

Sunday Night Message

November 26, 2017

Joshua 3 – *Crossing Jordan*

Series – Joshua

Text – Joshua 3

Introduction

Having been commanded by God in chapter one to conquer all of the inhabitants of Canaan, and having made a reconnaissance trip into Jericho to see what lay ahead of them, Joshua is ready to bring the Children of Israel into the Promised Land.

They had waited a long time for this privilege and the entire congregation was anxious to demonstrate that this time (forty years later) they were ready to trust the Lord and take the land that He promised them. (See Deuteronomy 7:1 – 8; 9:4 - 6)

I The Preparation (vs. 1 – 8)

A Moving the Congregation Closer Geographically (vs. 1 – 4)

Shittim was the place that Israel was encamped at. Apparently, it was three days journey away from the Jordan River. (See map) Remember the spies had to hide themselves in the mountains to the west of Jericho while those that pursued them headed east toward Shittim.

The Congregation was told to stay 1000 yards (2000 cubits = 3000 ft.) behind the priests and the Ark of the Covenant. Though they were not approach the Ark of the Covenant, it appears that the reason for this great distance was so that the congregation would be far enough away to see the delegation of priests. If they were too close, the congregation might not be able to distinguish them from each other.

The Ark of the Covenant was kept in the Holy of Holies (or the Most Holy Place) within the Tabernacle. It was a wooden box made of shittim wood, which was 3 feet 9 inches long and 27 inches wide and high. It was overlaid with gold, and had a mercy seat on the top, also made of pure gold. On top of the mercy seat were two cherubim who faced each other with their wings pointed toward each other. Inside the mercy seat were the Ten Commandment, a golden pot of manna, and Aarons rod that budded. The presence of God dwelt between the Cherubim, and the shekinah glory of God would guide them through a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night as they travelled through the wilderness.

Only the priests were to come near the ark. Only the high priest was to approach when the glory of God was upon it.

Practical Point – The congregation was to stay behind God, not get ahead of God. We often get into trouble when we jump ahead of God.

B Moving the Congregation Closer Spiritually (vs. 4 – 6)

God tells the people to “sanctify” themselves. The word “sanctify” means to set apart or to consecrate. God’s people are to be set apart. God was about to do something awesome for and through this congregation, and they needed to be a holy people. Sin and a lack of separation would have caused them to lose the power of God.

"For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." (Leviticus 11:44)

"Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God." (Leviticus 20:7)

Later on, after the Battle of Jericho, the congregation of Israel will be brought down because of the sin of one man, Achan. After defeating Jericho, the Israelites lose a battle against the much smaller city of Ai. Joshua has no idea what went wrong. (See Joshua 7:1 – 3)

In order to sanctify ourselves, we must:

1 Remove the Sin

"Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you." (Joshua 7:13)

2 Reject the World

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17)

3 Resist the Devil

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)

C Magnifying Joshua (vs. 7 – 8)

God was about to do something awesome for Israel and He was going to use Joshua to do it. God wanted to magnify Joshua. The people respected Moses, but they needed to see that God’s hand was on Moses’ replacement.

II The Plan (vs. 9 – 13)

Joshua outlined to the people exactly what God told him to do. The priest with the ark were going to step into the Jordan River, and the river was going to dry up. As God parted the Red Sea for Moses, He was now going to part the Jordan River for Joshua.

Practical Note – We need to stop constantly reminiscing about what God did for yesterday's generation, and sanctify ourselves, pray, and work to see God do something just as awesome for us today.

Elisha didn't want to spend his time talking about what Elijah did, he wanted God to do the same thing with him. (See 2 Kings 2:8 – 14)

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." (John 14:12)

