

# Joshua

And  
The Land of Promise

by

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### A MEMORABLE DAY

(Joshua 10:14)

“This day shall shine,  
For evermore  
To thee a star divine  
On Time’s dark shore.”  
- A. Proctor

“**THERE was no day like that.**” It stood alone in the history of the conquest, and of Joshua. Let us notice:

#### I. THE CONFEDERACY WHICH WAS GATHERED AGAINST ISRAEL

Israel had previously dealt with separate cities, Jericho and Ai; but now five kings of the Amorites joined together, namely, the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon.

The traitor city of Gibeon was the object of the attack of the combined forces; partly because its defection had aroused the fiercest animosity of its former allies, and partly that by its occupation they might be able to interpose one further barrier to the invasion of the Israelites. This was more especially the purpose of Adonizedek, whose name, “*lord of righteousness*,” recalls the ancient glory of Melchisedec, the friend of Abram. The royal city of Gibeon lay only six miles to the north of Jerusalem.

All suddenly, the men of Gibeon found themselves surrounded by a vast host of infuriated warriors, who, not daring to measure themselves against Joshua, because of the awe which his exploits had inspired, were all the more eager to wreak their vengeance upon those who had dared to make a league with him. Relying upon Joshua’s fidelity to the covenant so recently formed, a message was sent in breathless haste, summoning him to their help.

#### II. JOSHUA’S HEROIC FAITH

There had been great days in his life before:

- The day of the Passover, when he marched in the van of his tribe;
- The day of the fight with Amalek when, beneath the uplifted hands of Moses, he drove the tribes of the desert before him;
- The day when first he had stood with his master amid the burning splendor of the vision of God;
- The day when he had returned with Caleb from espying the land, and had heard himself singled out to survive his nation and to enter the Land of Promise.

There had also been some wonderful days lately, when he crossed the Jordan, saw the Angel, and beheld the walls of Jericho fall flat; but there had never been a day in his life quite like this.

*It was a day of vigor.*

As soon as he received the message, he saw the importance of at once vindicating the trust reposed in him. Ere the sun went down, orders had passed through the camp that the men of war should be ready for a midnight march; and at dead of night he climbed the pass from Gilgal to Gibeon - fifteen difficult miles - and came upon the sleeping host suddenly before they had had time to prepare themselves for fight. Inertness and indolence ill become those who are entrusted with great concerns. The stirring of God's Spirit in man makes the pulse throb quickly; purposes form themselves in the will, and all the nature is braced, and knit, to subserve the heroic soul.

*It was a day of Fellowship.*

Soon after the first message had come, with surely a certain amount of startling surprise, God hath spoken to him and said, "**Fear them not, for I have delivered them into thy hands; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.**"

It was in the strength of that promise, and under the pressure of such stirring circumstances, that he spake to God as man had never spoken before. There must have been hard fighting all the morning. It was dawn when the battle began, and it would have been toward afternoon when the kings gave the signal for retreat; and the Canaanites, unable longer to sustain the successive onsets of Israel, charging to the battle-cry of "**The Lord, mighty in battle,**" broke into flight like a flock of panic-stricken sheep.

Ten miles they fled, climbing a precipitous ascent to the high ridge of Beth-horon the Upper. From that point the road drops, broken and rugged, seven hundred feet in two miles. The rock is cut into steps. Down this breakneck steep the fugitives fled, to reach, if only they might, their fastnesses and citadels, which lay in the valley below, and longing for night to put a pause upon the anguish of the pursuit. It was at this point that the storm, of which we will speak presently, burst on them with irresistible fury, as if the whole artillery of Heaven had suddenly opened fire, and when Joshua reached the head of the ravine, before him the descent was blocked with the masses of the routed armies; beneath him the valley was thick with cloud, which was venting its contents on his foes; while upward to him there surged the mingled voice of the cry of the vanquished, the shout of the pursuer, and the chorus of the hailstones.

