

JOSHUA

CHAPTER 10

The Sun Stands Still

As soon as Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, heard how Joshua had captured Ai and had devoted it to destruction, doing to Ai and its king as he had done to Jericho and its king, and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them, 2 he 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 warriors. 3 So Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron, to Piram king of Jarmuth, to Japhia king of Lachish, and to Debir king of Eglon, saying, 4 “Come up to me and help me, and let us strike Gibeon. For it has made peace with Joshua and with the people of Israel.” 5 Then 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 their forces and went up with all their armies and encamped against Gibeon and made war against it. 6 And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, saying, “Do not relax your hand from your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the hill country are gathered against us.” 7 So Joshua went up 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 given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you.” 9 So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal. 10 And the LORD threw them into a panic before Israel, who struck them with a great blow at Gibeon and chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon and struck them as far as Azekah and Makkedah. 11 And as they fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Beth-horon, the LORD threw down large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword. 12 At that time Joshua spoke to the LORD in the day when the LORD gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, “Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.” 13 And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jashar? The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day. 14 There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD heeded the voice of a man, for the LORD fought for Israel. 15 So Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

10:1–43 The army under Joshua comes to the defense of Gibeon and defeats the coalition of southern kings at Aijalon, then subdues all the southern cities of Judah and the Negev. (CSB)

10:1-5 The kings of the land have a new reason to dread Israel. Not only have the LORD’s people destroyed Jericho and Ai, but now Gibeon, a formidable city, has succeeded in securing a covenant of peace with Israel. Together they present a mighty threat. That these Canaanite kings fear the Israelites is amazing. Just recently the nation had wandered in the desert as a band of people without a homeland. The LORD, in keeping his promises, has brought about a dramatic change. (CC)

10:1 *Adoni-Zedek*. Means “lord of righteousness” or “My (divine) lord is righteous.” An earlier king of Jerusalem had a similar name (Melchizedek; see Ge 14:18 and note). (CSB)

Jerusalem. City of the Jebusites. (CSB)

The name “Jerusalem” (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם) occurs for the first time in the Bible in 10:1. The city was mentioned earlier in Gen 14:18 under the name “Salem.” Apart from the Bible, early references to Jerusalem appear

in the Ebla tablets from about a thousand years before Joshua and in the Amarna letters from about his time. For more details surrounding the world's most famous city, see the excursus "Jerusalem." In Judg 19:10, 11 Jerusalem is called "Jebus" after its inhabitants, the Jebusites. (CC)

10:2 *great city.* Gibeon was not only larger in size than Bethel or Ai, but also closer to Jerusalem. With Bethel and Ai conquered and the Gibeonite league in submission, the Israelites were well established in the central highlands, virtually cutting the land in two. Naturally the king of Jerusalem felt threatened, and he wanted to reunite all the Canaanites against Israel. Perhaps he also held (or claimed) some political dominion over the Gibeonite cities and viewed their submission to Israel as rebellion. (CSB)

royal cities. Cities or centers secure against the enemies of a king. (TLSB) *were*

were great warriors. Men famous for their courage in battle, yet wise enough to have made peace with the Israelites. (CSB)

Despite their military superiority, the Gibeonites still feared the power of the Lord that was displayed against Jericho and Ai. (TLSB)

10:3 *Adoni-zedek.* Lit, "The LORD is righteous," a name similar to that of another king of Jerusalem, Melchizedek ("King of Righteousness"). (TLSB)

While Jerusalem means "foundation of peace," her king no longer thinks of himself as dwelling in a safe place. Both he and his people are alarmed at the sudden changes in Canaan brought about by Israel's God. The king's name, Adoni-zedek, means "my lord is righteous" or "lord of righteousness." In this pagan Canaanite setting, "lord" probably refers to Baal, the chief male fertility god, or to El, the head of the Canaanite pantheon. Yet the form of his name is similar to that of an earlier king and priest of Jerusalem, Melchizedek (Gen 14:18), whose name means "my King is righteous" or "King of righteousness." Melchizedek was a "priest of God Most High" (Gen 14:18)—the one true God—and he blessed Abraham in the name of "God Most High" (Gen 14:19–20). The OT priest named "King of righteousness" was a forerunner of Jesus Christ, the great High Priest and true King of righteousness. (CC)

