

THE CROSSING OF THE JORDAN



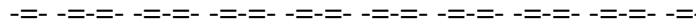
Passages to Study: Joshua 2:22-24; 3:1-17; 4:1-24

Read with the class: Joshua 3:9-17

Texts for memorization:

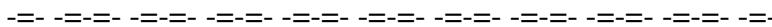
Younger: 1 Corinthians 15:4, "Christ ... was buried and He rose again the third day

Older 1 Corinthians 15:3-4



OBJECTIVES: To teach:

- 1. That God's omnipotent power of God is able to perform a miracle just at the right time.
2. That faith means to move forward because the Lord is going before us, even when there is not a complete understanding of the future.
3. The importance of remembering the goodness of the Lord towards us.
4. The significance of the Breaking of Bread as a means of expressing thankfulness.



SCENE No. 1. VISUAL AIDS: In Shittim, near the river Jordan, figures of the spies reporting to Joshua and the leaders of the people.

DEVELOPMENT:

- The people of Israel are facing a new experience, a new challenge.
Apl. There will always be new experiences and tests throughout all of life, for example a change of house or school. Through the Israelites, God teaches us how to live through these experiences and learn by them.
- The spies return from the other side of the river, after hiding for three days.
- They recount how all those who live on the other side are fearful of the Israelites. (Jos. 2:23-24)
- The spies express confidence that the Lord has delivered the whole land into the hand of Israel.
Cns. This should not make them think the battle is already won. The report of the spies should not have the effect of producing a dangerous self confidence, for it is necessary that they depend on God alone.
- The Jordan river is like a barrier that reminds the Israelites they have insufficient power or means at their disposal to enter the land unless God intervenes on their behalf.
- Even when they do not know what the Lord is going to do, they are willing to obey Him and go forward.
Cns. Some young people are fearful of trusting in Christ for salvation, others do not obey the Lord in baptism, and others prefer not to take their place in the local assembly. They fear not being able to remain faithful. This reveals a healthy distrust of self, but at the same time a lack of trust in God. What if the Israelites had not moved forward?
- After receiving instructions from the Lord, Joshua speaks to the people about the miracle that will clearly show that the living God is among them.
- When Joshua guides the people across the Jordan as Moses had guided them through the Red Sea, the people saw that God was with the new leader, and that they can trust him.
- Joshua orders the people to sanctify themselves in preparation for crossing over to the other side of the river.
- To sanctify means to leave behind their idols and all that they might have copied from other nations.
- God does not want His people to be like those around.
- The living God is very different to the gods of the peoples around. Their gods were products of their imagination and were false.

THE CROSSING OF THE JORDAN Page 2 of 4



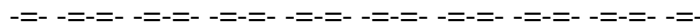
Apl. Trusting in God for salvation brings changes, including leaving behind those sinful practises which are not compatible with the new life.

Cns. Death to the past life in the desert, “burial” by passing through the waters of the Jordan, and resurrection on the other side in the promised land, is a figure of what happens at conversion.

- From now on the cloud would not guide Israel. They are to follow the ark.
- The ark is the symbol of the presence of God with them.
- The reason for following is “that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore”. (Joshua 3:3-4)

Apl. When we begin something new in life, we need not have “stress” if we know that we are being led of God.

- The miracle that they were going to experience was intended to strengthen their faith in view of the trials ahead. (Vs. 10)



SCENE No. 2. VISUAL AIDS. Facing the river Jordan, a figure of the ark going ahead of a group of people into the river.

DEVELOPMENT:

- The barrier presented by the Jordan River is a test of faith for the people of Israel.
- Wasting no time, Joshua rises up early in the morning and moves all the people close to the river.
- At this time they do not have Moses as their leader nor his rod that was used to open the Red Sea.
- Since the living God is truly among them (vs. 10) they will be victorious and conquer the promised land.
- At that time of year, the river was high and this meant death to anyone who did not have a means of crossing. **Note:** This does not happen now, since there are dams that control the flow of the Sea of Galilee which feeds the Jordan, which in turn empties into the Dead Sea.
- The Israelites have God’s promise (Jos. 3:13), but the water will not part until the feet of the priests enter the river.
- It will require faith on the part of the priests who lead carrying the ark to step into the water and show their faith. When they do so, the river opens.
- God has promised to bring the people into the Promised Land and they make the promise theirs by going forward in faith.
- From here on they will have to fight in order to take possession of the land.

Apl. Progress in the Christian life is on the basis of faith, with dependence on God, Who opens up the way before those who trust in Him.

- Joshua encourages the people to go forward.

Sug. Start a conversation among the students about what **FAITH** is. It is not a jump in the dark. Factors that must be present are **1)** The known will of God. **2)** An offered blessing. **3)** The desire to have that blessing. **4)** An indication of the means to be used or way to reach the objective.

