

Joshua 3 Commentary

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[Paul J Bucknell - Biblical Foundations for Freedom](#)

LAND ALLOTMENTS

(Joshua 13-21)

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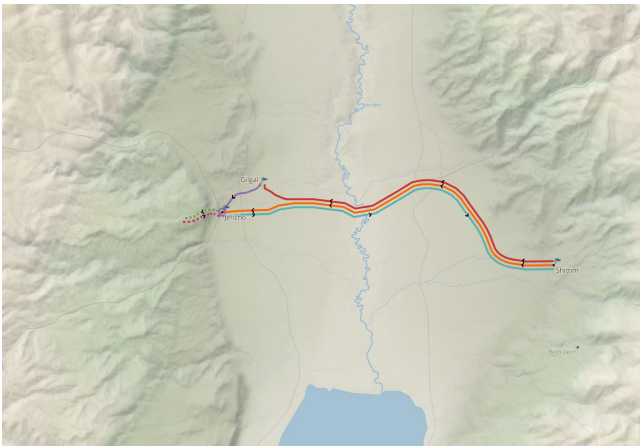
JOSHUA A BOOK ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE and REST HOW TO POSSESS YOUR POSSESSIONS					
CONQUEST OF THE PROMISED LAND		DIVISION OF THE PROMISED LAND		CLOSE OF JOSHUA'S LIFE	
ACTION		ALLOCATION		APPEAL	
Josh 1:1-5:15	Josh 6:1-12:24	Joshua 13:1-21:45		Josh 22:1-24:33	
WARLORDS IN CANAAN		LANDLORDS IN CANAAN			
ENTERING CANAAN	CONQUERING CANAAN	DIVIDING CANAAN			
SECURING THE LAND		SETTLING THE LAND			

Preparation	Conquest	Possession	Consecration
ca. 1 Month	ca 7 Years	ca. 18 Years	

[See also more detailed Chart by Charles R Swindoll](#)

Joshua 3:1 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.

- **rose early:** Ge 22:3 Ps 119:60 Jer 7:13 25:3 26:5 Mk 1:35
- **Shittim** : Jos 2:1 Nu 25:1 Mic 6:5 Abel Shittim - Nu 33:49
- [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



Shittim to the Jordan River - 7-8 miles
Click to Enlarge

Observe the overview charts above, noting especially that these first 5 chapters are preparation for conquest of the promised land.

Someone has entitled Joshua 3-4 "The River of Impossibility." Do you have any of these in your life? With God, this river was renamed "The River of Him-Possibility!" Amen? Amen!

Doug Goins - In the opening verses of Joshua 3, God illustrates for us three essentials for moving ahead by faith, claiming all that he has for us. This is what God desired for Israel and also what he desires for us. First, the Israelites were willing to wait on the Lord even when it was difficult to wait. Second, they were willing to follow the Lord unconditionally. And third, they were willing to consecrate themselves before the Lord.....The only way to go on is by faith. Faithlessness, or unbelief, says, "No , let's go back to where it's safe." But faith says, "Let's go forward to where God is working." Forty years before, Joshua and Caleb had assured the Jews with these words: "Let us go up at once, and occupy it; for we are well able to overcome it." That's faith. But the people said that they weren't able to. That's faithlessness. That unbelief cost the nation forty years of discipline in the wilderness. The apostle John assures us today, "And this is the victory that has overcome the world ---our faith" (1 John 5:4). ([Joshua 3:1-6 Standing at The Jordan](#))

Irving Jensen - The predominant lesson of Joshua 3:1–4:18 is that of leadership. Triumphant possession of Canaan demanded Israel's unceasing devotion to two leaders: God, the divine Commander, and Joshua, God's appointed general. It was vital that the divine leadership be identified and impressed upon the people at the commencement of the campaign. ([Rest-Land Won Everyman's Bible Commentaries](#))

John Hamby: Stepping out on Faith

1. FAITH MAY REQUIRE THAT WE WAIT (vv. 1 -2a)
2. FAITH RECOGNIZES THAT SOMETIMES GOD CHOOSES TO WORK IN NEW WAYS (vv. 2b-4)
3. FAITH MEANS THAT WE ARE WILLING TO STEP OUT (vv. 5-8)
4. FAITH IS AN OPPORTUNITY THAT CAN BE REJECTED (vv. 9-13)
5. FAITH AFFORDS GOD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE HIS POWER (vv. 14-17)

Then - **Then** is an [expression of time](#) which should always draw our attention. It will force us to examine the [context](#) and discern what is the progression of events in a text. Joshua receives the encouraging report of the spies and takes action immediately to

make preparations to possess the promise of God.

Joshua rose early in the morning - Early in the morning seems to be the best time for a lot of God's people. **Abraham** Ge 19:27, Ge 21:14, Ge 22:1-3; **Jacob** - Ge 28:18, **Moses** - Ex 8:20, Ex 9:13, Ex 24:4, Ex 34:4, **Joshua** - Josh 6:12, Josh 7:16, Josh 8:10; **Samuel** - 1Sa 15:12, **David** 1Sa 17:20; **Job** - Job 1:5; Jesus - Jn 8:2, Mk 1:35)

THOUGHT - Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows that it must run faster than the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning a lion wakes up. It knows that it must outrun the slowest gazelle or it will starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you are a lion or a gazelle: WHEN THE SUN COMES UP, YOU HAD BETTER BE RUNNING.

Depending on God does not preclude proper preparation on our part

Matthew Henry - Those who would bring great things to pass, must rise early. Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty.

John J Davis - Immediately after the return of the spies, Joshua began preparations for the crossing of the Jordan. The immediacy of Joshua's action is interesting. It indicates that he fully believed in the provision of the Lord. When the time came to actually move toward Jordan, Joshua did not request an extension of time in order to let the Jordan subside. He did not plead for a different route so as to avoid confrontation with the enemy. He did not call for a caucus, a commission, or a committee report in five copies, with this committee to be duly organized and named "The Committee on Crisis in the Contemporary Situation." Without argument and without delay, he prepared to march. The officers went through the tribes, and as they did, they commanded that the ark should be kept in view. ([Israel From Conquest to Exile](#))

And he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed - There was an old saying "[Go west young man](#)," and now that is exactly where Israel is headed, covering the 7-8 miles from Shittim to the edge of the flooded Jordan River. For a young man to go west in America conveyed the hope and potential for riches and fame. For Israel it meant the potential of prosperity in the Promised Land.

The text (and context) does not give us any suggestion that at this time Joshua knew how Israel would cross the flooded Jordan River, but he knew he had to be at the river's edge. **Here is a glimpse of Joshua's faith in action**. As someone has said **faith** is a "action verb," and Joshua knew that the One Who had charged Israel to enter Canaan would make a way to cross over and that it would help if they were at the edge of the River.

THOUGHT - Joshua's taking this initial step of faith reminds me of Rich Mullins' song [Step by Step](#). The practical application for all believers is when God gives us a promise, we need to obey and God will progressively show us the way, step by step.

Paul Apple - -- Chap 3 of the book of Joshua is about crossing over from the futile Christian walk of self-effort and defeat to the victorious life of faith that overcomes the world. What has been causing us defeat in our Christian walk? Where do we need the victory? What types of Jordan Rivers ... impossible boundaries ... do we need to cross today?

[Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah](#)

Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.

Cyril Barber has an interesting note - At the time of the Israelite encampment on the plains of Moab the River Jordan was in flood. Those in Jericho probably felt reasonably safe behind their city's double walls, for the river was deemed to be impassable at this time of year. The people in Jericho probably believed that only two courses lay open to the Israelites: (1) journey north and cross the Jordan below Lake Huleh, or (2) journey south and cross into Canaan by circling around the lower end of the Dead Sea. If they chose the former they would face a coalition of the northern kingdoms, and if they opted for the latter they would face a coalition of the southern kingdoms. God, however, chose neither route. ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

William Blaikie - From Shittim to the banks of the Jordan is an a journey of a few miles, the road being all over level ground, so that the march was probably finished before the sun had risen high. However strong their faith, it could not be without a certain tremor of heart that the people would behold the swollen river, and mark the walls and towers of Jericho a few miles beyond. Three days are to be allowed, if not for physical, certainly for moral and spiritual preparation for the crossing of the river. ([Joshua 3](#))

When the great company arrives at the river and begins to set up camp, you can sense the anxiety and apprehension in the air over the impossibility of the circumstance that lay before them.

THOUGHT - It has been said that the only difference between a live wire and a dead wire is the connection. A

supernatural source of strength is available in every generation to enable God's people to cross the rivers of impossibility. (Donald Campbell) (Recall Joshua's "connection" - Nu 27:18+).

Have you any rivers that seem to be uncrossable?

Have you any mountains you cannot tunnel through?
God specializes in things thought impossible
He does the things others cannot do.

Some writers see the crossing of the Jordan as a "type of our death with Christ" (C I Scofield). However one must be careful in assigning "types" to events in the Old Testament that are not specifically designated as types (See Typology). **J Vernon McGee** even ties it together with the name of the city **Adam** in Joshua 3:16 and writes "What is the meaning of this city? Well, friend, it is the city we all came from in the sense that Adam is the father of the human family and by Adam came death. What was taking place at the Jordan River represented the death and resurrection of Christ and His work on the cross. It not only reached forward over 1,900 years to where you and I are, but it also reached back to Adam and the beginning of the human family. That is the picture we have here." I personally think this is taking the text too far and am surprised that those who "typically" (pun intended) interpret the Scripture literally (especially in the prophetic passages) would in effect spiritualize or allegorize the text to this degree. And before you write me, I will admit that I could be the one in error! This note is written simply to encourage you to be a Berean (Acts 17:11+), for you have a Teacher, the Spirit of Truth (cf 1Jn 2:20+, 1Jn 2:27+)

Matthew Henry Concise Commentary - Verses 1-6. The Israelites came to Jordan in faith, having been told that they should pass it. In the way of duty, let us proceed as far as we can, and depend on the Lord. Joshua led them. Particular notice is taken of his early rising, as afterwards upon other occasions (Josh 6:12, Josh 7:16, Josh 8:10), which shows how little he sought his own ease. Those who would bring great things to pass, must rise early. Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty. All in public stations should always attend to the duty of their place. The people were to follow the ark. Thus must we walk after the rule of the word, and the direction of the Spirit, in everything; so shall peace be upon us as upon the Israel of God; but we must follow our ministers only as they follow Christ. All their way through the wilderness was an untrodden path, but most so this through Jordan. While we are here, we must expect and prepare to pass ways that we have not passed before; but in the path of duty we may proceed with boldness and cheerfulness. Whether we are called to suffer poverty, pain, labour, persecution, reproach, or death, we are following the Author and Finisher of our faith; nor can we set our feet in any dangerous or difficult spot, through our whole journey, but faith will there see the prints of the Redeemer's feet, who trod that very path to glory above, and bids us follow him, that where he is, we may be also. They were to sanctify themselves. Would we experience the effects of God's love and power, we must put away sin, and be careful not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

Irving Jensen - A survey of Joshua 3 and 4 reveals the underlying intent of the historical record of Israel's movements at this time. The following chart will be helpful in understanding the basic organization—somewhat hidden—of these two chapters: ([Rest-Land Won Everyman's Bible Commentaries](#))

JOSHUA 3:1–5:1			
3:1-17	4:1-14	4:15-4:18	4:19-5:1
Crossing the Jordan			Camping at Gilgal
People	12 Leaders	Priests	All
Leadership Prominent Here			Strength Prominent Here

George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 3](#)

1. Joshua rose early in the morning. That is, doubtless, on the morning of the third or fourth day after the proclamation mentioned, Joshua 1:11. Whether the spies had at this time returned or not is uncertain, though most probably they had.

Lodged there before they passed over. That is, for one night. It would be more convenient for the congregation to pass over in the day-time; the miracle to be wrought would be more conspicuous; and a greater terror would be struck into the minds of the Canaanites. There is no evidence that the Israelites were informed of the manner in which they were to cross the river, yet they went forward in faith, being assured that they should pass it, Joshua 1:11. Duty often calls us to take one step without knowing how we shall take the next; but if brought thus far by the leadings of Providence, and while engaged in his service, we may safely leave the event to him. He will cleave the flood or the rock rather than that the way of his servants should be obstructed.

Joshua 3:1-13 Strange Territory

"You have not passed this way before." - Joshua 3:4

When our son Stephen was eight, he was invited to stay overnight at a cousin's house. It was his first time away from home and it all sounded like an exciting adventure. But when we got ready to leave, he started getting that homesick feeling! With tears glistening in his eyes and his voice quavering, he cried, "Mommy, I don't feel so good. I'd better go home with you."

My wife responded, "It's up to you, but I know you'd have a good time."

"But Mommy," Stephen whimpered, "they said they were going to climb a big hill tomorrow, and I've never been there before."

We too can become fearful sometimes as we look ahead because we've "never been there before." But just as the Lord took care of Joshua and Israel (Josh. 3), He will take care of us.

Perhaps right now you are anxious about some new and untried pathway on which the Lord is leading you. Then listen to God's Word and take courage: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye" (Ps. 32:8).

Place your hand by faith in your heavenly Father's hand, and let Him lead the way.-- R. W. De Haan [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

I have promised you My presence

With you everywhere you go;

I will never, never leave you

As you travel here below.

- Rose

God does not ask us to go where He does not lead.

Joshua 3:2 At the end of three days the officers went through the midst of the camp;

- [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Joshua 1:11 "Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for **within three days you are to cross this Jordan**, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, to possess it.'"

OFFICERS MUSTER THE CAMP

The camp was [mustered](#) so that they might [pass muster](#) and be ready to break camp.

At the end of three days the officers went through the midst of the camp- The text does not give details of why **3 days** but clearly there were preliminary preparations that had to be undertaken before crossing the Jordan. Also keep in mind that it is in the spring season when the waters melting from Mount Hermon and the latter rains would swell the Jordan into a raging river! Imagine being an Israelite and seeing this raging river for **three days** and not knowing how they would be able to cross such a torrent! This uncertainty/impossibility would make it even more dramatic when God provided the way as described later in this chapter. It must have been during this 3 days that God gave Joshua assurance that Yahweh would make a way across the Jordan (see "Then..." in Joshua 3:5)

The Lord often delays long enough so we will recognize His hand at work in the deliverance that is going to come

THOUGHT - Are you staring at a raging torrent of impossible circumstances? **Obstacles** in a believer's life are **opportunities** for God to show Himself mighty. As someone has said **Fear sees the obstacle; faith sees the opportunity**. In every difficulty you can find an opportunity. What do we focus on? Do we see only the size of our problems, or do we see the "size" of our infinite God? Only He can give us 20/20 spiritual vision (cf ["Vertical Vision"](#)) We need to remember the mindset (heartset) of Joshua and Caleb in Numbers 13:1-14:45,

for they had faith to see the **opportunities** despite the **obstacles**. (Nu 13:28-29, 31-32+ versus Nu 13:30+, Nu 14:7-9+) The question is will we focus on the size of our obstacles or the size of our God. While God may provide a way for you to cross over the "raging river" you are facing, it is not guaranteed. But what is guaranteed is 1 Cor 10:13+ Paul writing "No temptation (test) has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and **God is faithful**, who will not allow you to be tempted (tested) **beyond what you are able**, but with the temptation (test) will provide the way of escape also, **so that you will be able to endure it**" Let me ask another question -- Will God be most glorified in your life by bringing you through possible circumstances or impossible circumstances? (That's [rhetorical!](#))

Waiting on the Lord is hard to do.

Waiting of the Lord is vital (Isaiah 40:31+)

And remember when God allows (permissive will as with Job) or sends a test, it is never to make us bitter, but to make us better.

A W Pink - It was not an army of men only, but a vast congregation of men, women and children, to say nothing of their baggage and herds of animals, and further advance was blocked by the river. Whatever the breadth and depth of the Jordan in recent centuries or today, it is evident that it presented an impassable obstruction in Joshua's time--moreover, it was in flood at that particular season (Josh 3:15): and yet they were left to gaze upon it for three days, faced with the fact that they had no means for crossing it! Why? What was the Lord's objective in this? Was it not to impress Israel more deeply with a **realisation of their own utter helplessness? Was it not to shut them up more completely unto Himself? And is not that, very often, the chief design of God's providential dealings with us? To bring us to the end of our own resources, to make us conscious of our own insufficiency, by bringing us into a situation from which we cannot extricate ourselves, confronting us with some obstacle which to human wit and might is insurmountable?**For three days the congregation of Israel had been encamped before that river which barred their entrance into the land of promise, thus being obliged to take full stock of that formidable barrier and made fully conscious of their own helplessness. The Jordan is the symbol of death, and it is not until the saint appropriates the solemn truth or has learned from painful experience that death is written upon all his natural powers that he is likely to make any real spiritual progress or enter practically into his fair heritage. That was the great lesson which had to be learned by the father of them that believe, before his longing could be realized and fruit borne. Because Sarah was barren he thought to obtain the desired son by Hagar, only to bring trouble upon his household. Not until he truly recognized the natural impotency of himself and his wife did he count upon Him who quickeneth the dead' Romans 4:17-21. ([Gleanings in Joshua](#))

Believer's Study Bible - The **three days** of waiting may have a significance in Scripture beyond the literal, conveying an ominous sense of expectation (cf. Ge 22:4; 42:17; Ex 19:11; Ezra 8:15, 32, 33; Neh. 2:11; Jon. 1:17; Matt. 12:40). A period of either three days or three years (2Sa 21:1; 1 Kin. 18:1) is often associated in Scripture with a transition from retribution to restoration.

Goins on waiting **three days** - There is a similar tension for the disciples of Jesus implied at the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts, after his resurrection and his ascension into heaven. Jesus had said, "...Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49+). And for forty days the disciples had to wait for the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, the resource they needed to live a life of overcoming faith. Remember, the power of God was demonstrated for the church at Pentecost, and it would be demonstrated here for Israel on the fourth day at the Jordan in a miraculous crossing over into the promised land. But waiting on the Lord is hard to do.

Woudstra on **three days** - The chronological connection between the three days in this verse and those of 1:11 has been given more than one interpretation. It appears best not to identify the two. The three days of 1 : 11 may have been an indefinite period (see commentary), allowing for the mission of the spies to have occurred in the meantime. This mission may have taken as many as four or five days. The three days here begin with Israel's departure from Shittim. ([The New International Commentary on the Old Testament The Book of Joshua](#))

Pink adds that **"Man's extremity is God's opportunity**. The Lord waits to be gracious. Often He suffers our circumstances to become critical, yea, desperate, before He appears on our behalf. Here was Israel ready to enter Canaan, and there was the Jordan "overflowing his banks"—a season which to carnal reason seemed the most unfavorable of all. Ah, but it afforded the Lord a most fitting occasion to display His sufficiency. "Though that opposition made to the salvation of God's people have all imaginable advantage, yet God can and will conquer it. Let the banks of Jordan be filled to the brim, filled till they rush over it, it is as easy to Omnipotence to divide them and dry them up, as if they were never so narrow, never so shallow: it is all one unto the Lord" (Matthew Henry). Then let not the Christian reader give way to despair because the conditions in which he finds himself are altogether beyond his power to overcome. Your troubles may have already reached the high-water mark, but when they "overflow" and all appears to be lost, then you may expect the Lord to show Himself strong in your behalf. ([Gleanings in Joshua](#))

Joshua 3:3 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.

- Nu 10:33
- **When you see:** Jos 3:11
- **the Levitical priests:** Jos 3:6,8,14-17 4:10 6:6 Nu 4:15 De 31:9,25 2Sa 6:3,13 1Ch 15:11 1Ch 15:12
- **you shall set out from your place and go after it** Ex 13:21,22 Mt 8:19 16:24 Rev 14:4
- [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passage

Numbers 10:33-36+ Thus they set out from the mount of the LORD three days' journey, with the **ark of the covenant of the LORD** journeying in front of them for the three days, to seek out a resting place for them. 34 The cloud of the LORD was over them by day when they set out from the camp. 35 Then it came about when **the ark** set out that Moses said, "Rise up, O LORD! And let Your enemies be scattered, And let those who hate You flee before You." 36 When it came to rest, he said, "Return, O LORD, To the myriad thousands of Israel."

Joshua 6:6+ So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD."



Ark of the Covenant

CHARGE TO FIX ONE'S EYES ON THE ARK

And - This conjunction connects the officers in the previous passage going through the camp.

They commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD([Jehovah](#)) your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it - Notice that the officers are not telling the people to fix their eyes of Joshua, but on the Ark! While in the past normally the Kohathites carried the ark (cf Nu 3:27, Nu 10:21), on this extraordinary occasion the Levites who were priests (all the Kohathites were Levites but were not priests) carried it (also Joshua 6:6; 1Ki 8:3-6).

Note the **KEY WORD** in Joshua 3 is **ARK** occurring 10 times in 8 verses out of a total of 17 verses (Josh 3:3 Josh 3:6 Josh 3:8 Josh 3:11 Josh 3:13 Josh 3:14 Josh 3:15 Josh 3:17). And it may surprise you to learn that Joshua 3 in fact is the most concentrated use of the **ARK** in all of Scripture! The **ARK** which symbolizes the presence (and power) of Yahweh, Who is clearly the central Figure, not the courageous leadership of Joshua or the willingness of the valiant warriors.

When you see the Ark, the symbol of the presence of God begin to move, then "break camp and follow it (Him)." The Israelites had been "trained" in their wilderness wanderings to follow God (Cloud by day, flame by night). The Ark symbolic of Yahweh, shows that it was not a military party that would lead the way, but it was Yahweh "the Lord of all the earth" (Joshua 3:11) Who would lead the way across. Israel would know the way they should go by fixing their eyes on the Ark.

THOUGHT - Believers are to know they way they are to go by fixing their eyes on Jesus (Heb 12:2+) and surrendering to God that they might know His will which is good, acceptable and perfect (Ro 12:1-2). (See [The Will Of God](#))

Recall that during the wilderness wandering Israel had been guided by the [Shekinah glory](#) (manifested in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. cf Nu 9:21+), but God introduces a new way in declaring they are now to be guided by the Ark of the Covenant.

Note that Joshua did not send his most qualified officers to lead the way (like most armies might do), but the Levitical priests! While

Israel's crossing would be physical, the solution for safe passage was spiritual. Once again we see God's sovereign power and provision integrally linked with man's responsibility to obey and follow His lead.

What did the **Ark** symbolize to Israel? As noted above the Ark represented the presence of Yahweh and His covenant commitment to enable His people (to cross the raging river) as they obeyed His Word. Israel was to **see** and **set out!** And as subsequent passages show, Israel got off to a good start!

THOUGHT - Israel was to focus on the righteous Ark not the raging river! Focus on the focal point of this chapter - Israel was to do that then and believers are to do that today. This begs the question dear weary, storm tossed saint, are you "fixing (YOUR) eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ." (Hebrews 12:2+)? **Dear brother or sister in Christ, would you take a moment and..**

Turn Your Eyes On Jesus

O soul are you weary and troubled
No light in the darkness you see
There's light for a look at the Savior
And life more abundant and free

Turn Your Eyes On Jesus

Look full in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace

Believer's Study Bible - The ark, referred to 17 times in chs. 3; 4, represents the presence and covenant of the Lord, the basis for these events (cf. Ex. 33:16; Num. 10:33ff.). The position of the ark throughout the crossing would have been a visual lesson to Israel of the necessity of following and relying upon the Lord (Joshua 3:9, 10).

Go After It!

When ye see the ark ... then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. (Joshua 3:3)

Sherman Owens says, "You will never arrive if you don't set out. The tragedy of life is not that it ends too soon, but that we wait too long to begin it." It's your job to discern when God is moving and be willing to leave and follow Him—and you may have to go alone.

Elisha was willing to leave everything and follow Elijah for twenty years to get a "double portion." You can't get it in one church service, one book, or one tape set. It has got to be the passion of your life. It will keep you turning the pages of God's Word to see what He has to say next. It will make you take down the walls of your tradition and cry like David, "So panteth my soul after thee, O LORD" (Psalms 42:1).

A lot of us see the Ark moving, but because of fear we never set out and go after it. When we first meet Abraham he has nothing but his family, his dream, and his God. But that's OK! You don't have to know where you're going, you just have to know you're following God! Before it's all over God is calling him His friend, he's the father of nations, and he's one of the richest men on earth. (Bob Gass - [A Fresh Word for Today](#).)

IF YOUR LIFE HAS BEEN ON HOLD, THE MESSAGE FOR YOU TODAY IS "GO AFTER IT!"

QUESTION - What is the Ark of the Covenant?

ANSWER - God made a covenant (a conditional covenant) with the children of Israel through His servant Moses. He promised good to them and their children for generations if they obeyed Him and His laws; but He always warned of despair, punishment, and dispersion if they were to disobey. As a sign of His covenant He had the Israelites make a box according to His own design, in which to place the stone tablets containing the Ten Commandments. This box, or chest, was called an "ark" and was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. The Ark was to be housed in the inner sanctum of the tabernacle in the desert and eventually in the Temple when it was built in Jerusalem. This chest is known as the Ark of the Covenant.

The real significance of the Ark of the Covenant was what took place involving the lid of the box, known as the "Mercy Seat." The term 'mercy seat' comes from a Hebrew word meaning "to cover, placate, appease, cleanse, cancel or make atonement for." It was here that the high priest, only once a year (Leviticus 16), entered the Holy of Holies where the Ark was kept and atoned for his sins and the sins of the Israelites. The priest sprinkled blood of a sacrificed animal onto the Mercy Seat to appease the wrath and anger of God for past sins committed. This was the only place in the world where this atonement could take place.

The Mercy Seat on the Ark was a symbolic foreshadowing of the ultimate sacrifice for all sin—the blood of Christ shed on the cross for the remission of sins. The Apostle Paul, a former Pharisee and one familiar with the Old Testament, knew this concept quite well when he wrote about Christ being our covering for sin in Romans 3:24-25: "...and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith." Just as there was only one place for atonement of sins in the Old Testament—the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant—so there is also only one place for atonement in the New Testament and current times—the cross of Jesus Christ. As Christians, we no longer look to the Ark but to the Lord Jesus Himself as the propitiation and atonement for our sins. GotQuestions.org

George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 3](#)

3. Commanded the people, &c. In the name and by the authority of Joshua, not of their own motion. It is not unlikely that there is something of a transposition here, and that the portion from v. 7 to 14 properly belongs to this place.

The priests the Levites bearing it. The priests who are Levites, who belong to the tribe of Levi. Although it was ordinarily the duty of the sons of Kohath, who were merely Levites and not priests, to bear the ark, Num. 4:15, yet it appears that on solemn occasions this arrangement might be departed from, and the office performed by the priests, Josh. 6:6. The same measure was adopted when the ark was carried round Jericho—when Zadok and Abiathar brought it back to Jerusalem, at the time that David fled from Absalom, 2 Sam. 15:29.—and when it was lodged in the temple of Solomon, 1 Kings 8:6; the Levites not being permitted to enter the sanctuary.

