

Joshua 10:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, which remain until this very day.

Analysis

And it came to pass at the time of the going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, which remain until this very day.

The phrase "at the time of the going down of the sun" (לֵעֵת בּוֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, le'et bo hashemesh) emphasizes punctilious obedience to Deuteronomy 21:23. Joshua didn't leave the bodies exposed past sunset, demonstrating that even in executing divine judgment, God's people must observe covenant law. The verb "commanded" (צִוָּה, tsivvah) shows Joshua's authority continuing through execution to burial—leadership responsibility extends to completing tasks properly, not merely initiating them.

The burial location is profoundly symbolic: "cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid" (וַיִּשְׁלְכֵם אֶל־הַמְּעֵרָה אֲשֶׁר נִחְבְּאוּ־שָׁם, vayashlichum el-hame'arah asher nechbe'u-sham). The cave that seemed a refuge became a tomb. Where they fled from battle, they received burial. This poetic justice illustrates how human attempts to escape God's judgment only lead deeper into it (Amos 5:19). The verb "cast" (שָׁלַךְ, shalach) suggests unceremonious disposal rather than honorable

burial—appropriate for those who died under divine curse.

The sealing with "great stones" (אֲבָנִים גְּדוֹלוֹת, *avanim gedolot*) paralleled the earlier temporary sealing (v. 18) but now permanently. The concluding phrase "which remain until this very day" (עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, *ad hayom hazeh*) indicates the author wrote while evidence remained visible, providing eyewitness verification. This formula appears throughout Joshua (4:9; 5:9; 7:26; 8:28-29), grounding theological narrative in verifiable historical reality. These weren't myths but events that left physical traces.

Historical Context

The formula "until this very day" appears frequently in Joshua and Judges as authentication of historical claims. Ancient readers could verify accounts by visiting sites and seeing evidence—the stones at the cave mouth, the ruins of Ai (8:28), Achan's cairn (7:26). This grounding in physical, verifiable reality distinguishes biblical narrative from ancient mythology. The Bible presents real history involving real places that left real archaeological footprints.

The cave tomb at Makkedah became a permanent monument to God's judgment and Israel's victory. Ancient Near Eastern cultures commonly used caves as tombs (Abraham purchased Machpelah cave for Sarah's burial, Genesis 23). The sealed cave served multiple functions: proper burial preventing land defilement, perpetual memorial to the victory, and warning to future Canaanite resistance. Archaeology has uncovered numerous burial caves from this period throughout the Shephelah region.

The irony of the five kings' fate wasn't lost on ancient audiences. They formed a coalition to destroy Gibeon and eliminate Israel; instead, they died ingloriously, buried in a cave where they had cowered in fear. Their attempt to prevent Israel's expansion enabled it—the southern campaign's success (vv. 28-43) directly resulted from defeating this coalition. God's sovereignty ensures that opposition to His purposes accomplishes those very purposes (Acts 4:27-28; Romans 8:28).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the cave serving as both hiding place and tomb illustrate the principle that attempts to escape God's judgment only lead to greater condemnation?
2. What does the phrase 'until this very day' teach about the importance of grounding faith in verifiable historical events rather than abstract spiritual ideas?
3. How should believers respond when God's justice seems harsh—recognizing both His holiness that cannot tolerate sin and His mercy in sending Christ to bear the judgment we deserve?

Interlinear Text

וַיְהִי י	לֵיעַ תֵּן	בֹּא	הַשֶּׁשׁ מָשׁ	צִוָּה
H1961	And it came to pass at the time	of the going down	of the sun	commanded
	H6256	H935	H8121	H6680
יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	וַיִּרְדּוּם	מֵעַל	הָעֵצִים	וַיַּשְׁלֵכֵם
that Joshua	and they took them down	H5921	off the trees	and cast
H3091	H3381		H6086	H7993
הַמַּעְבָּה	אֲשֶׁר	נִחְבְּאוּ	שָׁם	וַיִּשֶׁן מוֹ
in the cave's	H834	wherein they had been hid	H8033	and laid
H4631		H2244		H7760
הַיּוֹם	עַד	הַמַּעְבָּה	פִּי	עַל
H3117	H5704	in the cave's	H4631	great
			H6310	H1419
				H5921
				H6106
				H3117
הַיּוֹם:				
H2088				

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 8:29 (Parallel theme): And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcase down from the tree, and cast it at the entering of the gate of the city, and raise thereon a great heap of stones, that remaineth unto this day.

Joshua 7:26 (Parallel theme): And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.

2 Samuel 18:17 (Parallel theme): And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent.