



## "REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart " Jeremiah 15:16

### KEEP CALM AND MARCH ON!

#### Marching through the Book of Joshua: Lesson 6

In last week's lesson, Joshua sent two spies to Jericho to view the land. There they met a harlot named Rahab who had come to the knowledge of the Most High God. God used this woman to protect His people and fulfill His divine plan and purpose. It's interesting to note that it is her name, not Joshua's, that is mentioned in the Hebrew's Hall of Faith. Rahab has been used generation after generation to remind us of the mercy, grace, and forgiveness of God, as well as her example of faith.

In chapter 3, we move from the faith of an individual to the faith of a nation. The Israelites now make the choice to put feet to their faith and cross the Jordan River. Genuine faith is always accompanied by obedience. As you study this week, ask God to give you the courage to put "feet to your faith" as the Israelites did.

Before we begin, there are some study skills that are important to remember as you study Bible narratives, or stories. Here are a few of those principles found in the book, How to Read the Bible for all its Worth, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart.

1. Narratives record **what** happened, not necessarily what **should** have happened every time.
2. Not every detail has deep significance.
3. All narratives are incomplete and selective. Not all relevant details are always given.
4. Narratives are not written to answer all our theological questions.
5. God is the main character of all Biblical narratives. The human beings are always secondary characters in a story about what God did.
6. We are not always told at the end of a narrative whether what happened was good or bad. We are expected to be able to decide that on the basis of what God has said directly elsewhere in the Scriptures.

7. Most of the characters in narratives are far from perfect, and so are their actions. Thus, we should not try to copy everything even a great man like Joshua does. We should let the rest of Scripture, especially the New Testament, guide us in drawing lessons for application.
8. We should pray for wisdom and discernment from the Holy Spirit to discern principles accurately before we make comparisons to our own life.

These are only a few rules of interpretation to remember as you study the Book of Joshua. I pray that they help you as you seek to interpret God's Word accurately.

### **First Day**

1. Read Joshua 3:1-17. Highlight any key points, phrases, or thoughts.
2. What did you observe? Answer the following questions:
  - a. When did this take place?
  - b. Where did this story begin? Where did it finish?
  - c. Who are the main characters?
  - d. Describe what is happening.
3. What do you think the atmosphere in the camp was like?
4. How long were they told to wait? Why?
5. How many miracles do you find in this chapter?
6. What do you learn about leadership?
7. What is the main point, or focus, of this chapter?
8. What kind of problems do you think were involved in crossing the Jordan?
9. Who was in control of every event in this chapter?

## 10. What spiritual application do you find upon first reading chapter 3?

Our goal for today is to get a good overall picture of what is taking place. I pray that you have a good understanding of what happened as the Israelites crossed the Jordan. Our memory verse of the week not only applied to the children of Israel, but to each of us as well. May we always be preparing and purifying our hearts.

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." **Joshua 3:5**

### Second Day

**Review your memory verse. Ponder it throughout the day.**

1. Read Joshua 3:1-17 again, concentrating on verses 1-4.

The distance from the *Acacia Grove* to the Jordan was about ten miles, which could be traveled in about one day. The people lodged there for three days. I'm sure they were wondering how *God* was going to deliver them.

2. What instructions were the people given?
3. Read Numbers 10:33. How does this event remind us of their earlier trip from Sinai? What are the similarities? What was the main difference?
4. What is the ark of the covenant? Read Exodus 25:10-22 and describe the ark.
5. What was the lid called? Read Exodus 25:17.

6. What was this ark for? Read Exodus 25:22.
7. What did it contain? Read Deuteronomy 10:1-5, Exodus 16:33-34, Hebrews 9:4.
8. What are some other names for the ark? Read Joshua 3:11-13, 4:5, 4:11, 4:16.

The people were supposed to keep their eyes on the ark of the covenant (vs. 3). The ark was the visible symbol that God used to direct the children of Israel. Here was the meeting place of God and man. When Israel was camped, the ark resided in the Most High in the Tabernacle. When Israel traveled, it was the job of the Levites (Numbers 3:5-31) to take care of the tabernacle and its furnishings. They always carried the ark when Israel traveled.

The word "**ark**" is an old English word meaning "wooden chest." This wooden box had a lid called the "atonement cover" or the "mercy seat." This represented God's throne, where the blood of the sacrifices atoned for people's sins. It was called the "**ark of the covenant**" or the "**testimony**" (Joshua 4:16), because it represented the covenant relationship and contained the testimony of that covenant. It was called the "**ark of the Lord your God**" (4:5, 11), because it was His throne and symbolized His presence in the midst of His people. It was called the "**ark of the Lord - the Lord of all the earth**" (3:11,13), to remind Israel that He was the God of all power and that He was interested not only in Israel, but all the earth (Joshua, Life Change Series).

The ark is a type of Jesus Christ. No longer do we have to sacrifice an animal in order to meet with God. Jesus Christ was the final sacrifice for us, and through His blood we now have access to God the Father. Through Jesus, we now can come before the presence of God. Jesus Christ is the perfect embodiment of God's presence. He is God in the flesh. Ironside so beautifully writes that "**the wood of the arc symbolizes Christ's perfect humanity, while the gold of the ark symbolizes the glory of His deity.**"

9. Why do you think the Israelites were commanded to walk 2000 cubits behind the ark? (This is about one-half a mile)
  
10. Read about the capture of the ark by the Philistines in 1 Samuel 4:1-11 and Samuel 5:1-5. What happened to the Philistine god when the ark was brought into their camp?
  
11. Read 2 Samuel 6:1-11. Why did Uzzah die? What had he and David done wrong? Read Numbers 4:5-15.
  
12. What do the above two events tell us about God and the ark of the covenant?

This ends our lesson for today. Do you ever wonder where the ark is today? There are many people who have many different ideas about the location of the ark at this time. No one knows for sure. But we can rejoice that when we have a relationship with Jesus Christ, we can enter into the presence of God, anytime, anywhere. We no longer need to make sacrifices at the mercy seat. Halleluiah!

### Third Day

**Review your memory verse. What "wonders" of God do you see today?**

Our memory verse contains the words of Joshua to the Israelites before they crossed the Jordan.

1. Read Joshua 3:1-5. According to verse 5, what were the children of Israel told to do?

Before making sacrifices and witnessing great acts of God, the Israelites were required to perform sanctification ceremonies. These ceremonies reminded them of the importance of approaching God with a clean and pure heart. According to the Law of God, the people could become unclean for many reasons, such as eating certain foods, disease, or touching a dead person (Leviticus 11, 12 and Numbers 19:11-22). They then had to go through the process of cleansing and purifying themselves, thus making them once more acceptable to God.

The word "**sanctify**" comes from the Greek word, "hagiozo" and can also mean "hallowed" (Matthew 6:9). It means to "**set apart**" or to "**be set apart for God's service.**" It is a form of the word "hagios," meaning "holy." "The definition of holy is fundamentally the idea of separation, and so to speak, consecration and devotion to the service of Deity" (Synonyms of the New Testament).

2. Read Hebrews 9:1-28. Explain how the Israelites were sanctified.

3. How are we sanctified now as believers?

We are sanctified, or set apart for God's use, by the Holy Spirit when we become believers. This is called your "positional" sanctification. 1 Peter 1:16 says to "be holy, for I am holy." As we are set apart for God, we are to be constantly growing in the knowledge of God and in our pursuit of living a holy life. This process is called "progressive sanctification." You are sanctified in Christ and are being sanctified throughout your Christian life.

4. Read the following verses on sanctification. What do they tell us?

- a. 1 Corinthians 6:11
- b. 1 Thessalonians 5:23
- c. John 17:17, 19
- d. Hebrews 2:11

5. What are we supposed to do before we come before the Lord? Read James 4:8 and Psalm 24:3-4.

6. How do we purify, or prepare, our hearts? Give Scriptures to support your answer.

7. Before you come before the throne of God, do you prepare your heart? Do you spend more time preparing your heart, or giving Him your requests? Why is it so important to prepare your heart?

Joshua wanted them to prepare themselves before they witnessed the miracles that God was about to do. God is still in the business of doing wonders, day after day, minute by minute. How important it is for us to constantly be asking the Holy Spirit to purify our hearts, so we can be ready to experience all that God has for us every day!

8. Read Psalm 136:4-9 and 23-25. What are some of the wonders that God has done? What should be our response? (Psalm 136:1-3)

9. What "wonders" has God done in your life lately or in the lives of those around you? (Be specific.) Have you thanked Him lately for being the God of wonders?

10. Where are you in your sanctification process? Are you pursuing after holiness? A. W. Tozer once said, "**You are as holy as you want to be.**" How holy do you want to be? Have you made a commitment to follow Christ's example and dedicate your life to the pursuit of holiness? Be honest before God. He knows your heart anyway.

Let's stop here for today. I pray that you spend some time with the Lord, searching your heart on the area of personal holiness. I know this is a topic that we will frequently look at as we study the Book of Joshua. God is perfect, and He is above all others. Psalm 93 says that "Holiness adorns His house." Doesn't that paint an awesome picture? Asaph said, "Who is so great a God as our God? You are the God who does wonders" (Psalm 77:12-13). Amen, Asaph! What a **"Reason to Rejoice."**

### Fourth Day

**What's your memory verse? Are you meditating on His wonders?**

1. Read Joshua 3:1-17.

God used the same sign to show the people Joshua's authority as He had with Moses (Joshua 3:7, Exodus 14:30-31). As the people witnessed the parting of the Red Sea, they believed Moses. Now as they witnessed the opening of the Jordan, they feared Joshua as they had feared Moses (Joshua 4:14).

