

November 28, 2010

## THE WAY BY WHICH YOU MUST GO

Joshua 3: 1-4

**“The way by which you must go”** is the WAY Israel must go if they would enter Canaan, the Land of Promise. And, the WAY Israel entered the Promised Land is **typical** (a picture) of **“the WAY sinners must go”** if they would enter into God’s salvation. **We will** look at that WAY under two points.

**“The way by which you must go”** is a WAY:

1. **That** no sinner knows by nature. **It** must be REVEALED.
2. **That** no sinner has ever been on (until God delivers them to it).

**Our** text is Joshua 3: 1-4.

**Look** at Joshua 3: 1, **“And Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.”**

**Give** background!

**Our** title is **“the WAY by which you must go”**. **And**, the FIRST thing we want to understand about this WAY: **It** is a WAY no sinner knows by nature. **It** is a WAY that (must be) REVEALED.

**Look** at Joshua 3: 2-4, **“And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host;**

**3** **And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.**

**4** **Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed *this* way heretofore.”**

**When** you see the Ark of the Covenant being carried by the priests, follow it. The Ark with the priests bearing it will show you **“the way by which you must go”**. **This** is the WAY Israel must go in order to enter into Canaan.

**Canaan** (remember) is the land Israel has **already** been given. **It is** the land God has commanded them to **enter into** and **take possession** of.

**Look** back at Joshua 1: 2-3, “ **Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, *even* to the children of Israel.**

**3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.”**

The command is “**enter in**”. The command is “**take possession of** the land I have given you”. **But! The WAY** they are to “enter in” has not been made known. **The WAY** has not been REVEALED. **And** that is what we are seeing in Chapter 3. **That WAY** is being **made known**.

**Look** back at our text, Joshua 3: 3-4, “**And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.**

**4 Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed *this way* heretofore.”**

The Ark of the Covenant being borne by the priests will REVEAL the WAY. **When** you “**go after it** (the Ark)”, then, YOU will **know** the WAY. **Then**, you will **know** the WAY you had NOT known BEFORE. **Then**, the WAY you had NOT known BEFORE will be REVEALED to you. **Then**, (and ONLY then), will YOU know “**the way by which you must go**”.

**There** are two things here we need to understand a little more about to see this WAY. **These** two things are the Ark of the Covenant and the priests bearing it.

**FIRST**, consider the Ark. **The Ark** was a **type** of Christ. In fact, the Ark of the Covenant was one of the clearest pictures of Christ in the Old Testament. The Ark was a box made of shittim wood. **It was** approximately 45 inches long, 27 inches wide, and 27 inches deep. **It was** overlaid without and within with pure gold. **The Ark** is where the tables of stone (10 commandments) were kept. (Explain!)

**These** commandments represent the strictness and inflexibility of God's Standard. **They** were placed in the Ark to remind Israel that God **demand**s perfection. **He** demands perfect, continual obedience to His law. **And**, where His law has been broken, He demands the punishment of eternal death. **He can** command **nothing** less.

**Over** the Ark was the mercy seat (or place of atonement). **The** mercy seat was the golden plate of propitiation on which the High Priest sprinkled the seat 7 times on the Day of Atonement symbolically reconciling Jehovah and His chosen people. **And**, two cherubims stood on each end overlooking the mercy seat. **The** slab of gold on top of the mercy seat, between the cherubims was (symbolically) the throne of God. **And**, this is the place where God told Moses He would meet with him.

**Look** at Exodus 25: 22, “**And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.**”

**This** is the **ONLY** place on earth where a holy God, and sinful man could meet together. **Why? Because** the mercy seat pictured the law and justice of God and the mercy of God coming together in harmony.

**David**, the Psalmist, said it best.

**Look** at Psalm 85: 8-10, “**I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.**

**9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.**

**10 Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”**

**Mercy** and truth meet, **ONLY** where law and justice have been satisfied. **Righteousness** and peace kiss **ONLY** where a holy God is right (just) in showing mercy to ungodly sinners. **They** meet and kiss **ONLY** in the Person and work of Christ.

Christ ALONE upheld the Standard of God's law.

Look at Isaiah 42: 21, "**The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make *it* honourable.**"

Christ ALONE satisfied the Justice of God in bearing away the sins of His people.

Look at Isaiah 53: 11, "**He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.**"

Christ ALONE established the Righteousness that ends the pursuit of Righteousness in those who believe.

Look at Romans 10: 4, "**For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.**"

So, you see, the Ark of the Covenant is not just a box overlaid with gold. It is a type of the LORD (Jehovah who saves). **To those** given understanding, the Ark of the Covenant TYPIFIES the Person and Work of Christ in putting away the sins of His people and providing them a Righteousness by which God declares them Righteous.

**In that** the Ark addresses and answers the primary question of the Scriptures. **How** can God, who is holy and just, show mercy to fallen, ungodly sinners like you and me? **The** answer is (always) by the Righteousness Christ worked out **freely** charged to the accounts of His elect.

