

Joshua Chapter 3-4 "God's people move forward by FAITH."

3:1 Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and they set out from Acacia Grove and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they crossed over. <sup>2</sup> So it was, after three days, that the officers went through the camp; <sup>3</sup> and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. <sup>4</sup> Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed *this* way before." <sup>5</sup> And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." <sup>6</sup> Then Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people. <sup>7</sup> And the LORD said to Joshua, "This day 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. <sup>8</sup> You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you have come to the edge of the water of the Jordan, you shall stand in the Jordan.'" <sup>9</sup> So Joshua said to the children of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God." <sup>10</sup> And Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God *is* among you, and *that* He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites: <sup>11</sup> Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan. <sup>12</sup> Now therefore, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from every tribe. <sup>13</sup> And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, *that* the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap." <sup>14</sup> So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, <sup>15</sup> and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest), <sup>16</sup> that the waters which came down from upstream stood *still*, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that *is* beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho. <sup>17</sup> Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan.

4:1 And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying: <sup>2</sup> "Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe, <sup>3</sup> and command them, saying, 'Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm. You shall carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight.'" <sup>4</sup> Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; <sup>5</sup> and Joshua said to them: "Cross over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, <sup>6</sup> that this may be a sign among you when

your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones *mean* to you?' <sup>7</sup> Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever." <sup>8</sup> And the children of Israel did so, just as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, as the LORD had spoken to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. <sup>9</sup> Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood; and they are there to this day. <sup>10</sup> So the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the LORD had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua; and the people hurried and crossed over. <sup>11</sup> Then it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over, that the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed over in the presence of the people. <sup>12</sup> And the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses had spoken to them. <sup>13</sup> About forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho. <sup>14</sup> On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they had feared Moses, all the days of his life. <sup>15</sup> Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, <sup>16</sup> "Command the priests who bear the ark of the Testimony to come up from the Jordan." <sup>17</sup> Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, "Come up from the Jordan." <sup>18</sup> And it came to pass, when the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come from the midst of the Jordan, *and* the soles of the priests' feet touched the dry land, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks as before. <sup>19</sup> Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth *day* of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. <sup>20</sup> And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal. <sup>21</sup> Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What *are* these stones?' <sup>22</sup> then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land'; <sup>23</sup> for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, <sup>24</sup> that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it *is* mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever."

## Introduction

Last week we examined the faith of an individual person called Rahab.

She had heard about the people of God from visitors to Jericho. She had heard about the power of God, how He rescued 2 million of God's people from slavery in Egypt. Also how God open the Red Sea and allowed them to walk through it on dry land.

She declared that the people of this God followed the one and only, Almighty God.

Then Rahab declared that she had 100% Faith in this God. Her faith was personal and genuine.

Rahab worked for God by hiding the two spies on her roof.

She took risks for this God and obey the spies by tying a scarlet cord in her window.

The scarlet cord was the sign of the agreement that she had made with the spies.

The spies promised that everybody in her building would be safe if she kept to the agreement. We discovered some parallels between this and the Passover in Egypt when God required all the Jewish homes to apply the blood of a male lamb without blemish to the doorposts and lintel of their homes.

When the Angel of death passed over the homes and saw the blood then the Israelite homes were safe. If they failed to do this then they would die. It was the “blood” that protected them from the wrath of God.

Rahab did what she was told and waited in “FAITH”.

The book of Joshua moves from the “Faith” of an individual to the “Faith” of an entire nation of between 2-3 million people.

The book of Joshua is about the victory of faith and the glory that comes to God when His people “Trust and Obey”

One Bible commentator said “God didn’t save us to make statues out of us and put us in an exhibition, He saved us to make soldiers out of us and move us forward by faith to claim our inheritance in Jesus Christ.”

Unbelief says “Let us go back to where it is safe”, but faith says “let us go forward to where God is working.”

Forty years before this event Joshua and Caleb said “Let us go up at once and possess the land... for we are well able to overcome it ...( Numbers 13:30 )

That was a statement of “Faith”. The people said ...we are not able, that is a statement of unbelief in the Almighty God who rescued them from Egypt.

The result was that the people had 40 years of discipline and not one of those people over 20 yrs. old lived to see the Promised Land. (Num. 13: v. 26-33)

#### 1. Preparation for crossing the river Jordan v. 1-13.

There were two main things that had to happen before the crossing of the Jordan could take place. The first was that the people had to be prepared, and the second was the “Ark of the Covenant” had to be in the right place.

