

Lesson 4

Crossing the Jordan

Joshua 3-4

Read Joshua 3, reviewing verses 1-5 from last week.

Finally, the Israelites were ready to cross into the Promised Land. They must have had hearts full of anticipation and excitement. Their consecration was complete; the years in the wilderness were behind them. All they had to do was cross the Jordan River.

1. Why do you think God ordained the crossing of the Jordan River when it was in the condition described in Joshua 3:15?

I used to imagine the Israelites stepping across a little trickle of water, but "the river overflow[ed] all its banks;" it was at flood stage! This was a mighty, rushing river, and the Lord decided that *this* was the time to cross. I live in Houston, Texas, and we don't have a river, but we have the Buffalo Bayou. Normally, it has a gently flowing current. But during floods, I have seen whole swing sets swept away in the rising water. I'm sure you have seen news stories of cars being carried away by floods. You would never consider wading through a river at flood stage – unless, of course, you're being led by the Living God.

Filled With the Holy Spirit

2. Review Joshua 3:1-5. What were the Israelites instructed to follow as they crossed the Jordan?

The Israelites would have been well acquainted with the ark of the covenant. Read through the account in Exodus 25:10-22 when the Lord ordained its construction as He spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai.

This was a gold chest, inside and out. However, the Israelites knew that its real value was found in the One who would meet with them above the mercy seat.

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

Galatians 2:20

3. Write out Exodus 25:22.

4. What do you think is the significance of the ark leading the way across the Jordan?

Even though they were prepared, they couldn't go it alone. The Israelites still needed God to lead the way. Their leaders told the Israelites to follow the ark:

When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before. (Joshua 3:3-4)

5. What does Jesus promise in Matthew 28:19-20 and Hebrews 13:5?

6. What do you learn about the Holy Spirit in John 14:26, 15:26-27 and 16:7?

Life in the Land of Milk and Honey is life following the Lord. He has not left us alone to try to figure out how to live. When Jesus ascended into heaven after His crucifixion, He sent us the Holy Spirit – the Helper, the Comforter, the Teacher. He is with us; He is within us, and He is leading us.

Read about the first fulfillment of Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-13.

7. What does the Lord command His followers in Ephesians 5:18-20?

At the time of salvation, every believer is given a deposit of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14 and Romans 8:9-10). I refer to this as being “sealed” with the Spirit. The event we see in Acts 2 is a little different. I call this being “filled” with the Spirit. Think of a gas stove. Once the stove is properly installed and connected to the gas line, its pilot light is lit. That is like a believer after salvation: we are hooked up to the source, and we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. *Being filled* with the Holy Spirit is like cranking the stove on – the gas valve is opened, and the spark ignites a flame.

Salvation happens once, and at that time, we are forever sealed with the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:22) and baptized with the Spirit whether we “feel” it or not (1 Corinthians 12:13). However, being filled with the Holy Spirit is an experience that needs to be repeated again and again (Ephesians 5:18). In our wilderness tradition, we assume that this “being filled” must be a lot of work. You may be wondering, *What must I do to earn this filling? How long will it take? And how often do I have to repeat it?* Breathe easy. God is bringing you into the Land of Milk and Honey where your striving will cease.



“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

Luke 11:13

8. Read Luke 11:9-13. How do we receive more of the Holy Spirit?
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Our heavenly Father knows our needs, and He delights in meeting them. I don’t know what your earthly father was like, but your Father in heaven is a good and faithful provider. If you ask Him for more of the Spirit, He will give you more.

9. What are some results of our being filled with the Spirit?

❖ As we are filled with the Holy Spirit, what will our lives look like according to Galatians 5:22-23?

❖ Read Acts 1:8. What will we be empowered to do when the Holy Spirit comes upon us?

❖ What does John 7:37-39 teach us about the Holy Spirit in us?

