

CROSSING THE JORDAN RIVER

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have prayed for wisdom and read the Bible to learn what the Holy Spirit wants you to teach your students. Then let Him guide you in using these notes below to meet the needs of your students.

Lesson Aim: To show faith in God by complete obedience to His plan.

Suggestion: Give next week's Student Lesson to your class to answer the questions. Let them share their answers in class. The questions below will reveal important truths you may want to emphasize.

Introduction: Israel faced an obstacle before they could begin their conquest of Canaan: they had to cross the Jordan River at flood stage. It was dangerous for a strong man to swim across the Jordan at flood-time, but impossible for a nation of about two million to swim across it with its army, women, children, cattle and other possessions. Israel was not to seek human methods for crossing the river (a bridge, pontoons, or boats), but it was to depend on God's method. Israel could cross it only by faith in God. They had to have dependence on God's promise, confidence in God's presence, reliance on God's power, and complete obedience to God's plan. The lessons that Israel learned in crossing the Jordan would be needed for victory in the overall conquest of Canaan. "Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb 11:6).

Why were the people separated from the Ark of the Covenant by over a half mile? 3:3-4

God is holy and His wrath will fall on anyone who willfully comes into His presence so that they will die. Since God was present in the Ark of the Covenant, the people of Israel needed to respect His holiness. God commanded them to keep 3,000 feet from the Ark. Only the priests that carried the Ark could be near Him. He had the priests step into the swollen waters of the Jordan and He stopped the waters from coming down and made the riverbed bone dry. Then the priests carried the Ark to the middle of the riverbed where they stood until about two million persons, who kept their distance from the Ark, had passed safely over the river into the land of Canaan. God showed the Israelites that He stopped the river by His power and He would use His same miraculous power to help Israel conquer the wicked nations in Canaan. God's holiness keeps sinners from His presence. The only sacrifice that can cleanse sinners is the blood of Jesus, who paid for the sins of all people on the cross (1 Jn 2:2). If you receive Him as your Savior, He will remove your sins so the Spirit of God will dwell in you. God dwells in us by His Spirit when we receive Jesus as our Savior. Is God's Spirit in you (Rom 8:9)?

What did Joshua tell the people to do the day before they crossed the Jordan? 3:5

Joshua told the people to sanctify themselves. They were to set themselves apart for God and away from the world. They were to seek the blessings of God, not the pleasures of sin (Col 3:21). They were to depend on God's supernatural power, not on their human strength for victory (Zech 4:6). They were to obey God's Word, not rebel against His commands (1 Sam 15:22-23). They were to be content with God's provisions, not covetous for worldly possessions (Heb 13:5). These are some things that we can do to sanctify ourselves.

What did God begin to do when Israel crossed the Jordan River? 3:7

God began to magnify Joshua as He did Moses by giving him the power to perform several miracles. Joshua was a minister to Moses for 40 years before God magnified him in the eyes of Israel. Believers must learn to be humble before God will magnify them with honor (Prov 15:33).

Why did God have the Israelites cross over Jordan at flood-time? 4:24

God wanted all people to know that His hand is mighty. God's might will cause unbelievers to fear and panic, but it will bring others to faith and salvation (Rahab and possibly her family). God also wanted His people to fear Him with grateful respect as their God forever. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom (Ps 111:10). By humility and fear of the LORD are riches, and honor, and life (Prov 22:4). Do you respect the LORD by keeping His commands to study His Word, witness and pray earnestly?