

Title: Prepared to Behold Christ

Text: Joshua 3: 1-6

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Justification is what God does for his people by the work of Christ Jesus fulfilling the law for those given him of God the Father. Sanctification is what God does in his people when Christ Jesus is formed in the new heart and of God, Christ is made unto us All—Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption. By a work of grace in the heart God puts true, godly fear within his child so that we believe on Christ and follow him in humble faith.

Before we can move forward in anyway with God, we must be sanctified by having Christ Jesus to be magnified in our hearts so that we fear him enough to follow him in faith. It is impossible for a sinner to be used of God for God's holy work, until we first be sanctified, to truly reverence and believe our great God and Savior Christ Jesus.

Proposition: Yet, before we can behold Christ we have to be prepared to behold him. We have to be born of the Holy Spirit of God, removed from one place to another place and taught some things before we can behold Christ.

Titled: Prepared to Behold Christ

**I. GOD BEGINS THIS WORK WITHIN US BY SEPARATING HIS CHILD FROM OUR FALSE WAY—
Joshua 3: 1: And Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.**

Where they removed from and where they came to is very significant as we will see in a moment.

Background

First, let's get some background. Joshua is a type of Christ. Moses has died. He represented the law. Moses could not take God's people into Canaan because the law cannot take God's elect into God's presence. Joshua must deliver them because only Christ can deliver his people into God's presence.

Joshua knew the LORD was about to doing something marvelous. He had told Israel this:

Joshua 1: 11 Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it.

So Joshua arose early and ordered the people to remove from Shittim, like Christ our Head does. Joshua is moving everything about in the camp of Israel, preparing them to behold God's way of salvation. Christ moves everything about in this earth and prepares his people to behold Christ God's Way of salvation.

From Our False Way

This reminds us of what God causes his child to REPENT FROM when God sanctifies us from our former way. Shittim is where the people fell into the snare set by Balaam's wicked counsel.

Numbers 25: 1: And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

Moab was the son of Lot's incestuous relationship with his daughter. False religion—Baal worshippers—used Moab's attractive daughters to seduce the sons of Israel to commit whoredoms. Then they easily got the sons of Israel to bow down and join themselves to their idol gods.

False religion is described in the scriptures as a harlot. The harlot of vain religion uses worldly allurements to attract men and women to visit them. Then it is easier for false, freewill, works religion to get sinners to make a decision for their idol god, and to bow down and worship their vain gods.

Numbers 25: 2: And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. 3: And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

I wish folks could see that there is no difference in false religion in our day than what was going on right there in Shittim.

Numbers 25: 4: And the LORD said UNTO MOSES, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.

God commanded Moses to slay all the elders in Israel—those that refused to believe God—who God said he would not allow entrance into the promise land. Moses represents the law. Here is the truth we can see from that: in the day God begins the work of sanctifying his child, the Spirit of God applies the law, making the commandment come and our sin revives and slays our old man of sin. So God makes us to arise and remove from our Shittim—the place of our former falsehood and curse.

Brought Down

When God does this, God brings his child down—**Joshua 3: 1: And Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.**

The word “Jordan” means: “descent, to come down, subdued, prostrate.” In the process of turning us from our former sin and death, God brings his child down and makes us to lodge there, before we go any further. The next verse says they lodged there three days. Do you know what they were looking at for those three days? They sat there looking at the Jordan River overflowing and flooding way beyond its banks. The River Jordan represents sin and death.

We are proud, hard-hearted, arrogant sinners by nature. So before God makes us to behold what he has done for us in Christ, God brings us down off our high horse to see our overflowing sin and death. Remember what happened to the apostle Paul? Christ appeared to proud Saul of Tarsus and knocked him down in the dust.

Acts 26:14: And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks...Acts 9: 6: And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?

Believer, God still does this to us, if we need it, doesn't he? If you and I begin to think too highly of ourselves, we are found stiffening our neck at what we know to be true then God removes us from the false ways and brings us down. He humbles us before him.

II. GOD USES HIS MINISTERS WITH THE GOSPEL—Joshua 3: 2: And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host;

Three Days

Throughout scripture God repeatedly manifests his glory on the third day, because it was the third day when Christ, the express image of his glory, arose from the dead. We are waiting three days for Christ to return. He shall return on the third day. His glory shall be revealed. So we are to wait by faith until that third day. Joshua had told them they were going across the Jordan in three days but he did not tell them how. If faith is strengthened it must

be exercised. God forces his child to walk by faith. Abraham had to wait three days. While he waited, all along he planned to offer up his only son Isaac simply because God said do it and because he believed God was able to raise him from the dead. That's walking by faith. We must walk by faith.

