

Joshua – Crossing the Jordan

Joshua 3:1-17 (ESV)

Israel Crosses the Jordan

[1] Then Joshua rose early in the morning and they set out from Shittim. And they came to the Jordan, he and all the people of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. [2] At the end of three days the officers went through the camp [3] and commanded the people, “As soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it. [4] Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about 2,000 cubits in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before.” [5] Then Joshua said to the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.” [6] And Joshua said to the priests, “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before the people.” So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people.

[7] The LORD said to Joshua, “Today 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] And as for you, command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, ‘When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.’” [9] And Joshua said to the people of Israel, “Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God.” [10] And Joshua said, “Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. [11] Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan. [12] Now therefore take twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man. [13] And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap.”

[14] So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, [15] and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest), [16] the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho. [17] Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.

Joshua 4:1-24 (ESV)

Twelve Memorial Stones from the Jordan

[1] When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, [2] "Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man, [3] and command them, saying, 'Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests' feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.'" [4] Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe. [5] And Joshua said to them, "Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, [6] that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?' [7] then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever."

[8] And the people of Israel did just as Joshua commanded and took up twelve stones out of the midst of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, just as the LORD told Joshua. And they carried them over with them to the place where they lodged and laid them down there. [9] And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant had stood; and they are there to this day. [10] For the priests bearing the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to tell the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua.

The people passed over in haste. [11] And when all the people had finished passing over, the ark of the LORD and the priests passed over before the people. [12] The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh passed over armed before the people of Israel, as Moses had told them. [13] About 40,000 ready for war passed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho. [14] On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they stood in awe of him just as they had stood in awe of Moses, all the days of his life.

[15] And the LORD said to Joshua, [16] "Command the priests bearing the ark of the testimony to come up out of the Jordan." [17] So Joshua commanded the priests, "Come up out of the Jordan." [18] And when the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD came up from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up on dry ground, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks, as before.

[19] The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. [20] And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. [21] And he said to the people of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in times to come, 'What do these stones mean?' [22] then you shall let your children know, 'Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.' [23] For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, [24] so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever."

Exaltation of God's Servant

Joshua 3:7 (ESV) [7] The LORD said to Joshua, "Today 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.

- Here God declares he will exalt his servant Joshua
- I'm reminded of another servant God would exalt from the book of Isaiah, we see it in the first verse of the fourth Servant Song:

Isaiah 52:13 (ESV) [13] Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted.

- Jesus is the prophesied Servant whom God would exalt through His life, death, and resurrection which brings salvation
- Jesus himself recognized His coming exaltation:

John 8:54 (ESV) [54] Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.'

- As I further contemplated this exaltation of God's servants, I was also reminded that the exaltation of Jesus began publicly at the Jordan river:

Matthew 3:13-17 (ESV) [13] Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. [14] John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" [15] But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. [16] And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; [17] and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

So, as we think about the exaltation of these two servants of God, consider:

- *Joshua's passing through the waters of the Jordan is the beginning of his public exaltation.*
- *Jesus' passing through the waters of the Jordan was the beginning of His public exaltation.*

- *Joshua's exaltation results in Israel's blessing.*
- *Jesus' exaltation results in our blessing.*

- *In Joshua's exaltation we see the fulfillment of the promises of God.*
- *In Jesus' exaltation we see the ultimate fulfillment of the promises of God.*

- *Joshua's exaltation secures the temporary salvation of God's people.*
- *Jesus' exaltation secures the eternal salvation of God's people.*

- *God demonstrates His might and goodness to the Israelites through the exaltation of Joshua.*
- *God demonstrates His might and goodness to us through the exaltation of Jesus.*

- With these comparisons in mind, we work towards the following idea as we examine the crossing of the Jordan river:

We should prepare to see God work because He is mighty and He is good.

Let's break this statement up for more detailed deliberation:

1. We should prepare to see God work ...
2. Because He is mighty ...
3. And He is good.

Prepare to See God Work ...

Joshua 3:1-17 (ESV) [1] Then Joshua rose early in the morning and they set out from Shittim. And they came to the Jordan, he and all the people of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. [2] At the end of three days the officers went through the camp [3] and commanded the people, "As soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it. [4] Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about 2,000 cubits in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before." [5] Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." [6] And Joshua said to the priests, "Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people.

- Position – the Jews positioned themselves to see God work
 - [4] Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about 2,000 cubits in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before.
 - Horse race to see triple crown winner

- Consecrate – the Jews consecrated themselves
 - [5] Then Joshua said to the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.”
 - The Israelites behaved in a manner that indicated they were expecting to see God work

- Faith – part of faith is an expectation that God will work in our lives
 - John Piper’s Future Grace – a book I plan to read this summer, expounds a theological trademark of this beloved theologian and pastor
 - It’s called living by faith in future grace; it can be summed up with the following quote: “We believe that because of the acts of past grace—the cross and the new birth—a river of future grace will never, ever stop flowing to us for all eternity.”

- Like the Israelites, personally prepare yourself
- Like the Israelites, position yourself to see God work – perhaps the place to start is by positioning yourself on the road of blood Graham spoke about last week; the road of service and compassion to your neighbours

Because He Is Mighty ...

Joshua 3:9-11 (ESV) [9] And Joshua said to the people of Israel, “Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God.” [10] And Joshua said, “Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. [11] Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan.

- In verses 14-17 we read that the priests carried the ark into the river and the waters stopped
- Joshua's point is that if God is mighty enough to stop the Jordan and cause you to walk across on dry land, then He is mighty enough to drive out your enemies before you and give you the land He has promised.
- God uses this same logic while speaking through the apostle Paul in Romans:

Romans 8:32 (ESV) [32] He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

- If God demonstrated His power to save you through the giving of His Son as a sacrificial substitute, He will continue to demonstrate His power to graciously give us what we need to serve him
- What pressing needs do you have before you that you can have faith in god for based on what He has already done for you?
 - Relational
 - Emotional
 - Physical
 - Salvation

And He Is Good.

Joshua 4:1-10, 21-24 (ESV) [1] When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, [2] “Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man, [3] and command them, saying, ‘Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests’ feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.’” [4] Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe. [5] And Joshua said to them, “Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, [6] that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ [7] then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.”

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then you shall let your children know, 'Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.' [23] For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, [24] so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever."

- Through His mighty deeds, God demonstrated His goodness in caring for his people, and they were to remember this and teach their children this
- The stones were a memorial to God's goodness and strength towards the Israelites
- We generally do not make memorials anymore, but you can erect a memorial to the goodness and power of God by the words you speak.
- You can speak a memorial about the goodness and might of God for salvation by telling people—your children, your co-workers, your friends, your neighbours—about God's work of salvation in your life.
- This is evangelizing: sharing the Gospel, which is the good news of Jesus' saving work with those around you; it is telling people about the might and goodness of your God in saving you

Driscoll: Israel heard God's Word, believed God's Word, obeyed God's Word