Years ago when I was turning back to the Lord I found a great Bible study and a great church where the Word of God was being taught. I was so thirsty for His Word, I couldn’t get enough of it. Through excellent teachers, I learned that many of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not for today. They taught me that since we have the complete Word of God, we do not need supernatural experiences with the Spirit of God. I so appreciated their great teaching and they were so much more

knowledgeable than I, that I did not question them. Except every once in awhile, when I would read of an incredible supernatural experience in a foreign missionary newsletter or book, a little question bubbled up. Why would we hear of accounts of supernatural healing and encounters in foreign lands and not in our churches in America today? I began to wonder what had happened to the Holy Spirit. I felt so dry inside. I felt like gears in a machine that were turning but needed to be oiled. I wondered if there was more to the Christian life than what I knew. My search began.

I had a dear friend who I knew was “out there” in the things of the Spirit. I enjoyed talking with her about what she was learning and experiencing. Sometimes we went to meetings and conferences. I always had my Biblical antenna up, as I did not want to fall into any deception. We went to a conference where an old friend of mine, Jack Deere (who wrote *Surprised By the Power Of the Spirit* and *Surprised By the Voice Of God*), was teaching. I had known him when he was a seminary student. He went on to become a seminary professor, and he loved the Word of God. He never compromised the Scriptures, but his life had been touched by the power of the Spirit. He was teaching about how we need to be strong in both the Spirit of God and in the Word of God. He said that the way we get more of the Spirit in our lives is the same way that we get anything from the Lord, we simply ask.

So I began to ask. I asked privately, and I received prayer about this in different meetings. I was persistent. In the words of Luke 11:9, I asked, sought and knocked. For years, nothing happened. I realized that in my earlier zeal to stay away from any supernatural experience that was not from the Lord, I had determined that I would stay away from all supernatural experiences. I had basically told the Holy Spirit that I was afraid that if I sought more of Him, I would get more of the enemy. The words of the Lord in Luke 11:13 were reassuring, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” I said a prayer of repentance, telling the Lord I was sorry for the way I had tried to keep the Holy Spirit in a box in the corner of the room.

One day during a corporate prayer in our regular church service, I felt a slight movement in my eyes. This continued every time I went to church and prayed. It began to happen when I prayed at home and other times. Then it started to happen in the middle of the night when I was resting. This feeling was growing stronger every time I prayed. Not too long after this sense began, I went to a home meeting with my “out there” friend. When I walked into the meeting, all heaven broke loose. That’s the only way I know to describe it. It was as if the Holy Spirit fell through the roof and onto me! I felt like a painless electrical charge was surging through me. His presence was almost palpable. I sensed that the oil of the Spirit was greasing those dry gears turning inside me. My main manifestation was simply joy.

That happened about fifteen years ago, and I continue to sense His powerful presence. I have observed and experienced many of the gifts of the Spirit that I

was earlier taught are not for today. They are wonderful gifts from God that build up the body of Christ. I particularly love to watch the Father reveal His heart of love to an individual by delivering a prophetic word through a fellow believer. I have seen time and again how the Lord can touch someone through a word of knowledge, breaking through with His personal love because He knows her situation and hears her heart's cry.

Read Exodus 33:1-3 and 33:15.

Through these years of walking in the Spirit I have found that the Word of God and the Spirit of God are always in sync – never in contradiction. Way back in Exodus when God was furious with the Israelites for their golden calf fiasco, God told Moses that he should head out for the Promised Land with the people but that He would not go with them. This tells me that it is possible for us to go through life in His will and His Word, but without His presence – without His Spirit filling us. Moses wouldn't settle for that, "If Thy presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here." We shouldn't settle either. Go for it. Start asking for more of the Spirit of God. He just might surprise you.

God gives us the Holy Spirit to empower us because He knows that we cannot keep His commandments on our own. In the wilderness, we gritted our teeth and tried to "do the Christian thing." In the Land of Milk and Honey, we are filled with the promised Spirit. Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" – through the fullness of His Holy Spirit.

