

Joshua 3-4

Good evening and welcome to Calvary Chapel. Would you please turn in your bibles to Joshua chapter 3?

If you recall Moses has died, and Joshua is now to lead the nation into the promised land of Canaan. God spoke to Joshua several times in chapter 1 commanding Joshua to be strong and courageous, for God would be with him.

Tonight our sections are smaller chapters, so we're going to study chapter 3 thru verse 12 of chapter 5. As we go through this study, I encourage you to count the number of times the Israelites are called to step out in faith and trust God.

The title of tonight's message is Radical Obedience

Let's pray

1-3

1 Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and they set out from Acacia Grove^[fn] (also pronounced shitaw) and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they crossed over 2 So it was, after three days, that the officers went through the camp; 3 and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. Remember the Ark represented the presence and the holiness of God. The officers instructed the people- 'when you see the presence of God move, follow Him'"

4 Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before." Since a cubit was 18" - 2000 cubits equal 3,000 feet. The people stayed roughly 3/5 of a mile behind the Ark. And it

demonstrated that the nation needed to set their eyes upon God and follow His presence as they go into the promised land.

Yet there's also a deeper symbolism here in verse 4. Remember, the Ark carried the Law of God. The distance between the Ark and the people of Israel represented the separation that existed between God and those who lived under the Law.

But when Jesus died, He removed the separation, allowing us to access God! **Ephesians 2:18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.**

5 And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." The word "sanctify" means "to set apart" or "to prepare." They're about to enter the promised land!

6 Then Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people. If you were to count in our study tonight, you'll see that Joshua mentioned the ark more than 15 times in chapters 3 and 4.

For three days the nation had camped by the Jordan River. They watched the raging water swollen by the spring rains – and I'm sure they wondered how 2-3 million Hebrew men, women, and children would manage to cross a turbulent river.

It's interesting Joshua didn't send out his Army Corp of Engineers to try and build a bridge. Even as amazing as Israeli ingenuity is, Joshua trusted in God

7 And the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. 8 You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you have come

to the edge of the water of the Jordan, you shall stand in the Jordan.' ”The priests are commanded to bring the Ark to the water’s edge – step into the flowing water - and expect God to give further instructions!

This is always how it is isn't it? I want God to give me the whole blueprint of what's about to take place and the 10 things beyond that, but we see in scripture God gives instructions for obedience- one step at a time.

9-10

9 So Joshua said to the children of Israel, “Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God.” 10 And Joshua said, “By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites: Seven nations will be evicted from the land.

We saw in our earlier studies how the Canaanites were exceedingly evil, and God was using Israel as His tool of judgment. **Leviticus 18:25 For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants.**

Now critics of the Bible will say ‘how could a God of love allow the bloodshed of women and children of Canaan?’ But that question is posed from the wrong vantagepoint

The question isn't why God chose to destroy these wicked nations and citizens, but rather why God allowed them to live for so long? It's purely by the grace of God that He allows any sinner to draw one more breath of life **Romans. 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.** Praise God for His mercy!

11 Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan. The title "the LORD of all the earth" occurs here for the first time in Scripture, and its placement is significant. It reminds us of God's absolute sovereignty over His planet.

12-13

12 Now therefore, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from every tribe. 13 And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap." When the priests put their feet into the river, the water would divide.

Forty years before this, when the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, the water parted before they stepped in (Exodus 14). But not this time.

14-15

14 So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, 15 and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest), " pause here: The priests begin the procession, with the ark of the covenant some 1,000 yards in front of the people, and the priests came and walked right into a river that looked like it wasn't going anywhere.

We usually want the river to be dry before we even make a step; but God was calling Israel to step out in faith.

Notice, Joshua points out this was not summertime – when the Jordan river slows. No, the Israelites crossed the Jordan when the river was at its widest, deepest, and swiftest.

As the snow on Mt. Hermon melts and the rainy season ends, the Jordan rises to a depth of 10 to 12 feet, and floods to a width of 300 to 360 feet at this location today.

16 that the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho. The waters of the Jordan backed up at a city named Adam.

