

God Fights For His People

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Date: 29 March 2026

Preacher: Paul Brennan

[0:00] But this evening we're going to turn to our Bibles now. Paul Brendan's been taking us through the book of Joshua. We've come to a very exciting chapter today, Joshua chapter 10. Well, there's lots of exciting chapters really, aren't there in Joshua? But here's a long and interesting one. And we're going to read the whole chapter together. If you need a Bible, if you're a visitor with us, don't have a Bible, there's some red Bibles at the sides at the back. Do pick one up or ask for one. I think it's page 185 in those ones.

Joshua chapter 10. And you'll see the heading in our Bible says, the sun stands still. So listen out for something rather interesting.

So as soon as Adonai Zedek, king of Jerusalem, heard how Joshua had captured Ai and devoted it to destruction, doing to Ai and its king as he had done to Jericho and its king, and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them, he feared greatly.

Because Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai. And all its men were warriors. So Adonai Zedek, king of Jerusalem, sent to Hoham, king of Hebron, to Pyram, king of Jarmoth, to Japhia, king of Lachish, and to Debir, king of Eglon, saying, Come up to me and help me.

And let us strike Gibeon, for it has made peace with Joshua and with the people of Israel. And the five kings of the Amorites, king of Jerusalem, king of Hebron, the king of Jarmoth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, gathered their forces and went up with all their armies and encamped against Gibeon amid war against it.

[1:50] And the men of Gibeon sent to Joshua at the camp in Gilgal, saying, Do not relax your hand from your servants. Come up to us quickly and save us and help us, for all the kings of the Amorites who dwell in the hill country are gathered against us.

So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. And the Lord said to Joshua, Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you. So Joshua came upon them suddenly, having marched up all night from Gilgal. And the Lord threw them back into panic before Israel, who struck them with a great blow at Gibeon, and chased them by the way of the ascent of Bethhoron, and struck them as far as Azekah and Makedah.

As they fled before Israel, while they were going down the ascent of Bethhoron, the Lord threw down large stones from heaven on them, as far as Azekah, and they died.

There were more who died because of the hailstones than the sons of Israel killed with the sword. At that time, Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel.

[3:10] And he said in the sight of Israel, Son, stand still at Gibeon, and moon in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies.

Is this not written in the book of Joshua? The sun stopped in the midst of heaven, and did not hurry to set for about a whole day.

There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord obeyed the voice of a man. For the Lord fought for Israel. So Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to the camp at Gilgal.

These five kings fled, and hid themselves in the cave at Makeda. And it was told to Joshua, the five kings had been found hidden in the cave at Makeda.

And Joshua said, roll large stones against the mouth of the cave, and set men by to guard them. But do not stay there yourselves, pursue your enemies. Attack their rear guard.

[4:15] Don't let them enter their cities, for the Lord your God has given them into your hand. And Joshua and the sons of Israel finished striking them with a great blow until they were wiped out.

And when the remnant that remained of them had entered into the fortified cities, then all the people returned safe to Joshua in the camp at Makeda. Not a man moved his tongue against any of the people of Israel.

Then Joshua said, open the mouth of the cave, and bring those five kings out to me from the cave. And they did so, and brought the five kings out to him from the cave.

The king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon. And when he brought these kings out to Joshua, Joshua summoned all the men of Israel, and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings.

And they came near, and put their feet on their necks. And Joshua said to them, Do not be afraid or dismayed. Be strong and courageous.

[5:22] For thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against whom you fight. And afterwards Joshua struck them and put them to death. And he hanged them on five trees, and they hung on the trees till evening.

But at the time of the going down of the sun, Joshua commanded them. They took them down from the trees and threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves. And they set large stones against the mouth of the cave, which remained to this very day. As for Makeda, Joshua captured it on that day and struck it and its king with the edge of the sword.

He devoted it to destruction. Every person in it, he left none remaining. And he did to the king of Makeda, just as he had done to the king of Jericho. Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Makeda to Libna and fought against Libna.

And the Lord gave it also and its king into the hand of Israel. And he struck it with the edge of the sword and every person in it. He left none remaining in it. And he did to its king as he had done to the king of Jericho.

Then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Libna to Lachish and laid siege to it and fought against it. And the Lord gave Lachish into the hand of Israel. And he captured it on the second day and struck it with the edge of the sword and every person in it as he had done at Libna.

[6:45] And then Horeb, king of Geza, came up to help Lachish. And Joshua struck him and his people until he left none remaining. And then Joshua and all Israel with him passed on from Lachish to Eglon.

