

Title: Knowing power with God - Joshua 10

Purpose: To appreciate some of the ingredients of truly knowing power with God as Joshua did here in this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

Power with God

It is an undeniable fact that throughout history there have been people who knew, people who demonstrated that they had what you might call "Power with God".

You could take Bible people - people like Moses, people like Elijah and Elisha OR again you could take other people further along on the history timeline - people like George Mueller who demonstrated great power through faith and prayer to be able to feed and house thousands of orphans around the Bristol area.

And today we are coming to what has to be one of the great POWER CHAPTERS of the Bible - it is Joshua chapter 10.

Joshua a particularly PROFITABLE book

There are many things that make this book of Joshua, that we are going through, particularly profitable for us. Some of those things are:

- seeing the SUCCESSES.

Under this heading we get:

- a sight of **the kind of God that we have** - the incredible ways in which He works
- AND ALSO **various insights about people** - what kind of personal actions and attributes it takes.

- seeing the FAILURES.

For this we observe:

- where people are WEAK - the things they do AND JUST AS MUCH the things they don't do
- AND ALSO how God responds - sometimes in direct and maybe quite devastating judgment THEN OTHERTIMES with patience and mercy.

Thus we can become "MORE THAN CONQUERORS"

So all told, this book of Joshua is one which is a rich mine for anyone who wants to pick his way with skill through the MINEFIELD OF THIS WORLD - coming through *not* just unscathed *but* as one who is in the company of those who are (as Paul calls them in Romans) "MORE THAN CONQUERORS".

Recent RECAP since Jericho

What has happened RECENTLY in the book:

- Jericho was completely defeated and destroyed
- THEN one man Achan sinned and so the people met DEFEAT when they tried to tackle Ai

- ONCE the SIN was dealt with a 2nd ATTEMPT at AI was successful
- FOLLOWING THIS - Joshua and the leaders were taken in by the people of Gibeon and ended up making a peace treaty with them because they were told that they lived far far away and Joshua (once again) forgot to pray and enquire of the LORD about this
- AND LAST OF ALL - the rank and file Israelites are pretty unhappy about this blunder YET Joshua stands his ground and does not compound one mistake with another - he remains true to the COVENANT that he has made with the Gibeonites and he effectively saves them from the Israelites:

The last but one verse of Ch. 9 (v. 26) says "So Joshua saved them from the Israelites, and they did not kill them."

Q. What will happen next?

So as we come into chapter 10, and we are not too far from the mid-point of the book, **we do wonder what will happen next**.

They have been lurching about from success to failure and clearly **IF they are going to win the whole campaign**:

- they are going to have to **do a bit better**
- they are going to have to **get a bit more stability in place**

And so as we work through the first 28 verses of Joshua chapter 10 - I want to **divide it down into 3 PARTS** - FIRST - Verses 1-7:

1] Joshua accompanies the Gibeonites (Verses 1-7)

The response of FEAR/ALARM - recurring feature

Now the **joint feelings of FEAR & ALARM** - do seem to be something a recurring feature as we go through the early chapters of Joshua. Even before Israel had started to defeat and destroy places in the actual land of Canaan, people had had gained a **well-developed sense of FEAR**.

This was what we learned from **Rahab** the prostitute in Joshua chapter 2 - because of the way that Israel had crossed the Red Sea and because of the way that the 2 kings of the Amorites had been defeated.

And now, by stages, that fear is stepping up as more places succumb, one by one.

A new PERSON (Adoni-Zedek), a new PLACE (Jerusalem)

Joshua Chapter 10 verse 1 introduces us to **a new PERSON** and to **a new PLACE**:

- **the new PERSON** is ***not*** a name that you might be **very familiar with** - it's a king by the name of **Adoni-Zedek** (which means in Hebrew - "**my Lord is righteous**" OR it could mean, given this is a pagan kings name - "**my Lord is the god Zedek**")
- **the new PLACE** is a name you **will most certainly know** - but this is **the very first time it gets mentioned** in the Bible - it is the place **JERUSALEM**.

Given the prominence that **JERUSALEM** holds through the rest of the Bible - all the way through to Revelation - it is pretty remarkable that this place **does not actually become occupied by the Israelites for another 400**

years or so - **King David** is the one who will push out the Jebusites and claim the city.

Q. So why was Adoni-Zedek (King of Jerusalem) so shaken by recent events?

Well 3 reasons I guess:

- **ONE was simply that** -the battle line was getting a lot closer to home for him. Gibeon was only 6 miles North West of Jerusalem.
- **ANOTHER was that** - Gibeon was not just any location, not just another Ai - it was, as Verse 2 tells us: "an important city, like one of the royal cities; it was larger than Ai, and all its men were good fighters."
- **and LAST but certainly *not* LEAST** - was the way that Gibeon had succumbed.

In WWI soldiers when they **deserted** were court-marshalled and then **executed by firing squad** - and there was always that terrible stigma of cowardice that attached to them.

However, the Gibeonites hadn't exactly deserted - they hadn't legged it out of the Land of Canaan to some safer place - instead of DESERTING they had DEFECTED - they had **gone across to the enemy side!!**

And quite understandably **Adoni-Zedek** was now worried that they **might produce a kind of DOMINO-EFFECT upon other cities around about** - that they might have a catastrophic result on the morale of all the other Canaanite cities.

A priority for Adoni-Zedek

So what this meant militarily was that **it was now IMPERATIVE that Joshua and his forces were not allowed to occupy Gibeon and the other 3 cities allied to them** (chapter 9 verse 17) - you see Joshua and the Israelites were still camped out at **Gilgal down on the plains of around Jericho** - and while they were there they **did not as such possess a central bridgehead** from which they could then drive a wedge between North and South preventing a nation-wide allied army forming.

- **NOW** - if Adoni-Zedek imagined that his coalition of 5 Royal Southern cities would easily out-gun the 1 important city (that even though it had good fighters, couldn't even boast having a King) - he was undoubtedly right.
- **YET** - what he did not consider was that **Israel and Gibeon were now forever connected and the bond was a strong one.**

The bond of true fellowship not easily broken

Because every Christian is planted in the same soil, that fertile soil around the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ who died for every single one who looks to Him by simple faith & earnest repentance - this means that there is a very deep bond that is able to overcome all sorts of challenges and the typical barriers of race and sex, of wealth and poverty, of disagreement and falling out.

Verses 6&7 tell us what happened next:

"The Gibeonites then sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal:
'Do not abandon your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us! Help us, because all the Amorite kings from the hill country have joined forces against us.'

So Joshua marched up from Gilgal with his entire army, including all the best fighting men."

Joshua, having saved them once from all the combined discontent of the people of Israel who would have happily seen them done away with for their deception - **Joshua now comes to their rescue for a second time.**

A lesson here - Whoever is not against me is for me

I think there is an important lesson here for application:

Jesus taught his disciples in the gospels, speaking about those who were driving out demons (that is faithfully ministering) in the name of Jesus - that: "whoever is not against us is for us" - we're on the same team.

And we should not be quick to separate ourselves from them as the disciples were rather hastily wanting to do. For Joshua, he recognises that this set of people have surrendered themselves fully to the Israelites and have now come under a covenant of peace. He sees that they too are, now, on the same side and can no longer be considered as enemies.

Q. So how does that work out in practice for us?

Q. Do we have the right to keep at arms length those that are true believers, that are clearly serving the same God and knowing the same saving grace that we know?

- There is **NOTHING SURPRISING ABOUT THE FACT** that believers can and do disappoint one another and then fall out of favour with one another (after all that old sin nature is still lurking around, not yet completely killed off).
- **BUT IT SHOULD BE SURPRISING TO US** (and saddening too), when the cooling of friendship functionally equals what you might call a "defection of fellowship", yes a "destruction of fellowship".

Does this not mean that we have forgotten that we are both servants of the same LORD, both saved by the same Saviour, both working to the same Kingdom Ends!!

Does it not also mean that we have forgotten that Satan is gaining another victory when two Christians are isolated one from the other and a wall of separation is erected.

Doesn't Ephesians 2 talk about the way in which the wall of partition was taken down in Christ and the two (i.e. Jews and Gentiles) were reconciled and became one body in Christ.

So firstly then we see **that Joshua** (AND of course all the Israelites) **that Joshua accompanies the Gibeonites** - secondly #2:

2] The LORD accompanies Joshua (Verses 8-15)

Now I think it has to be said that if:

- **if JERICHO** - was probably the **EASIEST** of their victories - they just need to stroll around the city once a day and get some exercise before walking straight up and in on the 7th day and taking them out in one fell swoop.
- **if AI** - was **THE MOST DETAILED & MILITARILY COMPLEX** of all the battles described in the book of Joshua
- **then the battle over GIBEON** - was **the most DECIDEDLY DRAMATIC** and **the most THOROUGHLY GOD-DRIVEN**

I can imagine, for generations to come, when the Israelites would **sit around the fire at night** and eat and **rehearse all the stories** of how they won the land:

- they would talk of **the walls falling down** and no doubt how unprepared the soldiers in Jericho were
- they would talk of **their clever strategy at Ai** - how they lured everyone out of Ai leaving it open and totally undefended
- but I think the way they gained the victory against this 5 king coalition and the unbelievable slaughter that took place as they chased them by way of the twin towns of Upper and Lower Beth Horon - **would have probably been the BEST STORY OF ALL** - perhaps they would leave it to last.

And it truly does make an INCREDIBLE STORY (and perhaps - because of the various supernatural, divine elements in this story - I should call it an ACCOUNT and not a STORY lest anyone have the idea that I don't expect you to take it literally).

Recounting the story

So we notice from Verse 9 that Joshua leads his men on an all-night march - that is certainly some commitment to the Gibeonites.

We see too that God here speaks to Joshua in the previous verse he says:

(Verse 8) "Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you."

What this suggests to me is that God, most likely, is talking to Joshua in the context of prayer. This seems to be one of the lessons that Joshua is repeatedly having to learn.

So they take the 5-king coalition by surprise, they catch them on the hop, as it were - and then from this point it is as though God takes hold of the steering wheel of the rest of the battle. There are 3 things that God, the LORD does:

- **NUMBER ONE** - Verse 10 "The LORD threw them into **CONFUSION** before Israelites"
- **SECONDLY** - when the Israelites are then pursuing the fleeing army (along the road back the way they had come - so that is the road through Upper and Lower Beth Horon) **God sends HAILSTONES**
- and then **THIRDLY**, God does something rather unique - He stops the **SUN & MOON IN THEIR TRACKS** so that the length of the day is extended

MIRACLES

Q. Now I don't know what you think about these things? Q. I don't know what you think about the subject of the SUPERNATURAL / this realm of MIRACLES?

- **NOW FOR MOST PEOPLE** - they would not be too challenged by the idea that God might somehow throw an army into some CONFUSION (a bit of a SUDDEN SPIN) and then they **turn tail** and **run away** having been kind of **"SPOOKED"**!
- **And even HAILSTONES** - given they are a, how shall we say a **"NATURAL PHENOMENON"** - perhaps we feel reasonably OK with that as well. We can visualise it. It doesn't seem so much in the realm of the IMPOSSIBLE.
- **But what about THE MOTION OF THE PLANETS** - the earth, the sun, the moon.

Verse 12ff is where you might feel that a problem begins:

"On the day the Lord gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the Lord in the presence of Israel: **'O sun,**

stand still over Gibeon, O moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.' So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. There has never been a day like it before or since..."

You see we live in a very "scientific age" and we might well say that we all know that if the earth suddenly stopped spinning so that the sun would remain where it was in the sky, it would be rather like a driver slamming on the brakes in the car when it was travelling at twice the speed of a jumbo jet - and you know how fast that feels when you are trundling down the run way at the airport about to take off.

just to make it worse, of course, none of us are wearing seat belts.

Big-godder/Little-godder

The story is told of a preacher who would in time become very famous.

He had been invited to preach in the Princeton Chapel twelve years after his graduation. One of his professors came in and sat down near the front. Well at the close of the meeting, the old professor came up to his former student and said:

"If you come back again, I will not come to hear you preach. I only come once. I am glad that you are a **big-godder**. When my boys come back, I come to see if they are **big-godders** or **little-godders**, and then I know what their ministry will be."

His former student asked him to explain, and he replied,

"Well, some men have a **little god**, and they are always in trouble with him. He can't do any miracles. He can't take care of the inspiration and transmission of the Scripture to us. He doesn't intervene on behalf of his people. They have a **little god** and I call them **little-godders**.

Then, there are those who have a **great God**. He speaks and it is done. He commands and it stands fast. He knows how to show himself strong on behalf of them that fear him.

You have a **great God**; and he will bless your ministry."

He paused a moment, smiled, said, "God bless you," and turned and walked out.

So that leaves us with the same question really:

Q. What are you? Q. Are you a "little-godder" or a "big-godder"?

Truly so much rides on your answer, because those who embrace the God of the Scriptures embrace the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob —and that makes all the difference!

2 Chinese evangelists

Just of late I have been reading about a couple of Chinese evangelists who truly knew power with God.

- One was by the name of **John Sung** - a powerful revivalist during the 1930's and 40's.
- The other is a man by the name of **Leland Wong** - a Chinese evangelist in America

He had a very distinctive letterhead that he would use with 3 short scripture phrased quoted one after the other:

"The sun stood still" - "the iron did float" - "this God is our God".

By the juxtaposition of these verses, Leland Wong was affirming that for him his God does the impossible." "The sun stood still." "The iron did swim." "This God is our God." **He was a BIG-GODDER.**

Q. What of you?

Hard to swallow?

If you say well I do have a bit of a problem swallowing this particular event - then you are, AT ONE LEVEL, in line with the author of this book of Joshua - see what he writes in Verse 14 - it is a statement of great EXCLAMATION:

(Verse 14) "There has never been a day like it before or since, **a day when the Lord listened to a man**. Surely the Lord was fighting for Israel!"

So if we are going to find something hard to swallow - it really should be the fact that God Himself should condescend to listen to a man and do his bidding!!

If you say that you have a big-god BUT you just find a few episodes like this one a bit far-fetched and hard to believe - well you should be a little bit more honest and press the logic a bit further.

Just back up a bit - what about the hailstones - they only hit the fleeing soldiers on the enemy side - isn't that a bit unlikely.

Move ahead into the NT and think about the one who died on the Cross for you, the one who has borne the justice of God on your behalf.

Q. How do you know that His work on the cross has been received?
In other words how do you know that your salvation in Christ is real?

Well 1 Corinthians 15 verses 3-5 tell us how we can and should know:

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance:

that Christ **died** for our sins **according to the Scriptures**, that he was **buried**,
that he was **raised** on the third day **according to the Scriptures**, and that he **appeared** to Peter, & then to the Twelve."

So FIRST - **Joshua accompanies the Gibeonites** THEN - **The LORD accompanies Joshua** - one last bit:

3] Victory accompanies the LORD (Verses 16-28)

I don't know if you can cast your minds back as **Christmas time 2003** when the end came for **Saddam Hussain the Iraqi President** - he was finally tracked down near farm building hidden away in small hole after a tip-off.

Well here in this story we have not one but five leaders who have gone missing in the headlong rush to escape from Gibeon and from the Israelites. And it seems that a tip-off had come from somewhere or another and these 5 kings had been found hiding in a cave.

Verse 17 takes up the story:

"When Joshua was told that the five kings had been found hiding in the cave at Makkedah, he said, 'Roll large rocks up to the mouth of the cave, and post some men there to guard it. **But don't stop! Pursue your enemies**, attack them from the rear and don't let them reach their cities, **for the Lord your God has given them into your hand.**'"

The key thing as Joshua sees it is the greater prize, not merely that they have found the kings - but rather that the VICTORY has been given and as such it is assured and they should therefore press in and take it.

No one uttered a word

You see when we are with God OR RATHER God is with us - then nothing can be said against that.

This is the sense that you get at the end of Verse 21:

"The whole army then returned safely to Joshua in the camp at Makkedah, **and no one uttered a word against the Israelites.**"

The truth is that if we have the LORD, then we have the VICTORY and no one will be able to say anything to alter or challenge that.

When God is clearly in something then people will have to shut their mouths.

Now Joshua could have settled for less. He was tired. How easy it would have been just to reason that now he had the 5 kings that was enough. He could have said to himself "Well we've basically broken the back of things...".

Q. How big a victory do you envision?

Q. How COMPLETE & TOTAL a VICTORY do you think can be yours through God?

Perhaps for you your enemy is a particular temptation or sin - this is your "demon" and you are content to keep it at bay BUT NEVER EXPECT TO FULLY CONQUER IT IN YOUR LIFETIME!!

CONCLUSION

Joshua was a man who patently had POWER WITH GOD:

- he valued **God's people** AND SO **he accompanied the Gibeonites**
- he expected **God's power** AND SO **the LORD accompanied him**
- he desired **God's purpose** AND SO IT WAS that **VICTORY accompanied the LORD**

Lessons we can learn - YES!

Dimensions we can emulate - YES!

Power with God we too can know - YES!

And all for Jesus' sake and God's glory - AMEN