10. Do you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit? If you do, take some time now to ask your Father. I like to be silent before God with my hands open, inviting the Holy Spirit to come and fill me.

Death to Self

We saw in the introduction that the Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea symbolize our salvation through the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The crossing of the Jordan River also symbolizes death, but this is death to self, death to running our own lives. In the wilderness, we have received salvation, but we still maintain some semblance of control. We are often asking the Lord to bless our agendas and our plans, calling out to Him when we are in a scrape or have a huge need. Life on the other side of the Jordan is different. Crossing the Jordan requires dying to self – releasing our plans, our desires and our dreams to the Lord. We place Him on the throne of our lives so that His will is our greatest goal. Just as each Israelite had to cross the Jordan to get into the



"Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

Galatians 5:24

Promised Land, so we will each have to die to self if we are going to start living in the Land of Milk and Honey.

11. What does Jesus teach about dying to self in Matthew 16:24-26?

12. Think of the words that begin with self- (self-centeredness, for example). Which words resonate with you regarding your own experience of life in the wilderness?

Keep in mind that as each Israelite crossed the Jordan, they didn't leave 10% of themselves back in the wilderness. We must be willing to die *completely* to self. We cannot let go of all but our biggest desire, cannot lay down all but one agenda item. We lay it *all* down to follow Him across the Jordan, just as the Israelites gave up *all* of their lives in the wilderness for lives in the Promised Land.

13. According to John 8:29, what was the attitude of Jesus when He was on the earth?

What is your initial reaction to hearing that you have to surrender all to Christ if you want to live the abundant life of which He spoke? Sometimes the most important step is just to ask the Lord to make you willing to be willing.

14. Ask the Lord to identify any area where you need to die to self. Release this to Him and ask Him to fill you with His Spirit.

Idols

If there is a desire or a particular part of your will that you are unable or unwilling to surrender to God, it is possible that it has become an idol. I don't mean idol in the true, Biblical sense of the word. True idol worship or the worship of other, false gods is egregious in the sight of the Lord. But in a secondary sense, an idol can be anything other than the Lord that we place on the altar of our lives. It could be a person, a desire or a goal. These may be legitimate things. It is normal to

desire to get married, to desire to have children, to desire to be successful. However, our true fulfillment and satisfaction can only come from God, and whenever those things start to take His place, they have become idols. We must release them back to Him.



“Any man of the house of Israel who sets up his idols in his heart, puts right before his face the stumbling block of his iniquity, and then comes to the prophet, I the LORD will be brought to give him an answer in the matter in view of the multitude of his idols, in order to lay hold of the hearts of the house of Israel who are estranged from Me through all their idols.”

Ezekiel 14:4-5

15. What happens to our hearts when we have idols according to Ezekiel 14:4-5?

Anne and I prayed with a woman once whose greatest desire was to have a child, but she and her husband were struggling to conceive. Every time that she came to us for prayer, we always came back to her all-consuming focus on having a baby. It was a huge ordeal in her life. I am not suggesting that everyone who desires to have a child and cannot conceive turns that desire into an idol, but in this case, she idolized having a baby. In the first commandment, we learn that our hearts are meant to worship only the Lord, and the focus of her heart had shifted from God to having a child. Finally the Lord began to transform her, and she was able to lay that idol down. A few months later, she and her husband conceived naturally. I cannot guarantee that if you lay your idol down, the Lord will immediately give you what you desire. But in her case, when she shifted her heart back to the Lord (who had been largely blocked out of this place in her life), He was able to grant her desire in His way, in His time. By laying the idol down, she allowed God access to this area of her life, and He was able to fulfill the desire of her heart – the desire that He had actually given her.

16. Ask the Lord to identify if there is an idol in your life. Is there anything specific that you need to release to Him as we cross the Jordan? Take some time and allow Him to search your heart. (Psalm 139:23-24 can be helpful in starting this prayer.)