And they laid siege to it and fought against it. And they captured it on that day and struck it with the edge of the sword. And he devoted every person in it to destruction that day as he had done to Lachish.

And then Joshua and all Israel went with him up from Eglon to Hebron. And they fought against it and captured it and struck it with the edge of the sword and its kings and its towns and every person in it.

He left none remaining as he had done to Eglon and devoted it to destruction and every person in it.

Then Joshua and all Israel with him turned back to Debir and fought against it and he captured it with its king and all its towns.

And they struck them at the edge of the sword and devoted to destruction every person in it. He left none remaining just as he had done to Hebron and to Libna and its king. So he did to Debir and its king.

[7:53] So Joshua struck the hill country and the Negev and the lowland and the slopes and all their kings. He left none remaining but devoted it to destruction.

All that breathed just as the Lord God of Israel commanded. And Joshua struck them from Kadesh Barnea as far as Gaza and all the country of Goshen as far as Gibeon.

And Joshua captured all these kings and their land at one time because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel. Then Joshua returned and all Israel with him to the camp at Gilgal.

Amen. And may God bless to us his word. Well, good evening.

Please do have Joshua open there in front of you. Joshua 10. And we'll spend some time thinking about this chapter this evening. And this is a chapter that makes it pretty plain to us that we are in a battle.

[9:18] We are in a battle. One of the images the Bible uses to describe the Christian life is that of warfare. Not a battle fought with physical weapons.

Not with swords. But a spiritual battle. And a very real conflict. The New Testament is crystal clear about this reality.

Listen to these words from the Apostle Paul in Ephesians. He says, Finally, Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

We are in a battle. The enemy is real. And he will seek to discourage and destroy Christian people and Christian churches.

[10:23] The enemy will seek to spread darkness and evil. To displace that which is good and beautiful and true. Now you will perhaps be also aware of that reality.

You look around our world. You see evidence of the enemy all over the place. Just consider the recent events in the various legislative bodies around the UK.

In God's mercy, the assisted dying bill in Scotland was defeated. But the very next day, in the House of Lords, a vote to decriminalize abortion.

The enemy is never at rest. Perhaps you are aware of it much more mundane, down to earth, things. Things of everyday life.

The opposition you encounter in smaller ways with friends or family or colleagues. There is a real resistance sometimes, isn't there, to the gospel and to the implications of the gospel.

[11:27] You see it within churches. Grumbling, infighting. Threatening to tear apart the living church. Seems that some sort of conflict is about to happen or already on the go.

It is exhausting. Life as a Christian can feel exhausting. We feel like we are always in battle mode. And then there is, of course, the great ultimate enemy itself.

Death. And that is the reality that none of us can avoid. Standing at the hospital bed with a loved one. Seriously unwell.

Perhaps only hours left to live. Or maybe that will be you in that bed one day. What is your hope then? As you face that great final enemy.

How can we face that enemy? Well, it is true. We are in a battle. It is true that we have real enemies.

[12:32] And that reality can weigh us down, can't it? It can depress us in the Christian life. We feel the weight of it. The shoulders slouch.

The smile fades. We feel the weight of it, don't we? And yet, that is not the full picture. The posture of the Christian is not to be that of someone crushed under a heavy burden.

This passage in Joshua, it is brutally honest and realistic about the battles God's people find themselves in. But the resounding note here is wonderfully positive. This chapter ought to give Christians and Christian churches a realistic optimism in the midst of warfare.

Because this chapter is loud and clear that not only is the Lord with his people, but this chapter proclaims so clearly that the Lord fights for his people. Look at the very end of that long reading which Willie read for us.

Look at verse 42. The very last paragraph. And this sums up the whole chapter. It says this, And Joshua captured all these kings and their land at one time because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel.

[13:57] That is the key message in this chapter. There are many excellent lessons for us to learn here. Lessons to help us stand up straight, not to fear.

Lessons to enable us to courageously face the enemy because we don't stand alone. The Lord fights for his people. We'll take this chapter in the three sections.

You see it there in your Bibles. Verses 1 to 15. And then verses 16 to 28. And then that last bit, verses 29 to 43. And this chapter, it charts the southern campaign as God's people take the land that was promised all those centuries before to Abraham.

If you can imagine in your mind a map of Israel, the promised land, you've got the Dead Sea in the south, the big Dead Sea. And then going north, you've got the River Jordan to the much smaller Sea of Galilee.