Historians tell us this was a city about 16 miles north of the crossing point, and 20 miles north of the outlet into the Dead Sea. At Adam the banks of the Jordan river rise 40 feet. God created a supernatural dam.

Interestingly, in modern times several earthquakes have sent tremendous amounts of soil into the Jordan River at this very location, damming up the river for many hours in the years 1267, 1837, and 1927.

Point is, God may have supernaturally used a natural phenomenon, like an earthquake or a landslide near Adam to cut off the waters, or it may have been entirely supernatural.

Please don't let verse 16 pass you by. Because the water backed up some 16 miles upriver, it means nobody could see that far what God was doing.

God was working out of their range of sight.

This is why the Bible tells us in **2 Corinthians 5:7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.**

17 Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan. The priests stepped into rushing waters, only to have God dry up the river in that location. It was a miracle

And it reminds us that God will never let us down when He asks us to take a step of faith. He will provide the way.

CHAPTER 4

1-3

1 And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying:

2 “Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe, 3 and command them, saying, ‘Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests’ feet stood firm. You shall carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight.’ Most of us would have wanted to rush on through and get ready to fight the battle at Jericho. But God is never in a hurry. Remember as we talked about last week Gods times of waiting in our lives are times of preparation for us.

4-6

4 Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; 5 and Joshua said to them: “Cross over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, this shows us they were large stones to be put on the shoulder according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, 6 that this may be a sign among you when your

children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' The purpose of these memorial stones was so that the people of Israel could teach their children about the great things God had done, so that the work of God wouldn't be forgotten.

7 Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever." Notice Joshua's name is not mentioned anywhere in verse 7. The people weren't to remember what Joshua did, but what the Lord did.

8-9

8 And the children of Israel did so, just as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, as the LORD had spoken to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. 9 Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood; and they are there to this day

Joshua places an additional 12 memorial stones at the water's edge – at the exact place the people stepped into the river with God.

God's miracle at the Jordan was a turning point in the history of Israel. It solidified their identity as God's people. It was the same miracle as the Red Sea, but with a new meaning. When Israel came to the Red Sea they were slaves escaping their enemies – at the Jordan they were an army determined to conquer their enemies.

It's important for families and individuals to setup memorials as well. Of course it doesn't have to be stones, a memorial can simply be a statement in a journal, an etching on a wall, or a tree that you plant—whatever it takes to jog your memory about God's greatness and faithfulness. So often we lack the faith to march forward because we forget what God has already done!

10 So the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the LORD had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua; and the people hurried and crossed over. The priests stood with the ark of the covenant for the entire time it took the nation to cross over. How long did it take for 2-3m people to cross? We don't know, but they were faithful

11 Then it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over, that the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed over in the presence of the people. 12 And the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses had spoken to them. We talked about these tribes last week, these were the ones content to settle on the east side of the Jordan, but they had to send their armies over to fight on behalf of the rest of the nation according to Numbers 32.

13 About forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho. 14 On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they had feared Moses, all the days of his life. The miracle at the Jordan so closely resembled the parting of the Red Sea the nation of Israel realized God's hand was on Joshua, as with Moses.

Now the 40,000 isn't the population of Israel, just those who were ready for war

15-18

15 Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, 16 "Command the priests who bear the ark of the Testimony to come up from the Jordan." 17 Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, "Come up from the Jordan." 18 And it came to pass, when the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet touched the dry land, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks as before.

According to John 1:28, Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River at a place called Bethabara. This name, Bethabara, is provoking, because Bethabara means "house of passage." Jesus was baptized in the same place Joshua was as he passed over into the Promised Land.

To the Pharisees and Sadducees who cynically watched him baptize, JTB said this in **Matt 3 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, 9 and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.** No doubt JTB would have been pointing to the stones that would still be there in his day, the twelve stones placed as a memorial in Joshua's day.

19 Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. The detail that the crossing took place on the tenth day of the first month is significant. It was exactly 40 years earlier, to the

day, that God had instructed Israel to prepare to depart from Egypt by setting apart the Passover lambs **Exodus 12:3 Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household.'**

20 And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal. Gilgal will be Israel's base of operation throughout their conquest of the land.

21 Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?' 22 then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land'; 23 for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, 24 that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever."

At the Red Sea the Hebrews exited slavery. But they didn't begin to live the life God planned until they crossed the Jordan River, and entered the land of Canaan. This parallels each Christian's experience... We're free from sin's penalty and power - but that's only part of what God desires. He brings us out to bring us into something better-a life empowered by the HS.

Chapter 5-we're only going to study until verse 12.

1 So it was, when all the kings of the Amorites who were on the west side of the Jordan, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel until we[fn] had crossed over, that their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel. If you

remember in chapter 2, the inhabitants of the Promised Land heard what God had done for His people forty years earlier when He parted the Red Sea. But here in chapter 5, we see they also heard what God had done when He parted the Jordan.

Some people rejoice over the things the Lord did forty years ago. That's good, we should celebrate that. But the Lord is still on the move today!

So the enemy was demoralized, intimidated, and afraid. This would have been the perfect time to attack using the 40,000 who were ready for war...

2 At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time." I'm sorry, what?

Picture the scene as the men are have crossed the Jordan.

Ok here we go-we're doing it!! The water is stopped; we're crossing thru the other side. It's just like when God parted the red sea for our fathers! We're on our way to the land flowing with milk and honey. We crossed over-nothing can stop us now!!!

And Joshua says ok guys, here's what's next. We're gonna setup memorial stones-

Right- great idea make sure God gets the glory and we don't forget what He did right here. Ok great-so they setup the memorial stones.

Ok guys-1 more thing we need to do. I need to circumcise you. "um, what'd you say?" Pardon me?

But isn't that so like God in our lives. We're running, sprinting, pumping on all cylinders, we're getting ready to conquer the next mountain-, and God says – pause, hold, stop.

3 So Joshua made flint knives for himself, and circumcised the sons of Israel at the hill of the foreskins.^[fn] Notice God said knives, plural. More than 1 knife was to be used on all the men and I bet each man was VERY grateful that it wasn't the same knife going from man to man.

Circumcision was always a powerful act of dedication to God. Much like being baptized, it's an outward expression of inner faith. And by the rite of circumcision, an Israelite said "I'm not like the other nations. I follow God and obey His word." It was stepping out in faithful obedience and identifying as one of the LORD's people.

But perhaps even more than the identification piece, it was a very symbolic act of renouncing the flesh and the world. It was dying to self and living to God.

4 And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: All the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way, after they had come out of Egypt. 5 For all the people who came out had been circumcised, but all the people born in the wilderness, on the way as they came out of Egypt, had not been circumcised.

6 For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people who were men of war, who came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD—to whom the LORD swore that He would not show them the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers that He would give us,

“a land flowing with milk and honey.”^[fn] 7 Then Joshua circumcised their sons whom He raised up in their place; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way.

8 So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed. No one is running a marathon after a circumcision

9 Then the LORD said to Joshua, “This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.” Therefore the name of the place is called Gilgal^[fn] to this day. I absolutely continue to marvel at the kindness of God. God only asked them to get circumcised AFTER they saw the miracle of crossing the Jordan. I mean He coulda said get circumcised in the wilderness, or right before crossing the river. But God showed them the mighty miracle of the Jordan river to buoy their spirits, to once again strengthen their faith in Him BEFORE He asked them to take another giant step of faith by incapacitating their army.

10 Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. Can you imagine the conversations, the worship, the prayers of thanksgiving at this Passover? I mean their feet had just touched the bottom of the Jordan and now they remember God’s deliverance from the hand of His plague as they were set free from bondage.

What’s notable about this verse is that this is the first Passover in the Promised Land. They heard their parents, their grandparents talk of the promised land, and now here they are. The time has finally come and they are beginning their new relationship with God by observing the Passover in the new land

11 And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. 12 Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year.

3 times in these 2 verses we see the Israelites ate of the Promised Land. The land flowing with milk and honey was finally producing the blessings that they had heard about for so long.

The miraculous Manna was gone. Just as God gave them provision thru manna, He would also give them provision through the harvest of the land. So the Jordan is now flowing again, the manna has ceased, it's like God is saying there is no going back-move forward. If we want to be men and women, and a church used mightily by God, it will cause us to be radically obedient.