

Joshua 2:22-3:5 | Sunday August 2, 2026

Joshua sent two spies into Jericho to spy out the land and find out any valuable information that they could. The spies were immediately recognized on this secret mission. We are not told how much of Jericho they were able to see because the main focus is their time with Rahab. God had prepared Rahab's heart in an amazing way and she knew that the God of Israel was the true God in the heavens above and on the earth below. She had heard stories about what the God of Israel had done to Egypt and the other kings. She knew Jericho was terrified of Israel. **By faith Rahab received the spies, and in a step of growth and maturity she helped them to safety.** Based on her trust of God she made a covenant promise with the spies that she would protect their lives if they would protect her families' lives. Rahab fulfilled her promise by sneaking the spies out of her window. She sent them in the opposite direction of where the Israelites were camped to the caves in the southwest which would provide protection.

Joshua 2:22-24 ESV

- (22) They departed and went **into the hills** and remained there three days until the pursuers returned, and the pursuers searched all along the way and found nothing.
- (23) Then the two men returned. They came down from the hills and passed over and **came to Joshua the son of Nun**, and they told him all that had happened to them.
- (24) And they said to Joshua, **"Truly the LORD has given all the land into our hands. And also, all the inhabitants of the land melt away because of us."**

The spies remained hidden for three days until they were able to make their way back to the Israeli camp. Rahab had kept her word and did not expose the spies. The spies did not give a public report to all the people but came back to Joshua and told him what happened. After fleeing for their lives, and spending much of the time hiding from soldiers, I am amazed at their conclusion. **They had full confidence that God had given the land to Israel.** In Joshua 2:9 Rahab had confirmed that Jericho was fearful and melted away before Israel. The spies knew this confirmed a promise that God had made to Israel.

Exodus 23:27-30 ESV

- (27) **I will send My terror before you** and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and **I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you.**
- (28) And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivites, the Canaanites, and the Hittites from before you.
- (29) I will not drive them out from before you in one year, **lest the land become desolate and the wild beasts multiply against you.**
- (30) **Little by little I will drive them out from before you**, until you have increased and possess the land.

When the spies heard that fear had gripped Jericho it confirmed God's promises to them. He had sent His terror before Israel. Their enemies would turn and run at the sight of them. **God's promise was always sure but now it was confirmed through Rahab's testimony.** What God promises is true and will happen yet being confident in His promises is something we all grow in and need confirmation in. God was so gracious not only to fulfill His promise but was willing to give the spies and Joshua assurance of His promises. God meets us where we are and keeps drawing us to trust in Him.

Also notice why God did not empty out the Promised Land before Israel ever showed up. He will give it over little by little so that the land does not become desolate and filled by wild animals. God is powerful enough to empty the entire country before Israel ever showed up, but then it would not be a good cultivated land flowing with milk and honey with crops waiting to be enjoyed. **God wanted Israel to walk in His victories, city by city, little by little.** He does the same for us in our walk with Him.

Psalm 119:105 ESV

(105) Nun Your word is a lamp to my feet and **a light to my path.**

God guides us through His Word. The word for light is a **small clay lamp that would have oil and one spout with a wick.** So often we want God's direction and leadership to be like the sun and illuminate everything all at once or at least be like a giant flood light. God promises to use His Word to give us enough light for our next step. **We get so focused on the destination when He is interested in the relationship building journey with us.** What is amazing about this kind of leadership is that it is custom tailored to right where we are.

1 Corinthians 10:11-13 ESV

(11) **Now these things happened to them as an example,** but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

(12) Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

(13) No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. **God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability,** but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, **that you may be able to endure it.**

These true stories of Israel and how God led them are to serve as an example for us. In them we are able to see God's character and heart. He is so personal and loving to each of us that **we will never enter a trial that is beyond our capability to trust Him in it.** Almost always they will be beyond our ability to handle it ourself. Yet, nothing will come into our life that we are not capable to trust Him with. He faithfully gives us the grace to endure, **bear up under,** the trial.

He will strengthen us and give us the grace to remain in His strength as we endure the trial. He will even be faithful to confirm His promises to us like He did for Joshua and the spies. **He draws us to grow in our trust of Him little by little.**

The other 10 spies at Kadesh Barnea could have trusted God. It was not beyond their ability or growth to rely on Him in that moment. Yet, they refused to trust Him. Now 40 years later, their children will have the same chance to trust God. **Instead of focusing on the danger and fear the spies felt as they hid from the soldiers, they saw God confirming His Word.** The spies trusted God and viewed these events through the light His Word provided. As Joshua hears the spies report He is encouraged by God's continued faithfulness to Israel.

Joshua 3:1-2 ESV

(1) Then **Joshua rose early in the morning** and they set out from Shittim. **And they came to the Jordan,** he and all the people of Israel, and **lodged there** before they passed over.

After the spies report Joshua feels even more confidence that God is with them. Joshua does not delay but faithfully follows God's command to arise and go over the Jordan (Josh 1:2). He has Israel move out and set up camp right on the edge of the Jordan river. **Crossing the Jordan was the**

point of no return. Once 2 to 3 Million Israelites crossed over the Jordan there would be no escape but they would have to face the armies, walled cities, and enemies in the Promised Land. As Joshua has the people move into position he still does not know how they will cross the Jordan river yet God is faithful to instruct Him.

Joshua 3:2-8 ESV

- (2) **At the end of three days** the officers went through the camp
(3) and commanded the people, **“As soon as you see the ark of the covenant** of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, **then you shall set out from your place and follow it.**
(4) Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about 2,000 cubits in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before.”
(5) Then Joshua said to the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.”
(6) And Joshua said to the priests, “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before the people.” So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people.
(7) **The LORD said to Joshua,** “Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.
(8) And as for you, **command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant,** ‘When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.’”

