

Look at What God Has Done

DARRELL DELANEY

I once heard a story about a man who drifted out too far in the lake and couldn't swim back. He tried to swim back, and got so exhausted he couldn't keep himself afloat. The man began to lose consciousness. As he was going down for the last time, a lifeguard jumped in and saved him. The lifeguard brought him to shore, resuscitated him, and helped him breathe again. Now every chance the man gets, he tells the story of how the lifeguard saved him. Telling that story always encourages his soul. In this episode of *Groundwork*, we will see how Joshua encourages people to tell the story of God's deliverance and his promise to give them the land he promised long ago. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we are actually in the third part of our six-part series on the book of Joshua, and we have talked about how God is a covenant-keeping, promise-keeping God; and he had promised this land way back to Abraham...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And now he is going to actually give it to the people. We also talked about how Rahab, an unlikely hero in this story, who didn't know the Lord before, but actually helped the spies so that she could be part of the family of God eventually.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, we have, in this book, a new leader. Moses has died at the very end of Deuteronomy, and there in Deuteronomy 31, Moses appointed Joshua. There would always be...God promised in Deuteronomy 18...there would always be a prophet in Israel...there would always be a leader. There was never anybody quite like Moses. There probably wouldn't be anybody quite like Moses until Jesus comes, but in the meantime, God is faithful; and so, Joshua gets affirmed and appointed and charged before the people; and he is now going to lead them. In this program, Darrell, we are going to see the people indeed transition from former Egyptian slaves, and then for forty years wanderers in the desert, into soldiers; and to finally enter the Promised Land.

DARRELL DELANEY

They are also going to transition geographically, because they are not in Egypt anymore, and they are going into the land that God has promised; and as we look at that in Joshua 3, we see God doing these powerful things. It says: Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. ²After three days the officers went throughout the camp, ³giving 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. ⁴Then 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.”

SCOTT HOEZEE

⁵Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.”
⁶Joshua said to the priest, “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people.” So they took it up and went ahead of them. ⁷And 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. ⁸Tell 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.”

DARRELL DELANEY

So, there are some interesting things happening in this passage, Scott. I love the verse that says: You have never gone this way before. So, they are going in a new direction for the way that God is leading them, and then the second thing is they are told to consecrate themselves because the Lord is going to do amazing things among them. That is new preparation, and then Joshua is the new leader. So, there is a lot of newness going on, and I think about this as a new season in their lives. I often think about, too, how there are new seasons in my life; when I am getting older, when life is changing for me; but the good news is, even though those things are changing, God does not change and he is leading.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and you know, it is very important here. I think you just pointed this out, Darrell, that God tells Joshua they are going to know that I am with you just as I was with Moses...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, God is taking care of things in this transitional period. All of us know transitional periods can be difficult, you know: the church has a new pastor, you know; can we keep from comparing him to the old pastor? Or the country has a new president; or I’ve got a new boss at work; or I have just become a parent for the first time.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, when you are the middle of those transitions from one stage of life to maybe another, and a momentous stage of life, it is so important to know that God is with you. So, it is lovely here to see how God is assuring Joshua, God is assuring the people, he is assuring the priests and the leaders that he is with them, as he has been in the past; and so they can go forward with this new leader in this new era with confidence.

DARRELL DELANEY

Just like the old hymn that says: We need to hold to God’s unchanging hand; even though the time is full of swift transitions of many kinds. In the way that he instructs Joshua is to: 1) Be strong and courageous; 2) Remember I will be with you; and God also gives instructions as they get ready to cross into the Jordan. So, it picks up at verse 13. It says:

(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.” ¹⁴So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. ¹⁵Now 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, ¹⁶the 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. ¹⁷The 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. So, it is really crazy because they had to step into the water this time. I am thinking about how Moses did the parting of the Red Sea...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

And he is standing at the banks and the army is coming and he raises his staff and the water parts, but this situation is different. They literally have to step in the water first before the water moves. That is very powerful.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Probably most of these people weren't alive when the Red Sea crossing happened. They may have heard of it. Maybe there were a few older people who remembered; but right, God is doing it differently this time, and we shouldn't always expect that God will do everything the same way, you know; I mean, I think one of the easiest things that we can do in our lives sometimes...our spiritual lives, Darrell...is we can say, well, God did it this way with me so that is what you should expect. God is going to do it the same way. You pray like I pray, God will speak to you over breakfast when you are eating your Cheerios, like I heard God speaking over my Cheerios...that is how it is going to be for you. No; God does it differently in different times with different people, and what is important is that we stay alive and open to God, even if he does something a little bit differently than he did in the past. God is a God of surprises; we will see that throughout this series; but the main thing is to know God is with us, and even if he is doing a new thing in a different way, he is still active.

DARRELL DELANEY

I love that because it keeps us open to the possibilities of what God can do; and then, in this situation sometimes we expect God to part things before we actually do something...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, right.

DARRELL DELANEY

But this situation had them step into it first and then God parted it. So, there may be situations that you might think: Oh, God will just fix this and handle this; but then there are situations where he actually wants us to take the initial step, and then he sees that act of faith and he says: Okay, now I can do the rest. I think that we need to be versatile and open to God being able to use either one of those in his sovereign choices, and it is really powerful to think about; but when we look at the next segment, we want to talk about more things that God teaches his people in a very special moment; so, stay tuned.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and Scott, we have been talking about how God has been giving these different instructions that are different than the ones he gave to Moses, but the God who is interested in keeping the promise of bringing his people to the Promised Land has a surprising way to do that; and we see in this book he had them walk into the water first before he began to part it, and that is something that really was interesting to see because God didn't do it that way in Deuteronomy.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; but you know, what is interesting, too, is that I think we sometimes treat this Jordan River crossing as sort of not quite as impressive as the Red Sea. I mean, it is just a river, right? But we are told in what we read just a few minutes ago, the river was at flood stage...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

That means the waters were deep. If you have ever seen a river in flood or after a lot of rain, there can be a pretty strong current. So, people could have been swept away...women and children, even grown men could have gotten swept away. So, we shouldn't discount that this looked insurmountable to the people. Again, most of them were either very little children or hadn't been born yet when the Red Sea happened, so they don't remember what that looked like, but this looked bad enough. So, it looked insurmountable; and yet, they had to believe God was with them. They had to step into the waters, which looked dangerous, and then the miracle happened, and God once again stopped the river from flowing; upstream, he doesn't really divide the waters here, he just stops it. So then, all the water that is in front of them drains away and they can cross on dry land.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, it is really powerful because when you pick up right there at Chapter 4, God gives more strange instructions for them to do; and so, it says right here. It says: When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, ²“Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, ³and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.” ⁴So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, ⁵and said to them, “Go over before the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, ⁶to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ ⁷tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people forever.”

Man, I love how God uses these stones as a teachable moment to help people remember who he is and what he has done; and they have this testimony now: Grab these stones, bring them with you, and then when your children ask you, guess what? They get to talk about what God did.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is interesting to me how frequently...in the Old Testament and in the early days of Israel's history, Darrell...frequently you get this child asking a question scenario, right?

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, in the Passover, even to this day among our Jewish brothers and sisters, the oldest child asks: How is this night different from all other nights? We saw also in Deuteronomy, in Moses' last sermon, talk about all the things of God when you are at home with your children, you know; when your children ask you this and that and the other thing, be ready to answer them; and so also here we are going to have a stone memorial; twelve stones stacked up together, and the children are going to see it in the future and they are going to say to their parents: What do these stones mean? That becomes, then, the opportunity to pass on the wonderful mercy and providence of God to the next generation.

DARRELL DELANEY

And actually, Scott, that is biblical because in the Psalms we see that, in 145:4 it says one generation will tell of God's works to the next generation, and remind everyone of his mighty deeds. You just brought up that in Deuteronomy...and actually a lot in the Old Testament...there is a theme of remembering who God is and what he has done. I think it would be really powerful for us as believers to not have a short-term memory when it comes to what God has done in our own lives and in the lives of other people around us. Those are actually metaphorically *stones* if we think about it, because God has placed blessings in each and every one of our lives. We just need to be observant to recognize: Oh, that might be a stone; that might be something very powerful. I will give you an example: My daughter is 8 years old, and we actually spent time talking about this story in the scripture, and how they brought stones over to remind them of what God had done; and she has a new favorite song. Her favorite song is called: *Firm Foundation* by Maverick City. So, every time she hears that song she says: I feel like God is giving me a warm hug. So, when she said that I said: Well, that could possibly be a stone. So, then we went to worship and they played that song. They didn't talk to her; they didn't talk to me about what the set was. My daughter walked in and heard the song. I said, look, another stone. And so, she was really excited to see that God has been placing these things into her life and our lives so that we could remember him, we could love him, we could worship him; and God is doing that all over the place. Especially in hard times, we can remember those things.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I think sometimes we don't do this as well as we should. I know when I was a pastor that one of the things...I mean, we are always good...in schools and even in Sunday school sometimes, you know, we are good at celebrating birthdays: Oh, yeah; it's your birthday; you are bringing the treat, and so forth. But I liked it when a lot of worship centers and children in worship programs years ago started to find out the date of the baptism. So, in traditions like the Reformed tradition where we baptize children, we find out what was the date. Okay, we know your birthday, but what was your baptism day? What was your *rebirth* day?

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Then they would celebrate that in Sunday school...they would celebrate that. That is kind of an *ebenezer*, right? That is literal in Hebrew *the stone is our helper*, right? That is a memorial to remember that on this day I was born anew. It reminds me of a friend of mine who had leukemia, and he had a stem cell replacement. What happens then is you totally have all your stem cells removed and you get a new transfusion. Your blood type often will change. In the cancer world, they call that your second birthday because your life started over again. You've got all new cells; you have maybe a whole new blood type. That is what baptism should be, you know. That is one of those memorials that we should help our children remember because God does significant things in our lives, and we need to remember them just as much as things everybody looks at like birthdays and anniversaries. We should look at anniversaries of the Lord working in our lives.

DARRELL DELANEY

One of the prayers that I pray every morning is that God will make me open and attentive to the blessings that he has already put in the day, because before I set a foot on the floor for the morning to get my day going, he has already begun working. It is kind of like what he did with Adam and Eve in the creation. Six days he put it all out there, and in the seventh day Adam gets to walk right into God's provision, his care, his blessings; and God has wanted us to remember the powerful things that he has done, great and small.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, sometimes there are those major events in our lives, but there can be smaller ones, too; and you know, one of the things that all of us, I think, could probably do more, Darrell, is to say thank you to God. I mean, I always think I bet if I could tote it up, I have asked God for more things that have happened than I have thanked God for the things that happened. I think my requests outpace my thank-yous, and that is not so

good; but it is good to remember when we can the big things and the small; make them part of our prayer life; make them part of our devotional life so that we do indeed do what the Israelites were told to do over and over: Remember; remember; and do not forget. The refrain also of the previous book of the Bible, Deuteronomy.

Well, coming up next, we will see how this story situates itself in the biblical narrative and how we ought to respond to it. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

DARRELL DELANEY

I am Darrell Delaney, with Scott Hoezee, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and as we bring this episode to a close, Scott, I was thinking about how this book of Joshua has great deliverance overtones and transition overtones and they are being geographically moved from a place of slavery to a place of freedom and liberty in the Promised Land that God has given them; and this, if you think about it, is a theme throughout the Bible, where Christ is coming soon, and he is going to be the one who transitions and delivers us out of a place of oppression, out of a place of sin and misery, to a place of deliverance spiritually speaking.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And really, all through history the exodus from Egypt and then the crossing of the Jordan and entering the Promised Land, that is that has had great resonance...all that imagery was used a lot by the civil rights movement in the United States.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In fact, I remember one of the best histories of the civil rights movement is a book by Taylor Branch, and the book is titled *Parting the Waters*. So, you have this imagery from Israel's history, but the New Testament itself uses the Promised Land. The book of Hebrews does it a lot, but it is all through the New Testament. Christ is the one now leading us. Jesus, who is the Greek form of Joshua...Joshua/Jesus is leading us into the Promised Land, beyond the Jordan. So, that "crossing over" imagery is very powerful for salvation.

DARRELL DELANEY

Actually, it does pick up with that in the book of John Chapter 5. It says in verse 24: "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word (Jesus says) and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.

So, the transition now is not a geographical one, it is a spiritual one, and we are going to be released from the powers of death and hell and eternal punishment thanks to the atoning work of Christ on the cross; and we also see that in Romans 6, where Paul picks it up when he says: What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? ²By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? ³Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

SCOTT HOEZEE

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—⁷because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

So, that is baptismal imagery: the parting of the waters, the going through the waters; one of the confessions of the Reformed tradition is the *Belgic Confession*; and there is an image in there in baptism where Jesus is

called: Our Red Sea. So, the crossing of the Red Sea; the crossing of the Jordan; the going into the waters and coming out to life on the other side; passing from death to life; from the old way to the new way; from the old world to the new Promised Land; that is a great part of baptism, but it also picks up on what we memorialize and celebrate in the Lord's Supper—both are the sacraments of the Church.

DARRELL DELANEY

Now that we have identified with Christ as believers, he has really removed the oppression from our lives. I think John Calvin called it the bondage of the will, when you don't want to do anything better; but when he comes to save us, he releases that power over our lives; and then the grace of God can flow into that life once we repent...once we trust him...and Joshua is actually foreshadowing that. I don't want to make it difficult and say that the book of Joshua in and of itself doesn't have any powerful things to say, but I do want to say that that book has a foreshadowing effect that points us to the fulfillment of deliverance in Christ.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You mentioned the book of Hebrews a few moments ago, and Hebrews, which we think is probably a series of sermons; and if so, then the preacher of Hebrews was really good at wielding this imagery, and was very good at saying, as you just said, Darrell, the stuff that happened in history, the events of Joshua...what we are seeing here...the crossing of the Jordan and so forth...yes, those were all real and they were very concrete, solid events; but, Hebrews says, in some ways those were just the shadows of the reality of what was going to come in Jesus Christ, where we will all cross over into a Promised Land. We will all cross over into what we now would call the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ our Lord; and so, what we see, as you said, Darrell, foreshadowed...previewed...we could also say it is previewed in these stories is our ultimate salvation in Christ, and the new people we become through baptism, the new people we become by being children of a different bread by coming to the Lord's table. All of that is just a beautiful, beautiful reminder that, as Paul also wrote one time: Because of Jesus, the whole universe turned the corner from darkness into light.

DARRELL DELANEY

And that is the crossover. I mean, it is not that the Christian life will be easy every time...

SCOTT HOEZEE

No.

DARRELL DELANEY

And easy every day. It won't always be sunshine and rainbows, but definitely it will be worth it to trust in Christ, because he is the true rest; and as we think about this story in the book of Joshua, we are reminded that we need to take some steps of faith in uncertainty and remember that God's provision is there for us, and then bring the stones of our testimonies with us to remind us, and to remind those who come after us, as we are disciples who make disciples, this is what God has done in our lives; this is how he was our ebenezer; this is how he is our help. He opened the way for us; and then, remember too, how this story points itself to Christ, who is the new rest; and if we take comfort in these things in hard times, we know that our God is the one who has the presence that we can take with us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Israel ultimately isn't going to do very well in history, but by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we can do better, for we have been raised...we have crossed over into a new life, thanks be to God.

Well, thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we continue our study of Joshua with the story of Jericho in Chapters 6 and 7, and the story of one man's sin and how it affected the entire nation.

Connect with us now at groundworkonline.com to share what *Groundwork* means to you, or tell us what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*.

DARRELL DELANEY

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