



THEN JOSHUA SAID
TO THE PEOPLE,
"CONSECRATE
YOURSELVES,
FOR TOMORROW
THE LORD WILL
DO WONDERS
AMONG YOU."

J O S H U A 3 : 5

PROMISE

KEPT

DATE

February 29 & March 1

WEEK

1 of 5

KEY VERSE

Joshua 3:5

SETTING THE STAGE

From the beginning of creation, we were designed to live as God's people in God's land under God's righteous rule. Beginning in Genesis 3, man chose his own way over God's way and Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden; but, they were given a promise that a descendant would be born who would bring an end to the curse. From Genesis 3 through the end of Revelation we see the story, His Story, unfold. The story of God working out His plan to redeem and restore His people.

God would accomplish His plan from a small tract of land bridged between two continents. From this small area of the world, God's covenant blessing would extend worldwide.

Beginning with Abraham in Genesis 12, this Kingdom Promise of people, land, and blessing was given by the Lord to His servants (*Genesis 12, 13, 15; Exodus 3*). Let's take a look:

GENESIS 12:1-3 *Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; ² And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; ³ and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."*

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LESSON OUTLINE

1. Set Your Eyes On Him
2. Set Yourself Apart
3. Step Out In Faith
4. Step Into the Promise

THINGS TO KNOW

- Joshua was Moses' assistant in Exodus.
- Joshua was a good leader of the people because he was a great follower of God.

PROMISE

KEPT

Setting the Stage, continued >

GENESIS 13:14-17 *The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; ¹⁵ for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. ¹⁶ I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. ¹⁷ Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.”*

This covenant promise is restated to Abraham in Genesis 15, this time with the following prophecy:

GENESIS 15:13-16 *God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. ¹⁵ As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.”*

The first part of this prophecy in verses 13-14 was fulfilled through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons as the Israelites became slaves in Egypt for 400 years. The last part – the return of the fourth generation – we will look at today in Joshua 3.

Again, the promise is reaffirmed to Moses hundreds of years later in Exodus 3:7-8, and repeated in Leviticus and Numbers:

As we saw in the Story of Deliverance, at the Red Sea, the Lord separated His people from their old life as they crossed over into new territory. At Mount Sinai, He brought them into a covenant relationship with Himself.

EXODUS 3:7-8 *The LORD said, “I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. ⁸ So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.*

As we saw in the Story of Deliverance, at the Red Sea, the Lord separated His people from their old life as they crossed over into new territory. At Mount Sinai, He brought them into a covenant relationship with Himself. But because of their unbelief and rebellion, that generation would not enter the Promised Land but wander in the wilderness for 40 years. As we begin the book of Joshua we see a new generation of Israelites poised at the edge of the Jordan River, preparing to cross into their new beginning and take possession of the land. The Promise is about to be fulfilled.

Introduction

Joshua is first introduced to us as Moses’ assistant in Exodus. In Joshua 1 we see he is now the leader of the people as the Lord now speaks to him the promise of old:



JOSHUA 1:1-3 Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, ² "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. ³ Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.

Then, God gives Joshua specific instructions for taking possession of the land:

JOSHUA 1:5-7 No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.

God kept His promise of people and blessing to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. And now, He will use Joshua to lead the Israelites in taking possession of the land. In the verses above, the Lord affirms that it is time for Joshua to step out in faith, step into His purpose, and lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. To take the first step toward a new beginning, Joshua believed the Word of God and he trusted the promises of God. Joshua's belief determined his behavior. He was ready for the next step. Warren Wiersbe writes: "Faith looks ahead with courage; unbelief looks back with complaint."¹

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Up until this time the Israelites had been wandering in the wilderness, led by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night eating manna day in and day out. The time had come for them to step out in faith, step into the purpose and promise of God, and take the land that He promised them. But are they ready for their next step?

Is the Lord calling you to step out in faith and step into a new purpose and promise that He has for your life? Is He calling you into a new beginning? Are you ready? Let's see what we can learn from the Israelites on how to be ready to take that first step into a new beginning.

1. SET YOUR EYES ON HIM

JOSHUA 3:1-4 Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed. ² At the end of three days the officers went through the midst of the camp; ³ and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. ⁴ However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before."

Joshua was an early riser and ordered the camp to move alongside the Jordan River and lodge there for three days. We know that each of the tribes had an assigned place and an assigned order in the march. Since they had never come this way before, they needed the Lord to lead the way and guide them. The people were to remain 2,000 cubits, about 3,000 feet behind so that ALL could see the ark. If they crowded too close, only a few in the front could see it. When God told them "follow the ark," He was telling them, "Follow Me." Even today we need to make sure there are no obstacles or distractions that prevent us from following God, keeping our eyes on Him.

The ark symbolizes God's presence with His people. When God told them "follow the ark," He was telling them, "Follow Me."

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *With the Word*, Numbers, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991.

In Exodus 25:10-22 we see the instructions for building the ark of the covenant and verse 22 explains God's presence:

EXODUS 25:22 *There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.*

The ark symbolizes God's presence with His people. He tells them, take the ark, with the priests leading the way. I am with you. God is letting them know that victory would come at the river and far beyond as they focused on and followed Him.

In Matthew 28:20 at the end of the Great Commission, Jesus tells us, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Though we face an unknown future, His presence gives us the confidence to face whatever the future holds. Yet we need the Lord's guidance along the way. We need to keep our eyes and ears attuned to His leading. He goes before us; He is with us and He knows the way. When we set our eyes on Him, we can rest in His presence and easily take the next step, even when it is a way we have never passed before.

2. SET YOURSELF APART

JOSHUA 3:5 *Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you."⁶ And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people.*

"Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you," was both an order and a promise. Some of God's promises are unconditional and require only that we believe them; other promises require certain conditions to be satisfied before the promise is met.²

We are to set ourselves apart from sin and apart to God, giving ourselves fully to Him.

Joshua was making sure the Israelites' hearts were ready for the next step through consecration. This process of bathing and changing clothes is symbolic of preparing for a new beginning. We saw this at Mount Sinai (*Exodus 19:9-15*), with Jacob (*Genesis 35:1-3*); after King David confessed his sin (*2 Samuel 12:20*) and it is carried over in the New Testament (*2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Ephesians 4:26-27; Colossians 3:8-14*). We are to set ourselves apart **from** sin and apart **to** God, giving ourselves fully to Him.

Joshua led a surrendered life. His example set the stage for the Israelites to lead a surrendered life as well. Joshua was faithful in his task and as long as Joshua was alive, the people followed the Lord.

3. STEP OUT IN FAITH

JOSHUA 3:7-8 *Now the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you."⁸ You shall, moreover, command the priests who are carrying the ark of the covenant, saying, "When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan."*

It was the responsibility of the priests to carry the ark of the covenant and go before the people as they marched. They were to lead by stepping out in faith, trusting God and relying on His faithfulness.

² Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, Old Testament*, Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2007, p. 390.

Joshua's authority came from the Lord, but just as He did with Moses, God would remind the people that Joshua was His chosen servant leader, giving him authoritative stature before them. The Israelites would face many challenges ahead and would need a strong servant leader to guide them through the days ahead.

JOSHUA 3:9-13 Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God."¹⁰ Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will assuredly dispossess from before you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, and the Jebusite."¹¹ Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan.¹² Now then, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe.¹³ It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap."

Living faith always leads to action and requires the first step. Joshua reminds the people that they serve a living God who is able to do abundantly more than they can even imagine. Warren Wiersbe says it best:

"But Joshua's God was more than just the God of Israel. He was *"the living God"* (v. 10) and *"The Lord of all the earth"* (v. 11, 13). Because He is the living God, he can defeat the dead idols of the heathen nations that then inhabited the land (*Psalm 115*). Because He is the Lord of all the earth, He can go where He pleases and do what He wishes with every land and nation."³

True spiritual leadership constantly points people to the Lord and His greatness, minimizing, instead of magnifying the role of the leader. Joshua reminded God's people of His Word and encouraged them to trust and obey. He lived his life in the shadow of God's Word. Joshua was a good leader because he was a great follower of God.

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4. STEP INTO THE PROMISE

JOSHUA 3:14-17 So when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant before the people,¹⁵ and when those who carried the ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest),¹⁶ the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho.¹⁷ And the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan.

Most of the year, the Jordan River was about a hundred feet wide, but during flood season the river would overflow its banks and expand to about a mile wide.⁴ For three days they were camped beside it, watching the impassable waters, hearing the rush of the river all hours of the day and night, not knowing how they were going to cross. It was a visible, tangible, natural obstacle.

But God's plan was simple - He told them, "Trust Me." As the priests led the way by stepping out in faith into the waters, the Lord responded with a miracle, stopping the flow of water. With each step,

³ Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, Old Testament*, p. 390.

⁴ Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, Old Testament*, p. 391.

the water rose up, many miles away. Commentators say Zarethan was 30 miles upstream! God made a wide path for His two million Promised Land people to take their next step.

We see in verse 15 that the feet of the priests were “dipped in the edge of the water” until they were standing on dry ground in the middle of the river. It was the smallest of steps, but it was enough to activate a mighty miracle. Through the obedient feet of the priests, stepping out in faith and into His promise, the way was opened for them all to move forward.

Unless and until you are willing to step out in faith and step into the purpose and promise God has for you, your new beginning will only be in your future instead of your present.

Is it time for you to get “your feet wet?” Unless and until you are willing to step out in faith and step into the purpose and promise God has for you, your new beginning will only be in your future instead of your present. Is there an area of your life where you are wandering aimlessly instead of claiming the inheritance He has for you?

Warren Wiersbe notes that many commentators and songwriters refer to the crossing of the Jordan as a picture of a Christian dying and going to heaven. Yet he contends that instead, it is a picture of the believer claiming their inheritance in Christ. ⁵ Joshua is a reflection of Christ representing Jesus as our Conqueror.

Our assurance that the “*living God is among us*” comes as we stand on the finished work of Christ, looking back at His work on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. Jesus is our new beginning.

HEBREWS 9:13-15 *For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? ¹⁵ For this reason, He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.*

Is it time for you to leave the Jordan behind and claim your inheritance in Christ? For the Promised Land people, assurance that “*the living God is among you*” (*Joshua 3:10*) came as they stepped into the waters and then stood on dry ground looking back on the western bank of the Jordan from where they had come.

⁵ Warren Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, Old Testament*, p.380

HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

With one small step of faith, God did for the Israelites what they could not do for themselves. And He continued to assist as they fought battle after battle to take the Promised Land. Oh, there were defeats along the way, but the promise of the land was fulfilled. Under Joshua, God delivered the land into the hands of His people as they trusted Him and obeyed. God calls us to trust and obey. To step out in faith, trusting Him to go before us, to come behind us and to lead the way. God's Word is sure. The Jordan is behind us and Canaan is before us. What awaits ahead if only we will take that next step of faith into the promise of His inheritance?

So often we become complacent because of the familiar. We want something new, something different. However, we get scared or nervous; not trusting ourselves or perhaps even God in the process. We want to change but the familiar is what we know, even though it may not be best.

The first step is always the hardest. The first step is often a bit shaky. If you have ever seen a little baby trying to take the first step, it is not always a pretty sight. There is some wobbling that takes place. There is some pausing that takes place. There is also some falling down that takes place. Yet, the baby keeps striving to take that first step, which leads to the second step, which leads to walking and eventually running.

We are still only a few months into the new year. A year we are focusing our influence. A year where God may be speaking to you in taking a first step to a new beginning. Do not let fear or doubt stand in your way. Be in prayer to see how God is leading. And perhaps God is going to use you in the life of someone else to help them in their new beginning. God fulfilled His promise to His people after 430 years of slavery and another 40 years in the wilderness. The promise fulfilled may not always be swift, but it always happens in God's timing. It starts with the first step; is it time for you to get your toes wet?