



# Christian Questions

TALK RADIO WITH A PURPOSE

You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:13

Dear Rick,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You wanted to know if the sun and the moon truly did stand still as is recounted in the Book of Joshua or were the words badly translated.

"Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: Sun, stand still over Gibeon; and Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon. So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the people had revenge upon their enemies. Is this not written in the book of Jashar? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hastened to go down for about a whole day. And there has been no day like that, before it or after it, that the Lord heeded a voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel." (Joshua 10:12-14)

After doing some research we found that science really has no credible answer for such a phenomenon as is seemingly described in the above scriptures. For the sun to appear to actually stand still would mean that the earth would either have had to stop or slow down its rotation on its axis. Such an event would have been catastrophic, particularly for those living on or near the equator, since everything, including oceans, would have been launched in a ballistic trajectory sideways at about 1,600 km/hour. Although we know that God could have performed this miracle without any harm being done to the earth or its inhabitants, we think there is a plausible answer to God's miracle based on the weather conditions at the time as well as some translation discrepancies in Joshua 10:12-14.

You may be familiar with A.O. Hudson's article, "When the Sun Stood Still" which appeared in the Bible Student Monthly several years ago. After examining scientific theories as well as thoughts by other Bible commentators we concluded that Hudson's explanation of the events made the most sense. He explains that when Joshua saw that the Amorites were escaping from him he uttered the cry to the Lord to intervene on his behalf. That intervention was in the form of a violent hailstorm that decimated the enemy. "As they fled before Israel on the road from Beth Horon to Azekah, the Lord hurled large hail stones down on them from the sky." (Verse 11) The Amorites were between Beth Horon and Azekah, and therefore, well down in the valley. It is presumed that Joshua must have been standing on the summit of Beth Horon when he saw the storm coming. The Israelites, high up on the summit escaped the hail, but the Amorites were utterly destroyed. It was not the "standing still"





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of the sun and moon, but the hailstorm that achieved victory for the Israelites.

What then was the purpose of Joshua's command to the sun and the moon? The words in question are not original to the Book of Joshua. As is noted in verse 13, they are quoted from the Book of Jashar, a poetic narrative. Verses 12-15 were inserted into the Book of Joshua by a later transcriber in order to place on record the words Joshua used on this occasion, words that apparently had been preserved only in this Book of Jashar. Therefore, "the passage in question needs to be considered as a fragment of true history preserved in a fine piece of poetic language." (A.O. Hudson) The Hebrew word for "stand still" (*dom*) in verse 12 means to be silent, quiet, still, or dumb. It does not mean standing still in the sense of cessation of motion, but still in the sense of ceasing to perform a customary activity. Because the sun's heat was increasing as the morning advanced, Joshua appealed to the Lord not for the sun's cessation of progress, which would have meant more heat, but for the silencing or cessation of the sun's activity so that the day would be cooler and aid his tired men. God answered Joshua's prayer by sending a hailstorm.

"The sun . . . hasted not to go down about a whole day" (Verse 13). The word "down" is not the correct translation for the Hebrew word "*boa*," which means to come in or to enter. Hudson says that in verse 13 the word probably means, "the sunlight failed to break through the clouds so as to enter upon the earth for the remainder of the day." He further states that his argument is strengthened by the fact that the word for "sun" in this account is "*shemesh*," meaning the sun's radiance, rays or sunlight, not the actual word for the sun itself. Similarly, the word for "moon" is "*yareach*," meaning moonlight and not "*levonah*," for the lunar satellite.

"And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel" (Verse 14). Hudson says, "This is the comment of the unknown transcriber who felt bound thus to complete his quotation from the Book of Jashar. The reference is of course to the hailstorm, which, the account tells us, was definitely sent by the Lord to ensure the Israelite victory."

We hope we have answered your question. Be sure to sign up for CQ Rewind at [www.christianquestions.com](http://www.christianquestions.com). The service is free without obligation and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.





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Sincerely,

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