

## Lesson 7 - 11 December 2011

### Israel Crosses the Jordan

**Lesson Scope:** [Joshua 3:1-5:12](#)

**Lesson Focus.**

God planned to show His power and to strengthen the Israelites' faith by having them face a great obstacle—the Jordan River. The river lies in the center of the Jordan Valley, a deep, barren depression about twelve miles wide in the region of Jericho. The river itself is normally ninety to one hundred feet wide, flowing through a deep riverbed. This one-fourth to two-mile-wide valley, covered with thick jungle vegetation and inhabited by wild beasts, was now flooded as usual at harvest time.

The previous generation had failed to enter under more favorable conditions. Then they were at the southern border with open access to the land. Now they were at the eastern border facing the flooded Jordan River. In spite of the added difficulty, this time faith prevailed, and Israel crossed the Jordan into the promised rest.

The Lord expects His people to possess the land of victory and fulfillment. Those who step forth by faith and in obedience to divine direction enter into His rest.

The primary emphasis of this lesson is entering rest in the Christian life and not eternal rest in heaven. When the Israelites entered Canaan, they were certainly not in heaven. But they were dwelling in the land God had prepared for them.

Rest in the Christian life may seem like a paradox when we are called to take up our cross and "fight the good fight of faith." But compared to the cruel bondage of sin, the Christian life is one of rest. The "peace ... which passeth all understanding" and the satisfaction of pleasing God, combined with the promise of future reward, create a life of inner rest no matter how much outward pressure we may face.

**Lesson Aim:** To show the involvements of entering the promised rest.

**Theme Verse:** [Hebrews 4:1](#). Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

## Lesson Text:

### "The People Passed Over"

*Joshua 3:2-5* <sup>2</sup> And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host; <sup>3</sup> And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. <sup>4</sup> Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed *this* way heretofore. <sup>5</sup> And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.

*Joshua 3:15-17* <sup>15</sup> And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) <sup>16</sup> That the waters which came down from above stood *and* rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that *is* beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, *even* the salt sea, failed, *and* were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. <sup>17</sup> And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

### "Ye Shall Let Your Children Know"

*Joshua 4:1-3* <sup>1</sup> And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying, <sup>2</sup> Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, <sup>3</sup> And command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night.

*Joshua 4:21-24* <sup>21</sup> And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What *mean* these stones? <sup>22</sup> Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. <sup>23</sup> For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over: <sup>24</sup> That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it *is* mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever.

## **"They Did Eat of the Fruit of the Land"**

*Joshua 5:9-11* <sup>9</sup> And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day. <sup>10</sup> And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho. <sup>11</sup> And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched *corn* in the selfsame day.

### **Questions for Study**

#### **"The People Passed Over"**

1. What does this passage teach about God's part in providing rest? man's part in finding rest?
2. What will be the result if we wait to take the first step until we see a clear path?
3. Why must leaders excel in practical faith?

#### **"Ye Shall Let Your Children Know"**

4. Why did God command the gathering of a heap of stones?
5. What are some memorials God commands us to keep? How do they aid us in keeping faith alive?

#### **"They Did Eat of the Fruit of the Land"**

6. List some benefits of the preparations at Gilgal.
7. What lessons do 5:11, 12 teach about divine resources?
8. Why must consecration and worship precede conquest? Lesson

### **Analyzing the Passage**

Moses had foretold that God would give Israel rest (Deuteronomy 12:10; 25:19). Rest signified a place to settle down, in contrast to the wilderness wanderings. Hebrews 4 teaches that Canaan rest typifies both Christ's present rest and the future, heavenly rest.

Up to this point, Israel had been led by the cloud by day. Now they were led by the ark, which symbolized God's presence. They followed the ark at a distance of over one-half mile, a reminder of God's awesome power.

The place here called Adam (Joshua 3:16) is usually identified with Tell edDamieh, about sixteen miles north of Jericho. A wide stretch of riverbed dried up, allowing approximately two million Israelites with their animals and baggage to hurry across (Joshua 4:10).

