



Unit .08

Session .03

The Provision of Peace

Scripture



Joshua 10:1-15; 11:23

1 Now King Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem heard that Joshua had captured Ai and completely destroyed it, treating Ai and its king as he had Jericho and its king, and that the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were living among them. **2** So Adoni-zedek and his people were[a] greatly alarmed because Gibeon was a large city like one of the royal cities; it was larger than Ai, and all its men were warriors. **3** Therefore King Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem sent word to King Hoham of Hebron, King Piram of Jarmuth, King Japhia of Lachish, and King Debir of Eglon, saying, **4** “Come up and help me. We will attack Gibeon, because they have made peace with Joshua and the Israelites.” **5** So the five Amorite kings—the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon—joined forces, advanced with all their armies, besieged Gibeon, and fought against it. **6** Then the men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal: “Don’t give up on your servants. Come quickly and save us! Help us, for all the Amorite kings living in the hill country have joined forces against us.” **7** So Joshua and all his troops, including all his best soldiers, came from Gilgal. **8** The LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them, for I have handed them over to you. Not one of them will be able to stand against you.” **9** So Joshua

caught them by surprise, after marching all night from Gilgal. **10** The LORD threw them into confusion before Israel. He defeated them in a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them through the ascent of Beth-horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. **11** As they fled before Israel, the LORD threw large hailstones on them from the sky along the descent of Beth-horon all the way to Azekah, and they died. More of them died from the hail than the Israelites killed with the sword. **12** On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to the Israelites, Joshua spoke to the LORD in the presence of Israel: “Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.” **13** And the sun stood still and the moon stopped until the nation took vengeance on its enemies. Isn’t this written in the Book of Jashar? So the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed its setting almost a full day. **14** There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD listened to a man, because the LORD fought for Israel. **15** Then Joshua and all Israel with him returned to the camp at Gilgal. ... **23** So Joshua took the entire land, in keeping with all that the LORD had told Moses. Joshua then gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. After this, the land had rest from war.

Intro Options

Main Point:
**God fights for His
people to provide
the victory.**

Option 1

The Israelites were no strangers to war. Abraham, the father of the Israelite nation, was the first to go to war when his nephew Lot was caught up in a conflict between nine kings. When four kings defeated the other five, Lot became part of the spoils of war because of where he lived. Abraham gathered 318 fighting men from his household and pursued the victorious army of the four kings, defeated them, and rescued his nephew (Gen. 14:1-16).

Fast-forward five hundred years. Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, witnessing the destruction of Pharaoh and his army in the middle of the Red Sea. Soon after, those just-released-slaves, with no battle training, defeated an Amalekite army that saw them as easy pickings. The Amalekites thought they could overpower the unprepared Israelites; they didn't realize that the true power was coming from the raised arms of Moses on the mountain overlooking the battle (Ex. 17:8-16).

Israel eventually became a strong nation but never found itself far from war. It was constantly attacked by people near and far, fighting the same battles with the same peoples for centuries. The Philistines and Syrians, Assyrians and Babylonians, Greeks and Romans all found footing in the battlefield of Israel and with her people. War never took the Israelites by surprise: they knew that they would be persecuted and attacked because of who they were and what they represented (Deut. 20:1-4). Today's passage is the same song, though different verse: God's people battling for their existence. But the chorus never gets old: God is their strength. God is their protector. God is their victory.

Option 2

In the previous session, we saw the Israelites begin their campaign to conquer the promised land with a victory over the fortified city of Jericho. We saw God provide the victory and spare Rahab and bring her into the people of God. In the chapters that follow, the Israelites suffered defeat at the city of Ai because they failed to follow God's instructions, but they were given victory over that same city after they repented. In this session, we will see that Israel had learned an important lesson: victory was theirs if they obeyed God; defeat was certain if they relied upon themselves.

- **Why do you think God would want us to learn the lesson that self-reliance ultimately leads to our defeat in the end?**

TEACHING PLAN

Read Joshua 10:1-8



When the kings near Jericho and Ai heard about how these two cities had fallen, they formed an alliance to fight against the invading Israelites—all except for the Gibeonites who took a different approach. Some of them pretended they had journeyed from far away and convinced Joshua to sign a treaty of peace. Joshua fell for the ruse because he didn't consult God and when the truth came out, the Israelites had no choice but to honor the agreement. Because of their deception, Joshua declared that the Gibeonites were cursed, and they became woodcutters and water carriers for the Israelites. It was civility, but not camaraderie. But the other rulers in the area were not happy that Gibeon, a large city with many warriors, had aligned themselves with Israel.

The Gibeonites had aligned themselves with the Israelites—their enemy—so the Amorite kings attacked Gibeon. Gibeon was powerful, but no match for the alliance of kings that had come against it. So, with nowhere else to turn, the Gibeonites sent word for help to Joshua. But would Joshua and the Israelite army answer the call? Would they go to the rescue of those who deceived them? To ignore the Gibeonites surely would have been the easy thing to do. But here, Joshua and the Israelites spurned the easy way out—they didn't find an excuse to betray their word, abandon the Gibeonites, and impugn the God they followed. They kept their oath and marched forward to defend a people who had tricked them—but to whom they had made a promise.

