

# Sermon Outline

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

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### **PASSING OVER (JOSHUA 3:14-17)**

#### **I. The Moment of Truth (Joshua 3:14-15)**

- A. The people set off to cross the Jordan.
- B. Having heard the Word of God through Joshua, Israel knows that there is only one option ahead of them—and that is to obey all that God had told them to do.
- C. There is a note: “...now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest” (3:15). This shows us...
  - 1. why the priests could touch the waters so quickly without even entering the river itself.
  - 2. crossing the Jordan at this point of the year (harvest, March-April) is difficult and dangerous.

**\*Questions for reflection:** Why is the note about the Jordan overflowing significant? What does it say about attempting a river crossing at this time of year? How does it set the stage for God’s great act?

#### **II. The Waters Stop at Adam (Joshua 3:16)**

- A. When the priests touch the floodwaters, and this is just at the edge of the river and not even in the river itself, something astonishing happens.
- B. On the eastern bank of the Jordan, some 27k north of Jericho, there is a town called Adam, which is about 19k from another town named “Zarethan.”
- C. The Lord God works his wonders: The waters near Adam “stood and rose up in a heap” (3:16).
- D. The Israelites would have noticed the section of the Jordan River nearest them thinning out very quickly.  
—YHWH had stopped the waters for his people once again.

E. “And the people passed over opposite Jericho.”

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) Approximately how far is the city of Adam from where the Israelites were? (2) Why does Scripture say that the waters near Adam “stood and rose up in a heap”? (3) What does this say about God’s ability? How does this show that he is Lord of the Earth (3:11, 13)?

### **III. A Summary of Events (Joshua 3:17)**

- A. 3:17 presents us with a summary of the events.
- B. The priests who bore the Ark of the Covenant stood on dry ground in the River.
- C. All the Israelites passed over on dry ground “until” the whole nation had crossed.  
—The word “until” suggests to us that after the whole nation of Israel had crossed to the western side, the Lord God allowed the waters to flow normally again.

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) How does 3:17 function in relation to the whole event? (2) What does the word “until” imply?

### **IV. God Promises, God Fulfils**

- A. Joshua 3:14-17 is the fulfilment of the promise in 3:7-13.
- B. Before God performs a wonder that would forward salvation history, God will inform his people about it through his prophets (Isa 42:8-9).
- C. With the stopping of the Jordan comes a new sense of national confidence.  
—The stopping of the river is the God-given sign that God is with Israel and will overcome Israel’s enemies.

**\*Questions for reflection:** How does 3:7-13 connect with 3:14-17? If 3:7-13 is the promise, 3:14-17 represents the \_\_\_\_\_.

## V. God Has Brought Us across our Jordans

- A. In Christ, we have become fellow citizens with the faithful Israelites.  
—Joshua 3:14-17 is part of our history as God’s people (Eph 1:19).
- B. Just as God brought us through the Jordan centuries ago, he will bring us through the Jordans of our lives—difficulties at work, family, and life in general.
  - 1. *What is your Jordan today? What is the One Big Thing that stands in front of you and robs you off your rest?*
  - 2. Isaiah 43:2 is God’s promise to us.
- C. But there is a sense in which we have already crossed the final Jordan.
  - 1. How so? Because we are represented in Christ—and Christ has indeed made the final crossing by his resurrection and ascension into glory (Eph 2:4-6).
  - 2. In Christ, Joshua 3:17 is our verse: “...all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.”

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) How are we related to the Israelites in this Scripture? Based on Ephesians 1:19, how does Christ connect us with them? (2) What is your “overflowing Jordan” today? (3) In what sense have we crossed the final Jordan of judgement and death?

## VI. Encouragement for Those Who Have Passed Over

*Since God has brought all of us through the final Jordan of sin, judgment, and death by Christ our victorious Priest and King, we must respond by giving glory to God. We give glory to God by preserving the testimony of his awesome and holy deeds in our community; and by persevering in faith-full living in the midst of an unbelieving World that never seems to stop assaulting our trust in God’s Word. In Christ, we have passed over the Jordan. Glory to God!*

- A. We preserve the testimony of God’s deeds by re-telling God’s Deeds of salvation in the Church.
  - 1. Joshua 3:14-17 itself represents an application of this preservation.
  - 2. We teach our children the great testimonies of YHWH their God and King.

3. We recall the great testimonies of God during personal times of struggle.
    - a. This is exactly how God wants these testimonies to be used.
    - b. God wants us to use them to stir up...
      - i. *assurance* and *gratefulness* in us for salvation accomplished
      - ii. *hope* for salvation future.
- B. We preserve the testimony of God's deeds by persevering as his redeemed community in this Present Evil World.
1. Unbelief is a powerful force that threatens faithful Christian community and faithful Christian living.  
—unbelief often shows up in the form of cynicism.
  2. The unbelieving World encourages unbelief. It is like the Jordan River during harvest.
    - a. It never seems to stop coming.
    - b. And it threatens to drown us!
    - c. We are surrounded by the narrative of unbelief every day, from office gossip to the media.
  3. But we persevere by seeing ourselves in the Scripture; allowing Scripture to tell us what our history is.
  4. We are the Nation that has crossed the Jordan; the People for whom the Lord has parted the Red Sea, stopped the Jordan, and raised Jesus from the dead.
  5. Let us not give in to skepticism and cynicism. Let us demonstrate Faith, Love, and Hope—the virtues of the Baptized and Gospeled Life (1 Cor 13:13).

**\*Questions for reflection:** (1) How does unbelief show up in Christians? (2) Why is it so easy to give in to scepticism and cynicism? (3) How is the unbelieving World like the river Jordan at harvest? (4) How do we persevere in faith-full living? (5) What are “the virtues of the Baptized and Gospeled Life” that emerge out of embracing our history as written in Scripture?

SERMON NOTES: 

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