

Joshua 10

What was the concern of the King of Jerusalem (vv. 1-2)? Near panic had seized Adoni-Zedek, its king, and for good reason. The reputation of Joshua and the Israelites was spreading. The treacherous surrender of the Gibeonite cities completed an arc beginning at Gilgal and extending through Jericho and Ai to a point just a few miles northwest of Jerusalem. The handwriting was on the wall. Jerusalem's security was being severely threatened. If the advances of Israel's armies continued without challenge, Jerusalem would soon be surrounded and captured.¹

A further concern.....The people of Gibeon were now allied with the Israelites, they were living near Jerusalem and the Gibeonite men had the reputation of being good fighters.....a formidable addition to the Israelite threat.

What action did King of Jerusalem take (vv. 3-4)? He sent an urgent message to four other kings of southern Canaan stressing the fact that Gibeon had made peace with Israel, a traitorous and punishable act. This might pave the way for other cities to surrender in like manner. It was a signal for war. Immediate action had to be taken against Gibeon.²

What was the next move of the five kings of the Amorites (v. 5)? There was a quick response. Little time elapsed before the united force of a five-king southern confederacy was laying siege against Gibeon.³

What did the Gibeonites do in response (v. 6)? Faced with certain slaughter, the Gibeonites sent a runner to Joshua in Gilgal with an insistent appeal for help against the overwhelming force that pressed on them.

But why should Joshua respond to this cry for help from the very people who had deceived him? Why not just sit back and let the Canaanites fight among themselves? The Israelites would then be rid of any evidence of an embarrassing failure.⁴

How did Joshua respond to the request for help from the Gibeonites (v. 7)? Sitting back and watching was not an option for Joshua, which was made clear by his immediate reaction.⁵ He gathered his entire army and marched to the battle site.

The reason for Joshua's response lies in the area of military strategy. Up to this time, Israel's army attacked one fortified city at a time, at best a long and drawn-out offensive procedure for conquering the entire land of Canaan. But now Joshua sensed he had the strategic break he needed. The five Amorite armies of southern Canaan were camped together in an open field outside Gibeon. An Israelite victory would break the backs of the enemy forces of the entire region.⁶

What encouraging word did the Lord give to Joshua (v. 8)? God assured Joshua that he need not be afraid of the five Amorite armies (cf. 1:9; 8:1) for God would give him victory.

What did Joshua do next (v. 9)? Gathering his forces, Joshua and his men marched the 25 miles from Gilgal to Gibeon under cover of darkness. It was a tiresome journey with an ascent of 4,000 feet up steep and difficult terrain. There was no opportunity to rest. The army was fatigued and faced a powerful foe. Clearly God must intervene or all would be lost.⁷

How did the Lord intervene on Joshua's behalf (vv. 10-11)? Motivated by God's promise of victory, Joshua led a surprise attack on the Amorite armies of the south, possibly while it was still dark. The Lord threw the Amorites into a state of confusion and Israel routed them in a great victory.

Note the miracle that occurred in the destruction of the enemy. There was a tremendous hailstorm, which killed more men than the Israelites had slain. But note that they were discriminating hailstones—they killed only the enemies.⁸

What was the dilemma now facing Joshua? But the day of the battle was wearing on, and Joshua knew that the pursuit of the enemy would be long and arduous. At the most, the military leader had 12 hours of daylight ahead of him. He clearly needed more time if he were to realize the fulfillment of God's promise (v. 8) and see the total annihilation of his foes.⁹

What did Joshua ask God to do (v. 12)? Joshua, therefore, took to the LORD an unusual request: *"O sun, stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon."*

How did God respond to Joshua (vv. 13-14)? At the request of Joshua, the sun and moon "stood still" prolonging the hours of daylight so that the Israelites could continue to pursue and destroy the foe before they could escape to the security of their walled cities.¹⁰ Truly a great miracle!

When Joshua returned to his camp at Gilgal, what did he find out (vv. 15-16)? The five Amorite kings were hiding.... holed up in the cave at Makkedah.

What order did Joshua give (vv. 17-19)? Roll up large rocks in front of the entrance to the cave, post some men to guard it for now and continue in pursuit of our fleeing enemies.

When Joshua's army returned to camp after destroying almost all the enemy, what order did Joshua give to his men (v. 22)? Open the cave and bring the five kings to me.

When they brought the kings to Joshua, what did he do (vv. 24-26)? He had the army commanders come forward and put their feet on the necks of the kings. Then Joshua killed them and hung them on five trees.

Putting one's foot on the necks of one's enemies was a symbolic act that represented the complete subjugation and total defeat of an enemy in the ancient Near East (v. 24; cf. 1 Kings 5:3; Psalms 8:6; 110:1).¹ Performing this act and understanding its significance also gave the Israelites greater confidence.¹¹

What did Joshua do with the bodies of the five kings (v. 27)? At sunset, he took the bodies down and threw them into the cave where they had been hiding.

What did Joshua do next (v. 28)? He conquered Makkedah and killed all the people living there.

What did Joshua do in vv. 29-43? In obedience to God's command to exterminate the Canaanites, he attacked and conquered the remaining major cities of the south thus destroying any further military capability/aggression.

What was the key to Joshua's success (v. 42)? *"All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign because the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel."*

Sometimes we can experience discouragement when we look at all the wicked people that surround us (Psalms 73), or the many sins that plague us. We may think: What can one individual do to stem such a tide of wickedness? We may even think it is useless to do anything, in view of the huge task that we face (Matthew 28:19-20). In those situations, we need to do what God puts before us to do— day by day—rather than taking on more responsibility than God wants us to assume (cf. Matthew 6:25-34). The Israelites fought one battle at a time, and so must we.¹²

¹ Donald K. Campbell, "Joshua" in the Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 349.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 350.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 248.

⁹ Donald K. Campbell, "Joshua" in the Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 350.

¹⁰ William MacDonald, Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 248.

¹¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Joshua, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 99.

¹² Ibid., 103.