

Joshua Chapters 9 and 10

Introduction

The Canaanite kings formed an alliance against Joshua and the Israelites (v 1, 2), but the “inhabitants of Gibeon” took a different approach. Under false pretences they styled themselves as travellers “from a distant country” (v 6), which suggests they had done their homework, realizing from Scriptures such as Deuteronomy 7 v 1, 2 and 20 v 10, 11, 15 that Joshua would *not* make a covenant with them unless they came from far away...

The Gibeonite deception (Joshua 9 v 1 to 27)

- What factors led to the disobedience of Joshua and the leaders? Again, what did they neglect to do (v 14)?
- Deception apart, what was commendable about the Gibeonites’ behaviour? Recall that in the parable recorded in Luke 16 v 1 to 9, Jesus commended the ‘manager’ not for his dishonesty, but for his shrewdness.
- Having realized their mistake, how did the Joshua and the Israelite leaders deal with the situation (v 21, 23, 27)? How can we ‘let our mistakes work for us’?

The inhabitants of Gibeon were “Hivites” (v 2, 7), which means ‘serpent’. The Hivites “acted with cunning” (v 4), which reminds us to stand against “the schemes of the devil” (Ephesians 6 v 11), remembering that deception and cunning are his weapons (2 Corinthians 11 v 3).

Notice too that they were clever enough to refer to the defeat of the Amorite kings, Sihon and Og, but not to mention Jericho or Ai, which were recent and local events, and would have given the game away...

What happened to the Gibeonites after Joshua 9?

- (i) They became servants at the tabernacle, just as Joshua had commanded;
- (ii) Gibeon became a priestly city; the ark of the covenant stayed there in the days of David and Solomon (1 Chronicles 16 v 39, 40, and 21 v 29);
- (iii) At least one of David’s mighty men was a Gibeonite (1 Chronicles 12 v 4);
- (iv) God spoke to Solomon at Gibeon (1 Kings 3 v 4);
- (v) The Gibeonites helped rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 3 v 7 and 7 v 25). Even though their oath was made under deception, God expected the Gibeonites to keep it, and the people of Israel to keep their covenant with them. If God will not tolerate the breaking of an oath made in this way, how much more will he *never* break his own oath and covenant made to us on the basis of the shed blood of Christ! See Hebrews 6 v 17, 18.

The sun stands still (Joshua 10 v 1 to 15)

Back to the alliance of five Canaanite kings: the Gibeonites were now at war with their former allies (v 4). They looked to the people of Israel as their helpers and protectors (v 6) – they were not too proud to call for help. The Gibeonites trusted in Joshua and his word. How much more can we rely on Jesus and *his* word!

- How did the Lord encourage Joshua (v 8)?
- So what did Joshua do, and what did God do (v 9 to 15)?

The incident with the hailstones shows incredible marksmanship, and rules out any ‘natural’ explanations – see Job 38 v 22, 23. Compare this incident with the seventh plague of Egypt (Exodus 9 v 23 to 25), and the seventh bowl judgment (Revelation 16 v 21).

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- What do you make of “The sun stopped in the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day” (v 13)?
- How was the length of this day extended?
- Could it have been a slowing of the earth’s rotation, or a tilting of the earth’s axis?
- Was it a miracle of reflection, or refraction of light, or could it have been simply the presence of God manifested in light?
- Whatever caused this phenomenon, the result was clear: the sun appeared to stay still in the sky until Israel was able to complete the victory...

Nothing is too hard for God (see Jeremiah 32 v 17)! There are other similar incidents and allusions in Scripture:

- (i) Habakkuk 3 v 11a: “The sun and moon stood still in their place”, which may have been referring to this incident;
- (ii) Job 9 v 7a says that God “commands the sun, and it does not rise”;
- (iii) The sun appeared to go backwards in the days of Hezekiah (Isaiah 38 v 8).

CS Lewis (in ‘Miracles’) wrote “The mind which asks for a non-miraculous Christianity is a mind in process of relapsing from Christianity into mere ‘religion.’” To deny miracles is the epitome of human arrogance, and a claim to omniscience. To deny miracles would be to deny the birth of a child, or the miracle of Creation itself. All the resources of science cannot create even a single blade of grass. No wonder the Lord asks of mere mortal man, “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding” (Job 38 v 4).

Five Amorite kings defeated, conquest of southern Canaan (Joshua 10 v 16 to 28, 40 to 43)

“Put your feet on the necks of these kings” (v 24) – putting your foot on someone’s neck was a sign of victory. This act, performed upon the five Amorite kings, shows that the victory of the people of Israel was complete. See Romans 16 v 20a. Joshua conquered the whole of southern Canaan, and then returned to the camp at Gilgal.

Joshua’s military tactics were

- (i) speed;
- (ii) stealth; and
- (iii) knowledge of the terrain,

but the *key* to Joshua’s victory was that the God of Israel fought for Israel. This is also true as we battle against our own spiritual enemies: we can only win as we see the Lord fighting on our behalf. He provides the victory, which was won at Golgotha’s cross, and we need to live in light of that victory...