

MESSIAH IN THE OT

Week 4 – Crossing the Jordan (Joshua 3–4)

October 1, 2019

The book of Joshua carries a strong Messianic theme. Joshua is a foreshadowing of Jesus! We've seen Joshua whose Hebrew name was Yeshua leading the children of Israel into a place of victory and rest – into the land of promise. Who has acquired the place of ultimate victory and rest for us? The Messiah, Jesus! And, in understanding Jericho and Rahab, we understand clearly God's plan of redemption based on His covenant with Abram. Gen. 12:3 - *I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*

As we continue understanding the MESSIANIC THEME in the OT, the book of Joshua focuses on the faithfulness of God in giving Israel the land of promise. And, the book of Joshua is the revelation of God's hatred of sin! *The iniquity of the Amorites* (Gen. 15:16) was complete. The entry into the land of promise in Joshua's day was according to God's plan, according to His promise, and was also due to the wickedness of the Canaanites.

The setting for the crossing and entrance into the land, circa 1406 BC....

Josh. 2:21b-24 - *And she sent them away, and they departed. And she bound the scarlet cord (tikvah – hope) in the window. ²² They departed and went to the mountain, and stayed there three days until the pursuers returned. The pursuers sought them all along the way, but did not find them. ²³ So the two men returned, descended from the mountain, and crossed over; and they came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all that had befallen them. ²⁴ And they said to Joshua, 'Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us.*

This was no reconnaissance mission. The two men were to meet Rahab, hear her confession of faith in God, and offer her physical rescue from Jericho. We see in the book of Joshua the extent to which God goes in bringing a Gentile, the least likely to come to faith, and her family to salvation...having been blessed by Jews.

Josh. 3:1 - *Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and they set out from Acacia and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel (2+M along with all their possessions!), and lodged there before they crossed over.*

Joshua rose early to accomplish God's will. We read in the Gospels that Jesus often rose early to pray – submitting Himself to God the Father (Mark 1:35)

And lodged there before they crossed over... Lodged there? Why? They had set out 40 years ago for this the land of milk and honey. Why not rush in? "Lodge" means to abide/remain.

Josh. 3:2 - *So it was, after three days, that the officers went through the camp; Let's think of "three days" as God's timing.*

2

Josh. 3:3-4 - *and they (the officers who went through the camp) commanded the people, saying, 'When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. ⁴Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before.'* Who goes before the people? The ark of the covenant carried by the priests of the Lord. We know from the Scripture that the ark of the covenant represents God's presence as God dwelled between the cherubim above the ark in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle in the wilderness.

God required that they follow approx. 1,000 yards behind the ark. Why? Because the ark represented God's presence, there was to be a holy respect for the ark of the covenant. AND, all the 2+M people needed to have a clear view of the ark that they would know the way they were to go. The distance allowed all to see the ark guiding them, *that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before.* This was a new manner of being led since the pillar of cloud/pillar of fire perhaps would no longer guide them. The Bible does not specifically tell us when the pillar of cloud/pillar of fire stopped leading the Israelites. Note, however, Num. 33:1-49 ending on the plains of Moab. Consider Josh. 5:11 which states that the provision of manna stopped.

God had told the Jewish people that it was the responsibility of the Kohathites of the tribe of Levi to carry the ark on poles (Num. 4:5-6, 15). At the Jordan River we read of the priests, the Levites, bearing the ark. Why? Some have said because of this solemn and extraordinary occasion.

On the bank of the Jordan River...

Josh. 3:5-6 - *Joshua said to the people, ‘Sanctify yourselves (Consecrate yourselves; set yourselves apart) for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.’⁶ Then Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, ‘Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people.’ So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people.* Because this would be a spiritual battle, spiritual preparation was required. *Sanctify yourselves* means they were to separate themselves from common things and to focus on the LORD, and to realize that the LORD would most definitely accomplish wonders among them. (Note. Ex. 19:14 re: sanctifying themselves at Sinai)

Josh. 3:7 - *And the LORD said to Joshua, ‘This day 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.* This is a foreshadowing regarding the exaltation of Yeshua/Jesus!

Joshua/Yeshua is at the Jordan River. The Jordan River is significant in Scripture.

The prophet Elijah (circa 870-810 BC), who was known as a hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist (II Kings 1:8) was translated/taken bodily into heaven on the east side of the Jordan (II Kings 2:1-11). Joshua and the children of Israel were poised to cross the Jordan on the east side of the Jordan.

