

Let's Worship God

27th Nov. - 2nd Dec. 2017

Joshua

The Book of Joshua

THE PROMISED LAND

BOWNE

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THE PROMISED LAND

Monday -Joshua 3:14-17 - The Strangeness of the LORD's Method

Look at the little bit of information that is given in brackets at the end of v15: "(now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest)". This detail might seem a frustrating interruption in the middle of an exciting report about a miracle!

V13 tells us that the waters of the river will stop when the priests' feet touch it. From v14 onwards, the drama is building up - phrase after phrase. The people set out to cross the river. The priests go ahead of them. The priests reach the river. Their feet dip into the water. Then ... we have this report in brackets on the river conditions! Why break up the tension and expectancy with this?!

Because it helps us to appreciate the miracle. This was no trickling stream the Israelites faced. It was a raging torrent - possibly a mile wide. This is an important detail. God led Israel through the Jordan at precisely the time of year when such an achievement looked and was impossible. The God of the Bible delights to show His might in the face of our apparent helplessness. This helps us see that we contribute nothing at all to our deliverance!

There is a strangeness about the LORD's method. And yet there is method in such apparent 'madness'. Perhaps He brings us into impossible circumstances, situations so bleak and hopeless, for the very purpose of teaching us that if we make it through, if we endure it, if we are not overwhelmed and washed away, it will only be because of His grace and power. It may be His way of showing us our own inability and helplessness so that we realise that our "help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:2).

Questions

1. Why does 'the bit in brackets' in v15 matter?
2. What situations in your life or church might be a detail like this 'bit in brackets' - an opportunity for God to show His power even more clearly?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for God's grace and power on your behalf.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"So that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God for ever." Joshua 4:24

Praise: Psalm 102A:13-18 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Tuesday - Joshua 4:1-10 - Remember God's Power

One of the biggest points emphasised in chapter 4 is remembering. The stone memorial spoken of in v1-10 dominates this chapter. Its purpose was to "be to the people of Israel a memorial forever" (v7). Future generations were to be taught why the stone memorial was there and reminded of what God had done (v6).

V6 says: "that this may be a sign among you". A sign points towards something greater than itself. A sign points you in the direction of the real thing. This memorial was to make sure that the people remembered God's mighty power.

Sometimes the circumstances of our lives dishearten us. Sometimes the situation in our church or our nation can discourage us. We too need to remember the truth of God's mighty power. We need to actively remind ourselves what He has done throughout Scripture; what He has done throughout history; and what He has done throughout our own lives.

How can we help ourselves remember God's power? One writer says: "Empty churches and few conversions can be depressing, so we need to remind ourselves of what our God can do. Therefore, next to reading the Bible there is nothing more important than reading Christian biographies and church history. Christians who do not read these deprive themselves of great encouragement".

Think of the Israelites as they camped near the river at Gilgal that night after crossing over. They knew that many battles and many hard times lay ahead of them as they tried to conquer the new land. But a quick glimpse outside their tents would have shown them this pile of stones - which reminded them that their God was mighty. They could have confidence and expectation that He would be with them in whatever lay ahead.

Questions

1. What was the purpose of the stone memorial?
2. How would it have encouraged the people for generations to come?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for the reminders we have of God's power.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"So that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God for ever." Joshua 4:24

Praise: Psalm 102A:19-25 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Wednesday - Joshua 4:11-18 - Remember Unity

Joshua 4 also emphasises that this momentous, memorable event in Israel's history was an occasion of great unity among the people of God.

They were united behind their leader. V14 says: "On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they stood in awe of him just as they had stood in awe of Moses, all the days of his life". From this day on the people revered Joshua as their leader. They stood in awe of him, just as they had stood in awe of Moses. Around that time, the people may have considered the death of Moses (just a few chapters earlier - Deut. 34) to be a crisis. They might have had their doubts or concerns about the new leader. Was he up to the task? They may have had worries and fears about the struggles and battles that lay ahead. But now God exalted Joshua in their sight. They were united behind him.

They were also united alongside each other. V11 and v14 both speak of "all the people" and "all Israel". The number 12 is constantly repeated throughout the chapter. This was the number of tribes among the Israelites, so its constant repetition seems to draw attention to their completeness and unity. We even see in v12 that the two-and-a-half tribes who had settled on the eastern side of the Jordan still crossed over with their fellow Israelites to fight alongside them. Joshua 4 is highlighting the unity among the people of God on this historic occasion.

And then v18 reminds us again - just in case we were in any doubt! - that this whole incident had been God's doing. This was no coincidence. The rivers of the Jordan didn't resume their flow days or weeks later. The very moment the soles of the priests' feet touched dry ground on the other side of the river, the river flowed again as it had before! Remember the importance of unity among God's people - but also keep remembering His mighty power!

Questions

1. What attitude towards our leaders and fellow believers is important?
2. At what exact moment did the River Jordan resume its flow?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for your minister and elders.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"So that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God for ever." Joshua 4:24

Praise: Psalm 102B:1-6 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Thursday - Joshua 4:19-24 - Keep Remembering!

