

Joshua & Peter: The Sufficiency of God

Lesson 6: The Sufficiency of God's Provision

Key Verse: Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you."
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.~Joshua 3.5-6

Imagine the riveting Ted Talk Joshua and Peter would have in sharing their eyewitness accounts of the improbable acts of God! Moving from a spy story to an action-packed thriller, God reveals the incomprehensibility of His dominion over all of creation using the ark of the covenant which was His presence, or **tabernacle**, for His people. In this action-packed storyline, God is exalted as Holy, and His presence is **glorious**. *Commander LORD God, Holy are You and Holy is Your name. Lead us to devote time in one aspect of this story so that we may lift our eyes to You, not our circumstances and experiences, but to You, who dwells in us. Keep us face down before You as You lead our way. In Your Glorious name we pray, Amen.*

Joshua 3-5 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. **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.'"

9 And Joshua said to the people of Israel, "Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God." **10** And Joshua said, "Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. **11** Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan. **12** Now therefore take twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man. **13** And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the LORD, the LORD of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap." **14** So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, **15** and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest), **16** the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho. **17** Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.

CH 4 When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, **2** "Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man, **3** and command them, saying, 'Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests' feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.'" **4** Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe. **5** And Joshua said to them, "Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, **6** that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?' **7** then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever." **8** And the people of Israel did just as Joshua commanded and took up twelve stones out of the midst of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, just as the LORD told Joshua. And they carried them over with them to the place where they lodged and laid them down there. **9** And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant had stood; and they are there to this day. **10** For the priests bearing the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to tell the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. The people passed over in haste. **11** And when all the people had finished passing over, the ark of the LORD and the priests passed over before the people. **12** The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh passed over armed before the people of Israel, as Moses had told them. **13** About 40,000 ready for war passed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho. **14** On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they stood in awe of him just as they had stood in awe of Moses, all the days of his life.

15 And the LORD said to Joshua, **16** "Command the priests bearing the ark of the testimony to come up out of the Jordan." **17** So Joshua commanded the priests, "Come up out of the Jordan." **18** And when the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD came up from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up on dry ground, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks, as before. **19** The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. **20** And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. **21** And he said to the people of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in times to come, 'What do these stones mean?' **22** then you shall let your children know, 'Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.' **23** For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, **24** so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever."

CH 5 As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel. **2** At that time the LORD said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the sons of Israel a second time." **3** So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. **4** And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the males of the people who came out of Egypt, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way after they had come out of Egypt. **5** Though all the people who came out had been circumcised, yet all the people who were born on the way in the wilderness after they had come out of Egypt had not been circumcised. **6** For the people of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished, because they did not obey the voice of the LORD; the LORD swore to them that he would not let them see the land that the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give to us, a land flowing with milk and honey. **7** So it was their children, whom he raised up in their place, that Joshua circumcised. For they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way. **8** When the circumcising of the whole nation was finished, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed. **9** And the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." And so the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.

10 While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening on the plains of Jericho. **11** And the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. **12** And the manna ceased the day after they ate of the produce of the land. And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

13 When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" **14** And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" **15** And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

Diamonds: (choose **one** chapter to answer, then complete the deity, doctrine, and Scripture-Soaked Prayer) Having waited all his life, at 80 years old, Joshua instructs and leads the Israelites out of the desert and into the fulfillment of God's more than 400-year-old promise. These three chapters are one story involving three main events: 1) crossing the Jordan, 2) memorializing the crossing, and 3) the renewal and enacting of the covenant sign through circumcision. In each of these main events, God performs something awesome. Yet the focus of these events is not merely the awesome display of God's character and capabilities, but on the incomprehensibility of His character and capabilities in His steadfast progression of His promise, *His covenant*, to His people.

