

Joshua 10: The Most Doubted Miracle in the Bible

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In Joshua 10:1-11, Israel soon learned about the trouble their treaty with Gibeon caused. In chapter 9, Gibeon had fooled Israel by pretending to be a foreign nation outside of Canaan that had come into the land to form an alliance and sign a peace treaty. Joshua had made the deal with Gibeon, and now considered it a mutual defense pact. In ancient Jerusalem, some 400 years before King David took the city in 2 Samuel 5, the Canaanite King of Jerusalem found out about the Gibeonites joining the Israelites. Gibeon was an important fortified city only 9 miles away that threatened their existence. Therefore the King of Jerusalem feared a domino effect if all the other Canaanites didn't come together to oppose Gibeon. He rallied the kings of four other city-states that were all south of Jerusalem. They united and attacked Gibeon, and with the odds 5 to 1 against them, Gibeon sent word to Joshua (their new best friend) for help. While this confederation of great kings assembled their armies, God must have had a good laugh, because He was using these events for good to accomplish His will. Most people would have considered helping the tricky Gibeonites a burden, but not Joshua. Even though they had tricked Joshua into the treaty, Joshua saw a great opportunity to catch all 5 of the Canaanite kings out in the open. Instead of having to assault 5 fortified walled cities, now Joshua had them where he could attack them altogether out in the open. God gave Joshua His approval by assuring Joshua "Do not be afraid, for I have given them into your hands". When we as students read Joshua 9, we wondered how the Gibeonite deception could possibly be a good thing, but now it is apparent that by the providence of God even lies and mistakes can be used for good.

Joshua marched about 25 miles uphill at night, and surprised the enemy from behind. No Canaanite would have expected the Israelites to be able to march a large army that far at night, much less immediately attack a larger force. The Canaanites panicked and scattered in retreat. The terrain was a two mile descent falling 700 feet, so they were fleeing down a difficult steep decline. We know that God was fighting for Joshua because v. 11 says that God caused a shower of hailstones that killed more of the enemy than the Israelites—the battle is the Lord's. From Joshua's standpoint, he must wipe them all out before they can reach the safety of their fortified cities. Joshua felt like time was running out, and he would not have enough daylight left to win a total victory. Therefore Joshua prayed a very unique prayer that had never occurred before or since, "Oh sun stand still in Gibeon and Oh moon in the valley of Aijalon". We know this was phenomenological language because the sun and moon don't move, but the earth is rotating around its axis, which makes it appear that the sun and moon move. Even today we all say the sun comes up and the sun sets, even though we know the sun doesn't move. Joshua's prayer was for God to extend the daylight until the victory was totally won. In verse 13 there is an indication that what happened was God slowed down the rotation of the earth thus extending the daylight hours, "the sun did not hurry to set". In order that we will know for sure, the author adds "There was no day like it before it or after it." We thought the miracle of the hailstones was big, but extending the time of daylight was HUGE! I have searched all the commentaries and writings of theologians I could find, and it is apparent to me that no miracle in the Bible is as doubted as this one. The traditional biblical view is that it was a miraculous event caused by the intervention of God, but in the last 150 years most theologians have sought out different ways to explain it. The first is the poetic view that this request was in the form of a poem, so it is invoking poetic metaphor to magnify the power of God who won the victory. They would say that the fact the sun stood still instead of the earth tends to back figurative language. A better explanation is that God's glory simply kept the light available until the fight was over. Before you decide, consider what C. S. Lewis said, "The mind which asks for a non-miraculous Christianity is a mind in process of relapsing from Christianity into mere religion".

Is Time Constant, and What is Time Anyway?

