**THE LIVING GOD IS AMONG YOU**

Joshua 3:1-17

Key Verse 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, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites.

**Introduction**



In order to enter the Promised Land, the Israelites have to cross the Jordan River first, the geographical obstacle that lies between Israel and the Promised Land. Joshua’s first mission is to cross the Jordan with all the Israelites. Joshua and Israel cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land, following God’s leading. Through today’s passage, let us learn how to overcome our Jordan River that we face in our lives and in the course of our mission and experience God’s amazing work among us. “This is how you will know that the living God is among you!” May the Lord help us to grow as a kingdom of priests in our times!

1. Read verse 1-4. What did Joshua and the people do after hearing the report of the spies? (1) What instructions did the officers give the people? (2-4) What can we learn here about following the word of God?

1-1, Read verse 1-4.

Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. **2** After three days the officers went throughout the camp, **3** giving orders to the people: “When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. **4** Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about two thousand cubits[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joshua+3&version=NIV#fen-NIV-5898a)]between you and the ark; do not go near it.”

1-2, What did Joshua and the people do after hearing the report of the spies? (1)

***Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over.***

* After hearing the report of the spies, Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim early in the morning, went to the Jordan River and camped at the edge of the Jordan.
* Many might have excited to enter the promised land finally. But the reality was that the river was at flood stage at that harvest season.
* There they spent the next three days, seeing the uncrossable river. Some might have doubted and said, “It’s impossible.”



*The Jordan River is a 251-kilometer-long river. It begins from Mount Hermon, flows through northern Israel to the Sea of Galilee, and continues south to the Dead Sea, about 1,410 feet below sea level, the lowest land point on earth. When Joshua and Israel are about to cross the Jordan, it is at flood stage and its width is more than 1.6 km.* (From ***Wikipedia****)*

* Humanly it was indeed impossible. But in God it is more than possible. Thus, the people of God should walk by faith in God almighty, not by sight. By crossing the Jordan God wanted his people to learn the living faith.
* By breaking through what is impossible, God also wants us to have faith in mighty God and experience the living almighty God.

1-3, What instructions did the officers give the people? (2-4)

***2 After three days the officers went throughout the camp, 3 giving orders to the people: “When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. 4 Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about two thousand cubits[***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Joshua+3&version=NIV#fen-NIV-5898a)***]between you and the ark; do not go near it.”***

* Inside the ark, there were the Ten Commandments stone tablet, the pot of manna, Aaron’s staff, a symbol of God’s authority, guidance and power.
* Moreover, on top of the ark was a gold plate called the Mercy Seat on which two statues of cherubim knelt. God showed up right above the Mercy Seat and met his people and forgave them through the blood sacrifice.
* The ark of God witnesses God’s unfailing love for his people, his provision and his guidance. So, the ark means God loves, provides and leads his people. It means God’s presence with Israel, in the New Testament term, “Immanuel, God with us.”
* So when the ark led the way, it meant God was out in front. God would make a way. Therefore his people should stop doubting but just follow his leading and go after him. God would lead them, make a way for them, protect them and bring them to the Promised Land.
* So the test to enter the Promised Land for the people of Israel was the test of faith. The first Exodus generation could not pass the test of faith because of their unbelief and disobedience, and all died in the desert.
* Now their second gens had the same test. They could pass this test only when they had faith in God and assuredly and boldly followed the ark of God who would make a way where there seemed to be no way.
* God is our spiritual **GPS** that leads us into the right path. After we set our destination into the GPS, we trust it and follow it.
* When we miss the way, it says, “Rerouting…” and shows a new path to the destination. So we simply follow its leading.
* In the same way, God knows the way and so we just follow him humbly. Often times, we wander not knowing where to turn and go. But we must follow God and his word by faith.

1-4, What can we learn here about following the word of God?