Jerusalem. Also called "Jebus"; first usage of "Jerusalem" for this city in the OT. (TLSB)

10:4 *come ...help me.* Adoni-zedek's fear is understandable. Gibeon is just eight miles northwest of Jerusalem, and Israel's camp at Gilgal is only twenty miles down the road to the northeast. Israel and the Gibeonites, living near one another, could team up in a hurry against Jerusalem. Hearing the reports that the kings of Jericho and Ai were impaled on trees (Josh 8:29) would not bring peace of mind either. Add to that the knowledge that Gibeon is a "great city" and that all of Gibeon's men are "warriors" (10:2). The fact that Gibeon apparently has no king does not detract from its military potential. Some interpreters suggest that kingless Gibeon may be under the jurisdiction of the king of Jerusalem. That would further explain his alarm and quick reaction to Israel's covenant of peace with the Gibeonites. (CC)

Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem appeals for help to the kings of four other cities southwest of Jerusalem. He gathers a league of five, equaling the five that make up the Israel-Gibeon pact (since Gibeon is associated with three other cities [9:17]) . The Canaanite kings are the heads of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon. All of the five kings in this newly formed league are called "kings of the Amorites" (10:5). "Amorite" means "the high one" and may refer to these people as inhabiting the mountain heights. "Amorite" can be used in a broad or narrow sense. In its wider sense it covers all the early inhabitants of Canaan (e.g., Gen 15:16). In its narrower sense here it refers to the people of the mountainous regions as opposed to the people along the coast. (CC)

10:5 *five kings of the Amorites.* Rulers over five of the major cities in the southern mountains. The Amorites of the hills are here distinguished from the Canaanites along the coast. (CSB)

By listing the Amorite kings and cities twice (10:3, 5), the author accents the amassed military force facing Gibeon. Teaming up with King Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem are King Hoham of Hebron, King Piram of Jarmuth, King Japhia of Lachish, and King Debir of Eglon. The tension mounts as the armies of the five Amorite cities move into position against Gibeon and begin their assault. The Amorites apparently are afraid to confront Israel head on, so they attack her new and weaker ally in the covenant of peace. (CC)

In the same way, the devil and the world often deem neophytes and the weak in faith to be easy prey. The entire church militant must rush to the aid whenever any members of the body of Christ are under attack. Through fidelity to God's Word and all the articles of the faith, Christians "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:3) and put up a united front against the assaults of the evil one. Even if persecuted Christians are on the other side of the globe, we may instantly support them in prayer to the Lord, who alone is able to defend and preserve them unto life everlasting. (CC)

against Gibeon. Jerusalem led the attack, hence it came from the southeast. (TLSB)

10:6-11 The God of Israel acts according to his Law and Gospel. He executes just judgment but also shows mercy and accomplishes salvation for sinners who do not deserve his grace, but who nonetheless cast themselves upon him. Throughout history various interpreters have erroneously argued that the OT depicts the LORD as a vindictive God of Law alone. The heretic Marcion in the second century A.D. is the most famous exponent of that view, which has persisted into modern times in some quarters. But Joshua 10 shows God using his people to accomplish salvation for former pagans who had cast themselves on his mercy and were incorporated into his covenant nation. (CC)

If Joshua were vindictive or if he did not understand God to be a faithful God of mercy, Joshua might have considered the attack of the five Canaanite kings against the Gibeonites to be divine retribution. He might have thought that God was now avenging the craftiness of the Gibeonites, who tricked Israel into a sworn covenant of peace with them (Joshua 9). Joshua may have been tempted simply to stand by and watch the armies of the five Canaanite kings slaughter the Gibeonites as their deserved punishment. But as a man of faith in the LORD, he cannot and does not let that happen. (CC)

