

You Have Not Passed This Way Before

I. Introduction

- A. Connection with last week & the faith of Rahab
- B. Connection between Joshua 3 and 4

II. Follow the Ark (1-6)

- A. Get up early. Joshua got up early. Matthew Henry wrote, “In this march Joshua led them, and particular notice is taken of his early rising as there is afterwards upon other occasions (Josh 6:12; 7:16; 8:10), which intimates how little he loved his ease, how much he loved his business, and what care and pains he was willing to take in it. Those that would bring great things to pass must rise early.”¹
- B. The meaning of the Ark.
 - a. *The box of promise.* The Hebrew word that we translate “ark” simply means, “box.” A covenant is a promise that is legally binding. God’s covenant with Israel began by God freely promising Abraham that God would bless him and his descendants and give them the land of Canaan. The Ark of the Covenant is a physical reminder of that promise. It could be called the box of promise.
 - b. *The box of provision.* Inside it was also manna (and Aaron’s staff) that reminded Israel that God fed them for 40 years in the desert (Heb 9:4).
 - c. *The box of presence.* The ark was chiefly a physical representation of the presence of God. When the ark was present, God was present in a special and powerful way.
 - 1. God knows our weakness that we tend only to believe in what we can see and so He granted a physical symbol of His continual presence.
 - 2. This connection between the presence of God and the ark will become so prevalent in Israel that even their enemies will know it. (See 1 Sam 4:6-7)

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Old Testament* (Quickverse, Omaha Nebraska).

- d. *The box of preeminence.* It's all over this chapter. It's referred to 12 times in 10 of the 17 verses.
- C. ***Follow the Ark.*** The Lord leads, we follow.
- a. Joshua does not lead them in river, the ark, the presence of the Lord does.
 - b. The elders of this church desire that the Lord do the leading. We do not want merely good planning to direct our paths, we want our good God to direct our paths.
- D. ***Proper distance leads to proper perspective.*** A distance of 3000 feet, nearly three-fourths of a mile is to be maintained, so that as many people as possible can witness what is about to happen.
- a. The reason God commanded the distance was so that they would be able to see what God was doing. When you are too close to a thing, you often lack to proper vantage point to view all of what is happening. *"Don't come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go..."* (v.4)
 - b. Usually the ark was always at the center of the camp. There had to be some distance for how else would a million people witness what was happening. If they were all surrounding the ark only those closest to it would see that it was in fact the ark that was holding back the waters.
 - c. No protection, it's way out in front. There is no army surrounding the ark. God is quite able to protect Himself.
 - d. Sometimes we need a little distance from an event in order to see rightly what was happening.
 - 1. Often in our younger years we doubt the wisdom of our parents. However, after some years have put a little distance between our youthful desires, we see that our parents' advice was really worth considering. And we wish we had listened to them more often.
 - 2. Perhaps it is not getting that job you thought you had to have only to later discover that there was one better.
- E. *"You have not passed this way before"* (v.4)
- a. What about the Red Sea? The passed through that on dry ground.
 - 1. At the Red Sea they were fleeing the land of slavery. At the Jordan, they were entering their inheritance.
 - 2. At the Red Sea Moses led them. At the Jordan, God Himself (i.e. the ark) led them.
 - 3. At the Red Sea, Moses parted the waters. At the Jordan, the dusty sandals of obedient priests parted the waters.

4. At the Red Sea, they were leaving behind a hard life. At the Jordan, they were entering into a life of abundant blessing.
 5. At the Red Sea, their enemies were chasing them. At the Jordan, they begin to chase their enemies.
- b. No, this is new. They had not passed this way before.
 - c. As a nation, this was a first. They were now a nation walking into the land that was theirs, but that was possessed by other nations. God was about to judge the sins of those nations and remove them and give the land to the children of Israel. (Deut 9:4-5).
 - d. **Small Groups:** This past week the elders discussed the possibility of implementing intentional small groups. Pray for us as we consider a small groups strategy. We haven't been this way before.
 - e. **GENESIS:** Pray as we discern the Lord's will in whether or not to plant Genesis. We haven't been this way before.

