



Joshua 3
Crossing Jordan on Dry Land

NKJ Joshua 3:1 Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and they set out from Acacia Grove and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they crossed over.

2 So it was, after three days, that the officers went through the camp;

3 and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it.

4 "Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before."

5 And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you."

6 Then Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people.

7 And the LORD said to Joshua, "This day 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 "You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you have come to the edge of the water of the Jordan, you shall stand in the Jordan.' "

9 So Joshua said to the children of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God."

10 And Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites:

11 "Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan.

12 "Now therefore, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from every tribe.

13 "And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap."

14 So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people,

15 and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest),

16 that the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho.

17 Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan.

What would be the worst time to cross over a river? Well usually it is in the Spring, melting snow and April showers tend to swell rivers so that they are at their highest at that time of the year. At that is

certainly the case with the Jordan. The river sometimes becomes as wide as 200 yards across and varies in depth from 3 feet at the fords to 12 feet, because of the massive drop in elevation from the Sea of Galilee in the North to the Dead Sea in the south, a drop of over 9 feet per mile, the river current becomes quite swift.

I don't know if you have ever tried to wade through a flooding river, I wouldn't recommend it. Several years ago, I waded through a flooding Creek in order to get to our apartment which had been cut off by the floodwater. The water came up to my chest, and before I was even half-way there I realized I had made a terrible mistake. Again and again the force of the water almost swept me off my feet and away downstream. In fact I had the unsettling experience of passing people grimly hanging on to trees who had been swept away by the force of the torrent. By the grace of God, I made it through in the end, but I had a new appreciation for the force of flood water and a determination to take it much more seriously next time.

Now how is Israel going to cross the Jordan? Presumably the Canaanites were already watching the fords, we read in Joshua 2:7 that the men of Jericho had pursued the spies to the Fords, and even at the fords the depth of the water was easily 3 feet. Spies might be able to cross over such a barrier, but certainly hundreds of thousands of women and children and the elderly and the livestock and the masses of baggage could not. The enemies of Israel probably saw the Jordan as an impenetrable obstacle, their first sure line of defense. Surely, if they were going to get across they would have to wait until after the floods and then cross at the fords.

But the Lord again and again, has determined to rescue his people at the most unlikely times and through the most unlikely methods, precisely to show that with him, nothing is impossible and to show them, to quote Paul " If God *is* for us, **who can be against us?**" Previously in the Exodus he had lead them to a point where they had the mighty Egyptian army behind them and the Red Sea in front. An impossible situation, and yet the Lord delivered them by parting the Red Sea so that they might cross over unharmed, and then closing it again to destroy their Egyptian enemies.

Here again, the Lord delivers his people via the most unlikely method at the most unlikely time, the ark of the covenant, symbolizing his presence will go ahead of them, the Levites will carry into the midst of the Jordan at a point not normally used for crossings. But as the feet of the first Levites touch the water the waters will dry up, and the entire nation will pass into the promised land on dry land! The power of the Lord will do this thing.

The Lord tells us explicitly that he is doing it this way, rather than commanding them to wait or to build a bridge, to impress two things upon them.

- 1) ***By this mighty sign and wonder, he will exalt his servant Joshua in the eyes of the people*** - *This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel*, - Just as he used signs and wonders like the staff that became a snake, the plagues upon Egypt, the water from the rock to confirm that he was with his servant Moses, and that Moses spoke for him and with his authority, he will do the same thing with Joshua. This is important, because up to now, the authority that Joshua has been conferred upon him by Moses at the command of God. He has however had no outward attestations yet, and just as it was impressive that the Apostles were appointed by Christ, it is even more impressive that their divine appointment was confirmed by the signs and wonders they did. Prophets have long recognized this, so Elisha the servant and successor of Elijah asked not that Elijah go from town to town confirming his prophetic calling and ability but that ***"a double portion***

of your spirit be upon me." A man might be appointed to a high position of command, given a gleaming uniform, many titles, and widely acclaimed, but until he actually demonstrates his gifts in battle all the titles in the world are going to have only limited value in the eyes of his troops.

General George McClellan was widely hoped to be the Savior of the Army of the Potomac, reputed to be an officer of such skill he was dubbed "the Young Napoleon" he set out to capture Richmond in 1862, and had he been the general everyone thought and hoped he was, he would have done it. But by over caution and bungling he fumbled the campaign and the south scored an upset victory.

The reputation did not match the gifts and so it often is with Pastors. A man will graduate from Seminary with impressive scores and credentials and the general acclaim of all his professors. Great things will be expected of him, but then he inexplicably fails in the ministry. Often the problem was that like Saul, he was great in the eyes of the people, but not in the eyes of the Lord. He didn't have the gifts, the spirit, or the heart for the task.

Joshua does, and now the Lord will begin to confirm that in view of all the people.

2) By this Mighty Sign and Wonder, he will confirm his ability to drive out the inhabitants of Canaan and deliver to them the land that he promised - *By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Hivites and the Perizzites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Jebusites*

If God is able to subdue raging floodwaters, if he is able to make a river stop in its course, then how difficult will it be for him to subdue attacking Girgashites and Amorites. If he can accomplish the greater for his people certainly he can also accomplish the lesser. This same point is made with even greater force in Romans 8:31

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

In other words, why do we worry so that God will not be able to take care of us or preserve us in the faith or carry out his will in our lives to its appointed ends? If he was willing and able to interpose the blood of his own Dear Son and make full atonement for the sins of all his Sheep, how will he not grant those sheep full salvation?

But sadly God's people miss this point again and again, the Israelites forgot it in the wilderness despite the fact that they saw the parting of the Red Sea, and the Apostles forgot it after the arrest of Jesus, despite the fact that they had seen things like the stilling of the raging waters.

The people though are told to prepare themselves for this mighty act of redemption, to sanctify themselves, via repentance. Why so they will see the work of the Lord and appreciate its significance:
 He will bookend it with preparation before
 And a memorial afterwards
 Because we FORGET

1) Application here: Preparation for worship – importance of the Supper as the Ebenezer the Memorial

Do we prepare and remember?

So at the appointed time the Levites carry in the ark and the floodwaters stop, the river dries up, and all the people cross over on dry land, but they are told to maintain a distance of 200 cubits, both so that everyone might see the way to go, and so that there would be a respectful distance between the people and their holy God

No Accidental touching etc.

2) Final Application: Crossing the River into the Promised Land on Dry Land, we can go forward into the Kingdom because Christ has gone before us and dried up the raging torrents, these things are sign of what God was going to do in redemption.

Both on entering into salvation

And entering into the hereafter, passing through the river of death