



4 | JOSHUA 3

CROSSING THE JORDAN

Walking by Faith, not by Sight

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Call to Worship

Isaiah 35:1-4, The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; ² it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. ³ Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴ Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you."

Songs

All Creatures of Our God and King

All I Have is Christ

Death was Arrested

Guide Me O Though Great Jehovah

By Faith

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WELCOME: Welcome visitors

GIVING: You can still give over Zelle through your bank with no fees. We also have a collection box on the Welcome Center.

ANNUAL MEETING Today after the morning service. Will also be broadcasted on Zoom so all can participate. Bring any questions about the budget. We will vote for 2020/21 budget, reaffirmation of Martin Alexander as a deacon, and taking on Ahmed & Stephanie Joktan as missionaries under our care and support.

VACATION: I'm on vacation for the next week. If you need anything, please see Pastor Mike or one of the elders.

Introduction

Open your Bible to the book of Joshua. We are in a series called "Safe and Secure in Jesus". The title of our message is "Crossing the Jordan".

A Miracle

You've heard people proclaim: It's a miracle! God is a miracle working God. One definition of a miracle is by Systematic Theologian Wayne Grudem:

A miracle is a less common kind of God's activity in which he arouses people's awe and wonder and bears witness to himself. –Wayne Grudem

There are those everyday miracles, if you take the time to look. This morning I opened my curtains to the back yard and saw two bunnies face to face. They played, and then stood completely still. And then, like a mirror, they jumped into the air together. As they did that a third bunny wanted to get into the fun and joined the fun. I couldn't believe what I was seeing and burst out with joyful laughter.

There are those unique miracles, like the birth of a baby. It seems like yesterday I was holding Ava talking with her after her birth. I told her we would be best friends, and we are. That's such a miracle.

Then there are what we are used to calling miracles: those unique acts of God. The blind see, the lame leap, and the dead are raised. We see at least some of this. People are miraculously healed and the prayer of faith heals can heal the sick. We saw Blanca's cancer disappear. We saw Jerry's back pain of many years disappear. We see God giving visions and Jesus appearing to people in dreams throughout the Middle East and even sometimes here in the West, and eventually coming to know Christ.

Augustine said:

"I never have any difficulty believing in miracles, since I experienced the miracle of a change in my own heart." –Augustine

And that's the greatest miracle: our salvation. The moment you came to know Jesus: it was a miracle.

The children of Israel needed a miracle. They had been in the wilderness for 40 year. Joshua 3 is all about getting out of the wilderness. You've got to cross the Jordan. I preached on this passage six weeks ago. But I want to look at it again this morning.

There's a wilderness that God's people were in. That wilderness represents a place of wandering. The Israelites were in the wilderness because they disobeyed. Hebrews says the idea of "entering the Promised Land of God's rest" is akin for the Christian with entering into salvation in Christ. God doesn't want us in the wilderness.

That wilderness represents death, and remember, now the second generation is hemmed in by the Jordan River at flood time. That's a mile wide at its widest point. Raging rapids. And here's the kicker. Jordan means Judgment. It's the River of Judgment.

The entire first generation with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, died in the wilderness. You can see why they wouldn't venture on through that Judgment River. It's safe in the wilderness. There are no Canaanites to fight in the wilderness. God provides in the wilderness. There's manna. And their shoes and clothing endured without rotting for 40 years. Lots of miracles: water from the rock!

But God doesn't want us to stay in the wilderness. He wants us to leave the wilderness behind for the Promised Land. Christ is our inheritance. He is our "exceeding great reward" (Gen 15:1). He wants his "waters to break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert" (Isa 35:6).

Between them and that land there lay a river of difficulty. It was the river Jordan, and at this time of the year the river was swollen. Before Joshua and the people of Israel could begin their conquest of Canaan, they had to cross the Jordan River. This was no small thing as the river was at **flood tide** (3:15). This wasn't just a little river: it covered a great territory and it was seemingly impossible for them to get through the flooded Jordan River and into the land. But God is a miracle working God, and this day, God performed a miracle. God got them in, even though it seemed impossible.

