



## Joshua - Chapter Ten

### **II Joshua 6:1-12:24 - Taking the Land (continues)**

#### Summary of Chapter Ten

The end of Chapter 9 finds Israel in a covenant relationship with the Canaanite city and people of Gibeon! The defection of an important Canaanite city causes alarm among other city leaders, and a coalition is formed. Despite Israel's presumptuousness in not inquiring of the Lord before making a covenant (Joshua 9:14), once made, the covenant is defended even by the Lord himself.

In Chapter 10 he decisively intervenes to defend Israel's Canaanite ally. The battle is recounted first briefly in vv.1-10, while vv.11-15 provide additional details; vv.16-27 add yet further details, focusing on the fates of the five kings; and, finally, vv.28-39 recount the so-called 'southern campaign' in which key southern cities are defeated. Because the events of Chapter 10 are precipitated by Canaanite aggression, Israel's defeat of the south can be viewed as a defensive operation. The chapter concludes with a summary of the conquest so far (vv.40-43).

#### **II.e Joshua 10:1-43 - Defence of Gibeon, Conquest of the South**

Refer to the chapter summary above.

##### **II.e.i Joshua 10:1-15 - The Sun Stands Still**

The king of Jerusalem was greatly afraid because of the victories of the Israelites over Jericho and Ai, and because the Gibeonites had become subservient to Israel. Therefore, he called on other city leaders to form a confederation to march on Gibeon because of their submission to Israel. So Gibeon called upon Israel to protect them because of their covenant and Joshua honoured the agreement, taking his army to fight the confederation for the Lord had said he would give them victory. And it was the Lord's battle for he defeated the armies with mighty

hailstones. More supernatural phenomena are in view when the sun and moon stand still in the cosmos; something that can only be of God.

<sup>1</sup> When King Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it, 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, <sup>2</sup> he became greatly frightened, because Gibeon was a large city, like one of the royal cities, and was larger than Ai, and all its men were warriors. <sup>3</sup> So King Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem sent a message to King Hoham of Hebron, to King Piram of Jarmuth, to King Japhia of Lachish, and to King Debir of Eglon, saying, <sup>4</sup> ‘Come up and help me, and let us attack Gibeon; for it has made peace with Joshua and with the Israelites.’ <sup>5</sup> 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.

#### Joshua 10:1-5

The leader of this group, the king of Jerusalem, is an interesting figure. The name Adoni-zedek resembles that of another king of Jerusalem, Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18. The names sound like ‘lord of righteousness’ and ‘king of righteousness’ respectively. If anything, Adoni-zedek is really the opposite of the lord of righteousness. Some commentators even believe he represents the Antichrist, set against Joshua’s representation of Jesus Christ. If Adoni-Zedek, the false lord of righteousness, represents the Antichrist, it becomes even more interesting to find that he leads many nations against Joshua and the children of Israel.

The enemies of Israel became greatly frightened, but like spiritual enemies of the church, they do not retreat when they are afraid, but launch attacks that are even bolder, as a wild animal might fight when it feels threatened. Although they are afraid, they are still clever. Afraid to attack Israel directly, they attack their vassals the Gibeonites.

That the Gibeonites had submissively joined in covenant with Israel strikes fear in the heart of Adoni-zedek and other Canaanites, because Gibeon was a large city, like one of the royal cities, and was larger than Ai, and all its men were warriors. A royal city would have been of sufficient importance to have its own ‘king’ and would likely have controlled a larger district.

In Genesis Chapter 15 the Lord promised Abraham that his descendants would one day inherit the land of Canaan, but not until the iniquity of the Amorites was

complete. Outside the Bible the Amorites are referred to as Martu, Sumerian for westerner, and Amurru in Akkadian. They are attested as early as the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium BC. Migrating westward and southward into Canaan, they were at their strongest in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium BC and faded quickly thereafter. In biblical parlance, the term Amorite is variously used to connote the inhabitants of Canaan generally, and the inhabitants of the hill country specifically.



