



"It Is Time To Cross Jordan"

Scripture: Joshua 3:1-17

**A Written Expository Message Encouraging Us To
Cross Over To Victorious Living**

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Introduction:

“The crossing of Jordan does not illustrate the passing of a soul into eternity, but rather, does illustrate the passing of a Christian from one level of Christian life to another. It marks the end of the self-life and the beginning of a life lived on the principle of faith and obedience.” Alan Redpath. The statement that Dr. Redpath made here pertaining to the crossing of the Jordan is extremely important to every child of God. What he tells us is that when we once get saved, it is not God's will for us to become complacent saved people just trying to absorb the blessings of God. When God saves us, He wants us to discover His perfect will for our each of our lives, and then move forward to the Promise Land of spiritual growth and development. In other words, when we get truly saved, God expects us to turn to His Word and find His perfect will for the rest of our lives in His service. If we do this, then there will be a personal peace and strength in our lives. This peace and strength comes from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, Who comes to live within every believer that gets genuinely saved. Then, as we walk and serve Jesus every day of our lives, the Holy Spirit will fill us, guide us, encourage us, bring joy to our hearts, and He will lead us into the entrance of the spiritual promised land of blessing given only to those who have the courage to move on into the promised land by faith. And, we must never forget that we won't retain our courage, unless we live and work by believing and trusting in Christ by faith. But, if we do keep moving on into the promised land of spiritual blessing, we will experience the peace of God with the encouragement to continue on running the race until we go home to be with Jesus, or He takes us up in the rapture of the church.

So, my dear Bible study student, let me encourage you to dig deeply in the next 17 verses of Scripture and follow the example of Joshua and Caleb as they led the second generation of Israelites out of the wilderness into the promised land. There are truths in these verses that lead you, guide you, give you wisdom, and strengthen your faith to accept the challenges that are before you, and all of us as born-again believers pressing on to the promised land of blessing!

I. NOTICE THE DEMANDED PREPARATION FOR CROSSING JORDAN.

vs. 1-6

Nobody every takes a long journey without making the right preparations for that journey. And, absolutely no one takes a long journey into a strange land without having a map to guide every step of the way. The following preparations that come

from the Word of God are absolutely mandatory if we are going reach the Promised Land of spiritual blessing like the Israelites did when they crossed over Jordan.

A. This preparation calls for a readiness to proceed. v. 1a

As we begin to look at verse one of this text in Joshua, we must notice that very early one morning Joshua arose and led the children of Israel out of the city of Shittim and proceeded toward Jericho. Now, Shittim was located on the Plains of Moab. Scholars argue over how long Joshua and his huge multitude of Israelites were in Shittim. But, we do know that it was near or in Shittim that Israel turned once more against the real and living God, and begin to worship idols. It was also here where the story of Balaam and the talking donkey took place. This story developed because of king Moab who tried to work out a special deal with Balaam to curse the nation of Israel in order to get recognition and money. But thank God, for the donkey that Balaam was riding on to the place to curse Israel. But, along the way an angel suddenly appeared and scared the donkey so much that it fled out of the way and began to speak and bless Israel, instead of cursing Israel. King Moab was defeated and Israel took over the land of Moab in order to make their way on to the Jordan River, where they would cross over into the Promised Land. But, we do need to know that while Israel was located in Shittim during the reign of king Moab, they fell into idol worship, promiscuity with prostitutes, and every kind of sorcery. But, we need to take note that God still loved them in spite of their sin, and He providentially sent them across the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

I will add one additional thought! This verse tells us that very early in the morning that Joshua rose up to make the preparations for the entrance into the Promised Land. We too need to be ready to respond to the call of God immediately in order to make the preparations to proceed toward the Promised Land of spiritual blessing.

B. This preparation calls for a readiness to pause. v. 1b

When Joshua rose early in the morning to make preparations for the crossing of Jordan, he led the Israelites to the Eastern shore of the Jordan. It was there that Joshua made the people to pause for three days in making the final preparations before he and the huge multitude crossed the river. Personally, I truly believe that Joshua paused for the three days so that he and the Israelites could get themselves ready spiritually to crossover. The step that these Israelites were about to take was a very big one. So, with three days of pause they could pray, seek the face of God, invite the presence of God to be with them, and I believe it was a time for them to get their sins confessed up to date. If they would have crossed over

while having unconfessed sins, the outcome would have been different. And, I would like to add that just before they crossed over, they were told by God that they had to follow the Ark of the Covenant. Of course, if we know anything about the Ark of the Covenant, we should know that it was in the Ark of the Covenant where the presence of God was so mighty because the Ten Commandments were in it. Therefore, as they had no doubt requested the presence of God during that three-day sabbatical, their prayers were being answered with the priests and the Ark of the Covenant going before them.

I would like to add that if we as born-again believers expect to be victorious in our daily Christian lives, we must have a time daily where we use it to get our sins confessed up to date and where we appropriate the glorious presence of God. Have you paused recently?

C. This preparation calls for a readiness to pursue. vs. 2-4

Now, let us look carefully at verses 2-4. In verses 2-3, we are told that Joshua and probably a couple more leaders told the children of Israel that it was the time to go and cross over Jordan. As they were packing up and started leaving in obedience to God's command, Joshua told the people to follow the Levite priests and Ark of the Covenant down into the Jordan. And, I really loved the final phrase, which tells us that Joshua told the people to "go after it." This should be what each of us does as we start into this New Year! In other words, as we cross over the Jordan, figuratively speaking, in this New Year, we should be ready to go after the will of God for our lives, and for a much higher level of victorious Christian living. I hope you are ready to join me in doing this!