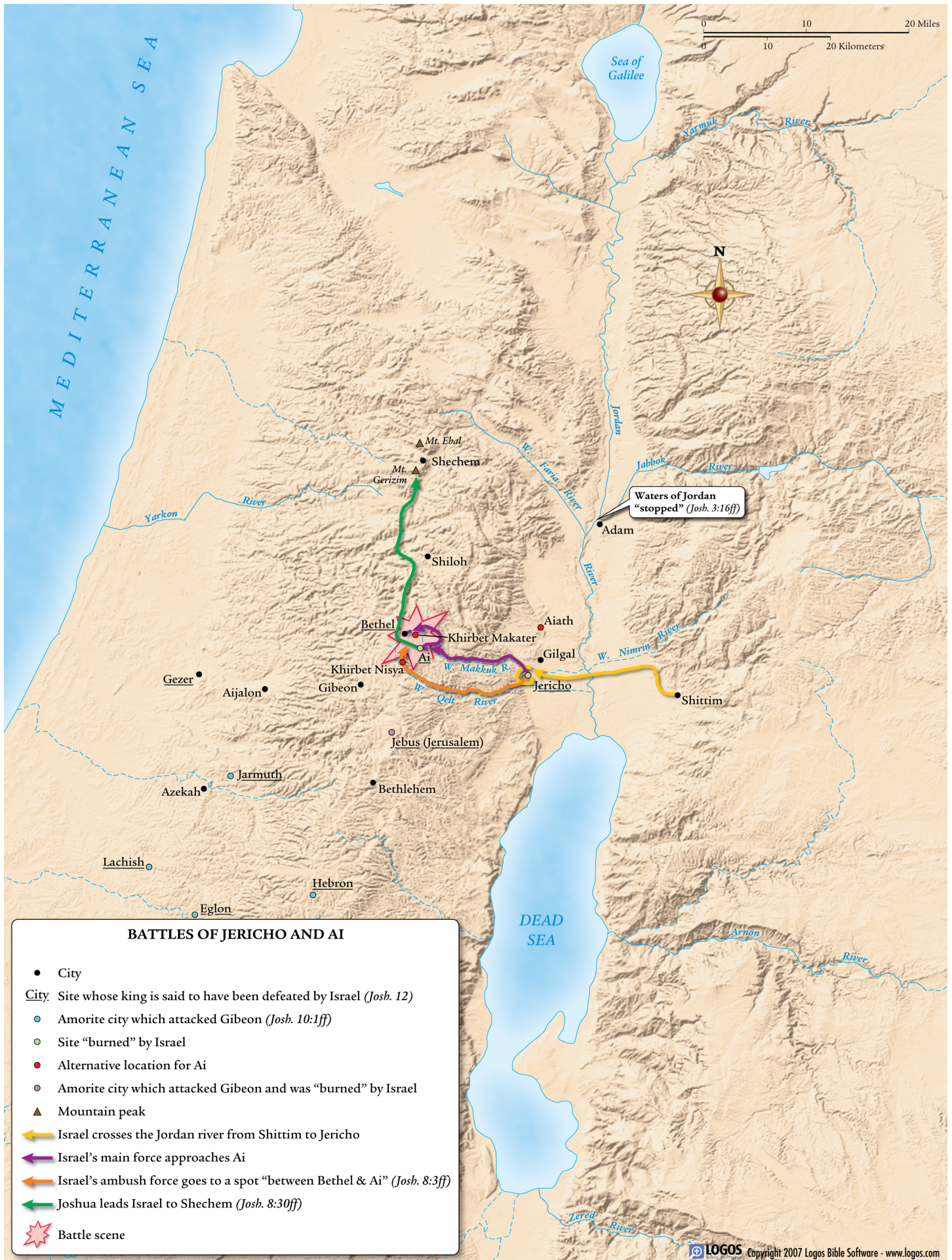
III The Passing Over (vs. 14 – 17)

The priests stood in Jordan, and God dried up the river several miles upstream near Adam. (18 miles north - See map) He also stopped all of the other rivers and tributaries that fed into the river. The priests stood in the river until all of the people crossed over. To get as many as 2,000,000 people across the Jordan when it was at flood stage in one day is a miracle in itself.

Conclusion

Israel had blown it forty years earlier, but they paid their dues, they had repented, and forsaken their sin and lack of faith; and, now they were sanctified and ready to do whatever God wanted them to do. This is a marvelous picture of grace.

Practical Point – Maybe you have blown it, and maybe God had to judge you, but if you are willing to make things right with him and be patient, waiting on Him, He will use you again.



BATTLES OF JERICO AND AI

- City
- City. Site whose king is said to have been defeated by Israel (*Josh. 12*)
- Amorite city which attacked Gibeon (*Josh. 10:1ff*)
- Site "burned" by Israel
- Alternative location for Ai
- Amorite city which attacked Gibeon and was "burned" by Israel
- ▲ Mountain peak
- Israel crosses the Jordan river from Shittim to Jericho
- Israel's main force approaches Ai
- Israel's ambush force goes to a spot "between Bethel & Ai" (*Josh. 8:3ff*)
- Joshua leads Israel to Shechem (*Josh. 8:30ff*)
- ★ Battle scene