Joshua himself made peace with the Gibeonites and established the covenant with them that was ratified by the leaders of Israel swearing an oath to them (9:15). Joshua acts in concord with David's later declaration about a righteous man. (CC)

In that way Joshua even resembles Jesus Christ, whose fidelity to God's sworn promises caused him to place himself in harm's way. (CC)

10:6 *Do not relax your hand.* Joshua stretched out his hand against the city of Ai (8:18), and the armies of Israel destroyed it. This phrase is a call for Joshua to use the armies of Israel to defend against the Canaanites. (TLSB)

Come ... and save us! An urgent appeal for deliverance to a man whose name means "The LORD saves." A treaty such as Joshua had made with the Gibeonites usually obliged the ruling nation to come to the aid of the subject peoples if they were attacked. (CSB)

Gibeonites were reminding Joshua of their vassal relationship to Israel. (TLSB)

The Gibeonites begged Joshua, “Save us!” (10:6 יהוה יצִיבֵנוּ). Their words and their dependence upon Joshua to save them are similar to that expressed by the cry of “Hosanna!” meaning “Save [us], please!” shouted during Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Mk 11:9–10; see the textual notes on Josh 10:6 above). The Gibeonites’ plea is also similar to the name of Joshua (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) and Jesus (Ἰησοῦς or ἸηϞου̅, a later form of the same name). The name means “the LORD saves” or “the LORD is salvation.” (CC)

The Gibeonites have asked the right man for help. He is the “servant of the LORD” (24:29), the minister of “the living Mighty One” (Josh 3:10), who alone can save. Joshua is a man who knows that he must be faithful to God’s Word in all respects (see, e.g., 8:30–35), and so he is a man who keeps his word. (CC)

Likewise, the cries to Jesus for help are addressed to the right man. He is the one who fulfills both halves of the name (of both Joshua and Jesus): he is both the Lord and the Savior (cf. Mt 1:23). Those cries will include, “Lord, save [Κύριε, σῶσον]; we are perishing!” (Mt 8:25); “Jesus [Ἰησοῦ], Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Lk 18:38); and “Jesus [Ἰησοῦ], remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Lk 23:42). (CC)

10:7 *went up.* From Gilgal to Gibeon. (TLSB)

The response of Joshua shows that the covenant with the Gibeonites is more than a promise for Israel not to attack them. It obligates Israel to defend from any outside threat those who have been incorporated into the divine covenant. The same is true of all members of the new covenant in Christ. Christians are to honor all fellow members of the body of Christ. No part of the body is to be considered expendable. When one member is attacked, the whole body is attacked, even the Head, as Jesus asked, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *me*?” (Acts 9:4; 22:7; 26:14). When one member is saved, all members rejoice together (1 Cor 12:12–31). (CC)

Joshua shows himself to be a true neighbor to the Gibeonites, who are geographical neighbors of Israel (9:22) and who have now become spiritual neighbors as well. He fulfills the second greatest commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18; Mt 22:39; cf. Jn 13:34; Rom 13:9; 1 Jn 2:7). He illustrates this proverb: “At every time the neighbor loves, and a brother is born for adversity” (Prov 17:17). His rescue of the attacked Gibeonites is similar to that of the good Samaritan, whose rescue of the attacked man is a model of love for one’s neighbor (Lk 10:27–37). Joshua serves to picture his namesake, Jesus, the friend of sinners who laid down his life for the salvation of all. His covenant of saving “peace” with the Gibeonites (Josh 9:15) that granted them the status of being Israel’s neighbors anticipated that in Christ. (CC)

10:8 The Lord would bring the attacking armies into Joshua’s hand to do with as He instructed. (TLSB)