Behind him, over the hills of Gibeon, the sun was westering. It wanted but an hour or two, and its sudden disappearance would bring on the rapid Eastern twilight, whilst the moon's pale face appearing over the purple waters of the great sea was waiting to lead on the night. It was under these circumstances that Joshua dared to ask an unprecedented gift of God that the day might be prolonged.

“Why should not the sun, which is thy creature, but worshiped too long in this land in thy stead, now subserve thy purpose in the destruction of these who have given it what was thy due? and why should not yonder moon, which has so often looked down upon these licentious orgies of the Amorite, now see their impurity washed out by blood? They are thine, The Lord; they will perform thy bidding; hearken to my voice and let them stay.”

There are high days in human lives when thought and purpose, which had been quietly gathering strength, like waters swelling against a barrier, suddenly leap from their leash, and vent themselves in acts or words or prayers. We are not, then, drunk with wine: but we are flushed, as to our spirits, with the exhilaration and sense of power which the Spirit of God alone can give; or, to put it in another form, we catch fire.

There is too little of this capacity of rising into the loftiest experience of that spirit-life which is within the reach of us all, through living fellowship with God: but whenever we realize and use it, it is as when the feeble, smoldering wick is plunged into oxygen gas; or as when a flower that had struggled against the frost is placed in the tropical atmosphere of the hot house. In such hours we realize what Jesus meant when he said, **“Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.”**

*It was a day of Triumphant Onlook.*

Discomfited, weary, vanquished, the kings sheltered in the cave of Makkedah; but Joshua did not stay to dispatch them; he was too eager to finish what he had commenced, and to prevent the Canaanites re-entering their cities.

So he took measures for keeping them imprisoned in the cave till his return. Presently, flushed with victory, and with (as Josephus tells us) the loss of hardly a single life, he came again. The kings were summoned from their hiding-place; and as they crouched abjectly at the feet of their conquerors, Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said unto the chiefs of the men of war, **“Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings.”**

And whilst they stood, in that attitude of unquestioned victory, there broke on the exalted spirit-kindled imagination of the warrior-chieftain the sure prevision of the ultimate issue of the conflict in which they were engaged. He already saw the day when every knee should bow before The Lord's might; when every king should be prostrate before Israel's arm; and when the whole land should be subdued.

So all through the years that followed, he would come back again and again in thought to that moment when he stood on a peak of the mountain of vision, and said, **“Fear not, nor be dismayed! be strong and of good courage; for thus shall The Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight.”**

### III. THE EXTRAORDINARY INTERPOSITION OF THE LORD

The storm that broke in that late afternoon over the rugged descent to Beth-heron was no common one. Oriental hailstones are of great size: it is said that sometimes lumps of ice, of a pound or more in weight, will fall; and these would naturally kill any on whom they fell. But the remarkable thing in this case was that the storm broke in a moment when its fury could be spent on the Amorites without inflicting injury upon Israel.

**“It came to pass as they fled from before Israel, while they were in the going down of Beth-horon, that the Lord cast down great stones from Heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died; they were more that died with the hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.”**

But the stupendous miracle of the day consisted in the arrest of daylight. It is obvious that verses 12-15 are a quotation from the poetical book of Jasher. This is clear, because verse 15 is duplicate with verse 43; and the style is altogether different from the majestic roll of the historian’s prose.

But there is no reason to believe, with some, that these verses give us only a metaphorical account of the fight, and of the thoroughness of the victory; as though the poet would say that in that one day Israel did the work of two. Beneath the veil of poetry, so gravely interpolated by the historian, there must be a reference to a marvelous and miraculous episode.

We place no limit to the divine power. He who made all things is the Monarch of all. It is indeed easy for him to impose his will on nature, man, or human will. The miracle of the resurrection is so stupendous in the raising of our human nature, incorporate with the divine, to take its place in the heart of the forces of the spirit-world, that we need not hesitate to accept any well-accredited marvel. Nor should we scruple to believe that God could make the clock of the universe stop, if it were necessary that it should do so.

