



Israel's Southern Campaign Joshua Chapter 10

Introduction

We do not know how much time had passed since Israel crossed the Jordan into Palestine, whether a few months, a year, or more. The entire conquest of the land took about seven years. Joshua Chapter 10 records the spectacular completion of the campaign for the southern region. In his commentary [Explore the Book](#), J. Sidlow Baxter divides the conquest thus:

- Entrance to the land - Chapters 1-5
- Central campaign - Chapters 6-9
- Southern campaign - Chapter 10
- Northern campaign Chapter 11
- Summary of all the kings and major cities which fell before the sword of Israel - Chapter 12

We have seen that God was actively engaged in each victorious battle. In fact, without Him victory would have been extremely doubtful. That is the central lesson in the first ten chapters of Joshua. At Jericho God did it all. The people simply marched and shouted. At Ai they were roundly defeated until sin was exposed, confessed, and then judged, confirming victory was secured by moral rather than military prowess. Gibeon conceded defeat by conciliation because all their military men had heard of the God of Israel. It is no different today. Jesus said, *without me you can do nothing* (John 15:5).

Outline of Joshua 10

- I. Southern Coalition Attack - Joshua 10:1-9
- II. Supernatural Assistance - Joshua 10:10-15
- III. Supremacy over the Enemy - Joshua 10:16-27
- IV. Successful Conclusion - Joshua 10:28-43

I. Southern Coalition Attack - Joshua 10:1-9

- A. Adoni-Zedek - Joshua 10:1-4
 - 1. King of Jerusalem

Adoni-Zedek ("lord of righteousness") was the king of Jerusalem, the stronghold of the Jebusites, a tribe of the Amorites. Strictly speaking, they were not Canaanites but they were even fiercer than the tribes Israel had previously encountered. Keil and Delitzsch call the Amorites the strongest of all the Canaanites. It is possible Adoni-Zedek was a title, just as "Pharaoh" was a title of Egyptian rulers.

2. Threatened by Gibeonite's defection

According to [Baker's Bible Atlas](#) (Charles F. Pfeiffer), "The destruction of Jericho and the defection of Gibeon served as a warning to the Canaanite kings of the south. Under the leadership of the king of Jerusalem, an alliance was formed in which the rulers of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon agreed to join in resisting Israelite encroachments."

Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities... greater than Ai, and all its men were mighty. Gibeon was a major city, the loss of which undermined the stability of the southern area. Joshua was in possession of a key city.

B. A Coalition of Kings - Joshua 10:5

The five kings led by Adoni-Zedek attacked Gibeon, "perhaps as an object lesson to others who might wish to make a separate peace with Israel" ([Baker's Bible Atlas](#)).

C. Gibeonites Cry for Help - Joshua 10:6

The men of Gibeon sent a desperate plea to Joshua asking him to defend them, in accord with their treaty, *for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the mountains have gathered against us.*

D. Joshua's Response - Joshua 10:7-9

Joshua exhibited integrity by honoring the treaty made with the Gibeonites. "When Joshua received word of the attack he assembled his warriors at Gilgal [twenty miles east of Gibeon], made a swift night march, attacked the enemy and then pursued them through the mountain passes guarded by the two Beth-horon in the valley of Ajalon. After relieving the Gibeonites, he chased the enemy from Upper Beth-horon (1750 ft. above sea level) to Lower Beth-horon, one and three-quarter miles down the valley" ([Baker's Bible Atlas](#)).

How much do you rely upon God's promises to you? "If the Gibeonites could rely on an oath the Israelites made in the adverse circumstance of the Gibeonites' deception, when the Israelites did not even ask God's counsel, how much more confident can we be in God's oath to us. May we rely upon it. May we cast ourselves upon Christ and be those of a completely quiet heart" ([Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History](#), Francis Schaeffer).

II. Supernatural Assistance - Joshua 10:7-15

A. A Fortifying Assurance

After Joshua and his *mighty men of valor* left Gilgal, the LORD gave Joshua assurance of victory, “Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand before you” (10:8). With this promise, Joshua marched all night and arrived at Gibeon infused with confidence. His armies attacked the five Ammorite kings near daybreak and *the LORD routed them before Israel*.

B. A Timely Hailstorm - Joshua 10:10-11

“A providential hailstorm contributed to the sound defeat of Israel’s foes. The fleeing kings were pursued to Makkedah, in the Shephelah north of Lachish, where they were slain. Joshua followed up his victory with the capture of the five strongholds. The battle at Beth-horon had been decisive. *The LORD fought for Israel*” (Baker’s Bible Atlas). The Shephelah (referenced above) is the low-lying district between the central area of Palestine and the Mediterranean.