And Joshua and his army, they have come from the east side of the Jordan. They've crossed over it to the west. And they've come in about halfway up, just above the Dead Sea.

[15:09] They've crossed the River Jordan. So they've come in about halfway along. And chapter 10 covers the southern campaign as Joshua and his army take the southern part of the promised land.

And chapter 11 takes the northern part. So that's next time, chapter 11. Now, I love a bit of geography. I love a good map. But I'll spare you any more details than that. You can sort of imagine the rough picture.

So these three sections, chapter 10, cover the southern campaign of the conquering of the land of Canaan. It's like three scenes, three panels that we'll think about.

But firstly, verses 1 to 15. This is the first part. And it's the defense of Gibeon. Now, last week, well, not last week, two weeks ago, we saw in chapter 9 that Joshua was tricked into entering into this covenant, this sort of peace treaty with the Gibeonites.

They are one of the cities in the land of Canaan. And these were people that were destined for destruction. They should have been wiped off the map. However, for reasons we don't need to go into tonight, a covenant was entered into with them, a peace treaty.

[16:20] And yes, we saw last time it was a foolish mistake. It shouldn't have happened. But it was a mess that God's people had to live with. It was a mess they created, but a mess they would have to live with. That peace treaty would have to be honored.

And here, we see the people of Gibeon putting that treaty to the test. Would Joshua and all the people be true to their promise?

A crisis has arisen here. Look at the first few verses. News has spread about what Joshua has done in terms of the defeat of Ai and also the peace treaty with the Gibeonites. And the king of Jerusalem has heard about this.

And he's rightly fearful. He knows that he's next in line. Gibeon was a big player in those parts. And that was a big problem for the other cities in the region.

What were they going to do about it? And so, the king of Jerusalem forms this little coalition of five kings from five cities. And verse 3, they march on Gibeon to make war against it.

[17:23] End of verse 5. So, you can imagine. People of Gibeon, they see this army, this massive army of five cities coming against them. And so, they turn to Joshua.

Verse 6. The men of Gibeon sent to Joshua, the camp in Gilgal, saying, Do not relax your hand from your servants. Come and help us, they're saying. You made a promise.

And now we see here the nature of that promise that Joshua made. It was not merely a promise not to wipe them out. No, it was an alliance.

And if these people were attacked, they would come to their aid. They were going to come to their defense. That's the essence of the plea, isn't it? Verse 6. Come and save us.

End of verse 6. Help us. All the kings of the Amorites are gathered against us. Come and help us. And so, Joshua and the people have got no choice. They have to come to their rescue.

[18:22] And they do. But not before another reassuring word from the Lord. Look at verse 8. And the Lord said to Joshua, Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands.

See, the Lord yet again, graciously reaffirms his word of promise. He's already given this promise to them, but he's reaffirming the promise he's already given.

Isn't that just the way of the Lord? Full of tender grace and reassurance for his often fearful people. He's done it again and again for Joshua.

We've seen that over these last chapters. Again and again, the Lord reminds his people, No, I'm with you. Do not be afraid. And he does it for us, doesn't he?

Again and again. Every time we gather. Every Sunday we gather. Every time we gather around the Lord's table. Every time we see a baptism. Through his ordinary means of grace, the Lord repeats.

[19:33] Again and again. He repeats his promise to you. I am your God. You are my people. Do not be afraid. I will never leave or forsake you.

And such words of repeated promise, they ought to always stir God's people to action. And that's what you see happening here.

Look at verse 9. God's just reminded them and reassured them, I'm with you. And then verse 9, Joshua came upon the enemy suddenly, having marched all night from Gilgal.

Divine assurance like that. Divine assurance sparks human ingenuity. It's a nice phrase. It's not mine. I think it's David Jackman. But divine assurance sparks human ingenuity.

God's reassuring word should always energize his people into action. Joshua uses his head. He takes steps, doesn't he? They march all night. And they take a surprise attack on the enemy in the morning.

[20:43] Israel routes this coalition of five armies. And they defend the people of Gibeon. And that in itself is a reflection of the nature of God, isn't it?

He fights for his people, even for the Gibeonites. They only entered into this covenant a few days before. But with immediate effect, they come under the protection of Almighty God.

The Gibeonites, really? Outsiders. We saw last time they're deceivers. They tricked Joshua. And yet, what do we see here? God fighting for them.

He is committed to the sort of people that we might easily dismiss. Do you remember the people of Israel last time were grumbling against Joshua because of this covenant? And yet, here they are being extended to the protection of God.