***4 Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before.***

* The Ark must go before the community and must lead the way to guide them and to give them direction.
* The Levitical priests were to bear the Ark using poles and the people were to move from their positions and follow.
* Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. When we follow God’s direction we will know which way to go.
* The word of God is God’s great blessing to us. The word of God gives us direction.

Ps 119:105 says,

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

* Through the Bible, we know which way to go. Across the river were cities like Jericho and Ai and Gibeon. Enemy cities were fortified with advance technologies and trained militaries. But no need to fear them. God is with Israel.
* As long as the Israelites followed the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord their God they will know which way they must go.
* If you have a GPS you don’t bother about directions. No matter how many times we miss the way, a soft-spoken lady simply say, “Recalculating…”
* Similarly, when we follow God’s words we cannot lose our way. God gives the directions; we only need follow.

***But keep a distance of about two thousand cubits between you and the ark; do not go near it.”***

* The distance between the Ark and the people should be approximately a half mile. It is to protect the people.
* Our God is a consuming fire (Heb 12:29). We must maintain reverent and holy respect for God Almighty. God is holy and sinful people cannot approach God.
* Only in Jesus have we received grace to draw near to God… having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water (Heb 10:22).
* Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

2. Read verse 5-11. Why should they consecrate themselves and take up the ark of the covenant? (5-6) Why would God begin to exalt Joshua? (7) What were the priests carrying the ark required to do? (8) What was God teaching them before crossing of the Jordan river? (9-11)

2-1, Read verse 5-11.

**5** Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.” **6** Joshua said to the priests, “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people.” So they took it up and went ahead of them. **7** And the Lord said to Joshua, “Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses. **8** Tell the priests who carry the ark of the covenant: ‘When you reach the edge of the Jordan’s waters, go and stand in the river.’” **9** 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, Girgashites, 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.

2-2, Why should they consecrate themselves and take up the ark of the covenant? (5-6)

***5 Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.”***

* To consecrate is to set apart for God that which we already separated from sin. To consecrate is to sanctify.
* John 17:17 says, “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” The word of God is the means by which God concentrates his people.
* By His words, he equips us and sets us apart for God’s holy use. God is holy. God cannot tolerate sin and sinners.
* Sin causes God’s wrath and blocks God’s blessings. To participate in God’s work therefore, we must first repent of our sins, turn our hearts back to God.
* Consecration in the Old Testament times also implicates washing their clothes, abstaining from sexual relations, changing their work schedule and the like.
* They deliberately interrupted normal functions in life in order to be spiritually alert. To join in God’s amazing work, we must restrain our daily normal routine, be spiritually alert and get involved in God’s work.
* Let us repent of our sins first before our holy God. Let us dedicate ourselves to him and his life-giving work, to witness God’s abundant and amazing blessings.

***6 Joshua said to the priests, “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people.” So they took it up and went ahead of them.***

* Joshua told the priests to take the ark of the covenant and position themselves in front of the people.
* The ark was to be their guide in their march toward the promised land. Now Joshua was a new leader, and the priests were independently minded people.
* But they did not say anything contrary to Joshua. They obeyed him. They respected Joshua, the servant of God, because they respected God.

2-3, Why would God begin to exalt Joshua? (7)

***7 And the Lord said to Joshua, “Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses.***

* God was pleased with Joshua when he saw how spiritual he was. Joshua was a military general. But according to God’s command in chapter 1:7, he obeyed to keep God’s words on his lips.
* He told his people do to was to consecrate their hearts before the Lord. Then he worked together with the priests to obey the word of God.
* Joshua proved himself to be worthy of God’s servant and a spiritual leader of his people.
* When Joshua obeyed the word of God, God recognized his leadership and wanted to let the Israelites know that he was the chosen leader for his people.
* It also reminds us that God promised to be with Joshua as he was with Moses.

Praise the Lord who raised up Joshua to be a leader to follow His holy words.

