

“Established”

8/8/10

9 & 10:45 am

Joshua 3-4

Series, “A New Beginning”

INTRODUCTION

The book of Joshua is the story of a new beginning for the people of Israel.

- They are a new generation; the second generation since God freed them from slavery in Egypt,
- They have a new leader, Joshua,
- They are going into a new land that God promised them as a homeland,
- They are facing a new challenge, unlike any they have faced before.
(Deuteronomy 7:1: people in the land are stronger and more numerous than Israel)

In most every way, it is *A New Beginning*.

As we move through the book, we will see the key lessons to learn and apply whenever we are going through new beginnings in our own lives, family, business, as a church family.

First key lesson, last week: *When God leads in a New Beginning He promises to be with you. (Joshua 1)*

In chapter 1 we saw that God told Joshua repeatedly to **“be strong and courageous”** as he led the people; and that he could be strong and courageous because God was with him and would stay with him all the days of his life.

When God commits Himself to you, you don’t have to fear people or circumstances. You don’t have to fixate on your weaknesses. God is beside you to accomplish just what He has promised: strength, wisdom, provision, insight, perseverance, patience, anything you need to accomplish that He has called you to do.

This week’s key lesson: *When God leads in a New Beginning, trust Him to establish you. (Joshua 3-4)*

OPEN to Joshua 3 (**PAGE** 334)

READ Joshua 3

When God leads in a New Beginning, trust Him to establish you.

I. Focus on Being God's Person (Joshua 3)

We see Joshua's focus is on being God's man. It's really not a complicated process:

- Listening (to the Lord),
- Following (what God says),
- Leading (passing on God's direction to the people)
- Pointing (people to the Lord)
 - He credits the Lord with the miraculous things that happen
 - He leads the people to honor and trust Yahweh

In seeing what Joshua is doing, it's just as important to call attention to what he is not doing: He is not trying to establish himself as the new leader:

- He is not taking it in his own hands to prove how great he is, or why he was selected. ("watch this!")
- We don't see him trying to take a piece of the glory of God for himself, i.e., taking credit for what God is doing.
- We don't see him calling attention to himself, as if it's all about him.

His focus is clearly on one thing: being God's man by listening to God, following God, leading the people according to God's word, and then pointing people to the Lord so that they will trust Him.

When God leads us into new beginnings: a new job, a promotion on the job, marriage, parenting (and the several "new beginnings" as children move through different phases of maturity), there can be the pressure to prove ourselves and we can start exalting ourselves.

Sometimes in a new job, a new position, in business, people seek to establish themselves by using other people as stepping stones; stomping others down to put themselves higher—back-stabbing, exaggerating facts, using people, manipulation, misrepresenting oneself or the product.

That's not the way to go and it will be a shaky foundation upon which to build your future.

Notice how Joshua focuses on being God's man:

Joshua 3:5 **"Joshua told the people, 'Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you.'"**

He sets the focus upon the Lord.

"Consecrating" was a ritual cleansing that God told His people to do before He revealed Himself in a significant way. *Consecration* often included a ritual washing, abstaining from sexual relations, putting on clean clothes, separating oneself from the day-to-day to prepare to meet with God in a special way.

The next day:

Joshua 3:9-13 **"Joshua said to the Israelites, 'Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God.'"**

10 **This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that He will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Gergashites, Amorites and Jebusites.**

11 **See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the Earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you.**

12 **Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe.**

13 **And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD - the Lord of all the Earth - set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap."**

Joshua is Listening (to the Lord),

- Following (what God says),
- Leading (the people in God's ways)
- Pointing (people to the Lord)

He is focused on being God's man.

Second,

II. Trust God to Establish You in His Ways and in His time

(Joshua 3:7-17; 4:16-18)

READ Joshua 3:7 “**And the LORD said to Joshua, ‘Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so [for the purpose] they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses.’”**

Joshua is focused on being God’s man. God is now going to establish Joshua as His leader to accomplish His purposes.

READ Joshua 3:15-17 “**Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water’s edge,**

16 the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam [approx. 25 miles north] in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea) [the Dead Sea] was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho.

17 The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.”

II. Trust God to Establish You in His Ways and in His time

God’s way: is going to be by working a miracle... by using Joshua to lead the nation in something humanly impossible.

God is going to stop the flow of the Jordan River. *This is not the only way God could have brought Israel into the land.*

He could have lead them to go further south, beneath the Dead sea and approach that way. He could have lead them north and passed above the Sea of Galilee. But, God had them cross though the Jordan.

He wanted to make it clear to the people that He was speaking to Joshua, giving His directions to Joshua, just as they had seen Him do through Moses.

Joshua has told the people that God said that when the priests carrying the Ark of God step into the Jordan River, the waters would stop flowing. It’s either going to happen or not. God has spoken to Joshua or He hasn’t.

It will be clear!

God’s timing: This is the most difficult time to cross the Jordan.

It was during the spring floods. The river was wider, deeper, and more treacherous because of the fast-moving water.

Leading the way, and at the center of the Jordan riverbed, is the Ark of the Covenant.

