

August 6

Scriptures: Joshua 3 & 4

Key Verse: God dried up the waters of the Jordan... that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever. (4:23-24)

Overview

Israel's long-awaiting dream was about to be fulfilled. This would show the faithfulness of God to the promises He made their forefathers, and it would also show His faithfulness and mighty power as He miraculously brought them over the Jordan River into the Promised Land. This would have tremendously strengthened Israel's faith and also would have brought terror upon the inhabitants of the land. How could the idolatrous heathens hope to stand against a God who had such great power and even performed miracles in the land where their gods were supposed to reign? They would understand that the God of Israel had laid a just claim upon the land and their gods could do nothing to stop Him nor His people.

The spies' report reassured Joshua that God was already at work (2:24), now he and the people were to take a great step of faith; a step in which Israel had miserably failed forty years earlier. Early in the morning, Joshua commanded that they move camp and lodge beside the banks of the flooded Jordan River (3:1). He possibly did not know exactly how the great multitude of people was to cross, yet he believed God would do wonders and His presence would be with them; therefore, He ordered that all Israel sanctify themselves (3:5). They needed to consecrate themselves to God with both the outward ceremonial purification and the very important inward devotion to God. Because they were embarking on a holy war, spiritual preparation was necessary. Indeed, before God's people can take a step of faith and move in the direction He is leading, they must be spiritually prepared.

Once Israel was encamped beside the Jordan, the Lord revealed to Joshua His divine plan. God explained to him that the miracle would magnify him in the sight of all Israel, thus validating his leadership, saying: "that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you" (3:7; fulfilled in 4:14). Joshua, then, could relate God's plan to the people so they would know that God had truly spoken to him. When the miracle did happen just as Joshua had told them, all the people respected him, just as they had Moses, thus fulfilling God's promise to him (4:14).

The Ark of the Covenant, representing God's presence, was carried by priests ahead of the Israelites. Before God would dry up the Jordan, the priest's had to show faith by first "getting their feet wet" in the rushing floodwaters. Immediately, God miraculously heaped up the water about twenty-five kilometers north at the city of Adam. The river became dried up as far south as the Dead Sea, leaving a stretch of about thirty-five kilometers where the multitude of Israelites could easily and hurriedly cross over the pebbly riverbed while the priests stood bearing the Holy Ark in the midst of it. There they remained until all had crossed over, and the twelve stones were erected where they were standing as a monument, testifying to their future generations of God's miraculous power.

Another twelve stones, also taken from the midst of the Jordan and having the same significance, were erected at their new place of encampment, west of the Jordan at Gilgal, about four and a half kilometers north east of Jericho. The reason God gave for the erection of these monuments was that all Israel would hear Him and that the whole earth would know His mighty hand (key verse, 4:24). God is interested in the salvation of the whole world and longs to see all men and women come to believe and exclaim like Rahab, “the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath” (2:11).

Prayer

Lord, we know that Your hand is mighty and we fear You forever. Help us to tell others today that You are God in Heaven above and on earth below. Amen.