

Joshua 3:1 ¶ 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.

Joshua 3:2 And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host;

Joshua 3:3 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.

Joshua 3:4 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.

The day after the spies returned they broke camp and Joshua led the people to make camp on the shores of the Jordan. After three days, the leaders of the people went throughout the congregation and told them to be ready to follow when they saw the Levites carrying the ark of the covenant of “the LORD your God.” It was important to keep emphasizing that they were being led by the LORD, YHWH, the self-existent eternal God, their supreme authority—not just the voice of their leaders.

The people were to ensure that they kept at a distance of about 2000 cubits or about 1000 yards from the ark. It was the Levites who would actually lead them according to the LORD’s direction. Point is made that they were going where they had not gone before.

Joshua 3:5 And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.

Joshua 3:6 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.

Joshua then commanded the people to “sanctify” themselves, a reference to making sure they were ceremonially clean. He declared that the next day they would see the LORD work wondrous things.

As I continued to read, it became obvious that verse six picks up on the “morrow” referenced in verse 5. Joshua then commanded the priests to pick up the ark (in the proper way is implied) and take their position at the head of the congregation. If I remember correctly, the ark was usually behind the camp of Reuben.

JFB points out that it was “the priests,” the sons of Aaron, that were carrying the ark—not the Kohathites who usually carried the ark—a special emphasis to the fact that the LORD was in the lead, and this would be a holy war.

Joshua 3:7 ¶ 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.

Joshua 3:8 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.

The LORD then spoke again to Joshua and promised to make it clear to the people that He was with Joshua just as surely as He had been with Moses. Joshua was to give specific command to the priests that were carrying the ark. When they came to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, they were to step out into the water and stand still.

We will be told the rest as Joshua tells the people.

Joshua 3:9 And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God.

Joshua 3:10 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.

Joshua 3:11 Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan.

Joshua 3:12 Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man.

Joshua 3:13 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.

Joshua did as he was commanded. He told the people of Israel to pay attention because he was going to explain what the LORD had told him was about to happen. This experience would testify to the fact that “the living God” is among them. (That same God is still alive and is not dead—no matter what the atheists choose to believe.) The LORD will not fail to drive out the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, Girgashites, the Amorites and the Jebusites from before them as they take possession of the land.

He told them that the ark of the covenant of the LORD would pass before them into the Jordan River. He made sure to emphasize that the LORD was supreme in authority not only over Israel, but also over all the earth. The people were to choose one man from each tribe to represent them (for a special purpose that will be revealed in the next chapter). When the soles of the feet of the priests that carried the ark of the LORD stood still in the Jordan River, the waters of the Jordan would stop flowing and stand up in a heap.

Joshua 3:14 ¶ 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;

Joshua 3:15 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,)

Joshua 3:16 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.

The people took down their tents and prepared to cross the river as instructed. Joshua notes that the Jordan was at flood stage at the time, the time of harvest. When the priests stepped into the Jordan River, the waters stopped flowing and stood up in a heap just like Joshua had said. The heap evidently piled up as far back as the city of Adam, near the city of Zaretan, and prevented their normal flow into the salt sea (that we know as the Dead Sea); only the water that was already past the priests flowed on to empty into the Dead Sea. The people then crossed the Jordan outside of Jericho—a miracle that mirrored the crossing of Israel at the Red Sea when the LORD delivered them out of Egypt.

JFB offers the following insight: “This was a stupendous miracle; Jordan takes its name, “the Descender,” from the force of its current, which, after passing the Sea of Galilee, becomes greatly increased as it plunges through twenty-seven “horrible rapids and cascades,” besides a great many lesser through a fall of a thousand feet, averaging from four to five miles an hour [LYNCH]. When swollen “in time of harvest,” it flows with a vastly accelerated current.”

Guzik made a great application: “We usually want the river to be dry before we even make a step; but God was truly calling Israel to step out in faith.... As we keep our eyes on, and follow behind our victorious Jesus, the river of impossibility will dry up.”

Joshua 3:17 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 all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

The priests that carried the ark of the LORD stood firm on the dry ground in the middle of the Jordan as the entire congregation went across on dry ground.

This was quite a testimony to the fact that the LORD was with Joshua as he had been with Moses; all happened according to what he had told them.

Principle: The LORD does not hesitate to work the miraculous according to His purposes on behalf of those who follow Him in faith.