

## Joshua 3 • The Second Crossing

### Introduction

This is the second miraculous “parting” of a watery obstacle which was necessary for God to complete His rescue of Israel, and it turns out to be a dramatic illustration for the exact, same thing in our life as well. It is important to note both the similarities and the contrasts in order to understand that these are not mirror events, but combine to describe the total working of God in a life committed to Him. That which begins with a commitment to Christ must be properly followed through in order to obtain the inheritance which comes with the promise of salvation.

<sup>1</sup>Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed. <sup>2</sup>At the end of three days the officers went through the midst of the camp; <sup>3</sup>and they commanded the people, saying, “When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. <sup>4</sup>However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before.”

<sup>5</sup>Then Joshua said to the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.”

### [Read v.1-5]

#### **Q: Who is the New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament Joshua?**

A: “Jesus” is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew “Joshua”. All the good figures in the Old Testament prefigure the Messiah in some way, but Joshua is one who particularly stands out.

#### **Q: How did Joshua figure out which method to use to cross the flooded Jordan River?**

A: Trick question—he didn’t. God gave him the necessary instructions.

**Application:** We are to proceed in life in strict accordance with His Word and ways. This is the only way to conquer this life in the course of pursuing our new life in Christ. By man’s reasoning alone it cannot be accomplished.

#### **Q: What did the Ark of the Covenant represent to Old Testament believers?**

A: It was the presence of God within which was always carried the Word of God. This was the dual aspect of the “seat” on the lid and a copy of the Torah carried within.

**Observation:** The term “ark” will be used some 10 times in the passage being studied, and is therefore the overwhelming theme of this study.

#### **Q: What does the Ark of the Covenant represent to New Testament believers?**

A: It is a representation of the Messiah, made of wood to represent His humanity and covered with gold corresponding to His deity. And as we learned from John 1, Jesus the Messiah IS the very Word of God.

#### **Q: Why must this distance—approximately 1 KM or about .6 miles—be maintained?**

A: The presence of God always carries with it the holiness of God, which is actually something quite dangerous for ordinary people.

<sup>6</sup>But when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out toward the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen nearly upset it.

<sup>7</sup>And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah, and God struck him down there for his irreverence; and he died there by the ark of God. (2 Samuel 6:6–7)

**Application:** Believers are to never engage in undue familiarity with the things of God; holiness requires holiness.

#### **Q: So what is the greater spiritual meaning of how the Ark is being used?**

A: The Ark going before the people and providing the means to pass through the river corresponds to the fact that Christ always goes before His people and opens the way for them.

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**Q: What might be particularly powerful about the instructions to stay in a specific relationship to the ark, “for you have not passed this way before”? (v.4)**

A: Believers are defined by their adherence to God’s Word. Just as Israel was entering the Promise Land for the first time and would need to live by God’s Word to succeed, so Christians leaving the old life and embarking on the new in Christ are likewise guided. We are on a journey to an ultimate spiritual destination which we have never previously travelled.

**Q: What is the more formal term for this process?**

A: “Sanctification”.

**Q: How is the process of sanctification expressed in the text?**

A: This is found in v.5 when Joshua instructs, “Consecrate yourselves”. The underlying Hebrew here literally means, “make yourselves holy”. In other words, to do what is necessary according to God’s Word to make one’s self biblically acceptable to be in the presence of God.

*<sup>1</sup>Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Corinthians 7:1)*

**Application:** *New believers find that they are going to be led to a new life in a new way, for which they must prepare themselves by the working of God’s Word. A special working of God requires a special preparation.*

**Observation:** *Note how this is present in many examples in Scripture: Jesus spent the night in prayer before choosing the Apostles, withdrew and prepared in Gethsemane for the Crucifixion, the Apostles’ time in Jerusalem between the Ascension and Pentecost, Paul’s three years in Arabia, and so forth. A time of proper preparation is always necessary.*

<sup>6</sup>And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, “Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people.” So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people.

<sup>7</sup>Now the LORD said to Joshua, “This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. <sup>8</sup>You shall, moreover, command the priests who are carrying the ark of the covenant, saying, ‘When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.’”

**[Read v.6-8]**

**Q: If a Christian leader is to be magnified, by what means does it rightly come about?**

A: It comes about through God.

*<sup>14</sup>On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; so that they revered him, just as they had revered Moses all the days of his life. (Joshua 4:14)*

*<sup>1</sup>Now Solomon the son of David established himself securely over his kingdom, and the LORD his God was with him and exalted him greatly. (2 Chronicles 1:1)*

**Q: What is the repeated situation documented in Scripture showing how this comes about for true and qualified spiritual leaders?**

A: It is always a reciprocal response for obedience to God’s Word and ways.

*<sup>46</sup>Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:46–47)*

<sup>12</sup>At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. <sup>13</sup>But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem. (Acts 5:12-13)

**Application:** If respect and standing in the world is provided to believers, it will only come about by their compliance to God's Word and ways, not by any adaptation of the world's.

**Q: What is being represented by the priests going first with the Ark?**

A: The ministers of God's Word themselves pave the way for the people with His Word.

**Application:** It is not only individual believers or the Church as a whole who must follow Christ the Word, but the Church must be led by ministers leading by the example of His Word.

<sup>9</sup>Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God." <sup>10</sup>Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will assuredly dispossess from before you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, and the Jebusite. <sup>11</sup>Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan. <sup>12</sup>Now then, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe. <sup>13</sup>It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap."

