

CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 10

JOSHUA

CHAPTER 10

Joshua 10:8 -- *“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 thee.”*

INTRODUCTION

Joshua and the elders of Israel had been tricked into making a peace treaty with the Gibeonites. But this event will be used by the LORD to bring about the eventual conquest of the southern portion of Canaan. The kings of the south were fearful for Gibeon was a stronger nation than Ai. They were most unhappy that the Gibeonites had made a peace treaty with Israel. They formed a military coalition to destroy the Gibeonites.

In this chapter, it is clear that Joshua's military strategy to claim the whole land of Canaan was to push his army first through the central region of the land and westwards. Using Gilgal as his sanctuary and military HQ, he took Jericho and Ai, including Bethel. Then he led all the children of Israel to Shechem where Mount Ebal and

Mount Gerizim were. In obedience to Moses' command, the children of Israel renewed the covenant God made with their forefathers, and their open declaration of the Law of Moses on both mountains.

So far, Joshua had met only individual cities — Jericho and Ai — but now a coalition of angry kings had developed. This would be the first time for Joshua to confront a combined force of such a great scale. He must be strong and courageous as the LORD had at the outset exhorted him, and now his dependence on the LORD for victory was even more pronounced. God had promised that He would be with Joshua and the children of Israel. To what extent would God go to help Joshua and his army? The account in this chapter gives us the answer and reveals more about the character of God. This revelation of God will surely be an encouragement and comfort to us for we are engaging in a spiritual warfare against a very powerful adversary and his agents.

Chapter 10 can be divided into the following sections: 1) The Alliance (10:1-5); 2) The Rescue (10:6-14); 3) The Execution (10:15-28); 4) The Conquests (10:29-39); The Completion (10:40-43). We should bear in mind that while we can be fascinated by the military genius of Joshua, it is more important to discover the spiritual principles that we can apply to our daily Christian life today.

COMMENTARY

The Alliance – 10:1-5

Adoni-zedec, king of Jerusalem, heard all about the fall and utter destruction of Jericho and Ai by the Israelites. He also learned that the Gibeonites had made peace with Joshua and the children of Israel and they had become a vassal of Israel.¹ He was terrified because Gibeon was a great city. It was one of the “royal” cities. The word “royal” did not mean in the “regal” sense. It meant that the city was well inhabited and strongly fortified. The city was larger than Ai, and its men were brave and strong. King Adoni-zedec could see that his territory was being increasingly encroached upon. If Gibeon was such a big and strong city and surrendered sheepishly and by stealth, then this act of cowardice by Gibeon would surely demoralize the rest of the nations of Canaan. Adoni-zedec cannot allow this cancer of fear to spread across the Land of Canaan. Therefore Gibeon must be punished for her cowardice.

Adoni-zedec hastily sent his ambassadors to Hoham, king of Hebron; Piram, king of Jarmuth; Japhia, king of Lachish; and to Debir,

king of Eglon with the proposition to form a military pact to attack the

Gibeonites because the latter had made peace with Israel. These five kings of the Amorites (a general name for the inhabitants of Canaan) unanimously supported the idea. They gathered their armies together and encamped before Gibeon, ready to attack it.

A spiritual understanding that we can apply to our learning today is that the wrath of man will praise God. The sovereignty of God is mind boggling as seen in this episode of Israel’s conquest. Psalm 76:10: *“Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”* By ganging up against Gibeon and with larger numbers, they thought they will have the victory for certain. Instead they have fallen into the hands of God Almighty by this very act without realizing it.

The Rescue – 10:6-14

The Gibeonites received news of an imminent attack on their city by the kings of the Amorites. They wasted no time in seeking the protection of the Israelites, with whom they had recently tricked into signing a peace treaty. It was a dangerous situation to be under such a terrible threat by a large and formidable combined military force led by King Adoni-zedec. Time was of the essence. They sent men to Gilgal where Joshua was. The distance between Gilgal and Gibeon was about thirty kilometres. They informed Joshua that the kings of the Amorites

¹ The name “Adoni-zedec” is a compound

in the regions around were ready to invade and destroy them. They reminded Joshua that they were now Israel's servants, obviously appealing to the peace treaty they had made, and pleaded with him to come quickly to help and save them.

Joshua responded immediately. He led all his warriors through the thirty difficult kilometres up the hills to Gibeon. He could have taken the easy way out and let the Amorites destroy them because the Gibeonites were liars. They had tricked him and the commandment of the LORD was to utterly destroy all of them. Moreover the Amorites could do the job for him. He could be tempted to do this which was the easier path. But Joshua acted with integrity by doing the right thing in honouring the terms of the peace treaty made in the name of the LORD. The LORD approved of his decision. The LORD calmed his fear and promised him complete victory over the enemy. Once again, Joshua was forced to trust God implicitly. Previously, it was Jericho and Ai, but now the combined force of five kings, with whom he had no past experience.

Joshua moved his troops all night from Gilgal, and surprised the enemies on their way to Gibeon. The LORD helped Joshua by bringing about confusion in the camps of the enemies. The Israelites killed a great number of the Amorites at Gibeon. They chased some of the enemies as they fled along the way to Beth-horon, and killed them at Azekah and at

Makkedah. While the enemies were fleeing down to Beth-horon, the LORD sent large hail-stones on the enemies. The number of the enemies died by the hail-stones was more than the number killed by the Israelites. The falling of hail-stones from the heavens was not an uncommon phenomenon. Many places in the world have reported such happenings from time to time. It was undeniable that it was a miraculous interference by God on behalf of His people. God had done this before in Egypt.² It is a most foolish thing to fight against the people of the LORD God for they are not fighting against man but God.³

In the midst of the war, Joshua saw that his army could not complete the destruction of the enemies before the sunset. He needed more daylight to finish the work. Joshua was full of confidence and faith in his LORD that he prayed: "*Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and*

² Exodus 9:18 Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now. 19 Send therefore now, *and* gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; *for upon* every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die.

³ Deuteronomy 7:21 Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the LORD thy God *is* among you, a mighty God and terrible.

Deuteronomy 10:17 For the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward. See also Psalm 66:3-5; 68:35

the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies" (verses 12, 13). This was a stupendous miracle. The inspired writer commented that such a stupendous miracle had never happened before or after it, that the LORD answered the "voice of a man" because the LORD fought for Israel (verse 14).

In the past, many scholars have postulated various explanations for this passage. Some tried to find a metaphorical or allegorical interpretation. Others argued that if it happened as written, there would be an astronomical catastrophe; therefore it is not possible. There must be another explanation. The whole idea contradicts scientific knowledge and understanding. Yet others tried to explain that the phenomenon should not be considered strange at all because in Norway on certain days of each year, the sun does not go down! But there are some like Adam Clarke who believed in the infallible and inerrant Word of God at face value. He comments thus: "It is vain to cry out and say, 'Such a cessation of motion in one planet could not take place without disordering the motions of all the rest;' this I deny, and those who assert it *neither know the Scripture nor the power of God; therefore they do greatly err*. That the day was preternaturally lengthened is a Scriptural fact. That *it was a miracle* is asserted; and whether that miracle was wrought as above stated, is a

matter of little consequence; the thing is that it is a Scriptural fact, whether we know the modus operandi or not. I need scarcely add that the command of Joshua to the sun is to be understood as a prayer to God (from whom the sun derived his being and his continuance) *that the effect might be what is expressed in the command*: and there it is said in verse 14, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel."

Why should man think it strange that the Almighty God who created the heavens and the earth and all that are therein is unable to do this miracle and yet maintain the natural order of all things? Give God the glory and let us be humble. Our God indeed is great and good; when we do His will and pray, He will intervene and help us. No one needs to know how this miracle was done. All we need is faith to believe that God has the power to do it and He did it. The knowledge of the "how" is irrelevant. It is the "WHO" is doing it that we must focus on.

The Execution – 10:15-28

In the midst of the battle, Joshua was informed that the five kings who fled the war had hidden themselves in a cave at Makkedah (verse 17). Joshua instructed his men to roll great stones to block the entrance of the cave and secure the place with guards. In the meantime, he commanded the rest of his army to continue their pursuit of the enemies

and kill all of them. None of the enemies should be allowed to escape into their cities. He repeated the promise of God to his warriors in order to encourage and spur them onwards. Now when the enemies were completely defeated, Joshua and all his warriors returned to their camp at Makkedah in peace. This means that the army of Israel had no casualty at all. All the children of Israel were well. Meanwhile, there was a remnant in the camp of the enemies, which were not killed, and they were allowed to go back to their walled cities. It appears that those who were killed were killed. Apparently a remnant managed to escape and hid in their walled up city. But they were eventually killed as recorded in verse 28.

In Makkedah, Joshua ordered that the five kings, who had been interned in the cave, to be brought out to him (verse 22). His men obeyed. Joshua then told the captains of his army to pin down the kings on the ground with their feet on their necks. This was a most degrading form of humbling one's enemies. This act was to impress on all Israel that their victory over the enemies were total and complete and also acts as a symbol of total victory over all Canaanites in future wars. There were more battles to be fought.

