

Joshua
A Day Like No Other
 Joshua 10:1-15

Joshua 10:1–5 The king of Jerusalem appealed to the kings of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish and Eglon to attack Gibeon because they made peace with Joshua and the Israelites.

v. 6 the Gibeonites, with their allies sent word to Joshua pleading for help.

From Gilgal, Joshua immediately marshaled his forces and marched all night up the steep ravine to Ai and then south to Gibeon, where he fell, suddenly, on the unsuspecting Amorite Hill Country Confederacy, presumably at dawn.

v. 10 *“Israel pursued them along the road going up to Beth Horon and cut them down all the way to Azekah and Makkedah.”*

v. 11 *“More of them died from the hailstones than were killed by the swords of the Israelites.”*

Joshua 10:12-14

*Sun, stand still at Gibeon,
 and moon, in the Valley of Aijalon.
 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 the midst of heaven and did not hurry to set for about a whole day. There has been no day like it before or since, when Yahweh heeded the voice of a man, for Yahweh fought for Israel.

What Actually Happened at Gibeon That Day?

Traditional View: God stopped the rotation of the earth and the revolution of the moon to give Joshua an extra day of light to completely destroy his enemies.

The same God who spoke the entire universe into existence *ex nihilo*, out of nothing (**Psalm 33:8-9**).

The same God who *“upholds the universe by the word of his power”* (**Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:17**)

Matthew 19:26 Jesus - *“With man this is impossible, but with God ALL things are possible.”*

Problem: Joshua prays *in the morning as the sun is rising in the east and the moon is setting in the west*. So, why would Joshua request for longer daylight, if it's still early in the day?

Other Possible Ways to Understand This Passage

1. *The prayer is figurative language.*

Judges 5:20 Deborah and Barak claim that the very stars fought against Israel's enemy (cp. **Habbakuk 3:11**).

The book Jashar (cp. **2 Samuel 1:18**) is filled with poetic and figurative language.

Problem: What do you do with the miracle of the hailstones? Were they figurative, as well? The literary genre of Joshua and the repeated emphasis in the text that the day was prolonged does not support taking the prayer figuratively.

2. *God caused a miraculous refraction of the sun's rays that made it seem as if the sun and moon were out of their regular places.*

“A special and rare mirage in the earth's atmosphere which is similar to one or more of the natural mirages, but in **Joshua 10** it was of a magnitude, altitude and character that would be the result of a divine miracle only.”

Problem: Regardless of how many adjectives you use to embellish this view, it hardly qualifies as a day like no other.

3. *Joshua asked for release from the day's oppressive heat.*

The Hebrew verb *dom*, which most of the English versions translate “stand still,” usually means “be silent” or “cease.”

God answered Joshua's prayer with dark clouds that not only gave relief to his soldiers so they could do the work of a full day in half a day's time, but also provided the mother of all hailstorms that destroyed his enemy.

Problem: What is said in the first line of Hebrew poetry is clarified and complemented in the second line. Although the Hebrew word *dom*, used of sun in the first line, may be ambiguous in meaning, what is said in parallel about the moon in the second line is not—the word means *“to stop,”* which is why *dom* is rightly translated *“stood still”* regarding the sun. It's unlikely Joshua simply asked for cloud cover to relieve his men from the heat.

4. *Joshua prayed for a bad omen to dishearten the Amorite armies.*

Joshua prayed for the sun and full moon to be on opposing horizons on the 15th day of the month, rather than, as normal, on the 14th of the month, because if the sun and full moon appeared together on opposite horizons on the 15th, it would indicate a shorter than normal lunar month, which would be interpreted by the Amorites as an evil omen for them.

Joshua himself need not have believed in such omens, but he asked for this so his enemies would, thus using their own beliefs against them and lose heart.

This view makes sense, because, if all Joshua needed was more daylight, why ask for the moon to stop as well?

Problem: This view is based on 4th century BC literature, some 800 years after **Joshua 10**.

In the final analysis, I have no strong conviction as to what exactly happened in **Joshua 10**, and as I read the various articles and books available by conservative scholars, I sense they don't either.

I'm inclined to take the passage at face value.

The miracle of Christ's physical resurrection from the dead, with a body that defies all natural laws, is, by far and away, more fantastic than either miracle in **Joshua 10**.

Whatever happened, what is absolutely certain is this: As never before, God listened to the prayer of a man and gave Joshua a day like no other so Israel could have a complete and decisive victory over the enemies of God. That day, Yahweh fought for his people in a way like no other.

Life Lessons from Joshua 10

1. *Nothing is too great for God.*

Rationalizing attempts for the purpose of satisfying the modern scientific mind should be avoided.

Positivism is a philosophy which holds that every rationally justifiable assertion can be scientifically verified or is capable of logical or mathematical proof, and therefore rejects theism (belief in God) and a biblical view of the world as being out of accord with the actual state of affairs.

Although the scientific method, itself, is a wonderful tool, one to fully respect as an important way to understand the natural world God has created, science cannot any more test and replicate in its laboratories HOW God performed the supernatural in **Joshua 10**, than when he miraculously fed

several thousand people with five loaves of bread and a couple of fish, much less how he performed Christ's resurrection.

When it comes to the miraculous, the scientific method is impotent. At this point, scientists must put away their test tubes, turn out their lab lights, set aside their humanistic arrogance, and stand in awe of God and worship!

Psalm 14:1 *The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."* If the omnipotent God of all creation exists, then it is completely logical to accept this passage at face value, as a long line of Christian and Jewish scholars have for millennia.

2. *When we join God in doing what he is doing, we can expect great personal victories.*

This was the secret to Joshua's prayer. God told Joshua, in v. 8, that he was giving the kings of the hill country and their armies into his hand. Joshua and Israel would serve as God's instrument to *do God's will—judge the horrifically evil Canaanite nations* by removing them from the land, and, at the same time, *fulfill God's promise—give Israel the land*. In joining God in that work, Joshua could literally "ask for the moon" and get it.

John 14:13-14 Jesus - *Whatever we ask "in his name" will be given to us.* To pray *In Jesus' name* is to pray in Jesus' person, purpose, pleasure, and plan. It means to pray with the mind of Christ.

John 15:7 Jesus - *"If you abide in me (i.e., walk in intimate fellowship with me in loving obedience) and my words abide in you (i.e., our minds and hearts are immersed in his word and revealed will) ask whatever you want and it's yours."*

1 John 5:14 *This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.*

Is what we pray in concert with what the Spirit is praying for us and what Jesus is praying for us (**Romans 8:26, 27, 34**)?

When our prayers join God in what he is doing, we, too, can "ask for the moon," and God will intervene to give us great victory.