

LESSON 3



PREPARING TO CROSS THE JORDAN

Scripture Texts: Joshua 3; 4:1-7

We learn from our lesson today the importance of the ark of the covenant of the Lord. The children of Israel were taught, first of all, to go after it. They were to follow behind, leaving a space between them and the ark of God's presence.

The old generation who had crossed the Red Sea had passed on. They had been unfaithful. After wandering aimlessly through the wilderness for forty years, they had died there because of their unbelief. Now the Lord had a new generation to lead on into the land He had promised Israel. The people must sanctify themselves before crossing. A person must be saved from all sin, be living holy, and sanctify himself, set himself apart for God's use, before he can

be led further into the Spirit-filled life.

MEMORY VERSE: *That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.* —Joshua 4:24

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—Joshua 4:8-18 The crossing completed.

Tue.—Ezekiel 33:1-16 Watchman's responsibility.

Wed.—1 Corinthians 1:18-31 God uses weak for His glory.

Thu.—Colossians 3:8-15 Freed from ordinances against us.

Fri.—Acts 2 Entering the Spirit-filled life.

Devotional Reading: Psalm 105:1-15 God's covenant forever.

A Preparation to Cross

Joshua 3:1-6 The spies were back from Jericho, and now Israel was ready to cross the Jordan. But there was some preparation to be made. They moved up close to the river. **The officers . . . commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God . . . go after it.** This ark was God's presence with them. Without it, they could have no success in moving ahead. **There shall be a space between you and it.** God did not want them taking a chance of getting ahead of His leading. We need God's leading because we **have not passed this way heretofore**—before. **Joshua said . . . Sanctify yourselves.** They must be cleansed and prepared to enter the homeland. This was a part they had to do. How? By washing their bodies and clothes, by turning away from all else to do this one thing. **To morrow the Lord will do wonders.** This part God would do; they were but to obey. The priests were to lead the way with the ark, symbol of God's presence; the people were to follow to see clearly the way.

The Lord's Promise to Joshua

Joshua 3:7-13 God said He would **magnify** Joshua—give him authority and honor with the people as He had with Moses. He would need this to lead successfully. God would exalt him, not Joshua himself. **And Joshua said . . . drive out** the inhabitants of the land. **Behold, the ark . . . of the Lord . . . passeth over before you.** This event was to be

supernatural, miraculous. Joshua had not planned it, God had. God gave the commands; Joshua was only a spokesman for Him. God controlled the waters. **And it shall come to pass . . . that the waters of Jordan . . . shall stand upon an heap.**

The Waters Parted

Joshua 3:14-17 This event is a faith builder for all mankind. As God had said, **it came to pass**. As the priests' feet touched the water that was overflowing its banks, the river was cut by the hand of God. The water coming down rose in a heap, forming a wall at the people's side. **Very far from the city Adam**—beginning here, it piled up for a great distance upstream. Down river, the water flowed on, leaving a wide space of dry riverbed. On this **dry ground** the people passed over **right against Jericho**.

Some unbelievers say the people crossed in shallow water and by stepping stones. But the river was flooded over its banks. Others have supposed that an earthquake loosened a landslide which stopped the river. God surely could have used an earthquake but was in no way limited to that method. Whatever His way, the miraculous nature of this event is clearly seen in that the waters were **cut off** and returned at the same moments when the priests' feet dipped in the water and were lifted onto the dry ground. This, God had foretold earlier. Truly, the presence of the God of Israel was there.

The ark of the covenant (Exodus 25:10-22; 40:20-21; Numbers 4:5-6, 15), representing the presence of God, led the way and was held in great reverence. Their enemies recognized this fact and were watching as they moved forward. Both in Spirit filling and in the life to follow, God leads. We must trust and obey Him.

A space was left between the people and the ark. We must not crowd upon the Spirit, neither push ahead of Him. **Wait upon the Lord**—listen, weigh, be sure of His leading, then obey. Now that Israel is in the land, all lies before them. When one is Spirit filled, all lies ahead—work, choice, life, victory or defeat, possessing of the land. He has the resources and power of God at his disposal. According to how he uses them and the decisions he makes, his spiritual life will develop.

A Memorial

Joshua 4:1-7 The twelve **prepared**—previously chosen—men, representing all twelve tribes, carried twelve stones from the river where the priests still stood with the ark. The stones were piled into a memorial. Why? To draw their children's questions so they could tell them of the miracle in that men had walked there on the riverbed, and also, a testimony to the presence of the Lord with them. The purpose of this great miracle was that all people might know the power of God and be brought to fear Him. Read the Memory Verse.

What memorials are we setting to draw our children's inquiries? Family worship, Bible teaching, daily obedience, and testifying to them of God's goodness and blessings to us are some good ones. Any culture can be lost in one generation. It is frightening to see where our nation has moved from in a generation or two. The Bible stresses early religious education and training as being extremely important. The parents who neglect it must give an account to the Judge of all men in that final day.

JUST A THOUGHT

The treasure is found, not in understanding the sanctified life, but in living it.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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