F. Consecration: prepare for wonders

- a. The meaning of consecration. God gave this command at Sinai also (see Ex 19:10-13)
- b. Consecration meant washing clothes and body and to ridding one's self of anything unclean.
- c. He did not command them to "sharpen your swords and check your shields."² No strap on their armor. This is strange considering the fact that they are about to go to war with these nations. The first order of preparation is spiritual before it is ever physical.
- d. Is there any sin which you still cling to. Lay it down today. Forsake it and turn away from it. Cry out in prayer to the Lord and ask Him to help you leave it behind. Put off the smelly robe of sin and wrap yourselves in the robe of righteousness.

III. Come and Listen to the Words of the Lord your God (7-13)

- A. When He takes us to new places, He reminds us we're never alone. I never tire of hearing this promise, "I will be with you." How many Christians throughout the ages have been nourished by this promise? I can hear this every day and it never grows old.
- B. Who is this God among us?
- C. He is the living God (v.10). He speaks. He talks to Joshua. Idols don't speak.

² *The Bible Knowledge Commentary.*

- a. Psalm 115:3 Our God is in the heavens;
he does all that he pleases.
4 Their idols are silver and gold,
the work of human hands.
5 They have mouths, but do not speak;
eyes, but do not see.
6 They have ears, but do not hear;
noses, but do not smell.
7 They have hands, but do not feel;
feet, but do not walk;
and they do not make a sound in their throat.
8 Those who make them become like them;
so do all who trust in them.
9 O Israel, trust in the LORD!
- b. The living God announces beforehand what He will do (v.10). He lists all the nations that He will drive out.
 - 1. Prophetic fulfillment of His word is THE characteristic that demonstrates that God is God (Ez 17:24; 22:14; 24:14; 36:36)
 - 2. Isaiah 42:8 I am the LORD; that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to carved idols.
9 Behold, the former things have come to pass,
and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth
I tell you of them.
 - 3. Amos 3:7 The Lord reveals His secrets to his servants the prophets.
- c. He is **Lord of all the earth** (v.11 & 13)
 - 1. He commands the elements of earth.
 - 2. God performs the miracles He does so that His name will be glorified through all the earth. God intends for His glory to fill the earth (Num 14:21; Ps 72:19; Hab 2:14). He acts to proclaim His name in all the earth (Josh 4:24). God's purposes have always been global not merely tribal.
 - a. Josh 4:24 Remember this day, *"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 forever."*
 - b. This was His purpose from the beginning of the covenant with Abraham.

- i. Gen 12:1-3 *"...I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing ...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*
 - c. This was His purpose in bringing 10 plagues on Egypt and for allowing Pharaoh to remain in power.
 - i. Ex 9:16 *"But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth."*
- D. **God calls for faith:** only when you get your feet wet will the waters part
 - a. Believe & then you'll see. Keep walking and then you will see the waters part.
 - b. Augustine's quote: "Faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe."

IV. An Impossible Crossing (14-15)

- A. Foolish priests standing at the brink; what will others think? These priests are told to march up to the water ankle deep and then stand still and watch what will happen.
- B. Once before this people stood on the brink of the promised Land. That time their faith faltered and resulted in 40 years of wandering. Would they falter this time? Or would they believe and enter?
- C. The Jordan @ flood stage. The author tells us, "Oh, by the way, the Jordan river was flooded." That would make it nearly impossible to cross.
- D. "Who then can be saved?" Matt 19:23-25 *"With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*
- E. "Yahweh delights to show his might in the face of our utter helplessness, apparently so that we cannot help seeing that we contribute nothing to our deliverance."³

V. Christ In the Crossing (16-17)

- A. Waters stopped @ the city of Adam. I wonder do the raging flood waters of the Jordan represent the raging torrent of sin?
 - a. It was through Adam that sin came into the world (and death through sin). It is sin that separates us from God. (Rom 5:12)

³ Dale Ralph Davis, *Joshua: No Falling Words*, (Scotland, Christian Focus Publications, 2008), pp. 38.

- b. The flooded, raging Jordan separated Israel from the Promised Land.
 - 1. If they had tried to cross the flooded swollen, raging river on their own, they would have been swept away.
 - 2. If we attempt to deal with sin on our own, we too will be swept away.
 - c. When God's presence entered the river and stopped the waters, the Jordan became a path into the Promised Land.
 - d. When Jesus entered into our sin, and His flesh was torn for us, He became the path to Promised eternal life.
 - e. 1 Cor 15:21 *For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*
- B. Sin & baptism: Is their passing through the waters symbolic of baptism? Paul says that baptism is a picture of death and new life.
- a. Romans 6:3 *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*
 - b. Passing over the Jordan was in a sense passing from death into life. They had endured 40 years of wandering in desert place where there was no food. They should have died and in did they deserved death (Ex 32:10; Dt 9:14) and yet, by God's grace, they were able to pass over into a new land.
- C. Jesus is the way; a wide way
- a. The city of Adam was 19 miles north of Jericho. That's a wide path.
 - b. Jesus is the way (John 14:6) and ANYONE who believes in Him can find eternal life. That's a wide path.
- D. He went before us "on the third day"
- a. They entered the Promised Land "at the end of the third day." (v.2)
 - b. Jesus arose on the third day.

VI. Conclusion

- A. Jesus is the way into the promised land
- B. Only He can get you there
- C. Stand firm on Him

Spurgeon⁴

What to do when the Lord leads you someplace new:

Get up early
and don't stay up late,
Know when walk
and when to stand still and wait.

As soon as you see
the God of the ark,
Leave all behind and follow Him
even if it's dark.

Draw near to Him
as near as can be
But don't be discouraged,
by what you can't see

Remember
His ways are not like yours,
Trust in Him because
you haven't been this way before.

Wash off the old dust
from the dead desert dunes,
And prepare yourself
for the wonders He will do.

If your feet falter
at the fearful trail ahead,
Just close your eyes
and remember what He said:

"As I was with Moses,
so I'll be with you.
Come Hell or high water,
I will never leave you."

⁴ Source: <http://www.recoverthegospel.com/Old%20Recover%20the%20Gospel%20Site/Spurgeon/Spurgeon%201001-2000/1057.pdf> accessed at 8/1/08 10:07:34 AM.

“When the high waters come
and you stand on the brink,
Care not for one moment,
what others will think.”

“Just keep on walking,
follow My lead,
And you’ll see wonders
You’ve never dreamed.”

“Draw near to Me
and hear My word,
I will deliver you
without shield or sword.”

“Move ahead now,
towards the raging river,
Stand still on the bank
and watch how I deliver.”

“Keep your faithful feet moving,
don’t stop when they’re wet,
Let the eyes of your heart
direct each step.”

“In quietness of soul,
a deep breath take,
Watch the winds of My Spirit,
divide the great lake.”

“Then pass right through,
don’t stop to look around,
Keep your eyes on Me
and your feet on dry ground.”

“If along the way,
you don’t *feel* Me at your side,
Listen for My voice,
let My Word be your guide.”

“The Word is My Son,
Jesus is His name.”

“You see I sent Him before you

On that Promised Land day,
He willingly went,
To lead the way.”

“That flooded river crossing
was a small prophetic play,
of a spiritual crossing
He would lead in one day.”

“When He split the waters
and dried the river bed,
on dry land you crossed over,
Into life from the dead.”

“He stopped the raging waters
At the city of Adam,
He stopped sin and separation
that plagued all of man.”

Please don't stumble
And doubt if this is true,
Just consider for a moment
These wonders are for you.

The Lord of all the earth,
The Living God is among you.

God always leads us to new places but He never leaves us alone. He goes before us and marks the path. Jesus went before us in death and He is the way to eternal life. I pray that you believe this and rejoice in this fact.