

Joshua 3:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.

Analysis

Joshua's command to "sanctify yourselves" (hitqaddešû, הִתְקַדְּשׁוּ) uses the Hebrew reflexive form, indicating self-consecration through ritual purification and spiritual preparation. This term appears before major divine encounters—Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:10-15), covenant renewal (Joshua 7:13), and here before crossing Jordan. The sanctification involved washing garments, abstaining from sexual relations, and purifying oneself ceremonially, but primarily demanded heart preparation to encounter the holy God. The promise "tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you" (yiftsor Yahweh biqirkem niflaot, יִפְתֹּשֶׁר יְהָוָה בַּקְרֵבָכֶם נִפְלָאֹת) uses niflaot (נִפְלָאֹת), meaning extraordinary, miraculous acts beyond human ability. This same word describes the plagues in Egypt (Exodus 3:20) and God's mighty works throughout redemptive history. The theological principle is crucial: God's miraculous intervention requires human preparation and consecration. Divine power operates most dramatically when His people prepare their hearts to receive and witness His glory. This pattern continues in the New Testament: before Pentecost, disciples devoted themselves to prayer (Acts 1:14); before revival, God's people humble themselves and turn from sin (2 Chronicles 7:14). The connection between holiness and power runs throughout Scripture—God displays His strength through sanctified vessels prepared to witness and proclaim His glory.

Historical Context

This command preceded Israel's miraculous Jordan crossing during the spring flooding season when the river overflowed its banks (Joshua 3:15). The timing

made natural crossing impossible, requiring obvious divine intervention. Israel camped at Shittim in the plains of Moab, having completed the 40-year wilderness wandering. The entire generation that witnessed the Exodus plagues and Sinai theophany had died (except Joshua and Caleb), leaving a new generation who had not personally witnessed those miracles but had heard the accounts. Joshua's call to sanctification prepared them for the miracle they would experience. Ancient Near Eastern peoples commonly practiced ritual purification before encountering deity or entering sacred space. Priests washed before serving in the tabernacle (Exodus 30:17-21), worshipers purified before approaching God's presence. The sanctification requirement demonstrated that approaching God's presence demands reverence, preparation, and holiness. This generation would cross dry-shod through Jordan as their fathers had crossed the Red Sea, establishing continuity of divine faithfulness and power across generations. The miracle would authenticate Joshua's leadership as Moses' legitimate successor and demonstrate to Canaanites that Israel's God was mightier than all pagan deities.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What specific steps of spiritual preparation and sanctification do you need to take before expecting God to work powerfully in your life and circumstances?
2. How does anticipating God's miraculous work 'tomorrow' affect your spiritual preparation and consecration today?
3. In what ways has your expectation of divine intervention diminished because you've neglected the preparation and sanctification God requires?

Interlinear Text

כִּי הַתָּקִדְּשׁוּ אֵלֶּיךָ מִן־אֶתְרָה

said

And Joshua

אָל

H413

בְּעֵמָה

H5971

כִּי הַתָּקִדְּשׁוּ שְׂעִיר

Sanctify

H3588

מִצְרָיִם

רְמִצְרָה

יְמִינְךָ הַיְמִינָה

יְהִי הַיְמִינָה

בְּקָרְבָּךְ מִן־

בְּקָרְבָּךְ מִן־

yourselves for to morrow

H4279

will do

H6213

the LORD

H3068

among

H7130

wonders

H6381

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 20:7 (References Lord): Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God.

Joshua 7:13 (References Lord): Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow: for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you.

Joel 2:16 (Parallel theme): Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.

1 Samuel 16:5 (References Lord): And he said, Peaceably: I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

John 17:19 (Parallel theme): And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

Leviticus 10:3 (References Lord): Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.

Psalms 86:10 (Parallel theme): For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone.

Job 1:5 (Parallel theme): And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and

offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

Joshua 3:13 (References Lord): And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap.

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