The LORD himself speaks to encourage Joshua and to show that he has approved of Joshua’s treaty with the Gibeonites and now desires Israel to honor that covenant. The LORD promises the defeat of the five Canaanite kings with their armies: “Do not be afraid of them, because into your hand I have given them. A man from them will not stand in your presence” (10:8). The exhortation is similar to others that the LORD had spoken to bolster Joshua’s courage for the conquest (see 1:5, 9; 6:2). Due to the weakness of our faith and the frailty of our flesh, we need to recall our Baptism into Christ, hear his Word, and receive his Supper regularly for the specific challenges we face. The overconfident Christian who neglects the Divine Service, where God’s gifts are given in Word and Sacrament, and says in cavalier fashion, “I’ve heard all that before,” may find himself in a time of crisis without the needed strength. (CC)

10:9 *marched all night.* Gilgal was about 20 miles east of Gibeon, a steep uphill climb for Joshua’s men. (CSB)

In order to reach Gibeon in one night from Gilgal near Jericho, the Israelites would have had to climb a rise of 3,000 ft in 17 mi. (TLSB)

Joshua acts quickly, gathers his best forces and makes the all-night march from Gilgal to Gibeon. The twenty-mile night march would probably take eight to ten hours. It may have been aided by moonlight, as hinted by the reference to the moon in 10:12. It was a difficult march up and over Canaan's central mountain ridge, a rise of 3,000 feet from Gilgal near Jericho. Even after the hard, fast march and without a night's sleep, Joshua catches the Amorites by surprise and conquers them in a great victory at Gibeon. (CC)

suddenly. Joshua attacked early in the morning, perhaps while the moon was still up (v. 12). (CSB)

10:10 *threw them into a panic.* The Hebrew for this word implies terror or panic. (CSB)

Israelites were able to chase the panic-stricken enemy westward down a 1,000-ft descent to lower Beth-horon and south toward the lowlands known as the Shephelah, where Azekah and Makkedah were located. (TLSB)

10:11 *down...of Beth Horon.* A long descent to the plain of Aijalon below, following the main east-west crossroad just north of Jerusalem. (CSB)

When the routed enemy tried to flee downhill to the northwest, Israel followed along the sharply descending Beth-horon road. Then, when the fleeing Amorites headed south toward the lower hills, Israel continued to cut them down all the way to Azekah and Makkedah southwest of Jarmuth. What the swords of Israel could not accomplish, the hand of the LORD does completely! The author will soon again credit the LORD with victory (10:12, 14). When he recalls this day, the prophet Habakkuk in his poetic prayer will do the same (Hab 3:11–13). (CC)

large stones. For the Lord's use of the elements of nature as his armaments see Jdg 5:20; 1Sa 7:10; Job 38:22. (CSB)

In keeping His promise, the Lord aided Israel by casting hailstones down on the enemy. Hail was referred to as stones from the sky. (TLSB)

The hailstones from heaven confirm in deed what the LORD had already confirmed in word (Josh 10:8), namely, that he expected Joshua and Israel to honor their covenant of peace with the Gibeonites despite the fact that Israel's spiritual negligence had led to the covenant (Joshua 9). Hailstones come "from the heavens" (10:11), showing that this act of salvation is from the hand of God alone. By hurling the stones himself, the LORD demonstrates that he considers the Gibeonites to have been incorporated into his redeemed covenant people. Again, human sin does not prevent God from displaying his grace and accomplishing his salvation. Despite the Gibeonites' deception, the LORD still saves them, just as Rahab and her family were saved through faith even though she deceived the men sent by the king of Jericho (2:2–7; Heb 11:31; James 2:25). (CC)

The LORD's choice to employ hailstones strengthens the Gospel message in this passage. Previously he had sent hailstones as the seventh of his ten plagues against Egypt (Ex 9:13–35). Just as he used hail to redeem Israel, his chosen covenant people, out from Egypt, so he now uses hail to save the Gibeonites from their attackers, implying that the Gibeonites are full partners with the Israelites as heirs of his promised redemption. The closest NT parallel to the hail falling from what must have been the dark and stormy sky would be the darkness that covered the heavens while Jesus hung on the cross (Mt 27:45). The

divine wrath at all sinners fell from heaven upon God's only Son, who suffered the punishment deserved by reprobate humanity in order to procure salvation for all. (CC)

