



*The Presence of the LORD*  
*Joshua 3*

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## Joshua 3: Introduction

The events of Joshua 3 would demonstrate the power of God's presence with His people. As Israel crossed the Jordan on dry land, they were reminded of all God's mighty works accomplished for the generation of their fathers, and strengthened by the knowledge of His presence with them in power.

Joshua's leadership is again confirmed by this event, and leaders at all levels of the nation step up to help the people enter the promised land, renewed in hope. The people learn that they can trust the Lord and their leaders, and this will put them in good stead for the hard work that lies ahead.

We're pleased to make this resource available for personal or group study at no charge, and we hope you will find this series helpful in realizing more of the presence, promise, and power of the Kingdom of God.

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## 1 To the Jordan

*Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and they set out from Acacia Grove and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they crossed over. So it was, after three days, that the officers went through the camp; and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before." Joshua 3.1-4*

*Reflect.*

1. We will notice that Israel crossed into Canaan by several discreet stages, rather than all at once. Why do you suppose this was so?
2. The people had the ark of God – His presence – with them, but they were not to come near it. Why?

*Think about it.*

Mustering and moving well over a million people was a complicated undertaking. We've seen that Israel was organized by tribes and households, with leaders appointed at various levels. Moses had learned this from his father-in-law (Ex. 18), and God explicitly commanded that officers and leaders should be appointed for the tribes and households of Israel (Num. 11.16; Deut. 16.18-20). This would have made for great efficiency in moving the people forward; still, mobilizing the people for the advance on Canaan was no easy task.

We can almost hear the clanking of cookware, calls to children playing throughout the camp, prayers and excited talk, as officers call out the instructions and people make arrangements for the next three, and final, days in this encampment.

Joshua would bring the people along gradually, making sure at each stage that they were well prepared for what would happen next. Progressing by stages also provided the people with opportunities to follow commands that, perhaps to some, might not have made much sense. If the people of the land were terrified, why not just rush them now and get on with seizing their farms and homes? It would be important that the people learn to follow Joshua's instructions, and moving them toward Canaan in increments would have provided useful practice in obeying orders.

Sadly, not even these repeated exercises would help all the people learn obedience to their leaders.

As they began to move, all eyes were to focus on the ark of the LORD (v. 2). Though they had able leaders, the people must at all times bear in mind that God is going before them in this undertaking. We can see this great nation of people preparing to move as one, and feel the charged air of excitement, expectation, fear, and faith that must have stirred on the plains of Moab.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. The conquest of Canaan would depend on Israel's keeping focused on God's promises and trusting in His Word. How can you see that in these verses?
2. Why was it important that a space of around three-fourths a mile should be maintained between the people and the ark of the covenant? What does this suggest about Israel's relationship with God? About our relationship with Him?

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3. During their sojourn in the wilderness, the tribes of Israel organized around the ark of the covenant. When they moved, the ark was surrounded in the middle of the people, and the various tribes were appointed to stations around the ark (cf. Num. 10.11-28). Now the ark would go before them all, with only a handful of priests and Levites leading the way. What does this change signify?

*“But remember that it is written, ‘Those who draw near to me, draw near to fire.’ If you are gold and silver and have drawn near to the fire, you will shine forth more splendid and glowing because of the fire. But if you are conscious of building ‘wood, hay and stubble’ upon the foundation of your faith, and you approach the fire with such building, you will be consumed. Blessed, therefore, are those who are very near, who are so very near that the fire illumines and does not burn them. Nevertheless, even Israel will be saved; but it will be saved from far away, and it makes its journey not by its own power but by the support and foresight of the priests.” Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

*Draw me near, O Lord, and purify me for this day’s journey. Help me to prepare well so that...*

*Pray Psalm 15.*

Ask the Lord to make you a person fit to journey in His presence in all the ways mentioned in this psalm.

**Psalm 15** ([\*Arlington: This is the Day the Lord Has Made\*](#))

Lord, who may dwell within Your tent, or on Your holy hill?  
All those who keep Your covenant and walk within Your will.

All they who with integrity work peace and righteousness,  
Forever in God’s house shall be forgiven, kept, and blessed.

Let truth from every heart proceed, and slander disappear:  
Thus shall we know God’s grace indeed and feel His presence near.

No evil to your neighbor speak, nor turn against your friend:  
Thus shall you know the end you seek – God’s presence without end.

Let every sinner be despised; but those who fear the Lord  
Shall honor have before our eyes, according to God’s Word.

