

Gods at War: A Study through Joshua

The Northern and Southern Campaigns: “Because the Lord, the God of Israel fought for
Israel”

Todd Roughton / July 17th, 2016

Review of Last Week: The people of Gibeon more or less tricked Joshua into a treaty with them. 9:14 says “*So the men of Israel took some of their provisions, and did not ask for the counsel of the Lord.*” We saw the very practical consequences of not seeking the Lord. Then, at the beginning of chapter 10, we see Joshua and the nation of Israel being called upon by the Gibeonites to help them. We’ve already looked at part of this account, but it is worth looking at again through a different lens.

It will also do us some good to remember Pastor Jeff’s sermon from a few weeks ago... the one right before the sermon on the battle of Jericho. We are about to step into a couple more chapters where Israel is doing some serious work on the Canaanites, conquering many kings and territories and no doubt at the cost of many lives. Remember one of the final points Jeff made... “*God has the sovereign right to judge wicked people.*”

This morning we are going to see God’s hand of judgment on those who oppose His plan and His people. And contained within the account, some very practical lessons for us to take home.

I. The Text

The Southern Campaign - Ch 10

Gibeon is plotted against (10:1-5) - Word of what the Lord has done for His people, along with the treaty recently made between Gibeon and Israel is continuing to spread. People, much like the Gibeonites, are hearing about the things that YHWH is doing for and on behalf of His people and they are becoming terrified that they might be next. So, these five kings get together and figure they will take out Gibeon. All five of the cities represented are within striking distance of Joshua and Israel. They knew it, so they probably figured, let’s get them before they get us.

Gibeon calls for help (10:6-11) - Gibeon sends word to Joshua, asking for help. Joshua prepares his crew (which this would have been a perfect opportunity for him to really stick it to these guys for tricking him into a treaty, but he doesn’t. He holds up his end of the bargain) and goes and fights for/with Gibeon. As they are going, the Lord tells Joshua that you’re going to win hands down (v8). They march all night to get there and then they go to work. God sends down “large stones from heaven” that take out a huge number of the enemy.

The sun stands still (10:12-15) - Joshua sees the need for more time to fight, so he asks the Lord to cause the sun to stand still. Verse 14 tells us that “the Lord listened to the voice of a man.” How this physically looked or happened...I don’t really know. I also

don't think that is the point. The point is the miracle done on behalf of God's people, so they could in turn give Him glory.

Dealing with the kings (10:16-28) - These verses are not a separate account or battle. They provide us with additional details of things that took place. What happens here is the 5 kings take off and hide in a cave. Their location gets back to Joshua, he sends orders to seal it up. After the battle is over, Joshua goes to the cave, takes the kings out and kills them.

The Southern victories (10:29-43) - The chapter closes with Joshua marching south and capturing city after city.

The Northern Campaign - Ch 11

Kings gather to fight Israel (11:1-5) - The kings of the north get together, because, much like Israel's former enemies, they had heard of the power of the Lord. It appears that these guys might have the advantage, having "*as many people as the sand that is on the seashore.*" (v4)

Israel responds (11:6-23) - In the remaining part of the chapter, we read of the conquest of Israel in the north. Verse 18 says that "*Joshua waged war a long time with all these kings.*" It's easy to read this and get the feeling that it all just sort of happened over night. This is not the case. Some authors state that it took nearly 7 years.

But what does all this mean? What is the point or points, that Joshua and God are trying to hammer home through these battles and treaties?

II. The Teachings

1. Pray prayers that agree with divine purpose

"Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, 'O sun, stand still at Gibeon, and o moon in the valley of Aijalon.' So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies." (Joshua 10:12, 13a)

Imagine being on the battlefield that day and hearing Joshua's petition to the Lord. Now, the nation of Israel had already seen God do some pretty sweet things, so maybe this request didn't sound as off the wall as it does to us...but still a bit out there. But then imagine as the Israel keeps fighting, looking up at the sun, fighting some more, looking up at the sun..."That thing ain't moving!" It worked! Joshua's request was granted! Wow! Why? Joshua's request was granted because it was in line with what the Lord wanted for His people.

***Haan's story - how they are using what has happened to Kenz as a platform to share their hope in Christ

2. Do not fear

“The Lord said to Joshua, ‘Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands” (Joshua 10:8)

“Joshua then said to them, ‘Do not fear or be dismayed! Be strong and courageous, for thus the Lord will do to all your enemies with whom you fight.” (Joshua 10:25)

“Then the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow at this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel.” (Joshua 11:6)

As Joshua is preparing to enter into battle, going up against armies that should have handed Israel their lunch, the Lord gives him a familiar encouragement. One author says this idea of “Do not fear” is the “key-note of Joshua’s career.”

