

# Don't be Surprised by Opposition

## Joshua 10:1-5

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, July 16th 2023

### I. Review - The Gibeonites have given themselves to God

Last week we saw that chapter 9 showed a remarkable example of faith on the part of the Gibeonites. Now granted, initially it looked like a totally *fake* faith - a deception. But later Scripture shows that though there *was* sin and deception involved (and we spent a whole sermon looking at the seriousness of that sin), God turned what may have started out as fake faith into the real thing. I believe He did it by the time of this chapter. And I will comment on that briefly later. But I won't try to once again prove that God did indeed give them a genuine faith. I am going to assume that I convinced you that God did such a remarkable transformation in their lives, that long after the rest of Israel apostatized and left the altar, the Gibeonites remained faithful. They never wavered from commitment to God even when Israel was on the losing side of battles; even during times of foreign domination. And to honor their faith, God changed their name from Gibeonites to Nethinim or devoted ones.

And what we are going to look at in this chapter is what happens when you change sides from the devil to the Lord. This chapter will show that there are immediate additional things that begin to happen in your life. Today we are only going to look at the first of those - the immediate opposition that happens. But the rest of the chapter will show the commitment that believers have to one another (what a blessing!), the miracles that God works, angels who guard your ways, God's presence, increasing victories, and other benefits given to those who are on God's side.

Now let me clarify that last statement. To say that we are on God's side *can* mean a different thing than saying that God is on our side. When you are on God's side, certainly God is for you. But some Christians turn things around to mean that God is on their side irrespective of their behavior. In both world wars, many of the German soldiers had Gott Mitt Uns (God with us) prominently displayed on their helmets. They thought God was on their side, and the Americans thought God was on our side. What does that mean? Everyone thinks that God is on his side, but few care to be on God's side on unpopular issues. To say that God is on your side could perhaps simply mean that you are the center of the universe and you want God to be your teammate, not your Lord. In contrast, to be on God's side is to submit to His law, to heed His rebukes, to glory in His Word and in short to follow Him.

And I think that little distinction in words uncovers a lot of what is wrong with evangelicalism today, and may uncover our own hearts this morning. So many Christians have agendas, plans and desires that they came up with on their own. They've made their plan, and *now* they want God to *bless* their plan. And churches do that too. It never dawns on them to ask God what *He* wants. It never dawns on them to be at God's disposal however inconvenient that may be. It never dawns on them to let God blue-pencil their plans all over

the place. So I wanted to begin with that caveat so that we don't misunderstand what we are talking about as we approach this passage. In today's culture wars we shouldn't hope God will bless our side. We need to make sure that we are truly representing *Him*. These Gibeonites were now committed to being on God's side.

## II. When Christians give themselves unconditionally to God, they find hostility from their former friends (vv. 1-5)

So what happens the moment people come to Christ and switch sides? The first thing we see in these verses is that there is immediate opposition. When Christians give themselves unconditionally to God, they find hostility from their former friends. And it surprises them. They are super excited about their newfound faith. Their life has been turned around for the better and they are excited to tell everyone about it. And they are puzzled that their relatives and friends are not just as excited. Oh sure, some of them might pat you on the head and condescendingly say, "that's good for you, but not for me." But more often than not, there is outright mocking and persecution.

And this is one of hundreds of places in the Bible that illustrate that any time Christians give themselves unconditionally to God, they *will* find hostility from the world - similar to what these Gibeonites found. The Bible *guarantees* it. 1 John 3:13 says, "Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you." He is saying, "Don't be surprised." On the other hand, He said that you should be very concerned about the reality of your Christianity when everyone speaks well of you. Luke 6:26 says, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you." That's not a good sign. Jesus explains in John 15:19. He says, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." And we certainly see that immediate reaction the moment the Gibeonites switch sides and put their trust in Yehowah.

### A. The why of this hostility

Let's look first of all at the *why* of this hostility. And this passage hints at seven reasons for it.

#### 1. They have a counterfeit standard (cf. Adoni-Zedek - v. 1a)

First of all, the world has its own standard of right and wrong and when you become a Christian, you all of a sudden stop being enamored with that worldly standard. Take a look at the first sentence. This king had the audacity to name himself the "lord of righteousness." That's what Adoni-Zedek means: the lord of righteousness. He saw himself as the authoritative definer of righteousness, just like the woke movement of today has created new definitions of righteousness in their war on Christ. If you call sodomy what the Bible calls it, all hell breaks loose and you are accused of hate speech, not righteous speech. If you refuse to bow and grovel at the mention of white fragility and refuse to admit that all whites are racist, your very refusal to bow to this new lord of righteousness is proof in their eyes that you are an enemy. If your definition of inclusivity does not include the whole

LGBTQ+ movement, including pedophilia, then you are labeled with some kind of phobia by the new lords of righteousness. They redefine terms.