10:12–13 Heated discussion of this passage proceeds from opposing viewpoints. (1) Some interpreters find here no miraculous intervention in the regular course of nature but rather a poetic, figurative way of saying that the day was long enough to permit Israel to destroy the fleeing enemy. Hence, it would be similar to the poetic statement "The stars fought ... against Sisera" (Jgs 5:20). (2) A second interpretation finds the miraculous element in the fact that God, at the right moment, commandeered the forces of nature (as in Egypt and at Jericho) by sending a barrage of hailstones at Gibeon. The accompanying storm prolonged the darkness of the night. Under its cover, the Israelites surprised the enemy and were able to complete the pursuit of the fleeing allies. Accordingly, the result of God's intervention was sustained darkness rather than additional hours of sunlight. (3) Opposed to this contention is the view that this day was miraculously prolonged beyond the normal 24 hours, which is the best reading. A believer may readily trust that He who created "the heavens and the earth ... and all the host of them" (Gn 2:1) could control His creation and stop the vast machinery of the universe. Luther: "God's power had been so ordered that the sun retained its course and motion; but when Joshua prayed in his distress and commanded the sun to stand still, the sun stood still at Joshua's word. Ask the astronomers how great a miracle this is! But what is the reason? No other than that God does the will of those who fear Him and subordinates His will to ours, provided we continue to fear Him.... In Scripture there are more evidences of this kind; they prove that God allows Himself to be prevailed upon and subordinates His will to ours. Why, then, are we so remiss in regard to prayer? Why are we without faith to such an extent and so fainthearted, as though our prayer amounted to nothing?" (AE 3:289). (TLSB)

The author saves the most striking detail of the battle for his summary of the victory narrated in 10:1–14. The sun stood still for about a day (10:13)! That information is introduced by the quotation of Joshua's prayer (10:12). The first readers of the book of Joshua may have already known that prayer since it was included in "the Book of the Upright One" (10:13). That book evidently was a collection of poems singing the praises of the LORD, who granted victory to Israel through heroes of faith. Apparently that collection received subsequent additions. David's lament over Saul and Jonathan was included in the same book according to 2 Sam 2:18. "The Book of the Wars of the LORD" may have been another similar collection (Num 21:14). Both of those books are long lost. (CC)

After the all-night march up from Gilgal, Joshua might speak his prayer in the early morning, when the sun and moon are both visible as happens even today (see the textual notes on 10:12). His place of prayer seems to be west of the city; from that vantage point he sees the sun to the east "at Gibeon" and the moon to the west "at the Valley of Aijalon." The Valley of Aijalon, a wide basin west of Gibeon, points like a pistol toward the heart of Judea and provides the easiest approach to the mountains and to Jerusalem, which is fourteen miles southeast. The battle may have begun about dawn with Israel's surprise attack. Then some time into the battle Joshua may have wondered whether there would be enough daylight to complete the victory. Made bold by the LORD's promises in 10:8, he prays. The LORD "listened to" this man (10:14) and granted his prayer so that "the sun stood in the middle of the heavens, and it did not hurry to set [for] about a whole day" (10:13). (CC)

10:13 *Book of Jashar*. An early account of Israel's wars (perhaps all in poetic form; but never a part of canonical Scripture. (CSB)

Lit, "the book of the upright one." This anthology of ancient Israel has not survived. From time to time, other poetic descriptions of events apparently were added to this collection of songs (2Sm 1:18). (TLSB)

did not hurry. Some believe that God extended the hours of daylight for the Israelites to defeat their enemies. Others make other suggestions, some of which deny the supernatural. The fact is we do not know precisely what happened, except that it involved divine intervention. (CSB)

“Be silent”; by analogy, “cease” or “desist” from a given activity. Hippolytus: “The sun stood still, and the moon, in their places, so that that day was one of twenty-four hours” (*ANF* 5:176). Athanasius: “This was the work, not of the son of Nun, but of the Lord, Who heard his prayer” (*NPNF* 2 4:550). (TLSB)