All they who keep their word in faith, though suffering may ensue,  
Shall know the favor of God’s grace, His presence ever true.

No greed and no injustice shall they do who seek the Lord;  
But on His mercy ever call and stand upon His Word.

## 2 “Sanctify Yourselves!”

*And Joshua said to the people, “Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.” Then Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, “Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people.” So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people. Joshua 3.5, 6*

*Reflect.*

1. Suppose someone were to instruct you to sanctify yourself. What would you do?
2. Would having the ark on display in front of the people help them to sanctify themselves? Why?

*Think about it.*

To some of the people, Joshua’s command to *sanctify themselves* – literally, *make yourselves holy* – might have seemed strange. They were preparing to cross the Jordan into Canaan, to besiege the city of Jericho – military, tactical stuff. What did spiritual matters have to do with this?

More such instructions would come, as we shall see, and they reveal Joshua’s frame of mind. He knew the conquest of the pagan nations of Canaan was ultimately the LORD’s work. The people would have to be fully invested in it, of course, and it would be difficult and dangerous. But only the LORD could overcome their adversaries, as He had promised (Deut. 17.17-24); their responsibility was to be a people holy unto Him. God would work in, with, and through them to fulfill His promises, but they must be fit vessels for His use.

Sadly, as we shall see, that would not always be the case.

Moving the ark into position before the people helped them focus on God and His presence. When Peter stepped out of that boat onto the suddenly *terra firma* of the Sea of Galilee, his only hope of not sinking was to keep his eyes on Jesus. When he looked around at the winds and waves, he began to sink (Matt. 14.22-31).

Similarly, the people Joshua led needed to focus on the presence and promises of God if they expected to know His power for victory. The dangers and distractions would be many, but if Israel would look to God and trust His Word, they would realize all the promised blessings of His covenant.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. How do you keep focused on the Lord through all the duties and distractions of your daily life (Col. 3.1-3)?
2. What would you recommend as a way of keeping yourself a fit vessel for the Lord’s work throughout your day?
3. Meditate on Ephesians 5.15-18. How is Paul’s instruction here similar to what Joshua did in today’s text?

*“It is the ark of the covenant of the Lord in which the tablets of the law written by the hand of God are preserved. And everyone who is ‘truly Israel’ proceeds around this ark of the covenant and is not far from it; but the Levites and the priests even carry it on their shoulders.” Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

*Lord, sanctify me today, and make me a fit vessel for...*

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*Pray Psalm 32.1-6.*

Let the Spirit lead you in confessing your sins and fitting you to rise above any floods that may threaten your walk with and work for the Lord today.

**Psalm 32.1-6** (*Hendon: Take My Life and Let It Be*)

Blessed are they whose sins the Lord has forgiven by His Word!  
Pure their spirits are within; them He charges with no sin;  
them He charges with no sin!

When in silence I remained, groaning in my sinful pain,  
You Your hand upon me lay; all my strength You drained away,  
all my strength You drained away.

I confessed my sin to You; You forgave me, ever true!  
Let confession's pleading sound reach You while You may be found,  
reach You while You may be found.

### **3 Word in Time**

*And the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you have come to the edge of the water of the Jordan, you shall stand in the Jordan.'" Joshua 3.7, 8*

*Reflect.*

1. Meditate on Matthew 1.18-23. How does this connect the events of Matthew's gospel with the book of Joshua? How do the events of Acts 2 (the pouring-out of the Holy Spirit) fulfill the promise of Joshua 3.7 and Matthew 1.18-23?

2. God promised to exalt Joshua, to give him a great name before the people of Israel. In what sense would his name be "great"?

*Think about it.*

This Word from the LORD comes as affirmation of all that Joshua has done to this point and instruction for Israel's next steps. God is pleased with Joshua, so He promises to make him even greater in the sight of all Israel than he was at present. There would be no doubt in anyone's mind that as God was with Moses, so He was with Joshua as well.

That last point is important, but not entirely clear. God does not explain precisely how He will make Joshua's name great – a direct reference to His promises, by the way (cf. Gen. 12.1-3) – or of what that greatness will consist, except that the people will know He is with him. Jesus holds out the prospect of greatness to His followers (cf. Matt. 5.17-19, Mk. 10.42-45), but He is more explicit about what this entails. Like Joshua, Jesus' followers should accept the challenge of seeking greatness in His Kingdom.