Preachers and Preaching

So after three days then came these messengers through the host with a message. These were not preachers but they set a good example for us of how God does use his preachers.—**Joshua 3: 3: And 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.**

When You See Christ

This was their message, “When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God.” Through the gospel, God gives spiritual sight to those who were once blind in sin to see Christ. Christ is typified in the ark.

The ark is called the “Ark of the covenant of the LORD your God” because “all the promises of God in (Christ) *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God.” (2 Cor 1: 20)

Inside the ark was the manna. Christ is the Manna from heaven. “And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.” (Jn 6: 35)

Inside the ark was the law. Christ is the fulfillment of the law. He is the believer's righteousness, our obedience to the law—when Christ is formed within us we become sanctified and believing Christ, he becomes to us the end of the Law for righteousness. (Rom 10: 4)

Inside the ark was Aarons rod that budded—Christ is that Rod—Regeneration, Life, Fruit, living children of God are produced by Christ the Rod of God.

Over the ark was the mercy seat—Christ is our mercy seat—the Propitiation for God's people—“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 Jn 4: 10)

So the message is, “When you see Christ....” And they said, when you see “the priests the Levites bearing it.” Christ makes his ministers (and all his people) priests unto God. His preachers simply hold up Christ like we will see these priests held up the ark. Believers learn the Way looking to Christ the Way set forth in the gospel. When God sanctifies the word of his preacher into your heart, you are hearing the words, not of a man, but of God.

Repent and Believe

These officers, picturing Christ's preachers, told them that when they saw the ark “then ye shall remove from YOUR place, and go after IT.” Sinner, when you see Christ with the eye of faith, do not tarry. Remove—repent from YOUR PLACE. Your place is the place of self-righteousness and sin and death. Repent from your place. And follow Christ in faith. Believe on Christ. Follow Christ in obedience: in believer's baptism, in joining his people in his church. “Why tarriest thou, arise be baptized.” was the command to Paul. (Acts 22: 16) Also, brethren, in our trials, when you see Christ, remove from your place—of self-wisdom, self-importance—and follow Christ.

Important Instruction

Next, God gives very important instruction—**Joshua 3: 4: Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: [about half a mile] come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed *this* way heretofore.**

The only way believers know the way is by following Christ the Way, keeping our eye of faith on Christ. So they were commanded to keep a distance and not get too close to the priests bearing the ark for then they would lose sight of Christ. With such a multitude of people—literally they had to stay back in order for all to see the ark lifted up.

Spiritually, there is an important lesson here. Under the new covenant, believers can draw near to Christ by his blood. But we must never take our blessings for granted. We must not become familiar with Christ in such a way that we regard him in a flippant, careless way. The same is true of his ministers. We cannot get too familiar with Christ's preachers else we will cease remembering that it is God speaking to me when the gospel is preached.

Remember when Christ came into his own country? The reason they couldn't hear what he taught was because they were too close to him, too familiar with him. They considered themselves wiser than Christ and so they were offended at his word. If that can happen with Christ it can certainly happen with Christ's ministers. He said,

Matthew 13: 57: A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. 58: And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

Everything God is doing in our text and the next chapter is a picture of God magnifying Christ in the hearts of his people so that we reverence Christ with a good kind of fear, a reverential fear. So they tell them not to draw near in such a way so as to lose sight of the ark which they are to be looking upon. We must not lose sight of Christ.

Walking By Faith

Here is why we need to keep a reverential eye upon Christ, "For ye have not passed this way heretofore." I do not care how long you and I have been in the faith—or how much wisdom one might think he has—this is true of the oldest to the youngest in the faith—"ye have not passed this way heretofore." Christ constantly leads us in a path we have never travelled so that we have to walk by faith, not by sight.

They were crossing a flooding river! Do you think they obeyed? Yes! So will we when God brings us into the swelling of the Jordan. (Jer 12: 5) God makes it so everything a believer does is beyond our ability, else we would walk by fleshly strength and sight rather than by faith.