If those assumptions about the sequence are correct, then the LORD seems to delay his answer to the prayer of Joshua from morning until about noon, since the sun is in the middle of the sky when the extraordinary event takes place (10:13). Even when the LORD answers prayers with yes, he may delay action for greater strengthening in faith and greater benefit to the salvation of his people. Thus the long-promised Christ was not born until “the fullness of time” (Gal 4:4) and after his atoning death his resurrection was not until the third day. The greater “Joshua” waited until the fourth day to raise Lazarus (Jn 11:38–44). (CC)

When the text speaks of the sun and moon standing still, this does not necessarily imply that the author believed that the sun revolves around the earth instead of the reverse. Rather, it is using language that describes phenomena as they appear to us from our vantage point on the earth. The sun and moon did stand still in the sense that they did not follow the normal paths of movement that we watch them traverse in a typical day and night. Instead, human observers saw them remain fixed in their respective locations for about one whole day. (CC)

We today continue to use such phenomenological language. We speak of the sun and moon rising and setting even though we know that the earth too is in motion. Scientists today believe that all celestial bodies are in motion in relation to one another. The sun too is not stationary, but rotates and is in motion in relation to other stars. The entire Milky Way galaxy apparently spins around its center. Even the galaxies themselves appear to be moving apart from one another. Scientists make these inferences based on phenomena they observe from vantage points on earth and from telescopes launched into space. (CC)

Keil says: “The Scriptures speak of the things of the visible world as they appear; just as we speak of the sun as rising and setting, although we have no doubt whatever about the revolution of the earth.” Luther recognized that the Bible speaks in this way in other passages.⁶ However, Luther cited Josh 10:12 as evidence against the idea of his contemporary Copernicus that the earth revolves around the sun. Luther stated: “But that theory is confused. Despite it I personally believe Holy Scripture; for Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, not the earth (Joshua 10:12).” Plass notes: “This much is certain: Luther would have permanently rejected the Copernican theory if he had been convinced after thorough investigation that it could not be reconciled with the statement in Scripture.” Luther’s comments here illustrate that we must critically examine the exegesis of even the greatest Bible scholars and theologians before adopting their views. It is Scripture alone that is forever infallible and authoritative. (CC)

Much discussion centers on precisely what did happen that day in connection with sun, moon, and earth. Many skeptical commentators flatly deny the supernatural event. Some point to the poetic language of the account and say that the writer is expressing in figurative terms that Israel was able to pack about two days of fighting into one day. Some speak of an electrical storm that flashed its lightning all night so that it almost seemed like two straight days. Some point to the volcanic eruption of the Island of Santorini (Thira) of about 1400 B.C. and relate its fallout to the hailstones that killed the fleeing Amorites. Others suggest a rare refraction of the sun’s light so that the sky remained bright even after the sun set. (CC)

We, of course, fully acknowledge God’s supernatural act as recorded here in the inspired and inerrant Scriptures. Yet even among fellow commentators who affirm God’s Word, there are various ideas about

the nature of the miracle. Did the earth suddenly stop rotating on its axis? Did God tilt the earth so that the Middle East became “the land of the midnight sun”? Did God suspend the usual natural laws of motion, momentum, and the gravitational force between the earth and sun, perhaps even freezing astronomical time itself in space while allowing earthly time to keep going? (CC)

10:14 *heeded*. Hus: “Obedience is a more general thing than submission, since obedience is becoming in God and submission is not.... God, the Trinity, was not subject to man, or under a man as a lesser to a greater” (*The Church*, pp 185–86). (TLSB)

We may never be able to answer such questions about *how* God performed the miracle. However, it is a certainty *that he did* perform it and that the normal motion of the earth, moon, and sun in relation to each other ceased for about a whole day. The result was that the sun remained in mid-sky and provided this extra day of light. The most important fact is that through this miracle Israel’s God intervened in a spectacular fashion to give his people a mighty victory. “The LORD was warring for Israel” (10:14). (CC)