##### a) Practical Preparation of the people.

The people were given three days to prepare for the crossing. – (1:11 & 3:2)

They were told in chapter 1: v.11 to make provisions for the crossing. They had to prepare practically for the journey.

b) Spiritual Preparation of the people

Not only did the people have to prepare practically but they also had to prepare “Spiritually”.  
Look at verse 5.

<sup>5</sup> And Joshua said to the people, “Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.”

Q. What did it mean for the people of God to sanctify themselves?

Well the answer is always in the Bible.

We have to go back to Exodus chapter 19 first to discover its meaning.

Exodus 19: v.10, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. <sup>14</sup> So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes.

First they had to wash their clothes. At that time water was a luxury and washing and showering like we do every day was not something that they could do easily.

In the Bible the washing of your body and the changing of your clothes was symbolic of a new beginning with God.

After King David’s son died he washed himself and changed his clothes, he was about to have a new beginning with God.

In Genesis 35: v. 1-3 When Jacob made a new beginning with God he and his family washed and changed their clothes.

This imagery is carried over into the New Testament so we can make application for ourselves today.

Let us read 2 Corinthians 6: v. 14 – 7: v. 1.

The Temple of the Living God

14 Don’t team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? 15 What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? 16 And what union can there be between God’s temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said:

“I will live in them  
and walk among them.  
I will be their God,  
and they will be my people.

17 Therefore, come out from among unbelievers,  
and separate yourselves from them, says the Lord.

Don't touch their filthy things,  
and I will welcome you.

18 And I will be your Father,  
and you will be my sons and daughters,  
says the Lord Almighty."

7 Because we have these promises, dear friends, let us cleanse ourselves from everything that can defile our body or spirit. And let us work toward complete holiness because we fear God.

So it is clear that Joshua was asking the people to prepare themselves spiritually for a new beginning in their history. No doubt couples would have to abstain from sexual activity and they would pray and meditate on God's word.

c) The People had to be prepared in recognizing the importance of the "Ark of the Covenant in relation to the crossing.

The officers went through the camp instructing the people to follow the "Ark". However there had to be a space of 2, 000 cubits between them and the "Ark".

How far was 2,000 cubits, it was just under 1 Kilometer. It was far enough away for 2 million people to view a dramatic event. If people were too close then they would have missed the miracle. The people were told that if they came near the Ark then they wouldn't know the way.

Clearly there is a guidance issue here and God knew exactly how far they had to be behind the "Ark".

The Priests had to carry the "Ark of the Covenant" to the middle of the river and hold it there until all of the Israelites had crossed over. ( v. 6-8,17)

Clearly the "Ark of the Covenant" was very important in the crossing and therefore in case we don't know the significance I will explain about the Ark.

After God had rescued His people from slavery in Egypt He asked them to build a structure called the Tabernacle. ( Exodus 25-30 )

This was going to be a place where God would live among His people.

God didn't ask them to build a house because He wanted somewhere to live, He did it to create a visual aid for the people.

In Exodus 25: v.9 "Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you."

There was a fenced off area of 46 meters long and 23 meters wide. Inside this area there was a courtyard where animals were sacrificed to cover the sins of the people.

There were two pieces of furniture here, the bronze altar for the sacrifice of the animals and a basin for ceremonial washing.

There was a large tent to the back of the gated area which was divided into two sections.

The front section was called the “Holy Place” and the back section was called the “Holy of holies”.

The Holy of Holies was where God’s presence symbolically lived with man. Nobody except the High Priest once a year was allowed to enter that place.

In this Holy Place there was only 2 pieces of furniture. The Ark of the Covenant and the Atonement cover.

The Ark of the Covenant was a small wooden box overlaid with pure gold. Inside the box were the tablets that contained the 10 Commandments. These were rules to live by, given by God Himself from Mount Sinai.

(Exodus 20 ) Inside the box there was also a pot containing a sample of the bread that God was providing for them each day in the desert.

The Ark had a cover for the box. It was a gold lid with two angels on it with outstretched wings.

God promised to meet with the High Priest above the atonement cover and give all His commands to His chosen people.

So the “Ark of the Covenant” represented God Himself.

Therefore the people had to be reminded of this fact. It was God that was going to do a miraculous work. (v. 10 )

#### d) The people had to be prepared to follow a new leader. V. 7.

God was preparing the people to follow a new leader. Leadership changes are never easy in any Christian organization or Church, but when your Church has 2-3 million people with one main leader then that is a BIG change. God wanted the people to know that as He was with Moses so He would be with Joshua.