### The Conquest of Canaan: The Southern Campaign

Upon hearing that the Gibeonites had signed a peace treaty with the Israelites, five Amorite cities attacked Gibeon. Joshua's forces came up from Gilgal to

defend the Gibeonites, and they chased the Amorites as far as Azekah and Makkedah. Joshua's forces continued their attack until they had captured Libnah, Lachish, Makkedah, Eglon, Debir, Hebron, and most likely Jarmuth.

<sup>6</sup> And the Gibeonites sent to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, saying, 'Do not abandon your servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us; for all the kings of the Amorites who live in the hill country are gathered against us.' <sup>7</sup> So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the fighting force with him, all the mighty warriors. <sup>8</sup> The Lord said to Joshua, 'Do not fear them, for I have handed them over to you; not one of them shall stand before you.'

### Joshua 10:6-8

Do not abandon your servants. In Joshua Chapter 9, Joshua, the leaders of Israel, and all the people of Israel knew they had made an improper covenant with the Gibeonites, yet they did not turn their backs on that vow. However, Joshua and the leaders of Israel go even further here. Allowing these Canaanite kings to wipe out the Gibeonites would have been a convenient way to annul the covenant that should not have been made, but they would have none of it. The church should have the same sense of honour. Although Joshua was only bound to not kill the Gibeonites himself (Joshua 9:15), he goes on to fulfil what the spirit of the vow he made to the Gibeonites.

Do not fear them. Although Joshua has reason to fear because Israel faces a confederation of five kings, God commands Joshua to not fear his enemies.

I have handed them over to you. Whatever questions were raised by Israel's failure to *<<ask direction from the Lord>>* (Joshua 9:14b) before making a covenant with the Gibeonites, the Lord assures Joshua that he will be with him in defending the Gibeonites against the Jerusalem coalition. The past tense I have handed them over to you is significant: God has decided on the outcome, but Israel is still required to do some hard fighting.

<sup>9</sup> So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal.

### Joshua 10:9

So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal. Having the assurance of God's promise in v.8, Joshua did not sit back to passively watch God work without his participation. He went to great effort to participate with the work and will of God. While the precise location of Gilgal is not known, according to Joshua 4:19b it was *<<on the eastern border of Jericho>>*. From the

vicinity of Jericho in the Jordan Valley to Gibeon in the hill country would have been an uphill journey of 15-20 miles or 24-32 km.

The march took hard work and initiative on Joshua's part. The march from Gilgal to Gibeon involved a climb of 3,300 feet, and the distance was about twenty miles, taking eight to ten hours of hard marching, all through the night. God does his work, but he draws his people into working with and for him. Often God waits to see human initiative, their willingness to be a partner with him, before he does what only he can do. This is not the idea that 'God helps those who help themselves.' The idea is 'God wants to draw his people into partnership with him in seeing his work done.'

<sup>10</sup> And the Lord threw them into a panic before Israel, who inflicted a great slaughter on them at Gibeon, chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah.

#### Joshua 10:10

The Lord threw the Jerusalem coalition into a panic before Israel, and the battle spread west to Beth-horon and then south-westward as far as Azekah and Makkedah, thus covering more than 30 miles or 48 km. This military action not only secured a foothold in central Canaan, controlling the major east-west corridor from the Jordan through the central hills to the coast, but also opened the way for Joshua's southern campaign of vv.29-43. God's work, and the partnership of Joshua's work with the Lord, accomplished something great. The enemies of God were routed.

<sup>11</sup> As they fled before Israel, while they were going down the slope of Beth-horon, the Lord threw down huge stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and they died; there were more who died because of the hailstones than the Israelites killed with the sword.

#### Joshua 10:11

The Lord threw down huge stones from heaven is a picturesque way of referring to the hailstones with which the divine warrior decimated the fleeing Amorite troops. The hail itself could have been a phenomenon of nature, but their aim and timing obviously displayed the hand of God: <<*Tomorrow at this time I will cause the heaviest hail to fall that has ever fallen in Egypt from the day it was founded until now*>> (Exodus 9:18), <<*Out of the brightness before him there broke through his clouds hailstones and coals of fire*>> (Psalm 18:12), <<*See, the Lord has one who is mighty and strong; like a storm of hail, a destroying tempest, like a storm of mighty, overflowing waters; with his hand he will hurl*

*them down to the earth>> (Isaiah 28:2), and: <<Say to those who smear whitewash on it that it shall fall. There will be a deluge of rain, great hailstones will fall, and a stormy wind will break out>> (Ezekiel 13:11). The Canaanites, who worshipped nature deities, must have thought that their own gods were aiding the Israelites.*

<sup>12</sup> On the day when the Lord gave the Amorites over to the Israelites, Joshua spoke to the Lord; and he said in the sight of Israel,

‘Sun, stand still at Gibeon,  
and Moon, in the valley of Aijalon.’

<sup>13</sup> 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 mid-heaven, and did not hurry to set for about a whole day. <sup>14</sup> There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord heeded a human voice; for the Lord fought for Israel.

#### Joshua 10:12-14

Sun, stand still. The traditional understanding of this passage is that it refers to a miracle of cosmic proportions, in which the earth ceased rotating for a time. Since the Bible unquestionably teaches that God brought the universe into existence: <<*In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth*>> (Genesis 1:1), and: <<*By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth*>> (Psalm 33:6), and that he owns and rules it all for his own purposes: <<*Indeed, the whole earth is mine*>> (Exodus 19:5b), and: <<*Although heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to the Lord your God, the earth with all that is in it, yet the Lord set his heart in love on your ancestors alone and chose you, their descendants after them, out of all the peoples, as it is today*>> (Deuteronomy 10:14-15), this certainly would be possible as God would no doubt be able to compensate for the adverse effects this would have on such requirements to sustain life such as gravity. One of the prophets seems to make reference to this occasion: <<*The mountains saw you, and writhed; a torrent of water swept by; the deep gave forth its voice. The sun raised high its hands; the moon stood still in its exalted place, at the light of your arrows speeding by, at the gleam of your flashing spear*>> (Habakkuk 3:10-11). As alternatives to the traditional understanding, a number of possibilities have been proposed:

1. A solar eclipse. However, this is problematic as the sun and moon are described in opposition, not conjunction.

2. Poetic imagery, i.e. a day that seemed prolonged by virtue of how much was accomplished.
3. A day in which the sun's heat was diminished, perhaps by thick cloud cover, allowing Israelite troops to continue fighting.
4. A refraction of light causing the light to linger until the battle was completed.
5. An additional possibility proposed more recently suggests that Joshua is exploiting the Canaanites' superstitious fear of a bad omen, related to the position of the sun and the moon 'standing' on the opposing horizons, i.e. the sun at Gibeon, and Moon, in the valley of Aijalon.

None of these proposals are without difficulties, however, and each fails to do justice to the claim that there has been no day like it before or since. Given the miracle-working God of the Bible, the traditional understanding is certainly possible and a further example is given perhaps in 2 Kings 20:9-11, paralleled in Isaiah 38:8, where the sun's shadow moves backwards ten steps. Although there is not enough information in the narrative to determine the precise nature of this exceptional day, the author's emphasis in any case is on the extraordinary answer that God gave to Joshua's prayer, and on the fact that the Lord heeded a human voice.

Until the nation took vengeance on their enemies. Joshua did not ask God to do the fighting for him, even though God did do so to a certain extent. Joshua simply asked that God would miraculously give him the opportunity to fight for him.

Apart from the present context, the Book of Jashar is mentioned only in 2 Samuel 1:18. No longer extant, the book appears to have contained poetic accounts or songs of the deeds of heroes. Hebrew *Jashar* may be related to the Hebrew words sing or upright.

<sup>15</sup> Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

### Joshua 10:15

The notice that Joshua returned to the camp at Gilgal anticipates the conclusion of the entire southern campaign (v.43), and the apparent return to the camp at Makkedah in the interim (v.21). Such summary statements, followed by more detailed descriptions, are quite common in Hebrew narratives. On the logical arrangement of Chapter 10, refer to the chapter summary.