10:1–15 When the kings in Canaan set out to destroy Gibeon for its covenant with Israel, Joshua honors that covenant and God delivers Gibeon (v 11). When confronted by strife, do we try to handle it ourselves, or do we call on the Lord to save and help us? What a blessing to call boldly on the Lord Jesus Christ in our troubles and find in His baptismal covenant with us grace and mercy to help in time of need. • Deliver us, good Lord, according to Your promises, for we trust in Your good Word. Amen. (TLSB)

Five Amorite Kings Executed

16 These five kings fled and hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah. **17** And it was told to Joshua, “The five kings have been found, hidden in the cave at Makkedah.” **18** And Joshua said, “Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave and set men by it to guard them, **19** but do not stay there yourselves. Pursue your enemies; attack their rear guard. Do not let them enter their cities, for the LORD your God has given them into your hand.” **20** When Joshua and the sons of Israel had finished striking them with a great blow until they were wiped out, and when the remnant that remained of them had entered into the fortified cities, **21** then all the people returned safe to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah. Not a man moved his tongue against any of the people of Israel. **22** Then Joshua said, “Open the mouth of the cave and bring those five kings out to me from the cave.” **23** And they did so, and brought those five kings out 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** And when they brought those kings out to Joshua, Joshua summoned all the men of Israel and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, “Come near; put your feet on the necks of these kings.” Then they came near and put their feet on their necks. **25** And Joshua said to them, “Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous. For thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight.” **26** And afterward Joshua struck them and put them to death, and he hanged them on five trees. And they hung on the trees until evening. **27** But at the time of the going down of the sun, Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves, and they set large stones against the mouth of the cave, which remain to this very day. **28** As for Makkedah, Joshua captured it on that day and struck it, and its king, with the edge of the sword. He devoted to destruction every person in it; he left none remaining. And he did to the king of Makkedah just as he had done to the king of Jericho.

10:16 *Makkedah*. A town near Azekah (v. 10) in the western foothills where Joshua’s troops made their camp. (CSB)

Town in western foothills near Azekah (v 10). (TLSB)

10:18 The place they sought for refuge became a prison and ultimately their tomb. (TLSB)

10:19 *yourselves*. Commanders of Israel who had gone up to fight against the five kings. (TLSB)

Pursue your enemies. Most of the fighting men defending the southern cities were caught and killed before they could reach the safety of their fortresses. (CSB)

their rear guard. The danger now is the reserve of the five kings' armies that could assist and protect the cities in the event they lost. (TLSB)

10:20 *remnant*. Though the armies as units had been wiped out, not every member had been killed. (TLSB)

10:21 *no man moved his tongue*. The thought here appears to be that no one dared even to raise his voice against the Israelites anymore. (CSB)

Unlike in 9:18, when they had grumbled over the treaty with the Gibeonites. (TLSB)

10:24 *chiefs*. General term for commanders of the armies of Israel. The same term was found on a pottery shard in the Judean fort in the Arael Valley. (TLSB)

put your feet on the necks. Public humiliation of defeated enemy chieftains was the usual climax of warfare in the ancient Near East. (CSB)

Humiliating gesture symbolized that the kings were completely under the power of the victors. This symbolism is used elsewhere in Scripture to show the Lord's rule (Ps 110:5; Mal 4:3; 1Co 15:25–28; Eph 1:22; Col 2:14–15).