If He brought anything to mind, will you choose to lay down that idol? Tell the Lord you are sorry for allowing it to become an idol in your life and that He is the only one worthy of your worship.

I don't want to overlook the fact that some may be giving a place to actual, physical idols in our lives.

17. Read Exodus 20:3-6. What are the first and second commandments? How does the Lord view idol worship?

Do you have anything in your house that is related to idol worship? These may be Buddahs, pagan symbols, tribal artifacts, shrines, or objects from cults. Even if they are merely artifacts to you, these need to go. It may seem silly to you, but it is serious to the Lord. Remove and destroy them this week! Let's take the first two commandments seriously.

18. Ask the Lord to bring to your attention any items in your home or life that are unpleasing to Him. When He does, respond to His prompting by getting rid of them and confessing it as sin (even if it is something that you have done in ignorance). He is faithful to bring our sin to our attention and to forgive us when we confess!

If we are going to live in the Land of Milk and Honey, the Lord will define our lives. We must release to Him our agendas and dreams, even those most dear to us. Often those dreams and desires really are from the Lord, but we have to surrender to His will, and let the blessings in our lives come from His hand in His way.

Memorials

Read Joshua 4.



“Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance.”

Exodus 12:14

Crossing the Jordan was a significant occurrence in the lives of the Israelites, and God didn't want them to forget what He had done for them. In Joshua 4, we learn that, at the command of Joshua, the Israelites built two memorials commemorating the crossing.

Gilgal, the location of the first memorial, became the Israelites' home base as they conquered and possessed the Promised Land. The women and children remained there, and when the men returned from battle, they were greeted not only by their families, but also by the memorial that reminded them of the past faithfulness of the Lord.

19. What was the timeless lesson of these memorials?

There is something in us that makes us want to proclaim, "I was here!" Even kids have that desire. Look at any bunkbed at an overnight summer camp: *This wuz Michael's bunk; Amy hearts Chris; Camille slept here – 2000.* We want to leave a mark on the world. We want the world to know that we were here!

I think God wired us that way. He wanted the Israelites to build memorials to acknowledge not only that God was faithful, but also that they had the faith to trust Him. He led them, but they followed! He wants us to remember where we've been; He wants us to know He is faithful; I believe He wants us to remember that we were too!

Not too long ago I found a journal from many years ago. When I started the notebook, I had recently turned to the Lord and begun meeting with some friends to pray. We really didn't know what we were doing, but I think someone told us we should have a prayer group, and so we did. In our fumbling way, we began to pray – for one another, for our families, for our friends. And I kept this notebook, jotting down our shared requests, sometimes pouring out my heart to the Lord. Many years later I found the journal, and I was blown away by the faithfulness of the Lord. He had answered most of those requests in His amazing way and in His perfect timing. Had I not written it all down, I would never have been able to recall all that the Lord has done.

20. Do you have a way of memorializing events in your life when God shows Himself faithful? Do you keep a record of where you and the Lord have been? If so, what do you do? If not, can you think of a way to build these "memorials"?

In the Land of Milk and Honey we want to be sure to remember the things the Lord has done for us!

Prepare for Life

Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea picture what Christ did for us through His death, burial and resurrection. They depict His free gift of salvation. The crossing of the Jordan portrays dying to self. Choosing to lay down our own wills and desires and to take up the Lord's is something we must do if we are going to get to the Promised Land. We don't pray, "Lord, take my will," but rather, "Lord, I lay down my will." He will not take what we do not freely surrender. He is a God who honors our free wills. We have not passed this way before. We are moving into new territory, but we are following the Living God who is our personal Lord. Once we've crossed over into the Promised Land, let's be intentional to memorialize the event!

21. Consider the following scripture and meditate on it using the prayer exercise that was detailed on page 13.

❖ Scripture: **John 14:26**

❖ Word or Phrase:

❖ Insight:

❖ Invitation:

Lecture Notes: