

Joshua 07-06-15b

Let's pick up our study now in Joshua chapter 10. We've seen the background here. We know that there's a confederation of five kings who have assembled themselves.

They have marched up to Gibeon. They have been getting ready for the attack. They're having their planning meetings.

They're drafting their five-paragraph orders. They're slapping each other on the back and talking about what a big rout they're going to produce. Now they're going to overwhelm and destroy the Israelites.

They're quaffing ale and celebrating in advance what a big victory they're going to have because they're so overpowering in their numbers and their skills. These ne'er-do-well newcomer Israelites have come in. They might have pushed over those good-for-nothings down in Jericho and Ai, but we'll show them something.

They eat a hearty meal and drink themselves into a stupor and fall over asleep. And while they're sleeping, Joshua and the Israelites march all night long, show up out of nowhere. By the way, there are several other precedents in history.

I don't have time to talk about them, but if you're a military history buff, you know that there are other precedents for this kind of rapid movement where an army suddenly shows up where the enemy was not expecting it to be. Patton did this. T.J. Jackson did this.

Many of your great generals knew their troops, had them fit. And by the way, a forced march of this nature in the dark requires a lot of things. You don't just get up off of your little stretcher thing that the servants carry and stagger off and pick up a sword and say, well, I believe I'll go do an 18-mile forced march.

You have to be fit. You have to have discipline. You have to have good leadership.

You have to have a recon party who's going to go out and mark the way. Now they have these little sticks that you break and they glow, and a recon party will go ahead of time, and they'll figure out the best path, and they'll mark surreptitiously with these little lights inside of cans or under rocks or whatever so that only your advancing party can see them. They can't be seen from the other direction.

They can't be seen from the air. And you're running on lights. If you've ever done one of these night movements, I used to do it as an artillery battery, and you've got a deuce and a half, or depending on the size of your artillery pieces, if you're a 155-millimeter battery, you may have five-ton trucks, and you've got to run on dim lights, practically no headlights at all.

You've got trailers and weapons and vehicles. It used to be Jeeps. Now it's Humvees.

But you've got to move this vast amount of stuff, and it's dangerous. People walking can get run over. You can run off in terrain.

You can go off the edge and wreck stuff and hurt people. It's tremendously involved in doing a night movement. It's no different in the ancient day, with the exception that you may not get run over.

But if a group of this size, you've got Joshua with all the fighting men, all the mighty men of valor. If you've got groups that get separated and suddenly come upon one another in the night, don't know who they are, if you don't have a recognition signal, if you don't know who's where and how to communicate and how to stay dispersed and yet how to stay together and make this night movement, noise discipline so that some fleet-footed messenger doesn't run and alert the enemies so that you don't get ambushed. Somebody's got to be recon in advance to make sure that the enemy has not posted sentries and recon parties looking for you.

It isn't simply, well, let's just hop, skip and jump and we'll be there in no time. This is a profoundly professional movement that takes place at night in the dark. These guys don't have flashlights, they don't have infrared, they don't have goggles, they don't have laser range finders.

These people have come a long way and they are faithful, they are dedicated, they are professional, they are now battle-hardened veterans. They've been through three or four or five campaigns now, if you count the stuff on the far side of the Jordan with Og, King of Bashan, etc. and then coming across Jericho, Ai and Bethel and that sort of thing.

And now they are able to do this march. Why? Because they are prepared, they know how to do what they are doing. They are disciplined, they follow orders and they arrive undetected.

And bright and early the next morning, these confederated kings and their soldiers are waking up, yawning and gapping and stretching and saying, well, I guess we ought to kind of get our stuff together and start finishing up our orders and organizing our stuff and packing our provisions and we'll tootle on down and attack the Israelites. Well, they are completely unprepared. They did not expect this level of military skill and professionalism on the part of the Israelites and for that reason they die.

They all die. Now, you and I are engaged in a spiritual conflict. Like it or not, want it or not, wish for it or not, it's a fact.

Remember our memory verse, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand. Having done all, still standing.

Stand therefore, having girded your waist and so forth. We're in a conflict. We have to remember, we have to view the events of each day.