**From** our former studies you remember that this land Israel is about to enter into was **given** to them by God in a promise to their father Abraham some 470 years before this. **The** Ark would REVEAL Israel's WAY into POSSESSION of the land they had ALREADY been given. **By** following the Ark with the priests bearing it, Israel would know "**the way by which they must go**".

**The** Gospel proclaimed by men sent by God in each generation DECLARES Christ crucified and risen again. **And**, Christ crucified REVEALS (spiritual) Israel's WAY into possession of the eternal salvation they were given in Christ "before the world began".

**What** about the **priests** bearing the Ark? **What** is significant about them? **Under** the Old Testament economy, the priests are the ones designated by God to minister the ceremonial law.

**They** kept the tabernacle. They killed the sacrifice. **They** sprinkled the blood. **Once** a year, the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies, sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat, and made an atonement for the sins of Israel.

**I.e. The** priests were the ones who set Christ forth in picture and type in that era. Everything about the priests, their office, as well as, every duty they performed in that office, pictured and typified some aspect of the Person and Work of the Messiah who was to come. **When** Christ, the great High Priest, came and fulfilled all the pictures and types, the Levitical priesthood gave way to Christ's eternal, unchangeable priesthood.

**The** Ark of the Covenant was a type of Christ. **And**, the priests were the ones of that era who set Christ forth in picture and type thru the ceremonial law. **So**, the priests bearing the Ark pictured those men of each generation designated by God to declare (proclaim) Christ to their generation.

**That** is what Christ told Ananias concerning Saul, of Tarsus.

Look at Acts 9: 15, "**But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.**"

**So**, when the nation Israel saw "**the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it**", they were to "**go after it**" because in doing so the WAY into **possession** of the land they had been given would be REVEALED.

**Likewise**, when sinners of any generation see Christ being set forth (declared) in the Gospel of God's free and sovereign grace, the WAY into the eternal salvation Christ has worked out for His people is being REVEALED. **Every** sinner who hears the Gospel is thereby commanded to find ALL of their hope of salvation in Christ and Christ ALONE.

**The FIRST** thing we understand about “**the way by which you must go**”: It is not known to any of us by nature. It must be REVEALED.

**To Israel** that WAY was REVEALED by the Ark of the Covenant and the priests bearing it. **To us** that WAY is REVEALED in the Gospel that declares Christ in truth.

**The SECOND** thing we want to understand about “**the way by which you must go**”: It is a WAY that none have been on BEFORE God delivers them to it.

Look back at our text now, Joshua 3: 3-4, “**And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.**

**4 Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed *this way heretofore.*”**

See the phrase underlined in verse 4, (“**you have not passed this WAY, heretofore**”). **You** have not passed this WAY before now. You are not familiar with THIS “way”. **This** is the **first time** THIS “way” has been REVEALED to you. It is a **new** WAY. It is a **different** WAY.

**On** the surface this might not look like anything significant. **But**, this is a **new** procedure for Israel. **Under** the leadership of Moses, when Israel moved, it was not the Ark of the Covenant that directed their movement, but the cloud that hovered over the Tabernacle. **When** the cloud moved, Israel moved. **The** Ark (of course) moved **with** them. **But**, the Ark is not what **led** them.

**The** cloud that led them before is gone. It ceased with the death of Moses. **NOW** the Ark is to lead them. **So**, you can see there is a (distinct) difference.

**What** is the **Spiritual significance** of following the Ark instead of the cloud? **The** cloud was an emblem of the Mosaic era. **It was** a figure of the dark and cloudy dispensation of the law, particularly the ceremonial law. **The law**, (given by Moses), revealed Christ, **but only** in pictures, and shadows, and types. **The law** was but a “shadow” of good things to come.

**Look** at Hebrews 10: 1, “**For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.**”

**The** law could not **bring** perfection. **It could** only **picture** the perfection found in Christ alone.

**The** cloud continued only during the former state, and discontinued to be of any use when the Mosaic dispensation ceased.

**But**, now Moses was dead and Joshua or Jesus was come. **This seems** to mark a new *ōeraō* for Israel. **The** Ark of the Covenant would take the forefront. **It would** lead this nation **into** the Promised Land. **As we** have already seen, the Ark, as it pictured and typified Christ and His work, is “**the way by which you must goō.**”

**So**, Israel has been given a **new** way of movement. **They no longer** followed the cloud. **They now** followed the Ark. **This** is “**a WAY they had not passed**”, a WAY they had not been on *ōbefore*”.

**There** is something else in these verses that identify this as a WAY Israel “**had not passed before**”. **The** Ark (itself) had never moved this WAY before. **What** WAY? The WAY of the **priests** bearing it. **Always**, BEFORE when the Ark moved, a **certain** family from among the Levites, (the Kohathites), were the ones designated to bear it.

