keep** thee:*

*The LORD make his face **shine** upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:*

The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. (Numbers 6:24-26)