

## Conquering the Promise Land – Part 3

### Consecrate Yourself

#### **Romans 8:37**

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

#### **Joshua 3**

<sup>1</sup> Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. <sup>2</sup> After three days the officers went throughout the camp, <sup>3</sup> giving orders to the people: “When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. <sup>4</sup> Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about two thousand cubits between you and the ark; do not go near it.”

<sup>5</sup> Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you.”

<sup>6</sup> Joshua said to the priests, “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people.” So they took it up and went ahead of them.

<sup>7</sup> And the LORD said to Joshua, “Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses. <sup>8</sup> Tell the priests who carry the ark of the covenant: ‘When you reach the edge of the Jordan’s waters, go and stand in the river.’”

<sup>9</sup> Joshua said to the Israelites, “Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God. <sup>10</sup> This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. <sup>11</sup> See, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. <sup>12</sup> Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. <sup>13</sup> And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD—the Lord of all the earth—set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap.”

<sup>14</sup> So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. <sup>15</sup> Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water’s edge, <sup>16</sup> the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (that is, the Dead Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. <sup>17</sup> The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.

#### **I. What is the Arc of the Covenant?**

God's original desire was that the nation would be a nation of priests.

But they had fear that kept them out.

The tabernacle was set up to help Israel know how to approach God.

How does a frail, fearful, utterly sinful and deeply flawed people approach God.

So God set up the priesthood.

They could only enter into on the East side.

Only one entrance to enter in.

First - Altar of sacrifice – taught Israel that only through the shedding of blood could they become reconciled with God.

Second – Bronze Laver – The priests would wash their hands and feet – this symbolized the need for spiritual purity.

Third they entered into the Holy Place – inside was the golden lamp stand,

Table of shew bread with twelve loaves of bread

Golden altar of incense –

Light, nourishment and the ability to pray before God in front of the veil.

Then there was a large veil that was embroidered with cherubim wings.

Only the high priest could go beyond the veil and only on one day a year.

The Day of Atonement.

Inside of the holy of holies was the arc of the covenant.

God would commune with the high priest and the high priest would intercede on behalf of the people.

Inside = ten commandments, Aaron's budding rod, golden jar of manna

Outside – Acaia wood overlaid with Gold

On top is the mercy seat

On sides were four gold rings for carrying poles – they were to never be removed.

On day of attonement – two goats – draw lots – then one would be the scape goat – symbolically all sins were placed on the goat and it was driven into the desert where it would die.

The other goat was sacrificed. Blood taken into the holy of holies and sprinkled on the mercy seat seven times.

Attonement – Hebrew – to cover or blot out. Only through the shedding of blood could one enter into the presence of God.

It is called the arc of the covenant because it reminded the people of covenant God had made with his people.

John 6

After Jesus fed 5,000 he said they all died. Then he announces he is the bread of life. They all died

<sup>30</sup> So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? <sup>31</sup> Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

<sup>32</sup> Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.”

<sup>34</sup> “Sir,” they said, “always give us this bread.”

### **John 6:48-51**

<sup>48</sup> I am the bread of life. <sup>49</sup> Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. <sup>50</sup> But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

God told the people that if they would obey the law = God would protect them.

Problem is they all broke them – including you and me.

This was covered by the mercy seat. Indicating that because of shed blood I will give mercy to you.

### **Numbers 17:1-13**

<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to Moses, <sup>2</sup> “Speak to the Israelites and get twelve staffs from them, one from the leader of each of their ancestral tribes. Write the name of each man on his staff. <sup>3</sup> On the staff of Levi write Aaron’s name, for there must be one staff for the head of each ancestral tribe. <sup>4</sup> Place them in the tent of meeting in front of the ark of the covenant law, where I meet with you. <sup>5</sup> The staff belonging to the man I choose will sprout, and I will rid myself of this constant grumbling against you by the Israelites.”

<sup>6</sup>So Moses spoke to the Israelites, and their leaders gave him twelve staffs, one for the leader of each of their ancestral tribes, and Aaron's staff was among them. <sup>7</sup>Moses placed the staffs before the LORD in the tent of the covenant law.

<sup>8</sup>The next day Moses entered the tent and saw that Aaron's staff, which represented the tribe of Levi, had not only sprouted but had budded, blossomed and produced almonds. <sup>9</sup>Then Moses brought out all the staffs from the LORD's presence to all the Israelites. They looked at them, and each of the leaders took his own staff.

<sup>10</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Put back Aaron's staff in front of the ark of the covenant law, to be kept as a sign to the rebellious. This will put an end to their grumbling against me, so that they will not die." <sup>11</sup>Moses did just as the LORD commanded him.

<sup>12</sup>The Israelites said to Moses, "We will die! We are lost, we are all lost! <sup>13</sup>Anyone who even comes near the tabernacle of the LORD will die. Are we all going to die?"