Going one more step further in this wonderful study, we need to look closely at verse 4. In this verse, we find Joshua, and probably some of the priests, telling the people that as they follow the priests and the Ark of the Covenant, they must stay two thousand cubits behind the Ark and the priests. We are told that one cubit is about 18 inches. Therefore, the distance they had to remain behind the Ark was about 3,000 feet. This obviously, was because of the sacredness of the Ark. Ladies and gentlemen readers, I pray that we might be able to learn a tremendously important truth from this command to stay far behind the Ark of the Covenant on their journey across Jordan. And, I sincerely believe that this command to the children of Israel was and still is a truth that millions of people in the world today need to learn. All we have to do in order to see the dire need for reverence and sacredness today is just enter most any church on any Sunday, or even Wednesday to see how the church members and pastors are dressed. The dress in almost every church today is appalling. So many of the singers and musicians are dressed almost naked right there in our churches. The church members come with their shorts and

pants with the knees out of them. The pastors dress like they have come from a ball game or other recreation. Many of the shoes worn are athletic shoes or other recreation type. Folks, I could go on and on, but hopefully, you get the truth that if God commanded the Israelites to respect or revere the Ark of the Covenant as they were about to cross Jordan, how should we use reverence and respect in the houses of God where the presence of God is supposed to be. But of course, if the sacredness of the house of God is gone, there will be no presence of God!

One last thought here; just as God told the people through Joshua and the priests, we too have never passed through the New Year that is before us. I pray that you are courageous enough with the presence and power of God to move forward in this brand New Year!

D. This preparation calls for a readiness to purify. v. 5

Verse 5, is a very important verse in this study. In this verse Joshua tells the people that if they are going to cross Jordan with him and the other leaders, they must sanctify themselves. This word sanctify has many meanings. Some of these are to set apart, to be consecrated, to be separate, to keep sacred, and on and on I could go. But, this word sanctify is an extremely important word to any child of God who wants to rise above desires of the flesh, temptations, lusts, or evil desires. The process of sanctification begins at the moment we get saved through our spiritual birth by and through the Holy Spirit. Then, every day that we live after our salvation, we are to become more and more separated from the world, and our desires and primary emphasis in our lives must be to put Jesus and His Kingdom work above everything else. In other words, no person, no project, no purpose, no goal, no vision, no quest, and no other work should ever take precedence in our daily lives. You see, when we get saved, we must realize that Jesus bought us with the price He paid on Calvary, and, we no longer belong to ourselves. We are His blood bought children. Therefore, to be obedient children to our heavenly Father, what He tells us to do through His Word and through the indwelling Holy Spirit is what we should strive to do every day in every way. Please pay attention to the following verse of Scripture, which God gave to us through Paul the Apostle. **"Ye are bought with a price; be not ye servants of men." (I Corinthians 7:23)** My beloved friends, are you clean enough to be only used by God?

E. This preparation calls for a readiness to practice. v. 6

Dear beloved friends, in verse 6, we discover that it is now time for the priests to take the Ark of the Covenant and begin the walk down into the Jordan. Up until this time the people had protected the Ark, but now, when God is about to do

mighty things, the Ark is going to protect the people, and show them mighty things, because in that Ark was indeed the presence of God. Now, let me give you a few brief words from the Liberty Bible Commentary.

"The people are not commanded to prepare their weapons, draw their swords, or polish their shields. Instead, they are to prepare their hearts. The sanctification mentioned here was not ceremonial, but spiritual. They were to prepare themselves to see the mighty hand of God moving among them in a way heretofore unknown. For a people who had seen God's hand leading them miraculously all along the way, this was a tremendous promise."¹

II NOTICE THE DIVINE AFFIRMATION FOR CROSSING JORDAN. vs. 7-11

We are now moving on to the in depth study of verses 7-11. In these verses we find a great affirmation from God to Joshua how He was going to bless the steps of the Israelites and take them into the Promised Land just like God had told Moses over 40 years before after they came out of Egypt. Once God gave Joshua these words of divine affirmation, Joshua then brings the people to come and also hear the divine affirming words of promise coming directly from God. At this moment, I believe with all of my heart that now the Israelites were truly convinced that as God had brought them through 40 years in the wilderness, He was going to bless them with the fulfillment of the promise that they were indeed going to arrive in the Promised Land. By the way, these children of Israel could have left Egypt and traveled to the Promised Land in just three to four weeks were it not for their unbelief. But now, the time had come, and, they were going to cross over.

A. This Divine affirmation includes the promise of a stamp of Divine approval. v. 7

In verse 7, we discover a marvelous truth. That is, that when children of God seriously seeks God's will for their lives, and commit wholeheartedly to following His perfect will, God will then put His stamp of approval upon the actions we take to obey God's perfect will in our lives. May I tell you that when Joshua got the affirming or confirming words that God was about to put His approval upon him as He had for Moses, I am sure that Joshua was overwhelmed, but yet, extremely humbled by this act of Divine affirmation. Let me give you some more commentary from the Liberty Bible Commentary.

"It is never easy to replace a great man of God. In fact, it is impossible. Only God can replace His man, and Moses had now been replaced by Joshua. That which

¹ The Liberty Bible Commentary, the Book of Joshua, Liberty University, page 398.