What is Christ about to do this afternoon? I do not know. So it is best we walk by faith with our eye on Christ. What is Christ about to do tonight? I do not know. So it is best we follow with our eye of faith on Christ. No matter where we are in this walk of faith we are in unfamiliar territory—"ye have not passed this way heretofore." So every eye must be on Christ the Way. We quietly walk by faith trusting Christ.

Lamentations 3:26: *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.*

Preparing our Hearts

Furthermore, believers must prepare our hearts in order to behold the wonders of our LORD among us—**Joshua 3: 5: And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.**

Notice, as the officers spoke, Joshua gave this command to the people. Joshua means Jesus, Savior. Remember, Joshua is a type of Christ our Sanctifier. As Christ's minister preaches, Christ suddenly speaks into the heart of his child. Christ removes us from our false way, Christ brings us down in humility not to trust our fleshly reason and strength and Christ, having sanctified us—having set us apart himself—then commands his child to sanctify ourselves. But until the Spirit of Christ has sanctified us, we only hear a man speak and we will react like our unregenerate children often react at our command. Yet, when Christ speaks effectually then we will render obeisance and obey his voice.

Sanctifying Ourselves

Joshua commanded, “Sanctify yourselves.” It means: make clean, consecrate yourselves, prepare yourselves, purify yourselves from all worldly cares. God will not share our attention with the world. He will not have us with half a mind to trust him and the other half to put our hand to the work. God must have our full confidence and our full focus.

James 4: 8: Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

He told them to do so a whole day before. That day they were to separate themselves from every thought, person, thing and action that would keep them from beholding what the LORD would do among them the next morning. This is what scripture means when it says “he is a rewarder of them that DILIGENTLY seek him.” (Heb 11: 6) Christ commanded them do so a day in advance.

For us this includes simple things such as getting a good night’s rest the night before, preparing ourselves through prayer, being ready to arise early in the morning, getting here early so we are prepared behold the wonders of the LORD among you. It applies to our whole life.

Hebrews 12: 1:...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2: Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith;

A Word to the Preacher

Next, we have a word to the preacher. Christ through the Holy Spirit is instructing each person involved, how to follow Christ—**Joshua 3: 6: And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people.**

Joshua gave this command to the priests. These priests are good pictures of Christ’s preachers, also. It is Christ who gives his preachers their orders, just as he does his people. His preachers are to take up Christ themselves. We are to believe on Christ ourselves. Look to Christ ourselves. Feed upon Christ ourselves. And we are to pass over before the people.

Before the people, we are to hold up Christ by preaching Christ and him crucified. We preach Christ is God in human flesh. Christ is the first elect in whom God elected all that shall be saved. God the Son came down and took flesh and the GodMan put an end to sins for his people. He accomplished the work. Now, Christ is risen and reigning with all power in heaven and earth, filling all in all to send forth his gospel, to regenerate his his lost dead and helpless child, and to give us repentance and faith, preparing us to behold Christ. Christ is working in each of his people in his church right now, just like we see Joshua working in the midst of the children of Israel. Christ gets all the glory. “He shall not fail till he hath set judgment in the earth.” (Is 42: 4)

III. THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH GOD IS WORKING ALL THINGS IS TO MAGNIFY CHRIST IN THE HEARTS OF HIS PEOPLE—Joshua 3: 7: And 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.

God is working all things in our text—and all things around us today—to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ our Joshua—our Savior in the hearts of his people.

Moses Pictures Law

Moses could not take them into the promised land because Moses is a type of the law. No sinner shall enter God’s presence by the law.

Romans 3: 19: Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20: Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Joshua Pictures Christ

Only Christ could take them into the land of Canaan. In the next message, “Sanctified for a Holy Use”, we will behold Christ as we see how God brought them across the Jordan River.

May the LORD be pleased to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ this day in your sight, that you might know, that “God was in Christ reconciling the world of his elect unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” (1 Cor 5: 19) So God’s preachers say to you:

- Remove from the cursed, falsehood of Shittim.
- Come down to Jordan to behold your sin and death.
- Today, lay aside everything that would hinder you and be ready to behold the LORD do wonders among you.
- When you see Christ repent from your way go after him in faith.
- Do so with reverence—quietly waiting on the Lord and following him.
- God saves through Christ alone, “that you might know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever.” (Jos 4: 24)

This is the beginning of true separation from this world and true delight in Christ. Now may God sanctify his word to our hearts!

Amen!