

GOD AT WORK...Through Us
Preparation For Crossing The Jordan
Joshua 3:1-7

Chapter 3 is a chapter on the **Lordship of Christ**. The **Jordan River** is the obstacle that stands in the way of every Christian from crossing over and possessing the victories that Christ has purchased for us and desires to give us...*the victorious Christian life...the abundant life*.

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

~John 10:10

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world...our faith.”

~I John 5:4

Crossing the **Jordan** signifies *dying*...not physical death...but the death that every child of God must experience in order to come under the **Lordship of Christ**...the *death of self-effort*...the *death to self-will*...*death to self*.

“Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.”

~Romans 6:6

What **Moses** could not do in **40 years**...**Joshua** was about to do in **3 days**. He is about to lead **Israel** into the **Promised Land**...the land of **Canaan**...the **land flowing with milk and honey** (**Exodus 3:8**).

I. THE COMMAND FOR THE CROSSING: (vs. 1-4)

Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed (vs. 1)...As soon as the spies returned and gave their report, **Joshua** began immediate preparations to cross the **Jordan** and invade **Canaan**. Even though he had no idea how the massive group of people was going to cross the river, much less the river that was overflowing its banks at that time of year (**vs. 15**), **he believed God**. So he began moving everyone and everything the **seven miles** from **Shittim** to the **Jordan**.

Remember, **Shittim** was also known as **Acacia Grove**...and it was where **Israel** had been camped since **Balaam's** failed attempt to curse them (**Numbers 22:1; Numbers 25:1**).

Having arrived at the river, they stopped for **three days**. This allowed time for **Joshua** and his leaders to *prepare*...time to *get organized*...time to *pass instructions* on to the people.

With the **Jordan** at flood stage, it would have had a strong, rapid current due to the melting snows from **Mt. Hermon** (which was to their north). To the average man...this would have seemed like an *impossible task*. This is the type of situation that test one's *faith*.

At the end of three days the officers went through the midst of the camp; and they commanded the people, saying, “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 (vs. 2-3)...At the end of the **third day**, the people were given instructions. For the first time in **forty years** the *pillar of cloud* would no longer be leading them. Instead, they were to follow the **Ark of the Covenant**.

Now, this would not be the normal military engagement. No scouts would advance into the land first...but rather **priests** carrying the **ark** would lead (**vs. 11**). And since the **ark** symbolized the Lord Himself...it was **Yahweh** who would be leading His people into **Canaan**.

Officers (vs. 2)...these **officers** were equivalent to the *foremen* back in **Egypt**. The title was also used for *judges* and those with other responsibilities. They were the *secular counterpart* to the **priest**.

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. (vs. 4)...With the **ark** leading...the people were to keep a distance of approximately **3,000 feet (1,000 yards...1 km.)** between the **ark** and themselves. This distance served as a reminder of the *sacredness* of the **ark** and the *holiness* of God it represented. The people were to have *no casual* or *careless intimacy* with God...but a profound spirit of *respect* and *reverence* and *awe*. They were to see Him as *sovereign* and *holy*...the God of all the earth.

The distance also allowed the greatest number of **Israelites** to see the **ark**. God was about to lead them into unfamiliar territory...a way they had never been before. It was a new land. They were absolutely dependent on the Lord's guidance and leading.

II. THE CONSECRATION FOR THE CROSSING: (vs. 5-6)

Then Joshua said to the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you” (vs. 5)...Joshua commanded the people to *sanctify* or *consecrate* themselves. It would have been easier for them to understand and it would have been more normal if Joshua had told them to *sharpen their swords* and *check their shields*. But *spiritual*...not *military*...*preparation* was needed at this time because God was about to reveal Himself in a very *mighty* and *powerful way* by performing a great *miracle* in Israel’s midst.

Consecrate yourselves (vs. 5)...literally it means to *wash* and *clean*. It’s a picture of *washing one’s clothes* or *taking a bath*. Spiritually it’s instruction to *clean one’s heart*...*confession* and *repentance*.

Just as a person would meticulously prepare to meet someone of earthly royalty...it was appropriate for the Israelites to prepare to meet the Lord...to prepare for a manifestation of God. This same command was heard at **Mount Sinai** when the previous generation prepared itself for the revelation of the Lord when He gave them the **Law**...the **Ten Commandments** (**Exodus 19:10-13**).

“The Lord also said to Moses, ‘Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, “Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether beast or man, he shall not live.” When the ram’s horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain.’”

~Exodus 19:10-13

And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, “Take up the Ark of the Covenant and cross over ahead of the people.” So they took up the Ark of the Covenant and went ahead of the people (vs. 6)... The Lord had told Joshua how they were to make the crossing and now Joshua gives his first instructions to the **priest**. Note that this verse describes their *precise obedience* to his words.

God then explained to Joshua that this miracle would *magnify* or **exalt** him as the leader of the people of Israel.

III. THE CONFIRMATION GIVEN TO JOSHUA: (vs. 7)

Now the Lord said to Joshua, “This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you” (vs. 7)...It was time to establish Joshua as God’s representative to *lead* and *guide* Israel. It was God’s *promise of His presence* with Joshua that accompanied a promise to **exalt** him that was a *seal* on his leadership over Israel.

What more powerful way to accomplish this than for Joshua to direct their passage through a *miraculous parting of the river*... much less, a parting of the river while it was at *flood stage*. After crossing, the people did in fact revere Joshua (**Joshua 4:14**)... acknowledging that God was with him (vs. 7).

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- **God is God! He is going to accomplish what He has planned and purposed...with or without us.** Missing God doesn’t *restrict* or *negate* His work...we are the ones that misses out. **Moses** verse **Joshua**.
- **The key to one’s growing relationship with God...to coming under the lordship of Christ...one must consecrate (sanctify) themselves.** This is a picture of *confession* and *repentance*...to be *holy* before God.
- **To experience God in a personal way...you must obey God.** When God speaks...what you do next shows what you truly believe about God. (**Jonah**).

JOSHUA 3:1-7

- 1. Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed.**
- 2. At the end of three days the officers went through the midst of the camp;**
- 3. And they commanded the people, saying, “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.**
- 4. 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.”**
- 5. Then Joshua said to the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”**
- 6. And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, “Take up the Ark of the Covenant and cross over ahead of the people.” So they took up the Ark of the Covenant and went ahead of the people.**
- 7. Now the Lord said to Joshua, “This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you.**