

## THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

### Joshua: God's Faithful Giving Of The Promised Land To Israel

#### Part I: God's Leading Israel Into The Promised Land, Joshua 1:1-5:12

#### D. Israel's Discerning God's Leading For An Uncharted Future In A Troubling World (Joshua 3:1-4:24)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We face a humanly uncharted future in a troubling world, and that can tempt anyone to feel anxious:

(1) Spencer Jakab's article, "Stock Market Is Full of Surprises" (The Wall Street Journal, 3/23-2015, p. C1) reported "the Citigroup Economic Surprise Index" gauge had fallen to "depths not seen in 3 1/2 years," and "(t)he last time it was so low . . . (t)he S&P 500 came closer to a bear market than at any point since the recovery began." Yet, Mr. Jakab then added: "When the index is deeply negative, as it is today, that is usually a good sign for stocks."

Such conflicting signals can leave the reader not knowing what to do about investing in the stock market!

(2) The 3/23/2015 issue of the journal (*Ibid.*, p. R1-R4) ran opposing articles on whether we should eat less or more salt or take a daily aspirin or ingest a paleo diet of mainly proteins, nonstarchy veggies and healthy fats like coconut oil versus heeding the USDA diet of grains, dairy, veggies and fruits while skipping foods high in fat! We all want to live long lives, but how do we know what we are supposed to eat to accomplish that goal?

(3) While I was typing up the first draft of these notes last Tuesday morning, I received a call from a Christian woman outside our Church who was alarmed at what she saw occurring in the world and in her medical field. She wanted to know if the rapture was Pretribulational or if she would go through part if not all of the Great Tribulation.

(4) The evening of that same day, I got a call from a believer who put me on a speaker-phone with an unsaved man who wanted to know how God could be omnipresent though Cain in Genesis 4:16 "went out from the presence of the Lord." The unbeliever had asked his priest that question, and the priest, according to the Christian, had essentially "told him to get lost," so the unbeliever doubted if anyone -- including me -- could even answer his question!

(5) On Thursday, an upset lady who attends a Catholic Church who knew I was a pastor asked me why there weren't 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Easter this year so she could resume eating what she gave up for Lent by Easter! She was also upset at hearing that Sundays were to be excluded from the 40 days, prolonging her fast!

**Need:** *So we ask, "How can we discern God's settling guidance for an uncharted future in a troubling world?!"*

- I. When Joshua was about to lead Israel across the Jordan, its water was at flood stage (Jos. 3:15), so the dangerous state of the river would have left Israel tempted to feel anxious about the imminent crossing!**
- II. Remarkably, as God gave Joshua instructions on leading Israel to make this crossing, Joshua noted that He was about to lead her in a manner she had not before experienced, Joshua 3:1-4b:**
  - A. Joshua 3:1-4b notes that Joshua had directed the officers of the people closely to heed their instructions on making the crossing for they had "never been this **way** before," especially Joshua 3:4b NIV.
  - B. The Hebrew text shows that by "way" in this phrase, Joshua meant that Israel had not before been led in the **manner** God was about to lead her: the Hebrew word is (*derek*) and here it refers to the manner of action as in Proverbs 30:19, Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, p. 324; B. D. B., A Hebrew-English Lexicon of the O. T., p. 202-204.
- III. That new manner of leading, which set the pattern for God's future guidance of Israel, involved His replacing His cloud and fiery pillar with the teaching examples of godly men, Joshua 3:3-8:**
  - A. In the wilderness, God had led Israel by His visible supernatural presence in a cloud and fiery pillar (Numbers 9:15-23), but these visible, supernatural objects were now going to be replaced by priests, Joshua 3:3.
  - B. Also, the Levitical Kohathite clan had carried the ark in the past (Num. 4:4-15; Z. P. E. B., v. Three, p. 840-841), but the priests would now bear it, Joshua 3:3; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Joshua 3:3!
  - C. In order for the people to be able to see these priests so they could follow them, the people had to stay 3,000 feet away from the ark in all directions, Joshua 3:4; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Joshua 3:4.
  - D. Yet, most notably, God's new way of guiding Israel required the priests to heed Scripture and walk by faith:
    1. God had Joshua tell the priests with the ark to "go and stand in the river" that was flooding, Jos. 3:8 NIV.
    2. This directive is rich in Scripture precedents regarding the lesson of trusting God's Word in a life of faith:
      - a. God had told Israel's father Abraham to walk through the land, for God had given it to him, Gen. 13:17.
      - b. In the wilderness, Moses had told Israel that God would then drive out nations in Canaan before her that were greater and mightier than she was, for every place that the soles of her feet trod in Canaan God would deliver over to her akin to His promise initially made to father Abraham, Deuteronomy 11:23-24.