Hail was one of the plagues of Egypt (Exodus 9:24). God the Creator can use nature to accomplish His will and to help His people. David wrote, *The LORD thundered from heaven...hailstones and coals of fire...He sent from above, He took me...He delivered me from my strong enemy* (Psalm 18:13,16-17). See also I Samuel 7:10 and Job 38:22-23.

Again, it was God’s power and not the Israelites who turned the tide of battle. *There were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the children of Israel killed with the sword*.

The turning point in Europe in World War II was D-Day June 6, 1944. General Dwight Eisenhower waited off the coast of France, hidden by cloud cover but dependent on the weather clearing just long enough for the invasion of Europe. Storms prevented any movement. He knew they could not wait long without being discovered and attacked. Finally, a few hours before aborting the operation, the opportunity came - only a few hours - and the allied troops landed, ultimately resulting in victory. Eisenhower knew he had the military strength and advantage, but it was the weather that made the difference. God was in control!

C. A Day unlike Any Other - Joshua 10:12-15

1. Joshua’s prayer

For Israel, victory was in sight if only the daylight would hold. Joshua may have wondered if there were enough daylight hours left to finish the job. He cast his burden

on the LORD. We are given a quote from the Book of Jasher, a piece of poetry commemorating the stupendous event. Joshua prayed, *in the sight of Israel*:

“Sun, stand still over Gibeon;
And Moon in the Valley of Aijalon.”

Then the editorial comment follows,

So the sun stood still,
And the moon stopped,
Till the people had revenge
Upon their enemies.

2. The Book of Jasher

The Book of Jasher seems to have been a collection of odes praising certain heroes and recording their feats. The collection was formed by degrees. It was never considered inspired; however, it is quoted here as an authentic account in poetic form.

3. God’s answer

So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. With all that has been conjectured, explained, and written, this is the best description of what happened. It was a day unique in history. *And there has been no day like that, before it or after it, that the LORD heeded the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel*.

Joshua’s faith was equal to the challenge. He knew, *Without faith it is impossible to please Him. For he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him* (Hebrews 11:6). Joshua believed God as we can when He says, *Call to Me and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things which you not do know* (Jeremiah 33:3).

God is willing and able to do so much more than we can imagine. *He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think* (Ephesians 3:20). “Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God.” So said William Carey (1761-1834), a British pioneer missionary to India, known as the “father of modern missions”. As we fight our spiritual battles and strive to faithfully serve God, why do we not ask more boldly according to what we really desire Him to do for us?

III. Supremacy over the Enemy - Joshua 10:16-27

A. The "Caved-in" Kings - Joshua 10:16-24

According to Alfred Edersheim (Bible History), Beth-horon means “house of caves”. The five kings fled and hid in one of these caves. When it was reported to Joshua,

he had the kings secured by placing large stones over the mouth of the cave. When Joshua returned victoriously from battle, he called all the people together and had the trapped kings brought out. He commanded his officers, "*Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings.*" Having stood upon the promises, he wanted them now to stand upon their enemies.

It was not a barbaric act for military leaders to set their feet upon the necks of defeated kings. It was a symbolic act of subjugation. Today a conqueror may require the enemy to sign a document and surrender his sword, as General MacArthur did to the commander of the Japanese forces on the battleship Missouri in 1945. In 1865, when General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox, ending the Civil War, Lee offered his sword. However, Grant refused it in admiration of Lee's conduct of the Confederate forces.

B. The Conquered Enemy - Joshua 10:25-27

1. Conquering fear

a. "*Do not be afraid*"

The first enemy we need to conquer is the enemy within ourselves - fear. The only useful purpose fear serves is to mobilize us to action. Fear releases adrenalin and gears us for response, be it flight or fight. Having done that, fear's usefulness is over. We can be done with fear. We can say to ourselves, as Joshua said to his officers and as the LORD said to Joshua, *Fear not* (KJV)! We have the ability to control our fear by self-determination. *For God has not given us a spirit of fear* (2 Timothy 1:7).

b. "*Nor be dismayed*"

Being dismayed means not knowing what to do next. If nothing replaces fear, we will be thrown into confusion and fear may return. If we are not to be dismayed, we need to move into action immediately. Joshua's officers were commanded to put their feet upon the necks of their enemies.

c. "*Be strong and of good courage*"

Strength and courage replace the fear inside.

2. "*For thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight*"

Once again Joshua simply told his officers what God had told him. God had promised victory. They could have confidence in Him and act on the basis of that assurance. Failing to act on the basis of God's promises

and principles is either disobedience, laziness, or foolishness. All are the product of unbelief.

IV. Successful Conclusion of the Southern Campaign - Joshua 10:28-43

A. The Remaining Cities - Joshua 10:28-39

1. Makkedah - 10:28

The kings of the coalition were slain and hung at Makkedah (10:21, 27-28). At Joshua's command, and in accordance with Deuteronomy 21:23, they were taken down at sundown.

2. Libnah - 10:29-30

Israel fought and the LORD delivered the city and its king to them. Note the writer, presumably Joshua, gave the LORD credit for the victory.

3. Lachish and Gezer - 10:31-33

These cities fell like dominoes. There is a form-like repetition with each account. Israel encamped, they fought, the LORD delivered them, and they struck down all the people. In this case Lachish was taken on the second day of fighting. The king of Gezer came to help Lachish so Joshua struck him and his people as well.

4. Eglon - 10:34-35

Israel encamped against Eglon, fought, took it on the same day, and struck the people until they were utterly destroyed.

5. Hebron - 10:36-37

Hebron had been Abraham's campground, and now it was a major city with suburbs. Israel fought against Hebron, took it, and struck its king, suburbs, and all the people. *He left none remaining.*

6. Debir- 10:38-39

Debir was the last city to be taken in southern Canaan. Israel fought against it, took it and its king with its surrounding cities, and utterly destroyed the people. The southern campaign was ended. Debir was later taken over by Egypt and given to Solomon as a wedding gift.

B. Rest - Joshua 10:40-43

1. *So Joshua conquered all the land: the mountain country and the South and the lowland and the wilderness slopes and all their kings.*

2. *He left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed.*

Peace is costly. It doesn't just happen. The Israelites had been strong, courageous, and disciplined. They had followed Joshua's every command. The punishment for Achan's sin no doubt helped. The conquest was half over.

3. *As the LORD God of Israel had commanded*

Joshua was faithful to his orders from the LORD God of Israel, the Supreme Commander. This is a lesson for us. Any objection we may have regarding purpose, strategy, or tactics must be taken up with Him.

C. Greater Rest Ahead

1. Joshua's incomplete rest

Distances can be long on interstate super highways. Travelers see the sign "Rest Stop" many miles ahead and take heart. However, a stop along the way is not anyone's permanent destination. Neither should we think that the rest Joshua and the Israelites experienced was permanent rest, welcome as it was. They would fight again. Their descendants would sin against the LORD and lose the land that had been so hard-won. Those are deceived who think this world can give rest in the truest sense.

2. Christ's complete rest

a. Foreseen by David

The writer to the Hebrews says...*a promise remains of entering His rest.* Those who believe enter that rest. *If Joshua had given them rest, then he [the Psalmist] would not have spoken of another day* (Hebrews 4:1, 3, 8). For David says, *Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart* (Psalm 95:7-8), regarding a rest similar to God's Sabbath rest when He finished His work of Creation. It was a final rest from a particular work which was finished. David knew there was a greater rest to come because Joshua's rest brought only physical rest, not spiritual rest since people's hearts were still hard. David foresaw a spiritual rest even greater than the spiritual rest he knew.

b. Offered by Christ

Jesus Christ invited all to come to Him for that rest. *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls* (Matthew 11:28-29). How can anyone refuse this offer? Do you need rest for your soul, inner rest and peace, release from struggle and tension? Will you take Jesus at His word today?

c. Received by faith

Christ died to provide perfect and eternal rest for all who come to Him by faith. This includes peace with God, peace between people, and peace of mind and heart. *For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God [did] from His.* *Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest* (Hebrews 4:10-11). It is the rest of relationship with Christ by faith. Once you have it, it never ends.

Applications

1. Are you part of a cause that desperately needs your assistance lest it go down in defeat? Although not every cause is necessarily our business (and we need to be aware of being deceived into leaving the work God has given us for one He has not given us), there are times when immediate action is not only appropriate but our duty.
2. How open are you to cries for help from those who are helpless? Our Lord went about doing good deeds. Will you leave your comfort zone, your cell phone, your television, to help another who needs you?
3. What fear do you need to face and fear not? Is it fear of the future, of illness, job insecurity, failure, loneliness? Will you give your fears to the Lord Jesus? What practical step can you take today to not be dismayed? Remember, the antonym of fear is faith.
4. How do you handle fear? Do you refuse it and take God's promises in His Word as your own? Do you pray and ask God's help? Do you seek godly counsel and prayer support? These steps are basic in handling fear.
5. Are you confident of ultimate victory in your situation because of God's promises to you and because Christ has defeated our enemy, Satan? Will you stand firm, resisting this enemy in the safety of Jesus our Lord?