

THE DAY THE SUN STOOD STILL

Presented by

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As we thumb through the pages of the Bible, we sometimes come across stories that tell us about how God's people did not trust and obey Him—and how they suffered as a result. In the sermon that Justin presented to you right before I got up to speak—“Fiery Serpents, Bronze Serpents”—he told you about one such occasion in Numbers 21. God's people refused to trust Him, and instead chose to gripe and complain about how He had treated them. As a result, many of the Israelites died after being bitten by the poisonous snakes that God had sent to punish the people. Moses had warned the Israelites about this very thing when he said in Deuteronomy 30:15-17,

“I command you today to love the Lord your God. Walk in His ways and keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, so that you may live. And the Lord will bless you.... But if you turn away so that you do not hear...I tell you today that you shall surely perish.”

However, as we read through the Bible we also find amazing stories about how God helped His people whenever they trusted and obeyed Him. In fact, in Joshua 10:1-15 we find a fascinating story about that very thing. Joshua was the leader of God's people, the Israelites. But there were some people in a city called Gibeon who had become the Israelites' servants. One day, some wicked kings decided to attack Gibeon and capture its people. So the people of Gibeon asked Joshua to save them—and he did! He brought the entire Israelite army to rescue them. Joshua knew that this was the right thing to do because God had told him, “Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hands” (Joshua 10:8). Because Joshua and the Israelites were willing to trust and obey God, He promised Joshua that He would help the Israelites win. And He did exactly that—by performing two remarkable miracles.

First, at one point in the battle, the enemies of the Israelites became discouraged and tried to run away. But God did not want them to get away, so He sent a terrible hailstorm to stop them. The hail was so big, and came down so hard, that it actually killed many of the enemy soldiers! In fact, according to Joshua 10:11, more of the Israelites' enemies died in the hailstorm than in the actual battle itself.

Second, God did something else that had never been done before. He actually altered time so that the Israelites would have more hours of daylight in which to fight the battle. The Bible says, “So the Sun stood still, and the Moon stopped, till the people had revenge upon their enemies,” and “the Sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not go down for about a whole day” (Joshua 10:13).

This is the Bible's way of telling us that God caused the Earth to stop rotating around the Sun so that, from the Earth, it appeared as if the Sun was actually standing still in the sky. Could God actually **do** this? Of course He could! Genesis 1:16 tells us that God created the Sun and the Moon. So He could do anything with them He wanted to. Plus, in Jeremiah 32:27 God said, “I am the Lord, the God of all the peoples of the world. Is anything too hard for me?” Jesus Himself said, “With God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26).

Yes, God performed this astonishing miracle so that the Israelites could have more daylight in which to defeat their enemies. But He also did it to teach the Israelites and us a lesson. That lesson was expressed by Moses in Deuteronomy 15:5-6—“If you carefully obey the voice of the Lord your God, and if you observe with care all these commandments, the Lord your God will bless you just as He promised you.”

Today, we must understand that if we do what God has commanded us to do, He will **ble**ss us. But if we do not trust and obey Him, He will **punish** us. If those are the two choices—being **ble**ssed by God or being **punished** by God—how hard a decision should that be for us to make? As Jesus said in John 14:15, “If you love Me, keep my commandments.” That is all we need to know in order to make the right decision, isn’t it?