

**Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**  
**Bible Study Notes**  
**1-4-23**

**Joshua 3**

**Crossing The Jordan – Verses 1-4**

**<sup>1</sup> Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. <sup>2</sup>After three days the officers went throughout the camp, <sup>3</sup>giving orders to the people: “When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. <sup>4</sup>Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about two thousand cubits between you and the ark; do not go near it.”**

**3:2-4** The ark of the covenant was Israel’s most sacred treasure. It was a symbol of God’s presence and power. The ark was a gold-covered rectangular box with two cherubim (angels) facing each other on the lid. Inside the ark were the tablets of the Ten Commandments Moses received from God, a jar of manna (the bread God miraculously sent from heaven during the wilderness wanderings), and Aaron’s staff (the symbol of the high priest’s authority). According to God’s law, only the Levites could carry the ark. The ark was constructed at the same time as the tabernacle (Exodus 37:1-9) and placed in the sanctuary’s most sacred room.

**Consecrate Yourselves – Verse 5**

**<sup>5</sup> Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you.”**

**3:5** Before entering the Promised Land, the Israelites were to perform a consecration ceremony. This was often done before making a sacrifice or, as in this case, before witnessing a great act of God. God’s law stated that a person could become unclean for many reasons—eating certain foods (Leviticus 11), giving birth (Leviticus 12), dealing with disease (Leviticus 13–14), touching a dead person (Numbers 19:11-22). God used these various outward signs of uncleanness to illustrate a person’s inward uncleanness that comes as a result of sin. The consecration ceremony pictured the importance of approaching God with a pure heart. Like the Israelites, we need God’s forgiveness before we approach him.

**Joshua’s Step Of Faith – Verse 6**

**<sup>6</sup> Joshua said to the priests, “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people.” So they took it up and went ahead of them.**

**3:6** Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people: We should assume that God told Joshua to do this, and that he wasn’t working based upon foolish presumption. We can also assume that God spoke to Joshua about this as Joshua was in God’s word, reading and remembering the crossing of the Red Sea.

**3:6** So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people: Even with God's specific guidance, and with specific guidance from His word, this is still an impressive step of faith for Joshua. Living and walking in the Promised Land comes from this kind of faith, not a slavish reliance on a "law" relationship with God. Faith leads us into greater victories than the law ever could.

### **God's Encouragement To Joshua – Verses 7-8**

**7** And the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses. **8** Tell the priests who carry the ark of the covenant: 'When you reach the edge of the Jordan's waters, go and stand in the river.'"

**3:7** This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel: As Joshua takes a step of faith, God encourages him all the way. God always wants to encourage and help along our faith, but we may have our ears closed to His encouragement.

**3:7** That they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with you: God will make Joshua a leader like Moses in the eyes of the people, and He will do it by using Joshua to miraculously lead the people across an impassable body of water.

**3:8** When you have come to the edge of the water...you shall stand in the Jordan: After Joshua had obeyed the previous guidance, based on faith and his understanding of God's word, then God gave him more specific instructions.

### **Joshua Encourages And Instructs Israel – Verses 9-13**

**9** Joshua said to the Israelites, "Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God. **10** This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. **11** See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. **12** Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. **13** And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD—the Lord of all the earth—set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap."

**3:9** Just before crossing over into the Promised Land, Joshua gathered the people to hear the words of the Lord. Their excitement was high. No doubt they wanted to rush on, but Joshua made them stop and listen. We live in a fast-paced age where everyone rushes just to keep up. It is easy to get caught up in our tasks, becoming too busy for what God says is most important—listening to his words. Before making your schedule, take time to focus on what God wants from all your activities. Knowing what God has said before you rush into your day can help you avoid foolish mistakes.

**3:10** Why would God help the Israelites drive out these nations from their native land? God had punished Israel first for its disobedience. He then turned to the rest of the nations. Genesis 15:16 implies that the people of Canaan were wicked and deserved to be punished for their terrible sins. Israel was to be a vehicle for this punishment. More important was the fact that Israel, as a holy nation, could not live among such evil and idolatrous people. To do so would be to invite sin into their lives. The only way to prevent Israel from being infected by evil religions was to drive out those who practiced them. Israel, however, failed to drive everyone out as God had told them to do. It wasn't long before Israel—the nation God chose to be his holy people—began following the evil practices of the Canaanites.

## **The Faith Of The Priests And Of Joshua – Verses 14-15**

**<sup>14</sup> So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. <sup>15</sup> Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge,**

**3:14-15** The Israelites were eager to enter the Promised Land, conquer nations, and live peacefully. But first they had to cross the flood-level waters of the Jordan River. God gave them specific instructions: In order to cross, the priests had to step into the water. What if these priests had been afraid to take that first step? Often God provides no solution to our problems until we trust him and move ahead with what we know we should do. What are the rivers, or obstacles, in your life? In obedience to God, take that first step.

## **The Jordan Is Stopped, And The People Cross Over On Dry Ground – Verses 16-17**

**<sup>16</sup> the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (that is, the Dead Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. <sup>17</sup> The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.**

**3:16-17** God had parted the waters of the Red Sea to let the people out of Egypt (Exodus 14), and here he parted the Jordan River to let them enter Canaan. These miracles showed Israel that God keeps his promises. God's presence among his people and his faithfulness to them made the entire journey from Egypt to the Promised Land possible. He was with them at the end of their wanderings just as he was with them in the beginning.

**3:16-17** The Israelites crossed the Jordan River in the spring, when it was overflowing its banks. God chose the time when the river was at its highest to demonstrate his power—parting the waters so that the entire nation could cross on dry ground. Some say that God used a natural occurrence (such as a landslide) to stop the waters of the Jordan; others say he did it by a direct act. In either case, God showed his great power by working a miracle of timing and location to allow his people to cross the river on dry ground. This testimony of God's supernatural power served to build the Israelites' hope in God and to give them a great reputation with their enemies, who greatly outnumbered them.