

Joshua 10:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel.

Analysis

Adoni-zedek's message to allied kings: 'Come up unto me, and help me, that we may smite Gibeon: for it hath made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel.' The imperative 'come up' indicates urgent summons. Jerusalem's elevated position (geographically highest city in region) makes 'come up' literally accurate. The request for help (azar, אָזַר—to aid, assist) creates coalition obligation. The target—Gibeon—is strategic: punishing defectors deters further defections. The phrase 'it hath made peace' treats Gibeon's survival strategy as betrayal. The dual naming 'Joshua and...Israel' recognizes both personal leadership and national covenant. This coalition against Gibeon inadvertently triggers Israel's treaty obligation, bringing decisive battle. God's sovereignty orchestrates even enemies' strategies to accomplish His purposes. What intended to weaken Israel actually concentrates Canaanite forces for decisive defeat.

Historical Context

The five-king coalition represented southern Canaan's major powers. Attacking Gibeon served multiple purposes: punishment (detering other defections), military (Gibeon's warriors removed from potential opposition), and psychological (demonstrating consequences of collaborating with Israel). Ancient Near Eastern warfare recognized that punishing betrayal maintained alliance cohesion. Gibeon's defection threatened to unravel Canaanite resistance—if strong cities sought peace, weaker cities would follow. The coalition had to act decisively. Ironically,

attacking Israel's new ally obligated Israel to intervene (9:15 established covenant), bringing the confrontation Canaanites hoped to avoid by attacking Gibeon rather than Israel directly. This demonstrates how God's providence works through human decisions—even enemy strategies advance divine purposes. The battle at Gibeon would devastate southern Canaan's resistance, opening the region for conquest. What seemed like strategic wisdom (attacking the weak defector) became tactical disaster (drawing God's army into battle they couldn't avoid).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does God's providence work through even enemies' strategies to accomplish His purposes?
2. What does attacking Israel's allies (rather than Israel) teach about indirect approaches in spiritual warfare?
3. When have you seen apparent setbacks (like Gibeon being attacked) become opportunities for greater victory?

Interlinear Text

עֲלֹי	אֶל־י	וְעִזְרָה־נִּי	וְנִכְּה	אֶת־	גִּבְעֹן וְ	כִּי־
Come up	H413	unto me and help	me that we may smite	H853	Gibeon	H3588
H5927		H5826	H5221		H1391	
הַשָּׁלֵם יִמָּה	אֶת־	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ עִ	וְאֶת־	בְּנֵי־י	יִשְׂרָאֵל:	
for it hath made peace	H854	with Joshua	H854	and with the children	of Israel	
H7999		H3091		H1121	H3478	

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 9:15 (Creation): And Joshua made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them.

Joshua 10:1 (Creation): Now it came to pass, when Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem had heard how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it; as he had done to Jericho and her king, so he had done to Ai and her king; and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel, and were among them;

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