Now God gives Joshua a second command for the priests, who are carrying the ark of the covenant within sight of all the people of Israel. They are to enter the Jordan and stand there. Let's remember that all the information they have at present is that they are going to cross over the Jordan River (1.10, 11). Perhaps like the spies had done, at a proper fording-place (Josh. 2.7)? Joshua understood otherwise (v. 13), but how he knew this we do not know.

The people might have balked at the idea of crossing the Jordan at this time, since it was in flood stage and overflowing its banks (v. 15). Joshua would not leave them to wonder about this for very long (v. 13). But one thing at a time.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. God gives instructions to Joshua one step at a time. The more he obeys the Word of the LORD, the more of His Word and will the LORD reveals. What should Joshua have learned from this? Is there a principle here for us?

2. Once again, the LORD emphasizes that the priests, who are carrying the ark of the covenant, must be out front and visible. Yet these are not Israel's military commanders, and the task ahead of Israel was a military one. What's the message here?

3. Since God could speak so plainly to Joshua, why didn't He just gather the people and tell them Himself what they should do? What makes someone a leader through whom God speaks and works?

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*“And he commands the priests to go before the people with the ark of the covenant. It is then, too, that the mystery of the dispensation of the Father with the Son is manifested, since the Son is highly exalted by him who grants ‘that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.’” Origen of Alexandria (9185-254 AD)*

*Help me to hear Your Word clearly, Lord, so that I may shelter in it and wield it today to...*

*Pray Psalm 12.1-8.*

God’s Word is our shelter against the lies and deceptions of our unbelieving age. Ask Him to bring His Word to your mind as you face temptations, trials, and tasks for the day ahead. Choose a stanza of the following version of Psalm 12 to memorize and use as a shield and sword in the spiritual warfare.

**Psalm 12.1-8** (*Hamburg: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*)

Help, Lord! The godly cease to be; they who believe in Christ are few.  
Falsely the wicked confidently flatter, deceive, and mock Your truth.

Stop, Lord, the lips that utter lies, all those who speak with boasting tongue!  
See how Your holy Word they despise, while their own praises they have sung.

Rise up, O Lord, and rescue all Your precious children sore distressed.  
Save those who faithfully on You call; grant them deliv’rance, peace, and rest.

Your words are pure and proven true, like silver seven times refined;  
You will preserve Your Word ever new, and keep the heart to You inclined.

Proudly the wicked strut and stand; Your indignation builds on high.  
Men may exalt their wicked plans, but You will judge them by and by.

## 4 The Sign of God's Presence

*So Joshua said to the children of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God." And Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites: Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan. Now therefore, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from every tribe. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap." Joshua 3.9-13*

*Reflect.*

1. God gave Israel signs and tokens to persuade them that everything He had promised would be theirs. "This," He said to them, "is the guarantee of *that*." Does He still do this?
2. Joshua declared to the people that God was "among" them and "before" them. In what sense is this true for us as well?

*Think about it.*

God was "among" the people of Israel and would go "before" them to drive out their enemies and secure the land of promise for them (vv. 10, 11). The mention of the various pagan nations in verse 10 would have served two purposes. First, it would have reminded the people of Israel of the vast scope of God's promises – all those nations! Second, though God would go before them to drive out the pagan peoples, Israel would have understood that a good bit of work lay ahead before the promised land was theirs.

We can only deduce how Joshua understood what God was planning for the crossing of the Jordan. He remembered what God had done at the Red Sea, and he believed God would do this again, even though the Jordan was at flood stage (v. 15) and the waters would be swift. Had God revealed this to Joshua? Did more conversation pass between God and His chosen leader than is recorded here? This must have been the case, because as he assembled the people, Joshua called them to "hear the words of the LORD your God" (v. 9).

Joshua's instruction in verse 12 might have caused some people to wonder. What does he have in mind for these twelve men? No particular qualifications are provided for the men who were to be chosen, but we can safely assume that the people sought out able men. Joshua would explain their task in due course. One thing at a time.

Can you hear the gasps of amazement and surprise that must have rippled through the assembly as Joshua explained what God was going to do (v. 13)? The parting of the Jordan would be the definitive sign of God's presence. It would remind the people of their dramatic rescue from Egypt, and it would demonstrate the power that was going before them to subdue their enemies and secure God's promises. We can be certain that those who observed this miracle would never forget it.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. "And Joshua said, 'By this you shall know that the living God *is* among you...'" How would they know that? How do we know today that God is in us and working through and for us?
2. Imagine you're one of those twelve men, chosen by your tribe for this as-yet-unnamed task. Are you willing to do it? Why or why not? When God calls you to step forward and follow Him each day, do you always know what to expect, or what will be required of you?