We would write them off. But the Lord fights for them. And that's good news, isn't it? It's good news for you and me. You and I who once were outsiders.

[21:50] Imperfect. And imperfect we remain. And yes, God fights for his people. He fights for you. He fights for me. And if you trust in the Lord Jesus, you have his protection.

He fights for you. And so it was for the Gibeonites, for Israel. They annihilate the armies of the five kings.

And it's such a wrath that Joshua is going to pray that the day would be extended. He doesn't want it to end. Look at verse 12. At that time, Joshua spoke to the Lord.

And the day when the Lord gave the Amorites over the sons of Israel and said to the sight of the Israelites, Sun, stand still at Gibeon, and moon in the valley of Alajon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, until the nation took vengeance on their enemies.

It's a remarkable prayer, isn't it? And a remarkable answer to prayer. Verse 13 says, The sun stopped in the midst of heaven. Now much ink has been spilled on these verses.

[23:00] I don't want to be totally sidetracked, but I think it's worth briefly sketching out the options here, because there are some translation issues that make it hard to say with absolute certainty what happened on that day. But the big thing that text draws attention to, notice, look at verse 14.

It says, There has been no day like it before or since when the Lord heeded the voice of a man.

For the Lord fought for Israel. The big thing being drawn attention to there is not this astonishing astronomical event, but rather the fact that God listens to Joshua and fights with his people.

That's the thing that the text makes a big point about. We'll say more about that, but let me sketch out the viewpoints on the sun stopping in the sky. You read the commentators, there's all sorts of ways of trying to understand this, but here are the main ones, main three options for understanding what is said here.

The first option is what you might call the cosmic explanation. This is where the workings of the cosmos itself were interrupted. The earth stopped rotating so that the sun stood still in the sky.

[24:15] And that raises all sorts of questions, doesn't it? How could the earth stop spinning? What happens to gravity? All that kind of stuff. But

surely, that is not beyond the power of the sovereign God of all the universe.

Surely he can overcome that. What are the very first words of the Bible? In the beginning, God created. Surely this isn't a big problem for him. That's the first way of understanding it. Number two, it's what you might call atmospheric. So the conditions of the day were so ordered by God so as to benefit the Israelites and assure them of victory.

And that word, stand still, in verse 12, is in other places in the Old Testament translated as silenced. The sun being silenced could indicate that it was actually being darkened.

You couldn't see the sun shining. The thing being stopped wasn't the movement of the sun, but it's shining. And such darkness might play into the hands of Israel's army.

[25:23] The hailstones you read about a little bit earlier, verse 11, these large stones from heaven, it might also suggest dark clouds overhead. There was darkness, which helped God's people win the battle.

The third way of understanding this is poetic. There are other examples in the Bible of poetic language being used to describe actual events. It could be that the language here about the sun and the moon is being used figuratively in order to describe and heighten the description of God's intervention.

Now we could say more about all that, but each of those views has strengths and weaknesses, but for my part, I probably would favor option one or two. If you can see the very first miracle, Genesis 1, verse 1, then this is not a problem.

If you can understand and see the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, this is not a problem for Almighty God. He could stop the sun in the sky, if we wished. Let's not miss the key thing.

The Lord, whatever he did, enabled that day, a day like no other, to enable Joshua and his army to have total victory over their enemies.

[26:39] He fought for Israel. It was the longest day. If you've got small children, you probably relate. When each day begins before 6 a.m., every day seems impossibly long.

But for Joshua, this was the kind of day he needed. And however long the Lord extended it, the rout was so strong and so complete that the Lord amazingly listened to Joshua's prayer.

He lengthened that day so that the Amorite coalition might be wiped out. And notice what Joshua did. He sought the Lord.

He prayed. And this is not a text that preaches, pray whatever you want and the Lord will do it. It's not saying you could pray for the earth to stop rotating and the Lord would answer your prayer.

No, it's not that. God isn't a slave to our bright ideas. The text is clear that this is unique. This is a one-off. There's not been a day like it.

[27:43] But I think we can pray with confidence when we pray in line with God's already stated plans and purposes. Remember earlier that very day what the Lord had said to Joshua?

God had promised to deliver this army into his hands. And Joshua is praying in line with that promise, isn't he? He's not praying for some random idea of his own.

No, no, he's praying in line with what God has already revealed. And this shows us, doesn't it, the lengths to which God can go to in order to answer prayers of his people in accordance with his purposes.

He can even stop the sun in the sky. And so it's worth considering what is the content of our prayers? Are they aligned with God's great purposes, his great promises?

Are our prayers concerned with God's command to go and make disciples to the end of the earth?

Are we praying big prayers in alignment with that? Prayers for the salvation in our city?

[28:52] Prayers for our children that would grow to be dangerous warriors in the kingdom of God? Or are our prayers wrapped up in my own little concerns, my own small worlds?

It's not saying we don't bring our cares and concerns to the Lord, of course not. But we can't merely be focused on ourselves, merely. Are we praying great prayers in line with God's revealed purposes?

Okay, let's look on to part two of this chapter. We've seen the defense of Gibeon, the amazing defense. And in verses 16 to 27, we see what happens to the five kings.

Whilst all this is going on, the five kings, they're good kings, aren't they? They flee. They abandon their troops. Off they go. They run. Running for their own lives, verse 16. They hide themselves away.

And the people of Israel, they find them in the cave. And they roll a stone over the cave. So now their hiding place has become a tomb. They can't escape. And the Israelites, they go off and pursue the rest of the fleeing army, verse 20.

[29:59] And then once they've taken care of the armies, they come back to the five kings. And just cast your eyes over verse 22 and onwards. It's quite the dramatic scene. They go back. They roll back the stone.

They bring out the five kings. They put their boots on their necks and they kill them. Then they hang them up. Then they take them down, put them back in the cave, roll the stone, and they pile a great heap of stones.

Just trying to imagine it. It's quite the scene, isn't it? Getting the five kings out there, putting their feet, putting their boots on their necks.

Now maybe you've got squeamish of that. It's a bit much, isn't it? A bit unnecessary. Well, look at what the text records.

Joshua is saying at that moment. Verse 25. The boots are on the necks and Joshua says this, do not be afraid or dismayed.

[31:05] Be strong and courageous. For thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against whom you fight. this wasn't just barbarism.

This wasn't military macho. No, no. The leaders placing their necks on these enemy kings was a visible demonstration of the fact that God was keeping his promises.

He really was fighting for his people. God would put all their enemies under their feet. And what a real visible encouragement that would be for Joshua, for his leaders, for all the army to see their enemies biting the dust with their feet on their necks.

The fact that God would crush his enemies under his feet, that's been a foundational promise. It's the beginning, hasn't it? Genesis 3.15 says what about the great enemy?

It says that the offspring of the woman will bruise the head of the serpent, the enemy. And that has been the great hope, hasn't it, from the very beginning of time?

[32:16] That an enemy crusher, that a serpent crusher would come and set his foot on the head of the enemy? And this theme reverberates all throughout the Scriptures, doesn't it?

The most quoted Old Testament verse in the New Testament is from Psalm 110. It says this, the Lord says, the Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool, until your enemies are under your feet.

It's quoted in Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, Hebrews. And Hebrews 10 alludes to this verse when speaking of Jesus, it says this, But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting for that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

Now we are yet to experience that moment fully, aren't we? That moment when Christ returns as judge and all enemies will be seen under his feet. then and only then will the great enemy and every other enemy of God's people be fully defeated, fully subdued.

And that is our great hope, isn't it? That that day is coming when all our enemies will be subdued visibly, will see it. And we know it's coming because the decisive blow has already been struck on the cross when that single sacrifice for sin was made.

[33:54] But even though we await that final victory, we do get foretaste of it now, don't we? We do see small victories over enemies now, like this one in Joshua 10.

This chapter is here to encourage us, to keep us going for that day. Victories like this ought to give you and I great encouragement, great reassurance.

This is in our Bibles to encourage us. And victories like this, they're worth remembering. Joshua knew that, didn't he?

Look at what he says again, verse 25. For thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against two Mephites. Hence, another pile of stones.

We've seen that again and again, haven't we? Through the book of Joshua, the river Jordan, Achan, chapter 7, and Ai. they heap up these large piles of stone, visible reminders.

[34:55] And here in Joshua 10, this pile of stones where these five kings were put to death, it's a visible reminder that the Lord fights for his people.

And we need to hear that. Throughout the scriptures, we are reminded that the Lord is with his people, he is fighting for them. You read in Isaiah 41, these words, for I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand.

It is I who say to you, fear not, I am the one who helps you. The Lord is with his people. Like a father taking the hand of a little girl as they step into a huge crowd, a crowd which seems to that little girl utterly overwhelming, dangerous, impossible, but to her father, he can see through it. He can see her way through. He reassures her, fear not, I am with you. I am here to help you. I have got your hand. And as we face our enemies, whatever form they may take, the Lord takes hold of our hand.

He says, fear not, I am with you. I am fighting for you. And we can trust him, can't we, in the face of all those things? Because of what we are going to remember next weekend.

[36:22] What we mark on Friday. A day that seems to the watching world like a total failure. Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, the serpent crusher, put to death on a Roman cross, the humiliation, the defeat.

But that was not the end of the story, was it? On the third day he rose from the dead. Death defeated. First death, then resurrection. And we have hope in every situation, even in the face of death, because the Lord Jesus' death could not hold him.

It could not hold him because the wages of sin was paid. And the one who conquered death now fights for you. And this is what Joshua 10 underlines so clearly for us.

The Lord fights for his people. He fights for you. Just look over this chapter with me again and again and again.

It is clear who is doing the fighting here. Look at verse 8. The Lord said to Joshua, do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands.

[37:35] Verse 10. The Lord threw them into a panic before Israel. Verse 11. The Lord threw down large stones from heaven.

Verse 12. The Lord gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel. Verse 14. The Lord heeded the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel.

Verse 19. Do not let them enter your cities, for the Lord your God has given them into your hands.

Verse 25. Do not be afraid or dismayed.

Be strong, courageous, for thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against whom you fight. Verse 30. The Lord gave it also and its king into the hands of Israel.

I could go on. Do you get the point? It's the Lord who's doing this. The Lord fights for his people. Are you not glad that we have a God like that?

[38:38] He fights? Do not imagine the Lord Jesus meek and mild, unable, feeble, to do anything. No, no, he fights for his people.

And that great conclusion we saw at the start, verse 42. All these kings and their land at one time because the Lord God of Israel fought for them.

Now this chapter concludes with a final summary from verse 29 to the end that sweeps through southern Canaan and it makes very clear, isn't it, that the Lord is doing this.

It's a rapid fire summary of the defeat of a further seven cities and it works from north to south. It'd be like describing the conquest of England. Don't get too excited.

Marking off the key cities down the M1. Leeds, Sheffield, Nottingham, Leicester, Northampton, just walking down like that. And each stage of the campaign the outcome is the same.

[39:43] A total victory for Israel, annihilation of our enemies. And the summary comes there from verse 40 to the end. I'll not read it again but you know what it says.

Total defeat, the Lord fought for Israel. Now friends, we do have very real enemies in the Christian life.

The world, the flesh, the devil would seek to derail us, discourage us in order that we would abandon the Lord who saved us.

But we're not alone in the fight. God is with us. He fights for us. And is that not an incredible reality to grasp?

That the God who flung stars into space, the God who created unnumbered galaxies, the God of unlimited power is concerned with you and I on this little planet, concerned with the Gibeonites, concerned with Joshua.

[40:53] He's concerned for the Tron Church. And the Apostle Paul knew this reality so clearly and in some of the final words of his letter to the Roman Church, he says this, he says, the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

Now we're still longing for that day, aren't we? We're not there yet. Roman tells us that as we wait we groan. We're saved in hope waiting eagerly for that day when salvation will at last be complete. But until then there will always be great struggles. there will be battles along the way. But even as we await that final victory, even as we endure the skirmishes along the way, we have this assurance from Joshua that we do not fight alone.

God is with us. He's with us in the fight. He fights for us. So we do need to be battling until the end. Christians, we are in a war, but this chapter reminds us that we are on the victor's side.

We're the God who will establish his peace, his eternal peace. He will establish his victory one day. So if you're a Christian here tonight, know that assurance.

[42:24] If you're not yet a Christian, know this, there is a battle. Are you on the victor's side? If you're not, then you must be because that day is coming when he will return and all his enemies will be placed under his feet.

But friends, we've got a glorious future. And let me finish with these words from Revelation which point us to what is to come through the battles to that day of peace. Listen to these words speaking of that great day.

It says, Therefore they are before the throne of God and his people serve him day and night in his temple and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. The sun shall not strike them nor any scorching heat for the lamb is in the midst of the throne.

He will be their shepherd and he will guide them to streams of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Friends, that's our future.

[43:31] Let me pray. Father, we are so glad to have you as our Father in heaven.

Thank you that we are not alone. we do not fight in our own strength but Lord, we know that you are with us always to the very end of the age and so help us to be certain of these things.

Lord, we often are so frightened because we live by what we see but Lord, help us to be a people that live and fight by faith not by sight and so with these realities we've heard about tonight be real in our hearts and enable us to go on because you're with us.

Thank you. In Jesus' name. Amen.