God was about to do through Joshua would supersede any thing, which He had done through Moses. Thus encouraged, Joshua was commanded to tell the priests to bear the Ark of the Covenant to the brink of the water."²

I would like to interject something right here. I have been a full-time minister of the Gospel for 58 years. I have been a pastor, evangelist, and a missionary during these many years. And, I want to affirm what this verse tells us about how God affirms every one of His calls and plans for which He reveals to us as His individual children. I have seen this over and over down through my years in His service. Oh yes, sometimes God changes His plans for us throughout our years of service. But, with the new directions, God always affirms all the changes He brings to our lives in many various ways.

B. This Divine affirmation includes the practice of a stand in Divine appointment.

v. 8

We now move on into verse 8, where God gives Joshua some new instructions for him to give to the priests. God tells Joshua to tell the priests that they are now to move the Ark of the Covenant to the "brink" or near the edge of the shoreline on the Eastern side of Jordan. And, when Joshua tells the priests to move over to the water's edge, they must "stand still in Jordan." In other words, the priests are to stand with the Ark of the Covenant in the edge of the water. And, the word stand here actually means to stand firm like a military soldier in battle, and not be moved until the project was completed. The reason God told these priests these words was because He knew that if they did stand firm by the Ark, the Book of the Law was in the Ark. If they moved away from the precious Word of God, the waters of Jordan would come flooding down and kill all of those trying to cross over Jordan. In other words, the future of Israel and yes, our eternal future, is also dependent upon our preachers and teachers standing firm on the truth of God's Holy Word as the people are trying to cross over into the Promised Land of spiritual victory and blessings. And beloved, I will tell you that there is no hope for believers to grow in grace, to grow in understanding of God's plan and purpose for their lives, to grow in spiritual courage, and to grow in understanding of the Gospel message so they might be able to take this message to a lost and hopeless world, unless our preachers and teachers stand firm on the precious, infallible, inerrant, and absolute truth of the Word of God!

C. This Divine affirmation includes the perception of a sensitivity to Divine advice.

v. 9

² Ibid, page 398.

Verse 9 in our text has given to us the perception that in spite of 40 years of rebellion against God in the wilderness, the children of these rebellious people were now getting ready to go into the Promised Land. It is very evident that Joshua believed strongly that these children of rebellious parents under the leadership of Moses could now in reality still understand the words of God. So, he gathered the people together in an outdoor meeting and told them that this meeting of these Israelites was for the purpose of getting finalized instructions for the entrance into the Promised Land. I do believe that Joshua believed that these people could and would understand the message from God. And then too, I believe that he wanted God to speak on Joshua's behalf to convince the people that God had called Joshua just like He had Moses. You might say that Joshua took this opportunity to get Divine authentication and genuine credibility for his leadership of almost two million Jews. Truthfully, Joshua must have already had a lot of respect from his people. And yet, he didn't want anyone questioning his appointment as God's choice servant who would lead these wandering Israelites finally into the Promised Land!

D. This Divine affirmation includes the positiveness about the success over diabolical adversaries. vs. 10-11

We come now to look into verses 10-11. These verses reveal to everyone that the impending battles within the Promised Land were going to be victorious over all of the enemy tribes already in the land. "The inhabitants included Canaanites, descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham (**Gen. 9:18**). As their name signifies, they were the inhabitants of the lowlands of Palestine, the less mountainous portions by the sea (**Numbers 13:29; Joshua 5:1**) and by the side of Jordan (**Numbers 13:29**). The Hittites were the principal tribe in Palestine at this time. They were descendants of Heth (**Gen. 10:15**). The Hivites were a tribe not enumerated in the nations of Canaan (**Gen. 15:19-21**), but they were listed among Canaan's descendants in **Genesis 10:17** and in **I Chronicles 1:15**. Shechem, the prince, also of the city of the same name, was a Hivite (**Gen 34:2**). The Perizzites whose name signifies those who dwell in the open (**Deut. 3:5; I Sam. 6:18**), are much less known than the preceding tribes named. The Girgashites, which are not mentioned elsewhere in Scripture save in **Joshua 24:11, Genesis 15:21, and Deuteronomy 7:1**, were undoubtedly a very small tribe. The most powerful of the Canaanite peoples (**Amos 2:9** were the Ammorites. They inhabited the mountains (**Num. 13:29; Joshua 11:3**), as well as the country from Arnon to the Jabbok Rivers, which they wrested from the **Moabites (Num. 21:13, 24,26)**. They dwelt in Transjordan until they were dispossessed by Moses. Finally, the Jebusites possessed the central highlands around Jerusalem, which was their major city. They maintained possession of this area until David's time (**II Sam. 5:6-8**).³

³ Ibid, pages 398-399.

III. NOTICE THE DESIGNED OPERATION FOR CROSSING JORDAN. vs. 12-13

We now move on from the intense instruction from God through Joshua to help prepare His people to go into the Promised Land, to the practical application of the instructions they had been given. So now, instead of talking about what they were going to do, they begin now to put into operation the things they were told and had learned. I too hope that each of us who have done this intense study of this passage of Scripture might now be ready to put the process into action to help get us to the Promised Land of the spiritual victory where God can give us a tremendous sense of accomplishment that will instill in us a genuine personal peace and joy that nothing else can ever provide!