The children of Israel came to this raging, impassible river. Their hopes were thwarted. They were so close but so far away. They were confronted with a test of faith.

CONTEXT: CROSSING THE IMPOSSIBLE

Joshua needed to get two million people ready to cross the Jordan at flood level. The children of Israel have come out of Egypt; they've spent 40 years in the wilderness. Joshua was ready to go into the promised land when he was 40. Caleb was ready as well. To make this miracle all the more amazing, remember Joshua is 80.

Joshua is getting ready to lead God's people into their inheritance, into the Promise Land. This was quite different from Egypt. They are freed! But between them and this great Promised Land was the river Jordan. And it was flood time for the Jordan, like a raging rapid. It still occurs today. It's incredible. This placid little river becomes the raging

The Priests Feet

As soon as the feet of those priests touched the river Jordan, the water stopped flowing and it just started stacking up like it was held up by a plexiglass shield and the ark stopped right there in the middle of the riverbed of Jordan. God's people went right on through and came up on the other side. For twenty miles across from Adam, near Shiloh in the north, to the south at Gilgal, the Jordan River went dry during flood season.

1. THE POSSIBILITY OF MIRACLES (3:1-4)

Joshua 3:1-3 | Then Joshua rose early in the morning and they set out from Shittim. And they came to the Jordan, he and all the people of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. ²At the end of three days the officers went through the camp ³and commanded the people, “As soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it.”

A Miracle Working God

God is a miracle working God. The Christian life is one of supernatural life abiding in you. Though you struggle through the trials of this life, you are “seated in the heavenly places” ruling and reigning with Christ.

The greatest miracle is for God to become flesh and dwell among us (Jn 1:14). That he would leave his throne and inhabit a human tent. And then to die in place of sinners!

But oh, the transformation that has come! That’s a miracle.

Dear Christian, your trials and suffering are filled with purpose. God wants to take you from the wilderness to the fullness of the Promised Land where his manifest presence fights for you.

God keeps his promises to you. No matter how difficult the wilderness, he’ll bring every child of God into the inheritance he has ordained. For Israel that was Canaan. For all true believers it’s Jesus. It’s like God promised Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant:

“Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward” (Gen 15:1, KJV).

Follow Our Miracle Working God!

They were to prepare themselves to follow God. They had heard of his miracles. They had heard of the crossing of the Red Sea with the pillar of glory cloud, God’s manifest presence (the Holy Spirit) fighting for them. But now they were to follow the Lord with the Ark and with the Pillar.

Joshua 3:2-3 | At the end of three days the officers went through the camp ³and commanded the people, “As soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it.”

God is a miracle working God. When we follow him, we must know above all that he is working on our behalf. He doesn’t need our plans. We need his plans.

Waiting for a Miracle

They had waited 40 years. Their parents died in the wilderness. They didn’t know what it was like to cross the Red Sea. Only Caleb and Joshua knew that. Now was their

time, and they had to wait three more days. Sometimes we need to wait. But follow God, and you will see miracles.

God is worth the wait. The children of Israel had to wait. For forty years they had waited, while an entire generation died. The promise had been deferred because of the unbelief of the leaders. And now they would wait again, three days, with the destination in sight.

No one likes to wait. Waiting is not a strong suit for most of us. We tend to be horn honking, microwaving, FedEx mailing, fast food eating, and express lane shopping people. Yet sometimes God says wait.

Waiting is the hardest part of trusting. It is the most arduous aspect of the before principle. God's ways are not our ways. His ways are higher than our ways. God's timetable is different than our ways. His plans are much better than our plans! Amen?

Too often we want God's resources, but we do not want his timing. We forget that the work God is doing in us while we wait is as important as whatever we are waiting for. Waiting means that we give God the benefit of the doubt that he knows what he is doing.

Waiting is God's way of seeing if we will trust him before we move forward.

Waiting reminds me that I am not in charge.