▪ **What are some ways we tend to try to “play it safe” today, even if that path takes us away from God?**

After the Israelites set out from Gilgal to help defend the Gibeonites, God spoke to Joshua and instructed him not to be afraid. God was going to hand over the opposing alliance to the Israelites, and not a single one would be able to stand against them. What appeared to be a great risk for Israel from a human perspective was actually God's way of delivering five kings and their armies to Joshua and the Israelites at once. And once again, we see God reminding Joshua that victory was based on who He is and what He would do, not on who the Israelites were and what they could do. God put the Gibeonites in the path of the Israelites. God gave Joshua the opportunity to honor the word he had given the Gibeonites. God provided the battle that would reveal His power. God promised the victory and provided that victory—in its entirety.

99 Essential Doctrines (p. 56, DDG)

Miracles

A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order of things, or supersedes natural laws, for the purpose of demonstrating His glory and/or validating His message. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture; miraculous signs and wonders were oftentimes evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God's message to the people. Because we believe God to be all-powerful and personally involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God fights for His
people to provide
the victory.


Joshua 10

9. The idea of marching all night was not unprecedented in the ancient world, but it was not common because it could exhaust the soldiers and thus ruin their effectiveness.

14. Verses 11-14 summarize how the LORD fought for Israel. God's part in the miracle was of primary significance. Had He not fought, Israel would not have won. Because He fought, Israel could not lose and needed only to follow up on the victory. God hears and responds to prayer elsewhere in Scripture. (see Num. 14:11-21; Deut. 9:19.) But the wording here, listened "to the voice of a man," is used with God as the subject elsewhere only in Numbers 21:3 and 1Kings 17:22. In other contexts it can also mean "obey."

The author's emphasis in the section comes in verse 14. He marvels, not so much at the miracle or sign of verse 13, but rather at the fact that God heard and responded to the voice of a man (v. 14), interceding dramatically for Israel because of Joshua's petition (v. 12)! There had never been such a day, nor would there be ever again. The two previous miracles on Israel's behalf—the stopping of the waters of the Jordan and the victory over Jericho—had been at God's initiative; this time, it was in response to one man's petition. This fact again highlights Joshua's importance in the book, and it also underscores God's faithfulness to his people.

In Defense (p. 58, DDG)



Regarding Joshua 10:9-15, interpreters have proposed four major explanations of this passage: (1) the earth stopped its rotation, (2) a solar eclipse occurred, (3) an astrological omen took place, or (4) the passage is figurative, not literal. The second option is not plausible because the text does not state that the sun and moon darkened; they continued to shine but stopped moving (the verb is best translated "to cease"). The third option suggests that Joshua employed a pagan form of prayer based upon the practice, found in other ancient Near Eastern cultures, of reading omens in the movement of heavenly bodies. This option is inconsistent with Joshua's faithfulness to the Lord. The fourth option is not credible because verses 13-14 state clearly that the sun and moon stopped their motion. The best way to understand these events is to accept the first option, according to the plain reading of the text. Through alteration of the earth's rotation the apparent movement of the sun and moon across the sky was halted. The urban legend that Princeton scientists or NASA computers have "discovered" Joshua's long day has circulated for more than a half century. Though baseless, this fictitious "scientific" explanation is still widely promoted. (The Apologetics Study Bible)

TEACHING PLAN

Though this situation came about from deception, none of it was outside of God's plan to make good on His promise to give his people the land. God was going to be glorified, even through the trickery of the Gibeonites and the rash promises of Joshua.

- **How is it comforting to know that God can be glorified and bring good from anything, even our mistakes?**


Read Joshua 10:9-15





When the Israelite army drew near Gibeon, they were worn out. Yes, they had caught the alliance of five kings by surprise, but that advantage was lessened by their weakened state of marching all night—which was exactly what God wanted. Once again, we see that God's strength is made known most clearly through the weaknesses of His people. Notice who acted in these verses: the Lord. The Lord was the One who threw the opposing army into confusion. God had told Joshua that He would hand the enemy over to the Israelites, and that is precisely what He did.

- **How have you seen and experienced God's power and what have you learned from those experiences?**

The battle had been won; God had provided the victory. The alliance of five nations was on the run. The day was now getting late and the Israelites, while no doubt energized from the victory, were surely tired. But Joshua had something else other than calling off his troops' advance in mind. He didn't want to stop the battle; he wanted to prolong it to give his army time to wipe out their enemies.

Joshua knew the battle was the Lord's and that the victory was secure, but there was a problem: he needed more daylight for his forces to see the battle through to the end. They would not be able to continue fighting in the dark. So he did only what was logical: he prayed for God to hold the sun in its place and to stop the moon's advance. He prayed for God to make the day longer. 

God answered Joshua's prayer and the sun stood still. And just as Joshua demonstrated His faith in God, the army demonstrated their faith and obedience as they cast aside their exhaustion and possible frustration, and kept fighting. When they likely wanted to stop, Joshua prayed for the ability to keep going. And in the end, God won a greater victory and received greater glory. 