The northern part of Canaan had not been conquered yet. Joshua again exhorted his captains not to be afraid but be strong and courageous, for the LORD would do this to all their

enemies against whom they would be fighting. While the kings were being pinned down under the feet of his captains, Joshua struck them dead one at a time. Then he hanged each of their bodies on a tree. When the sun was about to set in the evening, Joshua commanded his men to take down the bodies of the five kings and throw them into the cave where they had earlier been interned. And the men covered the entrance of the cave with huge stones. This was another stone memorial of the triumphal march of the Israelites in the Land of Canaan. Joshua's exhortation to the captains of his army was not to be afraid but be strong and courageous. This applies to us today as we battle against *"the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."*

The Conquests – 10:40-43

The victory over the five powerful kings and their armies, which represented the best of south Canaan, secured for Israel the control of the rest of this part of the Land. Joshua moved from city to city — Libnah, Lachish including Gezer, Eglon, Hebron and Debir — destroying and killing all the inhabitants as the LORD delivered them to him. Joshua was consistent in dealing with the inhabitants of these cities as it is indicated by the phrase "according to all that he had done to. . ." (verses 32, 35, 37, 39). Joshua could now look to the unfinished task of the land in the north with confidence. The enemy is

powerful and the stakes of our spiritual battle in life are high but with the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our ultimate Victor, we will emerge victorious!

The Completion – 10:29-39

The divinely inspired writer concluded this chapter with a summary of the conquests of the southern part of Canaan. He summarized in three ways. He described the region, which was conquered: all the country of the hills, and valleys and springs, and all the kings and the people were utterly destroyed as the LORD commanded him (verse 40).

He then delineated the conquest by describing the boundaries — from Kadesh-barnea even unto Gaza, and from Goshen, even to Gibeon. Kadesh-barnea was the place from where they were supposed to enter Canaan, but they did not because they rebelled against God. Goshen was not the place where the Israelites had lived in Egypt. It was the Goshen which was situated in the south eastern region towards the Dead Sea and the Negev (Joshua 11:16; 15:51).

Then he related that Joshua took the Land “at one time,” or in one go or in one campaign. This stressed how quickly it was completed because God fought on behalf of the Israelites. It signalled the end of the southern campaign and sealed the victory. Joshua and all Israel returned to the camp at Gilgal.

PRACTICAL VALUE

A very important lesson, which we can learn from this chapter, is that when we do the will of God, we exercise His authority. We have His promises just as He promised Joshua that He would be with him and exhorted him not to fear but be strong and courageous. We can also be assured that God would go to any length to ensure that His will is accomplished according to His purpose and His way. On our part, we must know what the will of God is, and His will is revealed in His Word.

If we take the account of the battles of the Israelites against the five kings as a symbol of the life of the disciple of Christ, it is no surprise that we face daily pressures and struggles in our life. Our enemy is the devil who appears as the “roaring lion” and when that is not effective, he will appear as an “angel of light.” In this life-long struggle, we must be humble and obedient to the LORD for without His help, we will fail. And when God helps, He will go to any extent to ensure that we emerge victorious. But we have to act like Joshua. When he prayed to God, commanding the sun to stand still, and the moon to stay, he took full advantage of the promise of God to be with him, and he exercised his faith with it ⁴

⁴ Hebrews 4:2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*.

In any spiritual warfare, it is imperative that we must do the right thing. Never act according to circumstances. It is the quickest road to folly. Joshua acted with integrity when the Gibeonites sought his help to protect them against the five kings. Joshua could have taken the easy way by letting the enemies kill the Gibeonites who had lied and cheated him, but he did not. He chose to honour the LORD. The tendency of people is to compromise, to take the path of expediency and pragmatism, to do what is right by the context of the situation (this method is called "situational ethics"); do not worry too much about rights and wrongs, just do what seems good now in this particular situation, rather than to do the right thing in the sight of God.

Finally, we must understand that when we communicate with God about what we want when we want it, God does not always do what we ask from Him. When this happens, most people would murmur against God. The important thing to ask ourselves in the first place is whether we are on God's side rather than whether God is on our side. When we ask God what we want when we want it in a supernatural way, are we on God's side? In other words, am I willing to submit myself to His sovereignty and let Him do what He wants in my life? Joshua was on God's side when he fought the battles against the five

kings. He spoke with all the authority of God's Word, and God uses His power to achieve His ends. AMEN

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Joshua 10:1-5; Ephesians 6:10-17.

TUESDAY: Joshua 10:6-14; Ephesians 6:18-20; Hebrews 4:2.

WEDNESDAY: Joshua 10:15-28; 1 Thessalonians 5:24.

THURSDAY: Joshua 10:29-39; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

FRIDAY: Joshua 10:40-43; Romans 8:31-39.

Discussion Questions

1. Democracy is the solution of every nation's problem. Do you agree? With majority we cannot lose. Do what they want and we will grow! Do you agree with this statement?

2. Have you experienced times when the wrath of man against you has been turned by the LORD for your blessing and His glory?

3. Do you think Joshua was too cruel to humiliate the 5 kings and killed them the way he did?

4. What is the difference between a nation attacking and destroying another nation as compared with Israel utterly destroying the Canaanites?

5. What two miracles involving nature are recorded here? How would you present the literal belief that “the sun stood still and the moon stayed” (verse 13)?

6. What spiritual lessons have you learned that will help you in your walk with God?
