

Sermon Outline

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

LEAD ON, O KING ETERNAL (JOSHUA 3:6-13)

I. A Taste of the Future

II. The Day of March Has Come (Joshua 3:6)

- A. The great day of march arrives (3:6).
- B. Joshua instructs the priests to “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before the people.”
- C. The priests (dutifully) obey Joshua (3:6d): “So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people.”

***Questions for reflection:** Why is it significant that 3:6 features an almost exact repeat of Joshua’s original instruction? What is the author trying to communicate by this?

III. The LORD Speaks to Joshua (Joshua 3:7-8)

- A. The Lord tells Joshua that “Today” he will begin exalting Joshua before Israel (3:7a).
- B. Why does YHWH want to exalt Joshua? (3:7b)
 - 1. So that Israel “may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.”
 - 2. At this particular moment in salvation history, Joshua Ben-Nun is the Messiah of Israel.
- C. YHWH instructs Joshua to command the priests (3:8):
—The priests are to “stand still” in the Jordan.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does Joshua’s exaltation say about God’s opinion on exalted humans? (2) Why does God want to exalt Joshua?

IV. Joshua Speaks to Israel (Joshua 3:9-13)

- A. Joshua calls Israel to heed the Lord's words (3:9).
1. Joshua does not ask Israel to listen to him but to the Lord.
 2. Joshua sees himself as a mediator between God and man.
- B. Joshua presents to Israel the proofs that God is with them and will grant Israel victory over the inhabitants of the land (3:10-13).
1. A historical note: 3:10 shows us that the cultural make-up of the Promised Land was quite diverse.
 - a. Joshua scholar Trent Butler writes: “[Israel] faced a number of different small city-states, each with its own tradition, people, culture, and god.”
 - b. Israel's entrance represents a clash of civilizations: YHWH's versus Satan's.
 2. The Ark of the Covenant is going ahead into the Jordan (3:11).
 3. Israel is to take twelve men from each of the twelve tribes (3:12).
 4. When the Ark-bearing priests touch the river, “the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing...” (3:13).
- C. This miracle is similar to the parting of the Red Sea in Exodus 14. —This whole event is designed to bring one important fact home to Israel: God wants Israel to see Joshua as the new Moses. And through this new Moses, God will lead Israel into their Promised Land and their Sabbath rest.
- D. YHWH is acknowledged twice as Master of all the earth.
1. Here they are:
 - a. 3:11: “Behold, the ark of the covenant of *the Lord of all the earth...*”
 - b. 3:13: “And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the LORD, *the Lord of all the earth...*”
 2. Why this emphasis on God as Lord of all the earth?
 - a. It's to show Israel that he is Master of all of nature's laws.

- b. It's to remind Israel that he is Landlord of the Promised Land and has every right to remove his rebellious tenants.

E. Israel's crossing of the Jordan is a kind of Judgment Day for the Canaanites.

—The Lord YHWH is Master of the Earth and the Prophet Joshua is his lieutenant.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is the significance of the miracle that God is about to do at the Jordan? What is this miracle designed to do? (2) Why is the Lord acknowledged twice as Master of all the earth? What does Joshua's exaltation say about God's opinion on exalted humans?

V. Joshua as History and Parable

- A. As history, Joshua represents a new beginning for Israel.
- B. Yet, the victory is temporary. Joshua does not lead Israel to the ultimate Sabbath.
- C. Joshua serves as a parable of the coming Kingdom.
- D. Joshua serves as a parable also to help the Church understand her journey in the world.
- E. How is Joshua 3:7-13 a picture of our situation today?
 - 1. Like the Israelites, the Church today is still on the other side of the Jordan. We have not yet come into our final Sabbath Land.
 - 2. Like the Israelites, we are on the way.
 - 3. Like the Israelites, we know that God will indeed bring us to the Promised Land.
 - 4. Like the Israelites, we only have God's Word to guide us.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How does Joshua function for the Church today? (2) In what ways is the situation in Joshua 3:7-13 like the situation of the Church today?

VI. Lead On, O King Eternal

The Lord God is leading his Church to the Jordan, the “boundary” between this Present Evil Age and the glorious Age to come. By his sovereign grace, God will make a way for us into the Promised Land-Age. Until we arrive, God calls us to press on amidst persecution, worldly seductions, doubts, and the powers of darkness. What sustains us? What would keep us going with God? Only his promise that he will part the Jordan for us. Only his Word that he will bring us through. Just as it was the case for the Church of old, our Father wants us, the Church of today, to trust in his holy Word and allow it to lead us to our final destination.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) Where is God leading the Church to?
(2) What would keep us going with God today?