10:25 *be strong and courageous*. There were more wars to wage, and this was to instill confidence in the people for what lay ahead. (TLSB)

the LORD will do. Prophetic promise. The Lord had given them into Joshua's hands. (TLSB)

10:26 *hanged them on five trees*. See note on Dt 21:22. (CSB)

To make a statement to one and all that these kings were cursed by God (Dt 21:22–23). (TLSB)

10:27 *they took them down*. According to God's command (Dt 21:23). (TLSB)

they placed large rocks. A fifth monument in the land to the events of the conquest (see note on 8:32). (CSB)

10:28 *none remaining*. The holy ban was placed on the people of Makkedah, meaning they were "devoted to death" for their wicked deeds (see NIV text note on v. 1). The same fate came to the other major cities of the south (vv. 29–42). (CSB)

10:16–28 Joshua captures and destroys the five kings, who tried to hide in a cave that later became their tomb. When the Lord promises victory, He brings it to pass. No matter how great or how many challenges face you, cling to the Lord's promises and pray based on them. He will hear and answer in mercy, as the promises of Christ prove. • Lord Jesus, defend us from all dangers, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen. (TLSB)

Conquest of Southern Canaan

29 Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Makkedah to Libnah and fought against Libnah. **30** And the LORD gave it also and its king into the hand of Israel. And he struck it with the edge of the sword, and every person in it; he left none remaining in it. And he did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho. **31** Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Libnah to Lachish and laid siege to it and fought against it. **32** And the LORD gave Lachish into the hand of Israel, and he captured it on the second day and struck it with the edge of the sword, and every person in it, as he had done to Libnah. **33** Then Horam king of Gezer came up to help Lachish. And Joshua struck him and his people, until he left none remaining. **34** Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Lachish to Eglon. And they laid siege to it and fought against it. **35** And they captured it on that day, and struck it with the edge of the sword. And he devoted every person in it to destruction that day, as he had done to Lachish. **36** Then Joshua and all Israel with him went up from Eglon to Hebron. And they fought against it **37** and captured it and struck it with the edge of the sword, and its king and its towns, and every person in it. He left none remaining, as he had done to Eglon, and devoted it to destruction and every person in it. **38** Then Joshua and all Israel with him turned back to Debir and fought against it **39** and he captured it with its king and all its towns. And they struck them with the edge of the sword and devoted to destruction every person in it; he left none remaining. Just as he had done to Hebron and to Libnah and its king, so he did to Debir and to its king. **40** So Joshua struck the whole land, the hill country and the Negeb and the lowland and the slopes, and all their kings. He left none remaining, but devoted to destruction all that breathed, just as the LORD God of Israel commanded. **41** And Joshua struck them from Kadesh-barnea as far as Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, as far as Gibeon. **42** And Joshua captured all these kings and their land at one time, because the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel. **43** Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

10:30 The armies of Israel attacked and destroyed the people, possessions, and city without taking anything for themselves, just as they had done to Jericho. (TLSB)

10:32 *as ... Libnah.* This and similar expressions in vv 35, 37, 39 emphasize the faithfulness of Joshua and Israel to the Lord. (TLSB)

10:33 *Horam king of Gezer.* An important detail: the defeat of the king of the most powerful city in the area. Gezer was eventually taken over by the Egyptians and given to King Solomon as a wedding gift (see 1Ki 9:16). (CSB)

Israel never captured this city, but the defeat of its army was a great victory. (TLSB)

10:34 *laid siege.* Attacked it with the purpose of capturing it. (TLSB)

10:38 *Debir.* In the past, Debir (also known as Kiriath Sepher, 15:15) was identified with Tell Beit Mirsim. More recently, however, it has been equated with Khirbet Rabud, about five miles southwest of Hebron. (CSB)

10:40 *all that breathed.* Likely refers to all people and domesticated animals. Along with “devoted to destruction,” it is an expression of obedience to the Lord. (TLSB)

10:41 *Kadesh Barnea to Gaza.* The south-to-north limits in the western part of the region. *Goshen.* A seldom-used name for the eastern Negev, not to be confused with the Goshen in the delta of Egypt; it is also the name of a town (15:51). Goshen and Gibeon mark the south-to-north limits in the eastern part of the region. (CSB)

Consider the deliverance that came by God's hand as you reflect on the challenges you face. What a blessing that by Christ's crucified hands He gives us His victory against all our sin and death's power. He equips us for every new challenge. • Grant that I may in all things, Lord, seek the hand and the victory of Christ through faith in Him. Amen. (TLSB)