### II.e.ii Joshua 10:16-43 - Five Kings Defeated

The five kings became trapped in a cave where they had hidden from the Israelites who continued to battle with the other troops until most were dead and the others holed up in fortified cities. Then Joshua had the five kings brought to him and after demonstrating to his senior leaders in front of the men that they had nothing

to fear from the Canaanites, he killed the five kings and had their bodies hung on trees as a warning to others.

The narrative then continues to provide details of the other cities and their kings that Joshua and the Israelites defeated before they finally returned to their main camp at Gilgal.

<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, these five kings fled and hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah. <sup>17</sup> And it was told Joshua, 'The five kings have been found, hidden in the cave at Makkedah.' <sup>18</sup> Joshua said, 'Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and set men by it to guard them; <sup>19</sup> but do not stay there yourselves; pursue your enemies, and attack them from the rear. Do not let them enter their towns, for the Lord your God has given them into your hand.' <sup>20</sup> When Joshua and the Israelites had finished inflicting a very great slaughter on them, until they were wiped out, and when the survivors had entered into the fortified towns, <sup>21</sup> all the people returned safe to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah; no one dared to speak against any of the Israelites.

#### Joshua 10:16-21

Roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and set men by it to guard them; but do not stay there yourselves; pursue your enemies. Joshua will not allow anything, even the personal capture of the kings, to keep him from completing Israel's victory. The kings can be imprisoned and dealt with later. Here there is another striking similarity with the Book of Revelation. Not only does a false 'lord of righteousness,' i.e. Adoni-Zedek, lead a group of nations against Joshua, who has come to possess the land; but also, in the midst of their defeat, the kings hide in caves in fear of the conquering Joshua: <<*Then the kings of the earth and the magnates and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb'*>> (Revelation 6:15-16).

No one dared to speak. After Israel's decisive defeat of the coalition, no Canaanites dared speak a word against Israel.

<sup>22</sup> Then Joshua said, 'Open the mouth of the cave, and bring those five kings out to me from the cave.' <sup>23</sup> They did so, and brought the 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. <sup>24</sup> When they brought the kings out to Joshua, Joshua summoned

all the Israelites, and said to the chiefs of the warriors 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.

#### Joshua 10:22-24

In the ancient Near East, victors would often put their feet on the necks of defeated foes, symbolising supremacy. This action underlies the notion of making one's enemies a footstool under one's feet as foretold of the Messiah by King David: <<*The Lord says to my lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool'*>> (Psalm 110:1).

<sup>25</sup> And Joshua said to them, 'Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous; for thus the Lord will do to all the enemies against whom you fight.'

#### Joshua 10:25

Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous. Joshua applies to the leaders of Israel the assurance God gave him in Joshua 1:1-9. Such encouragement before, during and after battle is a sign of good leadership.

For thus the Lord will do to all the enemies against whom you fight. The idea of partnership with God in the pursuit of victory is again repeated. God promises victory over all enemies against whom his people have to fight.

<sup>26</sup> Afterwards Joshua struck them down and put them to death, and he hung them on five trees. And they hung on the trees until evening.

#### Joshua 10:26

He hung them on five trees is a sign that they are cursed: <<*When someone is convicted of a crime punishable by death and is executed, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse must not remain all night upon the tree; you shall bury him that same day, for anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not defile the land that the Lord your God is giving you for possession*>> (Deuteronomy 21:22-23); this mirrors the treatment of the king of Ai in Joshua 8:28-29. The Canaanite kings were executed. Joshua wants to make it clear that there can be absolutely no accommodation with these Canaanite kings.

<sup>27</sup> At sunset Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves; they set large stones against the mouth of the cave, which remain to this very day.

## Joshua 10:27

The large stones set against the mouth of the cave containing the bodies of the slain Amorite kings serve as a fifth monument in the land; refer to the comment made on Joshua 4:20. This monument recalls God's gracious action in defending Israel's covenant with a Canaanite city even though they acted rashly in making it.