Look for example at what this lord of righteousness named his city. The text says, "Now it came to pass when Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem..." He was the one who called his city "Jerusalem." This is not an anachronism. He came up with the name. Jerusalem means "foundation of peace."<sup>1</sup> It's a good name, but he meant something different than God will mean by that name later on. The world has its own definition of what constitutes peace and what constitutes a war on peace. And their foundation for peace will be quite different than God's. The world will not like the fact that God calls their peace a false peace and their righteousness a false righteousness. Don't be surprised by the persecution that Christians receive in the new America. Your switching of sides guarantees that tension because they have a counterfeit standard to measure things by. And their war with Christianity begins with words, definitions, standards, and values just like this king had different definitions, standards, and values.

And by the way, this war on words and values started in Genesis 3. Words are not neutral. From the earliest chapters in the Bible we see Satan challenging God's Word (saying, "Has God really said...?" - Genesis 3:1) and redefining God's terms in Genesis 3:1-5. Satan tempted Adam and Eve to embrace independent knowledge ("your eyes will be opened"), independent ethics ("knowing good and evil"), and independent sovereignty (to "be as God"). He was successful in part because he reframed reality by redefining terms and putting a negative spin on what God had said. Satan was engaged in what is called semantic manipulation. And since Satan is called "the father of lies" we should not be surprised if his children also play unfair in modern social discourse.

This war on words has recently even hit the standard dictionaries, most of which have changed their definitions of words to fit the new definitions and values of the new lords of righteousness. For example, the Cambridge Dictionary has recently updated its definition of the word "woman" to include men. I'm not kidding. A woman is now officially defined as "an adult who lives and identifies as a female though they may have been said to have a different sex at birth." And look at these dictionaries' new definitions for pride, hate, toxic, justice, freedom, love, peace, dialogue, diversity, equity, xyz-phobia, man, woman, they, and hundreds of other words. He who defines words controls the debate and eventually wins the debate. The point is, even dictionaries can no longer be trusted. And don't trust a book just because it claims to be a "Christian" view of something. There is a lot of nonsense out there that claims to be a Christian view of something. In this past week alone I have dipped

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<sup>1</sup> "The name means 'height or foundation of peace.'" Warren Baker & Eugene Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, s.v. "יְרוּשָׁלַיִם," (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), p. 473. See also Zondervan's *Complete Vocabulary Guide for Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic*. See also the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon. See also James Strong's *Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*. See also the NASB *Hebrew-Aramaic Dictionary of the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance*.

into books that have these titles: “Transgender Christian,”<sup>2</sup> “Gay Christian,”<sup>3</sup> “Lesbian Christian,”<sup>4</sup> or “Queer Christian.”<sup>5</sup> They have obviously redefined even the word “Christian.” There are anti-Biblical books that still claim to be “Christian view of” any number of topics, including civic ideas that deviate from Scripture ranging from anarchism<sup>6</sup> all the way up to Christian Maoism - the little red book.<sup>7</sup> These are all clear examples of semantic manipulation with a revolutionary goal of overthrowing God's order.

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<sup>2</sup> See Laurie Suzanne Scott, *God Doesn't Make Mistakes: Confessions of a Transgender Christian* (hardback; no publication data: 2018); Alex Clare-Young, *Transgender. Christian. Human.* (Glasgow, UK: Wild Goose Publications, 2019); Justin Sabia-Tanis, *Trans-Gender: Theology, Ministry, and Communities of Faith* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003); Brandan J. Robertson, *The Gospel of Inclusion, Revised Edition: A Christian Case for LGBT+ Inclusion in the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022); Austen Hartke, *Transforming: The Bible & the Lives of Transgender Christians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2018); etc

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (2014) is one of many such books

<sup>4</sup> See Michael Bernard Kelly, *The Erotic Contemplative: Reflections on the Spiritual Journey of the Gay/Lesbian Christian*, (Clouds of Magellan Pub, 2021); Stacey Chomiak, “Life as a Lesbian Christian” at <https://www.redletterchristians.org/life-as-a-lesbian-christian-this-is-what-i-see/>