The Ark is the foremost symbol of the presence of God in the OT. It was a rectangular box about 4' long and 2' wide, by 2' tall. It was covered with gold, and made to God's specifications. When Israel was in one place for a while and their portable worship center was set up, the Ark was placed in a small section within called "the holy of holies." When the temple was later built in Jerusalem, it was placed there in the same way.

When Israel was traveling, priests were assigned to carry it. There were rings fastened to the Ark. Poles were put through the rings, and the priests put the poles on their shoulders and carried it that way.

No one was to touch the Ark, as it was like approaching God in an irreverent manner.

So, following God's instructions, Joshua told the priests to step into the river. When they did, God stopped the water from flowing, damming it up about 25 miles to the north. The remainder of the water ran by, the priests then walked to the middle of the Jordan and stood there.

The people then crossed over, while the Ark remained in the midst of the riverbed. God stopped the rushing, flood-stage waters of the Jordan River.

Once everyone was across, the priests brought the Ark across, and the river began flowing again.

By doing this, God reminded the people how He had parted the Red Sea when leading their parents out of Egypt.

And as a result of what God did:

Joshua 4:14 **"That day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they revered him all the days of his life, just as they had revered Moses."**

The LORD exalted Joshua, Joshua didn't exalt himself. As a result, he was established as God's leader; honored and revered by the people as God's leader for them.

ILLUSTRATION

This applies much broader than to just those who lead God's people.

There's a businessman who God established beyond anything he could have dreamed.

This man received a new assignment that was definitely a *"New Beginning"* for him in many ways.

His new assignment was somewhat of a mess because the manager he was replacing had tried to get a substantial salary increase from their company, even though he didn't want to produce more or work more. He was already very well paid.

When the company chose to not give him a certain percentage increase in pay, he approached a competitor, asking for the money he wanted and promised to bring a huge account with him, which he did. This account was worth about \$1.5 million a year. As part of the process of taking this account with him, he lied about his own abilities, about the new produce line, and slandered his company. This created a real mess for the new man.

In spite of his anger towards the manager who preceded him, the new man decided he was going to respond as closely as possible to what the Bible would direct him to do.

He determined that he would not "repay evil with evil or insult with insult." (1 Peter 3:9a). A second step was prayer that God would expose the lies and reveal the truth. Next, he instructed his team in the way he wanted them to respond, conducting themselves with all integrity, both when they encountered the former manager and in how they talked to others in their field.

Well, the new man had to finish up a few jobs that had already been contracted with the big client that his predecessor had taken with him. As he worked with this client, he heard some of the lies that had been told, and could see that the client was so convinced the lies were true that there was nothing he could say to turn the tide. So, he didn't reply. He just prayed and kept silent. When he encountered the former manager, he didn't give him the "death look," but treated him with respect.

He was choosing to be God's man, and trusting God to take care of business.

God began to visibly work. He started revealing the truth. The new product line did not deliver, as the first manager had promised. After a few frustrating experiences, other lies he had told became clear.

The new manager received a call from the major client. They had a long talk. The client told him how he realized he'd been lied to, that the former manager had misrepresented his abilities and the new product, and he wanted to switch back.

The new man's refusal to slander the former manager had kept the air clear between the two of them and helped establish his integrity.

What did God do as this businessman sought to walk in His ways?

God established the new manager in the eyes of the client.

God established the new manager in the eyes of his regional boss.

And then, he received calls from the president and the vice president of this nation-wide multi-multi-million dollar company, congratulating him on “*whatever he did*” to bring back the \$1.5 million client. **God established** him at the highest levels of the company.

God established this man far beyond anything he could have done for himself in his own ways, to prove himself, to try prove the other man a liar, or take things in his own hands to deliver justice.

Getting the major client back was a great thing. *But there was something greater.* It established the new manager as someone who was honest, had integrity, who was different from the manager who preceded him, who seemed to be willing to do whatever it took to establish himself in business.

It also gave him a platform to credit God and to share with his clients about his faith in Jesus Christ.

Psalm 75:6-7 **“No one from the east or the west or from the desert can exalt a man. 7 But it is God Who judges: He brings one down, He exalts another.”**

1 Peter 5:6-7 **“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.”**

7 Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.”

James 4:6b **“... That is why Scripture says: ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’”**

Who are the **proud**? Those who do things their own way.

Who are the **humble**? Those who do things God’s way.

Let God establish you!

III. Remember What God Has Done (Joshua 4:1-9, 19-24)

Create a physical reminder

Joshua 4:19-24 **“On the tenth day of the first month the people went up from the Jordan and camped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho.**

20 And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan.

21 He said to the Israelites, 'In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, "What do these stones mean?"

22 tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.'

23 For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan just what He had done to the Red Sea when He dried it up before us until we had crossed over.

24 He did this so that all the peoples of the Earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God."

Make lasting reminders, because you want to pass on the great things God has done!

"Father God, I thank You that I can trust You to establish me in Your time and in Your ways. Please help me to focus on being a person who listens to You, follows You, points to You. Thank You! In Jesus' name, Amen."