- c. God had again repeated this promise to Joshua in calling him to lead Israel in Joshua 1:3-5.
- d. Thus, **God's focus** in Israel's crossing the Jordan would be on the **soles** of the **priests' FEET** as they carried the ark, for God was opening up the Jordan for Israel to cross into Canaan as they literally stepped out in faith in God's promise to Abraham, which promise was repeated to Moses and later to Joshua!

**IV. Thus, GOD LED Israel ACROSS the threatening, flooded Jordan River into the Promised Land of Canaan with a REPEAT, EMPHATIC FOCUS on the FEET of the PRIESTS, Joshua 3:9-4:24:**

- A. Joshua told the people to observe that the way God intended to lead them across the Jordan was meant to show that He would surely give them victory over the Canaanites once they crossed the river, Joshua 3:9-10.
- B. Joshua thus told them that as the ark of the God of the whole earth went before them, the instant the soles of the priests' **FEET** who bore the ark rested in the river's edge, its water would back up into a heap, and they were to have 12 men ready, 1 from each tribe, for a ceremony to be performed in the crossing, Jos. 3:11-13.
- C. The people obeyed, preparing to cross and the priests bearing the ark walked down to the riverside, Jos. 3:14.
- D. The instant their **FEET** stepped into the brink of the water, though it ran at flood stage, the Jordan River backed up into a big heap of water 15 miles upstream at Adam, and the tributaries feeding into the river south of Adam dried up for Israel to cross on dry ground, Ibid., ftn. to Joshua 3:16; Joshua 3:16-17.
- E. After the people went across, God told Joshua to send the 12 men back into the riverbed so each one might pick up a stone near where the priests' **FEET** that bore the ark still stood on dry ground, Jos. 4:1-3a. Each man took a stone back to the place where Israel would lodge that night, back to Gilgal, Joshua 4:3b, 20.
- F. The men obeyed, and Joshua explained that when their sons asked the meaning of the 12 stones by the river, they were to testify throughout her history how God had opened the Jordan so Israel might cross it, Jos. 4:4-7.
- G. While these 12 men did this, Joshua also took 12 stones from the riverbank and set them down near the **FEET** of the priests who were bearing the ark likely as an act of worship to the Lord (Joshua 4:8-9 KJV).
- H. When all this was done, God had Joshua tell the priests who bore the ark to come up out of the riverbed, and when the priests' **FEET** stepped up onto the land, the Jordan returned to overflow all its banks, Jos. 4:10-18.
- I. The date for this crossing was the tenth day of the first month, the very date Israel needed to put aside the Passover Lamb before it was to be slain at Passover, Joshua 4:19 with Exodus 12:3-6; Ibid., ftn. to Jos. 4:19.
- J. Joshua set up the 12 stones taken from the riverbed at Israel's first campsite, at Gilgal, and he again told Israel to explain their meaning to future generations -- proof that God intended to keep His Word to give them the whole land wherever their feet traversed, Joshua 4:20-22. As God had parted the Red Sea for Israel to leave Egypt, He had decades later backed up the flooded Jordan so she could enter the Promised Land, for God was a great, true, promise-keeping Lord for all generations, so Israel was to revere Him forever, Joshua 4:23-24.

***Lesson:*** *At her crossing of the flooded Jordan River, God taught Israel to trust His Word and to follow His human designated spiritual leaders, the priests, as they exemplified by their personal walk a life of faith a-step-at-a-time!*

***Application:*** *(1) May we trust in Christ for eternal life, John 3:16. (2) Then, in facing an unknown future in an uncertain, threatening world akin to the flooded Jordan River that Israel was to cross, may we (a) believe God's Bible promises that apply to us (b) and follow the example of a walk of faith set for us by godly leaders, (c) and testify to the next generation of our experience of God's leading and provision that they might also walk by faith!*

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the message . . .)

By God's grace, all of the issues raised in our sermon introduction have been settled in my own life through the application of Scripture along with the guidance and exemplification of Christian teachers I have known in my past:

- (1) I have learned that Ecclesiastes 11:1-6 directs us to invest in a diversified, aggressive portfolio for the long-term when it comes to the issue of investing in general.
- (2) I have learned that Proverbs 1:5 calls us to increase in learning, and that has led me to a paleo diet!
- (3) I have learned from Scripture that the rapture is Pretribulational, and have taught this in Revelation series.
- (4) I have learned that Scripture at times uses "anthropomorphisms" to depict God with human characteristics so we can understand how He relates to us. When Cain thus left God's "presence," it anthropomorphically means that Cain rejected spiritual fellowship with God, for God was still with Cain when he left since God is omnipresent.
- (5) I have learned that Scripture does not refer to "Lent," that Colossians 2:20-22 directs us Christians not to be subject to man-made, religious dietary restrictions, meaning we can ingest a regular diet during the "Lent" season.

**May we face an unknown, uncharted future in a troubling world by trusting in God's Word and heeding the examples of those God has raised up to lead us by example in a life of faith! (2 Timothy 3:14-17)**