

# Sermon Outline

**“AND THE LORD GAVE THEM REST”:  
A CHRISTIAN READING OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA**

---

## **GET BEHIND GOD (JOSHUA 3:1-5)**

### **I. Introduction**

### **II. Setting Out from Shittim (Joshua 3:1)**

- A. After the spies had given their report, Joshua rose early and led Israel out of Shittim.
- B. Joshua leads Israel to the Jordan.
- C. Israel lodges at the Jordan before crossing it.
- D. Joshua moves slowly because he is leading the entire nation, not just the soldiers.
- E. Joshua shows himself to be a patient and compassionate leader.
- F. Joshua’s “style” of gentle, humble, servant-leadership is required by God’s Law.
  1. All nations use laws to represent and protect their core values—Israel is no different.
  2. By legislating servant-leadership, God wants this kind of leadership to be protected within Israel.  
—Deuteronomy 17:20: “...*his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers...*”
  3. The rest of the world is only now getting the hang of it!

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What does Deuteronomy 17:20 teach about God’s ideal king/ruler? (2) How does Joshua’s servant-leadership show in this text?

### **III. Joshua’s Instructions to the People of Israel (Joshua 3:2-5)**

- A. Upon arriving at the Jordan, the people of Israel camp there for three days.
- B. At the end of the three days, Joshua sends his officers to instruct the people (3:2).

- C. Joshua gives the people three instructions (Josh 3:3-5).
1. Israel must follow the Ark of the Covenant of YHWH as soon as they see it being moved (3:3).
    - a. The Ark of the Covenant is YHWH's throne on earth (Ex 25:17, 22).
    - b. By following the Ark, Israel (including Joshua) allows God to take the lead.
    - c. God is still the undisputed Sovereign and King of Israel.
  2. Israel must keep a space of 2,000 cubits (900 meters/0.6 miles) from the Ark (3:4).
  3. Israel must consecrate themselves (3:5).
    - a. To consecrate is to make holy, to set apart to God.
    - b. Why must Israel consecrate themselves?  
—Because “tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.”
    - c. YHWH is about to show himself in great power and glory—and Israel must be prepared for a visit from the Great Lord.
- D. The timing of the divine visitation may also be something worth noting:
1. 1:10: Joshua tells the people to prepare themselves to move out from Shittim in *three* days.
  2. 3:2: When the Israelites come to the River Jordan, they wait for another *three* days.
  3. If “the end of three days” in 3:2 is sometime in the evening of the sixth day, then the next day—the day on which the Lord performs his wonders; the day on which the Lord leads Israel across the Jordan—would be the seventh day.
  4. The seventh day is the day of YHWH's visitation, his great day of power and wonders.  
—The Sabbath pattern may well be present here.
  5. God wants Israel to understand their entrance into the Promised Land in terms of entering the Sabbath.
  6. Even if we are reading too much into the timing of events, the close link between entering the Promised Land and entering the eternal Sabbath rest is already confirmed in Hebrews 4:8-10.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) What are the three instructions that Joshua gives to Israel? (2) What is the Ark of the Covenant? (3) What is the significance of Israel's following the Ark? (4) What is the significance of God doing wonders on the seventh day?

#### IV. Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah

*Everything in this Scripture—from the instruction to follow the Ark to the very timing of Israel's movement—is meant to press one truth into our hearts: Our heavenly Father wants to lead us into our holy place of rest. And God is so concerned that each one of his people arrives at this goal that he dwells with us to lead us there. So we follow our heavenly Father as his humble and obedient children. We follow his leading, through his Word, to our eternal Sabbath Land in the Lord Jesus Christ.*

- A. Like the Israelites of old, we need God to guide us because we don't know the way (Josh 3:4).
- B. The unbelieving World knows *something* about the eternal Sabbath Land. But it tries to find it either by false religions, or achieve it by secular and God-less means.
- C. God guides his Church today by his holy Word.
- D. The Word of God shows us that the Sabbath Land is in our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 1:3; 7-10).
- E. We receive God's promised Sabbath by faith in Jesus our Lord.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) How do people of the unbelieving World try to seek God's Sabbath Land? (2) Where can God's Sabbath Land be found? (3) How do we get to God's Sabbath Land? What works must we do?