

## The Stones of Remembrance

T.J. CAMPO

### The Book of Jesus | Crossing Into the Land of Promise

Joshua 3.1-11, 4.1-7 and 19ff

9.23.18

Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed. 2And it came about at the end of three days that the officers went through the midst of the camp; 3and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. 4"However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before." 5Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." 6And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people. 7Now the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. 8"You shall, moreover, command the priests who are carrying the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.'" 9Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God." 10And Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will assuredly dispossess from before you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, and the Jebusite. 11"Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan.

4.1-7 Now it came about when all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, 2"Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from each tribe, 3and command them, saying, 'Take up for yourselves twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet are standing firm, and carry them over with you, and lay them down in the lodging place where you will lodge tonight.' 4 So Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe; 5 and Joshua said to them, "Cross again to the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel. 6 Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' 7 then you shall say to them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.' So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever."

4.19ff Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth of the first month and camped at Gilgal on the eastern edge of Jericho. 20And those twelve stones which they had taken from the Jordan, Joshua

set up at Gilgal.<sup>21</sup>And he said to the sons of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?' <sup>22</sup>then you shall inform your children, saying, 'Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground.' <sup>23</sup>"For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed, just as the LORD your God had done to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed; <sup>24</sup>that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, so that you may fear the LORD your God forever."

We've been looking at the SIXTH book of the Bible, the story of the Israelites crossing into the Land of Promise being led by the successor of Moses, Joshua.

We've called the series, The Book of Jesus, BECAUSE this protégé of Moses, this "relief-pitcher" bears the same name as the Savior of the World: the Messiah was named after THIS character, Joshua/Yeshua the General who brought the people home.

Joshua, son of Nun...is a type of Yeshua Son of God.

This book about God's agent who takes God's people into their inheritance (a task that Moses and the Law could NOT accomplish) this book tells us a lot about Jesus Christ (even though it was written some 1400 years B.C.).

Today's episode, the Crossing of the Jordan River (i.e. the actual entry INTO the Land) can be a huge help to people who are trying to benefit from the Bible.

If YOU want to believe in the God of the Bible and if YOU'VE HEARD that believing in this God is somehow a key (really THE key) to a life that's not crushed by fear... if you've heard that trusting God is the antidote to crippling anxiety and worry... THIS episode is a kind of model because this and the next few scenes are all about how God builds/grows faith in the lives of His fearful and insecure people.

If you've ever prayed, "Lord, I DO believe – help my unbelief! (Mark 9.24)" (and who hasn't?!) then this episode and the next should be a big, big help to you.

Let's look at HOW God grows faith in His people:

1) EVENTS Generated

2) EVENTS Remembered

3) HOW Information Becomes SENSATION

Basically what's happening in these two chapters (and we've omitted a lot) is the actual crossing IN to the Land and then (CH 4) ways God gives to remember this event and then there's a one-verse epilogue (start of CH 5 – which we hope to see next week).

Three days after the men left Rahab (last week) – "three days" is when death gives way to life in the Bible and NOW (after three days) God will mobilize the people behind the Ark of the Covenant (that's the gold-covered box with two sculpted angels on top...outstretched wings and in the hollow place in

the middle...is symbolized the invisible presence of God. The ark will be carried by the priests and the people are told to follow (at a distance of about a half-mile).

The people are to prepare spiritually because they will see wonders... God is going to DO something.

God speaks to Joshua (as He spoke with Moses). Joshua is told that he'll be confirmed as the new leader – God will highly exalt him and give him the name above every name (Phil 2.9), v. 7.

Then Joshua, the Leader... a kind of prophet-king... and he calls the priests to carry the ark.

He tells the people to listen and follow the ark – the symbol of God's presence and the priests are to carry the ark into the Jordan River (which, btw, is in flood-stage [15] and looks, I'm sure kind of menacing!)

And when the priests' feet touch the water a miracle takes place...the waters pile up...as a heap (just as when they crossed the Red Sea out of Egypt!) AND this miracle is said to be a sign of things to come.

It's meant to convince the whole nation that God is with them. The ark signifies that. And as the inanimate waters somehow KNOW to stand back from God's presence – so will the people of the land... the SEVEN NATIONS (in v.10) will also know to stand back from God and His people.

See, the whole scene is to be a huge faith-building experience... If the raging but lifeless waters seem to KNOW to make way for this God and His people then the human beings in the land should really GET IT!

He is "the Lord of all the earth" – the Land all belongs to Him and He can assign it as He wills. If even the dumb river gets this then surely the Canaanites will. "Who can stand before the Lord of all the earth"?

And it all unfolds exactly as God told Joshua and as Joshua told the priests and the people. And you can see how God is proving Himself to this weak-faithed people. They heard from Rahab that her whole city knew about this "Lord of all the earth" (2.11) and they all feared Him and now...even the inanimate waters fear Him. The priests stand in the river with the Ark of the Covenant and the people cross over safely.

The whole thing is meant to build the faith of this people – Rahab's report and the Raging River that stood at attention when God and His people crossed over... It's a repeated taunt in the Psalms: "The sea looked and fled; the Jordan turned back... What ails you, O waters, that you flee? O Jordan, that you turn back?" (Psalm 114.3 &5)

Now, after these events are generated by God, the people are instructed to remember the events – THIS is meant to be a faith-builder for generations to come. It was that way for Moses when he brought the Exodus Generation through the Red Sea – as soon as they got to the other side, Moses wrote a song...and it was written down and memorized because these faith-building moments can't be squandered!

Here, it's a pile of big rocks. Twelve representatives – one from each tribe – are to each shoulder a stone and set up a kind of monument...so that future generations can see it and children can ask their parents, "What IS this big pile of rocks?"

And this will give parents a way to build the faith of their children "Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' then you shall say to them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD when it crossed the Jordan... So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever.'" (4.6-7)

The monument is a sign...a memorial...it's an aid to believing! We need it because we all have a selective memory. We all forget things we SHOULD remember (and we also remember things we wish we could forget!) and memory is really important to faith!

In fact, the practice of EVENTS remembered is central to the practice of True Spirituality... And look how THIS scene with those important words, "a sign ... and a memorial" – look how this whole episode is SO packed with "SIGN-if-i-cance"!

In the LARGER story – some 1400 years later – another Joshua would stand in the waters of that very same river. As the new generation of Israelites were sort of born in that "birth canal" – so would Jesus Christ be baptized in those waters...our Representative!

In that moment, the Greater Joshua, Yeshua Christ would be drenched in responsibility ...would accept the blame for my sin and the sins of all God's people.

After the waters of the Jordan were poured on His sacred Head, then the Holy Spirit would come down (the word Jordan means to come down!) and all would hear the words, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (like a birth announcement!)

Remember that the True Joshua would then go into battle with the enemy of our souls... and would then begin to call His twelve representatives as if to say, "I AM the Ark of the Covenant – NOW the invisible Presence of God is visible...I go before you and as they followed the Ark in Joshua's day, I now say to you, "Follow Me!"

He will then go to-and-fro through the Land and put all our enemies to flight – all the things we fear – the unclean spirits, sickness, injustice/falsehood, hunger, the wind and the waves, sin, death and judgment – He the Greater Joshua, the True Ark of the Covenant would defeat all our enemies for us... and His Father would exalt Him and bestow on Him the Name that is above every name that at the Name of Jesus, every knee should bow – HE is Lord of all the earth!

The children of the Exodus Generation would have to trust God in order to take the Land He promised and their heavenly Father had them walk through the raging waters – they died and were reborn and they saw His power and found reason to TRUST Him.

But at last, the Greater Joshua, Jesus Christ, would undergo that most dreadful baptism (Luke 12.50) – would be drowned in the raging sea of God's justice and would then emerge after three days (when life

comes out of death) and He would be seen by witnesses who could never deny that He had indeed risen – just as He said!

God has given all people ample REASON to believe.

You see, we too, are, in a way, standing on the verge of Jordan. We are called to live with God in a world that is hostile and in many ways devoted to evil.

If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you have a calling in this world...in fact, many callings. You may be called to be an accountant, a mechanic, a student ... maybe a mom, a husband, a neighbor, a citizen – all these and many more callings issued by our General, the Greater Joshua, Jesus Christ.

To carry out these callings... to give ourselves away for the welfare of others and to live as lights in the midst of this generation (Phil 2.15) can be a terrifying mission... Hey, let's admit – just facing life and death in this world can be terrifying.

But God, the Holy Spirit, is in the business of taking what COULD be just information and making it sensation... He is using the sacraments (baptism and the Lord's Supper) – like Stones of Remembrance (more on that next week!)

He's using the people around you to encourage you in your mission and calling. We should be careful how we speak to one another...how we support one another and help each other believe!

All this information we sort of uncovered today – how Jesus Christ is the Greater Joshua and is our Champion, our Priest who walked into the raging water for us... See, this is how we pray: “Lord, You who turned water into wine – turn this information into sensation... the events are essential... and to know the facts is crucial but, Lord, I need that same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead to convert this information into WONDER...into trust!”

Isn't that how the earliest Christian leaders prayed for their young converts? “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places...”(Eph 1.18-20)

It's my final encouragement to us today – I urge you to pray this with St. Paul and the others... “Lord, the stones of remembrance are all around me – some, living stones, people in Your New Temple...and the signs, the sacraments, and I remember moments when You really applied it all and brought it home to my heart... and I pray again...turn the memory of Your great wonders... and the greatest of all: the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, set it all ablaze – turn the information into sensation and grant me to believe – to TRUST...

It's the only way to really answer the callings and fulfill our mission... that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, so that you may fear (i.e. TRUST) the LORD your God forever."(Joshua 4.24)