

SERMON: IT'S NEW TO US, BUT NOT TO GOD

JOSHUA 3:3-5

(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. (4) Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore. (5) And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.

Introduction

We are living in unprecedented times. This acknowledgement has been voiced and written more times than we can recall- or care to recall. None of us, no matter our age, has experienced anything like what we have experienced in this year, 2020. There is nothing new under the sun, but this is new to us. Part of the newness is the amount or preponderance of the same phenomena. There have always been forest fires, but not this many. There have been hurricanes, but not where we have to use Greek alphabets. There is no need to enumerate the unrest and the effects of the pandemic. We have never been down this road before. What steps shall we take? What course shall we follow? Let me remind you early on that this is new to us but, not new to God.

This is not an isolated text, but part of a great charge given by Joshua to Israel. They were about to cross the Jordan River and enter the Promised Land. They were entering when the Jordan River was at flood stage and on the other side was the mighty city, Jericho. They were entering a new land and a new era. The unknown was before them. The manna from heaven was about to cease. The pillar of fire would no longer lead them by night and the pillar of the cloud would no longer lead them by day. The proscription that their shoes and clothes would not wear out would soon be lifted. God would now lead them without theophany. In addition, they had a new head leader, Joshua. They were moving forth with great anticipation and also with great anxiety. How do you handle the new and the unknown? As we live in these critical times, there is much we can glean from this text and from the action of the early New Testament church. Some of the points will be for us personally and some will be for the church at large.

Exposition

1. When God Gives Specific Instructions, Follow Them

(They Were Told To Follow the Ark of the Covenant)

(Noah Was Given Specifications on the Construction of the Ark)

(The Apostles Were Told To Wait Until the Arrival of the Holy Spirit)

2. When God Chooses Not To Give Specific Instructions Let Your Actions and Decisions Comply With the Principles of His Word

- (A) Let Faith and Reason Work Together
- (B) Let Knowledge and Wisdom Work Together

3. The Early Church Used the Cutting-Edge Technology of Their Day To Spread the Gospel

(The Internet Is the New Roman Road)

4. Every Successful Church in This Era Must Have At Least Two Locations

(The Physical Location and the Digital Location)
(The Geographical and the Virtual)

5. The Message Will Not Change-The Medium Will Definitely Change

(It Is About Jesus Christ and Him Crucified)
(We Must Not Cut Down the Fruit Trees-Deuteronomy 20:19-20)
(We Must Keep Our Focus on Salvation and Edification)

Closing Thoughts

The Jordan River stood as a barrier to the hope of a new and better life in the Promised Land. For us it is a picture of the problems, difficulties, trials, and temptations that confront us throughout life-but especially when the unknown is before us. Remember what's new to us is not new to God and nothing catches Him by surprise.

I will end by quoting two reassuring passages from the book of Isaiah.

41:10. Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

43:2 When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned: neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

Related Scriptures

Deuteronomy 29:5

Joshua 5:12

End Note:

The Romans constructed a vast highway system that connected the great cities and the military bases of the ancient world. It started with the Appian Way in 312 B.C. This network of roads covered more than 50,000 miles with Rome as the center. Thus, the phrase: "All roads lead to Rome." The purpose of this cutting-edge technological feat was to advance commerce and allow Roman soldiers to quickly be dispatched to any part of the empire. These stone-paved roads were so skillfully constructed that some of them are still in use today. The roadbeds usually were cambered for drainage and flanked by footpaths. The roads cut through hills and traversed rivers and ravines on bridges. Large sections of the roads went through marshy grounds and swamp lands. These roads were truly the technological marvels of their day. Along these roads, Paul and the early missionaries traveled with the good news of the gospel. If you trace the land routes of Paul's missionary journeys, you will discover that they always moved on patterns that utilized the Roman roads. The ship routes he used had the intent of connecting to a Roman road. Though the Romans' intent was to facilitate the growth of the empire, the most important consequence, albeit unintended, was the spread of the Christian message throughout the world. With all the focus on digital technology in our day, it is easy to overlook how God used the cutting-edge technology of earlier ages to spread the gospel across the globe. Many times, they would use the phrase "Roman Road" to refer to the entire highway system. With that in mind we will quote Thom S. Rainer when he said, "The internet is the new Roman Road; Let's use it like Apostle Paul used the original Roman Road."

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