

Courageous

Claiming Canaan, Lessons from the Book of Joshua

Lesson 5: The Crossing (3:1-17)

Every eye watched intently as the Ark of the Covenant drew closer to the river that served as a barrier between them and God's spoken word. His promises were in view, but fixed "between them and the blessing was an impossibility"ⁱ. It was time to face it.

God had not left them to cross the river by their own devising, in their own way, strength and time. The Ark went before them; between them and the unknown. There it would stay until they reached the other side.

What they needed now was to seek a clear and personal view of God's Ark, to fix their eyes upon the symbol of His presence, promise, and protection. And step-by-step they would see the impossible give way to the One for Whom nothing is impossible.

When God calls us to step into the River Jordan, we can be sure that the same power that was engaged and employed for the Israelites will be engaged and employed for us. "We will laugh at seemingly impossible situations while we watch with delight to see how God is going to open a path through our [seemingly impossible situation]"ⁱⁱ.

"Got any rivers they say are uncrossable, got any mountains they say, 'Can't tunnel through'? [God] specializes in the wholly impossible, doing the things they say you can't do."ⁱⁱⁱ

Read Joshua 3:1-6.

1. What does the River Jordan symbolize? What does Canaan symbolize? Its crossing? What is its significance to you?
2. The crossing of the Red Sea symbolized salvation from sin and death; the crossing of the Jordan River, the attainment and fulfillment of God's promises. Why does the "Jordan River" pose a greater hurdle for many believers?
3. Identify any obstacles that keep you from moving forward with God.

4. Do you believe that the same power can and will be engaged and employed for you? Why or why not?

5. How many days were the people forced to observe the impossible? (v.2) What feelings might this have created among them?

6. What similarities exist between the Israelites' experience, Christ's death and the emotions experienced by His disciples?

7. Return to Joshua 3. *When* were the people to set out? Why mustn't they charge ahead?

8. If we set out before God, we set out without Him. Why is waiting one of the most difficult aspects of following Christ?

9. Upon what were they to set their eyes? What lesson lies therein for us?

10. When the Ark of the Covenant was carried in the open, it was covered by a veil of badger skins and blue cloth (Numbers 4:5-6). For what reasons were the people to remain at a distance from the ark? (Joshua 3:4; read also Numbers 4:15, 20.)

11. The people were to sanctify their hearts, drawing near to God in preparation for His miraculous display (v.5). How is this accomplished? Why was it necessary?

Consider John 17:17, Romans 12:1, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Colossians 3:1, 2 Timothy 2:21, James 4:8-10, and 1 John 3:3. Also 1 Thessalonians 5:22-24.

12. Why would their intelligence, skills and abilities prove unprofitable in their attempt to cross over? Record Zechariah 4:6.

13. Return to Joshua 3. What responsibilities lay upon the priests? (v.6)

Keep reading: Joshua 3:7-13.

14. What difference lies between coming to the edge of the Jordan and standing in the Jordan? (v.8) What must transpire before the miracle will occur? (vv.8, 13)

15. How would the people know that the living God was among them? (v.10)

16. Who went before Israel—who goes before you—into the river of impossibility? Read Deuteronomy 1:30, 31:8, Psalm 139:5, Isaiah 52:12, 41:10, and 43:1-2.

Read Joshua 3:14-17.

17. Describe the scene. Include the perspective of the inhabitants of Jericho.

18. Many scholars reduce God's miracle to a natural phenomenon such as an earthquake. What evidences prove that this was not a natural occurrence?

19. In verse 16 of Joshua 3, we learn that the waters were miraculously cut off at the city of Adam, preventing them from reaching the Dead Sea. What might this signify considering that Adam, the first man, is representative of man's carnal nature?

20. What position were the priests to take until the people crossed over completely? What did this require? (v.17)

21. For the Israelites, the crossing of the Jordan River meant they were irrevocably committed to walk by faith in the living God. It meant the "end of a life lived by human effort and the beginning of a life of faith and obedience"^{iv}. Are you willing to follow?

ⁱ Redpath, A. (2013). Victorious Christian Living: Studies in the Book of Joshua (p.54). The Redpath Family.

ⁱⁱ Cowman, L. B., Reimann, James, ed. (1997). Streams in the Desert (February 17). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

ⁱⁱⁱ (Song of the Panama Canal Builders). Cowman, L. B., Reimann, James, ed. (1997). Streams in the Desert (February 13). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

^{iv} Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An exposition of the scriptures (Joshua 3:1-15). Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books.