<sup>5</sup> Julie Rodgers, *Outlove: A Queer Christian Survival Story* (Minneapolis, MN: Broadleaf Books, 2021); Adrian Van Klinken, *Kenyan, Christian, Queer* (Penn State University Press, 2019); Rev. Elizabeth M. Edman, *Queer Virtue: What LGBTQ People Know About Life and Love and How It Can Revitalize Christianity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2016);

<sup>6</sup> See Kevin Craig's writings at <https://kevincraig.us/VFT.htm> It is hard to categorize the various streams within Christian anarchism. One famous book is Alexandre Christoyannopoulos' *Christian Anarchism* at <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/alexandre-christoyannopoulos-christian-anarchism>. But there are evangelical and even Reformed varieties of Christian anarchism that seem to uncritically accept Murray Rothbard's book, *Man, Economy, and the State*. (Note: Rothbard was an atheist.). One common line of argumentation is to argue that the books of Daniel and Revelation call all civil governments bestial in nature and subject to God's judgment. There is an element of truth to their assertion that God views any governments that are hostile to Him as bestial, but it hardly follows that God opposed all forms of civil government

<sup>7</sup> Here is one example of so-called “Christian Maoism.” <https://zinejihad.wordpress.com/2022/08/13/why-christian-maoism-zine/> The established church of China under Mao Tse Tung adopted Christian Maoism as true patriotism.

Why do I bring all of this up? So that you aren't surprised when the world unleashes its anger on you when you define terms God's ways and define righteousness God's way. The world has a standard of right and wrong, and when we become Christians we automatically stand at odds with that - that is, if we are faithful to Christ. They will declare war on us. And they already have. In Afghanistan, Iran, and other countries they just shoot you in the head. Here, it is more subtle. The government may support homo activists who sue Christian businesses that prefer not to perform faux weddings, or service faux weddings. But its still a war on Christ's values. And even various federal agencies have recently printed documents that label conservative Christians as extremists that they liken to al-Qaeda and the Ku Klux Klan. In one sense its crazy, but in another sense, it is not. Jesus said that you should not be surprised when the world hates you, but you should be surprised if the world speaks well of you. God's standard does not flex to accommodate the world's ever-changing standards. So even the first phrase gives a hint of why there is automatic conflict with their former friends, the Gibeonites.

### 2. The vitality of Christian faith becomes known (v. 1b)

The second reason given in the text was the vitality of Joshua's conquering faith. Verse 1 goes on to say, "heard how Joshua had taken Ai..." Joshua had the power of God behind him in his previous battles because his faith was engaged in God's agendas, not his own. When the vitality of Christian faith becomes known, demons tend to stir up opposition. Some of you may have seen the video clip of pastor Ray Simmons and Pastor Shover being pushed around as they sought to testify about abortion at the Iowa capital. There *were* battle lines there, weren't there? And those of you who go to the pride parade in Omaha to share the Gospel have experienced this personally.

Now, I will say that it's not a compromised Christianity that is dangerous to world or that is hated by the world. Opposition comes when you showcase God's power and the reality of His presence. It seems that through their demons, they instantly recognize it.

### 3. The antithesis of Christian faith becomes known (v. 1c)

The next reason given is "and had utterly destroyed it." It's one thing to war and then to declare peace before you are finished with what God has called you to do. That's called starting well and finishing poorly. What is the culture war that Jesus has declared? It's not just to win a few battles here and there. It is to completely replace pagan civilization with Christian civilization.

Now I should hasten to say that this was a unique kind of warfare called *cherem* warfare that was not allowed in the law of God for ordinary history. There was a typology or symbolism to it. God was using Israel as a special instrument of judgment by special revelation and this kind of warfare was not authorized for the rest of Israel's history or for our time.

But at the same time, it *is* a symbol of Jesus in the New Covenant not being satisfied until every square inch of life becomes Christian. Joshua was in a war that would replace paganism with Christianity by the power of the sword. We are in a spiritual war that is destined to completely replace paganism with Christianity by the power of the Gospel, and

the sword of Scripture. Christianity was going to inherit the land, and everything that stood against God's laws was removed. So it points to the antithesis that Christ calls us to.

Enough on what antithesis means. Here is the point - when Christians have a clear antithesis that does not acknowledge the legitimacy of the world system, and that believes that everything in the world system is destined to be replaced by Christ, then understandably the world will resist you. Both sides are out for total victory. The world is not going to be content to let you have a little space in their system. It will do everything in its power to stop the advance of the Gospel. And its the *Gospel* we are advancing, not physical warfare.

