

Crossing the Jordan

Purpose: to show, by the example of Joshua, 4 things that we must do before we go into battle.

Sooner or later, you are going to end up in a battle. It may be at school with classmates or at university with teachers who speak against your faith. Perhaps it will be in a relationship, or with a neighbour or work situation. We often battle with our relatives! What are the keys to victory in our situation?

Let's see what God did with the children of Israel. They were about to go into their first battle in the promised land. But first, they had to cross the Jordan river. This river was a physical barrier between them and their enemies. It was the starting point of their fight to take what was promised to them by God. In order for them to be victorious, there were several things that they had to do:

1. They had to follow the ark (v.1-3) -

Jos 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.

Jos 3:2 - So it was, after three days, that the officers went through the camp;

Jos 3:3 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.

Jos 3:4 - 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."

- a. The ark represented the presence of the LORD. The presence of the LORD was with the ark at the mercy seat.
- b. God promised them that He would go with them into battle – they had to fight, but His presence was with them.
- c. There had to be a space between them and the ark – about 3000 feet (the length of 10 football pitches)
- d. They could not come near it – out of reverence, and from a distance they could see where it was going and follow.
- e. What does scripture say about the presence of the Lord?

Psalm 9:3,4

Psa 9:3 - When my enemies turn back,
They shall fall and perish at Your presence.

Psa 9:4 - For You have maintained my right and my cause;
You sat on the throne judging in righteousness.

Psalm 31:19,20

Psa 31:19 - Oh, how great *is* Your goodness,
Which You have laid up for those who fear You,

Which You have prepared for those who trust in You
In the presence of the sons of men!
Psa 31:20 - You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence
From the plots of man;
You shall keep them secretly in a pavilion
From the strife of tongues.

2. They had to sanctify themselves (v. 5) –

Jos 3:5 - And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you."

- a. This means that they had to set themselves apart, with nothing unclean or unholy that would make them unfit to stand in the presence of God.
- b. Before doing battle against our enemies, we must make sure that we have put away anything that can weight us down:

Heb 12:1 - Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,
Heb 12:2 - looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The ark is a picture of Jesus, who is the one that we look to. We lay aside anything that can trap us so that we can run with Him, looking to him for direction, instructions and marching orders.

3. They had to follow their leader (vs. 6-8)

Jos 3:6 - 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.

Jos 3:7 - 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.

Jos 3:8 - 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.' "

If we are truly called by Him, He will raise us up. If God is truly with you, let Him promote you, prepare you, sanctify you, and place you in the position to lead. If He doesn't do it, you don't want it.

They had to listen to their leader: Joshua gave them specific instructions, telling them what God was going to do and what they were to do.

4. They had to look to God (vs. 9-17)

Jos 3:9 - So Joshua said to the children of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God."

Jos 3:10 - 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:

Jos 3:11 - Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan.

Jos 3:12 - Now therefore, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from every tribe.

Jos 3:13 - 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."

Jos 3:14 - 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,

Jos 3:15 - 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),

Jos 3:16 - 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.

Jos 3:17 - 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.

- a. God gave them confirmation that He they would win – he divided the Jordan river, just like he divided the Red Sea!
- b. The Jordan river was parted during the time when the river would normally rise to its highest point.
- c. The priest were standing on dry ground!
- d. This meant that the children of Israel could all cross an uncrossable barrier.
- e. This meant that the enemies were caught by surprise – they would have expected the army to cross at a different time and perhaps would have waited in ambush.
- f. By doing this, God gave them confirmation that they would be victorious.

Are you in the middle of a battle, or are you about to go into battle against the real enemy?

1. **Follow the ark!** Seek God's presence – look to Jesus for His direction and instruction. He will tell you what to do if you seek him!

2. **Sanctify yourself!** Ask God to forgive you of anything that may be holding you back, weighing you down, or tripping you up.
3. **Follow your leadership!** If God has raised someone up to lead, listen to them. If it is clear that he has given your leaders gifting and abilities, and if they have godly character, follow them. Remember that they will give account to God for what they do, but so will you.
4. **Look to God!** He will confirm His plan and directions. He will make it possible to cross the uncrossable barriers.