The text of Joshua indicates that God prolonged the daylight to give them more time. Can you change time? It seems that just as you can't unring a bell, you can't change time. WHAT IS TIME? From the beginning of recorded history, mankind has had a sense of time, and he tried to measure it. 4000 years ago, they used sundials that were divided into two parts and each part had 12 divisions, thus a 24 part day. In the 14th century AD, the first clocks changed the meaning of time and the 24 parts of the day became hours that were a defineable amount of time that equaled 1/24th of a full solar cycle as measured by the pendulum machine in the clock. A little later they also divided each hour into 60 parts called minutes. In the 16th century, clocks became more precise by adding 60 parts of each minute, or seconds. In 1967, the second was defined as the duration of 9.2 billion energy transitions of the cesium atom (I don't know either). This ushered in atomic timekeeping or Coordinated Universal Time, UTC for short. In order to stay perfect to 60 second minutes, every decade eight minutes have 61 seconds. If this is more than you wanted to know you are in good company, but at least now we know that time is perfectly measured by high speed computers and is definitely constant, right? NOT SO FAST

At the end of the 17th century, the great Isaac Newton believed that time is continuous, and that it flows at an unchanging

rate everywhere in the universe. This was the widely accepted view for over 200 years until Albert Einstein came along with his theories of relativity. According to Einstein, "the rate at which time passes depends on the relative motion between observers, and also on the strength of a gravitational field." Therefore time is an observed phenomenon by which humans attempt to record change, but a literal definition is impossible. Time is a practical convenience in our life, but it is only constant in the same physical location. I have about ten more pages of notes about time, but I'm sure you get it—We don't even know what time is, yet we try to put limitations on the God who created time when He created the universe. When God created our world that rotates around its axis in about 24 hours, thus creating day and night based on its relationship to the sun, He was not constrained by physical laws, so that elsewhere in His universe we can observe, by looking at light, that time is different in different locations. Even now in our world time is changing, and a modern day is longer by 1.7 milliseconds than 100 years ago. Question---Does God obey our limited understanding of the laws of nature, or do the laws of nature obey God? Will I question God's ability to extend time in Joshua 10 in order to achieve His will? Will I find fault with God's Word, or how God does things? I refer you to the book of Job when Job demanded answers from God, and found fault with how God does things. God's answer was not really an answer, but it was a theology lesson. God asked Job if he was there when God created all things. Did Job understand how it was all done, or how big the universe is, or how many stars there were? "Can the faultfinder contend with the Almighty God?" (Job 40:1) After God pounded him with these kind of questions for four long chapters in Job 38-42, Job finally repented and answered "I am insignificant so what can I reply to God. I shut my mouth." (Job 40:3-4). God then pounded him with questions for two more chapters and Job answered in Job 42:2-6, "God can do anything and I can put no limits on Him. Who am I to talk about God when I can't understand the creation? Its way over my head...therefore I take it all back and I repent---NEVER MIND" (my translation).

At the end of the day, when we consider miracles of God in Joshua 10, God fought for Israel, and its not important how He did it, but it is important THAT He did it. God could have stopped the motion of the entire universe, and some day He will according to 2 Peter 3:10-11. The natural laws that secular man says can't be violated are governed by God. All laws have two things---someone powerful created the law, and someone powerful enforced the law. Therefore, does God obey the laws of nature, or do the laws of nature obey God?

Time Before and After the Original Sin

In Genesis 1-2, we have a short version of the creation account, and we see that God's original creation was perfect and without sin. Time had no significance since Adam and Eve were not aging and had no concept of death. Yet God told them that if they disobeyed, they would surely die. After they disobeyed God in Genesis 3:6-7, they discovered what God meant, that they began to age and deteriorate, were separated from God, and eventually would physically and spiritually die. God forced them out of Paradise into a fallen world the text calls "east of Eden". From that time on, time took on real meaning as they had a finite time to live and a finite time to accomplish whatever task they performed. After the fall, time became their enemy, and everything was governed by time as they drew nearer and nearer to death. If you are like me you can look back in time and wonder how it all went by so fast. No longer can I do all the things I could do in my twenties. No longer is my memory good, and no longer am I pharmaceutical free. How did it ever get to this time when every day we have to take all these pills? It all happened in time, and time is clearly the enemy of the unredeemed human race that will run out of time, out of hope, and out of meaning. Therefore because our time is short, hasten to believe in the Lord as Isaiah said "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near" (55:6). How long will God allow time in a fallen world to continue? After all, you never know how soon it will be too late!

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