2. Explain how the people were to cross the Jordan. Who went first? When could they go? In what order?

3. According to Joshua 3:3 and 11, what were they supposed to be watching?

The ark of the covenant was supposed to be the center of all attention. Their eyes were supposed to be fixed on it. Remember, this was their visible reminder that God's presence was with them.

4. Where are our eyes supposed to be fixed? (Hebrews 12:2)

The word **"fix"** means to direct one's eyes steadily toward something, like a target (Webster's).



5. What other things do we sometimes "fix" our eyes on? Why is this dangerous?
  
6. Where are your eyes? Are they both "fixed" on Jesus, or is one "fixed" on something else?

Joshua 3:15 dates the crossing of the Jordan in Harvest period, somewhere between Easter and Pentecost. This was most likely in April. Waters would fill the Jordan River after the winter rains, along with the melting of the snow on Mount Hermon. The rivers were extremely high. Imagine all those people, with all their cattle and possessions, waiting to cross over this river. What a sight that must have been, standing silently by the riverbank I wonder how they felt. I wonder if anyone was afraid. What about the priests, who had to put their foot in first? I imagine they must have been pretty frightened. But God wanted them to look past the impossible, and look to Him. This was His way of convincing them that He was the Living God and that He was truly among them. This was a preview of what He was still going to do.

7. God still wants to encourage us today that He is among us and that He will, without fail, drive out the enemies (vs. 10). What other things does He want to drive out of our life?
  - a. James 3:14
  - b. Ephesians 4:26
  - c. 1 John 4:18; 2 Timothy 1: 7
  - d. Proverbs 6:16-19
  
8. Why do you think it was so encouraging to the Israelites to see God stop the Jordan? What effect do you think it had on their hope for the battle ahead?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. How does God encourage us today for what is planned for our tomorrow? (Make sense?)

It's important to remember that the ark went before them. Ultimately, God went first. God always goes before us. Psalm 16:8 says, "I have set the Lord always before me; because He is my right hand I shall not be moved." Psalm 139:5 says that He has "hedged us behind and before, and laid His hand on us." God not only has gone before us, He is always with us, and behind us. We are totally enclosed by Him. What a "**Reason to Rejoice**"!

### **Fifth Day**

**Write your verse by memory. How did it encourage you this week?**

1. Read Joshua chapter 3 through one more time.
2. This miracle affected many people. What effect did it have on:
  - a. The enemy?
  - b. The children of Israel?
  - c. Joshua?

3. Did all the Israelites make it over?

Think about the priests again for a moment. God had given them a command and a promise, but yet they had to take a step of faith by putting their feet into the river. Again, we see the concept of taking possession very clearly. They were up against what seemed to be an impossible situation, yet God wanted them to look past the situation, and look to Him. God even wanted them to look past the victory, to the victor Himself.

4. What happens when we focus on the impossible? What does Luke 1:37 say about the impossible? Is that word in God's vocabulary?
5. Are you experiencing any "winds of circumstances"? How about any "rivers of obstacles"? Maybe a "fire of trials"? **Read Isaiah 43:1-3.** Is it time for you to step into the river and trust God to do exceedingly abundantly more than you can ask or think (Ephesians 3:20)?

**Many other exciting events in Bible History happened at the Jordan.  
Let's take a look!**

6. Read 2 Kings 2:1-14. What happened by the Jordan?
  
7. Read 2 Kings 5:1-14. What happened in the Jordan?
  
8. Read Matthew 3:1-6. Who was baptized in the Jordan?
  
9. Read Matthew 3:13-17. Who else was baptized here?
  
10. Why do you think that God chose the time when the river was at its highest to have them cross?
  
11. Has God ever worked the same way in your life? Why do you think He chose to work that way?
  
12. How is God glorified when this happens? How is our faith strengthened?

God proved two important things when He cut off the Jordan waters. First, He proved to His people and to the Canaanites that He was the true and mighty God. The Canaanites served other gods, and God was showing them that He was the God over all of creation. Secondly, He showed the people who had the rightful claim to the land. It was God's land, not the Canaanites. The NIV Study Bible writes, "Bypassing safely through the Jordan at the head of His army, the Lord showed the rightness of the claim on the land. In the ancient Near East, a common way for obtaining judicial verdict of the gods was by compelling the accused to submit to a trial-by water ordeal. Usually this involved casting him into a river (if the accused drowned, the gods had found him guilty; if not, the gods had declared him innocent). In Israel, however, another form of water ordeal was practiced (Numbers 5:16-28). Significantly, the Lord entered the Jordan first and then remained there until His whole army had safely crossed over. Thus His claim to the land was vindicated before the eyes of all who heard about it. And it was His claim, not Israel's; she came through the Jordan only with Him, and as His army, 'baptized' into His service."

In next week's lesson we will look at the symbolism of crossing the Jordan River, and being "baptized" into Christ. Until then, keep looking for those "**Reasons to Rejoice**"! **See you next week!**