



Joshua/Lesson 2 Miracles - from God

Joshua 3-5

Store this in your Brain:

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." **Joshua 1:9**

1: PREPARATION TO CROSS THE JORDAN – Joshua 3:1-6

1. a. The Israelites are at the Jordan River. How will they know when and where to cross the river? vs.3-4 _____
b. From the *CBS Dictionary* and Exodus 25:10-22, what is the **ark of the covenant**?

c. The presence of the ark showed the Israelites that the Lord would go before them in their journey and symbolized to them God's nearness and His glory.
What does this say to **you**? _____
2. a. What did Joshua tell the people in verse 5? _____
b. Define **consecrate/sanctify**? _____

c. This applies to believers today. How can believers approach God with a pure heart? See Romans 12:1-2. _____

d. Why does what **you** watch on TV or at the movies, have anything to do with verse 5?

2: GOD PARTS THE WATER – Joshua 3:7-17

3. a. Why does God exalt Joshua? _____
b. When Joshua speaks to the people, how does he honor God?

c. When were the waters of the Jordan parted? _____
d. God showed His great power by working a miracle to allow His people to cross the river on dry ground. What does this tell **you** about God? _____
e. Would you have wanted to stay on the safe, dry land? Or would you have stepped out into the flooded river? And why? _____
f. Write Matthew 19:26. _____
g. What can **you** learn from this miracle? _____

3: ISRAEL ENTERS THE PROMISED LAND – Joshua 4:1 - 5:1

4. a. Define **memorial**? _____
b. Who did the 12 chosen men represent? vs. 2 _____
c. What was the meaning of the memorial for the Israelites? vs. 6-7 _____

d. What was the meaning of the memorial for "all the peoples of the earth"? vs. 24

e. Share a way that **you** can make a memorial for what God has done in your life.

Retelling your stories of God's faithfulness/miracles in your life keeps the truth of God's power alive.

f. What happened in verse 18? _____

5. a. Where are the Israelites now and what are they ready to do? vs.13

b. Centuries earlier God had promised Abraham and his descendants the land of Canaan. The only way to prevent Israel from being influenced by evil religions was to drive out those who practiced them. What do you learn from 5:1? _____

c. Don't underestimate God. When the Israelites were in line with God's direction, nothing could defeat them. How can **you** apply this wisdom to **your** life? _____

4: RITUALS AND CELEBRATIONS – Joshua 5:2-17

6. a. Gilgal became Israel's base camp during their invasion of Canaan. The people renewed their commitment to God and covenant with Him before attempting to conquer the new land. **Circumcision** was a practice God established to identify the men of Israel as His special people. It was a sign on their body that marked them that God had chosen them to belong to Him - setting them apart. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 2:29 that the real meaning of circumcision is the work of the Holy Spirit on your _____. Belonging to God's family is not based on outward rituals, even though they are important. God requires you to change inside - for your heart to be devoted and obedient to Him. What does this mean to **you**?

b. **Passover** was a very important event in the life of Israel. See *CBS Dictionary* for more information. From Exodus 12:21-27, why did Israel observe the Passover when they entered the land? _____

7. a. Who was the man talking to Joshua? vs. 13-15 _____

b. What did he say? _____

c. Why do you think God sent this visitor to Joshua? _____

d. Share a time when God sent someone to encourage **you**. _____

5: SO WHAT? – Joshua 3-5

8. a. What is a truth that **you** didn't know before you studied these verses?

b. What is a truth that will make **you** change your actions from these verses?

ACTION: This week daily surrender your choices to God. Record the wonders.

Extreme promises: When you realize that God is with you, that he'll never leave you nor forsake you, what do you have to be afraid of?

Lesson 2

Miracles

- from God

Joshua 3-5

COMMENTARY The two spies sent out by Joshua return from Jericho, reporting: *"The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands"* (Joshua 2:24). Eager to possess the land God promised to their forefathers, Joshua and the Israelites leave early the next day for the Jordan, where they camp for three days. The officers direct the people to move out and follow the ark of the covenant, which will be carried by the priests. The ark, a symbol of God's very presence with them, had been part of the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle. It held three items: a jar of manna, Aaron's rod, and the tablets of God's commandments (Exodus 26:33; Hebrews 9:4).

Only Levitical priests could carry the ark. The people (several hundred thousand) are to follow respectfully at a distance. Joshua commands them to *"consecrate"* (3:5) themselves (*"sanctify,"* RSV, *to be set apart for God*), which included washing their garments; eating only foods permitted by God; putting away foreign gods; purifying themselves (probably ritualistically); and changing their clothes (Genesis 35:2; Exodus 19:10; Leviticus 11).

God promises Joshua He will affirm his leadership to the people. Joshua tells the people that God will drive out the pagan nations; that they should recognize God's presence in the ark; and that a delegate from each tribe will witness a miracle at the Jordan River. Following Joshua's instruction, the priests carrying the ark step into the river, which immediately *"piled up"* (3:16) far upstream, stopping the flow of the river.

Being harvest time, the river is at flood stage. Humanly speaking, trying to cross would be pointless, but nothing is impossible with God. The priests stand in the dry riverbed while everyone goes across. Like their parents in Moses' time, this generation of Israelites experiences God's power and provision.

THINK ABOUT Joshua following God wherever He leads. When God directs us to the brink of turbulence, like He did to Joshua, will we walk by faith? Even in an "impossible" situation, Joshua trusted God. The focus of his vision was God above, not the swirling waters below. As we trust God, He has promised to bless us as He blessed the Israelites (Psalm 40:4); He will never leave or forsake us. We can believe Him, even when He leads us into the darkest hour of our lives (Matthew 28:20). His Word says, *"In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose"* (Romans 8:28). God assures us that with Him *"all things are possible"* (Matthew 19:26). Let's trust Him when we face problems that seem to have no human solution. Our God is able.

When all the people have crossed the river, God tells Joshua: *"Choose twelve men...to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and...put them down at the place where you stay tonight"* (4:2-3). These memorial stones would remind the Israelites, and the generations to come, of God's mighty deed on their behalf. This first miracle established Joshua's credibility with the people, who are now in awe of him even as they had been of Moses. The priests bearing the ark wait patiently in the riverbed until God gives the command through Joshua to come out. When they do, the river again flows, rising to flood stage. Crossing the Jordan took place on the tenth day of the first month, the Jewish month of Nisan (late March or early April). News about the miracle terrifies the pagan kings in Canaan. They are afraid to face the Israelites.

Joshua and the people camp at Gilgal, the site of two important events: circumcision and the celebration of Passover. God charges Joshua: *"Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelites again"* (5:2). *"Again"* may refer to the time Abraham circumcised his entire household (Genesis 17:22-27). Because the Passover would be celebrated for the first time in the Promised Land and could not be celebrated by uncircumcised males (Exodus 12:25, 48), the nation pauses to remedy their condition.

Lesson 2

Joshua 3-5

The Israelites celebrated Passover on the first anniversary after they left Egypt (Numbers 9:4-5), but they had probably not observed it in the thirty-eight years since. Circumcision, a sign of God's covenant with Abraham and his offspring, was to be performed on all male infants the eighth day after birth (Genesis 17:9-14; Luke 2:21). Although circumcision did not save the Israelites, it marked them as belonging to God, setting them apart from other people groups. No Israelite infant boy born in the desert had been circumcised, perhaps for reasons of hygiene. For the generation of Israelites entering the Promised Land, circumcision was also a symbol of their freedom from slavery in Egypt.

THINK ABOUT the deeper meaning of circumcision: an inward, spiritual "cutting away" of sinful attitudes of the heart by the work of the Holy Spirit (Romans 2:28-29). Belonging to God's family is not based on external rituals. Church membership, baptism, confirmation—important as they are—are not enough, just as being circumcised was not enough for the Jews. God requires internal change: our heartfelt devotion and obedience. When circumcision of the heart becomes real to us, we can worship God by His Spirit (Philippians 3:3). Then we will be truly free – not slaves to sin, sex, drugs, or alcohol – even as the Israelites had been set free from their slavery in Egypt.

The Passover was very important in the life of Israel. First begun in Egypt before the Exodus, the Passover Feast celebrated the night God saved the Israelites by telling the angel of death to pass over homes that had the blood of a lamb on the doorpost (Exodus 12:3-49). Today, Passover remains a symbol of the saving blood of the Lamb of God. Jesus is our Passover Lamb, sacrificed for our sin (1 Corinthians 5:7). Jesus revealed this truth when He introduced the Lord's Supper during the Passover Feast the night before His crucifixion (Matthew 26:26-28). Passover, then, is a living memorial for Jews and Christians of God's mighty acts and merciful deliverance from the slavery of sin and oppression.

On the fourteenth day of Nisan, the Israelites celebrated the Passover. The next day, God gave them a new diet: instead of the manna He had provided in the desert, they would now enjoy the fruit and produce of the Promised Land.

God appears to Joshua in the form of *"a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua...asked, 'Are you for us or for our enemies?'"* (5:13). The man says he is the commander of the army of the Lord who will accompany Joshua and his army. Joshua responds by bowing face down in worship. That the One he revered allowed him to bow in worship indicates this may have been a theophany—a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. The man tells Joshua: *"Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy"* (5:15). The Lord gives Joshua specific orders for the conquest of Jericho. This further assurance of God's presence and power enables Joshua to move forward fearlessly.

PERSONALIZE this lesson. The twelve memorial stones served to remind the Israelites of God's powerful, loving care for them. As believers in Christ, we have also been given a way to remember God's powerful, loving care. All of God's kindness toward us is revealed in His Son, Jesus. Holy Communion is the act by which we take part in the remembrance our Lord's death. By sharing the broken bread, His body, and the cup, His blood, we *"proclaim the Lord's death"* until He returns again (1 Corinthians 11:24-26). Jesus died as the perfect *"Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). As we partake of the bread and wine, the Holy Spirit reminds us of God's promises to us as we worship Him *"in spirit and truth"* (John 4:24).