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(Joshua 10:1-28)

Intro. In 1980 nobody expected the Soviet Union to lose in men’s ice hockey. They had won 4 straight gold medals & had a 27-1-1 record while outscoring their opponents 175-44 during that span. They dominated the sport in every facet. But no one told Coach Herb Brooks that the task was impossible. Just 2 weeks before the Olympic Games, the USA men’s team played the Soviets in an exhibition & were crushed 10-3. Now they faced them in the final four, with the winner going to play for a chance at the gold. The day before the match, columnist Dave Anderson wrote in the *NY Times*, “Unless the ice melts, or unless the United States or another team performs a miracle... the Russians are expected to easily win the Olympic gold medal” (Wikipedia). All throughout the game, goalie Jim Craig made incredible save after incredible save. With just a couple of minutes remaining and the USA ahead 4-3, we pick it up in the movie “Miracle” (play clip). That appeared to be a modern-day miracle, but the miracles we read of in Scripture go farther than that & whether you get a miracle from the Lord or not in a time of need, when you want to be “Moving Forward,” you need to be “Dependent on the Lord.” Let’s look at Joshua 10.

Theme: God’s Sovereignty/Miracle

Background: Yahweh continues to give Israel victory in the Promised Land, first over Jericho, then Ai.

Shortly thereafter, Gibeon used deceit to trick Israel into making a covenant with them.

Overview of the Narrative:

- This passage begins by noting the fear of the Canaanites of Israel & their desire to attack Gibeon, who just made a covenant with Israel—thus, instead of defeating these city-states one by one, Israel would get to conquer them all at one time!
- The cities mentioned are in southern & central Canaan, in some cases 16-19 miles west & southwest of Jerusalem
- This coalition against Gibeon is another test of Israel’s willingness to stand by its covenant—chapter 9 was the first test when Israel wanted to kill Gibeon but the leaders intervened
- Gibeon asked Israel for help & Joshua responded by going & sending all his soldiers & special ops forces (whereas our President wouldn’t respond that quickly, Joshua sent them immediately)
- They travelled about 21 miles uphill at night & appeared before them suddenly at daybreak, throwing them into a panic
- During the battle, the Lord sent large hailstones to kill the Amorites & it appears He stopped the earth’s rotation to lengthen the day to give Israel more time to fight without the Amorites escaping under the cover of darkness (more on that in a few moments)
- Israel eventually chases down the kings, who have taken refuge in a cave. Joshua commands large stones to cover the entrance & to guard it so that there place of refuge became a place of incarceration & ultimate doom, as the kings are killed

Truths to Apply from the Text:

I. Keep the covenants you make & the Lord will honor you (10:1, 6-7)

- I mentioned something along these lines last time, but we see it reappear here in this chapter, too—whether you make a covenant in marriage or business or whatever, keep your end of the deal & the Lord will honor you for it

Illus: When it comes to Christian friends going in on business deals together, I almost always counsel against it, because it usually doesn’t turn out well & someone tries to hold up their end of the deal, but the other feels like the deal isn’t how it started & the friendship goes south—that being said, if you do go into business with someone else, hold up your end of the bargain (or renegotiate so you can)

II. Do not fear the world, because the Lord will fight for you (10:8, 10-14, 25)

- Time & again, the Lord told Joshua “do not fear, for I am with you” & Joshua repeated the command to his people

Illus: Did you know the command in Scripture most often repeated? Fear not. Do you know the reason? For God is with us

Illus: Have you seen the video on Facebook where the baby (around 9-10 months of age) floats in the pool for 3 minutes with no one around? So it seems, but Dad is just a couple of feet away off camera, ready to scoop in for the rescue whenever needed—sometimes we feel like we are all alone, but for the Christian, the Lord is always close at hand, ready to help

- The Lord sent a great hailstorm & killed more Amorites with hailstones than Israel killed in battle
- Moreover, while verses 12-14 are not crystal clear, it seems Joshua was concerned the enemies would get away once it turned dark, so he prayed to the Lord to slow the sun & moon from their normal cycles & the Lord answered his request
- I don't know if the sun literally stopped in the sky, because the Hebrew can mean a "retardation of the movement" & not necessarily a complete cessation—either way, God did a miracle that day
- When Joshua was being written, it's almost as if he didn't think the readers would believe him about this event, so he appeals to another source, the Book of Jashar, which also records this event.

III. Thank the Lord for miracles, but look beyond them to the Miracle-Maker (10:12-14)

- There are at least two miracles in this story—the large hailstones hitting only the enemy soldiers & the longer day via the sun standing still
- While no one knows exactly what the "Book of Jashar" was, we do see another reference to it by David in 2 Samuel 1:18ff when he sings a song of lament at the news of the deaths of King Saul & his son Jonathan. Most scholars also consider 1 Kings 8:12-13 to be a 3rd quotation. These passages are poems or songs & was probably a collection of songs. Moreover, the word "Jashar" means "upright" or "honest" & probably refers to Israel's heroes & the songs Israel sang about her heroes (like the songs of Deborah [Judges 5] and Miriam [Exodus 15:21])
- You could say this song remembered the military leadership of Joshua, but clearly Yahweh, the Lord, is the Hero in this song, for He fought for Israel

Illus: When we think about miracles, it's easy for us to think about Jesus, the supreme Miracle-Maker & greatest Hero in Israel's history. He calmed the storm with just a word. He gave sight to the blind, made the lame walk, caused the deaf to hear, healed the sick, walked on water & so much more. God caused Jesus to be born of a virgin & after He died on a cross for the sins of the world, God raised Him from the dead. He transformed the lives of thousands of Jews over the next few years & eventually over 1 billion Gentiles. He is the Hero we sing about & Miracle-Maker

- The hanging of the 5 kings in public was a symbolic action that Israel's God would humiliate all other enemies. The fact the kings were hung on a tree meant they were accursed by God (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). They were then taken down, so as not to defile the land, & buried in the cave, never to be heard from again.
- Fast forward more than 1,200 years & we see a Man hanging on a tree, having become a curse due to sin. Soldiers remove the dead body from the tree & it is placed in a cave-like tomb. But unlike the 5 kings never heard from again, this One rises from the dead 3 days later & shows Himself to be King of kings!

Conc. This past Monday night during Lifeweek, I went go-karting with the middle schoolers. One kid in particular was bragging about his special skills on the race track, since he races quarter-midget cars quite often. For the last race of the night, a few others joined Pastor Ryan, this middle schooler & me for a race. I was in the lead & ahead of the MS by $\frac{3}{4}$ of a lap, thanks to Pastor Ryan bumping him into the pits at the end of lap one. Then, with less than 3 laps to go, the MS starts praying for a miracle, because he's never going to catch me & then there is the worst pileup in go-kart history & I get stuck while the MS caught up. Once things were clear, we took off & I had a few car-lengths lead, but then I got boxed in on the next to last-turn & bumped & he snuck in to pass me for the victory, so props go to Jacob Williamson! I cannot promise you the Lord will work a miracle on your behalf, but I can tell you He will faithfully stand by you & support you through everything you'll face in life. Therefore, to "Move Forward," be "Dependent on the Lord."