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Preacher: Guest Preacher

[0 : 0 0] As the Lord will enable us this evening I would like us to consider the chapters that we read together this evening, the events that we find in Joshua chapters 3 and 4 and the texts that we can focus on initially is such Joshua chapter 3 and verse 17.

Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan and I would like us to consider this passage tonight not merely as a history we often think of the Old Testament teaching as history but what we have in the Old Testament is God revealing to us to a saint in every age how he deals with his people and there is much within this account of the crossing over the River Jordan that speaks to us as believers in Christ today. We find here the children of Israel Moses their great leader has died and the people of Israel are left.

Joshua is to assume the place that Moses had as the leader of the children of Israel and the Lord gave Joshua such clear instructions in chapter 1 verse 2 he makes it clear what he is to do. Moses my servant is dead now therefore arise go over this Jordan you and all this people into the land that I am giving to them to the people of Israel this was the work that God had entrusted to Joshua.

[2 : 2 7] Moses had taken the people of Israel 40 years they had been in the wilderness having come out of Egypt but God had not permitted Moses to lead the people into the promised land Moses could view it from afar this was the ministry that God had given to Joshua to lead the people of Israel into the promised land and we find here also this image of the Ark of the Covenant it is there central to the movement of Israel the Ark of the Covenant is there we read of it in verse 3 of chapter 3 as soon as you see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God being carried by the Levitical priests then you shall set out from your place and follow it you know that between chapters 3 and 4 there are 17 references to the Ark of the Covenant.

It seems to meet us at every turn wherever the people of Israel are going the Ark of the Covenant is in their midst and the Ark of the Covenant is there reminding us of God's presence amongst his people Israel the Ark of the Covenant containing the law and it is the Lord who is leading his people it is the Lord who is going before them as they go into the Jordan it is the Lord who cuts the waters of the Jordan and who holds them up as in a heap to let his people walk through as by dry land it is the Lord who is leading them the whole miracle from start to finish it's not Joshua's miracle it is a miracle by the hand of God and all of the Israelites are there they are there as active spectators of what God is doing they are active spectators of the power of God and notice in verse 4 how there is a distance and the distance is specific there shall be a distance between you and it about 2,000 cubits in length around a mile the people are to follow the Ark of the Covenant but there is to be about a mile different distance between them and the Ark and the reason for this was so that all of the people of Israel would observe and would see what God was doing you see if the crowd had simply followed in one procession the

Ark they wouldn't have been able to see what God was doing but there was this distance of a mile and all of the children of Israel were standing on the banks of the Jordan River and they could see ahead of them the Levitical priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant and the Lord has told them so precisely that once the priests feet will enter the Jordan River bearing the Ark of the Covenant representing the presence of God the waters of the Jordan River will be rolled up into an heap. Now this was not because of anything any holiness of the Ark the distance between them and the Ark was to allow them to observe the work of God it was not because of any holiness within the Ark that the Ark of the Covenant symbolizes God's presence and there is there an idea for them of the majesty the glory of God the presence of the Lord in their midst and the Lord goes before them

setting a clear path through the Jordan River the Lord has commanded Joshua and verse 5 we read the people are told to consecrate themselves consecrate yourselves for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you sanctify yourselves the Lord was going to do a great wonder in their midst and it was important that the people were sanctified and prepared in their souls to observe the work of God they must prepare themselves how would they sanctify themselves they would wash their out their garments their clothing they would abstain from sin they would confess their sins before God and so friends should the people of God in every day if we have to expect the Lord to work in our midst so we ought to consecrate and sanctify ourselves before we gather to worship with the people of God we ought to confess our sins to the Lord abstain from sin prepare our souls and that's a challenge for us today do we rightly prepare our souls for worshiping the Lord we may not observe the rivers being opened before us but when we gather as a worshiping people we worship the same God and we ought to sanctify ourselves as we meet in the public worship of God and if we fail to see any grandeur or majesty or beauty in the Lord it is because of a lack of preparation in our own souls now the Lord had a purpose here the Lord's great purpose was that the people of Israel would accept Joshua as their leader appointed by God notice what the Lord says to Joshua and verse 7 today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel that they may know that as I was with Moses so I will be with you Joshua had to take up the mantle of the great man of God Moses and the people had to recognize Joshua as a man sent from God and the Lord here was to display to all Israel that here Joshua is a man set apart by the Lord as the leader of the children of Israel you see the people here were likely despondent Moses has died the great leader of the church they've come to the end of an era and they don't know what's ahead of them they had seen the miracles performed in the days of Moses and they would ask what now but the Lord here encourages his servant Joshua that as he was with Moses so he will be with him and so it is child of God tonight for you if you are a child of God purchased by the blood of Christ the God of Moses the God of Joshua is your God there was here a crisis situation Moses has died the people haven't reached the promised land a change of leadership and it was essential that the people put their faith and their confidence in Joshua it was essential that