Remove from your place. That is, break up from your encampment, leave your tents, commence your march, v. 14.

Go after it. Follow it. Go in the rear of it. Hitherto, under the conduct of Moses, the ark had held a different position. It was stationed in the centre while the host was encamped, and borne in the middle of the immense procession when it set forward. But they then had the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night to precede them. Now the cloud is removed, and the ark is transferred to the vanguard of the army, to go before

Joshua 3:4 "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."

- **there shall be between you and it a distance:** Ex 3:5 Ex 19:12 Ps 89:7 Heb 12:28,29
- **you have not passed this way before** Ge 31:2 Ex 4:10 1Ch 11:2 Isa 30:33 *marg:
- [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Exodus 3:5+ Then He said, "**Do not come near here;** remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

Exodus 19:10-13+ The LORD also said to Moses, "Go to the people and **consecrate them today and tomorrow**, and let them wash their garments; 11 and let them be ready **for the third day**, for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people 12 "**You shall set bounds for the people all around**, saying, 'Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. 13 'No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether beast or man, he shall not live.' When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain."

FOLLOW THE ARK AT A DISTANCE

However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure- While the Israelites were ritually consecrated, they still could not come too close to the sacred presence symbolic of perfect holiness. The Ark symbolized God's presence with Israel. In 2Sa 6:6 Uzzah touched the Ark and in anger Yahweh struck him down (see Nu 4:15+).

Cyril Barber notes that the Ark "was stolen from them later on in their history and they kept thinking that something was mystical about that Ark. No, it's God's presence with them, but they needed to focus on that. It's just like with us, we have got to learn to focus on Christ. He is our Ark, and we went through this last time together. We cannot look at the circumstance; we've got to learn to look at Him who is our provider in the midst of that circumstance." ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

Donald Campbell - They were to have no casual or careless intimacy with God but a profound spirit of respect and reverence. God was to be considered not "the Man upstairs" but the sovereign and holy God of all the earth. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before **Amplified** "that you may [be able to see the ark and] know the way you must go," NET = Keep your distance so you can see which way you should go." If the nation kept the distance, everyone would be able to see the Ark.

Campbell- The distance was also essential so that the largest possible number of this great population could see the ark. God was about to lead them over unfamiliar ground, over a way they had not taken before. It was new territory so without the Lord's guidance and leadership the people would not know which direction to take. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

Joseph Parker - A wonderful process we have seen in all these readings. We have seen the cloud by day displaced, giving way to the ark of the covenant. Hence the words, "**Ye have not passed this way heretofore**,"--that is, as we have seen, Ye have not heretofore had the ark of the covenant ahead of you, but only a symbolic cloud. ([Joshua 3 Commentary](#))

Paul Apple - Striking out into new territory – We need God's guidance and presence Think of the exciting tension there must have been to travel to the moon and take that first step onto unknown terrain ... God calls us at times to leave our comfort zone and step out in faith and tackle new frontiers and challenges ... but we can be confident of His presence with us ([Taking God's Gift of the Promised Land Spiritual Victory in the Book of Joshua](#))

Spurgeon - THEY had come out of Egypt, they had gone up and down in the wilderness, but they had not before crossed the Jordan. It was new ground to them, a new difficulty, and a new series of events lay before them. As a fresh emergency had arisen, they had new orders direct from the Lord their leader, and Joshua and his officers were busy going throughout the host to communicate the divine directions. Beloved, when it shall be our lot to come into new positions we shall always obtain renewed guidance from the Spirit of God, if we will but wait upon him for it and cry, "Show me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path." (Excerpt from Sermon - [Untrodden Ways](#))

George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 3](#)

There shall be a space—about two thousand cubits. Two thousand cubits amounted to about one thousand yards, or three quarters of a mile, and this space was to intervene between them and the ark, in order that they might be impressed with a becoming awe and reverence of the symbol of the Divine presence. They would see, too, by this means, that instead of their protecting it, they owed all their protection to it. Another reason is expressed in the words immediately following.

That ye may know the way by which ye must go. The ark was to be their pilot across the waters, and by being advanced so far ahead of them, would be more conspicuous than if the people had gathered and pressed close around it. As it was put at such a distance before them, they would all have the satisfaction of seeing it, and would be animated by the sight. This was the more necessary, as the passage of the Jordan was an untraced way to them.

Ye have not passed this way heretofore. Heb. מִמְּוֹל שְׁלֶשֶׁם mitemōl shilshōm, since yesterday and the third day i. e. never hitherto. The same form of expression occurs, Gen. 31:2. It is perhaps intimated, moreover, that they were now to cross the river, not at any usual fording place, but at some point entirely new, by a passage which should miraculously open before them as the priests and the ark advanced

JOSHUA 3 "You have not passed this way before" (Joshua 3:4).

When I was a boy, the flame of adventure burned brightly in my soul, filling my life with anticipation. I loved to read stories about pioneers who ventured into the unknown, and I still remember these words of Rudyard Kipling:

"There is no sense in going further—it's the edge of civilization,
So they said, and I believed it—
Till a voice, as bad as conscience, rang interminable changes
On one everlasting whisper day and night repeated—
Something hidden. Go and find it.
Go and look behind the Ranges—
Something lost behind the Ranges.
Lost and waiting for you. Go!"

Although I still like to try new things, I have lost some of my adventurous spirit as I've grown older, and I find myself feeling a bit

uneasy as I draw closer to retirement, old age, and death. It's natural, I believe, to feel a mixture of fear and anticipation as we face the unknown. But as I trust God and keep walking with Him, I find that fear diminishes and my longing for heaven grows stronger.

The Israelites undoubtedly felt both uneasiness and eagerness as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. Knowing this, Joshua told them to follow the ark, the symbol of God's presence. The people leading the column were to stay far enough behind the ark so that those in the rear could see it. By trusting God and obeying Him, their fear dissolved and their sense of anticipation grew stronger. And it still works that way today. —H.V.L. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Faith keeps the sails of life filled with the breath of heaven.

(cf [Filled with His Spirit/Richly Indwelt with His Word](#))

Joshua 3:5 Then Joshua said to the people, 'Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.'

- **Consecrate yourselves:** Jos 7:13 Ex 19:10-15 Lev 10:3 20:7 Nu 11:8 1Sa 16:5 Job 1:5 Joe 2:16 Joh 17:19
- **Tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you:** Jos 3:13,15 Ps 86:10 114:1-7
- [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Exodus 19:10-11+ (**CONSECRATION HERE ENTAILED RITUAL WASHINGS**) The LORD also said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; 11 and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

CONSECRATED FOR THE CROSSING

Then - When? Presumably when they saw the Ark, the symbol of God's presence, which would have or should have motivated a willingness to consecrate themselves. Clearly this was not just a military exploit but was a spiritual matter, and so it needed spiritual rather than military preparation. This was not ceremonial but spiritual! Joshua did not tell them to sharpen their swords but to sanctify their soul. They were to set themselves apart before God led them into the land. We see a similar charge repeated in Joshua 7:13.

"Rise up! **Consecrate** the people and say, **Consecrate** yourselves for tomorrow, for thus the LORD, the God of Israel, has said, "There are things under the ban in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you have removed the things under the ban from your midst."

THOUGHT - For spiritual victory we must be willing to separate ourselves from all that might defile us, so that we can be set apart for God's purposes in our life. In addition, before God can do in our lives what He wants to do, we must become clean vessels for Him. "Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, **he will be a vessel for honor**, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work." (2Ti 2:21+)

Related Resource:

- [What does the Bible say about consecration? | GotQuestions.org](#)

Joshua said to the people, 'Consecrate (qadash) yourselves - NET = "Ritually consecrate." Separation from the common and profane would allow them to fully focus on the Ark (the LORD). This command signifies that their following the Ark was in a sense an act of worship. It was more important for the people to be ritually clean, then for their swords to be gleaming and sharp! This war would be a "holy war" against the abominable godless pagans. God's ways are often the antithesis of the ways of natural (fallen) man! The Hebrew for **Consecrate (qadash)** is rendered in the Septuagint by [hagiazō](#) a command to do this now ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)), to "to purify or cleanse and so make acceptable for cultic use.... to set oneself apart in dedication." (BDAG)

God Demands our Personal and Corporate Purity
before He is willing to work wonders on our behalf
-- Paul Apple

Cyril Barber adds the consecration would include "abstaining from everything that might take their minds off the seriousness of the task that lay before them." ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

Paul Apple - The urgency of crossing the Jordan and getting moving did not rise above the necessity of having prepared hearts. Sometimes we can be all about action when we have neglected our devotion and worship. What steps did the Israelites take to consecrate themselves: - probably involved fasting, probably involved abstinence from sexual relationships, certainly involved asking the Lord to search their hearts for any sin. (cf Ps 139:23-24) ([Taking God's Gift of the Promised Land Spiritual Victory in the Book of Joshua](#))

We get a sense of what this **consecration** involved by comparing with an earlier, similar charge in Exodus 19:10-14+

The LORD also said to Moses, "Go to the people and **consecrate** them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments; 11 and let them be ready for the third day, for on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. 12 "You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. 13' No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through; whether beast or man, he shall not live.' When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain." 14 So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and **consecrated** the people, and **they washed their garments**.

For - Term of explanation - explains why consecration is commanded.

Tomorrow the LORD (Jehovah) will do wonders (pala) among you - NIV = "amazing things." NET = "the LORD will perform miraculous deeds." Joshua has heard from Yahweh how Israel would be enabled to cross the flooding Jordan and so stimulates the people's anticipation. Yahweh would perform a miracle in the midst of the people. **Wonders (pala)** in the Septuagint is the adjective [thaumastos](#) which means wonderful, marvelous, remarkable and literally beyond human comprehension.

It is interesting that while God says there will be wonders, the text does not say that Yahweh gave him the specific details. Nevertheless Joshua obeyed without questioning God. After all Joshua had seen Yahweh part the Red Sea when Moses held up his staff. But now, no Moses and no staff, but Joshua still believes Yahweh will do **wonders**.

It is because we lose sight of a God Who can accomplish the impossible that we too often meet with frustration, futility and even failure when we come to an "impassable Jordan."

Campbell - spiritual not military preparation was needed at this time because God was about to reveal Himself by performing a great miracle in Israel's midst. As a person would prepare scrupulously to meet someone of earthly fame so it was appropriate for the Israelites to prepare for a manifestation of the God of all the earth. The same command was heard at Sinai when the previous generation prepared itself for the majestic revelation of the Lord in the giving of the Law (Ex. 19:10-13-[see above](#)). ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

F B Meyer applies consecration to believers - But if only each one of us were to sanctify himself, putting off the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new man, renewed daily in the image of Christ; forsaking every form of evil, and hating even the garment spotted by the flesh; yielding himself to the two-edged sword of the great High-Priest--we should find that wonders would begin and never cease; that the to-morrows would only unfold greater and better things than ever before; that Jordans would cleave, and Jerichos would fall. Then the Land of Promise would lie open with its immeasurable plenty, its oil and wine, its corn and honey, its precious priceless stores. ([Joshua](#))

Consecrate (Sanctify, make holy; Lxx = [hagiozo](#)) ([06942](#)) **qadash** means to set apart for a specific use. Consecrate, sanctify, prepare, dedicate, be hallowed, be holy, be sanctified, be separate, remove from common use, be holy, show one's self to be holy. To set apart a person or thing from all common or secular purposes to some religious use. Everything consecrated to God was separated from all profane use. Qadash could refer to anything reserved exclusively for God (Ex 13:2, 12, 13; Nu 18:15) **Qadash** signifies an act or a state in which people or things are set aside for use in the worship of God, i.e., they are consecrated or made sacred for that purpose. They must be withheld from ordinary (secular) use and treated with special care as something which belongs to God (Ex 29:21). Otherwise, defilement makes the sanctified object unusable (cf. Dt 22:9; Eze 44:19; 46:20).

Qadash is used 3x in Joshua - Joshua 3:5, 7:13, 20:7.

Wonders ([06381](#)) ([pala](#)) is a verb which means to be difficult, to be hard, to be extraordinary or amazing, to be surpassing or to cause a wonderful thing to happen. To be beyond one's power to do. To do something wonderful, extraordinary or difficult = Wonders, Marvels, Marvelous works. In most of its OT occurrences, pala refers to acts that are performed by Jehovah expressing actions that

are beyond the bounds of human powers or expectations, especially His deliverances of Israel (Ex 3:20, Ps 106:22, 136:4). He has done things beyond the limits of human powers or expectation. God showed His people miracles when they came out of bondage in Egypt and as they were going into the freedom of the promised land.

George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 3](#)

5. And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves Rather, 'had said,' for as he speaks of 'to-morrow,' the charge was probably given, on the day previous to the one now current, on which they were passing over Jordan. The command now given was undoubtedly of the same import with that given by Moses, on the eve of the delivery of the law upon mount Sinai, Ex. 19:10–14. They were to wash their persons and their garments, and to abstain from every thing that might indispose their minds to a serious and devout attention to the miracle about to be wrought in their behalf. A similar command was generally given on great and solemn occasions. Lev. 20:7, 8; Num. 11:18; 1 Sam. 16:5; Joel 2:16. The special manifestations of God's presence should be awaited by his people in a posture of deep humiliation, and penitence, and prayer, and by diligent efforts to 'cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit.'