**This** is the FIRST of four times that “priests” bore the Ark of the Covenant, (**here**, at the crossing of Jordan; later, **when** they marched around Jericho; **when** David recovered the Ark from the hands of the Philistines; **and when** Solomon dedicated the Temple). **So**, until this event, Israel “**had not passed this WAY**”. **They** had not **followed** the Ark of the Covenant with the priests bearing.

**The** first 430 years of Israel’s existence as a nation, they lived in bondage in Egypt. **The** last 40 years they wandered in the wilderness. **But, now** God was bringing them to a **new** WAY, a WAY “**they had not passed before**”. **Now**, God was bringing them into POSSESSION of a land they would not fight for. **It would** be

GIVEN to them. **It was** their inheritance. **Now**, God was bringing them into a land already established with houses and wells and vineyards.

**Look** at Deuteronomy 6: 11, “**And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,**

**11 And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not.**

**All** Israel had to do was “**enter in**” and “**possess**” a land that was **already** full, a land **lacking nothing** for their comfort and enjoyment. **They** had NOT **earned** this land. **They** had done NOTHING to **deserve** this land. **It was** theirs **simply** because God had **determined** it to be so; **simply** because He had **given** it by promise to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**This** is probably the greatest thing that made this “**a way they had not passed before**”. **They** were entering in to possess a land they had not earned and did not deserve based on anything found in them.

**In like** manner God brings His elect (Spiritual Israel) from the wilderness of false religion; from the **bondage** of salvation conditioned on the sinner, to a **WAY** they “**have not passed before**”.

**National** Israel’s entrance into the land of Canaan is a picture, a type of Spiritual Israel’s entrance into eternal salvation. **Sinners** are commanded (by the Gospel) to **enter into** and **take possession of** a salvation they have done nothing to earn; a salvation they do not deserve based on anything found in them (not even their **BEST** obedience, their **BEST** reformation, their **BEST** religious zeal).

**The** **WAY** (no) sinner has passed **before** is the **WAY** of eternal salvation by Jesus Christ **ALONE**. **We** have all been on **MANY** “ways” (many ideas) of salvation too numerous to mention.

“**We** all **THOUGHT** we were saved, **BEFORE** we were saved, **UNTIL** we were saved.” **By** nature we all **thought** we were saved, because we **thought** we had



met the condition to be saved. (**We** walked an aisle, we prayed a prayer, we confessed our sins, etc.)

**But**, we had never heard of God's salvation. **We** had never heard of God, who is Just to (save, justify, declare Righteous), otherwise ungodly sinners based on **Christ's** Righteousness freely imputed/charged to a sinner's account.

**We** had never heard of the salvation Christ worked out **in full** for a people of God's choosing. **We** had never heard of the salvation sinners **enter into** (take **possession** of) when the Spirit of God gives them life and, then, faith in the doing and dying of Christ ALONE.

**THIS** way is not **known** to us by nature. It is not known until God REVEALS it. **We** are not **on** this WAY by nature. **We** do not even **consider** this WAY by nature. **It** is only known when Christ, who has removed all obstacles, is REVEALED.

**You** see! **The** salvation of God is NOT a salvation in which sinners meet a condition or fulfill a requirement. **It is**, rather, salvation where Christ has met ALL the conditions, fulfilled ALL the requirements for a people of God's choosing. **Sinners** (simply) ENTER INTO; they TAKE POSSESSION OF (this) salvation by God given faith.

**In the** sermon of the mount Jesus contrasts two WAYS of "entering in". **And**, He is speaking of "entering into" eternal salvation.

**Look** at Matt 7: 13-14, "**Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:**

**14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."**

**All of** us by nature are on the "broad way that leads to destruction". **But**, none of us know we are on THAT (way) UNTIL The Spirit of God brings to Christ and shows us that ONLY by His Righteousness imputed can God be Just to declare us Righteous in His sight.

**Also**, the book of Proverbs tells of a “way that **seems** right”, but ends in death. **This** “way” is recorded in 14: 12 and repeated in 16: 25.

**Look** at Proverbs 14: 12, “**There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.**”

**There** is A (single) way in the minds of MANY. **That** way **seems** right to each of them. **But** the end of ALL those ways ARE the “ways” of death.

**By** nature sinners have (many) WAYS (many ideas) of salvation. **But** Christ crucified and risen again is “**the WAY by which you must go**”. **Christ** is the WAY sinners must follow if they would enter into God’s salvation. **This** is the WAY “**no sinner has passed before**” (before) the Spirit of God brings them to it.

**Look** back at our text now, and I will close.

Joshua 3: 3-4, “**And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.**

**4 Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed *this* way heretofore.”**

**When** you “see” Christ, being set forth in the Gospel, FOLLOW HIM. **He is** the WAY into eternal life. **He is** the One who **must** (and shall) REVEAL TO His sheep the “**way by which you must go**”. And, that WAY is His shed blood and imputed Righteousness. **He is** the One who must (and shall) deliver His sheep **off of** the WAY that is leading to destruction. **He is** the One who must (and shall) deliver His elect **onto** the WAY they “**have not passed before**”.

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