[12:04] Joshua himself felt secure that he was undertaking the work of God that Israel were confident that he was a man competent under God to lead them as a people see there is always a problem if you have no confidence in the leadership God knew that his people needed confidence in Joshua because once they had crossed over the Jordan River they were to enter into war with the Canaanites now in the war between the states general John Pope led his troops and he marched them round and round until they were exhausted and until they had no food left they had run out of supplies they were physically exhausted and it was clear to John Pope's troops that their leadership did not know what was ahead of them so when John Pope brought his troops to face Stonewall Jackson and to face the Stonewall Jackson's guns they expected the worst they had no confidence in their leadership and they expected the worst and God knew that Joshua needed to have the confidence of the people of Israel and here in this great miracle is where he is to place a seal of approval on Joshua through this great event here we find the God of heaven stripping down to dam the waters of the Jordan and to set his seal on his servant Joshua we read in chapter 4 and verse 14 on that day the Lord exalted

Joshua in the sight of all of Israel and they stood in awe of him just as they had stood in awe of Moses all the days of his life and Joshua said to the people now verse 10 of chapter 3 here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites the Hittites the Hivites the Perishites the Gurgashites the Amorites and the Jebusites behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan and the Lord is showing if he can dry up the rivers and Joshua is telling him if God can let us cross through the Jordan and surely he will be with us as we go into battle with the enemies of the people of God surely the Lord will be with us so that we will overcome our enemies and you know that the reasoning is so similar to the reasoning of the apostle in Romans chapter 8 thinking of what what has happened in the experience of God's people through the sufferings of Christ Romans chapter 8 verse 32 where we're in verse 31 what then shall we say to those things if God is for us who can be against us he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all how will he not also with him graciously give us all things if God is for us who can be against us if God gave his son Jesus Christ so that we might have life then shall he not also give us all things if God will open the Jordan River to let us walk through us on dry land shall he not be with us so that

we might conquer and that we might take the promised land to be our own the God who delivered the children of

Israel out of bondage in Egypt who kept them all these years as they wandered through the wilderness who took them through the Red Sea who dried up the Jordan River the God who sent his son to die on Calvary's cross so that we might have life and have it in all its fullness the God who raised his son on the third day with power over death and over the grave friends these are some of the most powerful examples of God's love to his people that we have in scripture they are as someone said explosions of God's power that ought to color the horizon of every believer's life when we look back to what God has done for his people from the beginning of this world here we have a great demonstration of power and surely friends when the Lord can deal with all the obstacles that faces people he can deal with all the anxieties and the crisis that will face you as you live the Christian life notice the detail and there's so much detail in the word of God notice the detail as we read of them passing over in verses 14 to 17 when the people said out from their tents to pass over Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest notice that these words and brackets now the

Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest now that these words are there just to show us that this was a great miracle performed by the Lord the time of harvest for the Jews would be springtime the end of April the beginning of May and that is the time when the river would burst its banks you see the Lord didn't take them through the Jordan when the Jordan in a time of drought when it had almost dried up no the God of the Bible always seems to show us his might and power by doing these great miracles when they seem so unlikely as the people of Israel approach the Jordan they find the banks of the river are bursting they see the flow of the river as it rushes down before them and with a steep gradient it all seems so unlikely and we also know that that flood plain would be full of brush and jungle growth the river would have been a mile wide it was fast flowing and this is when God took them through the Jordan and a time when it looked impossible and that is so often the way God works when the people of God are helpless and they approach the difficulties before them in their helplessness the Lord is displaying to them that it wasn't their work they didn't contribute towards the opening of the Jordan it was his work it is the Lord who delivered the Israelites and it is the Lord who delivered each and every one of us from the problem of our sin the Psalmist could say in Psalm 121 our help came from the Lord and here the Lord has wrought a great miracle in taking his people through the Jordan every one of that nation was taken through safely to the other side to the promised land and then the Lord instructs them in chapter 4 he calls his people to remember what he has done in chapter 4 verse 6 he commands them to gather 12 stones 12 stones from the bed of the river Jordan and to take one stone for every tribe of Israel and once they had crossed over and they had camped for the night there they would raise a cairn a cairn with these 12 stones and they would set them standing so that in future generations when the children will ask what do these stones mean you will tell them of the way the Lord dealt with you that he took your fathers through the Jordan River to the promised land and friends we