#### 4. The consistency of Christian faith becomes known (v. 1d - "as had been done to Jericho")

The next point shows another reason why Joshua was considered dangerous - consistency. What he did to Jericho, he did to Ai. It says, "as had been done to Jericho." And the implication is that he was going to continue to do the same to other cities. Consistency. If Joshua had taken Jericho and been content with that, he might have still been considered to be a threat, but the rest of the Canaanites might have been willing to let it go. But when Joshua was consistent in advancing the cause of God throughout Canaan, he was obviously considered to be a super serious threat.

And the degree to which Christians are consistent in their application of the Bible today, to that degree they are considered enemies. The United Methodist Church is absolutely no threat to the world because the world has basically taken it over and made it celebrate the world's values. You could see this at yesterday's pride parade which was endorsed by mainline denominations like the Methodists, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the PCUSA, and others. They embrace socialism, critical race theory, LGBTQ agendas, government reeducation camps (otherwise known as government schools), transvestites reading books to kids, and other values of our society's new lords of righteousness. Those kinds of churches are no threat to the world.

*But* organizations and denominations that consistently apply the Scripture are targeted by the Southern Poverty Law Center and their government counterparts. Both have labeled evangelical Christianity as "Christo-fascism" (whatever that means). No. We are the opposite of fascism. *They* are the fascists. Anyway, you can look it up. You can see it on the web. They have lumped in with suspected terrorist organizations good evangelical groups such as D. James Kennedy Ministries, American Vision, Biblical Worldview Ministry, Probe Ministries, and many other good ministries. Why? Because they have made their Biblical views widely known. They are a threat because they are consistent in their Biblical faith and unashamed of it.

#### 5. Seeing key leaders falling to the Gospel (v. 1e)

But the world especially gets ticked off when key leaders in sports, media, or government begin to be bold for Christ. Verse 1 ends by saying, "and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them." They knew that the Gibeonites had

submitted to Israel's God and were now considered to be among them. They were part of Israel and now had fellowship with Israel and stood for Israel's values.

And in the last couple of years key government leaders who have stood against the woke movement have had all hell unleashed against them. Look at the vitriol leveled against the conservative Supreme Court justices who have come out with several unpopular decisions. Those decisions are not as radical as the Bible would make them, yet they are now seen as a threat. Well, its even worse for faithful Christians in government. Pray for them. People are going after them like they went after the Gibeonites.

#### 6. The fear generated by a consistent Christian faith (v. 2a)

And that leads to the next reason - the fear generated by this threat to their power. Look at the first phrase in verse 2: "that they feared greatly." When Adoni-Zedek heard that an entire city; a mighty city had converted to the God of Israel, it struck fear into his heart. He recognized that this was not like other petty wars that he had previously engaged in. He was dealing with a God of miracles. He was dealing with an indomitable force. And he felt that he needed to do something about this.

I think of the city of Cali, Columbia. In the 1990s Christianity had been growing so rapidly in that city that it was hitting the pocket book of the seven drug cartels that ruled the city. As people who used to be aligned with the cartels were getting converted and speaking against drug use for the first time, they were being assassinated. The drug cartels also began threatening pastors. This past week Campus Crusade resent a letter that Bill Bright had sent before he died.<sup>8</sup> In the letter he mentions a dear pastor friend of his in that city, Julio Ruibal, who had tried to mobilize the pastors to pray against the strongholds of Satan, and especially against the drug cartels. But the other pastors were scared to death to join with him. So Julio publicly preached and prayed on his own. Well, not for very long. It was shortly after he started doing so that he was shot to death in what clearly looked like a cartel organized assassination. Anyway, at his memorial service, his wife described the constant threats the drug cartels had made against her husband in order to intimidate him. And because he was a servant of Christ, he refused to be intimidated or to be a coward. She then explained his desire that all the churches of Cali unite together in opposition.

Well, the pastors who attended the memorial service were convicted of their cowardice and their failure to speak, and they made a covenant with each other to do so. God led them to stage an all-night prayer rally in the city's stadium and to declare spiritual war against the demons in that city. And God *immediately* began to do amazing things in Cali. Within nine months six of the seven drug lords were arrested and the power of the cartels was completely broken. It's a really cool story.

