

Joshua 10:1-15; Psalm 19:1-6; God Works in a Mysterious Way I. The Pressing Need for Rescue II. The Miraculous Deliverance Given

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, some events in the Bible are so fantastic that we have a hard time picturing them in our mind. There are events that are so extraordinary that they boggle the mind. Many of these events happen only once- they never happened before and did not happen again. Think of creation- a one time event never repeated. The world-wide flood- again only once and never again. Even the crossing of the Red Sea and the parting of the Jordan River- events that are unique and specific to Redemptive History. In our passage today we are going to find that the way in which the LORD fights for Israel is unique to be sure- but that is not to say that God is not still fighting for us today. Although God may not stop the sun in the sky for us, that does not mean that God is not listening to and answering our prayers. No, our God always hears the cry of His children- always ready to answer their pleas for help. His answer may be more ordinary in some sense, but He does answer all the same! So the first lesson we should learn is that God hears the prayers of His people and He answers them according to His good will. We also catch a glimpse of God's power today as well. Although God does not normally use such extraordinary means to answer- He is surely free to use such wonderful means as He sees fit. So this evening we consider this theme: Jesus Christ reveals the power of God in defeating His enemies as the Gibeonites are defended.

I. The Pressing Need for Rescue

Our passage opens with the pressing need for rescue. This time, the people needing rescue are not the Israelites as such, but rather the Canaanites who have recently been aligned with them. So we have 5 kings who are allied together against one of their own- the Gibeonites. As you will remember from last week, the Gibeonites have received a covenant of peace from Israel- and thus they are aligned with the people of God having broke their ties with their fellow Canaanites. And thus far in this stage of the conquest, the Israelites have been making good progress into the land. By defeating the cities of Jericho and Ai, the eastern front has been opened up. Now with this alliance with the Gibeonites and their surrounding cities, the center of the land has been secured as well. But to these 5 Canaanite kings- they see that the inroads of the Israelites

is knocking at their doors. With their alliance to the Gibeonites, the center of the land has been handed over to them. Now the entire territory of Canaan has been divided into two. Israel has a wedge of defense between the North and the South- the people of the land are divided and now easier to conquer. So the Axis of Evil joins forces in v. 5- they need to restore the central passage so that troops can move North and South again. It would be like rebuilding the railroads after they had been destroyed- if we hope to mount a counter attack we need to have safe passage. In order to stop Israel from shoring up their foothold, the Canaanites attack one of their own people. So the southern kings make war against the Gibeonites. Knowing their military might and prowess- they do not want Gibeon to be an asset to the Israelites going forward. Facing this army, the Gibeonites send a message to Joshua in v. 6, please come, help quickly and save us. Now remember, these are Canaanites who have entered into covenant with Israel. But what exactly did Joshua promise back in 9:15? It was covenant of peace- we will let you live. They did not promise to protect and defend them from others, however. So it could have been an option for the Israelites to ignore the plea for aid. Think about it- this way the Gibeonites would get what they deserve for tricking us. And the 5 armies that are attacking them will have their numbers decimated as well. Israel can just wait until this battle is over- and attack the 5 kings when they are already battle weary and depleted. That would make Israel's job easier going forward. But Joshua is a man of His word- and a covenant ally is not to be forsaken. The Gibeonites are now under their protection- so they will not forsake their duty. It would be like seeing a member of your church in need of help. Although not technically a member of your biological family, would you forsake someone who belongs to the same house of worship? The Israelites will not simply refuse to do harm- they will positively protect and seek the good of these Gibeonites. In this way they illustrate the positive use of the law- loving your neighbor and not committing murder does not only mean you refrain from killing- it also means that protect and defend your neighbor as well. Seeking the good of all- and especially within the household of faith. So Joshua quickly gathers the men of war and sets out that very night in v. 8. They travel the 22 miles from Gilgal to Gibeon and surprise their enemies in v. 9. Now that we understand the context of this battle, in our second point we are going to focus in the

miraculous victory provided by the Lord. And it all starts in v. 8- the LORD promises victory to Joshua. And again in v. 12- the LORD listens to the prayer of Joshua. Joshua is bold in prayer because he has heard the promise of God! Holding fast to the promises of God is what make bold, prayer warriors!

II. The Miraculous Deliverance Given

So how does the LORD deliver the Gibeonites- how does the LORD hand the 5 Canaanite kings into the hands of Israel and Joshua? Well, in this point we are going to see 3 distinct way in which God works mysteriously- marvellously for the sake of His people and for the glory of His name. So the first aspect of this three part victory is found in v. 10- the LORD throws them into a panic. With the sudden arrival of the Israelites, the Canaanite army is confused and thrown into chaos. They were in a state of terror and dread- as the LORD filled their hearts with fear. Now although our passage does not specifically say this, one of the ways in which God throws armies into a panic is by sending a thunderstorm. We find this in I Sam. 7:10 where the LORD threw the Philistines into a state of confusion by thundering with a mighty sound against them. This state of confusion and panic was also seen when Gideon fought the Midianites in Judges 7. A thunderstorm would fit as we see the second aspect to this victory as well. Not only does God send them into a panic, He also hurls down hailstones. As the Canaanite army is fleeing from Israel- as they are running away- God starts to hurl rocks at them. Literally, the LORD cast great stones from heaven. The imagery is striking- as the LORD is throwing rocks- stoning the Canaanites. An ordinary event- a severe thunderstorm- turned into an extraordinary deliverance for Gibeon. Now the largest hailstone ever found was slightly larger than a softball- estimated to fall at over 100 mph. These large stones can rip through the roof of you house- anyone outside would not survive if hit by one of these. And these stones of ice are said to be large or great! It is as if cannon fire from heaven was ripping the enemy army to shreds. There is no defense for something like this- thrown down specifically from the LORD. If you have ever had a snowball fight and someone throws a piece of ice at you- you know how much pain ice can cause. But this was not just painful- the LORD killed more enemies this way than the Israelite army did with the sword. And to prove that this

was not just some random event, the hailstorm followed the enemy army all the way to Azakah. Wherever the Canaanite soldiers went- wherever they turned- the giant rocks from heaven were hurled at them with deadly accuracy! As the LORD asks in Job 38:23, have you ever seen the storehouses of the hail- that which I have reserved for the day of battle and war? Even the LORD reveals this deadly weapon to Job- who can stand before our mighty God? And finally, the third aspect to this divine victory is found in the movement of the sun and moon. In v. 12, Joshua states in the presence of the people, sun and moon stand still. And God listens to the voice of this man. Now this request for the sun and moon to stay in their place is ridiculed by secular science. For one, this has never happened before. Two, the sun does not go around the earth anyways. And three, if the earth stopped moving for a moment we would all be flung forward and the water of the oceans would rush towards the poles of the earth. So science says it cannot and did not happen. But when we keep in mind that God made and takes care of the earth. That God controls the movement of all things. This stopping the sun in the sky is no real problem for the Christian. We speak of the sun rise and the sun set all the time- so if the LORD stopped the earth's rotation for 1 day- it would be as if the sun had stopped in the sky. Normally the sun is compared to a groom who rushes to run its course- but this day the sun stood still. Now, interestingly, we still speak this way. We still hear these words- "the day that the world stopped turning"- as way to describe some calamity. It is a day that we will never forget! Joshua would not forget this day- it would be a day like no other! Now why would God cause the sun to stay in its place for a whole extra day as v. 13 records? Well, this gave Joshua the necessary time to chase their enemies and defeat the army of the 5 Canaanite kings. In this, the LORD suspends the normal course of the day so that the wicked would be destroyed and those in covenant with Him would be protected. Now one of the lessons we can learn from this really interesting passage is that God is not limited to what we see and know. Nothing is impossible for God- if suspending the laws of nature for a time will be used to carry out His good end, then He is free to do as He sees fit. Just because we have not seen it before does not mean that God cannot do it! We also learn that God hears and answers the prayers of His people. The point that we find in this passage is that God is strong and mighty to save! He is pictured as a mighty warrior who goes out

to battle for the sake of His bride- stoning those who would oppress her- while giving light so that she might see. Now in the extension of the day, remember that the Canaanite army was under the cloud. They were being pursued by a mighty thunderstorm! So there was darkness and death for the enemy of God- while light, blessings and peace for His people! We see a contrast here- between what Israel enjoyed and the Canaanite's endured. One has peace while the other panic. One killed with stones of ice while the other protected. One in darkest gloom while the other enjoys the light of day. This division brings to mind what took place in Egypt those 40 years ago- and the division that will take place on the last day. It is this division that points us to the work of Jesus in separating the sheep from the goats. Jesus will protect and defends His people- sometimes that looks like throwing hail and lengthening the day. He will do what is necessary to save and protect His people- even if that means dying on the cross for them.

Before we close, our passage reveals the strong hand and mighty arm of our God! Let the God who controls the movement of planets be the God in whom you trust- the God who hears and answers the prayers of His people- let Him be the one you call upon in the day of trouble. God always hears and answers our prayers. Sometimes He uses extraordinary means- and other times more ordinary ways. To illustrate a few of these extraordinary means, we need only think of Jesus' life. Being born of a virgin, when He was on this earth, He was able to calm the wind and the waves with His word! When He died, the sun did not stop in the sky- but rather the sun stopped shining all together! But there is one more time when the heavens will be shaken! In fact, one of the signs of the return of Jesus in Mt. 24 is that the sun will stop shining and the moon will not give its light. So Joshua 10 and Matthew 27 are not the last times that the heavens will mark God's direct and extraordinary works! No, on the last day the sun and moon will declare the return of the Son of Man! And when Jesus comes back on the clouds of glory- those who rebelled against Him will be cast out into outer darkness- where the sun never gives its light! And for those who are in covenant with God- these will be welcomed into unended light- where there is no night! It is for this return that we eagerly wait! As our theme stated: Jesus Christ reveals the power of God in defeating His enemies as the Gibeonites are defended. Let all of God's people learn to depend upon His God for He is mighty to save!