

ISRAEL CROSSES JORDAN

[BIBLE TEXT](#): Joshua 3:1-17; 4:1-24

LESSON 154 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee" (Joshua 3:7).

[BIBLE TEXT in King James Version](#)

Joshua 3:1-17

¹ And Joshua rose early in the morning; and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.

² And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host;

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 to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.

⁶ And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people.

⁷ And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, *so* I will be with thee.

⁸ And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan.

⁹ And Joshua said unto the

[BIBLE REFERENCES:](#)

[NOTES:](#)

Early in the Morning

At last came the day for which the Children of Israel had longed — the day to enter the Land of Canaan. For forty years they had looked forward to that time. They had been told many wonderful things about Canaan, a land that flowed with milk and honey, wherein were cities and houses already built, with wells and vineyards for the Children of Israel.

Three days before (**Joshua 1:10-11** ¹⁰ Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, ¹¹ Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it), officers had gone through the camp to tell the people to prepare food, for they were about to cross the Jordan river. Preparations had been made. Two spies had viewed the land (**Joshua 2:1** ¹ And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there) and reported to Joshua that fear was in the hearts of those who lived in Canaan. They told Joshua that the people had no more courage because they had heard how God was with the Children of Israel; they had heard about their encounters with the kings of the Amorites.

Before the death of Moses, God had appointed Joshua to lead the Children of Israel across Jordan into the Land of Canaan. Joshua had been in Canaan forty years before to spy out the land. He had been one of the two spies who said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:30). At that time the Children of Israel had feared to go into the land of promise because of the walled cities and the giants. For forty years they wandered in the wilderness where God worked many miracles to strengthen their faith. Joshua must have been very eager to cross Jordan. Joshua had told them before that the Lord was with them (**Numbers 14:9** ⁹ Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they *are* bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us: fear them not) ; and had not God proved it to the Children of Israel? Did He not promise to be with Joshua as He had been with Moses? Joshua must have believed the truth of the words that were later written by Paul, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

When the day was at hand, Joshua rose early in the morning. No doubt he felt his responsibility as a leader, and there was work to be done that all the words of the Lord would be obeyed.

Instructions to the People

Once more the officers were sent to the people with the orders of the Lord. The people were directed to sanctify themselves as a preparation, for the Lord would do wonders among them.

No more was the cloud over them to lead and protect. The Children of Israel were instructed to watch the Ark of the

children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God.

¹⁰ And Joshua said, Hereby ye 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 passeth over before you into Jordan.

¹² Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people;

¹⁵ And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,)

¹⁶ That the waters which came down from above stood *and* rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that *is* beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, *even* the salt sea, failed, *and* were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.

¹⁷ And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until

Covenant, in which were the tables of the Law, Aaron's rod that budded, and a golden pot of manna ([Hebrews 9:4](#) ⁴ Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein *was* the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant). The Ark was carried by the priests. The Children of Israel were told to stay back from the Ark a distance of about half a mile; then all of them could see the Ark and know where they were going. They had never passed that way before but they were to follow after the Ark. When the priests who carried it moved, then the Children of Israel were to move.

Christians who are traveling to a heavenly Canaan must keep their eyes on the Guide, who is Christ. They have never trod the way before; but by following the Lord in faith, they will enter into their spiritual inheritance. As the Ark, borne by the priests, went before to search out a resting place for the Children of Israel, so Jesus has gone before to prepare a place for His people ([John 14:2](#) ² In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you).

Joshua told the people that their crossing Jordan would be a token of God's presence and a pledge that the inhabitants of the land would be driven out by the Lord Himself.

Priests

Finally everything was in readiness. No doubt all eyes were upon the Ark, lest when it was moved the people would not see it. The priests had a wonderful privilege and a great responsibility to bear the sacred Ark. At last the order to go was given, but the water of the river was still in its place. What a wonderful scene as the priests who were carrying the Ark moved forward in faith and in obedience, and the people began to follow! The priests reached the water's edge — but still nothing happened. Had not the Lord said that the waters of Jordan would be cut off? They were, when the feet of the priests touched the water. Back rolled the water, even the floodwater of the harvest time! "The priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground."

The Lord cut off the waters of the Jordan river. On the upstream side they were heaped up, permitting the Children of Israel to cross on dry ground. What a miracle the Lord performed! Surely He did wonders for the Children of Israel. It was no act of nature. There is no explanation except that God did it for them.

Cannot all children of God say that He has done wonders for them? Perhaps some have had a test to prove that they have faith in God, much like the priests who went forward even though there were floodwaters ahead of them. When they obeyed God, He rolled back the hindrances.