Which remain to this very day is again a reference to the time that the account was written down.

<sup>28</sup> Joshua took Makkedah on that day, and struck it and its king with the edge of the sword; he utterly destroyed every person in it; he left no one remaining. And he did to the king of Makkedah as he had done to the king of Jericho.

<sup>29</sup> Then Joshua passed on from Makkedah, and all Israel with him, to Libnah, and fought against Libnah. <sup>30</sup> 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 no one remaining in it; and he did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho.

<sup>31</sup> Next Joshua passed on from Libnah, and all Israel with him, to Lachish, and laid siege to it, and assaulted it. <sup>32</sup> The Lord gave Lachish into the hand of Israel, and he took 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.

<sup>33</sup> Then King Horam of Gezer came up to help Lachish; and Joshua struck him and his people, leaving him no survivors.

<sup>34</sup> From Lachish Joshua passed on with all Israel to Eglon; and they laid siege to it, and assaulted it; <sup>35</sup> and they took it that day, and struck it with the edge of the sword; and every person in it he utterly destroyed that day, as he had done to Lachish.

<sup>36</sup> Then Joshua went up with all Israel from Eglon to Hebron; they assaulted it, <sup>37</sup> and took it, and struck it with the edge of the sword, and its king and its towns, and every person in it; he left no one remaining, just as he had done to Eglon, and utterly destroyed it with every person in it.

<sup>38</sup> Then Joshua, with all Israel, turned back to Debir and assaulted it,  
<sup>39</sup> and he took it with its king and all its towns; they struck them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed every person in it; he left no one remaining, just as he had done to Hebron, and, as he had done to Libnah and its king, so he did to Debir and its king.

### Joshua 10:28-39

Joshua next takes the important towns in the southern part of the land, establishing Israel's hold on it. The accounts for the various towns are similar, reflecting the uniform pattern by which God gave these enemies over to Israel. The variations probably reflect the particularities of each battle. Observe that v.33 makes no mention of taking Gezer, which is confirmed by: <<***They did not, however, drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer: so the Canaanites have lived within Ephraim to this day but have been made to do forced labour***>> (Joshua 16:10), <<***And Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer; but the Canaanites lived among them in Gezer***>> (Judges 1:29); it finally became an Israelite possession in 1 Kings 9:15-17, when Pharaoh gave it to Solomon.

<sup>40</sup> So Joshua defeated the whole land, the hill country and the Negeb and the lowland and the slopes, and all their kings; he left no one remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded. <sup>41</sup> And Joshua defeated them from Kadesh-barnea to Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, as far as Gibeon. <sup>42</sup> Joshua took all these kings and their land at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel.

### Joshua 10:40-42

So Joshua defeated the whole land. In a period of weeks or perhaps months these six cities are defeated, without a single loss for Israel. Each battle was a test. None of them were easy, but under the leadership of Joshua, they all were victorious. God's desire is that his people today should enjoy the same life of victory: <<***And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit***>> (2 Corinthians 3:18).

This interim summary of the conquest credits Joshua, in the typically hyperbolic language of ancient Near Eastern conquest accounts, with leaving no one remaining, totally destroying all that breathed. Similar language in v.20

juxtaposes the statement that Israel's enemies <<*were wiped out*>> with the admission that <<*the survivors had entered into the fortified towns*>>.

Joshua took all these kings and their land at one time. There are many people in the church who often want to do everything and win every battle for God all at once. This can be Satan's strategy to set them up for a strong attack of discouragement. As well, God knows which battles to fight and when to fight them. These were not the only Canaanite cities in the region, but they were the military strongholds. God knew what he was doing in selecting which particular battles to fight, and when they needed to be fought.

While Joshua is credited with acting obediently by taking no prisoners, the ultimate cause of Israel's success is that the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel.

<sup>43</sup> Then Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

### Joshua 10:43

Joshua's return to the camp at Gilgal, already anticipated in v.15, marks the successful conclusion of the central and southern campaigns.