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3. Parting the waters of the Jordan was not merely God showing off. What would have been the effects of this on the people of Israel? On the nations of Canaan, as they learned of it? What miracle has God provided to encourage us that everything He has promised will one day be ours, if we are faithful to obey His Word?

*“What great things were manifested before! The Red Sea was crossed on foot, manna was given from heaven, springs were burst open in the wilderness, the law was given through Moses. Many signs and marvels were performed in the wilderness, but nowhere is it said that Jesus [Joshua] was ‘exalted.’ But where the Jordan is crossed, there it is said to Jesus [Joshua], ‘In this day I am beginning to exalt you in the sight of the people.’” Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

*I know You will go before me today, Lord, as I take up the hard work of...*

*Pray Psalm 128.*

Prayer is an excellent setting for rehearsing the promises of God, and for thanking Him for the miracle of Jesus’ death and resurrection, and the giving of His Spirit. These sure tokens are the guarantee of blessings to come. Thanks be to God!

**Psalm 128** (*Fountain: There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood*)

How blest are they who fear You, Lord,  
Who walk within Your ways!  
Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word,  
They prosper all their days!  
They prosper all their days, they prosper all their days!  
Rejoicing in Your bounteous Word,  
They prosper all their days!

Their homes with happy children bloom  
Who fear Your holy Name;  
Their tables and their every room  
Declare Your glorious fame!  
Declare Your glorious fame, declare Your glorious fame!  
Their tables and their every room  
Declare Your glorious fame!

O Lord, from Zion send Your peace,  
And prosp’rous make our ways;  
Thus may Your blessings e’er increase  
Upon us all our days!  
Upon us all our days, upon us all our days!  
Thus may Your blessings e’er increase  
Upon all us all our days!

## 5 Jordan Parted

*So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest), that the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho. Joshua 3.14-16*

*Reflect.*

1. Notice how the writer builds the drama of this moment. Read these verses slowly, putting yourself in the place of those people, and let the drama build in your soul. Enjoy.
2. Approximately how much of the Jordan River dried up?

*Think about it.*

The book of Joshua contains many dramatic moments, in which the writer wants us to slow down and enter more fully into the action. See how he does this here: The people set out. The priests are in the lead. The feet of the priests enter the river. The river is at flood stage. The upstream waters stand still. The downstream waters fail. The people cross.

That's just good writing, writing which wants to make a lasting impression. These few verses do more than merely set a dramatic scene, however. They recall each of God's previous commands and show that Israel carried them out faithfully.

How much of the Jordan dried up? "Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan," was just below the Jezreel valley (cf. 1 Kgs. 4.12), perhaps 25 miles north of where Israel had camped. South to the "Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea" was perhaps another 5 or 10 miles. The Jordan River flows 156 miles from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, so as much as one-fourth of the river bed may have dried up, affording plenty of room for the people to pass in an orderly manner. At the same time, the phenomenon would have been observed by nearly ever Canaanite along the Jordan Valley, including those who would have experienced an augmenting of the flood because of the "heap" of water at Adam.

God used this sign to show His faithfulness to the people of Israel, and to embolden them to press on in laying hold of all His promises. At the same time, this sign struck terror into the hearts of the Lord's enemies, but not so that they would give up trying to resist Him and His people. Compare this situation with what we see in Acts 4: A miracle noted by many emboldens Peter, John, and all the disciples, while it strikes terror into the souls of God's enemies, who nonetheless determine to resist Him.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. Joshua 3 provides lessons in leadership – how God leads His people. What are you learning about God's leadership from this chapter?
2. Miracles can happen when we are obedient to the Lord's commands. Our every next step might be the one God chooses to bless in removing some obstacle, illuminating our path, or enabling us to realize His promises. Apply this to your daily walk with the Lord.
3. Joshua reported the Word of God to the people of Israel. He did not try to explain it, because that would have been impossible. He just said, "This is what the LORD says." The people heard and obeyed. Power comes from hearing and obeying God's Word, not necessarily from understanding it in exhaustive detail.

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How does this counsel you as a follower of Jesus Christ?

*“A strange power divided the river. One section came to a halt, its stream flowing back, while another section hastened in its gliding course to the sea, leaving the river bed exposed. Where the current surged strongly from its source, it held back and piled high its waves, so that a threatening mountain of water hung poised in quivering formation and looked down to see human feet passing across the dry, deep bed, and grimy soles hastening over the congealed mud, dry-footed in mid-river.” Paulinas of Nola (355-431 AD)*

*Give me grace, Lord, to hear and obey Your Word daily, so that...*

*Pray Psalm 114.*

As you pray, think of the miracles God has accomplished and the power He has shown relating to your salvation. Give Him specific thanks and praise.