Perhaps Joshua's prayer brings to mind another prayer for strength in the midst of a different battle. When a different Warrior, full of exhaustion and agony, would fight until the end as well after praying: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (Matt. 26:39). Like Joshua, Jesus knew the Father was Lord of the battle. The Father would supply Him with strength, and He would see Christ through to the victorious end. 

- **What are some promises of Scripture that keep you brave in the face of battles?**
- **What Joshua-style prayer might you need to utter to God today?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God fights for His people to provide the victory.

Joshua 11

The Lord did the unthinkable: He stopped the sun in its tracks, giving Israel more time to complete the rout of their enemies. Joshua trapped the five defeated kings in a cave so they couldn't escape while he and the men finished destroying the five armies. Then, after encouraging his commanders to be brave, he executed the five kings, hung their bodies on trees until evening, and then commanded their bodies to be buried in the cave they had hidden in (10:16-27).

The battle was finally over, but the war was not. While the story of Israel entering the promised land and God giving their first three victories requires nine and one-half chapters of the book, the balance of the conquest is recorded in a blistering pace in only a chapter and one-half. Then, we reach this summary:

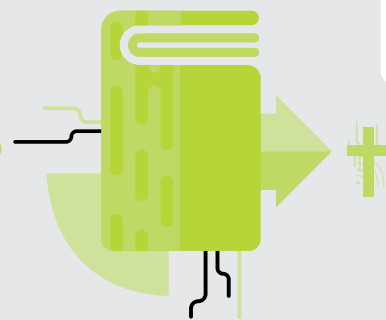
23. So Joshua took the entire land, in keeping with all that the LORD had told Moses. Joshua then gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. After this, the land had rest from war. (Joshua 11:23)

The Israelites had endured a lengthy war in pursuit of the promised land. And God had given them victory—the land was theirs. But notice that God gave them something else as well, something that they desperately needed: peace. “After this, the land had rest from war.” Rest for a land trampled by the feet of warriors and forced to drown on their blood. Rest for the battered and worn out bodies of God's people. Rest for the anguished minds and hearts of the people, never knowing if they would live through the battle before them, or the next, or all those that followed. The sweetest rest comes after the greatest exertion.

Jesus promised that all who come to Him will find rest for their souls (Matt. 11:28-30). The Israelites' physical, emotional, and mental rest in the land is a picture of this greater rest Jesus spoke of: spiritual rest we find only in Him. We too were in a battle we could not win on our own—the battle against sin and death. Like the Israelites, we faced an unbeatable foe. But also like the Israelites, we were never expected to win—at least not by our efforts. Just as God went before His people in battle in Israel, He went before us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, who conquered sin and death in our place. When we trust in Him, God gives us the victory and the peace and rest we need, leading into salvation and living out our salvation each day.

(p. 57, DDG) Christ Connection

God fought for Joshua and the Israelites, giving them victory over their enemies and peace in the land. God has provided victory over sin and death for us through His Son's death and resurrection. Through Jesus we have peace with God.



Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

Head



What are some things the Israelites were reminded about in this account regarding God and His character?

Why is the fact that God is omnipotent a good reminder for people?

Heart



What are some battles we face today as Christians?

Why is it important that we approach sin within our lives in terms of a battle?

Hands



What are some important reminders we need to recall as we face our own battles in life?

What does Christ's victory have to do with the battles we face today?

Main Point: **God fights for His people to provide the victory.**



Head

God had not just given His people the victory; He had taught them, and all the people in the land, something else quite important: He is omnipotent. Even nature is under His sovereignty. This was not a new lesson for the Israelites. They had seen God hold back the waters of the Jordan and had heard the stories of God's mighty works in the exodus, but this was a lesson that deserved repeating. God wanted His people to trust in Him and His might, not in themselves.



Heart

Maybe you feel like the battle against sin waging inside your heart is that of a never-ending battle. You know you're fighting the battle God led you to fight, but you had no idea it would take this much out of you. But we know this: we determine if a fight was worth it after the battle is won. The battle might be harder than we ever imagined; it might take more out of us than we were willing to give at first. It might last longer than we expected. Now, in the midst of the battle, we may want to quit. But we cannot. In the end, when we stand in victory, we have the clarity of vision to look back and know it was worth it. Worth every drop of sweat and blood we shed. Because the battle belongs to the Lord, and His glory is at stake.



Hands

Maybe you're fighting a battle right now. It might be a physical battle, full of sickness or pain. Or perhaps it is an emotional one, and your enemy is depression or anxiety. Perhaps your battle is within your family; relationships with parents or siblings. Or your battle might be against yourself—your pride, your ambition, or your own agenda.

Regardless of the battle, turn away from relying on your own strength to fight. You are not enough. The battle is not yours to win; it is God's to win for you. You won't get through this alone; you can't. Instead, turn to the only One who can and will get you through the battle in victory. Saturate yourself in His Word and His promises, spend time in His presence, and thank Him for His providence. Praise Him for the glory that will be all His. Thank Him that He is with you at every turn. And when you're tempted to pray that the battle will end, dare to pray for more sunlight so the fight can wage on—unto total victory.