

This is a brief excerpt of the sermon given by Pastor Alexander Thomas during the Watch Night Service on Sunday, December 31st, 11:30 PM 2017 at the International Church, Atlanta, Georgia.

This New Year 2018 message was taken from Joshua Chapter 3 Verses 1 - 10

The crossing of the Jordan river by the Israelites was as significant as the Red Sea crossing. The crossing of the Jordan takes up both the third and fourth chapters of the book of Joshua. It will be helpful to note that the records of Joshua 3 and 4 are not always given in chronological order.

The hope of the Promised Land was first given to Abraham and then to his son and grandson, Isaac and Jacob. Through the patriarchs, the hope of the people was passed down to all generations of Israelites. Down

through the centuries, true believers among the Israelites longed for the land promised by God. Hope in the promised land of God was the beat of their hearts, the motivating force that drove them throughout life.

Ever since the birth of the Israelites that began with their forefather Abraham, God had promised the inheritance of the land to His people. The promised land and the great hope it offered were the major theme of the teaching of the Israelites. Now, finally, the long-awaited crossing of the Jordan River was to take place. God's people were to enter the promised land. The inheritance for which they had so long hoped was finally to become their possession. Their faith in God was now to be rewarded. This is the subject of this passage of Scripture.

There was a serious problem confronting the Israelites. The Jordan River was flooded. The promised land represented a new life for the

people of God, a victorious life.

The Jordan River stood as an obstacle, a barrier to the believers hope of a new life in the promised land. The Jordan River had to be crossed if the people were going to claim their inheritance promised by God. But how?

The only way to cross the Jordan River and enter the promised land is by faith. Faith was and is the way to conquer the problems of life, the obstacles that stand between us and the promised land. The promised land is the inheritance of every genuine believer. But the only way to secure our inheritance is by faith.

The Jordan River is a picture of the problems and difficulties, the trials and temptations that confront us throughout life. Faith in God is the only way to conquer the obstacles of life.

At this time of the year, we are especially

conscious of vows or resolutions which we have made. A "vow" is simply a promise or an express desire of our determination to do better for the Lord. The making of holy vows unto the Lord is scriptural. In Psalm 76:11 we read, "Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God." As we approach the New Year, our thoughts turn to new experiences.

What is your life today? What has your life been the past year?

And Joshua rose early in the morning...

(Joshua 3:1-2)

Here, Joshua arises early in the day just as our Greater than Joshua did (Mark 1:35).

Rising early says Joshua was not lazy nor was he late at getting to his tasks. Those who lie around in bed late into the morning will accomplish very little worthwhile in life.

Following three days of preparation, it was time for the people of Israel to move off the banks of the Jordan and into the Land of

Promise. Time spent in preparation is time well spent.

As I read the passage of Scripture above (Joshua 3: 1-5), I saw three new things for the New Year.

A New Way

"for you have not passed this way before" (Joshua 3:4). The suggestion is not human, but divine. It is God Himself that proposes to guide and defend the lives of men. Yes, the way we go this year will be a new way.

But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. (Job 23:10), and God promises us "that ye may know the way which ye must go ..."
(Joshua 3:4).

We have His promise: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye"—Psalm 32:8.

"Many things about tomorrow I don't seem to

understand; But I know Who holds tomorrow,
and I know Who holds my hand.

A New Walk

"Sanctify yourselves ..."—v. 5.

The word "sanctify" is quodosh in Hebrew. It means "to set apart" or to prepare. This New Way for the New Year, God wants us to have a New Walk. He wants His people to be cleansed from all sin—2 Corinthians 7:1; 2 Tim. 2:21; I John 1:7; 3:2, 3. If we want God to work mightily on our behalf we must practice holiness.

New Wonders

"... for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you" v. 5b. If we would "sanctify" ourselves in the sense of cleansing ourselves and dedicating ourselves wholly to the Lord, He would do wonders among us this year.

In this passage, Verses 1-10 four different instructions are given by Joshua to continue

to the new way and to receive the new wonders.

Four different instructions challenging everyone to have faith, to trust God. By faith, God would provide the way to cross over the Jordan. By faith, God would show how to overcome the problem and obstacle of the Jordan. By faith, God would make sure His people would receive the promised inheritance, the victorious life of the Promised Land.

1. (Joshua 3:3-4) instructed the people to follow the Ark. The Ark was a symbol of God's presence, a symbol of His holy throne. Whenever the people saw the priest pick up the Ark and begin to courageously march forth into the Jordan River, the people were to move out and follow the Ark. The ark was a symbol of the presence of God. God was leading the Israelites here. Following the ark symbolically portrayed the fact of following

God. When and where the ark moved, they were to move. We must follow God likewise.

"There shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits... come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go" (Joshua 3:4). The spacing from the ark was so that all could see the ark. The space between the ark and the people was little over half a mile. They were no longer following a cloud which all could easily see but an ark which was on ground level. Hence the distance from the ark so all could see it and follow it.

The spacing from the Ark also was a picture of their showing reverence for God. He will never leave us nor forsake us. No matter what enemy, trial, or temptation may face us, no matter the size, the strength—God will be with us. His unfailing presence will never leave us nor forsake us.

2. There were the instructions to the people

(Joshua 3:5). Joshua ordered the people to sanctify, consecrate, purify themselves. This meant that the people were to prepare their hearts before the Lord. They were to pray, confess, repent, rededicate, and recommit their lives to God.

3. There were the instructions of Joshua to the people (Joshua 3:6). This was a challenge for the priests to be strong in faith, to believe enough to take up the Ark and move out ahead of the people. They were to courageously lead the people into the swift, dangerous currents of the flooding river.

4. There were the instructions of God to Joshua (Joshua 3:7-8). Joshua needed to learn that God was with him even as God had been with Moses. Through the miraculous event about to take place, Joshua would be exalted in the eyes of all the Israelites. The people would know that he was truly chosen by God and that he truly followed and trusted

God. They would know that God was with him even as He had been with Moses.

May this New Year for us be a "New Walk" for this "New Way" so that we may see "New Wonders". God loves and cares for us. He cares about every problem that confronts us, and He wants to strengthen us to overcome all problems. He wants to show us the way to triumph over the obstacles that stand in our way. Believing God, trusting God, having faith in God—this is the only way to become a conqueror throughout life. Faith in God is the victory that overcomes the world with all of its obstacles.