God informed Joshua that He would lead the people through the Jordan by having them follow the ark of the covenant. When the Ark moved it was time to cross the Jordan. This method of leading was different than the 40 years in the wilderness.

Exodus 40:36-38 ESV

- (36) Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out.
(37) But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up (38) **For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.**

Throughout their wanderings in the wilderness God lead Israel through a cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night. When the cloud was taken up it was time to move camp. This is what makes the crossing of the Jordan unique. It appears that God stops leading by the cloud and fire at this moment. **Instead the people are to follow after the Ark of the Covenant** at a distance.

Exodus 25:10-11; 22 ESV

- (10) “They shall make **an ark of acacia wood.** Two cubits and a half shall be its length, a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height.
(11) **You shall overlay it with pure gold,** inside and outside shall you overlay it, and you shall make on it a molding of gold around it.
(22) **There I will meet with you,** and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, **I will speak with you** about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.

The Ark was made out of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. It was not very large but **45 inches long, by 27 inches wide and 27 inches tall**. The mercy seat sat on top of the ark and is where God promised to meet and dwell with His people. **Everything about the Ark speaks about Jesus**. Jesus is fully man which is shown by the wood and yet fully God which is shown by the gold. Through Jesus we are able to meet with and commune with God. Through Jesus we find mercy and our sin is dealt with. The Ark is the means that God will use to lead His people into the promised land. **Just as we are lead into the Spirit filled life as we follow Jesus.**

Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV

(1) Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and **let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,**

(2) **looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith**, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

We are called to lay aside the weights that slow us down from walking with God. These are things that are not necessarily sin but they are not beneficial to growing closer to Jesus. We are also to lay aside the sin that clings closely to us and **easily ensnares** us tripping us up. God has laid out a race for each and every believer to run in. This is only possible as we look to Jesus. Look means **to direct one's attention without distraction, fix one's eyes**. Israel is led into the Promised Land, the Spirit filled life, as they keep a close eye on the Ark. We will grow closer to God and enjoy fellowship with Jesus if we stay focused on Him. It is all about Jesus.

He is the founder, this word means, **the originator** of our faith. It does not stop there He is also the perfecter which means the **one who brings something to a successful conclusion**. Our faith begins and is brought to completion through Jesus. This is why keeping focused on Him is so important. We should not get lost in what we can do for Him but stay focused on what He has done for us. Israel is not to focus on battle plans or strategies but to keep a close eye on the Ark, yet at a safe distance.

Joshua 3:4 ESV

(4) Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, **about 2,000 cubits in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before."**

2,000 cubits is about 3,000 feet or a little over half a mile. The Israelites were to keep a distance from the holy Ark but be close enough to see it so that they could follow it where to go. God is so holy His presence had to be veiled from the people even as the Ark was transported.

Numbers 4:5-6 ESV

(5) When the camp is to set out, Aaron and his sons shall go in and **take down the veil of the screen and cover the ark of the testimony with it.**

(6) Then they shall put on it **a covering of goatskin** and spread on top of that **a cloth all of blue**, and shall put in its poles.

God's presence is so holy that the Ark had to be covered by many thick layers before it was ever moved out of the Tabernacle. **It is very easy for us to reduce God down to our size**. We forget how holy and terrifying His presence really is.

Psalms 97:2-6 ESV

- (2) **Clouds and thick darkness are all around Him**; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne.
- (3) **Fire goes before Him** and burns up His adversaries all around.
- (4) His lightnings light up the world; **the earth sees and trembles**.
- (5) **The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth.**

God is glorious. He is holy. In His presence are clouds and thick darkness and at the same time unapproachable light. A fire of righteousness and justice goes before Him. It is not hyperbole or an exaggeration that mountains melt before Him. When the earth sees God in His holiness it **trembles which literally means to writhe in fear**. This is the God who we are so casual in using His name in vain both through our words and out actions. Israel could only come within 3,000 feet of the covered ark and had to prepare themselves to even be that close.

Joshua 3:5 LSB

- (5) Then Joshua said to the people, **“Set yourselves apart as holy, for tomorrow Yahweh will do wondrous deeds among you.”**

To prepare for this moment Israel had to reflect God's Holiness in morality but also in practical ways. In Exodus 19:10-15 when God called the people to set themselves apart as holy this involved washing their clothes and remaining ceremonially clean. **Instead of God telling Israel to sharpen their swords and check their armor, He told them to prepare for His holy presence**. This incredible holy God was going to do something truly wondrous in their sight tomorrow. This is the Holy God who Jesus has given us access to, and resides in us right now as believers. **We have God's presence inside us right now**. This is something that we should be in awe of and not take for granted.

2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1 ESV

- (16) What agreement has the temple of God with idols? **For we are the temple of the living God**; as God said, “I will make My dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.
- (17) **Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them**, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you,
- (18) and **I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me**, says the Lord Almighty.”
- (1) **Since we have these promises**, beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God**.

This is what makes what Jesus has done for us so truly incredible. **God the Spirit resides in us**. We are to live in this world but to be separate from it because **He who is in us is Holy and separated from this world**. God desires a deepening and growing relationship with us. He wants to lead us little by little and be a loving and caring Father to us. Not setting ourselves apart as holy gets in the way of this closeness. Since we have these great promises of fellowship we are to cleanse ourselves and bring God's holiness in us to completion. We were already told how, by fixing our eyes on Jesus. He founded and perfects our faith, let's keep our eyes on Him as He leads us to a deeper and closer walk with Himself.