2-4, What were the priests carrying the ark required to do? (8)

***8 Tell the priests who carry the ark of the covenant: ‘When you reach the edge of the Jordan’s waters, go and stand in the river.’”***

* The priests had a very important role in crossing the Jordan. They had to carry the ark of the covenant.
* They had to go ahead of the people in their march toward the uncharted territory. They had to go into the swollen river before everyone else did.
* They had to be the first ones to get their feet wet. Now God told them to go and stand in the middle of the river while all Israel passed by until the whole nation completed the crossing.

2-5, What was God teaching them before crossing of the Jordan river? (9-11)

***9 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, Girgashites, 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.***

* Joshua encouraged them to listen to the words of God. He told them that the crossing of the Jordan was to help them to know that the living God was among them and he would give victory over their enemies in Canaan.
* Having faith is the first and foremost thing before overcoming the difficulty. “The living God is among you and he will certainly drive out before you…” indicates that God wants us to have absolute faith first before seeing any result.
* “See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth go into the Jordan ahead of you.” When we rely on God’s promised words, we will never lost the way!

3. Read verses 12-17. Describe the crossing of the Jordan. What can we learn here about God and about their obedient faith?

3-1, Read verses 12-17.

**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.”

**14** So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. **15** 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 in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (that is, 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 stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground

3-2, Describe the crossing of the Jordan.

***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.” 14 So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. 15 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 in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (that is, 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 stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground***

* Again we can see how the priests led the people despite the overflowing river. The word, “the priests” appeared more than 4 times. Their role was critical!
* 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.
* What a tremendous responsibility they had! What does this mean to us today? We have been praying for our nation to be a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:5-6).
* God wants us to take the responsibility of priests. Jesus is our high priest and we must be his little priests.
* While on earth, Jesus did what the priests were to do in this passage. Jesus did set a good example for his sheep to follow.
* On the night he was arrested, Jesus identified himself, saying “I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go” (Jn 18:8).
* We learn here that to be a kingdom of priests we have to take the responsibility of the priests in this passage. We must learn to obey the word of God.
* We must go ahead of our sheep, setting good examples. We must also protect our sheep by standing in the middle of a river. This isn’t easy.
* What if the dam of the water suddenly breaks and sweeps us away? Like the priests in this passage, we must hold on to God’s promise by faith.
* We have much to learn from Joshua and the priests in order to become spiritual leaders. Most of all, we must learn of our Lord Jesus, our Good Shepherd.

3-3, What can we learn here about God and about their obedient faith?

* The people broke camp to cross the Jordan by faith. They obeyed the words of God. They trusted God’s promise even though the floodwaters of the Jordan were raging before their eyes.
* As soon as the feet of the priests touched the stream, the water from upstream stopped flowing. What a spectacular scene!
* By faith Joshua and his people witnessed the power of God with their own eyes. The priests stood firm in the middle of the river while the 1 million people crossed the river as on dry ground.
* The crossing of the Jordan teaches us important spiritual lessons. The Jordan lies between the wilderness and the promised land.
* Spiritually speaking the Jordan represent an obstacle that we must overcome to bear spiritual fruit in the promised land.
* Think of it this way. When we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, we are set free from our bondage of sin and death.
* Some Christians do not let go of their desires for this world and spend much time in the wilderness going around a circle. They are saved, but not yet sanctified.
* So they show similar tendencies, attitudes and problems of their past sinful life. Such a life does not bear good fruit in God.
* We must move forward from such fruitless life in wilderness to the promised land. We need to face our Jordan and cross it by faith.
* May God help us to have a reverent fear and respect for the word of God! May God help us to commit our lives fully to Jesus and obey his commands!
* May God help us to cross our personal Jordan and experience victory in God in the promised land!

**Conclusion**

Most of all, may God raise up all of us to be spiritual leaders like Joshua and the priests so that we may be used in his redemptive history! May the Lord help us to overcome our personal Jordan so that we may not give up but press on by faith only. Amen!

**One word: The Living God is among you!**