Exm. To apply the principle of faith to salvation:

- 1) The will of God. He is not willing that any perish. (2 Peter 3:9)
- 2) The offered blessing. Being saved. (Acts 16:31)
- 3) The desire to possess the blessing. “What wouldst thou have me to do?” (Mar.10:51; Luke18:41)
“What must I do to be saved?” (Acts16:30) These questions show the desire in the heart.
- 4) A way indicated. “He that heareth my word and believes”. (John 5:24)

Cns. The Israelites knew: **1)** The will of God -- that they go over the river.

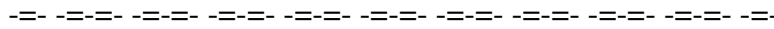
- 2) The blessing -- to enter the land promised them as a place to live.
- 3) Their hearts longed for an end of their pilgrimage.



4) By following the ark, they were in the way.

- Twelve men were chosen to follow the priests, each one a representative of his own tribe.

Apl. Inspired leaders are needed to guide the people of God today. Sunday School teachers should be “leaders” to their students, who should be able to see in them a true faith worth imitating.



SCENE No. 3. VISUAL AIDS. Figures of the ark on the shoulders of the priests, who are standing in the open riverbed, and figures of the people passing to the other side.

DEVELOPMENT:

God was faithful to His word, for as soon as the water began to wet the feet of the priests who carried the ark, the river dried up.

- The priests had to remain standing in the middle of the river while all the people passed from one side to the other.

Cns. Besides Joshua, the priests manifested leadership and their example of standing with the water behind them for the hours that were needed for the people to pass over, required a great measure of faith and constancy, qualities needed by those who lead others.

- The tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh chose to live on the eastern side of the Jordan.

- A company of soldiers, representatives of these tribes, went over the Jordan with the other tribes, showing their oneness with the people. (Jos. 4:12)

- The people had to designate twelve men for an important task. Once they were on the other side, they would know what it was. (Joshua 4:1-2)

Cmt. God does not reveal everything to us right at the start. The principle of faith is that of following step by step, and while we are in the way, God continues to reveal His will and makes it possible to fulfill it.

- The twelve men had to return to the river and take out twelve large stones before the priests came out.

- The stones were taken to Gilgal and raised up there at the place of their first camp.

- When the ark came up on the other side of the river, carried by the priests, the river returned to its normal course. (Jos. 4:18)

Cns. The road of return was closed.

Apl. Conversion is a one way street, that of going on with the Lord forever. The believer can not be happy except when living the life that God has prepared for him.

- It is calculated that more than a million people passed over Jordan, and God was glorified.

- The Israelites could feel encouraged upon seeing the hand of God with them, while the inhabitants of the land were terrified.

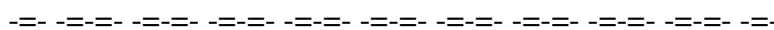
Cns. Just as the Israelites had the ark as a sign of God’s presence, so also believers today have the very presence of God through His Holy Spirit.

Cmt. The Lord has promised to be with us, and not leave us comfortless (orphans).

- The river is a symbol of death. Passing over to the other side is equivalent to coming out of death into resurrection, a new life.

Apl. Just as the ark entered in the river, Christ has entered into death and has taken us to the “other side” as resurrected ones.

Apl. The stones served as a permanent evidence of a historical fact in their lives. They were placed as a monument and reminder. (See Scene 4)



THE CROSSING OF THE JORDAN Page 4 of 4



SCENE No. 4. VISUAL AIDS. Figures of the things we use to help us remember, things such as photos, markers in the garden which show where something was planted, baptism, the table with bread and wine as used in the Remembrance meeting, and a figure of the twelve stones raised up.

DEVELOPMENT:

- The stones taken out of their place would serve to awaken the curiosity of future generations, who would ask "Why?".

Apl. God wants His people to remember his power displayed on their behalf and be thankful.

- There are things that awaken memories of the past and bring important events to mind.
- Parents take pictures of their children to remind them of important events.
- Talks with friends bring to mind events of the past.
- These may be happy or sad memories.
- As certain activities are carried out, such as putting seeds into the ground, it is necessary to remember where and what was sown.
- The experiences of the past teach a labourer how best to do the task, and the result, the harvest, shows him that his work was not in vain.

Cns. The Israelites would later say that it was worth while in crossing the river according to God's will, and their children would learn that God honours those obey Him in faith.

- At baptism, one remembers that Christ died for us, was buried and rose again. Baptism reminds us of the burial of the Lord Jesus.
- The table with bread and wine as used in the Lord's supper reminds us of the Lord Jesus Christ and His work on our behalf. It is a request of the Lord that He be remembered in the work He did for us.

Apl. The grateful heart will want to serve and please the Lord.

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