But it is not necessary to believe that he did this. No doubt here, as elsewhere, Scripture uses the language of ordinary human life. By some process, the laws of which are at present unknown to us, but of which we get glimpses, in refraction, in the after-glow of sunset, in the fantastic appearances familiar to travelers in high latitudes and amongst the loftiest mountains God was able to prolong the daylight until Israel had made an end of slaying their foes, with a very great slaughter, so that only a decimated remnant entered into the fenced cities.

The *how* is not material to our present purpose. It is enough to express our belief in the fact itself. Somehow, the duration of that day’s light was lengthened out until the people had avenged themselves of their enemies; **“And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel.”**

Our present purpose does not require us to follow the steps of the conquerors as they passed from city to city. Some of them, like Lachish, seem to have made an obstinate resistance; others, like Hebron, must have been regarded with intense interest, because of their connection with the lives and wanderings of the patriarchs; others, again, witnessed to a high state of civilization, as Debir, the city of books and learning. All were treated with the same unsparing severity. The kings were slain, their bodies gibbeted till the evening; and all the souls smitten, so that none were left remaining, an utter destruction of all and every one by the edge of the sword.

We must remember that the Israelites were the executioners of divine justice, commissioned to give effect to the sentence which the foul impurities of Canaan called for. There is a judgment-seat for nations as well as for individuals. Within the limits of the ages as they pass, and on the surface of this earth, that throne is erected and that judgment is proceeding. And the almighty Judge sees to it that his sentences are carried out. He has many agents - the Persian legions to execute his sentence on Babylon; the Vandals on Rome; the Russian Cossacks on Napoleon; as the Israelites on the Amorites, whose iniquity was now full, and threatened to infect the world.

#### IV. THE LESSON FOR OUR OWN LIFE

There are days so extraordinary for the combination of difficult circumstances, human opposition, and spiritual conflict that they stand out in unique terror from the rest of our lives. Looking back on them, we may almost adopt the language of the sacred writer, “**There was no day like that before it or after it.**”

But these days do not come, if we are living in fellowship with God, intent on doing his will, without there coming also his sweet “**Fear them not; for I have delivered them into thine hands!**”

Our only anxiety should be that nothing divert us from his path, or intercept the communication of his grace. Like a wise commander, we must keep open the passage back to our base of operations, which is God. Careful about that, we need have no anxious care beside. The greatness of our difficulties is permitted to elicit the greatness of his grace. We may even be glad to enter the storm, that we may make fresh discoveries of the all-sufficiency of Jesus, who is never so near as in these days of special trial. Moreover, these days may always be full of the realized presence of God.

All through the conflict, Joshua’s heart was in perpetual fellowship with the mighty Captain of the Lord’s host, who rode beside him all the day. So amid all our conflicts, our hearts and minds should thither ascend, and there dwell where Christ is seated, drawing from him grace upon grace, as we need; like the diver on the ocean-floor, who inhales the fresh breeze of the upper air.

At these times it is very necessary not merely to ask God to help us, because the word *help* may mean that there is a great deal of reliance on self; and whatever there is of ourselves is almost certain to give way in the strain of battle. The divine part of our deliverance will be nullified by the alloy of our own energy, strength, or resolution. Let us substitute the word *keep* for the word *help*.

Let us put the whole matter into the hands of God; asking him to go before us, to fight for us, to deliver us, as he did for his people on this eventful day.

In all such days we may have light which cannot be accounted for on any natural hypothesis. Our sun shall not go down, neither shall our moon withdraw itself; because the Lord shall be to us an everlasting light. Or in words spoken long after, which surely contain an allusion to this marvelous day of Gibeon, **“It shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light”** (Zechariah 14:7).

Only let us seek the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may be kept in such an attitude of soul that we shall miss nothing of God’s gracious and timely help. Trusting it, reckoning on it, appropriating it. Abiding in him, that we may ask with the certainty that God is hearkening unto the voice of man, and that he is fighting for us.

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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