Joshua 3:6 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.

- **Take up:** Jos 3:3 Nu 14:15 10:33 Mic 2:13 Joh 14:2,3 Heb 6:20
- [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Numbers 10:33-36+ (**ISRAEL HAD FOLLOWED THE ARK BEFORE**) Thus they set out from the mount of the LORD three days' journey, with the **ARK** of the covenant of the LORD journeying in front of them for the three days, to seek out a resting place for them. 34 The cloud of the LORD was over them by day when they set out from the camp. 35 Then it came about when the **ARK** set out that Moses said, "Rise up, O LORD! And let Your enemies be scattered, And let those who hate You flee before You." 36 When it (**ARK**) came to rest, he said, "Return, O LORD, To the myriad thousands of Israel."

THE OBEDIENCE OF THE PRIESTS

And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people." - Clearly Yahweh had communicated to Joshua how Israel would cross the Jordan and the Ark was the key. Joshua's commands are evidence of his faith and trust in the Word of Yahweh. Look at the depiction above which is probably very accurate because in Numbers 7:9 poles were to be inserted through rings in the sides of the Ark, so that it could be carried on the shoulders of those designated to bear it.

How had Joshua heard from God? The text does not tell us. However recall Yahweh's instructions for success in Joshua 1:8, and thus it is very likely that Joshua was meditating on God's Word (recall he had the 5 books written by Moses). Did God speak to him through his time of meditation on the Word? That is certainly possible and certainly one of the most important ways that God speaks to His children today.

THOUGHT - The preceding comment begs a question - Are you in God's Word daily, so that you might hear what He desires to say to you (what your "marching orders" are for that day)? It is one thing to go through the Word (as when doing a read through the Bible in a year program), but it is another thing for the Word to go through you! It is better to read smaller portions with a meditative mindset than to read large sections (as one often needs to do to keep up with a through the Bible in a year reading program). You are far more likely to recall shorter sections read meditatively.

So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people- This is what one might call a "crisis of faith" for they had no prior knowledge (as far as we can discern from the text) that the touch of their foot would dry up the Jordan! Nevertheless, the Levitical priests obey what to a natural man would seem to be a foolish command (cf 1Co 2:14+). Their obedience reflects their trust in their leader Joshua and in God's guidance of Joshua.

THOUGHT - "Living and walking in the Promised Land comes from this kind of faith, not a slavish reliance on a "law" relationship with God.. Faith leads us into greater victories than law ever could." ([David Guzik](#)) God doesn't usually reveal to us all of the details of His plan for our future ... He wants us to take one step at a time, trusting in Him and looking for Him to guide us into the next step. When Abraham was called to leave his homeland of Ur of the Chaldees, he didn't know all that was ahead of him. (see Heb 11:8-10+).

F B Meyer applies this text - We must never go before Christ; but we must surely follow Him, though into the waters of death . The way of the inner life is through the grave. Each day God says to us, "Ye have not passed this way heretofore . " What need then to follow Jesus! We must sanctify ourselves, if we would see the wonders of God's right hand. ([Joshua](#))

George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 3](#)

6. Take up the ark of the covenant, &c. Joshua in giving this command is not to be considered as acting on his own absolute authority, for it would have been too much for him to assume the responsibility of changing the usual order of march, without a Divine direction. He was merely the organ of announcing the will of God in respect to this matter. He obeyed the commands of Heaven as the priests did his.

They took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people. Heb. וַיִּשֹׂא וַיִּשְׂאוּ vaysu, they bore up, i. e. upon their shoulders, according to the direction, Nu 7:9. 'A noble defiance of the enemies of Israel was thus given; who were challenged to attack the unarmed priests, or to attempt to to seize the unattended ark.' Scott.

Joshua 3:7 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.

- **I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel:** Jos 4:14 1Ch 29:25 2Ch 1:1 Job 7:17 Ps 18:35 Joh 17:1 Php 1:20 Php 2:9-11
- **t just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you** Jos 1:5,17
- [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Joshua 1:5 "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.

Joshua 1:17 "Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you as He was with Moses.

Deuteronomy 31:7 Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and **you** shall give it to them as an inheritance (**NET** = "you will enable them to inherit it.") (NOTE WHO WILL GIVE IT OR ENABLE THEM! GOD OF COURSE BUT HE CHOOSES JOSHUA TO BE THE INSTRUMENT)..

DIVINE EVIDENCE OF TRANSFER OF POWER

Now the LORD ([Jehovah](#)) said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel- Now is when Joshua took this step of faith to give the command to the priests. Notice that Joshua begins to step out and God steps up (so to speak) to encourage him even further. Joshua would now be firmly established as having the "credentials" to as God's representative to guide Israel in this potentially dangerous journey.

THOUGHT - This is usually the way we grow in knowledge of God. It is by walking in a manner pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good word and as a result growing in the knowledge of God. This pattern is shown in Paul's great prayer (I highly recommend praying it for yourself and others, asking them to pray it for you -- I have done this for years and God has answered in the vein of Ephesians 3:20!) asking "that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and **increasing in the knowledge of God;**" (Colossians 1:9-10+, and be sure and add Col 1:11-14+)

Clearly Joshua had humbled himself (e.g., serving 40 years as the servant of Moses) so that Peter's words apply

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,
that He may exalt you at the proper time,
1 Peter 5:5+

The miracle wrought by the LORD would not only exalt Yahweh and demonstrate His awe inspiring power, but would also magnify His chosen leader Joshua in the eyes of the people. This would instill confidence that he could indeed lead them to victory over their strong enemies. In the next chapter we read "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+). Joshua's exaltation would also in a sense a fulfillment of Yahweh's promises in the first chapter that "I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you." (Joshua 1:5+, cf Joshua 1:9+)

Keil and Delitzsch - The account is also arranged upon the following plan: in every one of these three sections the command of God to Joshua is mentioned first (cf. Josh 3:7,8, 4:2,3,4:15,16); then the communication of this command to the people by Joshua; and finally its execution (Josh 3:9-17, Josh 4:4-13, Josh 4:17-20).

That (introduces purpose) **they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you** - The exaltation of Joshua would authenticate Joshua's role as Moses' chosen replacement. As Yahweh had blessed Moses with His presence, power and protection, so too He would now be with Joshua. The miraculous crossing of the Jordan was like God saying "Follow Joshua, for he is My chosen leader."

Cyril Barber - God planned to do a work as significant as the parting of the waters of the Red Sea (cf. Josh 4:23-24), and this would enhance Joshua in the eyes of the people. His power would also confirm the fact that Joshua was not alone in leading the people against so formidable an enemy. ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

Matthew Henry Concise Commentary - Verses 7-13. The waters of Jordan shall be cut off. This must be done in such a way as never was done, but in the dividing of the Red sea. That miracle is here repeated; God has the same power to finish the salvation of his people, as to begin it; the WORD of the Lord was as truly with Joshua as with Moses. God's appearances for his people ought to encourage faith and hope. God's work is perfect, he will keep his people. Jordan's flood cannot keep out Israel, Canaan's force cannot turn them out again.

My Lord knows the way through the wilderness,
All I have to do is follow.

My Lord knows the way through the wilderness,
All I have to do is follow.

Strength for today is mine always
And all I need for tomorrow.

My Lord knows the way through the wilderness,
And all I have to do is follow

George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 3](#)

7. And the Lord said unto Joshua, &c. Or, 'for the Lord had said as,' in numberless cases elsewhere. It seems highly probable that these words were spoken to Joshua before the preceding charge was given to the people. That which constitutes the ground or reason of a particular order or statement, and which is properly antecedent to it, is often by the sacred writers placed last.

This day will I begin to magnify thee, &c. To make thee great, to raise thee in the estimation of thy people, to confirm thine authority, and to clothe thee with honor. God had before put distinguished honor upon Joshua on several occasions, Ex. 24:13; Deut. 31:7, but it had not been in so public and solemn a manner; now he designs to magnify him as the successor of Moses in the government. He was to be the visible instrument of working a mighty miracle in the eyes of the nation; and from his circumstantially foretelling how the waters should be cut off, as soon as the feet of the priests should touch them, v. 13, it was demonstrated that the secret of the Lord was with him. True greatness belongs to those with whom God is, whom he employs in his service, and upon whom his blessing rests. The honor that comes from man may surround one with a temporary eclat, but let those that aspire to lasting and solid distinction seek it in the favor of God.

Joshua 3:8 "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.'

-
- **command:** Jos 3:3 1Ch 15:11,12 2Ch 17:8,9 29:4-11,15,27,30 30:12 31:9,10 2Ch 35:2-6 Ne 12:24-28 13:22,28
 - **shall stand:** Jos 3:17 Ex 14:13 La 3:26
 - [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Jordan Flooded (taken in 1935)

STAND STILL AND SEE THE SALVATION OF THE LORD

In a similar setting in which Israel was faced with a great "obstacle" (an approaching Egyptian army) Moses said to the people

"Do not fear! **Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD** which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. (Exodus 14:13+, cf 2Chr 20:17)

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 - Septuagint is rendered "you will stand in the Jordan." **NET** has "wade into the water." However **Living Bible** has "you shall stop at the edge of the river." **NLT** has "take a few steps into the river and stop there." **Amplified** has "When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan." Notice there is substantial difference in how the versions render this passage. Are the priests to stop at the edge or are they to touch the water. Joshua 3:13 would seem to support that in verse 8 they are at the edge, but one cannot be dogmatic (in my opinion).

In context, these appear to be new instructions from God following Joshua's instructions in Joshua 3:6. Joshua's trust in Yahweh's initial instruction was a step of faith that led to further revelation by God in this verse.

THOUGHT - God allows us plenty of time to view the impossible before He does His work. Will you examine your heart before the Lord so that He might do a great work in your life for His glory and honor?

F B Meyer - How easy life would be if only these were other than they are! Give me Canaan without its **Jordan**! But God permits the **Jordans** that he may educate our faith. Do not look at the troubled waters rushing past; look at the Priest, who is also the Ark of the Covenant. He will never send us by a way that he is not willing to tread before us. "Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passes over before you into Jordan ([Joshua](#))

George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 3](#)

8. Ye shall stand still in Jordan. They were first required to pause on the brink of the stream, till the channel was laid dry, and then they seem to have advanced and took their station in the midst of it, till all the people had passed over. As the entire bed of the river below the resting point of the ark would become dry by the waters running off towards the Dead Sea, the congregation might pass over in that direction having the ark on their right and keeping at the prescribed distance of 2,000 cubits.

Joshua 3:9 Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "**Come here, and hear** the words of the LORD your God."

- **Hear the words:** De 4:1 12:8
- [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

JOSHUA INVITES THE NATION TO

Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, 'Come here, and hear the words of the LORD ([Jehovah](#)) your God.' - Joshua is commanding all the Israelites to **come** within the sound of his voice. This is somewhat difficult to envision as there are some 2 million people, but God might have supernaturally amplified his voice! Nevertheless clearly **Joshua** is making a claim that Yahweh is actively speaking to him and he is Yahweh's "mouthpiece." And in the following section **Joshua** gives what is in essence a prophetic promise (Joshua 3:9-13) a prophecy that subsequently comes to pass! In that sense he has met the test of a true prophet of God. (cf Dt 13:1-5)

Paul Apple - When we are entering into battle, we can't get too much of the Word of God; that is our offensive weapon; the sword of the Spirit; that is how we combat Satan just as Christ did in His temptation

9. **Come hither.** Draw nigh towards me, as many as can come within hearing.

Joshua 3:10 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.

- **By this you shall know:** Nu 15:28-30 1Ki 18:36,37 22:28 Ps 9:16 Isa 7:14 2Co 13:2,3
- **that the living God is among you** De 5:26 1Sa 17:26 2Ki 19:4 Jer 10:10 Ho 1:10 Mt 16:16 Joh 6:69 1Th 1:9 Heb 10:31
- **among:** Jos 22:31 Ex 17:7 De 31:17 Jdg 6:12,13
- **He will assuredly dispossess** Jos 21:45 Ge 15:15-18 Ex 3:8 23:27-30 33:2 De 7:1 Ps 44:2,3
- [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Psalm 115:3-8 But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases. 4 Their idols are silver and gold, The work of man's hands. 5 They have mouths, but they cannot speak; They have eyes, but they cannot see; 6 They have ears, but they cannot hear; They have noses, but they cannot smell; 7 They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk; They cannot make a sound with their throat. 8 Those who make them will become like them, Everyone who trusts in them.

AN ASSURANCE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

God is the one who is going to take them in, drive out the enemies, and give them the land. In verse 9 it is the power of God's Word and here it is the power of God's presence.

Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God is among you - By this - by what? The miracle of the Jordan river crossing. Notice that although God had told Joshua he would be exalted when this miracle of the Jordan transpired, he does not allude to that in speaking to the people. It was private communication meant only for Joshua's encouragement. Joshua's humility is clearly seen by his NOT passing on the truth that God would exalt him as Israel's leader. To the contrary, like all of God's great leaders in the Bible and in real life, his desire was to exalt the Name of the LORD (cf 1Co 10:31). As the leader Joshua sought to focus the people's attention of the true Leader, **the living God**. The miracle would be unequivocal evidence that God was among them. In effect it would be fulfillment of Joshua's promises in Joshua 3:5 that "the LORD will do wonders **AMONG** you."

And do not miss the import of Joshua's description of Yahweh as **the living God**, for it is a striking contrast to the "dead gods" of the **"ites"** (cf. Ps 115:3-8). One would think that this description would serve to deter Israel from "whoring after" the dead idols of the Canaanites, but sadly this would not prove to be the case.

Bush on the living God is among you. - Not a dull, senseless, lifeless, inactive deity, like the gods of the heathen, but a God of life, power, and energy, able to work for you, and to put to confusion all your enemies.

Donald Campbell comments that "The promise, **the living God is among you**, became the watchword of the Conquest, the key to victory over the enemies in the land. It is a promise that appears on almost every page of this book: "**I will be with you!**" It is a promise that still sustains the Lord's people—the assurance of His presence. Since God is the Lord ('**adon**, "master") of all the earth (cf. Ps. 97:5), He was certainly capable of getting His people across a river. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament](#) or [Here](#))

And that He will assuredly (yarash**) dispossess (**yarash**) from before you - Assuredly dispossess** reflects repetition of the verb **yarash**, which emphasizes the fact that this will absolutely come to pass! The Septuagint is somewhat stronger as it repeats the verb **olethreuo** (not in NT but see [exolethreuo](#)), this repetition signifying "He shall utterly destroy.

As an aside **olethreuo** is used in 13 verses in the Septuagint (Ex 12:23, 22:20; Nu 4:18; Jos. 3:10, 7:25; Jdg 6:25, 28,30; Jer 2:30, 5:6, 22:7, 25:36; Hag 2:22), but Joshua 3:10 is the only time is it repeated for emphasis.

The Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, and the Jebusite- The **"ites"** are now as "grasshoppers" in the sight of the living God! (contrast the first generation's unbelieving declaration "we became grasshoppers in our own sight and so we were in their [the **"-ites"**] sight." - Nu 13:33+).

Donald Campbell - During the Civil War, the town of Moresfield, West Virginia was on the dividing line, and seesawed back and forth between Federal and Confederate troops. In one old house which still stands today, an elderly woman lived alone. One morning Yankee troops stomped up on her porch. Though at their mercy, she remained calm and invited them to be seated at her table. When breakfast was set before them, she said, "It is a custom of long standing in this house to have prayers before meals. I hope you won't mind." With that, she picked up the Bible and opened it at random and began to read from Psalm 27 (KJV): "The Lord is my Light and my Salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart, wait, I say, on the Lord." When she finished, she murmured quietly, "Let us pray." As she prayed, she heard stealthy sounds of shuffling shoes. When she ended with "Amen," she opened her eyes. The soldiers were gone! Her lack of fear had made them fearful of lingering any longer! ([No Time for Neutrality](#))

Dispossess (03423) **yarash** to take possession of, inherit, dispossess, to drive out. Yarash is an especially important word in contexts dealing with Israel's conquest of and possession of the land of Canaan. Possession of the land was directly connected to a person's relationship with the Lord; breaking the covenantal relationship led to dispossession. The meaning, "**to take possession of**," is most commonly used in connection with possessing land, specifically, the Promised Land. Yahweh first announced "possession" of the land in the context of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 15:7f). Although similar usage continues in Leviticus (Lev 20:24) and Numbers (Nu 13:30; 14:24; 21:24f), **yāraṣh** in the sense of covenant land possession is a key theme in Deuteronomy. "Go in and possess the land," the Lord commanded (Dt. 1:8, 21, 39; Dt 11:31; Dt 17:14). The phrase, "where you are going to possess it," with reference to the land, recurs in Deuteronomy and Joshua (Dt. 4:5, 14, 26; Josh 1:11, 15; 12:1; 13:1; Josh 21:43; Josh 23:5). Emphasis on the idea of "possessing" the land continues in Judges (Jdg 11:21-24; Jdg 18:9). Likewise, the prophets and post-exilic Books allude to **Israel's covenant right of possession of the land**. Jeremiah predicted a coming repossession of the land (Jer 30:3), as did Isaiah (Isa. 61:7; Isa 65:9), while Ezekiel (Ezek. 33:24ff) and Amos (Amos 2:10) looked to past land inheritance. Habakkuk described the coming invasion of Babylonian armies to "possess" the land (Hab. 1:6). After the Babylonian exile, Nehemiah's prayer alluded to God's earlier covenant promises of land possession (Neh. 9:15, 22ff).

Joshua 3:11 "Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan.

- **Lord of all the earth:** Jos 3:13 Ps 24:1 Isa 54:5 Jer 10:7 Mic 4:13 Zep 2:11 Zec 4:14 Zec 6:5 Zec 14:9
- **crossing over ahead of you** Jos 3:3-6 Isa 3:12
- [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passage:

2 Samuel 6:2 (**THE ARK CLEARLY REPRESENTED THE LORD**) And David arose and went with all the people who were with him to Baale-judah, to bring up from there the **Ark of God which is called by the Name, the very Name of the LORD of hosts** who is enthroned above the cherubim.

Psalms 24:1 A Psalm of David. The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.

Isaiah 54:5 "For your husband is your Maker, Whose name is the LORD of hosts; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth.

Jeremiah 10:7 Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? Indeed it is Your due! For among all the wise men of the nations And in all their kingdoms, There is none like You.

Zechariah 14:9+ (IN THE MILLENNIUM AFTER THE KING RETURNS) And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.

THE LORD OF ALL THE EARTH CONTROLS ALL THE EARTH

Behold ([hinneh](#); Lxx = [idou](#)) is Joshua's call to "Listen up!" "Don't miss what I am about to tell you!" Keep your eyes on the the Ark of the Covenant for leadership in the march across the Jordan and not on the soldiers, the generals or even Joshua.

The Ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan- The **Ark** symbolizes God going before them to prepare, protect, provide and make a way for Israel. In short, it was Jehovah who would lead his people into the Promised Land. Don't miss that great description **Lord of all the earth**, for Yahweh Alone is the Master of the Universe (and stands in stark contrast to the fictional "[Masters of the Universe](#)," [poppycock](#) which is fed to the world especially to the younger, more impressionable generations). It follows that the One Who is in control of the entire earth will have little difficulty with the raging Jordan River (or the "raging torrents" in your life)! (cf Ps. 97:5; Zech. 6:5)

[Lord of all creation](#)

Lord of water, earth and sky

The heavens are your Tabernacle

Glory to the Lord on high

And God of wonders beyond our galaxy

You are holy, holy

The universe declares Your majesty

You are holy, holy

Lord of heaven and earth

Lord of heaven and earth

According to Nu 10:35–36+ the **Ark** was synonymous with the presence of the LORD Who was among them (see also **related passage** above).

Then it came about when the **ARK** set out that Moses said, "**Rise up, O LORD!** And let Your enemies be scattered, And let those who hate You flee before You." 36 When **IT (THE ARK)** came to rest, he said, "Return, O LORD, To the myriad thousands of Israel."

Campbell - The promise, the living God is among you, became the watchword of the Conquest, the key to victory over the enemies in the land. It is a promise that appears on almost every page of this book: "I will be with you!" It is a promise that still sustains the Lord's people—the assurance of His presence. Since God is the Lord ('ādôn, "master") of all the earth (cf. Ps. 97:5), He was certainly capable of getting His people across a river. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

THOUGHT - "it is reassuring for a Christian to know that God is with him when his path carries him over new territory--sickness, pain, bereavement, failure, financial difficulties, misunderstanding, opposition. In times like these, believers may hear the Lord's voice saying "Be of good courage! Fear not!" (Bible Knowledge, Scripture Press, April, 1963, page 39).

Lord (in KJV)(See also '[adonay](#) in NAS)([0113](#)) '[adon](#) is a masculine noun meaning lord or master. The most frequent usage is of an earthly lord in excess of 300 times, but it is also used of divinity about 30 times (as here in Joshua 3:11). Generally, it carries the nuances of authority rather than ownership. One of the most notable uses of '[adon](#) is in Psalm 110:1 where David records "The LORD (YAHWEH) says to my (David's) **Lord** ('[adon](#) = THE MESSIAH): "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." Psalm 110:1 is quoted repeatedly in the NT - Mt 22:44; Mk 12:36; Lk 20:42, Lk 20:43; Acts 2:34, Acts 2:35; Heb 1:13

Behold ([02009](#)) [hinneh](#) s an interjection meaning behold, look, now; if. "It is used often and expresses strong feelings, surprise, hope, expectation, certainty, thus giving vividness depending on its surrounding context." (Baker) [Hinneh](#) generally directs our mind to the text, imploring the reader to give it special attention. In short, the Spirit is trying to arrest our attention! And so [hinneh](#) is used as an exclamation of vivid immediacy (e.g., read Ge 6:13)! [Hinneh](#) is a marker used to enliven a narrative, to express a change a scene, to emphasize an idea, to call attention to a detail or an important fact or action that follows (Isa 65:17, Ge 17:20, 41:17). The first use of [hinneh](#) in Ge 1:29 and second in Ge 1:31

All the uses of [hineeh](#) in Joshua - Jos. 2:2; Jos. 2:18; Jos. 3:11; Jos. 5:13; Jos. 7:21; Jos. 7:22; Jos. 8:20; Jos. 9:12; Jos. 9:13; Jos. 9:25; Jos. 14:10; Jos. 22:11; Jos. 23:14; Jos. 24:27

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11. The ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth. The original will admit of being rendered, **'The ark of the covenant, even the Lord of all the earth,'** and as the Hebrew accents favor this sense, it is adopted by many of the Jewish commentators, although the current of versions is against it. Indeed it is not a little remarkable that the first edition of our present English version published in 1611, exhibits this very rendering. It was afterwards altered, but at what time, by what authority, or for what reasons, it is now impossible to determine. This usage, it is contended by Buxtorf and others, is by no means confined to this passage. In

repeated instances, as they maintain, **the appellation 'Lord' is bestowed upon the ark of the covenant.** Thus it is said the address is to the ark, Nu 10:35, 36; 'And it came to pass when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, to the many thousands of Israel.' So also, 2Sa 6:2, 'And David arose and went with all the people that were with him, from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of hosts. Cp. Ex. 16:33; 1Sa 4:7 (Even the pagans understood the Ark was not just a box but indicative of the Lord Himself!) Such a title, however, could only be applied on the ground of its being the visible symbol of the Divine presence, and of the close connexion subsisting between the sign and the thing signified.

Joshua 3:12 "Now then, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe.

- Jos 4:2-5,9
- [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Joshua 4:2-5 **'Take for yourselves twelve men** from the people, one man from each tribe, 3 and command them, saying, **'Take up** for yourselves **twelve stones** from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet are standing firm, and carry them over with you and lay them down in the lodging place where you will lodge tonight.'" 4 So Joshua called the **twelve men** whom he had appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe; 5 and Joshua said to them, "Cross again to the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel.

TWELVE MEN SELECTED TO MEMORIALIZE ISRAEL'S MIRACULOUS CROSSING

Now then, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe- Joshua does not explain the command until Joshua 4:2-5+

George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 3](#)

12. Take ye twelve men out of the tribes of Israel. The object of this selection is afterwards explained, Josh 4:4, 5. They were now to be chosen, and to stand ready at a moment's warning, for the service to which they were set apart.

Joshua 3:13 "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."

- **the soles of the feet:** Jos 3:15,16 Ex 14:19-22
- **ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth:** Jos 3:11
- **will stand in one heap:** Jos 3:16 Ex 15:8 Ps 33:7 78:13 114:3-5 Hab 3:15
- [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Exodus 15:8 "At the blast of Your nostrils the waters were piled up, The flowing waters stood up like a **heap**; The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea.

Psalm 33:7 He gathers the waters of the sea together as a **heap**; He lays up the deeps in storehouses.

Psalm 78:13 He divided the sea and caused them to pass through, And He made the waters stand up like a **heap**.

DECLARATION OF

A DIVINE "DAM"

It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the LORD (Jehovah), the Lord ('adon) 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 - Joshua now predicts the miracle which would immediately be fulfilled, which would in turn exalt his reputation among all Israel and would be clear evidence that the **living God** was among them (Joshua 3:10).

Donald Campbell - The priests were not expected to act on blind faith and neither are we! Their faith and ours is based on what God has revealed, on what He has promised. "What do you do with the promises of God?" someone asked. "I underline them in blue," was the reply. Like the priests at the Jordan, we must do much more. We must appropriate them by faith and make them our own." (**ED: IN OTHER WORDS "DIP YOUR FOOT INTO THE WATER" OF GOD'S PROMISES, SO TO SPEAK**). ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

Irving Jensen observes that "the Jordan miracle was a supernatural creation of a complex of many factors:

1. the fulfillment of the foretelling of the event (Joshua 3:13–14)
2. the exact timing of the event—the priests dipping their feet (Joshua 3:15)
3. the rising up "in one heap" of a wall of water (Joshua 3:16)
4. the fact that this happened at flood stage (Joshua 3:15)
5. whatever was the retaining power or "wall," it had to hold back the onrushing Jordan north of the spot, including all its tributaries, throughout most of a day
6. in very short time the drained soft river bottom became firm as "dry ground" (Joshua 3:17)
7. the timing of the returning flow of the Jordan, as the priests with the ark left the river bottom (Joshua 4:18) ([Rest-Land Won Everyman's Bible Commentaries](#))

George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 3](#)

That bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth. The Heb. here exhibits two different words for 'Lord,' the first יהוה Yehovah, the second אדון adōn, which is also the word occurring v. 11. This seems to countenance the idea that the ark itself is called by that title.

The waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above. More correctly rendered, 'the waters of Jordan shall be cut off, even the waters that descend from above;' but whether he speaks in these words of the mass of waters remaining above the ark, that they were to be cut off from those below, which would be speedily drained off, and leave the channel bare; or whether the 'waters that come down from above,' mean those that flowed downwards from the point where the ark stood above, while the rest stood as a heap, it is difficult to determine. Comparing this, however, with v. 16, the first interpretation we think the most probable. This seems to have been the first intimation given to the people as to the manner in which they were to cross the river, unless we suppose such a transposition as we have hinted at in the note above, on v. 5.

F B Meyer - Joshua 3:13 When the soles of the feet of the priests ... shall rest in the Jordan. (R.V.)

The floods of the Jordan were high: so may be the goods of trial and sorrow that sometimes overflow their banks; so the floods of conviction of sin; and so, to some at least, the waters of death. Possibly this overflowing is needed for the time of harvest; the width of golden grain in the Jordan valley was no doubt to a large extent dependent on the far-spreading of those waters. How the heart trembles, as we hear the gurgling and rushing of the floods. Hark, how they lift up their voice!

But when the priest's foot touches them, they shrink away. Jesus has stepped down into these floods as our High Priest. In Gethsemane their overflowing tide washed around Him. At Calvary the water-spouts went over his head. In the grave He seemed momentarily to have succumbed. But since then they have been cut off. Through the ages He has stood, bearing the ark of propitiation, and arresting the tumultuous floods. "Thus far, and no further."

Sinful soul, deeply convicted, "Look for the Priest," on whose person the storm broke, and by whom it has been checked and stayed! Tried believer, be sure that the water-floods cannot pass Jesus, to reach or drown thee! His promise to thee is: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isaiah 13:2). And when death approaches thee, O fearful and trembling one, thou wilt find Jesus standing between thee and its might, making a path by which thou shalt pass over dryshod.

Streams in the Desert -

THE people were not to wait in their camps until the way was opened, they were to walk by faith. They were to break camp, pack up their goods, form in line to march, and move down to the very banks before the river would be opened.

If they had come down to the edge of the river and then had stopped for the stream to divide before they stepped into it, they would have waited in vain. They must take one step into the water before the river would be cut off.

We must learn to take God at His Word, and go straight on in duty, although we see no way in which we can go forward. The reason we are so often balked by difficulties is that we expect to see them removed before we try to pass through them.

If we would move straight on in faith, the path would be opened for us. We stand still, waiting for the obstacle to be removed, when we ought to go forward as if there were no obstacles.—Evening Thoughts.

What a lesson Columbus gave to the world of perseverance in the face of tremendous difficulties!

Behind him lay the gray Azores,
Behind the gates of Hercules;
Before him not the ghost of shores,
Before him only shoreless seas.
The good Mate said: "Now we must pray,
For lo! the very stars are gone.
Brave Admiral, speak, what shall I say?"
"Why, say, 'Sail on! sail on! and on!'"

"My men grow mutinous day by day;
My men grow ghastly wan and weak!"
The stout Mate thought of home; a spray
Of salt wave washed his swarthy cheek.
"What shall I say, brave Admiral, say,
If we sight naught but seas at dawn?"
"Why, you shall say at break of day,
'Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!'"

They sailed. They sailed. Then spake the Mate:
"This mad sea shows its teeth tonight.
He curls his lip, he lies in wait,
With lifted teeth, as if to bite!
Brave Admiral, say but one good word;
What shall we do when hope is gone?"
The words leapt like a leaping sword:
"Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!"

Then, pale and worn, he kept his deck
And peered through darkness. Ah! that night
Of all dark nights! And then a speck—
A light! A light! A light! A light!
It grew, a starlit flag unfurled!
It grew to be Time's burst of dawn.
He gained a world; he gave that world
Its grandest lesson: "On! sail on!"

—Joaquin Miller.

Faith that goes forward triumphs.

Streams in the Desert -

BRAVE Levites! Who can help admiring them, to carry the Ark right into the stream; for the waters were not divided till their feet dipped in the water (ver. 15). God had not promised aught else. God honors faith. "Obstinate faith," that the PROMISE sees and "looks to that alone." You can fancy how the people would watch these holy men march on, and some of the bystanders would be saying, "You would not catch me running that risk! Why, man, the ark will be carried away!" Not so; "the priests stood firm on dry ground." We must not overlook the fact that faith on our part helps God to carry out His plans. "Come up to the help of the Lord."

The Ark had staves for the shoulders. Even the Ark did not move of itself; it was carried. When God is the architect, men are the masons and laborers. Faith assists God. It can stop the mouth of lions and quench the violence of fire. It yet honors God, and God honors it. Oh, for this faith that will go on, leaving God to fulfill His promise when He sees fit! Fellow Levites, let us shoulder our load, and do not let us look as if we were carrying God's coffin. It is the Ark of the living God! Sing as you march towards the flood!—Thomas Champness.

One of the special marks of the Holy Ghost in the Apostolic Church was the spirit of boldness. One of the most essential qualities of the faith that is to attempt great things for God, and expect great things from God, is holy audacity. Where we are dealing with a supernatural Being, and taking from Him things that are humanly impossible, it is easier to take much than little; it is easier to stand in a place of audacious trust than in a place of cautious, timid clinging to the shore.

Like wise seamen in the life of faith, let us launch out into the deep, and find that all things are possible with God, and all things are possible unto him that believeth.

Let us, today, attempt great things for God; take His faith and believe for them and His strength to accomplish them.
—Days of Heaven upon Earth.

John Butler - [Sermon Starters Volume 6](#) - CROSSING THE JORDAN

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 3:13).

Crossing the Jordan was a prerequisite to entering the promised land. We note some details about this crossing.

FIRST—THE PRECEPT IN THE CROSSING

“As soon as the soles of the feet of the priest that bear the ark of the Lord ... shall rest in the waters.” The obedience to this precept was necessary before the crossing would occur. God does not give us blessing without responsibility. If we want the blessing we must demonstrate obedience. The priests must come to the edge of the Jordan and in fact put their feet in the water before God acted. If God is not acting for you, maybe you have not gone far enough in obeying Him. Maybe your dedication is not great enough.

SECOND—THE PROBLEM FOR THE CROSSING

“The Jordan.” The Jordan river was a threefold problem

1. The region of the river. The Jordan was between the Israelites and Canaan. It was a formidable obstacle to entering Canaan.
2. The raising of the river. Several verses after our text says the crossing was ordered when the Jordan was at flood stage. Man would have had Israel crossing during a dry season when the Jordan was at its lowest. But God loves to have difficulties be their greatest, for then it shows greater His power in fulfilling His promise.
3. The riverbed of the river. Any farmer knows that though the river ceased, it would take weeks before the riverbed was dried out enough for all the people and animals to cross without sinking in mud.

THIRD—THE PROMISE FOR THE CROSSING

“The waters of Jordan shall be cut off” God promised the Israelites the Jordan would be divided so the Israelites could cross over it. The promise would be hard to believe considering the circumstances, but God's promises are not based on conducive circumstances but upon His Sovereign will.

FOURTH—THE POWER FOR THE CROSSING

“The Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above and they shall stand in an heap.” Many are the skeptics about God working a miracle. Some want to say there was a landslide that stopped the Jordan (a professor of my college told us that). However, a landslide would not have dried the river bed for the Israelites to cross the Jordan (Joshua 3:17). God worked a miracle here. As soon as Israel showed their faith (the priest walking into the water), God parted the Jordan. As the Creator, He certainly has the power to do things like this. The skeptics would make God weak. In fact they do not want God involved. They do not believe in Divine miracles

Joshua 3:14 So when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the ark of the

- **the priests carrying the ark** Jos 3:3,6 6:6 De 31:26 Jer 3:16 Ac 7:44,45 1Co 1:24,25 Heb 9:4
- [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

BEAUTIFUL OBEDIENCE OF PRIESTS AND PEOPLE

So - The people exercised **faith** when they broke camp and moved toward the river, which is still raging. The priests exercised **faith** when their feet got wet at the river's edge. The Lord fulfilled His promise to go before them and open up the way.

Paul Apple adds "Obedience is Faith in Action – whole book of James written to illustrate this point ... it's a dead faith that just sits around and agrees intellectually with what God has said ... but God is a living God and He demands living faith of us ... faith that steps out and acts on what He has commanded."

When the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant before the people - What a scene this must have been to witness. The priests and the people both obeying Joshua's word from God. It was a triumphant scene presaging greater triumphs to follow in the Promised Land.

Paul Apple notes that the priests "were charged with a very difficult and courageous assignment. Talk about "Be strong and courageous!" They had to stand in the middle of the Jordan and be the last to cross over. Being a leader in God's army has always been about being a servant.

Campbell - We also face obstacles that keep us from enjoying a life of faith, obedience, victory. Even if these obstacles appear as formidable as the swirling waters of the Jordan, we must never lose sight of the God Who is able to take us through. He has promised, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. (Isa 43:2) ([No Time for Neutrality](#))

Got any rivers you think are uncrossable?

Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?

God specializes in things thought impossible;

He'll do what no other power can do.

([Listen to Selah's vocal and be blessed!](#))

Matthew Henry Concise Commentary - Verses 14-17. Jordan overflowed all its banks. This magnified the power of God, and his kindness to Israel. Although those who oppose the salvation of God's people have all advantages, yet God can and will conquer. This passage over Jordan, as an entrance to Canaan, after their long, weary wanderings in the wilderness, shadowed out the believer's passage through death to heaven, after he has finished his wanderings in this sinful world. Jesus, typified by the ark, hath gone before, and he crossed the river when it most flooded the country around. Let us treasure up experiences of His faithful and tender care, that they may help our faith and hope in the last conflict.

Cyril Barber - This is another example of faith and works going together. Everything happened exactly as the Lord had instructed Joshua. We could wish that the Church today was as quick to obey the commands of Christ. All too often our leaders reinterpret the text of Scripture to suit their own views on specific matters, and then wonder why the Lord has removed the church's lampstand from its place (Revelation 2:5). But how are we to explain the fact that the Jordan suddenly stopped flowing? The Bible clearly states that the river was in flood...Israel's bridgehead into Canaan was effected directly opposite Jericho. And the people of Jericho, having relied on the river to form a barrier between them, must now have had their earlier apprehensions intensified. ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

Joshua 3:14 Standing On The Edge

[The Israelites] set out . . . to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before [them]. — Joshua 3:14

Today's Scripture: Joshua 3:9-17

My little girl stood apprehensively at the pool's edge. As a nonswimmer, she was just learning to become comfortable in the water. Her instructor waited in the pool with outstretched arms. As my daughter hesitated, I saw the questions in her eyes: Will you catch me? What will happen if my head goes under?

The Israelites may have wondered what would happen when they crossed the Jordan River. Could they trust God to make dry

ground appear in the riverbed? Was God guiding their new leader, Joshua, as He had led Moses? Would God help His people defeat the threatening Canaanites who lived just across the river?

To learn the answers to these questions, the Israelites had to engage in a test of faith—they had to act. So they “set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before [them]” (v.14). Exercising their faith allowed them to see that God was with them. He was still directing Joshua, and He would help them settle in Canaan (vv.7,10,17).

If you are facing a test of faith, you too can move forward based on God’s character and His unfailing promises. Relying on Him will help you move from where you are to where He wants you to be.: Jennifer Benson Schuldt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, we’re prone to quickly forget Your goodness and care for us. May we trust You today and into the new year—whatever uncertainties we face. You are the God who can be trusted.

Fear fades when we trust our Father.

(See [How To Handle Fear](#))

Joshua 3:15 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),

- **the feet of the priests:** Jos 3:13 Isa 26:6
- **Jordan overflows:** Jos 4:18 1Ch 12:15 Jer 12:5 49:19
- **all the days of harvest:** Jos 5:10-12 Lev 23:10-16 De 16:1-9
- [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

THE MIRACULOUS DRAMA BEGINS

Don Anderson - Here we come to the test of faith. The Jordan is at flood stage. With the river moving so rapidly, the human natural response would be one of great fear.

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) (a pertinent parenthesis! See [1935 picture of Jordan flooded](#)) - **The priests carrying the ark** pictured God as the One Who was leading the way into the Promised Land. When they **dipped in the edge of the water**, God carried out a miracle in the swollen river Jordan. It is interesting how this miracle followed the obedience of the priests to do as instructed. It was a picture of their faith for they had no foreknowledge of what was about to transpire. God sometimes uses men in some way to carry out His miracles. One thinks of the [miracle of the loaf and fishes](#) (Mt 14:15-21, Jn 6:9ff)

Campbell on the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest- It was the time of the barley harvest, the month of Nisan (March–April), the first month of their year (Joshua 4:19). This fact would come into play in Joshua 5:11+ when "they ate some of the produce of the land." The river was at flood stage—a foreboding sight to the priests and people and a severe test of their faith. Would they hesitate in fear or would they advance in faith, believing that what God had promised (about the water stopping, 3:13) would actually happen? ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

THOUGHT - "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." ([Guzik](#))

McGee - This was the spring of the year. That land had two rainy seasons: in the fall and in the spring. The spring rains were most abundant. The Jordan was at flood stage. (**ED NOTE** - **Latter Rain** is the rain of spring, $\psi\iota\tau\eta\eta$, [malqowsh](#), Pr 16:15; Job 29:23; Jer 3:3; Hos 6:3; Joel 2:23; Zechariah 10:1; **Latter rain** in Septuagint = $\epsilon\tau\varsigma\ \psi\iota\mu\omicron\varsigma$. [huetos opsimos] The early and latter rains are mentioned together Dt 11:14; Jer 5:24; Joel 2:23; Hos 6:3; Jas 5:7 See related note on latter rain).