We are not just waiting around, we are growing into the image of Christ.

All to See our Great God!

Joshua 3:4 | Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about 2,000 cubits in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before."

The fact that the ark would be readily visible did not mean the people could get close to it. They were called to look at it and follow it while staying a half a mile away from it! Why? The reason for the distance from the ark is in order that the people can tell where to go and can witness the cutting off of the Jordan, something they could not do if everyone was closely following the priests and the ark. But this way all could see Yahweh's great deed and all could know the path to take.¹

Two million people needed to see the Ark at all times. They needed to see what in essence was the tangible presence of God. So they had to stay away two thousand cubits on each side, about one-half mile. Nothing could crowd in on God's presence to block it out. What about the **possibility** of miracles? With God, all things are possible.

2. THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES (3:5-13)

Why did God say to Joshua—in Joshua say to the people, “tomorrow is going to be a day of miracles?” I want to give you four basic reasons.

¹ Dale Ralph Davis, *Joshua: No Falling Words*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 33.

A NEW SEASON

First of all, God performs miracles when he wants to commence a program. When God is about to do something new, when God is about to do something different, so many times God confirms it with a miracle.

Joshua 3:5 | Then Joshua said to the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”

Now, what does that word “consecrate” mean? It means to separate yourself, set yourself aside apart for a particular person or special purpose. The decision they are making is life changing, life dominating. They need to prepare their hearts and minds and not make the mistake of the previous generation.

Here is God’s challenge to you today. Listen to it. God brought his people to the threshold of an impossible situation, which was an opportunity. This was a re-consecration of the Red Sea redemption. This is the second generation. They have to prefer Christ for themselves. They can’t just ride in on the previous generation’s coattails (most of which are dead and buried in the desert anyway).

God brought his people to the threshold of an impossible situation, which was an opportunity. This was a re-consecration of the Red Sea redemption. This is the second generation. They have to prefer Christ for themselves. They can’t just ride in on the previous generation’s coattails (most of which are buried in the desert anyway).

God often does miracles to commence a program, just to let people know that he is in it, that he is with them, that this is God's plan, that it has God's stamp of approval on it.

God’s just done some miracles for us. He’s provided for us. We’ve seen divine healing. We’ve seen salvation of people we’ve been praying for for years. God does these miracles among us to bring us to a new level of fellowship with him and power.

Are you ready for a new level of responsibility in your life? The children of Israel were going from wilderness wandering to Canaanite fighting. Now God is their warrior. He goes before them. But they still have to enter the land. Their first fight is going to be a very unusual beginning. They are going to march around a city with trumpets for seven days!

God may call you to do some really unusual things. That’s the life of faith. It doesn’t operate according to this world’s mechanics.

NEW SERVICE

This is interesting. The Scripture says God exalts Joshua.

Joshua 3:6-8 | And Joshua said to the priests, “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before the people.” So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people. ⁷The Lord said to Joshua, “**Today 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. ⁸And as for you, command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, ‘When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.’”

It's not exaltation, as in **worship**. This is exaltation as in **usefulness**. "God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble" (Jas 5:5). "Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and he will exalt you" (Jas 4:10).

Joshua must lead them through the flood of the Jordan River. Following God entails leadership. There needs to be tender courage. We need to have courageous love for those around us. We need to point the way. Joshua pointed to the ark, the symbol of God's presence.

Leaders do not allow **pride** and **panic** to control them. Leaders are led by God's presence and his Word which produces **humility** and **trust**.

God exalts Joshua. Joshua can't change anything. All he has is the favor and grace and **empowerment** of God. But God must show up for anything to happen. Every Christian today has that empowerment by the Holy Spirit for service.

You want to be used of God: be unentitled. Pick up your cross. Put on the slave's towel. That's leadership. Lead the way to the presence of Christ. Walk with God in spirit and in truth. Worship him at all times. Walk with Christ and he will exalt you for service.