The priests were responsible for carrying it here (v. 3), in accordance with the Mosaic legislation, which accorded that responsibility to the tribe of Levi (Deut 10:8; cf. 31:9). The ark was to be carried with poles and was not to be touched (Exod 25:12–13; 37:3–5; Num 4:4–15). As the symbol of God's presence, a healthy distance was to be maintained between it and the people (Josh 3:4).

The ark is referred to in various ways in this chapter, the most common phrase being "the ark of the covenant." However, several references to it elevate it to even more prominent status when the Hebrew is read carefully. The following are literal renditions of the Hebrew: In v. 11, the reading is "the ark of the covenant, the Lord of all the earth"; in v. 14, it is "the ark, the covenant"; and in v. 17, we find "the ark, the covenant of the LORD." These references suggest such a close relationship between the ark and the covenant it represents that it is almost as if the ark *is* the covenant. God, whose very presence is associated with the ark, is closely associated with the covenant as well, and these ways of referring to the ark highlight this.

The "priests, who are Levites," were to carry the ark. Since all legitimate priests were Levites (Num 3:10), the expression here is redundant. It may be a special reminder that these priests were indeed legitimate, and thus everything was in order. Also, the fact that the *priests* were to carry the ark highlights the importance of this special occasion, since it appears to have been more usual for Levites who were not priests to carry the ark. The priesthood was restricted to Levites (in general) and Aaron's family (specifically) in the Mosaic legislation (Num 25:7–13, esp. vv. 12–13; Deut 18:5). Although all legitimate priests were Levites, not all Levites were priests; their duties were different.

### **Application**

Jesus is our great high priest

## Book of Hebrews

### **Hebrews 14:14,16**

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

<sup>16</sup> Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

#### **I. What is the Arc of the Covenant?**

#### **II. Be Confident not Presumptuous.**

### **Joshua 3:3**

"When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. <sup>4</sup> Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about two thousand cubits between you and the ark; do not go near it."

#### A. Unpack

1. The NIV reverses the sentence order in this verse.
2. The verse begins with an emphatic particle (*'ak*) that introduces the warning about keeping a one-thousand-yard distance from the ark, and the first sentence might be translated, "*Be very sure* that a distance of a thousand yards remains between you and it."
3. This emphasizes the sacredness of the ark and the awesomeness of God's glory.
4. Even though the ark symbolized God's presence among his people, his presence among them was not to be taken lightly or abused (as it was on a later occasion, when the ark was taken into battle in order to "guarantee" a victory over the Philistines [see 1 Sam 4:3–11]).

### **Tell Story**

#### **1 Samuel 4:3-11**

<sup>3</sup> When the soldiers returned to camp, the elders of Israel asked, "Why did the LORD bring defeat on us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the ark of the LORD's covenant from Shiloh, so that he may go with us and save us from the hand of our enemies."

<sup>4</sup> So the people sent men to Shiloh, and they brought back the ark of the covenant of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim. And Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God.

<sup>5</sup>When the ark of the LORD's covenant came into the camp, all Israel raised such a great shout that the ground shook. <sup>6</sup>Hearing the uproar, the Philistines asked, "What's all this shouting in the Hebrew camp?"

When they learned that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp, <sup>7</sup>the Philistines were afraid. "A god has come into the camp," they said. "Oh no! Nothing like this has happened before. <sup>8</sup>We're doomed! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness. <sup>9</sup>Be strong, Philistines! Be men, or you will be subject to the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Be men, and fight!"

### **I Samuel 4:10-11**

<sup>10</sup>So the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers. <sup>11</sup>The ark of God was captured, and Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, died.

### **I Samuel 2:17**

This sin of the young men was very great in the LORD's sight, for they were treating the LORD's offering with contempt.

5. When the Israelites prepared for receiving the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, they were to keep their distance from that mountain where God was as well (Exod 19:12, 23–24).

### **Two Aspects of God's Nature**

1. His close, comforting presence.
2. His awesome, fearsome glory

- Both are kept in a healthy balance in the Bible.
- The second one is in danger of being forgotten by some of the church today.

- B. The distance was for the purpose of the people's knowing the way they should walk in.
  1. Since they had never traveled that way before.
  2. The meaning of this statement surely was meant literally and physically
    - a. These Israelites had certainly not crossed a river in the way in which they would soon be doing.
    - b. And they had not been in Canaan before.

### **Two Spiritual Implications**

- C. Figurative references to walking in God’s way/ways are common in the O.T.
1. In the Pentateuch alone, there are some eighteen references to this
  2. In these cases, what is meant is not a literal road or path, but right living.
  3. In two cases (Exod 18:20 and Deut 8:2), *knowing* or *remembering* the right way to go is stressed.

### **Exodus 18:20**

Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them **the way they are to live** and how they are to behave.

### **Deuteronomy 8:2**

<sup>1</sup> Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors. <sup>2</sup> Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. <sup>3</sup> He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. <sup>4</sup> Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. <sup>5</sup> Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.

4. Surely this was an appropriate charge for the Israelites as they entered the unknown land of Canaan with a mandate to do something they had never done before.
  - a. Take the land,
  - b. Destroy its inhabitants.