Treasury of Scripture Knowledge - The ordinary current of the Jordan, near where the Israelites crossed, is said by Maundrell, to be about twenty yards across, deeper than a man's height, and so rapid, that there is no swimming against it. It has, however, two banks; the first, or inner one, is that of the river in its natural state, and the second, or outer one, about a furlong distant, is that of its overflowings, which it does when the summer's sun has melted the snow on mount Lebanon and Hermon, in the months of March and April. And this was the time which God chose that the Israelites should pass over it; that a miraculous interposition might be necessary; and that, by the miracle, they might be convinced of his omnipotence.

15. Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest. That is, the time of the barley harvest; which began in that country in our March or April. 1 Chron. 12:15. Prof. Robinson remarks that he could find no evidence that the Jordan ever now overflows its banks in the manner that would be supposed from the rendering of this passage; and he adds, 'I apprehend that even the ancient rise of the river has been greatly exaggerated. The sole accounts we have of the annual increase of its waters are found in the earlier scriptural history of the Israelites; where, according to the English version, the Jordan is said to "overflow all its banks" in the first month, or all the time of harvest. But the original Hebrew expresses, in these passages, nothing more than that the Jordan "was full (or filled) up to all its banks," meaning the banks of its channel; it ran with full banks, or was brim-full. Thus understood, the Biblical account corresponds entirely to what we find to be the case at the present day.'—(Research., Vol. II., p. 262). This annual swelling of the waters of the Jordan arises from the melting of the snows upon Mount Lebanon, in which the Jordan takes its rise. It probably took place on this occasion just before Israel was to pass over, and served to render the miracle far more stupendous and unquestionable. Indeed we may suppose that this season was chosen expressly, in order that God might have the better opportunity to convince his people of his Almighty power; that they were under his immediate care and protection; and that they might never cease to confide in him in view of the most appalling dangers. 'Though the opposition given to the salvation of God's people have all imaginable advantages, yet God can and will conquer it.'—Henry.

Joshua 3:16 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.

- **rose up in one heap:** Jos 3:13 Ps 29:10 77:19 114:3 Mt 8:26,27 14:24-33
- **the city that is beside Zarethan:** 1Ki 4:12, 1Ki 7:46
- **the Salt Sea:** Jos 15:2 Ge 14:3 Nu 34:3 Dt 3:17 The passage through the Red Sea took place in the night, when the Israelites were fleeing from the Egyptians with great trepidation: but they passed Jordan in the day-time, with previous warning, leisurely, directly opposite to Jericho, and with a triumphant defiance of the Canaanites; this passage into the promised land evidently typifying the believer's passage through death to heaven.
- [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passage:

Exodus 15:8+ "At the blast of Your nostrils **the waters were piled up**, The **flowing waters stood up like a heap**; The deeps were congealed in the heart of the (RED) sea.

Psalms 78:13 He divided the (RED) sea and caused them to pass through, And He **made the waters stand up like a heap**.

THE MIRACULOUS DRAMA UNFOLDS: FLOW CEASES AND PEOPLE CROSS

The waters which were flowing down from above stood(NET - "stopped flowing") **and rose up** (piled 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** (Dead Sea), **were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho**- Adam is unknown by most commentaries say it was about 16-18 miles north (upstream) from where Israel crossed. That is 16-18 miles of dry river bed, enough space for 2 million Israelites to cross over! Those who have trouble with miracles, try to contrive some naturalistic explanation for the piling up of the Jordan, but such reasoning falters on 2 points - (1) the ground was immediately completely dry (Josh 3:17) and (2) when the priests stepped out of the dry river bed, it immediately began to flow again (Josh 4:18). God did and we do not need to try to explain it naturally because it is super natural! If one believes that Yahweh is [Omnipotent](#) (and I do), this should settle all arguments and speculations. He can do with His creation whatever He desires.

D Campbell - There were many supernatural elements brought together:

1. The event came to pass as predicted.
2. The timing was exact.
3. The event took place when the river was at flood stage.
4. The wall of water was held in place for what was probably an entire day .

5. The soft river bottom became dry at once .
6. The waters returned immediately as soon as the crossing was completed and the priests came up out of the river.

In the crossing of the Jordan River at flood stage by a nation some two million strong, God was glorified, Joshua was exalted, and Israel was encouraged. But the Canaanites were terrorized ([No Time for Neutrality](#))

Campbell - Though the place named "Adam" is found only here it is usually identified with Tell ed-Damiyeh, about 16 miles north of the ford opposite Jericho. A wide stretch of riverbed therefore was dried up, allowing the people with their animals and baggage to hurry across (cf. Josh. 4:10).

Creationist **Henry Morris** on **rose up in one heap** - A quasi-naturalistic explanation of this miracle suggests a providentially-timed upstream landslide damming the waters of the Jordan at just the right time, similar to events which have actually occurred on the river several times in the past. On the other hand, the miracle at the Jordan is compared to the miracle at the Red Sea (Joshua 4:23). This would suggest that it was also a true miracle of creation, involving the supernatural stabilizing of a wall of water until the crossing was completed.

Here is a comment from the **Treasury of Scripture Knowledge** - "This passage into the promised land evidently typifying the believer's passage through death to heaven." This is a good example of the danger of typology, for the Israelites are entering into a sin-filled land and would experience intense warfare. Heaven is a sinless place in which there will be no warfare. Thus to equate this passage over the Jordan is clearly an incorrect interpretation.

Paul Toms applies this truth - Go to the edge of that difficulty: go as far as you can, to your utmost duty and leave the impossible to God. He has almighty power, He has infinite wisdom. Nothing is too hard for Him. He can do anything that He pleases. He controls the storm, He opens the seas, He makes the flinty rocks pour out fountains of water, He makes the ravens feed His servant Elijah. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Ro 8:31) . He will make your Jordan passable. Remember this promise: "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour" (Isa 43:1-3). Here is God's provision for you, whatever your Jordan experience may be. **Come to it in faith, in confidence. Trust God, and cross the Jordan.** ([This Land Is Your Land](#))

The LORD said to Moses, "Is the LORD'S power limited (arm too short)?
Now you shall see whether My word will come true for you or not."
-- Numbers 11:23+

Alan Redpath - The floods, the opposition of principalities and powers to the child of God, can never get past what our triumphant Lord Jesus conquered. The passage of Jordan means facing the impossibility, following the dying, rising, ascending Jesus into the place of all power. Get a clear view of Him who can deal with the impossibility of your life before you have reached it. For in the name of the Lord Jesus I declare this truth, that, however subtle, however strong it may be, there is no attack of Satan on the child of God but first has struck the heart of the Lord. He overcame it at the Cross, and He bids us, His children to get a clear view of Him, to face again the impossibility that we have faced so often, then look up into His face and say, "Now, Lord Jesus, I believe that, although I cannot, you can." In that moment the roar of Jordan will be silent, its violence be checked, and we will go through on dry land. The path of the child of God from the wilderness to Canaan is by way of facing the impossible and looking up to a Risen Christ and getting hold of Him. ([Victorious Christian Living](#))

George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 3](#)

Stood and rose up upon a heap. Being checked in their course they continued to accumulate and swell higher and higher, till they filled up the channel to a great distance towards the source of the river. Probably another miracle was wrought in restraining the waters thus piled up from deluging the adjacent country.

From the city Adam that is beside Zaretan. The position of these cities is not easily ascertained. As to the first, nothing is known; and perhaps it was even then so obscure as to be described by its nearness to Zaretan', a place of more notoriety. This we learn from 1 Kings 4:12, was situated below Jezreel, near Beth-shean or Scythopolis, and not far from Succoth; but Succoth, as appears from Gen. 33:17; Josh. 13:27, lay on the east of Jordan, not far from the lake of Gennesaret, and somewhere in this immediate vicinity, doubtless, was Adam situated.

Passed over right against Jericho. It is probable that the people crossed the river at what was afterwards called Beth-abara, or house of passage, which seems to have derived its name from this very circumstance. It was here that John baptized, John 1:28, and that Jesus, as well as Joshua, began to be magnified.

Joshua 3:17 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.

- **the priests:** Jos 3:3-6
- **stood firm:** Jos 4:3 2Ki 2:8
- **all Israel:** Ex 14:22,29 Ps 66:6 Isa 25:8 Heb 11:29
- [Joshua 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Related Passages:

Exodus 14:29+ But **the sons of Israel walked on dry land** through the midst of the sea, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

CROSSING THE JORDAN RIVER ON DRY GROUND

And the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD([Jehovah](#)) **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** - So it was not only the miracle of stopping up the Jordan but also of drying out the muddy river bed to allow firm footing for crossing. When God does a work in our life, He takes care of the details (even the "muddy river beds"! Keep in mind that the priests stood firm, presumably holding up the Ark on their shoulders and would have kept this position likely for many hours if not the entire day, for passage of up to 2 million people would take some time to complete.

It is surely no accident that 40 years earlier that by a similar divine miracle Yahweh redeemed the first generation **OUT** of bondage and now this second similar miracle He brought **INTO** the Promised Land and into the potential for great freedom.

THOUGHT - Are you tired of wandering in the desert of Christian experience and longing for the spiritual sweetness of drawing upon an adequate Christ, so that out of your innermost being flow rivers of living water (cf Jn 7:38-39+)? Have you wholeheartedly surrendered and turned it all over to Him?

Alan Redpath - There are many faulty interpretations as to the spiritual meaning of this crossing of the Jordan into the land of Canaan. Many of the old hymns likened the crossing of Jordan to physical death and Canaan being our heavenly home. It is quite obvious that the rest of the story of the book of Joshua with all of its conflict and battles does not fit this typology . It would be better, probably, to see the following events in sequence:

1. The natural man in Egypt.
2. The salvation experience in crossing the Red Sea .
3. The carnal experience of wandering around the wilderness.
4. The surrender that takes place in the crossing of the Jordan, and then the spiritual life that follows that surrender in the land of Canaan .

The crossing of Jordan does not illustrate the passing of a soul into eternity, but rather does it illustrate the passing of a Christian from one level of Christian life to another. It marks the end of the self-life and the beginning of the Christ-life: the end of a life lived on the principle of effort and the beginning of a life lived on the principle of faith and obedience . Between these two rolls the mighty river Jordan--a river of impossibility. ([Victorious Christian Living](#))

F B Meyer - Mark the all-inclusiveness of the miracle. It did not concern the strong only, but also the weak; not men only, but women and children; not the loyal and true only, but the querulous, the murmurers, the doubters, the fearless and unbelieving. Achan, whose heart was preparing for his deed of sin; and Caleb, the hale warrior, who wholly followed the Lord. Not one was missing. The feet of the priests stood firm till every individual of the redeemed race had crossed the river. It is a blessed anticipation of the keeping back of a more awful flood until without one exception the entire host of the Church has entered that city whose walls are Salvation, and its gates Praise. ([Joshua](#))

Irving Jensen -The Christian's quest for the secret of victorious living is aided much by the experience of Israel crossing the Jordan. The major obstacle of the Christian's entrance into the rest-land of a victorious, abiding life is that which appears to be the impossible factor in his life. But the bigger the obstacle the greater the manifestation of God's might. God requires faith in the face of the obstacle, but He will always go before. According to the measure that one follows God's leadership, he will personally

experience His might. And just as Joshua was God's representative leader, walking with his people and bringing them over, so Jesus, the Captain of our faith, invites the Christian to warm, intimate fellowship and sure loving guidance by obeying His simple call, "Follow me." ([Rest-Land Won Everyman's Bible Commentaries](#))

Paul Toms - How do you handle troubles? Some people curse them. Some attempt to ignore them, to cover them up and hope somehow they might go away. Some tell everyone their troubles. Most of us have troubles, all right, and so most of us need to know what the Scripture has to say about overcoming them. The **Jordan River** is often pictured as an obstacle to be overcome. Sometimes in songs and poems it is seen as that last cold barricade to cross over before reaching heaven; so it is referred to as death. But the **Jordan River** can illustrate for us a new kind of understanding of the Christian experience. **Life on one side of that river is a desert filled with self-efforts and self-concern. Those who live on that side of the Jordan occupy themselves largely with personal efforts to accomplish things. In contrast to that, those who live on the other side of the Jordan exemplify the Christ-filled (SPIRIT FILLED) life--a life of faith and obedience.** ([This Land Is Your Land](#))

Dave Hunt - One thing is certain, however: The Bible never urges self-acceptance, self-love, self-assertion, self-confidence, self-esteem, self-forgiveness, nor any of the other selfisms that are so popular today. The answer to depression is not to accept self, but to turn from self to Christ.

William Law reveals the view that the church held for centuries:

Men are dead to God because they are living to Self. Self-love, self-esteem and self-seeking are the essence and the life of pride; and the Devil, the father of pride, is never absent from these passions, nor without an influence in them. Without a death to self, there is no escape from Satan's power over us To discover the deepest root and iron strength of pride and self-exaltation, one must enter into the secret chamber of man's soul, where the Spirit of God, who alone gives humility and meek submission, was denied through Adam's sin Here in man's innermost being, self had its awful birth, and established its throne, reigning over a kingdom of secret pride, of which all outward pomp and vanities are but its childish, transitory playthings...Imagination, as the last and truest support of self, lays unseen worlds at his feet, and crowns him with secret revenges and fancied honors. This is that satanic, natural self that must be denied and crucified, or there can be no disciple of Christ. There is no plainer interpretation than this that can be put upon the words of Jesus, "Except a man deny self, and take up the cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple."