A. This operation includes organization of God's people. v. 12

The first step in the instructions for crossing the Jordan was that the people needed to choose one man from each of the twelve tribes of Israel to be the representative of each tribe. Nowadays, we might call this politics, but, in those days when Joshua, the man of God was leading them, he needed them to get organized with a godly leader for each tribe so that each tribe could be properly motivated to not only get started with the crossing, but also, to continue on following the priests and the Ark of the Covenant all the way to the Western side of the Jordan. Let me just add that after my 58 years of pastoring, preaching, and leading large groups of people in elven churches, there is just no way that any process will be successful unless there is at least one representative from every group in the body of believers. Truly, as we discover in the Book of Ephesians, Paul tells the Ephesian that no church will be successful unless the church is organized properly with every person who has been given the spiritual gift of leadership in any area standing strong in his or her leadership position **(Ephesians 4:11-16)**.

B. This operation includes obedience to God's plan. v. 13a

Moving on, we must remember that God told Joshua that He would be with the people in this crossing of Jordan. But, we need to recognize that God had only promised to go with them to fight all of the enemy tribes in Canaan land if the people would obey God's instructions with the priests taking the first steps down into the water with the Ark of the Covenant, and then, the people were instructed to follow the priests from a distance of 3,000 feet. The great principle of truth given here is that before God steps in to roll the opposing waters back, the first step has to be taken by God's people with an act of strong faith. Now, let me give you several paragraphs of written commentary from the Biblical Illustrator. Please pay close attention to these fabulous words. There has to be first steps with a dynamic faith by the people before God begins to roll back the waters.

The First Step Of Commitment Or Surrender To The Commands of God Must Be Taken!

"The first step was to be taken in the waters. They were called upon not only to face the difficulties, but to enter them. They were not to ask God to prove His power first. They were to trust Him first, and then should they see as they followed on to know the Lord, 'His giving forth' to be 'prepared as the morning.' How fatal had been a halt, although but one step short of the brim of the waters! Even the foot uplifted, ready to fall as soon as the path was ready, would have waited in vain. The promise was addressed only to the faith that, without seeing signs and wonders, could yet believe. That one step taken which proved their faith, and placed it in a position of entire receptivity--then God could prove His faithfulness and manifest His power. His wonders follow at once. The lesson, which is here taught to us is of the utmost importance, showing us the very essence of all true faith. **Mature faith must be able to dare and to endure, with no other stay than seeing Him who is invisible.** Our Father does, indeed, stretch out the hand of yearning tenderness to steady the tottering steps of a babe. In His pity and compassion He will not forbid the poor cripple his staff; but the faith of full years and of steady strength can never be developed by continued indulgence. It must be exercised by reason of use. Again, that God, instead of giving His people some visible aid for their crossing, set before them a most visible hindrance, doubling the danger and difficulty to the natural eye, is in perfect accord with our advanced experience.

Only how often does the simplicity of our faith fail to equal theirs. It is the first instinctive impulse of unbelief to seek a sign--to have something to interpose between itself and the bare word of God. And so, how often is the question asked: 'If God be really disposed to bring me into this glorious liberty, will there not be at least some token of it? Shall I find no evidence of it in my own altered feelings; and especially will not the Lord prepare the way by lowering the opposing tide of temptation?' The word of our God needs neither sign nor surety. Be it a promise, or be it a command, it matters not; for every command has a promise for its kernel. **We are to go forward to obey His commands--forward to receive His promises--forward in faith--forward though difficulties double. Again, the foot dipped in the brimming waters declares emphatically that faith is to precede feeling.** Nothing that we discover in heart or life need hinder us in coming to Christ to seek deliverance from it. We may even use our worst discoveries as our plea in coming; 'For the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.' Nor will my sickness make the Physician displeased with me in my first application to Him. **But if after He has healed me, and taught me the conditions of sustaining health, I find myself again unloving, cold, perturbed, fretted, moody, I have not the least right to say that all is well, and that, disregarding all this, I am to believe**

myself fully accepted through Christ. Unless I bring this disturbance to Him for confession, forgiveness, and healing, I am utterly at fault. Our feelings are of importance. The same Creator who set the faithful nerves as sentinels along all the lines of the senses, to give due warning of danger and disease, gave a corresponding sensitiveness to our souls. Faith is not to discharge this as unnecessary, but to retain it in her service. If it be well with our faith, it will also be well with our feelings. (*S. F. Smiley.*)⁴

C. This operation includes optimism about God's promise. v. 13b

At this point, I want to tell you that if we are going to cross over Jordan to a higher plain of spiritual living, we must take that first step of faith down toward the water ahead of us. This act is in obedience to the command of our Lord. Therefore, if we are to have access to the power of God to overcome and defeat the enemy tribes in our Promised Land of blessing, we have to move ahead with a courageous faith and optimism. Let me now give you some more wonderful words of commentary from the Biblical Illustrator.

The Crossing Of The Jordan

"Our subject brings before us a scene, which in many of its features reminds us of that memorable night in which the Lord led Israel forth by that unexpected way, through the waters of the sea, from the house of bondage into liberty, from cruel slavery into the joy of a new national life. Now there is much to be learned from considering both the points of similarity and of contrast in those two memorable events. First we notice that in both cases there was a going down into the element of water, and a rising up out of it into an entirely new position--the mystical symbol of death, and burial, and of resurrection. In both cases by this passage through water a complete separation was effected between the old and the new state of things, and in both cases the passage indicated the commencement of a new and happy career. In each case the water, which naturally should have been an obstacle, became, what we may say, a help. And, that which naturally should have been a cause of danger became a means of safety. And in both cases this was caused by a distinct Divine intervention, and in each case that manifestation of supernatural power was associated with a symbol of the Divine presence, though the symbols in the two cases were different--in the first it was the fiery pillar, in the second it was the Ark of the Covenant. Nor are the points of contrast less striking than the points of agreement. The frenzied terror, the fearful excitement, which pervaded that terrified multitude at the Red Sea, is conspicuous by its absence on this occasion;