But the point is, the cartels initially fought back because they feared (and they rightly feared) that they were losing control of the city as Christianity was growing by leaps and

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.brightmedia.org/drug-cartels-and-pastor>

bounds. You can count on some kind of backlash as you are successful in advancing the Gospel against the forces of Satan. Be prepared for it. Don't be surprised.

But what is the message of Joshua? Is it that backlash from Satan is an evidence that we will lose? No. It's the exact opposite.

### 7. The greater the trophy of grace, the greater the opposition (v. 2b)

The next phrase indicates that the greater the trophy of grace, the greater the opposition. It says, "because Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were mighty." He didn't like the fact that the king and Gibeon's mighty men were now Christians. These were people of influence.

Let me quickly interject on why I take these verses apart phrase by phrase. God doesn't waste words on even historical books. Each word was meant for our edification. Matthew 4:4 says we are to live by every word of God. And I think the application here is that the greater the trophy of grace, the greater the opposition. We can expect it.

We are seeing attacks on popular figures in America and Canada when they stand for Christian values. And let me show how this opposition happens against great men even if those men are somewhat ignorant of the Bible or somewhat inconsistent. If they stand for any of Christ's values they are shouted down. Some people are surprised to see Buttigieg attacking Pence so harshly for his religious views. No, there is nothing surprising about it at all. Now, I am not making any statement in support of Pence for president. That's not the point. It's attacks on people of influence who stand for even a modicum of Christian values.

You may be familiar with the savagery vented against Tony Dungy back in January and February because of his speech at the March for Life. He was a Hall of Fame inductee, but that one speech made numerous public officials demand that he be fired. Reading the posts against him by news commentators, public officials, and just the flash mob showed irrational hatred. Why? Because he was a big figure.

Earlier you saw similar vitriol against University of Michigan football coach, Jim Harbaugh for his prolife stand. Quarterback Drew Brees came under brutal attack for simply appearing on a video encouraging Christian students to bring Bibles to school. That seems like such an innocent statement, but to the new lords of righteousness it is intolerable. The new lords of righteousness came against the Washington Commanders defensive coordinator, Jack Del Rio simply over a statement that he was concerned about the bias in the media coverage of the January 6th riot. They made so much ruckous that he felt he had to withdraw his statement - which is of course what they want for all of these guys - and a lot of times they are successful.

I feel bad for any famous person who has even a tiny portion of Joshua's values and convictions. Without the power of the Holy Spirit, it will be tough for them to stand. Their name and reputation will be attacked, and in some cases there will violence against them. Why? Because the greater the person or the city that identifies with God's values, the greater the opposition. Look at what they did to Schiff's bank in Puerto Rico. And nowadays you don't even have to be a trophy of grace; you don't even have to be a Christian. All you



have to do is be a non-Christian who still stands for some old fashioned Christian values. But this verse *especially* applies to Christians who preach the Gospel fearlessly. Pray for Michael, Bill, Daniel, and others as they take the lead in sharing the Gospel on the street. They aren't worried about the haters. They are looking for the elect.

One commentator said about this passage,

[this] supplies a solemn illustration of the fact that the Gospel is "the savor of life unto life" to those who believe and are saved, but "the savor of death unto death" to those who reject it and are lost (2 Cor. 2:15, 16).<sup>9</sup>

And I say, "Amen. Exactly." The Gibeonites didn't cave in and decide to rejoin ranks with Adoni-Zedek. That would have been the easier thing to do - to rejoin forces with Adoni-Zedek. But no, against all odds, they are going to fight - which is one of several indications that they already had faith at this stage.

## B. The how of this hostility

### 1. Attempting to have a united front against this new faith (v. 3), which means that they have to temporarily leave the previous alliance of 9:1-2.

But let's move next to verses 3-5, which describe the *how* of this hostility. And the first thing we see is an attempt to have a united front against these new believers. The king of Jerusalem didn't want to go by himself. He wanted others to unite with him. These new lords of righteousness are cowards when they are by themselves, so they seem to always try to have a mob with them. Verse 3 says,

Therefore Adoni-Zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron, Piram king of Jarmuth, Japhia king of Lachish, and Debir king of Eglon, saying...

Jerusalem tries to get a strategic alliance with other Amorite kings in the Southern region. His goal was to deal with Gibeon while Israel was busy fighting the rest of the coalition. Isolation was the name of the game. And by now you may have forgotten about the rest of the coalition, so if you turn back to chapter 9 I will read the first two verses of that chapter. Those two verses give some important background information that happened a day or two before. Chapter 9, verses 1-2.

And it came to pass when all the kings who were on this side of the Jordan, in the hills and in the lowland and in all the coasts of the Great Sea toward Lebanon—the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite—heard about it, that they gathered together to fight with Joshua and Israel with one accord.

So a day or two before, absolutely every army of all the Canaanite tribes that are on your map marched from their cities to confront Israel at Gilgal. Gilgal was Israel's homebase. It's

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<sup>9</sup> Arthur Walkington Pink, *Gleanings in Joshua* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 265.

16.5 miles east of Gibeon. So in the first half of chapter 9 the Israelite army is in Gilgal. In the second half they march quickly to Gibeon to confront the Gibeonites. Then all commentaries agree that between chapter 9 and chapter 10 Israel has gone back to Gilgal. How do we know? Verse 6 tells us that Israel was once again in Gilgal.

So, when Gibeon sends messengers to Gilgal for Israel to help them, Israel immediately leaves and marches at night arriving at Gibeon toward dawn, totally surprising the Amorites in verse 9 of this chapter by their presence. Why would the Amorites have been surprised? Because they expected Israel to be preoccupied with the armies of the Hittites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites and all the other ites. All of those armies are headed to Gilgal to annihilate Israel.

But when those armies arrive at Gilgal, Israel is nowhere to be seen. This Amorite coalition never anticipated that Israel would actually come to the defense of Gibeon and keep their covenant. They no doubt imputed their own lack of integrity onto Joshua and the leaders. That was a bad presupposition. But because Joshua and the leaders were not pragmatists but rather honored their covenant, they left the area where the other kings were heading and not only defended Gibeon and its league of cities, but defeated the five kings in one long day. And it appears that because the other army is hunting down Israel (doesn't know where they are), Israel is able to rapidly move from Gibeon to other cities in the southern coalition. It was a marvelous providence of God to divide the main Canaanite army from unitedly being able to attack Israel. So even though king Adoni-Zedek thought he had a really good plan, his plan ruined the plans of the whole Canaanite army. It divided everyone and the coalition fell apart. Hallelujah!

So what are some applications from this section? First, it would have been easy for Joshua to turn down the plea from Gibeon because he had his own problems to worry about. Pragmatism would have made him say that he is too busy. But it was his very integrity to do what he knew he should do that ended up helping him in the long run. God says that it pays to do the right thing. It may not seem like it at first, but it pays off. The bottom line is that integrity needs to trump pragmatism. Make that a principle of life.

Second, though pagans can seem united in their hatred for Christianity, they can have their own weaknesses that God can exploit. I'm actually not discouraged by the vitriolic opposition that the woke movement, critical race theory, and other modern movements have brought against Christians. They have one thing that unites them - a hatred for God's law, but they aren't very united on their own views. And it has been showing. The very mean-spiritedness that some are displaying in our modern culture wars is losing them friends. The incredible speed with which they are publicly promoting more and more perverse things is alienating them from some of their own coalition who aren't quite ready for that. Their very aggressiveness is actually producing fault lines in their ranks. People are bailing.

And I will only give you a couple of many examples that could be given. Just in the last few weeks I have read quite a number of articles by leftist writers saying that they might want to tone down their embracing of the woke movement (or at least the rhetoric of the word "woke") since they are losing some of their own people over it. And there are other fault

lines. For example, feminists have been offended with men pretending to be women in sports. That really has upset the feminists because there is no way that the women can compete. They feel like its not fair. Neither group is a friend of Christianity, but both are at odds with each other. Likewise, the critical race theory crowd is offended that white women are starting to hijack the woke movement, and some early leaders of the woke movement are offended at the perverse books being introduced to children as early as kindergarten, and there are articles claiming that big business has hijacked the woke movement for profit, and evangelicals who were previously soft on Revoice have backed way away from it because of how radical the LGBTQ+ movement has gotten. And there has been backlash to corporations like Anheuser-Busch and Target. The Lord is able to divide the loyalties of the pagan opponents when it suits His purposes. There really is nothing new under the sun. These are fantastic opportunities to present God's solutions as the world's solutions fail.

## 2. They try to isolate Christians from those who would disciple them (vv. 4-5)

Reading verses 4-5. The king of Jerusalem sends a letter saying,

4 "Come up to me and help me, that we may attack Gibeon, for it has made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel." 5 Therefore the five kings of the Amorites, the king of Jerusalem, the king of Hebron, the king of Jarmuth, the king of Lachish, and the king of Eglon, gathered together and went up, they and all their armies, and camped before Gibeon and made war against it.