**Psalm 114** (*Duke Street: Jesus Shall Reign*)

When Israel out from Egypt went –  
They of God’s gracious covenant –  
Out from a land of language strange,  
Into their midst Jehovah came.

He His dominion o’er them set;  
At His command the dark sea fled.  
Jordan subsided at His Word;  
Mountains and hills obey our Lord.

What ails the sea that it should flee?  
Jordan, that it should withered be?  
What makes the mountains skip like rams?  
What makes the hills spring up like lambs?

Tremble, O earth: the Lord is near!  
Jacob’s great God is present here!  
He from the rock sweet water brings,  
Making the flint gush flowing springs.

## 6 On and In the Mighty Work of the LORD

*Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan. Joshua 3.17*

*Reflect.*

1. Why would this miracle have been so significant for the people of Israel?
2. If you had experienced a miracle like this, do you think you would be inclined to share your experience with others? Why?

*Think about it.*

This verse encourages us to consider some important aspects of the life of faith. First, as the people crossed the Jordan “on dry ground,” they would have been wondrously aware that they were literally walking in and on a miracle. What they were experiencing – the wonder and excitement of it, the safety and security they felt in the midst of it – was a mighty work of God. He Who could do such a miracle for them would not fail them in the days and months ahead.

Second, the life of faith requires trustworthy leaders. We need leaders like Joshua who hear and believe the Word of God and report it to us exactly as He spoke it to them. We need leaders – like the twelve of verse 12 – who will accept responsibilities without fully understanding what they entail, simply because it is their nature to lead when necessary, whatever the cost. We need leaders like those anonymous priests and Levites who opened the way into the promises of God by fulfilling their duty in the midst of the Jordan – standing still and holding the ark of the Lord as the people crossed around them. And we need leaders like those heads of tribes, families, and households who guided and encouraged their charges step-by-step through God’s mighty work into His promises.

Third, the life of faith does not rest in miracles and mighty works, nor seek them for their own sake. Miracles of every sort – even the daily miracles of breath and health and goodness that we easily take for granted – are means of passage to a greater realization of the promises of God, to the next phase of His rest. We don’t dwell in God’s mighty works; we walk through those miracles and by those mighty works to greater levels of sanctification, growth, and Kingdom progress, knowing as we do that greater miracles and more mighty works lie just ahead, if only we believe and obey.

Those two uses of “all” together with the Hebrew verb here translated as “completely” (תָּמַד – *completed or finished*) produce a wonderful sense of finality and relief – “At last!” – don’t you think? A foretaste of God’s promised rest? Like the foretaste of rest we who believe in Jesus have come to know? God’s rest comes in stages, and even after Israel had conquered most of the land and Joshua’s work was done, still, a *rest* would remain that only Jesus can provide (Heb. 4.1-10).

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. How would you have felt, walking on that dry river bed, as you passed those priests and the ark of God? Is this what it’s like for you to draw near to God?
2. Do you imagine this crossing as noisy with singing and cheering, or as utterly silent, in stunned amazement? Why would either of these responses have been appropriate?
3. The miracle of the Jordan crossing symbolizes the work of the shepherds of God’s flocks. They are to stay

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close to the Lord and take the bold steps of obedient faith that will open the promises of God to His people. Do you pray for your pastors, elders, and church leaders? Do you thank the Lord for the myriad and often unseen ways their work makes it possible for you to know more of the promises of God? How can you encourage your fellow church members to be more faithful in praying for church leaders?

*“But if, you also have entered the mystic font of baptism and in the presence of the priestly and levitical order have been instructed by those venerable and magnificent sacraments, which are known to those who are permitted to know those things, then, with the Jordan parted, you will enter the land of promise by the services of the priests. In this land, Jesus receives you after Moses and becomes for you the leader of a new way.” Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

*Thank You, Father, for the shepherds You have assigned to watch over my soul. I ask that today You would...*

*Pray Psalm 132.13-18.*

Pray for the leaders of your church, that they will remain close to the Lord, grow in His salvation, and guard and nurture you and *all* your fellow church members to know a *more complete* measure of God's rest.