3

In the Gospels we find John the Baptizer who wore a camel’s hair garment with a leather belt baptizing on the east side of the Jordan River. John is the one whom the angel Gabriel told Zacharias, John’s father, that he would have a son who would come in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:13-17). John baptized in Bethabara “beyond the Jordan”... (Jn. 1:28) “Bethabara” means “place of crossing/passage,”

In Josh. 4:9 we read that *Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood; and they are there to this day.* It appears that this is where John the Baptizer preached/ baptized and called out the Pharisees and Sadducees as they claimed righteousness since Abraham was their father. In Matt. 3:7-9 John stated that God could raise up children to Abraham from “these stones.” Might John have been baptizing at the location where Joshua and the children of Israel crossed and set up the 12 stones?

The Jordan River is connected with God’s plan for Israel. The Jordan River is connected with the Messiah.

Jesus began His public ministry and announced Himself to Israel at the Jordan...

Matt. 3:16-17 - When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'

God the Father EXALTED God the Son at the Jordan. It is believed that it was here, at this specific Jordan River location, that Jesus was immersed by John the Baptizer and exalted by God the Father.

Continuing in Joshua 3...

Josh. 3:8-9 - You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you have come to the edge of the water of the Jordan, you shall stand in the Jordan.' ⁹ So Joshua said to the children of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God."

Josh. 3:10-16 - And Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God is among you..." ¹¹ Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan. ¹² Now therefore, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from every tribe. ¹³ And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap. So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, ¹⁵ and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for how long we're not told) (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest), ¹⁶ that the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan. What did the Jewish people

4

see when they lodged by the Jordan River for THREE DAYS? A river OVERFLOWING its banks (Josh. 3:15). God's intent: _____

The Jordan River is mentioned nearly 200 times in Scripture. The Jordan is one of the fastest flowing rivers of its size. Beginning at the foot of Mount Hermon, the Jordan travels about twenty-five miles before emptying into the Sea of Galilee. It continues to flow from the southern end of the Sea of Galilee and wind its way to the Dead Sea, about sixty-five miles away. The Jordan is narrow - fifty to seventy-five feet wide in most places. Jordan means "to descend" or "go down." The river drops significantly in elevation. Mount Hermon stands 9,000 feet above sea level while the Dead Sea sits

1,400 feet below sea level. The drop in elevation is what causes the Jordan to be one of the fastest flowing rivers of its size.

The fast flowing waters created a natural barrier between the land of promise and the lands to the east. At times, it also served as a line of protection when God's prophets and kings were being pursued. Elijah crossed to the east side of the Jordan to hide from King Ahab. David also crossed the Jordan when his son, Absalom schemed against him. During the harvest this barrier became much more of an impossible challenge as it overflowed its banks. "To cross the Jordan" became an expression concerning passing through something that stands in the way.

AND, aside from the banks overflowing in the spring, are you aware that wild beasts INFESTED the area during this time of year? The river in flood stage overflowed its banks into a plain that grew up as a thicket. The Zor, the narrow depression at the lower plain of the Jordan, was 150 ft. deep. It was labeled as the "jungle of the Jordan." The waters flooding into this deep depression during spring drove out ferocious animals that had been occupying the Zor. And when the flood waters spilled into their habitat, the animals fled and infested the neighboring country!

The Jordan "thicket" concealed wild animals! And so we read... Jer. 49:19 – *Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the floodplain/thicket of the Jordan.* (Jer. 12:5; Jer. 50:44).

What did God tell the priests? *When you have come to the edge of the water of the Jordan, you shall STAND in the Jordan* (Josh. 3:8)!

And it shall come to pass, as soon as the SOLES of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD...shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off...(Josh. 3:13) - FROM THAT POINT, NOT BEFORE.

...the feet of the priests who bore the ark DIPPED in the edge of the water.... The Hebrew word for "dipped" means PLUNGED!

BUT GOD! That's where our perspective needs to land and settle! Does God allow circumstances in our lives that appear to be insurmountable to cause us to realize that any way through this path can ONLY BE OF GOD!

Was Jericho watching?!

Josh. 3:16 - *that the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan. So the waters that went*

down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho. How did the children of Israel cross the Jordan? Perhaps

– hundreds or thousands cross abreast! God heaped up the rivers at Adam approx. 15 miles upstream from the crossing area! Josh. 4:10 tells us that the people *hurried and crossed over!* And the waters may have been dammed up at Zaretan – 12 miles further north!

Josh. 3:17 - *Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan.* The children of Israel were now on the other side of the Jordan in the land that GOD had promised them. For Israel it was a place of battle, but most of all, it was a place of *trust!* Wouldn't this be the perfect time to attack? Humanly speaking...yes. BUT GOD is never in a hurry. AND, beyond us doing something, we always need to **be** something for Him. And so God gave directives to the people that speak to His desire to conquer Israel – to do something in their hearts before they would move forward to engage in an external/physical conquest of Jericho under God's guidance and direction.

