

Joshua Leads Israel

Key Verse: *“The LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.”*
—Joshua 3:7

Selected Scripture:
Joshua 3:1-13

then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.”—Josh. 3:3

IT WAS A CLIMACTIC TIME

in the history of the Israelites. They were on the verge of entering into Canaan, with only the Jordan River separating them from the land promised to their forefathers. Their leader, Joshua, instructed the officers of the Israelites to go through the host and instruct the people. “They commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.”

The ark of the covenant symbolized God’s presence with Israel. Indeed, this ark had been the focal point of their worship of God for nearly forty years through the arrangement of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. It was God’s desire that they continue to put their faith and trust in him, represented in the ark, as they crossed the Jordan and entered into the land of promise. This is also a lesson for spiritual Israel. Faith in God and in his leading is a requirement of all those seeking to be pleasing in his sight. “Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and

that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”—Heb. 11:6

Our Key Verse shows God’s desire to make evident the fact that he would be with Joshua in the same way he had been with his predecessor, Moses. This testimony on God’s part was both for Joshua’s benefit, to encourage him and keep his faith strong, as well as for the ears of the people, so they might realize the need to obey Joshua as God’s representative. For spiritual Israel too, we are to obey God’s chosen representatives—the prophets, the apostles, and his chief representative, Jesus. To be heedless of their words is the same as disobedience to the Heavenly Father himself. To obey their instructions, however, is to follow after God’s precepts and teachings.

As final preparation for their crossing the Jordan, God, through Joshua, instructed the priests who bore the ark of the covenant to come to the brink of the river with the ark, and stand still. The people were then told that the ark, borne by the priests, would pass first over the Jordan, and they would follow after. (Josh. 3:8-11) The instructions continued, “It shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap.”—vs. 13

The promise of God was carried out. As the feet of the priests bearing the ark touched the waters of the river, it turned to dry land. They walked to the midst of the river, and the riverbed became dry all the way to the other side. The priests stood in the middle of the river, holding the ark, as all the people walked by, “until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.” (vs. 17) Israel’s faith in God, represented by the ark dwelling in the midst of the river, was rewarded by their entrance into the promised land. ■