**Psalm 132.13-18** (*Finlandia: Be Still My Soul*)

God dwells among us, and He will forever,  
To meet our needs and clothe us with His grace.  
He has to us sent Jesus Christ, our Savior,  
And made us His eternal resting-place.  
His foes are banished from His presence ever,  
But we shall reign with Him before His face.

## 7 The Power of His Presence

*Read Joshua 3*

*Reflect.*

1. Review Exodus 14, Israel's escape from Egypt through the Red Sea. In what ways was the crossing of the Jordan like this? How were they different?
2. The name Moses means "drawn out." The name Joshua means "he delivers." How was the name of each man appropriate for his calling?

*Think about it.*

Many of those who walked across that dry Jordan River bed would have been carried across the dry bed of the Red Sea forty years earlier. Joshua and Caleb were the only adults to survive the generation that witnessed the parting of the Red Sea. Then, God drew His people out from captivity in Egypt, destroying their enemies and bringing them to Himself at Mt. Sinai. Now, He was delivering them into the land promised so long ago (Gen. 12.1-3), where He would destroy their enemies and establish them as a holy people unto Himself.

It was fitting that He should do such a mighty work as Joshua 3 records, to assure His people of His presence and impress them by His power. God's presence and power meant that His promises would be sure to all who heard His voice and obeyed. God was in their midst, a reality every Israelite would have had driven home as they walked past that stationary ark, borne by those nameless, faithful priests and Levites. Knowing they were to cross the Jordan, the people must have imagined themselves wading a ford, carrying their young ones and goods, struggling with all the strength they could muster to make it safely to the promised land on the other side. They could not have imagined what Joshua revealed in verse 13 and the LORD accomplished in verses 14-16. The mighty feat of crossing the Jordan would not be their doing, but God's.

Wonder, amazement, fear, hope, excitement – all these affections and more must have washed over the hearts of the people of Israel as they emerged from that dry river bed onto the shores of the promised land. In the presence of such glory, they, like the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, may have been content to stay there, gazing back at that river and contemplating what they had just experienced.

But the mighty works of the God Who was with them had only just begun.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. How does the life of faith involve both a "drawing out" and a "delivering into"?
2. What is the role of leaders in the community of faith? What can leaders learn from Joshua 1-3 about how to fulfill their calling?
3. Once "all" Israel had "all" "completely" crossed the Jordan, they were in the land of promise. But this was just the beginning of their laying hold on that land and the promises of God attached to it. How is their experience a symbol of the life of faith?

*"But Jesus [Joshua], son of Nave [Nun], was a type of him in many things; for when he began to rule the people, he began from the Jordan; thence also did Christ begin to preach the gospel after he was baptized. The son of Nave [Nun] appoints the twelve to divide the inheritance; and Jesus sends forth the twelve apostles, heralds of truth, into the whole world." Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386 AD)*

*The Presence of the LORD*  
*Joshua 3*

*Thank You, Lord for drawing me out of the life of sin and delivering me into the power of Your presence and Your very great promises. Today, help me lay hold on this truth more firmly as I...*

*Pray Psalm 105.*

How many parallels between God's work for Israel and Christ's work for you can you find in this psalm? Give thanks and praise for each one as you pray through it.

**Psalm 105** (*Warrington: Give to Our God Immortal Praise*)

Give thanks unto the Lord Most High; call on His Name, before Him cry!  
Make known His deeds in every land; sing praise for all the works of His hand.

Glory in God, rejoice in heart, all you who seek His holy part.  
Him and His strength and presence seek; His works proclaim, His judgments speak.

You holy children of Abraham, you chosen ones of Jacob, stand!  
He is our Lord, of wondrous worth; His judgments are in all the earth.

He will His covenant faithfully guard – His oath, the promise of His Word.  
That which He to our fathers swore, He will perform forevermore!

He brought His people from Egypt alive, and made their joy and song revive.  
He made the nations' land their own, and all the wealth that they had known.

To them He granted the promised land, the portion of His gracious hand.  
Though they were few, and wandered far, He kept them close within His heart.

So let us all in our Savior confide, and in His holy Law abide.  
Let us observe His glorious Word, and praise our sovereign, faithful Lord!

*The Presence of the LORD*  
*Joshua 3*

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. God leads His people into His promises through duly appointed and faithful leaders. How is this reflected in local churches?
2. What are the primary lessons for church leaders from Joshua 3?
3. How does God show Himself to be in our midst today? How can we make sure to stay focused on Him, so that He is with us in all we do?
4. What is God's role and what is ours in laying hold on His precious and very great promises (2 Pet. 1.4)?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Joshua 3? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.