⁴ The Biblical Illustrator, From The Bible Portal website, Joshua 3:14-17

they are no longer fleeing from destruction and death, but passing on to a higher and happier kind of life. There they were passing from a fertile land into a howling desert, where they would have to depend on a miracle for every meal. Here they were passing from a waste of desert into a fertile land--a land that flowed with milk and honey. There we hear an outburst of triumphant enthusiasm when the sea was crossed, and loud songs of triumph rang forth from the vast multitude as the returning wave submerged the Egyptians. Here all seems to have been calm and solemn; the only expression of strong feeling was the setting up of those memorial stones as if a deep and lasting recollection of this great fact were aimed at rather than a temporary excitement. In both cases, observe, we are contemplating a scene of salvation, yet is there a great difference between the salvation effected in the one case and in the other? In both cases the salvation comes through a Divinely-appointed Savior; but even between these there is a contrast. Moses was the Savior from, while Joshua was the Savior into. And all this may throw much light upon a question that seems greatly to exercise the minds of some, especially just at present.

It is unquestionably a fact that long after their conversion some Christians pass through an experience so marked and definite in its character, and leading to such happy and unmistakable consequences in their subsequent lives, that some teachers give to this great inward change the name of a second conversion. Others speak of it as entire sanctification, and urge upon all indiscriminately the necessity of passing through some such definite experience. Now, two things are equally plain from this narrative. The first is that the crossing of the Jordan did mark a very definite epoch in the history of the Israelites, and served to emphasize a crisis in their history, out of which they passed into a new and far more satisfactory condition. The second is that this crossing of the Jordan, nevertheless, would not have been necessary at all but for the backsliding and perversity and unbelief of the Israelites. The lesson of Divine power exercised over the very elements, and over that element which, but for the intervention of an omnipotent hand, must have destroyed those whom it now protected, and the pledge that such a miracle contained for the future--all this would have been fresh in the minds of the Israelites when they first reached Kadesh-Barnea, and would have required no repetition. I was much struck with the remark of a dear friend of mine. Shortly after I had devoted myself entirely to mission work he said to me with great emphasis, "Now, my dear brother, you are going to give yourself up to the work of preaching the gospel, and I hope the Lord will give you many converts. But whatever you do, try and bring them in at Kadesh-Barnea; don't tell them that they've got to go wandering in the wilderness for forty years." I have never forgotten his words; and how I long for you young Christians who are just starting forwards from the Red Sea that you may be spared these forty years of weary wandering; that it should not be necessary for you to go on year after year murmuring over your doubts and fears,

your disappointments and your barrenness, your dullness and deadness, your infirmities and failures. Oh, it is weary work this! I pray you avoid it. We have seen that both the passage of the Red Sea and the passage of the Jordan were miracles of salvation wrought for Israel by God. We have also to notice that they are both instances of salvation by water. It is by God's judgment upon sin that we are to be saved from sin; by His judgment upon the world we are to be saved from the world.

And now here lies our practical lesson. Whether we have been baptized at the moment of our conversion, and actually expressed our faith in Christ for justification in submitting to the ordinance, as probably was the case with St. Paul, or whether we are baptized in unconscious infancy before our faith became operative, as is usually the case with us Church-people, or whether we are baptized long after justification, as in the case with modern Baptists, we cannot become truly justified without passing through that which the ordinance symbolizes--death and resurrection. Rise from the regrets of the past into the acquisitions of the future. Dry your tears, and claim your heritage. And here is the first step, "Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you." Sanctify yourselves. This is God's call to those of us who would fain cross over the Jordan. Put away every unclean thing--all that interferes with the Divine operation. And the next lesson is, expect that tomorrow the Lord will do wonders amongst you. Only by a miracle of grace can you be raised to your true level of Christian experience, and brought into the land that flows with milk and honey. Your heavenly Leader seems to ask, "Do you believe thou that I am able to do this?" Oh, let Him be answered from the bottom of your heart with a fervent 'Yea, Lord; there is nothing too hard for Thee.' Then comes the great fact, the pledge and prestige of all coming victories: 'Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you.' Go down again into the place of death and burial, but see your Lord there before you, a pledge that when you pass through the waters, because He is with thee, the floods shall not overflow thee. Go down into the place of judgment, and see thine old wilderness life, with all its waywardness and willfulness, judged, condemned, and left behind thee forever. (*W. Hay Aitken, M. A.*)⁵

IV. NOTICE THE DELIGHTFUL ACTUALIZATION OF CROSSING JORDAN. vs. 14-17

Well, my dear reader friends, it is truly time to follow the priests (Ministers) and begin our endeavor of crossing over Jordan. Most of these people that were now crossing Jordan had been born while their ancestors wandered in the wilderness for forty years and had died there because of their unbelief. Now, after all of those years, the new generation was now getting to cross over the Jordan, the thing that

⁵ Ibid, Joshua 3:14-17.

their fathers and mothers had wanted to do, just simply because the younger generation believed God, whereas the older generation could not. In other words, because the older generation had been through so much coming out of Egypt, and multitudes of them died in the wilderness because they just couldn't believe the promises of God. So, as the younger generation began to cross over Jordan, they were in actuality fulfilling the dreams of their mothers and fathers. I am sure that many of these were over taken with joy as they started to follow the priests and the Ark of the Covenant down into the Jordan. Yes, they were probably over taken by both joy and tears as they just reflected upon what was happening. The long time dreams and desires of their parents were now coming to pass for their descendants.