You think, well, I don't really see it as a conflict. It's just circumstances, it's people, it's things, it's pre-existing conditions, it's this, it's that. Listen to what the word of God says.

It is a spiritual warfare. We have been given the equipment to protect ourselves defensively and to go after the enemy offensively. We've got the shield of faith.

We've got the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. We've got the helmet of salvation. Our feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Our waist is girded about with truth. Breastplate of righteousness. All of those things are here for a reason.

And it sounds fine and it sounds like, well, what a wonderful little metaphor, but I put my Bible down on the table and I get ready to go address my responsibilities. I've got things to get done. I've got a house to clean.

I've got a job to perform. I've got a lawn to mow. I've got kids to take care of.

I've got this, I've got that, I've got the other. It's easy to forget, but it is the daily preparation, it is the daily conditioning, it is the daily readiness that makes us able to do the extraordinary things that we are occasionally called upon to do. How often does the army of Israel have to do an 18-mile forced march in pitch darkness? Not that often.

Why are they able to do it? Because they're in condition every day. These guys are not at home yelling at the wife and kicking the dog, and then suddenly Joshua blows the ram's horn and they all get up and grab their stuff and go off to fight. There are drills.

There is a rotation. You remember that there was a provision in the law of Israel that certain men were given time off. If you got married, you got a year off to spend time with your wife, to develop and solidify your relationship.

You didn't get married and run off to Iraq and come back six months or eight months or a year later. I'm just saying, the law of Israel allowed, God made provision for the fact that if you're going to get married, you need to solidify and strengthen that relationship, and it's no time to be separated for months or years at a time. A few weeks isn't that big a deal, but months and years, that's a different thing.

So, there's provision in the law. There's a rotation. There are men who are on duty and men who are off duty.

There's kind of a rotating reserve in Israel, so that out of the families and clans and tribes, there are men who serve for a period of time, and then they come home, and others serve. But they are always ready. They have honed their skills.

They have preparation in the desert. Joshua is a good general, and ever since he met the Amalekites on the way out of Egypt, he has been honing and preparing soldiers. Joshua has been a military general for 40 years.

How many stars do you think he has at the end of those four decades? Well, he's the five-star general in Israel. So, he knows what his men are capable of. He force marches them overnight, and these kings who gathered together and went up in all their armies and camped before Gibeon to make war against it, are taken by surprise.

God says, Do not fear them. In verse 8, I have delivered them into your hand. Not a man of them shall stand before you.

Joshua came upon them suddenly, by surprise. This is the idea. Now, why didn't Joshua just leisurely pick the strawberries? Who was it? General Ewell or somebody who picked the strawberries and never did arrive when he was supposed to at Gettysburg? Ah, good grief.

Joshua has this promise from God. Does Joshua slip the pack off his back and say, Well, we've got the promise of God, so we can take our time. We can just do the side shuffle up there to Gibeon.

There's no rush. There's no hurry. There's no need for professionalism.

Joshua understands that the grace of God is available to those who are dedicated, who have enthusiasm, who have motivation, who care about what's going on and want to do things in a way that is pleasing and honoring to the Lord. And he doesn't take this promise as an excuse to slack off. Just the opposite.

Well, we've got the promise of God. Let's hit the ground running. Let's hit them where it hurts.

Hit them hard. Hit them fast. Hit them often.

So, having marched all night, now think about this. How much sleep have these guys had? We were talking earlier about sleeping on your feet. Occasionally you hear about people marching in their sleep and so on.

These guys, if you look at the terrain on your map there, between Gilgal and Gibeon, and nobody was marching along on a nice flat road, semi-conscious. They were furtive. They were stealthy.

They got there over rough terrain, in the dark, at night, and they arrived the next morning, and now they are going to fight all day, and they're not going to be done when this day would normally have been over. They killed them because the Lord routed them before Israel, killed them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them along the road.

These guys did an 18-mile force march, they fought a pitched battle, and they're chasing these guys down the road.

Guys that had a full night's sleep and plenty of food and drink the night before. They're chasing them along the road. They go to bait Haran and struck them down as far as Azica and Makeda.

And again, you can look at your map and see that from way up there by Gibeon, which is pretty much west of Jerusalem, way down past Adullam, down in the Shefala there, the Shefala they call it, the plains. This is the plains of Judah, where it flattens out and you're getting into the country that is basically Philistia. This is a long ways.

This chase, look at the distance between Gilgal and Gibeon, and then look at the distance between Gibeon and Azica and Lachish and Eglon. It's two to three times the distance down there. These guys will have covered better than 50 miles by the time all is said and done.

And they're still swinging swords, slinging stones, bashing people over the head with axes and running them through with spears. Not a man of the enemy stands before them. These are five separate armies that have come together and they're killing them down to the last man.

This requires that hand-to-hand combat is the only kind of combat they have. So, what does the Word of God promise? They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.

Who is that promise made to? They who wait upon the Lord. They shall renew their strength. This is you and me.

These things are written for our instruction. This is not just some ancient battle and we say, wow, those Israelites were really made out of stern stuff. Why is this in the Word of God? Why is it recorded for our instruction? Why are we looking at it tonight? Many times, you know this, I know this, some of us are going through things right now and it's an endurance match.

We think, I am so tired of this situation. I am so tired of this pressure. I am so tired of this battle.

I want to sit down on a rock, let somebody else go chase Adonai Zedek and all of his allies. I'm sick of this. I've had enough.

I've already done an 18 mile force march in the dark. I've already hacked to death 27 enemy guys and I'm tired. I want to sit on a rock and I want to rest.

This reflects a certain perspective, doesn't it? Characterized by an overuse of the first

person singular pronoun. I am tired. I have done this.

I want to rest. I, I, I. What is the issue here? God has given a commission. God has given a blessing.

God has made a promise. There is strength available from God. I just edited a sermon by Dr. Criswell today where he was talking about the fact that the First Baptist Church had many opportunities and missions and many opportunities and expansion of the local ministries in Dallas and so on.

This is way back in 1970, 37 years ago. He was talking about this and he said, you know, the men on the board of the church here, the deacon board have come to me and said we're going to have to try to cut the budget. We cannot do these things.

And his point in this sermon was God does not give you a mission without giving you the resources to accomplish it. If these are indeed the missions of our church, he said, then God has given us the resources. We just have to find them and use them.

In the same way, and I think he's right about that, when God gives us a mission, He's not going to give you an assignment that you can't fulfill. He doesn't put something on your plate that you can't handle. If you're facing it, guess what? By God's grace, you can handle it.

I don't care what it is. I don't care what anybody says. If it's on your plate and you have to deal with it and you have to face it and you're a believer who loves the Lord and you're doing what you're supposed to do, you have got the resources.

They are there. And if you don't think they're there, you're not looking in the right place. And if you're getting tired, your eyes are focused on the wrong thing.

Subjectivity. Eyes on self, eyes on people, eyes on circumstances. What is the cure for subjectivity? What did Israel have to do when the vipers were biting them and killing them? Look up.

Lift your eyes. Look and live. Now, either what I have just said is true or there is no God.

The Bible is not true. It's all a bunch of fantasies like the little animated dinosaur movies they constantly want to show about, oh, here's how it was in ancient... I told you at the break about this program I saw. I'll tell you the level to which they're trying to convince you via this computerized verisimilitude that this is what really happened in the eons of evolution that took place.

They've got the australopithecines chasing away the proto-tiger that's about to eat one of their little young ones. And they say, you know, here's the early formation of group behavior and the glimmerings of intelligence that will later characterize the human race.

But right now, of course, they're just chimp-like, ape-like, proto-humanoid type.

But the glimmerings, it's beginning to happen. The early forms of societal bonds, and it takes a village, it's all beginning to take place. And so what do they do? Here's the little baby grey bottom sitting there, and here comes the proto-tiger, and he's about to get him.

And so they've all run away, run away, run away. But then they get an idea, and they all pick up stones and sticks, and they turn around, and there's a group. They start winging them at the proto-tiger, and the proto-tiger is confused and dazed and taken aback.

And he starts walking away, and then one of these rocks comes and hits the lens of the camera and makes a spiderweb thing in the glass. Now, why do they do that? This is so real. It's as though you're actually there with a camera, and Australopithecine has just cracked our lens.

That's how real it is. Patty saw another part where the proto-elephants were stampeding by, and the camera got knocked over, and you see them going away sideways. But, you know, this is their little sort of self-conscious attempt to make you think, wow, this is so real.

I can practically feel the hair on these proto-humans. Well, listen. These accounts in the Word of God are real.

They actually happened. And we're about to see an extraordinary account. We're about to see some miraculous happenings.

Many people dismiss this as mythology. It's not. And it's been recorded for us because the real and genuine power of God is really and genuinely available to you and to me.

We often don't sense it. We often don't experience it. We often don't take it into account as a real and vital thing.

And it becomes sort of a self-fulfilling prophecy because we lack the faith, because we're not willing to do a forced march because of God's Word, because we're not really willing to attack the Anakim. Remember, some of these confederated soldiers are big boys, sons of Anak. From down there at Kiriath Arba, the town Hebron, where so much great history, history of Abram, history of the forebears of the Israelites, it's now in the hands of the Anakim.

And they are fighting these giants. But what's the difference? Where before, the spies ran back to Israel saying, we can't take these people. They are too many for us.

Shoes on the other foot. Sandals on the other toe now because God is on their side. God has instilled fear.

And look at what else happens. It happened as they fled before Israel, verse 11, and were on the descent from Beth Horon, that the Lord cast down large hailstones from heaven on them as far as Azica. This is artillery support from God.

God doesn't need 105mm howitzers. God doesn't need mortars. God doesn't need bazookas.

God doesn't need rocket launchers and grenade launchers. Hailstones. Now, you know what's amazing about these hailstones? They only hit the enemy.

Israel is chasing these guys down the slopes and the hail is following the enemy, peppering them, killing them by the scores. The Bible goes on to say there were more who died from the hailstones than those that the children of Israel were able to kill with the sword. God killed most of the enemy.

What I think is especially intriguing about this account is, we know that there are giants in Anakim amongst these soldiers. And it seems like giants have a problem with getting hit with projectiles and being killed. These guys need to learn to wear helmets or something because, God, they don't learn.

Hundreds of them apparently get slaughtered here by hailstones and dumb old Goliath is going to stand there a few years later and he's going to get bonked in the head with a big rock and die as well. So, you know, big doesn't necessarily mean smart. But that more died from the hailstones.

Now, there are flash, I say flash, there are sudden storms that come up in Israel. And again, these wonderful travelers and documentarians that were in what they call the Holy Land back in the 1700s and 1800s have documented the fact that they would be out there with their little traveling party and all of a sudden a storm would blow up out of nowhere and they have documented hailstones falling in this region of Israel two inches in diameter. Falling in great abundance and so dangerous that if they didn't get under shelter there was, you know, death and injury ensuing for animals and people.

But this is a supernatural hailstorm that specifically targets the enemy and follows them as they retreat and slaughters them in greater numbers than the children of Israel are able to kill with the sword. But even this doesn't finish the day's events. Because then Joshua spoke to the Lord, verse 12, in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel.

And he said, in the sight of Israel. Now, we know what he's going to say. Sun, stand still.

Moon, stand still. And it's going to happen. But I want you to notice something in verse 12.

Where is Joshua when he makes this prayer? Is this a little private prayer? Does Joshua

go up behind a tree and say, Oh Lord, it would sure be great if we had a little more time. Where does Joshua make this prayer? Joshua stands before the children of Israel. He says, in the sight of Israel.

He stands there and speaks to God out loud with an abundance of witnesses. His staff, the leaders of the subordinate units, all of the surrounding soldiers around Joshua. And you can imagine he's the commanding general.

There's going to be a lot of security around him. And Joshua shouts out this prayer to the Lord. And vast numbers of Israelite soldiers hear him say this.

Now, how embarrassing is it going to be if Joshua prays this prayer and nothing happens? The sun sinks slowly in the west and Joshua's going to have egg all over his face. What's the point? This is unprecedented. Where is the scripture that says, Oh by the way Joshua, if you ever need more time, just ask me and I'll make the sun stand still.

Where does Joshua get the confidence to pray this prayer? Where does he get the idea to pray this prayer? We just take the movement of the celestial bodies and the sidereal movement of planets and everything else as a given. It's fixed. It's defined by the laws of physics.

It's been going on forever. In terms of creation, Joshua spoke to the Lord on the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel and he said in the sight of Israel something that's never been said before, never been said since. Why on this occasion? Sun stand still over Gibeon and moon in the valley of Ajalon.

So the sun stood still and the moon stopped until the people had revenge upon their enemies. Is this not written in the book of Yasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. Stood still in the midst of heaven.

Now this prayer is prayed at around noon. How do we know this? Well, where is the sun when Joshua says, stand still? It's over Gibeon. Where is Joshua? He's at Gibeon.

They're chasing, they're defeating. And once again, this is a little bit of a retrospective. They haven't finished chasing the people all the way down to the bottom of the road and so on.

But in the midst of the battle, why do they have time to make this great pursuit? Why do you look at those long lines on that handout I gave you? Where is the time to cover that distance? They had to force march all night long to go 18 miles from Gilgal to Gibeon. They're going to chase these guys 30, 35 miles. Southward, downhill.

Where do they get the time to do that? Not a man shall stand before you, the Lord said. Joshua said, well, if not a man is going to stand before us, I can already tell halfway

through the day, we're going to need more time. These guys are advancing in every direction here.

They're fleeing and we're not going to be able to fulfill the Lord's command to wipe them out to the last man if they run away. This is the mother of all retreats preceding the mother of all retreats. So, midway through the day, Joshua, being a smart general, realizes there's not going to be enough time to chase down and kill all these guys.

Even with the help of the hailstorm, they're not going to get them all. So he says, in the sight of all Israel, and he bases it on the promise of God. He bases it on the command of God.

Lord, the only way I can make this happen is for you to do something that's never been done before. You have to stop time. The sun stood still in the midst of heaven and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day.

Now, these guys started marching, say, 2,100 hours after it got good and dark the previous night, way back at Gilgal. They've marched 10, 12 hours to arrive in the early morning hours on the following day. They've been fighting viciously, vigorously for 6, 7 hours now at a minimum.

The sun stands still for about a whole day. We're talking about another 12 hours. We're talking about another daylight period.

Right? How come these Israelites are not just falling over in exhaustion? They're not only not falling over, they're running a marathon. How long is a marathon? 23.6 miles? Something like that? What is it? 26.3. I knew there was some combination of those numbers. 26.3 miles.

These guys are doing more than that. They ran 2 thirds of a marathon the night before. And now they're doing the rest of it.

What is the point? What I think, you know, all of the astronomers and so on try to poo-poo this, and there's been a lot of urban legend stuff about how, I used to read a thing years ago, even before there was an internet, about how all the computer guys were running time back and forth in their computers, and they suddenly discovered a missing day, and lo and behold, it was the day. No, that's not true. But, obviously, from the standpoint of an observer on the ground, there was daylight given by the sun for an extra 12 hours on this day.

How did God do that? Did He refract it? Did He put up a substitute sun? Did He actually freeze the movements? Look, God can do whatever He wants. I don't know how He did it. I don't really care.

The Bible says He did it. He did it. And they had an extra 12 hours of daylight here so

that there is a total of some 6 to 8 hours of additional daylight.

Remember, the sun did not hasten to go down for about a whole day, so it would have gone down in 4 to 6 hours from when Joshua called for it. It didn't go down for like 12 hours. This is the import of it.

So, weird refraction. Something was going on in the heavens because you have this bizarre hailstorm. If God used natural means, then there could have been some weird refraction that bent the light.

Have you ever noticed in a dashboard or a clock or whatever, well, you probably don't take them apart or break them like I do, but a lot of things now have little light bulbs inside of clear plastic and the light spreads evenly all through that plastic and it illuminates a dashboard or a clock face or whatever it might be, but there is no light shining directly on that face. It shines on the side of this clear plastic and it is evenly distributed. God could do whatever he wants to accomplish this feat.

And that's what he did. The sun stood still in the midst of heaven and did not hasten to go down. But as great as this is, as miraculous and bizarre as this is, because the daylight persisted for an extra 10 or 12 hours, it's more miraculous to me that the Israelites are still loaded for bear at the end of the day just like they were 24, 30 hours earlier.

They're still going strong. If you've ever... I mean, I compare this to boxing. If you've ever had to do boxing, we were required to do boxing, and they said, well, you know, you're not boxers, you're not in condition, so you'll just fight some three-minute rounds.

You know, like three three-minute rounds or five... I forget what it was. Something like three-minute rounds. And, you know, keep your guard up, jab, jab, jab, you know, keep your right, you know, do your hooks and uppercuts.

They teach you all that stuff. So then you get in the ring and there's somebody else who's actively trying to mash your face all out of shape, and you're trying to do the same to him. And you've got the gloves on and all that, so you start boxing.

And I'm telling you, at least for a guy built like me, that after about 45 seconds of doing jab, jab, jab, your jabs are going at a 45-degree angle down toward the floor. You just physically... These guys are swinging big, heavy bronze swords and throwing heavy spears with flint and various kinds of points on them. Hours, hours and hours.

They're running like crazy all down these things. It's extraordinary. It's unheard of.

It is a fulfillment of the promise of God. And the picture there is a picture for us. One of the things they talked about in that documentary I mentioned about the first year at the various service academies, over and over again, that you talk to these people and say,

you know, the people in charge are the people going through the program.

They all say the same thing. You can tell that a part of the program is to prove to you that you can do things you never thought you could do. The cadets or the midshipmen or the plebes or whoever saying, you know, I found out that I can do things I never would have guessed I could do, never would have imagined that I could do.

Admiral or the general or whoever it is is sitting there running the place and he says, you know, our whole purpose in running this program is to show them that they can do more than they think they can do by teamwork, by dedication, by listening to instructions, by learning to think under pressure. They can become something more than what they were. Well, listen, that's the point of this story.

That's why God put it in the Bible for us. You and I can do more than we think we can do by God's grace, through God's provision. Don't limit God through a lack of faith.

Don't have it be the case that Jesus comes and can do no great miracle in our city, in our life, in our soul. There is nothing that limits the power of God. How much power does it take to freeze the sun in the sky for 12 hours? I mean, the physicists just, it totally blows their mind.

I mean, there's all kinds of things about the rotation of the earth and gravity, and you freeze the planet, and everything, you know, it's like stopping your car in an emergency. Everybody's going to be pushed against the windshield. Everybody's going to fly off into space.

The oceans, the moon, the tides, you know, how many things did God have to arrange or some weird refraction? What did God have to do to put in the sky to get the sun to stay there? Did time catch up later? It doesn't matter. God can do whatever He wants. And we think, well, that's just so beyond the pale.

I can believe in dividing a sea, or, you know, I just can't. That's just too much. I don't really think God can do that.

It's easy for me to imagine because I have seen what computer programmers do within a virtual reality that's created on a computer. You can imagine inside a game space that has been created, and if you've ever spent any time watching or playing these games, there is a great virtual reality. There are rooms.

There are walls. There are stairs. There are places you can go.

There are things you can do and things you can't do. It is a universe defined by rules. And normally, when you are a first-person character in that universe, you are limited to whatever those rules say.

And you have whatever capabilities those rules allow. And it's inviolable. It always works the same way.

But if you are a programmer, or if you get a cheat, or you get a hack, or if you have control over the instructions that define that universe, you can change it. You can make yourself invincible. You can make yourself 9 feet tall.

You can give yourself all weapons all the time and you never run out of ammunition. You can make yourself bulletproof. You can give yourself the ability to fly.

You can do whatever the heck you want because you control the rules that define that universe as someone with access to the program. It's no different here. We have ideas of tangibility and reality based on what our senses tell us.

This is a universe defined by rules that God wrote. God can change them whenever and wherever He pleases. He's got all of the abilities of a programmer on steroids multiplied to the nth degree.

What does that mean for you and me? The challenges and the tests that face us, the things that we are asked to navigate, the battles that we are asked to fight are reasonable. When's the last time you had to pick up a sword and go hack somebody to death with it? When's the last time you had to run 18 miles in the dark and then fight for 10 or 12 hours hand-to-hand combat? When's the last time you were asked to step into a raging spring flood river on the promise that it will go away so that you can cross and it won't surprise you halfway through? When's the last time you were asked to march in silence around a city for a week and wait for its solid walls to crumble and provide a ramp so that you can climb up and kill everybody inside? These were extraordinary times. They were extraordinary days.

And these extraordinary events are recorded for we who now live equally extraordinary lives. But our battles are invisible. Our enemies are unseen.

And it's a greater challenge. Listen. It would be easier to be in Joshua's army than it is to fight the battle we fight today.

Their enemies were physical. Their provision was physical. The manifestation of God's power was physical.

Ours is spiritual. It's invisible. But it takes the same faith.

It takes the same confidence to stand up and pray out loud, sun, stand still, and moon in the Valley of Eidolon to claim the promises of God, to treat what God says as reality. That's our calling. There has been no day like that, verse 14, before it or after it that the Lord heeded the voice of a man and for the Lord fought for Israel.

This is another verse that, if it's understood properly, throws the Calvinists into something of a confusion. They like to say, well, you know, God doesn't respond to what a man says. Man responds unwittingly and without any action on his own part to what God says.

That's not the case. Joshua asked and God answered. Just like the Gibeonites took God at his word, Joshua took God at his word.

And they all live and everybody else dies. Joshua returned and all Israel with him to the camp at Gilgal. You know what that means when it says all Israel returned with him? Guess how many casualties there were in this conflict? Evidently none.

There are none mentioned. If all Israel returned, what does that tell you? These valiant warriors, disciplined, well trained, obedient, submissive, aggressive, energetic, were preserved by God. God granted them their lives.

God returned them to their families. God allowed them to see the fruits of that great victory. The five kings fled and hid themselves in a cave at Makeda.

It was told Joshua is saying the five kings have been found hidden in the cave at Makeda. This is a fascinating little vignette. And all I'm going to say about it tonight is wouldn't it be great for archaeologists digging around that area to find this cave which has never been found to my knowledge, pull these stones off and find the jewelry and the tattered remnants surrounding the dead, dry, dusty bones of these five kings inside this cave.

If it doesn't happen before the Lord comes back, I feel reasonably confident it's going to happen after He comes back. And we're going to get a chance to see that the book of Joshua is completely historically accurate. But instead of hunting around for the gold of the Exodus and the Ark of the Covenant and all the other weird things that people do in the Holy Land, I'd love to go down there and find this cave just to stick a finger in the eye of people who say Joshua is not a historical book.

What are you going to do with that? What are you going to do when you find these inscribed amulets and crowns and whatever else these guys were wearing? By the way, one final detail. Notice that Ai had a king. Jericho had a king.

Jebus had a king. Hebron had a king. Yarmouth, the rest of these places, had kings.

What about the town of Gibeon? There is no mention of a king at Gibeon. You go back and reread that account, you find that it was the elders who consulted together. This was a town that had a congress.

They had more of a democracy going. They had a council of elders who ruled the town. They didn't have a king.

They were what you might call enlightened. And it's just a tiny clue as to why God chose to preserve the Gibeonites. These were smart people.

They were enlightened people. They were wise. And they applied that wisdom toward faith.

Faith doesn't require stupidity. Faith requires wisdom. Smart people are people of faith.

Dumb people confederate, eat and drink, and get slaughtered. So this is where we'll leave off next time. We'll pick up with the execution of these Amorite kings.

We'll talk a little bit about the implications of this victory and what it's going to do for the nation of Israel next time. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the encouragement that we find individually as believers in the church age from the manifestation of your grace and your power and your provision for your people as we have seen it tonight.

We thank you for the truth of your word. We thank you for the solid reality of your promises. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress that truth in our hearts in the days ahead.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.