***Time I had to ask the homeless guy to leave the church property?

3. The Lord fights for His people

“And the Lord confounded them before Israel, and *He* slew them with a great slaughter at Gibeon...” (Joshua 10:10)

“...the Lord threw large stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died: there were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword.” (Joshua 10:11)

“There was no day like that before or after it, when the Lord listened to the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel.” (Joshua 10:14)

“Joshua captured all these kings and their lands at one time, because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel.” (Joshua 10:42)

The battle does indeed belong to the Lord. Joshua and Israel had no claim to these victories, they were the Lord’s. Because He fights for His people. This lesson we see in the text is so closely tied with the previous one of do not fear. God knew they had no reason to be afraid because He was going to fight on their behalf.

So what’s the application of this account into our lives today?

III. Our Takeaways

- 1. Pray properly** - Often times we use prayer as an opportunity to take our Christmas list to God to see what we can get from Him. This is not the example we see from Joshua. But how do we do this? I think it has to start with a relationship.

“Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord; And He will give you the desires of your heart.”
(Psalm 37:3, 4) Joshua was delighting in the Lord therefore the things he asked of the Lord were good, godly things. The closer we are to the Lord, the more we desire the things He desires, therefore they are granted to us.

So, pray properly from the appropriate proximity (a close one). If there's a distance, close it! Joshua had a unique relationships with the Lord, but so can you! Delight yourself in Him and the things of Him and in His people. The closer we get to Him, the more we will begin to reflect Him, even in the things we ask for.

One caution: this isn't a guarantee that you will always get what you ask for. **We have to remember that the Lord is working and moving behind the scenes in ways we cannot possibly comprehend.** Remember **Isaiah 55:8 “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,** declares the Lord.” Even in our closeness to the Lord, we need to remember that He is God and we are nowhere close to being God.

2. Don't be afraid - Time and time again, throughout the OT, God tells his people to not be afraid...do not fear! The idea carries over into the NT. Remember what Paul told Timothy in **2 Timothy 1:7? “For God has not given **us** a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.”**

Fear is something that is all to common for God’s people, not because of God, but because of the people.

The disciples struggled with fear too! Remember the account of Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee? After a long day of ministry, He sends the disciples off in a boat to go to the other side. He stays behind and spends some time by Himself, praying in the mountains. He goes to catch up with the disciples, and takes a bit of a shortcut. As He is walking toward their boat, they freak out..."It's a ghost!" Jesus says to them "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Literally translated, Jesus said "Have courage, I Am." It was this statement that caused Peter to boldly ask Christ to call him out of the boat. Picking up the account in **Matthew 14:30 we read “But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’**

What does this tell us about being afraid? It happens when we become distracted by things that are happening around us. Whether it's waves splashing up against our legs or an opposing army that wants to demolish us. The moment we take our eyes off of Christ, fear immediately sets in.

The call to not be afraid, for Joshua and the nation of Israel, and for us today is possible because of what comes next.

3. The Lord is fighting for you - just as God threw down hailstones, He surely continues to fight on behalf of His people today. He might go about it in different ways today (as much as we might like for Him to drop some hailstones). I believe that there are battles going on around us constantly, battles being fought by the Lord on our behalf.

Do you remember one of the reasons the Gibeonites went to Joshua and tricked him into a peace treaty? Joshua 9:9-10:

“Your servants have come from a very far country because of the fame of the Lord your God; for we have heard the report of Him and all that He did in Egypt, and all that He did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon the king of Heshbon and to Og king of Bashan who was at Ashtaroth.”

They went to them because they knew the Lord was fighting for His people, and they didn't want to be the next victims!

It's easy, especially in the midst of the battle (whatever that might look like for us) and if things don't seem to be working out the way we would want them to, to feel alone, defeated, weary and afraid. It was just a few chapters ago (4:5-7) when after crossing the Jordan river...on foot...that the nation of Israel was instructed “each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel. Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’” God knew things weren't going to be easy for His people, so He gave the a memorial, a reminder of what He has done. We need those!

In our moments of fear, look back on circumstances in your life. Look for victories. Look for healing. Look for places and ways that God has showed up. Look for your “sun standing still” moments. Ultimately, I believe that we have to look no farther than the cross upon which our Savior was crucified to see how the Lord continues to fight for us.

You see church, we have no reason to fear because the Lord our God is fighting on our behalf so we can pray prayers that agree with **His** purpose and bring **Him** the glory.