A. This was a moving actualization. v. 14

It goes without saying, that if anyone of us could have been there, with the younger Israelites at the crossing of the Jordan, we would have probably been moved to huge tears of joy, and probably praise to Almighty God. Just try to imagine how this younger generation must have felt as they thought about what they were witnessing as they began to follow the priests and the Ark of the Covenant down to the water's edge. The dreams of their forefathers and foremothers were finally being actualized in their very presence.

So now, I want you to just reflect upon the thought that the crossing of the Jordan may be similar to almost any difficulty that every born-again child of God might have to face on his or her way toward the victorious life, which our Lord has promised to us. So, I would like to challenge you to pay genuine attention to the following commentary words from the Biblical Illustrator.

"The Jordan of Canaan stands for any difficulty which the Lord commands us to encounter. Between us and the goal at which we are aiming, there is often some wide-Jordan which, at the time, seems to us to be very peculiarly broad. At another time, when the stream is not so wide, we think that we might dare to make the attempt, but just now the thing seems too hazardous. We think we had better wait for a little, until the waters abate. So we stand on the brink shivering, and dare not plunge into the waves. How many a sinner has felt thus, as he has heard the call of God to forsake his sins! If only this or that were a little different, he thinks he might venture, but just now the opportunity seems hardly propitious.

To the believer the same temptation comes, as he faces some duty, and recognizes that it is a duty, while yet he shrinks from it today. Tomorrow, he argues, will be a more favorable season; and so he too refuses to step boldly into the flood. We all are inclined to ask that the billows may cease flowing before we are called to descend into their very midst. Is it not so? Let the example of this people, whom we have so often condemned with a kind of superior feeling of virtue, spur us to better

ways of heeding the command of God. All that we need to be sure of is that we have the command of God. Sure of that, there is only one thing to be done by the believer, and that is to go ahead. If God says, 'Go into the water, and when you get there the way will be made clear,' we may be sure that in due time the waters will cease. Ours is to go ahead, and God's business is to see that the waters abate. If we do our part, we need not fear but what He will do His. The first step that costs is a proverb as true in religious matters as things secular. Many an undertaking that seemed impossible when we started has become very easy before we were done with it. Like the ten lepers who were told to go and show themselves to the priests before a spot of their leprosy had departed from them. But as they went, they were cleansed. And so, this happens to the people of God: as they go, they receive the fullness of blessing, whereas had they waited for that until they were willing to start, they would have received nothing at all. How many blessings do you suppose you have failed to receive simply because you have refused to move until the whole way was made clear to you? You can at least go as far as the brink of the water, and even put your feet into the water, without being drowned. Why not try that much, and see what will happen? Is it not worthwhile? (*A. F. Schauffler, D. D.*)"⁶

B. This was a miraculous actualization. vs. 15-16

Well, after more that four decades, the children of Israel are about to cross Jordan into the Promised Land of blessing. The past generations had died in the wilderness because of their lack of faith and trust in the promised blessings of God. Therefore, what was about to happen would truly require a miracle of God if the actualization or reality of the children of Israel entering the Promised Land came to pass. So, the respected priests with the Ark of the Covenant began to take their first step into the waters of the Jordan. Folks, I can't even imagine how these Israelites must have felt. No doubt there was still some uncertainty, probably quite a bit of fear, and some temptation to doubt no doubt. But yet, there had to be such a state of excitement that it can't be described. So here we are, figuratively speaking, standing on the eastern banks of the Jordan watching as the priests began to carry the Ark of the Covenant into the River. And, right before our very eyes, the huge waves of the Jordan at this time of the year began to roll back to the North, and the people began the crossing of the Jordan. It is believed that the Jordan River at this springtime was probably about one and one half to two miles wide. The river was normally between 3-10 ft. deep, but with the springtime rains, it could have been much deeper. But, we must remember that the actualization of the Israelite's crossing was indeed a Divine

⁶ Ibid, Joshua 3:14.

miracle. Therefore, because Jehovah God has no limit to His power or ability, the width and depth of the river didn't matter.

The Importance Of Obeying God's Commands

"The Jordan of Canaan stands for any difficulty, which the Lord commands us to encounter. Between us, and the goal at which we are aiming, there is often some wide-Jordan which, at the time, seems to us to be very peculiarly broad. At another time, when the stream is not so wide, we think that we might dare to make the attempt, but just now the thing seems too hazardous. We think we had better wait for a little, until the waters abate. So we stand on the brink shivering, and dare not plunge into the waves. How many a sinner has felt thus, as he has heard the call of God to forsake his sins! If only this or that were a little different, he thinks he might venture, but just now the opportunity seems hardly propitious. To the believer the same temptation comes, as he faces some duty, and recognizes that it is a duty, while yet he shrinks from it today. Tomorrow, he argues, will be a more favorable season; and so he too refuses to step boldly into the flood. We all are inclined to ask that the billows may cease flowing before we are called to descend into their very midst. Is it not so? Let the example of this people, whom we have so often condemned with a kind of superior feeling of virtue, spur us to better ways of heeding the command of God. All that we need to be sure of is that we have the command of God. Sure of that, there is only one thing to be done by the believer, and that is to go ahead. If God says, 'Go into the water, and when you get there the way will be made clear,' we may be sure that in due time the waters will cease. Ours is to go ahead, and God's business is to see that the waters abate. If we do our part, we need not fear but what He will do His. 'It is the first step that costs,' is a proverb as true in religious matters as things secular. Many an undertaking that seemed impossible when we started has become very easy before we were done with it. Like the ten lepers who were told to go and show themselves to the priests before a spot of their leprosy had departed from them, but who as they went were cleansed, so it happens to the people of God: as they go, they receive the fullness of blessing, whereas had they waited for that until they were willing to start, they would have received nothing at all. How many blessings do you suppose you have failed to receive simply because you have refused to move until the whole way was made clear to you? You can at least go as far as the brink of the water, and even put your feet into the water, without being drowned. Why not try that much, and see what will happen? Is it not worth while? (*A. F. Schauffler, D. D.*)"⁷

⁷ Ibid, Joshua 3:15-16.

Before moving to verse 17, I would like to give you some additional good information about this verse 16. I hope you will follow these next words of commentary very closely.

"As soon as the priests were in the water, the waters of Jordan began to back up into a heap. This event occurred at the city of Adam, that is Zaretan. The location of Adam is marked by the present site of Damieh, some sixteen miles north of Jericho. Since Jericho is a few miles north of the Dead Sea, the area in which the water was completely removed from the bed of the Jordan would cover approximately twenty miles. The neighboring city of Zaretan is identified with Tell es-Sa'idiyeh, approximately 12 miles north of Adam."⁸

The point I really want all of you readers to get is that when we sincerely get serious about crossing Jordan to the Promised Land of spiritual victory and fruitfulness, Satan will try his best to put as many obstacles and hindrances in our path to try hard to get us to give up, or to stop us in the midst of the river to keep us from going on. But, we must never forget that no flood of Satanic water or load of demonic boulders can offer a genuine resistance or stop the omnipotent power of almighty God Who is clearing the flood waters before us.

C. This was a monumental actualization. v. 17

"And all other Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan. (v. 17) This summary statement gives witness to the completeness of God's assistance on behalf of Israel. Whereas a few days earlier it would have appeared impossible for anyone to safely cross the torrents of the Jordan, now all Israel had crossed. All had crossed safely because **the priests that bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan.** True faith always produces works. The priests stepped in the muddy Jordan on faith, and the people accomplished the work of entering the Promised Land."⁹

I would just like to close this point by telling you that this passing of the possibly two million Israelites over the Jordan will always be remembered, because even if the fathers and mothers of these Israelites were never able to cross over due their lack of faith, this younger generation did cross over. And, with this successful crossing, the priests were ordered by Joshua to appoint twelve priests, one from each tribe, to take a rather large stone and carry it over to the first encampment where the Israelites would stop. Obviously, when they arrived on the western side of Jordan, they must have put the stones together in a pile to be left as a reminder to

⁸ Liberty Commentary Bible, Liberty University, page 399

⁹ Ibid, page 400.

all of their children and grand children about how God had brought them over the troubled Jordan with His might and power. Maybe we should have a pile of stones in our house or outside in our yards to remind all of the entrants that the family that lives here has been blessed almightily by God as a family!

Now, let me give you some more wonderful words about these stones. I hope you will pay careful attention to what God is trying to show each of us. These stones should be a indefinite monument to the great working of God on His behalf.

Stones Buried And Raised

"I. These stones were most emphatically a monument of great might. The hand of man is capable of great achievements. How stupendous, how unparalleled, was the work of carrying Israel across Jordan in this fashion; yet how easily, how quickly, how quietly, was it all done!

II. Yet these stones formed a monument that might be despised. Simple and rude it was; it had no beauty or architectural comeliness, to be desired; it was nothing more than a rough pyramid of twelve muddy stones. With what contempt would an Egyptian look down upon it. But, after all, ostentation is human, simplicity is Divine; for though, from a human point of view, the wonder commemorated here was very great, what was it from the Divine? Nothing. What, after all, was the opening up of this passage to Him who upholds all things by the word of His power, who gathers the waters in the hollow of His hand, who takes up the isles as a very little thing? Nothing and less than nothing. It was easy for the men of Israel to raise such a monument. Yes; yet it was harder for them to heap up these stones than for God to heap up these waters; and all the might that reared the pyramids could never have congealed these depths.

III. Again, this monument had a worldwide reference and a special application. Most monuments have a very restricted reference. They speak to a political or a religious community; to the inhabitants of a city or the natives of a country, or to the members of a common faith; but this simple monument on Jordan's bank has a voice for all mankind. It gives a declaration of God's mighty power, so clear and emphatic that if men do not hear its testimony it is because they have stopped their ears. And if it had, for the human race as a whole, a great lesson to teach, it was fraught with special instruction to the Israel of God. To all men it cried, 'God is mighty'; to Israel it testified, 'This God abides thy God for evermore.' He is your refuge and strength. Therefore this monument was set up that they might remember and fear the Lord forever and walk in His ways, and do His commandments.

IV. Other lessons are taught by these stones. They were twelve in number, arranged in their places by twelve warriors, one from each tribe; therefore it is plain that the whole people are represented by these stones. Also there were two sets of twelve stones: one set in the bed of the river, buried by its waters; another raised from the bed of the river, and piled upon its bank. Therefore we have here the whole people represented in two different aspects. The twelve buried stones speak of Israel in one relation; the twelve raised in another. Think of the buried. What mean ye by these stones? They lie on the bottom of the river, covered by its muddy waters. They represent God's chosen people, for they are twelve. The strange place, therefore, in which they lie, must be a representation of some spiritual and important truth concerning Israel. What is it? "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." The death of those who came out of Egypt made this very plain. Now the children have arisen in place of the fathers, and they are about to enter in. What is their title to the inheritance? Is it better than that of their fathers? Is it true that they are worthy; that they have clean hands and a pure heart, and have not lifted up their souls unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully? Is it true that they are righteous? Can they claim entrance because of their obedience to the law? Nay, by the law shall no man be justified; and this burying of the twelve stones most solemnly emphasizes this declaration. 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven.' The sinner must leave the old man behind; the body of sin must be destroyed; we must be born again ere ever we see or enter into the kingdom of God. Do we ask, where is the old man, the body of sin? The Cross and grave of Christ give answer: it is gone, clean gone for ever; lost sight of, as these stones in the bed of Jordan. They are buried, to know no resurrection; yea, God tells us He has cast them behind His back, into the depths of the sea, a far deeper grave than Jordan.