Memorials

When the Children of Israel were passed over Jordan, the priests who carried the Ark remained in their places until they were told to move. A memorial was to be made in the river bed. It was not Joshua's idea; God commanded them to do it. Some people might have been careless about doing all that God commanded — but not Joshua. Some people would have run for their lives for fear the waters would recede after the people were across — but not these priests of God. They did what they were told and were careful to obey in full the commandment of the Lord. God expects His people today to obey in detail, too.

A monument of twelve stones was erected by Joshua in

all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

Joshua 4:1-24

¹ And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,

² Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man,

³ And command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night.

⁴ Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man:

⁵ And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of Jordan, and take ye up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel:

⁶ That this may be a sign among you, *that* when your children ask *their fathers* in time to come, saying, What *mean* ye by these stones?

⁷ Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.

⁸ And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the LORD spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there.

the midst of the river bed where the priests had stood. Another memorial was made at Gilgal, their first camp on the west of Jordan.

Twelve men, one out of every tribe, had been chosen to do a special work unto the Lord. Each of the twelve men carried upon his shoulder a stone from the midst of Jordan to Gilgal. There the stones remained to remind them of God's power when He dried up the waters of Jordan until they had passed over.

They were commanded to teach their children about these memorials. In time to come they would ask, "What mean these stones?" The children would be told that the stones were a sign that Israel crossed Jordan on dry land. Thus God's work of wonders would be kept in everlasting remembrance.

Fighting Men

With the Children of Israel were the fighting men of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. Rather than go into the land of promise for their inheritance, these two and one-half tribes had chosen to settle on the east side of Jordan (**Numbers 32:5** ⁵ Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, *and bring us not over Jordan*). They had agreed to send their armed men over Jordan with the rest of the Children of Israel. What a mixture of feelings that day! Undoubtedly, the Children of Israel were happy to enter the land of promise for which they had longed; and yet, in their hearts, there must have been a little sadness that some of their brethren were being left behind, by their own choosing.

After all the people had hastened into Canaan, and memorials had been erected, Joshua commanded the priests to go up out of Jordan. Until everything was finished they stood in their places, and God held the waters back as long as necessary. As the priests walked up the river bank, back rolled Jordan into its place.

Canaan

The Children of Israel first camped at Gilgal. They had entered the land of promise in time to prepare for the feast of the Passover (**Numbers 32:5** ⁵ Wherefore, said they, if we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, *and bring us not over Jordan*), which they kept (Joshua 5:10 ¹⁰ And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho) in memory of the day in which the Lord led them out of Egypt (**Exodus 12:6** ⁶ And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. **Exodus 12:14** ¹⁴ And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. **Exodus 12:17** ¹⁷ And ye shall observe *the feast of unleavened bread*; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever).

The people had respect for Joshua and feared him as they had feared Moses, because by the hand of Joshua God led them into Canaan, the land that flowed with milk and honey.

God led the Children of Israel through the Jordan river, a great natural defense. They did not have to build a bridge nor a boat or raft to get across. Not by the works of our hands, but by faith in the power and mercy of God, are we brought into

⁹ And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day.

¹⁰ For the priests which bare the ark stood in the midst of Jordan, until every thing was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to speak unto the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua: and the people hasted and passed over.

¹¹ And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over, that the ark of the LORD passed over, and the priests, in the presence of the people.

¹² And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses spake unto them:

¹³ About forty thousand prepared for war passed over before the LORD unto battle, to the plains of Jericho.

¹⁴ On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life.

¹⁵ And the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,

¹⁶ Command the priests that bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of Jordan.

¹⁷ Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan.

¹⁸ And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD were come up out of the midst of Jordan, *and* the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as *they did* before.

¹⁹ And the people came up out of

our spiritual inheritance today. "Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:9). As surely as God led the Children of Israel through Jordan's flood, so He will lead His people today into the spiritual inheritance of a good land.

QUESTIONS

- 1 How did the Children of Israel prepare to cross the Jordan river?
- 2 Who led the procession?
- 3 How did the people get across the river?
- 4 Describe the river at that time, which was the harvest time.
- 5 Why did the priests stand in the midst of the river?
- 6 What did they carry?
- 7 What explanation was given when the children asked, "What mean these stones?"
- 8 Where did they get the stones?
- 9 When did the priests move from the midst of the Jordan river?
- 10 Who had been made the leader of the Children of Israel?

Jordan on the tenth *day* of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.

²⁰ And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.

²¹ And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What *mean* these stones?

²² Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.

²³ For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over:

²⁴ That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it *is* mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever.