



## Session 3

# COMMITMENT KEPT

Always in control, God uses all situations to bring about His purposes.

## JOSHUA 10:6-14

<sup>6</sup> Then the men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal: “Don’t abandon your servants. Come quickly and save us! Help us, for all the Amorite kings living in the hill country have joined forces against us.” <sup>7</sup> So Joshua and his whole military force, including all the fighting men, came from Gilgal. <sup>8</sup> The LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them, for I have handed them over to you. Not one of them will be able to stand against you.” <sup>9</sup> So Joshua caught them by surprise, after marching all night from Gilgal. <sup>10</sup> The LORD threw them into confusion before Israel. He defeated them in a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them through the ascent of Beth-horon,



and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. <sup>11</sup> As they fled before Israel, the LORD threw large hailstones on them from the sky along the descent of Beth-horon all the way to Azekah, and they died. More of them died from the hail than the Israelites killed with the sword. <sup>12</sup> On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to the Israelites, Joshua spoke to the LORD in the presence of Israel: “Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.” <sup>13</sup> And the sun stood still and the moon stopped until the nation took vengeance on its enemies. Isn’t this written in the Book of Jashar? So the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed its setting almost a full day. <sup>14</sup> There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man, because the LORD fought for Israel.

*Focus on how the Gibeonites framed their request for help. Identify words that point to their trust in Joshua’s integrity.*

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*Highlight the different ways God intervened in this passage. What does His intervention reveal about God’s character?*

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## FIRST THOUGHTS

Storms always seem to bring out the best in a community. We usually see the photos of the destruction left behind and rarely hear about how the survivors and others in the community rally around those affected. Neighbors will help neighbors clear debris from each other’s yards. Churches and other organizations become sources for food and other assistance. Teams of people help secure tarps on roofs, provide meals, and man chainsaws. Local college students volunteer to clean, salvage, and sort. New friendships are forged while old friendships are strengthened. Opportunities to share with others about Jesus abound as believers demonstrate His love and compassion.

***What are some ways you have seen God use extremely difficult situations to bring about His purposes? How can God bring good out of tragedy?***

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In Joshua 9, God's people entered into a covenant with the Gibeonites [GIB ih uh nights]. The Gibeonites acted deceitfully and fooled the Israelites into making a covenant with them. Nonetheless, God's people determined they would honor their commitment. When a coalition of Canaan's southern kings attacked the Gibeonites, Joshua and his armies intervened on the Gibeonites' behalf, and God provided a great victory (Josh. 10:9-15).

God's people often face seemingly insurmountable odds and challenges as they go through life. As they do, God often works through others to strengthen and encourage His people. He also expects His followers to keep their commitments, though many in the world are often quick to break their commitments. God is always in control and uses all situations to bring about His purposes.

## UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

### **JOSHUA 7:1-12:24**

Joshua sent spies from Jericho to the city of Ai on a reconnaissance mission. The men returned and advised Joshua not to dispatch the entire Hebrew army to Ai. They believed two or three thousand Hebrew soldiers could conquer Ai. Following their advice, Joshua sent about three thousand men (7:4). The soldiers at Ai drove Joshua's army from the battlefield, killing about 36 of them (7:5). Naturally, Joshua asked the Lord why (7:7). By a process of elimination, Joshua determined the reason (7:14-15). Achan, a Hebrew soldier, violated the command recorded in 6:17-19 by taking goods from Ai. Achan and his family were stoned to death. With Achan's sin revealed and removed, Joshua attacked and conquered Ai. After conquering Jericho and Ai, Joshua and the Hebrews now controlled central Israel.

When the inhabitants of Gibeon [GIB ih uhn] heard what Joshua had done at Jericho and Ai, they devised a plan, based on deception, to enter into a treaty with the Israelites. When Joshua and the



Israelites discovered the deception, they determined to enslave the Gibeonites rather than kill them (9:16-27).

A coalition of southern kings joined together to attack Gibeon when they discovered the Gibeonites had made peace with Israel (10:1-5). The Gibeonites sent word to Joshua, who came to their aid and defeated the southern coalition (10:6-27). During this battle, Joshua called to the sun to stand still, and the Lord honored his request (10:12-14). Joshua then led his army in a conquest of Canaan's southern cities (10:28-43).

With central and southern Israel in his grasp, Joshua concentrated on the remaining territory: the north (chap. 11). Again, the enemy, "as numerous as the sand on the seashore" (11:4), united against the Hebrews. In the end, Joshua defeated all these kings (11:12). Chapter 12 records an extensive list of territories conquered by Joshua.

## EXPLORE THE TEXT

### A COMMITMENT REMEMBERED (JOSH. 10:6)

#### VERSE 6

**<sup>6</sup> Then the men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal: "Don't abandon your servants. Come quickly and save us! Help us, for all the Amorite kings living in the hill country have joined forces against us."**

Learning of Joshua's victories at Jericho and Ai, the inhabitants of Gibeon elected not to engage Joshua in war. The Gibeonites chose a different tactic—they would trick Joshua into making an alliance with them. Their plan was to convince the Israelites that they lived in a distant land and, therefore, posed no threat to Israel. The deception included not only worn-out clothing and shoes, but also cracked and mended wineskins and dry bread (Josh. 9:4-5). Approaching Joshua and the Israelites, they requested a treaty with them. Cautiously and suspiciously, the men of Israel stated: "Perhaps you live among us. How can we make a treaty with you?" (9:7). To substantiate their claims that they came from a far country and did not live locally, the Gibeonites produced the dry bread, insisting the bread had been fresh when they left for their journey. Additionally, they insisted their wineskins were new when they initially departed, but now were cracked and dry. Finally, they pointed to their worn-out clothing and sandals, insisting

that they, too, had been new when they set out. The Gibeonites methodically and carefully implemented their plan of deception.

Joshua would have been wise to investigate further. Rather than coming from a distant land, the Gibeonites lived a few miles north of Jerusalem—only a three-day journey from the Israelites' camp at Gilgal (9:17). The presence of the Gibeonites could have been a threat to Israel's survival. The inhabitants of this territory dominated the strategic routes to the coastal plains on the west and the Jordan Valley to the east. Gibeon's location also proved to be an important trade location to surrounding cities and peoples, especially Jerusalem. The ruse complete, "Joshua established peace with them and made a treaty to let them live" (9:15). In regards to the Gibeonite trickery, sadly, "the men of Israel ... did not seek the LORD's counsel" (9:14).

Three days later, Joshua learned where the Gibeonites actually lived. Joshua moved his army to Gibeon, but because the men of Israel had "sworn an oath to them by the LORD" (9:18), he did not attack them. The Gibeonites agreed to become Israel's servants (9:21).

In retaliation for the treaty with Joshua, a coalition of kings from southern Canaan planned to attack Gibeon. A Gibeonite treaty with Joshua meant the potential loss of a significant trade route for these kings. In addition, the southern kings knew they had little or no chance against Joshua's forces without Gibeon's help. Their attack was intended to bring Gibeon back onto their side against Israel.

One cannot miss the panic in the message when the Gibeonites informed Joshua, now back at Gilgal [GIL gal], that ***all the Amorite kings living in the hill country have joined forces against us***. The words ***come quickly and save us*** highlight the urgency of the matter. The people of Gibeon remembered the promises of protection Joshua had given them. They pleaded with Joshua not to abandon them but to rescue them from their attackers.

***Name three or four large commitments many people make. What role does faith play in keeping commitments? What kind of impact can it have on others when they see God's people keeping commitments—even small ones?***

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***What commitments does Jesus make to individuals when we accept Him as our Lord and Savior?***



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## STAYING TRUE TO HIS WORD (JOSH. 10:7-8)

### VERSES 7-8

**<sup>7</sup> So Joshua and his whole military force, including all the fighting men, came from Gilgal. <sup>8</sup> The LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them, for I have handed them over to you. Not one of them will be able to stand against you.”**

Undoubtedly and probably painfully, Joshua remembered the commitment he made with Gibeon. Would he honor that commitment? Modern readers might argue that nothing bound Joshua to the treaty because the Gibeonites had acted in such a devious manner. Realizing the circumstances under which the Gibeonites operated, who could blame Joshua for ignoring his commitment? We might even argue that abandoning the commitment was not only acceptable but warranted. But Joshua did not think that way. He stayed true to his word. He moved his military force out of **•Gilgal** in route to aid the Gibeonites.

Joshua’s commitment demonstrates the importance of the spoken word in the Old Testament world. The Hebrews believed they could not retract a spoken word. Remember, for example, Isaac and his sons, Esau and Jacob (Gen. 27). As the firstborn, a double portion of the family’s wealth should have gone to Esau. But Rebekah and Jacob tricked Isaac into giving the blessing to Jacob. Contemporary believers might think the incident could have been resolved by simply retracting the commitment to Jacob and giving the double portion of the estate to Esau. But Isaac did not do that, because spoken words could not be retracted.

Not only did Joshua honor his word, the Lord honored His word as well. The Lord instructed Joshua not to be afraid of them. The words ***I have handed them over to you*** remind us of God’s assurance to Joshua regarding Jericho (Josh. 6:2). The victory over Jericho was so certain that God spoke of it as a past event. Likewise, in God’s mind, Israel’s battle against the southern kings had an outcome that was not in doubt: ***Not one of them will be able to stand against you.***

God’s words to Joshua encourage us to remember God’s past work in our lives. As we face new challenges, we remember His faithfulness

through earlier challenges. Doing so will help us trust God for present and future trials.

***What kind of impact is made for the cause of Christ when believers keep their commitments? How can our keeping a promise impact another's person view of Christ?***

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### **BIBLE SKILL: Memorize and reflect on a verse.**

Memorize Joshua 1:7 in your preferred Bible translation. Then write the verse in your own words. What words are most significant to you in this verse? To what situations in your life does this verse speak? How can applying God's Word to your circumstances help you with a tough decision or a difficult situation? Commit yourself to trusting in God's promise in this area of your life.

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## **DIVINE INTERVENTION (JOSH. 10:9-14)**

### **VERSES 9-10**

**<sup>9</sup> So Joshua caught them by surprise, after marching all night from Gilgal. <sup>10</sup> The LORD threw them into confusion before Israel. He defeated them in a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them through the ascent of Beth-horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah.**

Demonstrating military prowess (and the urgency of the mission), Joshua marched his army ***all night***. His maneuver proved successful: he ***caught*** the enemy ***by surprise***.

Verse 10 emphasizes the sovereignty of God in that ***the LORD threw them*** (Joshua's enemies) ***into confusion***. The writer of Exodus used the same word translated ***confusion*** to describe the state of the Egyptians trapped as the Red Sea engulfed them (Ex. 14:24).

Further, we see God's sovereignty in the phrases ***He defeated them in a great slaughter at Gibeon ... chased them ... and struck***



**them down.** The writer left no doubt that God gave the victory.

#### VERSE 11

**<sup>11</sup> As they fled before Israel, the LORD threw large hailstones on them from the sky along the descent of Beth-horon all the way to Azekah, and they died. More of them died from the hail than the Israelites killed with the sword.**

One can imagine Joshua's enemies sensing the possibility of at least escaping with their lives after fleeing the battlefield and putting some distance between themselves and Joshua's army. That glimmer of hope did not last long. Those who did not die at the hands of the Israelite army died when **the LORD threw large hailstones on them from the sky.** The Lord fought for His people. More enemy soldiers died from the hailstones than from the swords of Joshua's men.

#### VERSES 12-13

**<sup>12</sup> On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to the Israelites, Joshua spoke to the LORD in the presence of Israel: "Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and moon, over the Valley of Aijalon."<sup>13</sup> And the sun stood still and the moon stopped until the nation took vengeance on its enemies. Isn't this written in the Book of Jashar? So the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed its setting almost a full day.**

What occurred next is one of the greatest miracles in the Bible. Joshua knew the battle had not been won, even with his enemies retreating quickly. He offered a simple prayer, requesting divine intervention: "**Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and moon, over the Valley of Aijalon**" [A juh lahn].

It might appear at first glance that Joshua was directly addressing the sun and moon (many people in the ancient world would have addressed the sun and moon as deities). However, notice that **Joshua spoke to the LORD**, who gave him the authority to command the sun and moon.

Various understandings exist for the sun and moon standing still. Some interpreters have understood the words of verse 13 symbolically—that Joshua's army, with God's help, accomplished two days' work in one day. But based on the biblical text, that interpretation is not an option. (The sun **stopped in the middle of the sky.**) A better option is that God slowed the earth's full rotation to 48 hours instead of 24 hours. This was a miraculous event; therefore, we

cannot presume to fully understand the nature of the miracle. We can and do affirm, however, that God miraculously caused the sun and moon to cease their normal courses.

With victory incomplete, Joshua knew that the next day might mean an entirely different battle. During the darkness of night, Joshua's enemies could rest, be refreshed by food and water, and potentially be reinforced. The prolonged day allowed Joshua and the Israelite army to pursue their enemies and finish what they started.

#### VERSE 14

**14 There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man, because the LORD fought for Israel.**

The writer of the Book of Joshua communicated his amazement at the miracle with the words: ***there has been no day like it before or since***. But the greater source of his amazement seems to be the fact that ***the LORD listened to the voice of a man***. Once again the text emphasizes that ***the LORD fought for Israel***. (See also v. 10.) Because God was on their side, no enemy could stand against them.

God intervenes on behalf of His people. His ultimate act of intervention was when He sent Jesus to die on the cross on our behalf. Christ died for our sin, was buried, and was raised on the third day. As a result, we are able to say: "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" (1 Cor. 15:57).

***How does God intervene in our world today? How does His intervention today compare with what Joshua witnessed?***

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#### **KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Father***

God the Father is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise.



## IN MY CONTEXT

- When believers face insurmountable odds, God often works through other people to provide strength and assistance.
- God expects His children to keep their commitments.
- God intervenes on behalf of His people, giving them victory.

***Prepare to share with the group challenging times when the Lord provided you with strength and assistance. How can the group encourage each other by sharing their stories?***

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***List commitments you carry today, including financial commitments. What actions are you taking to keep each commitment? What adjustments do you need to make to be true to your promises?***

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***Reflect on ways God has intervened in your life. Begin by considering Him sending His Son to die for your sins. Take time to thank God for action on your behalf.***

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## MEMORY VERSE

Above all, be strong and very courageous to carefully observe the whole instruction My servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go. —Joshua 1:7