**The Sun Stands Still**

Last week we had a mathematics lesson so this week I thought we might continue the science theme, the discipline du jour being physics, a course I did not even attempt in high school. Isaac Newton is perhaps the most famous physicist due to his discovery of gravity. His interests were not limited to physics, he was also proficient in astronomy, chemistry and mathematics. From “How Stuff Works”: *Whether your high school calculus class blew your mind or crushed your spirit, you can blame it all on Isaac Newton. See, mathematics is the system by which we gauge the interworking of the cosmos, but like many scientists of his age, Newton found that existing algebra and geometry simply weren't sufficient for his scientific needs. Let that sink in for a moment: Existing math wasn't advanced enough for Newton. He developed calculus over an 18 month period beginning in 1665.* Some consider Newton to be the greatest scientist who ever lived and he certainly was far ahead of is time. Although Newton was a devout Christian, the Anglican and Catholic churches deemed him to be a heretic because they thought his ideas were radical. The Catholics believed that a mathematical explanation for gravity was in conflict with the idea that God was in control of all of nature. In truth, Newton agreed that God was in control, he was just studying the rules of the universe that God established including the gravitational pull by the earth on the moon. In our study of Joshua chapter 10, we see God defying His own laws of nature which is of course His prerogative.

The chapter begins with Adoni-Zedek who was the king of Jerusalem appealing to several other kings in the southern part of Canaan to join forces. Adoni-Zedek had heard of the Israelite victories at Jericho and AI. More troubling to him was the news that the Gibeonites who were known as great fighters had chosen to make a treaty rather than fight the Israelites. He decided to attack Gibeon and the other kings agreed. Matthew Henry noted that the decision to attack Gibeon may have been to punish them for making peace with Israel or he may have considered Gibeon to be a strategic city that needed to be held. Regardless of the motives, the kings of 5 cities united and attacked Gibeon.

The Gibeonites sent word to Joshua that they were under attack and called on him to come to their aid. Joshua took the entire army and marched to Gibeon in the dark, buoyed by God’s promise that He would give the armies of the 5 kings into his hand. The 5 kings thought they would be fighting the Gibeonites, instead they were fighting God (see Prov. 21:30). The early morning arrival of Joshua took the Amorite armies by surprise and God threw them into confusion. The Israelites routed them and as they chased them, God threw large hailstones down killing more than those who had died in combat. Joshua prayed to God that the sun and moon would stand still, apparently so that daylight would continue allowing the Israelites to continue their pursuit of the Amorites. God answered Joshua’s prayer and extended daylight for a full day. The Israelite army destroyed the enemies completely and captured the 5 kings. Joshua had them brought before him and he executed them in front of his army, telling them that God would do the same to any enemy they would face. Joshua then led the army to the cities of the kings and put every inhabitant to the sword and so subdued the entire southern region of Canaan.

As we discussed last week, the Gibeonites feared God. Despite their deception, they enjoyed God’s favor as He blessed Joshua’s decision to defend them against the armies which attacked them. God again displayed His great power through 2 supernatural events. Some have observed that the Bible is incorrect in stating that the sun stood still since it is the earth that revolves, not the sun. Such astronomical matters were unknown to Joshua so he described it as he saw it. Joshua witnessed many of God’s miracles such as parting the Red Sea and the Jordan River and causing the walls of Jericho to fall. God has at His disposal unlimited numbers of miracles He can employ to accomplish His purposes, miracles that even a celebrated scientist such as Isaac Newton could not begin to imagine (see Prov. 3:5).