Chapter 3: Crossing the Jordan (Ark of the Covenant)

1. After a three-day wait (V 2) at the raging, flooded banks of the Jordan river, the people are commanded/instructed to do several things. From verses 3-5, what are the people instructed to do?
2. What instructions are given to the priests? (V 6)

Exodus 19 explains the concept of consecration for God's people as they prepared to experience God in a new way (Joshua 3.4b). In a prior lesson, we learned that our beliefs determine our actions, and our actions reveal what we believe. Consider the scene the Israelites are entering: they are about to cross a flood-ravaged, swirling, deep currented river (think of the floods of hurricanes and monsoons). Perhaps the people were a bit relieved that the priest had to go first!

3. How is Peter's teaching about the necessity of obedience to our holy God because we believe in Him and His work reinforced in this story? What beliefs about God are revealed in the actions of the priests, Joshua, and the people?
4. As you read the story of the crossing, what details about the instructions to the priests stand out to you? Notice the adjectives used to describe what will happen at their feet in contrast to what we know is true of water and rivers in full flood.
5. The ark of the covenant symbolized God's presence among His people. Why do you think it was required to go first and that the priest's feet had to touch the raging waters BEFORE the water would "stand up in a heap" upstream (V 8, 13)? In other words, what is God teaching us about God?
6. What is God teaching you about His presence (Immanuel) amid your daily details, ordinary circumstances, or trials? If you have been able to complete several lessons, review those before you answer this question, incorporating any growth you notice.

Chapter 4: Memorializing the Crossing (Remembrance of Covenant God)

7. The 12-stone memorial set up in Gilgal, representing the twelve Israelite tribes crossing the Jordan, was meant to invoke future generations to what question (V 21)?
8. How would you have answered that question? What would you teach about God in your answer?

We too have memories of God's miraculous work. While they may not be as literal as crossing a flood-ravaged river in fulfillment of God's covenant promise, God does teach us about Himself through His miraculous work in our individual lives.

9. Please share what God has taught you about God through a meaningful situation in any part of your life story (you don't need to share the situation; just what God taught you about God)

Chapter 5: Renewal/Enacting of the Covenant Sign (Sign of the Covenant)

Logically, it is time to go fight! Yet God pushes the "pause button" on His actions, and even physically weakens His warriors through the requirement of circumcision (V 2; Genesis 17.10-14). Again, God's focus is not on the people's circumstances or the best military strategy, but on His people's hearts and their relationship of obedience to Him and His covenant.

10. What significant events happen in verses 1-12? (Note that the order of events us teaches about God, too)
11. Read Colossians 2.11-14 and 1 Peter 1.13-25. How does God circumcise His people today? What is our necessary response to God's circumcision?
12. It is likely that Joshua went on a reconnaissance mission to formulate his military strategy against Jericho (V 13-15). In doing so he encounters a divine messenger, likely Jesus. Describe this divine messenger:

Joshua's response to the commander to the army of the LORD is one of the strongest evidences of this commander's divinity. The translation of the commander's response to Joshua's question of allegiance is better understood as not denying being on Israel's side (He is!), rather, being stated as "No, Joshua, I have come to take command". Allegiance is not the issue. Who is in charge is the issue. God is God and He is in command, not Joshua. It would not be right for Joshua to claim the allegiance of God for his cause, though technically accurate. Instead, God has claimed Joshua as His and he will be following the Commander of the armies of the LORD in His battle, not the other way around.

It is tempting for Christians, and others, to claim God as their ally in their social, political and economic causes. The result is a partisan understanding of God as well as a description of God that is a myopic projection of a person's specific denomination rather than consideration of God's Church (Boice, pgs. 47-49). In addition, this can lead us to sinning against God's by taking His name in vain.

13. "The essential preparation for the fall of Jericho is that the earthly leader falls flat on his face before God". (Jackman, pg. 65) How is this statement by Mr. Jackman true? How does this run contrary to the conflation of many causes with Christianity?