Through Alaric I. the Goths first learned the way to Rome. He and his rugged hosts were everywhere invincible. All Italy, luxurious and effeminate, lay at his feet. He extended his conquest as far south as Sicily. But at Cosenza in Calabria he was seized with a deadly malady. When he died, his followers had to face a great difficulty. What were they to do with the dead body of their great leader? It was impossible to carry it back over Italian plain and snowy Alp to the dark forests of his fatherland. It dare not be left to the mockery and desecration of the caitiffs he had conquered. Therefore they determined to bury it in the bed of the river Busento. They set their captives to the task of diverting the stream from its channel, and there in its dry bed they dug the grave of Alaric. Then, when he was buried deep in his rocky tomb, and the waters rolled once more in their wonted channel, to hide forever the secret of this strange sepulchre, all the captives were put to death. These Goths wished to give their king a grave, which no hand could reach. Even such a grave has God given our sins, and here in these stones we behold a picture of what He has done. We are buried with Christ. Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto

sin but alive unto God by Christ Jesus our Lord. But there were twelve stones raised upon the bank as well as twelve buried in the bed of Jordan, and we may well ask, "What mean ye by these stones?" This is the positive side of the same truth we have been considering. As the buried stones speak of death, so the raised speak of resurrection. We are not only buried with Christ, but are also quickened with Him, raised with Him, and seated with Him in heavenly places. The twelve buried stones picture our place on account of sin; the twelve raised declare our place on account of righteousness. The first speak of weakness; the second of might. The one declares all "old things are passed away"; the other, "all things are become new." These twelve stones set on Jordan's bank were raised from Jordan's bed. That river, as it were, begot them. They were of it, from it, out of it. Even so the Church of Christ is begotten and brought forth from His death. The agonies of Christ crucified were the travail pangs of the new creation. As His people are buried with Him, so are they quickened, "begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead." Yes, it is a 'lively hope.' The great pyramid of Egypt was after all a monument of despair, "the eternal abode" of the dead. This little pyramid of Canaan is a pyramid of hope, placed in the goodly land conspicuously and permanently; reminding those that believe that we are not only raised with Christ, but seated with Him in heavenly places--that we are henceforth a constituent part of His inheritance. (A. B. Mackay.)"¹⁰

Conclusion:

Well, my beloved friends! As we stand on the threshold of a New Year, are you ready to move ahead and cross over Jordan into the Promised Land of spiritual victorious living? I pray that you are, but, so many professing Christians are not really saved, or, they are stuck in a complacent and apathetic mere existence. Are you one of these Luke-warm believers and are satisfied with a miserable life, which according to Revelation 3:14-22, makes Jesus sick on His stomach. I pray that you aren't, but, if you are, you need to make sure that you are genuinely saved and that Jesus truly lives in your heart. Then, you must crucify the flesh and begin to live under the power of the Holy Spirit and move on forward in order to get to that joyful and fruitful Christian life. I can emphatically tell you that it is not God's will for you to live in a state of fear and unbelief, which is keeping you from that glorious life of victory on the other side of troubled Jordan.

Also, if we are truly saved, then we must cross Jordan in order to prepare for the enemy tribes in our Promised Land. The only way for a true child of God to share his or her genuine gratitude for what Jesus has done for every child of God is to courageously enlist in God's soul-winning army to help take the Gospel message to a lost and dying world. If God has loved us enough to make the sacrifice of giving His

¹⁰ Op. Cit. Joshua 4:1-24.

Son to die on the cross in order to blot out our sins and to give us eternal life, then, we should truly show our appreciation, by joining many evangelism and outreach methods to make sure that the rest of the lost world gets to know how to get saved, just like we were told by some friend, some teacher, some preacher, or some soul-winner who told us the simple Gospel message on how to get saved and have our sins forgiven and erased through the act of spiritual justification, which lasts forever.

Dear beloved reader, we must be extremely careful that we don't become very frightened like the Israelites did and start wandering in the wilderness until they died with just a glimpsed of what could have been had they had enough faith to believe the promises of God and not be dissuaded by negative unbelieving people. I must remind you that even after leading the huge crowd of Israelites out of Egypt and across the Red Sea, he still never went into the Promised Land like we have been studying about Joshua and the younger generation of Israelites did! Unbelief and a lack of faith has probably stopped more shallow believers from crossing the Jordan in their lives and reaching the Promised Land of victorious Christian living and fruitfulness! So, I am going to plead with you to step up to the Jordan, bring your faith and family with you, and cross the Jordan before the rolling waves and foam fall back in place to stop you progress. Follow the true Bible believing priests as they take the presence and Word of God over before you! If you don't cross Jordan this immediate year, it may be very soon when Jesus returns to earth to get His children. I would encourage you to take as many family members and friends over Jordan with you. Why? Because time is soon running out!!