The Israelites, as they kept a proper, reverent distance from the ark of the covenant, would be shown in which way they should walk, both physically and spiritually.

### **D. Wordplay with the verb “know.”**

1. In v. 4, the Israelites would “know” the right way to go as a result of their keeping their distance from the ark.
2. In v. 7, they would also “know” that God was with Joshua, as a result of God’s exalting him on that day.
3. And in v. 10, they would “know” that God was with them.
4. As a result of his driving out the various Canaanite peoples before them.

**Illustration****Hebrews 14:14,16**

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.

<sup>16</sup> Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

**Application**

- Confidence in the person and work of Jesus Christ
- Humbly because we need mercy and grace – we are in NEED.

**I. What is the Arc of the Covenant?**

**II. Be Confident not Presumptuous.**

**III. Consecrate yourself and see a miracle.**

**Illustration**

- How do I enter into God's sacred space?
- Pools to bathe in.
- Include the steps on the southern entrance to the holy city – They were uneven.
- Don't rush in.

**Joshua 3:5**

Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you."

A. Unpack Text

1. Follow the Arc.
2. Do it with confident humility
3. Keep a distance
4. Consecrate yourself.

B. After the officials had completed their instructions, Joshua gave them an additional task: to consecrate themselves.

1. The Hebrew root here is in the same semantic field as such English words as "consecrate," "sanctify," "holy," and "sacred."

2. Although the term is not used very many times in Joshua, holiness is an important concept in the Old Testament, and the Israelites had had extensive instruction in God's holiness and their own need for holiness in the years prior to this, especially in the Book of Leviticus.

### Separation

- The core idea is that of "separation" from things that are unclean or common.
- Anything that would contaminate one's relationship with a perfect God.
- Here, **the people (and not just the priests)** were to consecrate themselves.
- Their proper preparation would have included extensive and rigorous ritual preparation, including thorough washings and abstinence from sexual relations and certain foods.

#### C. Watch for a miracle.

1. The Hebrew word behind NIV's "amazing things" (*nīplā'ôt*) is the closest word in the Old Testament for what we today call "miracles."
2. These wonders were such impressive acts that they astonished people and called forth their praise of God (see Pss 9:1; 96:3).
3. They included God's miraculous works among the Egyptians (i.e., the plagues: Exod 3:20; Mic 7:15) and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness (Ps 78:12–16).
4. They were so abnormal as to be unexplainable to people experiencing them except as mighty acts of God.
5. Here in Joshua 3, the "wonders" were the stopping up of the waters of the Jordan (see vv. 14–17).

### Understanding Consecration

- To "consecrate" (Hebrew *qadash*) means to set apart, to dedicate wholly to the LORD.
- In Joshua's day this involved ceremonial washing and abstaining from anything that would defile. Today the principle remains the same: we deliberately separate ourselves from sin and ordinary distractions so God can work freely through us.

### Why Consecration Still Matters

- God's wonders follow readiness. Israel's crossing of the Jordan (Joshua 3:14-17) came after their consecration.
- The pattern endures: "Pursue holiness—without it no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).
- Romans 12:1-2 calls believers to present our bodies as "a living sacrifice...holy."

## **Steps to Consecrate Ourselves Today**

### **1. Heart-level Repentance**

- “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive” (1 John 1:9).
- Invite the Spirit to search and expose hidden faults (Psalm 139:23-24).

### **2. Cleansing from Defilement**

- “Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit” (2 Corinthians 7:1).
- Break with anything—media, habits, relationships—that muddies moral purity.

### **3. Fresh Surrender of the Body**

- Offer every faculty—eyes, tongue, hands—as instruments of righteousness

## **Romans 6:13**

Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

- Practical action: schedule your day so appetites serve God’s purposes rather than rule you.

### **4. Immersion in God’s Word**

- “Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth” (John 17:17).
- Set apart unhurried time daily for reading, meditation, and memorization (Psalm 119:9-11).

### **5. Focused Prayer and Fasting**

- Jesus assumed His followers would fast (Matthew 6:16-18).
- Fasting quiets the flesh, sharpens discernment, and signals earnest dependence.

### **6. Obey Promptly**

- \* Consecration is incomplete without obedience: “Be doers of the word” (James 1:22)
- Start with the last clear instruction God gave—He rarely reveals new steps until we honor the previous ones.

### **7. Removing Competing Loyalties**

- “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21).
- Identify and dethrone anything stealing affection—career, possessions, entertainment, even ministry itself.

### **8. Practicing Love and Service**

- Pure devotion expresses itself in tangible care for others (James 1:27).
- Serve within your church, support the needy, share the gospel—holiness in action.

### **9. Cultivating God-Centered Community**

- “Let us consider how to spur one another on to love and good deeds, not forsaking assembling” (Hebrews 10:24-25).
- Accountability and encouragement protect a consecrated life from drift.

**What is the Arc of the Covenant?**

**Be Confident not Presumptuous.**

**Consecrate yourself and see a miracle.**