Josh. 4:1-9 - *And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying: ²'Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe, ³and command them, saying, 'Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm. You shall carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight.' ⁴ Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; ⁵ and Joshua said to them: "Cross over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, ⁶ that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' ⁷ Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.' ⁸ And the children of Israel did so, just as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, as the LORD had spoken to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. ⁹ Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood; and they are there to this day. Why?*

Josh. 4:10 - *So the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the LORD had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua; and the people hurried and crossed over.*

God interceded and performed WONDERS!

Josh. 4:11-14 - *Then it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over, that the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed over in the presence of the*

6

people. ¹² *And the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses had spoken to them.* ¹³ *About forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho.* ¹⁴ *On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they had feared Moses, all the days of his life.* The men from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh had requested of Moses permission to settle on the east side of the Jordan River where the land was suited to raise their livestock. They were granted permission only if they would send their armies to fight in the land of promise on behalf of the rest of the nation.

About forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho. The children of Israel knew they would be engaged in war! The battle rages!

Josh. 4:15-18 - *Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying,* ¹⁶ *‘Command the priests who bear the ark of the Testimony to come up from the Jordan.’* ¹⁷ *Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, “Come up from the Jordan.”* ¹⁸ *And it came to pass, when the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests’ feet touched the dry land, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks as before.* Why did the river return to its flood stage? Perhaps a flooded river would prevent them from retreating, going back, returning to Egypt. For the believer there is no retreat. But consider: as believers do we move forward moment-by-moment or stay the same!?

The book of Joshua tells us the exact day that the children of Israel crossed the Jordan.

Josh. 4:19 - *Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho.* We’ve already been told in Exodus 12 that on the tenth of Nisan, during the first Passover in Egypt, the Jewish people were to take lambs into their homes...live with them for four days...scrutinizing them to make sure they were without blemish...and then, if spotless, they were to kill the lambs and place the blood of the Passover lambs over their doors and on the sides of their doors. This was passage to their freedom, their release from bondage to slavery in Egypt.

How does the Jordan connect with the 10th of Nisan during Passover? As Joshua passed triumphantly through the Jordan River on the tenth of Nisan, four days before Passover, Jesus would pass along the same route on His way to Jericho on the tenth day of Nisan

(Matt. 19:1; Luke 19:1)...and then travel toward Jerusalem for His triumphal entry on “Lamb Selection Day” (Matt. 21:1-11).

Josh. 4:19-20 - *Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho.* ²⁰ *And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal.* Gilgal would become their base of operations for the conquest of the land. Therefore, it was appropriate that the first work at Gilgal was to set up a memorial to God’s great works.

Josh. 4:21-23 - *Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: ‘When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, ‘What are these stones?’ ²² then you shall let your children know, saying, ‘Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land’; ²³ for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed*

7

over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over.... Why did they need to remember?

Do we need to remember God’s powerful work in our lives? Are His works powerful...in our lives?

ALWAYS...the past great works of God are a springboard – launching us out in faith. Or do we hunker down and get settled/comfortable? We need to trust God for greater and greater works in the future.

The purpose of this memorial was so that the people of Israel could teach their children about the great things God had done, so that the work of God would not be forgotten among the generations. We often fail in our trust of God because we forget the great things He has done...

Josh. 4:23-24 - *for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over ²⁴ that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.”*

The parting of the Red Sea, the deliverance of Israel, the heaping up of the waters of the Jordan wasn’t for Israel alone. There was also a purpose for the WORLD!

Gen. 12:3 – that all the families of the earth would be blessed through Abraham and his descendants. THE MESSIAH WOULD COME FOR THE WORLD!

Gen. 18:18 – YES – God would use Israel as an instrument of blessing for the NATIONS – for the WORLD. The nations would witness God’s chastisement on Israel when they disobeyed and they would witness His blessings on Israel when they were wholly devoted to God.

And throughout Scripture the message would speak of the One Who would come pay the price for the disobedience, the sin of the people...and deliver us from our bondage – if we believe with our heart.

Rom. 10:9 - *...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved* – ULTIMATE DELIVERANCE! HALLELUJAH!

Questions:

Have you read this account in Joshua perhaps like never before? If so – how so? And, why?

Do you have new questions? If so, are you prompted to dig deeper?

How will your life be impacted?

What does moving forward/pressing on as a believer look like for you?

Suggested Homework:

Reread the handout for Week 4

Select one teaching from the lesson into which you desire to dig deeper:

Find the cross references in Scripture to that teaching.

Begin to jot down observations about what you're reading in the cross references.

Ask questions and begin to find answers from Scripture.

Share with at least one person what you learned from this lesson.

Read Week 5 when you receive it.