

Joshua 3 - Thursday, March 8th, 2012

(1) Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and they set out from Acacia Grove 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.

- Right out of the shoot, we've got a problem! The children of Israel are at the banks of the Jordan River, and for three days are staring at its size.
- Because of the spring rains, the Jordan River is at flood stage levels and presents an insurmountable obstacle in terms of crossing through it.
- Then, it doesn't help when they're commanded to follow the priests and Levites with the ark-of-the-covenant as they set out to cross the Jordan.

F.B. Meyer - When Israel reached its banks, the Jordan was in flood, and overflowing the low-lying lands on either side of its bed. It was the time of "the swelling of Jordan," which in after-days was employed as an expression for overwhelming trouble. Before the gaze of the assembled hosts the turbid floods rushed on, swollen by melting snows far away on Hermon, and carrying trunks of trees and other debris torn from the banks in their impetuous descent. Its force and velocity, as it poured down from its upper basins to the immense depression of the Dead Sea, had gained for it the name of "Descender"; and this title was specially appropriate at such seasons as that at which Israel first beheld it.

- The question that's burning on all of their minds is, how in the world are we ever going to crossover when we don't have boats or equipment?"
- The answer to their question, and it's the answer to our question of how, is simply "Who." I may not have the equipment, but I have the Lord.
- In other words, it's not what I have, it's "Who" I have. It's been said that you'll never know that Jesus is all you need, until Jesus is all you have.

(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." (5) And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you."

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which are the practical details that are recorded for us before they cross the Jordan.
- Namely, the distance they're to keep from the ark-of-the-covenant and how that they are to sanctify themselves before they set out the next day.
- It's after they did this that they'd be the recipient of the Lord's wondrous works in their midst. Simply put, they're being prepared for a miracle.

- Woven into the fabric of these details are some fascinating clues as to how it is that we too can be prepared for the wondrous and miraculous.
- Here's what I'm thinking, first and foremost, we've to get our eyes off the impassible obstacle of our Jordan River, and get them on the Lord.
- Just as the Israelites were to keep their eyes on the ark, a symbol of God's presence with and before them so to do we keep our eyes on Jesus.

- Secondly, and most interestingly, they are to stay back what would be measured as about 1,000 yards, (ten football fields), from the ark. Why?
- The thought is this distance would enable all the approximately 2-3 million Israelites to have the ark within their sights with nobody in the way.
- Had they not done this, instead of having their eyes on the ark, their eyes would have been on others. You may already see where I'm going.

- Perhaps you've heard it said that if my eyes are on others I'm stressed, if they're on myself I'm depressed, but if they're on the Lord I'm blessed.
- I believe this is one of the lessons of the passage, in that I'll never crossover the Jordan River in my life if I'm focused on it, and or, other people.
- Absent my constantly focusing on the Lord, I will never have any hope of overcoming the impossible, let alone being the recipient of a miracle.

(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. (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.

- In verse six, Joshua speaks to the priests, and in verse seven the Lord speaks to Joshua. There is a twofold reason that I am pointing this out.
- First, Joshua is taking a huge step of faith, as are the priest's, in their taking up of the ark of the covenant and going before the children of Israel.
- The significance and importance of this can never be understated. What I mean by that is, faith can be contagious, which is precisely the point.

- When we see leaders exercise this kind of faith it can sort of catch on in the sense that it produces in us a courage and strength to also step out.
- If the truth be known, there's something in all of us that longs for those who will be an example of courageous faith and unflinching fearlessness.
- Conversely, when fearfulness and a lack of faith is modeled, then that becomes contagious as well. It's not what's taught, it's what's caught.

- The second thing is, the Lord saying to Joshua that this day he will begin to exalt him in the sight of all Israel is a profound and prophetic picture.
- Just as Joshua was exalted in the crossing of the Jordan, so too was Jesus, our greater than Joshua, exalted after His baptism in the Jordan.
- Joshua, becomes for us a type of Jesus Christ, in so much as Moses was a type of the Law, which could not take them into the Promised-Land.

F. B. Meyer - Across the river stood Jericho, embosomed in palms and tamarisks, in a very paradise of exquisite vegetation, its aromatic shrubs and gardens scented the air. But as the people beheld it, all their cherished hopes of taking it by their own energy or courage must have been utterly dissipated. What could they do in face of that broad expanse of rushing, foaming, turbulent waters? The Jordan, on the page of Scripture, is constantly associated with death. ...So John baptized there; and there the Lord entered into his first identification with sins not his own. ... Multitudes have come to the brink of that river, and have been left there, waiting on its banks, that they might consider the meaning of those impassable waters, and carry away the sentence of death in themselves. - Abraham waited there for more than twenty years, face to face with the apparent impossibility of ever having a son. - David waited there for almost as long; and it must have seemed that the kingdom foretold to him as a youth lay on the other side of insurmountable difficulties. - The sisters of Bethany waited there; and the stone, rolled heavily to the door of the tomb where Lazarus lay, must have been to them all that the Jordan was to Israel - the knell of hope. - Many a saint since then has been brought down to these same banks, and has stood to witness these flowing streams. What though the promise of God has offered all manner of blessedness and delight! That river! Always that river! That flooded, fordless, bridgeless, boatless river! Are you there now, my reader? Do not hasten from it. Stand still and consider, until the energy and impetuosity of your self-life dies down. You can never reach the Blessed Life by resolutions, or pledges, or forms of covenant; your good self is as powerless now as your bad self was formerly; you must learn that your strength is to sit still, and that the rich blessings of God stored in Christ for you are an absolute gift to be received by the outstretched hand of faith.

(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." (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: (11) Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan. (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."

- Notice how they were to step in, and stand in, the Jordan before they crossed. This is different than with Moses at the parting of the Red Sea.
- With Moses, the water was parted first before they stepped in, whereas here with Joshua, they first have to step in before the water is parted.
- Why? One thought is that Joshua at the Jordan speaks to the baptism with the Holy Spirit, whereas with Moses it was a water baptism instead.

- Here's how they get there, just as Jesus was baptized in the Jordan, and the Spirit descended upon Him as a dove, so too is this true for us.
- Furthermore, they're stepping, by faith, into the torrents of the Jordan River, points to how our lives will become like torrents of living water.
- Again, the raging torrents of the Jordan River they stepped into, are a very vivid picture of the torrents of the power of the Holy Spirit in us.

(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), (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. (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.

- There's something here that can be easily missed at first glance, and I think I would be grossly remiss were I not to draw our attention to it.
- Notice how that the water was stopped further up the River Jordan, which means that it wouldn't have been in the sight of the children of Israel.
- In other words, this was totally by faith and not sight, which is what faith is, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things yet unseen.

- In concert with the stepping out in faith, there was also the standing firm by faith until the very end. Notice that they stood firm on the dry ground.
- The priests had not only stepped in, but they stood firm, until all the children of Israel had safely crossed over the River Jordan on dry ground.
- I would suggest that this speaks to remaining faithful until the end, fighting the good fight of faith, running the race, and finishing well in the faith.

2 Timothy 4:7-8 NKJV I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (8) Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Acts 20:22-24 NKJV And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, (23) except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. (24) But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.