

## *Joshua's Prayer*

But the miracle of the hailstorm was nothing compared to the miracle of extending the day so that Joshua could finish the battle and secure a complete victory over the enemy. His men were weary and the task was great; and if night came on, the enemy could escape. Joshua needed a special act from God to enable him to claim the victory the Lord had promised.

This is the last miracle recorded in Joshua and certainly the greatest. Joshua prayed for God's help, and the Lord answered in a remarkable way. This event is questioned by those who deny the reality of miracles and look only to science for truth. "How could God stop the rotation of the earth and extend the length of a day," they ask, "without creating chaos all over the planet?" They seem to forget the fact that days are *normally* of different lengths in various parts of the world without the planet experiencing chaos. At 2 o'clock in the morning, I read the newspaper *by sunlight* in Norway.

But how do you explain a miracle, *any* miracle? Of course, the simplest answer is the answer of faith: The Lord is God and nothing is too hard for Him (Jer. 32:17, 27). Day and night belong to God (Ps. 74:16), and everything He has made is His servant. If God can't perform the miracle described in Joshua 10, then He can't perform *any* miracle and is imprisoned in His own creation, unable to use or suspend the very laws He built into it. I have a difficult time believing in that kind of a God.

An Old Testament expert, Gleason L. Archer, points out that the phrase "hasted not to go down" in verse 13 indicates "a retardation of the movement" and not a complete cessation.<sup>1</sup> The sun and moon didn't stand still permanently and then suddenly go down but were held back so that the daylight was lengthened. God stopped the sun and moon and then retarded the rotation of the planet so that the sun and moon set very slowly. Such a process would not create chaos all over the globe.

A corollary to this view is that the sun and moon remained on their normal course and it only *appeared* that the day was lengthening because of the way God caused their light to be refracted. But verse 13 states twice that the sun "stood still" and once that the moon "stayed." However, these verbs need not describe a permanent situation but only the beginning of the miracle. God stopped the sun and moon in their courses and then controlled their gradual descent, all the while causing the light to be refracted for a much longer period of time.

Why try to explain away a miracle? What do we prove? Certainly not that we're smarter than God! Either we believe in a God who can do anything, or we must accept a Christian faith that's nonmiraculous; and that does away with the inspiration of the Bible, the Virgin Birth, and the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. Certainly there's room for honest questions about the *nature* of the miraculous; but for the humble Christian believer, there's never room for questioning the *reality* of the miraculous. C.S. Lewis wrote, "The mind which asks for a nonmiraculous Christianity is a mind in process of relapsing from Christianity into mere 'religion.'"<sup>2</sup>

You find seemingly contradictory facts stated in Joshua 10:15 and 21. Why would the army go all the way back to Gilgal when the battle wasn't over? The best explanation is to see verse 15 as the completion of the quotation from the Book of Jasher, beginning at verse 13b. The temporary Jewish camp was at Makkedah, which was near Libnah; and the army didn't return to Gilgal until they had established their control over central Canaan.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, by Gleason L. Archer (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), pp. 161–62.

<sup>2</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), p. 133.

<sup>1</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Strong*. "Be" Commentary Series (113–115). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.