**[Read v.9-13]**

**Q: What do each of those to be dispossessed represent?**

1. "Canaanite" = "merchants or traders". Those who are concerned with the comforts of this life.
2. "Hittite" = "annoyer or an annoyance". Those who are spiritual agitators.
3. "Hivite" = "a declarer or pronouncer". Those who are spiritual deceivers.
4. "Perizzite" = "villager" as "without walls". Those who willingly live without divine protection.
5. "Girgashite" = "dwellers in clay soil". Those who are mired in the life and things of this world.
6. "Amorite" = "talker" or "a sayer". Comes from the root word with the sense of "publicity", someone who will extol themselves before anyone else, especially God.
7. "Jebusite" = "treading down". Those who are spiritual oppressors.

**Point:** These seven nations represent seven types of personalities and spiritual traits which must not be merely resisted, but completely separated from. By not doing so, we risk allowing their influence to cause us to become exactly like them.

**Q: How do we know that these are particularly powerful nations/influences to be overcome?**

A: This is what was stated previously by God.

<sup>1</sup>"When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, <sup>2</sup>and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them. (Deuteronomy 7:1-2)

**Q: What may be the counterpoint to these overwhelming earthly influences by something stated in v.11?**

A: The Word of God as represented by "the ark of the covenant" is specifically qualified as belonging to "the Lord of all the earth".

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**Application:** No matter how strong the earthly entity or influence, God's Word is stronger.

**Q: What is going to allow us to be the agent of success in this scenario?**

A: This is why the Ark of the Covenant goes first—it is accomplished by our adherence to the Word of God.

**Q: What does it mean in v.13, "the waters of the Jordan will be cut off"?**

A: A place will be provided for them to cross the river, a divine entrance provided into the Promised Land.

**Q: How is this described as occurring?**

A: In the same manner as what took place in the crossing of the Red Sea, "...the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap". (v.13) In this instance, however, instead of the waters being "heaped" on each side, this being a river they will be "heaped" in one place ahead of their crossing point.

<sup>13</sup>He divided the sea and caused them to pass through,  
And He made the waters stand up like a heap. (Psalm 78:13)

**Application:** It is God's Word which goes before us and provides the right path. And it is by God's Word we can deal with all the worldly influences which attempt to undermine that very Word in our life.

<sup>14</sup>So when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant before the people, <sup>15</sup>and when those who carried the ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest), <sup>16</sup>the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho. <sup>17</sup>And the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan.

**[Read v.14-17]**

**Q: What is this sequence a greater representation of? Why was it necessary for them to only dip their feet in the Jordan?**

A: It represents an act of faith necessary to show obedience to God's instructions.

**Q: What was the result of this act of faith?**

A: God withdrew the waters so that they could proceed unimpeded to the center of the river, something which could not be accomplished in the river at its harvest time flood stage. They would have never been able to just walk out into the middle on their own.

**Q: How is this a greater picture of the working of Christ?**

A: Like His leading Israel in the cloud and pillar of fire, Christ guides and opens the way before us, standing with us until we cross over, but then following up for our subsequent protection as well.

**Application:** God kept His Word to those who trusted and obeyed Him.

**Q: How does this second crossing at the Jordan contrast with the first crossing at the Red Sea?**

1. The first crossing illustrates the initial work of salvation, our separating from the old life (Egypt); the second crossing corresponds to our entering a new life by faith to take hold of our inheritance in Christ, the subsequent work of sanctification.
2. The work of salvation in the first crossing represents the once-and-for-all defeat of the enemy, that being Satan as represented by the drowning of the Egyptian army in the sea, also a picture of baptism; the second crossing corresponds to the subsequent victories which must be won over the world as represented by Israel's campaign in Canaan.

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3. At the first crossing it was the pillar of cloud/fire which guided God's people representative of the initial work of salvation; at the second crossing it is the Ark of the Covenant—the Word of God.
4. Both represent the greater illustration of baptism in that going under or in is death of the old life, and coming up or out gaining entrance into the new life.

***Point:*** *Jesus, on the cross, defeated our enemies as the initial working of salvation, but we must wage a war by faith to obtain a daily spiritual victory in the working of sanctification.*

***Q:*** *What is being represented by this divine crossing of the Jordan when it is at its highest point of overflowing?*

A: Christ alone parts the waters for us to cross from this world into His kingdom. Passage by human means is impossible—that is, it cannot be accomplished by our own works, nor can we on our own win the subsequent war.

*<sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; <sup>9</sup>not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8–9)*

***Q:*** *What might be significant about this particular geographic location?*

A: This is where the ministries of Joshua, Elisha, John the Baptist, and Jesus all began. They are all representative of new beginnings and are each accompanied by a divine signs of confirmation.

***Q:*** *What was the greater role of leadership in the overall process?*

A: "...the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan...until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan". (v.17)

***Application:*** *Godly leaders never waver from their primary duty where God's Word is concerned.*

*<sup>45</sup>"Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time?  
<sup>46</sup>Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.  
<sup>47</sup>Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.  
<sup>48</sup>But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,' <sup>49</sup>and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards; <sup>50</sup>the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour which he does not know, <sup>51</sup>and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 24:45–51)*

***Application:*** *The most intimidating and impossible obstacles of the world are overcome by faith and obedience to God's Word.*

### ***Overall Application***

*That which began in the first crossing, where Christ as the pillar of cloud and fire revealed the way to an initial act of salvation, further represented by baptism out of the old life represented by Egypt, is completed by the second crossing where Christ the Word guides us into His inheritance by our daily pursuit of sanctification in order to defeat the world and its attempt to draw us back into the old life.*

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