[23 : 40] have here brought before us the importance of the principle of remembering what God has done and the importance of teaching the young about what God has done for his people throughout the history of this world here they had experienced an unusual display of God's power they had seen the work of the hand of God and that work was to be remembered and so there is a pattern of remembrance brought into the church and do we not still have that pattern of remembrance in the church when our saviour instructs his disciples this do in remembrance of me you know if the Lord hadn't instituted the sacrament of his supper I wonder how much emphasis that would be in the church of the suffering and the death of our saviour but he's asked them to remember his death until he comes again friends there are possibly some here who have never sat at the Lord's table and who know in their own hearts that they are the Lord's

I was in a church in Glasgow recently and I heard a minister preaching on the importance of remembering the Lord's death and of going to the Lord's table and he said in his sermon how growing up in the Highlands it was often said that the godliest man in the village never went to the Lord's table or the godliest woman in the village never sat at the Lord's table and we acknowledge that there were likely many of the Lord's people who never did sit at the Lord's table on this earth who are now in glory but the Lord has instructed his church to remember his death and if you are a

child of God tonight the Lord is inviting you to come and remember his death if everyone was to not take their places at the Lord's table there would be no church on this earth if everyone was to sit aside and leave the sacrament to others better than themselves there would be nobody to take office in Christ's church to preach the gospel friend if you are a child of God the Lord commanded his people here remember the work that he has done and he commands his church here to remember the work of his son who died on Calvary's cross who died to redeem a people for himself and if you are a child of God then it is your duty to remember him in his sufferings by taking your place at his table in chapter 4 and verse 19 we are told the people came up out of the Jordan on the 10th day of the first month and they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho they came up out of the Jordan on the 10th day of the first month and you sometimes ask why are all these details included while friends it was 40 years to that very date that the children of God had begun to prepare from going out of Egypt 40 years to the very date they crossed into the promised land that same date marked the beginning of their redemption and it marked the completion of their redemption as a people they were brought from slavery in Egypt to possess a land prepared for them by the Lord they were brought to be heirs of a land and we have friends the Ark of the Covenant coming out of the Jordan and the waters go back as they were the Ark of the Covenant many believed to be a type of Christ a type of Christ in the Old Testament a symbol of the Lord Jesus

Christ the one who went in to the sufferings of his people to allow every one of them to pass from bondage to sin to life in the promised land he stood in the Jordan in our place and he allowed us to cross over to the other side what a deliverance the Lord Jesus Christ has wrought in his death what deliverance there is for the people of God he will break our bondage to sin he will sustain us through the wilderness of this life he will take us through the Jordan River and he will take us friends at last to that promised land that land that flows with milk and honey where all of his people shall be glad and the Lord shall wipe away every tear from their eyes he will take them as the Savior does to his father's house of many mansions friends see that you find this Christ see that you have this Christ as your own Savior he is the one who calls you tonight come unto me and be saved he is the one who says whosoever shall come unto me I will in no wise cast out friends there is life eternal life in the gospel and the Savior is calling you tonight as he calls every son of Adam to come to him and he assures you that if you come to him confessing your sin calling to him for mercy that he will redeem you and he will bring you into that kingdom he will bring you into a land which flows with milk and honey which will sustain you for life and for eternity see friend that you see to the needs of your soul there is a Savior who is willing to save to the other most all those that come to God through him let us pray gracious and most blessed God we thank and praise the old Lord tonight for the hope of the gospel we praise the old Lord for the faithfulness that was demonstrated to the children of Israel as they sojourned in the wilderness and as they were lent through the Jordan River into that promised land we pray all Lord that thou would spring us as individuals to come to the Savior who will take us through all the adversities of this life and who will at last take us into that kingdom that hath none end at all we pray that the old Lord would bless thy work speak to souls and that they would redeem us all

Lord keep us by thy grace and wash and cleanse us in the precious blood of Christ for we ask all in his name and for a sake amen we shall bring our service to a close now singing to the praise of God and sing Psalms Psalm 32 Psalm 32 and sing Psalms from the beginning of the Psalm to the verse Mark 5 how blessed the one who has received forgiveness for a sin whose sins are covered from God's face whose debt is cancelled in God's grace there's no deceit in him when I kept silent all my bones with groaning were worn out beneath your hand I felt entrapped both day and night my strength was sapped as in a summer strout then I laid bare my sin to you the guilt that lay within I said oh Lord I have transgressed and you forgave when I confessed you pardoned all my sin let's sing these verses to God's praise oh bless to the one who has received forgiveness for a sin.