14. When was the last time you fell flat on your face before God? What will motivate you to do so today?

Deity: Glorious- having, worthy of, or bringing fame or admiration; having a striking beauty or splendor that evokes feelings of delighted admiration.

Psalm 66 (highlight the parts of this Psalm that move you to praise Him as Glorious)

Shout for joy to God, all the earth!

Sing the glory of his name; Make his praise glorious.

Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that all your enemies cringe before you. All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing the praises of your name."

Come and see what God has done, his awesome deeds for mankind!

He turned the sea into dry land, they passed through the waters on foot – come, let us rejoice in him.

He rules forever by his power, his eyes watch the nations – let not the rebellious rise up against him.

Praise our God, all peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard; He has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping.

For you, God, tested us; You refined like silver.

You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs, You let people ride over our heads; We went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance.

I will come to your temple with burnt offerings and fulfill my vows to you – vows my lips promised and my mouth spoke when I was in trouble.

I will sacrifice fat animals to you and an offering of rams; I will offer bulls and goats.

Come and hear, all you who fear God; Let me tell you what he has done for me.

I cried out to him with my mouth; His praise was on my tongue.

If I had cherished sin in my heart, the LORD would not have listened; But God has surely listened and has heard my prayer.

Praise be to God, who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me!

Doctrine: The Tabernacle¹- The tabernacle (tent of meeting) and temple provided the ability for God to dwell in the midst of sinful people. Before the permanent structure of the temple, the tabernacle was the place where God's presence was revealed by the Shekinah glory (Exodus 40.34; 1 Kings 8.11), where men drew near to God through offering sacrifices to atone for sin through the mediation of the priesthood (Leviticus 16); and to worship God through a Sabbath rest (Numbers 28-29).

¹ <https://bible.org/seriespage/5-hope-heaven-tabernacle-taste-heaven-exodus-2540-32-35-hebrews-8-10>

The ark of the covenant was housed inside of the tabernacle, or the tent of meeting (Exodus 33.7-11). The ark of the covenant symbolized God's presence among His people. Exact instructions for building it are found in Exodus 25. Moses saw the building and use of the ark and was required to speak of its significance when the priests carried it and set it down (Numbers 10.35-36).

Each detail of its design carries a larger spiritual meaning that points to God's promised Messiah. The ark contained the broken tables of the covenant law (10 commandments; Exodus 25.16), a bowl of manna (Exodus 16.33-34), and Aaron's sprouted, almond-producing staff (Numbers 17.8-10). Features of the ark were visual reminders of God's eternality, sovereign power, holiness, justice, and mercy.

John introduced Jesus as one who "dwelt", or "tabernacled" among men (John 1.14). Jesus spoke of Himself as the temple (John 2.18-22), likewise both the Church (2 Corinthians 6.16-18; Ephesians 2.19-22) as well as individual believers are called a temple (1 Corinthians 6.19-20; 1 Peter 2.4-10).

15. What happens to the manna in Joshua 5.12? How does their ability to celebrate the Passover feast reveal God as tabernacling with His people?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer: Using your highlights from Psalm 66, write a prayer praising our Glorious God. I mean, how could you not?!?!

Lecture Outline:

Aim: The LORD faithfully leads His covenant people into victory.

- I. Consecrated Victory (Joshua 3) **T1:** Believers follow the LORD of all the earth into victory.
 - a. How will you fight the battles you are facing right now?
 - b. What battle plan will you employ?
- II. Commemorated Victory (Joshua 4) **T2:** Believers commemorate God-given victory.
 - a. What memory aids help you commemorate what God has done for you?
 - b. How could you tell the peoples of the earth about your God-given victories?
 - c. Who in your life needs to know that the hand of the LORD is mighty?
- III. Covenantal Victory (Joshua 5) **T3:** Believers are in covenant with a glorious, victory-giving God.
 - a. In which of your current circumstances do you need God to give you victory?
 - b. Which past God-given victories will inspire your worship? How will you give Him all the glory He deserves?