Gilgal means "circle" or "wheel." Here "the reproach of Egypt" (ownership of sin) was rolled away by their renewal of circumcision, which represented the renewal of the covenant with this generation. Gilgal was to Israel what Calvary is to the New Testament believer. Gilgal became their permanent camp during the conquest (Joshua 9:6; 10:6; 14:6).

## **Principles and Applications**

### **"The People Passed Over"**

1. To enter into rest, we must follow divinely prescribed patterns (Joshua 3:2-5). We naturally seek for rest according to our own ideas. But our carnal nature leads us into confusion and conflict. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

God sees what is best for us from His eternal perspective. He gives us direction through His Word, through His Holy Spirit, and through our brethren. We need all three to gain victory over sin and to enter into God's rest.

2. As we step forth by faith, the way that looks impossible opens into rest (Joshua 3:15-16). The Jordan River kept raging right up until the priests' feet touched the water. They made a conscious choice to trust God instead of their physical eyes. Only then did the way that looked impossible open into rest.

Today, God calls us to step out in faith as well. If we wait until we see a clear path to take the first step, we will never begin. If we wait to obey until all our questions are answered, we will not be led into more truth. If we wait to start an outreach until all the practical details are finalized, souls for which Christ died will remain unreached. To enter into God's rest, we must make a conscious choice to trust and follow God.

3. Spiritual leaders fill an important role in helping God's people enter into rest (Joshua 3:15-17). A basic business-management principle states, "No member of an organization will rise above its leadership." Parents, schoolteachers, and church leaders must excel in faith and obedience. Their example must illustrate their teaching.

Many times the role of leader is more difficult (Israel's priests had to get their feet wet in flooded waters, but the people had a plain, dry path to follow). Leaders must be the first to face tough situations while carrying the extra burden of supporting their sick or weak followers. But all the

extra work is well worth it to help God's people enter into rest.

4. In this life, entrance into rest brings us face to face with the enemy (Joshua 3:16). The minute the Israelites crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land, they were in enemy territory.

The minute we receive salvation, we are prime candidates for attack—from without by the forces of evil and from within by the desperate wickedness of our own hearts.

At times we may be tempted to give up the battle and accept the devil's counterfeit rest. But those who give in will lose the peace of righteous living. They will also lose the eternal rest, where overcomers will be safe from the enemy forever.

#### **"Ye Shall Let Your Children Know"**

5. God-ordained memorials help us keep alive our commitments to the Lord (Joshua 4:1-3). The saying, "Out of sight, out of mind," often applies to us. As creatures of time and sense, we need tangible reminders of the eternal realities we accept by faith.

God has commanded us to keep the ordinances as memorials of our commitments to the Lord. They are visible symbols that remind us of our commitments to the Lord and His people.

6. Those who enter into rest are responsible to pass on the faith (Joshua 4:21-24). The Israelites personally experienced the miraculous crossing of Jordan, but their children would have no way to learn of God's power unless their parents told them about it.

We also must tell our children about God's miraculous power in our lives. We must explain the Scriptures to them and demonstrate practical obedience. We must teach them the history of the church and point out God's faithfulness. We must not rest until our children join us in entering into rest.

#### **"They Did Eat of the Fruit of the Land"**

7. To enter into rest, we must renounce fleshly desires and the love of the world (Joshua 5:9). We will never enter into rest without God's help. Sin will separate us from God and bring us pain and death. To enter into rest, we must crucify our carnal desires and the love of the world.

We may be eager to enter the Promised Land and win battles for the Lord. But consecration and worship are essential to align our hearts with God and ensure that we fight for His cause. "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

8. The life of rest is the life of fullness and blessing (Joshua 5:11-12). Think of all God gives to those who enter into His rest—forgiveness of sins, power to live above sin, the peace of doing what is right, the love of the brotherhood, and the hope of heaven. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Proverbs 4:18).