They went up because it was higher ground than where their cities were. That's why he says, "Come up to me..." And he gives as his reason that the Gibeonites have made peace with Israel. Anyone who is cozy with Israel is going to be an enemy of Adoni-Zedek.

It is understandable that the main armies in chapter 9 were headed to Gilgal to attack Israel, but why would these five subdivisions spin off to attack the Gibeonites? There have been various theories. One is that they assumed the other armies were sufficient to handle Israel. Another is that they thought Gibeon was vulnerable since they were newbies to the faith. Another is that the king wanted to ensure that the Gibeonites did not have time to join Israel and learn Israel's ways. Another was that it was conquering by division while Israel was indisposed 16.5 miles east. We don't know for sure.

But any of those reasons can happen today. Satan loves to attack the weak links in the church in order to demoralize the church. He also likes to tempt believers when they are not at church or not close to other believers. Likewise, if he can cause new believers to fall before they get discipled, he can bring discouragement. Whatever the reason, because Joshua ensured that the whole body cared for each other, this backfired. It didn't work. And we will look at that theology of body life in the next section, Lord willing.

### III. The Amorites confidently engage in a lost-cause war (v. 5dff)

But finishing off *these* verses, verses 4-5 show that these five kings confidently engaged in a lost-cause war. And down through history the enemies of Christ have often had a false confidence that they could destroy Christianity. Now, the five kings in these verses didn't think it was a lost cause, but we know from the rest of the chapter that it was. The armies of those five kings were totally annihilated the very next day. That doesn't make the battles any less tough, but they can be fought with the confidence that whether we live or die, Christ's kingdom must keep growing till it fills the whole earth. Look at all the lost cause fights against Christianity of the past, and be encouraged.

## IV. Other lost cause coalitions that have come against Christianity

### 1. Rome and Israel (1st-4th centuries)

Satan's first huge initiative against the church after the ascension of Jesus was engaged in by Israel and Rome. The New Testament shows that Rome and Israel (despite their hatred for each other) united in seeking to destroy Christianity in the first century. It's similar to the Canaanites (who were previously at each other's throats) uniting against Joshua. But the book of Acts and the book of Revelation both show that despite many martyrdoms and much suffering, the church grew worldwide into an enormous church that could not be numbered by the end of the first century. And in the next two centuries so many Roman citizens became Christian that the empire itself adopted Christianity as the official religion. Both Israel and Rome faded away, but not Christianity. It was precisely because Satan knows that a vibrant Christianity cannot be beat that he does his best to oppose it in its infancy and/or to make it compromise.

### 2. Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals, Franks (4th & 5th centuries)

With the decline of the Roman empire, Europe witnessed the migration and establishment of various barbarian kingdoms, such as the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals, and Franks. And they tried to destroy Christianity as well, but those Christians ended up converting rulers and their populations. Christianity impacted everything they did, including how they ruled.

### 3. Persian empire (4th & 7th centuries)

The Persian emperor Shapur II ordered the slaughter of Assyrian Christians in AD 341. Later, in the conflict between Rome and Persia, tens of thousands of Christians were killed and the remaining survivors were deported. It looked like he was successful in killing Christianity within that nation. But was Christianity stamped out? Not by a long shot.

### 4. Vikings (8th-11th centuries)

The Vikings gave their best effort at destroying Christianity, but ended up being Christianized instead.

Now, if we had time we could demonstrate that each of the points in this sermon could be illustrated in each of those massive times of persecution. I'm not going to do that. Instead, I want to illustrate that just as the Canaanites were not able to exterminate Israel, these persecutions were not able to exterminate Christianity. And some of them were pretty brutal. There have been times when compromised Christianity has been stamped out, but the true church has kept on growing.

#### 5. Islamic Caliphate (8th-9th centuries)

The Islamic Caliphate in the 8th through 9th centuries initially just taxed Christians extra heavily, but later Christians were abducted and carried into slavery. Yet even slaves shared their faith and spread Christianity - much to the frustration of the Muslims.

#### 6. Chinese empire (18th-20th centuries)

The Chinese empire of the 18th to 20th centuries brought all kinds of restrictions to Christianity, and eventually made evangelization punishable by death. Why did they do that? Because they were desperate. Christianity was growing so fast that they were desperate to stop it. Many died during the Boxer Rebellion and the Tibetan Rebellion, yet not only did it not stamp out Christianity, everybody acknowledges that Christianity grew.