V19 includes another one of those little details (like 3:15) that we could easily skip over: "The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho". Now turn back in your Bibles and read Exodus 12:2-3. It was on the same day 40 years previously that Israel had begun to prepare for going out of Egypt by setting apart the Passover lamb. So we could say that the same day that marked the beginning of their deliverance now marked the completion of their deliverance. What the LORD had begun, He now brought to completion. The God of Israel has written His faithfulness across another date on the calendars of His people! Israel had been a slave; now Israel was receiving its inheritance in the land of Canaan.

There can be no doubt about the teaching that Israel was to take from this event. Verses 21-24 re-emphasise the importance of families telling their children about the amazing thing God had done at the Jordan. The LORD, Israel's God, had done it again! He had now put the Jordan River on the map of faith along with the Red Sea - so that even Gentile observers might have clear proof of His might and so that Israel would reverently and continually submit to Him (v24).

The Israelites are now in the Promised Land! God has performed wonders on their behalf which will challenge the citizens of Canaan to choose either for or against Israel and their God. "... the hand of the LORD is mighty ..." (v24). Both the people of Canaan and the people of Israel will see that He is able to overcome the resistance of His enemies just as He overcame the resistance of the Red Sea and the Jordan River. His own people will know this success as they learn to fear Him (v24) - that is, to worship and obey Him alone.

Questions

1. What does the date in v19 tell us about God's purposes for His people?
2. How were the people to respond to what God had done at the Jordan?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks that God always keeps His promises.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"So that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God for ever." Joshua 4:24

Praise: Psalm 102B:7-10 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Friday - Joshua 5:1-9 - Criticism of God's People

Verses 4-7 form the heart of this section. We are told in v4-5 why the present generation needed to be circumcised - though we are not directly told why they hadn't already been circumcised before this time. Verse 6 gives us the clue that 'the wilderness period' (leading up to this point) was the time of unbelief and judgement, a time for the old Israel to die and perish. The original exodus generation were doomed to wander forty years and perish in the desert. Back in Genesis 17 - when the sign of circumcision was first given by God to Abraham and his descendants - we read in v14 that lack of circumcision meant being cut off from the people. Perhaps, in light of this, it is possible that Israel's lack of circumcision for forty years prior to Joshua 5 was a sign that they were 'cut off' because of their unbelief. They were God's people and yet they were not; they remained objects of God's care and yet they did not possess the sign that showed they were His.

The writer of Joshua is critical of God's people for this. The generation that had come out of Egypt in the Exodus "had been circumcised" (v5), but they "did not obey the voice of the LORD" (v6). So they "perished" (v6). In contrast, their children "were uncircumcised" and yet the LORD raised them up (v7). Listen to the warning! There were those who had been circumcised, but who did not listen to the voice of the LORD. You can have all the marks of the people of God but lack the response of the people of God. 1 Corinthians 10:1-5 tells us that you can experience the exodus, eat the manna, drink the water from the rock - and still remain in unbelief. You can receive the sacrament but have no faith. You may hold membership among God's flock but have no relationship with the Shepherd. You may live in the King's country but reject His rule.

Questions

1. What did forty years without circumcision tell us about that generation?
2. Can you think of outward signs people might display today and yet not truly be part of God's people?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that you would be obedient to the Lord.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"So that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God for ever." Joshua 4:24

Praise: Psalm 103:1-6 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

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Saturday - Joshua 5:10-12 - Continuity of God's Provision

As they had done just before they left Egypt (Ex. 12), Israel now once again celebrated the Passover. There they were celebrating the beginning of their redemption; now, in a sense, they marked its completion. However, the emphasis of these verses lies in the fact that now Israel was eating the produce of the land of Canaan - a fact that the writer mentions three times in v11-12! Now they enjoy what God was giving them in the land. So the manna ceased (v12). They no longer needed it as they had done in the wilderness. Did that mean that the LORD was no longer providing for them? No, because "they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year" (v12). In the wilderness, Israel had an extraordinary need. And extraordinary needs frequently call forth God's unusual supply - such as manna. But now Israel is in the land God had promised. And in that place, food grows in the ground so they didn't need it to come from heaven! The manna had been God's special supply for an exceptional need. Now that the people's need becomes normal, God's provision comes in the normal way. But it is still His provision, whether it is manna falling from heaven in the wilderness or grain growing in the ground in Canaan.

Israel had just witnessed a magnificent miracle as they crossed the Jordan. They were about to witness another great miracle as God Himself would demolish Jericho's impenetrable walls. Yet it was important that they also recognised God's hand and power as they sat down to their simple meal the day after the Passover (v11). We must beware of thinking that God is only in the earthquake, wind and fire; of thinking that manna but not grain is God's food. Most of God's gifts to His people are not dazzling or eye-catching. Quiet provisions of safety on the motorway, the health of our children, picking up your pay cheque, tea time with your family - it's all in an ordinary day's work for our God.

Questions

1. What is the significance of the meal mentioned in v10?
2. What are some of God's 'ordinary' provision in your life?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"So that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God for ever." Joshua 4:24

Praise: Psalm 103:7-12 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

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