### **Important Teachings**

1. To enter into rest, we must follow divinely prescribed patterns (Joshua 3:2-5).
2. As we step forth by faith, the way that looks impossible opens into rest (Joshua 3:15-16).
3. Spiritual leaders fill an important role in helping God's people enter into rest (Joshua 3:15-17).
4. In this life, entrance into rest brings us face to face with the enemy (Joshua 3:16).
5. God-ordained memorials help us keep alive our commitments to the Lord (Joshua 4:1-3).
6. Those who enter into rest are responsible to pass on the faith (Joshua 4:21-24).
7. To enter into rest, we must renounce fleshly desires and the love of the world (Joshua 5:9).
8. The life of rest is the life of fullness and blessing (Joshua 5:11-12).
9. The marvelous provisions of rest testify to the world and to the saints of God's greatness (Joshua 4:24).
10. Continuing in rest involves keeping the price of redemption current in our minds (Joshua 5:10).

### **Answers to Questions**

1. What does this passage teach about God's part in providing rest? man's part in finding rest?

God does far more than man. God provides the rest, guides us into the path of rest, and then gives us the power to enter and continue in that rest.

Man must choose to believe God, meet His conditions, and obey His directions.

2. What will be the result if we wait to take the first step until we see a clear path?

If we wait until we see a clear path before we take the first step, we will never get started. If we wait to obey until all our questions are answered, we will not be led into more truth. If we wait to start an outreach until all the practical details are finalized, souls for whom Christ died will remain unreached. To enter into God's rest, we must make a conscious choice to trust and follow God.

3. Why must leaders excel in practical faith?

Parents, schoolteachers, and church leaders must excel in faith because their followers will rarely rise about them. They must lead by example and be able to say, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." Because of their influence, leaders face stronger enemy attacks, while carrying the extra burden of supporting weak followers.

4. Why did God command the gathering of a heap of stones?

God knew how quickly men forget spiritual truths and the lessons of history. He intended the heap of stones to be a visible reminder to future generations of His miraculous deliverance.

5. What are some memorials God commands us to keep? How do they aid us in keeping faith alive?

God commands us to observe the seven ordinances—baptism, Communion, feet washing, women's head covering, the holy kiss, anointing with oil, and marriage.

These tangible symbols of spiritual truth remind us to live by faith and to focus on eternal realities instead of on the visible world. They discourage hypocrisy and make the errant member long to belong again.

6. List some benefits of the preparations at Gilgal.

The renewal of circumcision reminded the Israelites of God's covenant with them. It set a mark of separation in their flesh. The celebration of Passover reminded them of God's deliverance from the Egyptians and the Red Sea crossing. This assured them that God would help them across the Jordan and subdue the Canaanites before them.

7. What lessons do Joshua 5:11-12 teach about divine resources? God has unlimited resources at His disposal. But if He just poured them out upon us, we would tend to forget Him. So He expects us to do our part by reaching out for His help and asking for His grace. He expects us to use more advanced spiritual food when it is available—to leave the milk and move on to the meat of the Word.

8. Why must consecration and worship precede conquest?

Consecration and worship will align our hearts with God and ensure that we fight for His cause. Without consecration and worship, we might join those who thought they were doing wonderful works, but the Lord will say to them, "Depart from me" (Matthew 7:21-23). Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

### **Summarizing the Lesson**

The desire for rest is common to all men. But the evil nature we are born with leads us into confusion, conflict, and finally, eternal torment.

Thank God for sending Jesus, who said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:28-29).

### **Research Guide**

1. Meditate on Hebrews 4 and its emphasis on the written Word and the living Word (Christ) as essentials for entering into rest.
2. In Nave's Topical Bible, look up "Peace—Spiritual" and "Sin—Forgiveness Of," and meditate on the ways the Christian life is one of rest even in this world.