#### 7. Japanese empire (17th century)

Now, I will admit that one of the most successful attempts to annihilate Christianity was in Japan after Tokugawa ascended to the throne in 1600. The tortures inflicted on Christians were grisly and Christianity mostly went underground until it was legalized in 1890. But Gary can probably tell you a bit more about that country since he was a missionary there.

#### 8. Indian muslims (18th century)

In the 18th century, the Sultan Tipu of southern India captured tens of thousands of Christians and forcibly converted them to Islam from 1780-1784. Christian property was confiscated and churches razed to the ground. Where is Christianity in India today? Entire tribes in India are embracing Jesus. Wikipedia says India has 26 million Christians, Pew Research says it is closer to 28 million, and India's *own* census puts it at 32 million. Whatever the figure, Satan has not been able to stamp it out.

#### 9. French revolution (18th-19th centuries)

France has had a horrible history of barbaric treatment of anyone not French. Their treatment of the Algerians was atrocious. It's sickening to read that history. Their earlier treatment of the Huguenots was despicable. One author said, "The French Revolution may have temporarily destroyed Christianity in France, however, it acted as a savior for the future of Christianity." How? It purified the church and made it into a powerhouse again, but more importantly, the displaced Christians brought huge blessing to America and other countries.

### 10. Armenian genocide (19th-20th centuries)

The Armenian genocide of over one million people and the deportation of the rest is a gut wrenching story that has put a black mark on the face of Islam. Rushdoony came from that background.

### 11. Soviet union (20th century)

The Soviet union definitely tried to stamp out Christianity, yet it grew like crazy.

### 12. Communist China (20th-21st centuries)

The Chinese church has faced incredibly stiff persecution and repression from the Communist regime since 1948. But where is the church? Wang Yi says,

At a closed-door meeting at Peking University in 2006, Xiaowen Ye, the then head of the Chinese Communist Party's Religious Affairs Bureau reported that Protestants in China numbered 110 million.<sup>10</sup>

And as a communist, he probably downplayed that number. But Christianity has been growing by at least a 6.5% rate each year, and some estimate that by 2030 it may well exceed 247 million. Right now there are more official Christians in China than there are members of the Chinese Communist Party.

### 13. North Korea (20th-21st centuries)

North Korea still ranks #1 in persecution of Christians within its borders. The government gives all kinds of incentives to local governors to expose and eradicate Christians from their jurisdictions. It's horrible. When Christians are spotted, they are either immediately killed or sent to labor camps. Yet Christianity is growing there by leaps and by bounds. It's the only thing that can give those poor people hope. It's such a closed country that we don't know for sure how many are there, but Open Doors guestestimates that there are 300,000+ Christians in the country. It has been unstoppable.

### 14. Communist Cuba (20th-21st centuries)

### 15. Islamic extremists (20th-21st centuries)

Throughout Africa and the Middle East, Christians are harshly treated by muslims. Yet despite the persecution, Christianity is growing in absolutely every muslim country. Iran grew from 500 known Christians in 1979 to somewhere between (and estimates vary) 500,000 to 1 million. Africa has the fastest growth of Christianity of any continent - despite severe persecution. And sometimes it is actually persecution that strengthens the church.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.billionbibles.com/china/how-many-christians-in-china.html>

## 16. Secularism (18th-21st centuries)

And of course, we are familiar with the various forms of secularism that have tried to eviscerate Christianity of its power from without and from within. In many cases these have been successful - especially among Christians who have sent their children to government schools. That's a good way to destroy covenant succession. What's happened with the secular West is similar to what happened to Israel in some of the periods of the Judges. They have lost power by compromise. Yet the book of Judges shows that God can reverse even that.

The point is that worldwide, the church is growing despite passive and active persecution. And the Bible predicts a day when everyone will be converted - from the greatest to the least of them they shall all know the Lord. There won't be any more need for evangelism. Hebrews 8:11 says, "None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them." Hallelujah! The book of Joshua is a typology of that eventually happening.

But back to our main thesis until that happens. Jesus said, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." He was telling His disciples, "Don't be surprised by opposition. If you are consistently advancing the cause of Christ, you will receive it. But don't give up. He who is with you is greater than he who is with the world." May we all be convinced that this is true. Amen.