Moses led the people through the Red Sea and now Joshua would lead them through the River Jordan. They were both big miracles which needed the mighty hand of God upon them.

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#### 2. The Crossing of the River Jordan v. 14-17.

We are told in v. 15 that the Jordan was in flood at the time and its banks had overflowed. God had chosen the most difficult time to perform His miracle.

Everybody set out in “Faith” with the Priests carrying the “Ark of the Covenant” just under 1 K.M. in front of them. As soon as the Priests feet dipped into the water, the water stopped flowing. The waters stood still at a town called Adam which was about 30 kilometers away. They needed that space to get over 2 million people across the river to the other side.

Then the people crossed over opposite Jericho.

You could imagine what it would have been like standing on the walls of Jericho and viewing this spectacular event. The people of Jericho would have been very fearful.

Verse 17 tells us that the job was completed and everybody crossed over on dry ground.

#### A Testimony to God’s miracle – The Memorial Stones. 4: v. 1-24

As we survey chapter 4 we can’t help noticing that it is all about remembering God’s goodness. God spoke to Joshua and told him to get 12 stones from the middle of the Jordan, where the Priests were still standing, holding the “Ark”.

A man from each of the 12 tribes of Israel was told to go and get a stone from the river Jordan and bring it back to make a memorial. (Read v. 7 & 19-24. of chapter 4)

<sup>7</sup> Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.”

<sup>19</sup> Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth *day* of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. <sup>20</sup> And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal. <sup>21</sup> Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: “When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, ‘What *are* these stones?’ <sup>22</sup> then you shall let your children know, saying, ‘Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land’; <sup>23</sup> for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, <sup>24</sup> that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it *is* mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.”

Perhaps in days to come when Grandad was walking through Gilgal National park, his grandson might say to him, “Grandad”, what are these stones piled up here for?”

Grandad then would be able to tell the story of how he was there when the great event took place. He would pass on the story to his grandson’s generation.

We need to also notice when this event happened. Look at chapter 4: v. 19.

It was the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the first month. Now let us go back to Exodus chapter 12 and read v. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> “This month *shall be* your beginning of months; it *shall be* the first month of the year to you. <sup>3</sup> Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: ‘On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of *his* father, a lamb for a household.

Surprise!! Surprise!! it was the exact same day of the year that God had brought the Israelites across the Jordan into the promised land.

In Exodus the day had marked Israel’s rescue from slavery.

Now on the same day on the first month, God marks there arrival into the Promised Land.

When God is making a statement He makes it clearly and that is why He chose the same day.

### Applications

Preparation for crossing the River Jordan into the Promised Land - The children of Israel, God’s chosen people were about to enter into the promised land.

God asked them to prepare themselves spiritually, through sanctification.

If we are going to enter into the victorious Christian life of full discipleship, we too have to be willing for the process of sanctification. We need to be willing to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus.

( Luke 9:23-26)

<sup>23</sup> Then He said to *them* all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. <sup>24</sup> For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. <sup>25</sup> For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? <sup>26</sup> For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His *own* glory, and *in His* Father’s, and of the holy angels.

We need to take personal Holiness seriously and be willing to let God have his way and will in our lives. Things may have to that are holding us back from following Jesus fully.

Perhaps we are still visiting the Japanese shrines to pray, or following a custom or habit that is not glorifying God?

Crossing the River – God’s children had to move forward in faith. They had the confidence to go forward because it was God’s plan. This is the wonderful thing about surrendering your whole life to God, He takes over and you become His servant. You go where He wants you go and He provides what you need, as and when you need it.

I can testify to 30 years of going forward in “Faith” for God. The thing that gave me confidence to go forward in faith in very difficult circumstances is that I had fully surrendered my life to God. This is what we ALL need to do.

It is not just for Alistair McKenna it is for “Everybody” at O.I.C.

Are you willing today to do that? Perhaps today?

Memorial Stones – The greatest enemy of faith may well be “forgetfulness”. The stones were visual aids so that the people would not forget what God had done.

We remember the death of Jesus here at OIC so that we will not forget the greatest act of love to mankind by God.

Perhaps there are things that have happened in our lives where God has worked in a wonderful way. It is worth writing them down and encouraging yourself about past events, so that you can move forward with confidence to continue to follow Jesus.

Let us Pray.