A NEW SUCCESS

When faith is exercised, a great miracle takes place. We walk by faith, not by sight. That doesn't mean that we live blindly. It means we live in the reality of our God who is physically unseeable at this time but is manifested in every detail around us.

Joshua 3:9-11 | And Joshua said to the people of Israel, "Come here and listen to the words of the Lord your God." ¹⁰ And Joshua said, "Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that **he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Gergashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites.** ¹¹ Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan.

There are two scriptural **allusions** here that are **pictures of conversion**. The first allusion has to do with the twelve spies. They explore the land of Canaan in Numbers 13-14 and ten of them give up because of "giants in the land". Joshua begins the do-over, "Choose twelve men" (3:12). This time no one is afraid. You will recall when 12 spies explored the promised land and **10 of them** ended up refusing to trust God. Here in Joshua 3, we have a new test of the same kind for this second generation. They must have heard the story of this great failure that led to forty years in the wilderness. They need to choose twelve men to cross the Jordan and enter the promised land.

The second allusion is the **Red Sea** crossing from Exodus 14. Again, this points to salvation. The Red Sea crossing is the most famous picture of salvation in the Old Testament and is alluded to most throughout the Bible.

A NEW SURRENDER

Watch what happens. Twelve men with the priests surrender to the supernatural power of God, and God does something incredible. There is a manifestation when God moves in by faith.

Joshua 3:12-13 | Now therefore take **twelve men** from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man. ¹³ And **when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap.**"

This would unmistakably bring in their mind the Red Sea crossing. This second generation needed to experience the "salvation of the Lord" as well. Now watch these priests! They have feet of faith! When they stepped onto the water, the waters parted. But it wasn't until they took that step of faith.

Now we are told that the waters parted from the Dead Sea to Adam, near Zerethan and Shiloh. That's 20 miles!

God has you here this morning, and he's asking you to take a step of faith. That first step is conversion. You need to be converted.

Another step of every believer is consecration and surrender. We are sometimes so selfish, we don't want to give up our rights. We don't want to give up control. Surrender to Christ today Christian. It's a daily surrender. Walk in the Spirit. Surrender to Christ.

3. THE POWER OF MIRACLES (3:14-17)

At the end of the day, nothing happens until God shows up. This is true for all things in life. Once God's presence (symbolized by the ark) is carried into the water, there is a 20 mile gap in the River – from the city of Adam (parallel with Zarethan and Shiloh) all the way to the Dead Sea.

Joshua 3:14-17 | So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, ¹⁵ and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest), ¹⁶ the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at **Adam**, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho. ¹⁷ Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord **stood firmly on dry ground** in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.

There was a twenty-mile wide gap in the Jordan River. The water was standing "in one heap" (3:13). That's impossible right? "What is impossible with man is possible with God" (Lk 18:27). Is there anything too hard for the Lord?

20 miles of dry land! Wow! That's what happens when God shows up!

A warning: miracles won't give you faith. They will build up your faith if you already have some faith. But they don't convert people.

Jesus said, “If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead” (Lk 16:31).

But if you are a Christian, your life is a supernatural life. You’ve crossed the Jordan. You are in the Promised Land. God fights for you. Every step is a miracle.

I want to encourage you Christian: live life in the Promised Land of victory, not in the wilderness of defeat! Death and sin are defeated. Don’t live in the power of your flesh, but walk in the Spirit. Do whatever it takes so that you can see Jesus, our Ark, and follow him. See him, follow him, be transformed by him, from victory unto victory!

Conclusion

Now let me celebrate Christ here today. The Ark, representing Christ, went through that Jordan River. Jordan has the meaning of Judgment.

Christ your Ark of the Covenant went through that Judgment River for you. He was completely soaked in the justice for your sin. He was punished for sinners. “He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor 5:21).

We want justice in this world. We’re praying for it. But we are not going to get perfect justice here on earth. Perfect justice even on earth only begins to be seen as people get their hearts right with Christ. Jesus is the answer!

Christ went to that River of Judgement and he took it all for us. “It is finished,” he said.