

A Study of the Book of Joshua

Sermon # 9

"How Big is Your God?"

Joshua 10:1-14

How big is the God you serve? The question really is, how big is your concept of God? Is the God you serve big enough to perform miracles in your behalf. Or does your faith limit what God is able to do for you? Today this episode from the life of Israel gives us some important principles to remember.

1. WE NEED TO BE REMINDED THAT WE WILL FACE OPPOSITION (vv. 1-5)

You will remember that the Gibeonites had deceived their way into a treaty with Israel, thus saving their lives. But when the hill tribes heard of it they looked on the Gibeonites as traitors and quite understandably decided to move against them.

By the same token we have chosen to follow Jesus Christ we are a threat to those who oppose His kingdom. And just like Israel, every one of us who wants to be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ will face strong opposition.

“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 ... [the other kings in the region] 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.”

2. WE NEED TO BE REMINDED THAT COMMITMENTS ARE ONLY GOOD IF THEY ARE BACKED UP. (v. 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.”

The Gibeonites quickly sent word to Joshua, *“Do not abandon us but come to our rescue.”* What would you have done? Had Joshua not been a man of principle he could have used this a way to escape from the consequences of his rash treaty with the Gibeonites. *After all they had tricked him!*

But Joshua did not think that way. He had made a commitment in God’s name with the Gibeonites and he intended to honor it. Verse seven says, *“So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor.”* Oh, if men and women today still understood the value of giving their word and then standing behind it.

3. WE NEED TO BE REMINDED THAT GOD IS WITH US (v. 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.”

The latter part of this reassurance had already been given to Joshua in chapter one verse five before the invasion of Canaan began. But God often works in this way, not by unveiling some new truth previously unknown, but by reaffirming promises already given, which somehow take on a special significance because of a present pressing need.

Armed with the command and promise of the Lord Joshua lead his men into battle. They marched the 25 miles from Gilgal to Gibeon under the cover of darkness. They covered the same distance in eight to ten hours that had previously taken three days at a more leisurely pace.

Joshua’s long night march to Gibeon took the enemy completely by surprise. According to verse nine, “ *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, [the Lord] chased them along the road that goes to Beth Horon, and [the Lord] 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....”*

Notice with me that it is the Lord doing the fighting. We are told the Lord routed them (v10), the Lord chased them, and the Lord struck them down. Think of the excitement of realizing that God is fighting for you. We have all been decimated by the enemy, beat up by circumstances and wearied with our obligations. How wonderful it would be if God came to our rescue, took up our cause and defeated our enemies.

God fights for us too. If He were not constantly taking our side in the conflicts of life, we would have been overwhelmed long ago. Sin would have already defeated us and destroyed the last vestige of character. God still fights for His people and part of the wonder of Heaven will be to learn just how much God has protected us fought for us.

Perhaps already alarmed by the reports of Joshua’s victories, when confronted in such a sudden fashion the Canaanite soldier broke and ran, hotly pursued by the Israelites.

The terrain over which the soldiers are fleeing falls over seven hundred feet in just two miles. The Canaanites are fleeing down the steep decline with the Israelites in hot pursuit when God intervenes. God sent a hailstorm that struck the already panicked soldiers on the slopes below Beth Horon. There are two miracles recorded in this passage and the miracle of the hailstones is the first. Here the Lord is assisting the army of Joshua that is weary from an all night uphill march. The casualties of the Canaanites from the hailstones were incredible. Verse eleven continues with the report, “*There were more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword.*”

4. WE NEED TO BE REMINDED THAT NOTHING IS TOO GREAT FOR GOD (v.12-14)

Picture the sight that must have awaited Joshua as he crested the ridge and looked down on the armies. Before him as far as his eyes could see were the masses of panicked soldiers of the enemy being

pursued by his own soldiers. And over the battlefield were clouds that were raining down hail upon the enemy. Joshua must have realized two things; first, he had an unprecedented opportunity to destroy this confederacy and secondly, that was not enough daylight left to achieve a total victory. So Joshua prayed an unusual prayer in verse twelve,

“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

In verse twelve Joshua commanded the sun and moon to “stand still.” The Hebrew word (*daman*) means to “*be dumb, silent or still.*”

There is a lot of discussion about this second miracle, “the day the sun stood still.” Just what does that mean? You can read lots of different opinions of what God did. Some maintain that it is just poetical language, but I don’t believe that these words are merely poetic imagery. Nor do I know how God did it. All I know is that one day in history God intervened on behalf of his people and their leader Joshua. I don’t believe that the earth stopped its rotation, or that sun and moon actually stopped in their paths. But I do know that somehow God prolonged the daylight to give Israel enough daylight to finish the battle. I do know that God intervened and fought for Israel and He gave them the victory that day.

Perhaps the simplest answer is the answer of faith. God says through the prophet Jeremiah (32:27), “*Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?*”

Jeremiah reflecting on the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar wrote in Lamentations (3:21-23), “*This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. (22) Through the LORD’S mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. (23) They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.*”

Drawn from this passage we have the inspiring words of the hymn, “*Great is Thy faithfulness!, Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see; All I have needed Thy Hand hath provided – Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.*”

Illustration

“About twelve years after he graduated from Princeton, Donald Grey Barnhouse was invited to preach in chapel, and when he arrived, he noticed [his old Hebrew professor Robert Dick Wilson] had taken a place near the front to hear him. When the service was over, his old Hebrew professor came up to Barnhouse and said, ‘If you come back again, I will not come to hear you preach. I only come once. I am glad that you are a big-godder. When my boys come back, I come to see if they are big-godders or little-godders, and then I know what their ministry will be.’

Barnhouse asked Wilson to explain. He said, ‘Well, some men have a little god, and they are always in trouble with him. He can’t do any miracles. He can’t take care of the inspiration of the Scriptures and their preservation and transmission to us. They have a little god, and I call them little-

goddess. Then there are those who have a great God. He speaks, and it is done. He commands, and it stands fast. He knows how to show himself strong on behalf of those who fear him. You have a great God and he will bless your ministry.’ ”

[James Montgomery Boice. Joshua: We Will Serve The Lord. (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Revell, 1989) pp 114-115]

5. WE NEED TO BE REMINDED OF THE POWER OF PRAYER (v. 14b)

Verse fourteen tells us the significance of this event, *“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.”* The day was unique not for some unusual among of daylight but because God listened to a man’s prayer. Does it strike you as amazing that he God of the Universe listens to the voice of a man or woman who comes to Him.

While Joshua’s long day was a miraculous event which has not been repeated, God still hears and responds to the voice of man. He still responds to the cry of need and intervenes on the behalf of his children. It has been said that, *“God hearkens to the voice of a man who himself has hearkened to the voice of God.”*

“Just before V-E Day of World War II, a soldier named Joel wrote his mother in New Jersey about the miraculous deliverance of his platoon.

‘Our outfit has been taken off the army’s secret list so now you will hear a little of our activities. We are a part of the Third Army under General Patton. My platoon has been working mostly in observation post and also a few patrols.

One of my best buddies, Tom, with his whole platoon was pinned down by German mortar and artillery fire. They were give the order to move, but couldn’t because the Germans had full view of them for a hill and were zeroing their fire in on them perfectly.

Tom is the most conscientious Christian boy I have ever met in the service. He knew something had to be done to save the 50 men. He crawled from his foxhole and looked things over. Seeing how things were, he lay down behind a tree and earnestly prayed God to help them out of this situation.

This is true, Mother ... After he prayed, a fog or mist rolled down between the two hills and the whole platoon got out of their foxholes and escaped. They reorganized in a little town behind the lines where there was a church building. They all went in and knelt down to pray and thank the Lord. Then they asked the kid to take the service.

That is true, Ma, and it just shows how much prayer can mean- if that wasn’t an answer to prayer, I don’t know what is. You can bet that Tom is respected by his buddies.”

[as quoted by Donald Campbell. Joshua: Leader Under Fire.

(Wheaton; SP Publications, 1981) pp. 82-83. from “The Miracle of the Fog.” Good News Publisher]

Conclusion

It should thrill our souls to realize that the same living LORD stand ready to help us to overcome today. Our victories may be different in nature, but they will nevertheless also be great victories. We too can see great victories if we will cooperate with Him in quiet obedience and calm confidence just as Joshua did. The choice is ours. We can live by according to our values and depend upon our own strength, but we will pay the price. Or we can elect to faithful to Him and discover his faithfulness. He has not changed in all the countless years of human history.