A. W. Tozer puts it all in perspective :

Self is one of the toughest plants that grows in the garden of life. It is, in fact, indestructible by any means. Just when we are sure it is dead it turns up somewhere as robust as ever to trouble our peace and poison the fruit of our lives The victorious Christian neither exalts nor downgrades himself. **His interests have shifted from self to Christ.** (ED: AND THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST) What he is or is not no longer concerns him. He believes that he has been crucified with Christ and he is not willing either to praise or deprecate such a man.

Don Anderson - Maybe this message finds you wrestling with Jacob at Peniel with the angel of the Lord, over some thing that you are unwilling to surrender; and because of that unwillingness to deal with the matter, you find yourself without a moment's peace.

Fenelon in his book Let Go says, "When it comes to accomplishing things for God, you will find that high aspirations, enthusiastic feelings, careful planning and being able to express yourself well are not worth very much. The important thing is absolute surrender to God. You can do anything He wants you to do (ADK "LET GOD, LET'S GO!) if you are walking in the light of full surrender."

**LISTEN SLOWLY AND CAREFULLY TO THE WORDS OF THIS HYMN
AND THEN GIVE YOURSELF WHOLLY TO HIM...**

["Is Your All on the Altar?"](#)

You have longed for sweet peace,
And for faith to increase,
And have earnestly, fervently prayed.
But you cannot have rest,
Or be perfectly blest,
Until all on the altar is laid.

Refrain:

Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid?
Your heart does the Spirit control?

You can only be blest,
And have peace and sweet rest,
As you yield Him your body and soul.

Would you walk with the Lord
In the light of His Word,
And have peace and contentment always?
You must do His sweet will
To be free from all ill—
On the altar your all you must lay. **[Refrain]**

Oh, we never can know
What the Lord will bestow
Of the blessings for which we have prayed,
Till our body and soul
He doth fully control,
And our all on the altar is laid. **[Refrain]**

Who can tell all the love
He will send from above,
And how happy our hearts will be made,
Of the fellowship sweet
We shall share at His feet
When our all on the altar is laid! **[Refrain]**

Sidlow Baxter - The crossing of "this Jordan" was a major crisis of faith. The same crisis had come to the former generation of Israel some forty years earlier under somewhat different circumstances, and they had failed in their reaction to it. It was bound to repeat itself to the new generation. To be "brought out" of Egypt was one thing; but it was another thing altogether to "go over this Jordan" and thus become committed, without possibility of retreat, to the struggle against the powers of Canaan in their seemingly impregnable fastnesses, with their chariots of iron, and their large armies among which were the renowned giants. To do this was to commit themselves to a course which had been condemned by ten out of the twelve spies who had reported on the land forty years before! To the natural eye it was to hazard everything on the chance of battle, to have no retreat, and to run the risk of losing everything.

The same crisis comes in one way or another to all the redeemed - that intense crisis of the soul in which we are forced to the supreme choice whether there shall be an utter once-for-all abandon of ourselves to the will of God, so that henceforth God is absolutely first in the soul's love and life, or whether we shall take what seems to be the easier way, that is, of continuing in the Christian life, but with a reservation in our love to God. It is one thing to take Christ as Saviour from the guilt of our sin. It is another thing to make Him absolute Master of our will and life. It is one thing to be brought out from the Egypt of our unregenerate life and to join God's redeemed Israel. It is another thing altogether to bury all our self-born aims and desires in Jordan's swift-flowing flood, and to pass through to that higher life where no desires or purposes are tolerated but those of our blessed Lord Himself. It was one thing for Abram to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go out in faith at God's behest. It was another thing - a far bigger and costlier and sublimer thing for him to climb Moriah and lift the knife to slay his beloved Isaac. Yet the crisis must be. There was no other way of decisively determining whether God was to be supreme in the life and love of the soul. There was no need for further testing after that; and God said: "By Myself have I sworn, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore." Abraham's Moriah and Israel's Jordan are the same crisis under different names. There is an Isaac to be sacrificed, a Jordan to be crossed, in the history of every redeemed soul. Abraham yielded his Isaac. Israel crossed the Jordan. What of you and me? This is faith's major crisis; and this is what we have in this third chapter of Joshua - the crisis of faith. ([Baxter's Explore the Book](#))

Norman Geisler - JOSHUA 3:17—Did Israel cross the Jordan here or not?

PROBLEM: According to Joshua 3:17, the people crossed over the Jordan on dry ground. However, 4:5, 10–11 indicate that they had not yet crossed the river. How can these verses be reconciled?

SOLUTION: In Joshua 3:17, Joshua records that the priests who were carrying the ark of the covenant stood in the middle of the river while the people crossed over on dry ground. Chapter 4 begins with the statement, "And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the Lord spoke to Joshua." The passage then goes on to describe how Joshua,

according to the command of the Lord, directed twelve men, one from each tribe, to go back to the spot where the priests were still standing with the ark in order to dig up twelve stones from the midst of the river bed. Verses 10 and 11 describe how the priests, who were carrying the ark of the covenant, finally left their spot in the middle of the river bed after everything had been completed which the Lord had commanded Joshua. ([When Critics Ask](#))

CROSSING THE JORDAN Joshua 3:1–17

Joshua was chosen by God to take the place of Moses. Joshua felt very weak in himself. However, God gave him courage—Joshua 1:5. His first test was to cross the Jordan River.

1. THE COMMAND—vv. 1–4
2. THE CONSECRATION—vv. 5–6
3. THE COVENANT—vv. 7–13
4. THE CROSSING—vv. 14–17

As a Christian, remember these things: (1) God always keeps His promises, (2) God does impossible things, and (3) Be willing to trust God for your needs. (Croft Pentz)

James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose - CROSSING THE JORDAN Joshua 3

“With every wild ring mist dispersed,
In great deeps of Thy love immersed;
Holding Thee as my heart’s treasure,
In love’s measure without measure.
O God, keep me a child of light,
Yea, ev’n with Thine own brightness bright.”

The soul that has ceased to long for a fuller experience of the riches of God has ceased to grow in grace. Every Christian will have his or her Jordan to cross before entering into the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ. In the minds of men Jordan has been always associated with death, although it is not easy to see here any connection between them. After death we enter into rest, and our works follow, but when the children of Israel crossed the Jordan their work was before them. By their own works were they to drive out the enemy and take possession of their inheritance by the power of the sword. Their salvation from Egypt was all of grace, but they entered into possession of the land of plenty through the stern works of faith. See how it came about. There was—

I. A Word of Warning. “When ye shall see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, ... then ye shall go after it. Come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go” (vv. 3, 4). This warning is twofold. 1. They must follow when the ark moved. The ark was the symbol of Jehovah’s presence and the sign of the covenant. This is an unalterable condition of spiritual progress; we must be prepared to follow the Lord anywhere and at any time. 2. They must have a space between them and it. “About two thousand cubits by measure” (v. 4). The reason given for placing such a distance between them and the ark is, “For ye have not passed this way heretofore.” Surely this is intended to remind us that there is always a distance between the ETERNAL I AM and the creatures of but yesterday (Psa. 89:7). And also that every new path should be entered upon in entire dependence upon Him. Ye have not passed this way heretofore, therefore make sure that the ark of His guiding presence is before you.

II. A Call to Preparation. “Sanctify yourselves, for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you” (v. 5). It is a law in the spiritual kingdom that if God is to be glorified through us He must first be sanctified in us (Lev. 10:3). The Holy God must have holy instruments for the accomplishing of His wonders among men. Sanctify yourselves. Put off the old man with his deeds if you would in your inmost soul pass over into the more “abundant life” and the “greater works” of your wonder-working God.

III. A Word of Encouragement. The Lord said unto Joshua, “This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel” (v. 7). On the day that Joshua called for a sanctified people did God begin to honour Joshua. Seek the honour that cometh from God only; it maketh rich and addeth no sorrow. All human honours are like cut flowers, they soon wither in the wearing, but the honour of God crowns with everlasting reward. This diadem of divine favour is never put upon the head of those who seek it for their own glory. Begin to sanctify the Lord in your life, and God will begin to magnify you in the sight of the people. Become a prince with God, and you will have power with men.

IV. A Strange Halt. “The priests that bear the ark shall stand still in Jordan” (v. 8). Crossing the Jordan does not seem to represent the passing of a soul from time into eternity so much as the passing of a soul from a lower into a higher experience of the things of God. The ark of the covenant halted right in the river as the Lord’s guarantee to His people that the mighty floods of difficulties that would hinder them from taking possession of His inheritance will be rolled back before the feet of faith (v. 13). It is surely significant that near this very spot, Bethabara (the house of passage), the feet of the Son of God rested, who is the true Ark, in whom the law

was hid. And that while He stood there the clouds rolled back, and Heaven opened, and the Spirit like a dove descended upon Him (Mt 3:16). That baptism has opened up a passage for us from the wilderness experience into the milk and honey land. In this Jordan, that separates between the self-life and the Christ-life, our “Ark of the Covenant” still stands by His intercession, keeping the way open for all who by faith will enter in. Oh, that it were true of God’s people now, as it was then, that “all people passed clean over” (v. 17). Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Without this mighty baptism how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan (ED: ALL BELIEVERS HAVE RECEIVED THE SPIRIT - Ro 8:9+)?

V. An Assuring Promise. “As soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord rest in the waters of Jordan, they shall stand upon an heap” (vv. 13–16). “He that hath ears to hear let him hear.” Ye who have been made priests unto God, and who bear the Christ, the Ark of the Lord (Acts 9:15), be comforted and encouraged. No river of opposition whose destiny, like Jordan, is the dead Sea will ever hinder you from the enjoyment of the promises of God if in your heart you bear the Son of God. “What ailed thee, ... thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?” (Psa. 114:5). “Greater is He that is in you.”

VI. A Proof of His Presence. “Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you. He will without fail drive out from before you” (v. 10). The proof of His presence is overcoming power. The overcomer is always an inheritor (see Rev 2:1-29 and Rev 3:1-22). If we are not living a victorious life we may well question whether the Lord is with us. Hear the apostle’s testimony, “I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me.” “If God be for us, who shall prevail against us?”

Cyril Barber's closing comments - The Person of God

The Israelites must have viewed the obstacles facing them with human feelings of apprehension. It was necessary, therefore, for Joshua to encourage them with the assurance that the living God was among them. In saying this he immediately contrasted Him with the idols worshiped by the heathen. The Lord had already protected them, kept them safe in battle, and enabled them to defeat kings and kingdoms more powerful than themselves.

As we reflect on what Scripture teaches we also note God’s power and timing. The Bible portrays the Lord of heaven and earth as infinite, eternal, all-powerful, all-wise, and everywhere present. His names highlight who He is and emphasize His person and work.

In this chapter He is referred to as Yahweh (printed “LORD” in most versions, and occasionally “Jehovah” in some older versions), signifying His self-existence. He had no beginning and will have no end. He is the supreme ruler of the universe. He is also referred to as ’adon, a shortened form of ’adonay, meaning “Lord” or “Master,” and emphasizing the fact that He is all-powerful and has the right to be obeyed. It also signifies that He is our supreme Sovereign who has the right to be worshiped. And other Scriptures that speak of Yahweh-Jireh, Yahweh-Nissi, Yahweh-Shammah, et cetera, when taken together, reveal the perfection of God’s character and the extent of His work on our behalf. And in Joshua 3:3 and 10, He is referred to as ’Elohim (“God”), signifying His power and might. No other god can compare with Him.

Scripture confirms that our God is the Lord of heaven and earth (Genesis 24:3). He is sovereign over the kingdoms of the earth, and as such He is also Judge (Psalms 50:6; 58:11). And He is the Savior of those who put their trust in Him (Isaiah 45:15).

God is so involved in human affairs that He can be known by, and answer the prayers of, those with whom He has established a covenant relationship. The great blessing of knowing “the living God” as He is revealed in Scripture is that He becomes the standard by which all things are to be measured. And He becomes the one after whom character is to be patterned (Leviticus 20:26). Those who are in a covenant relationship with Him should respond to lovingkindness with trust and obedience.

The Promises of God

Joshua was assured of God’s personal promises: (1) He would be with him as He had been with Moses; (2) no one would be able to stand before him; and (3) to this the Lord added that He would magnify Joshua in the eyes of the people. All of this the Lord did.

Similar promises have been made to Christians. First, in the New Testament we are made aware of the truth that God the Holy Spirit indwells us, and we are assured of His presence wherever we go, no matter what may happen to us. We are also promised that He gives eternal salvation to all who believe in Christ (Hebrews 13:5, John 3:16). Second, though we are not promised unlimited secular success, the Holy Spirit does empower us and enable us to stand for what is right no matter how strong the opposition. And third, in 1 Corinthians 1:26–27 we learn that we have an adoption that has made us sons and daughters of God.

The more these truths take a hold of us, the greater will be our confidence when we face the vicissitudes of life. [Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#)

David Guzik's closing comments - To face such impossible challenges in our lives, we must look unto Jesus, our Joshua. He always leads us

- a. Jesus is the fulfillment of the ark; He is **Immanuel**, which is translated, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23).
- b. Jesus has cleared the way to victory over all things: Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in the cross (Colossians 2:15).
- c. As we keep our eyes on, and follow behind our victorious Jesus, the river of impossibility will dry up. (Heb 12:2, cf Col 3:1)
- d. To the cynic, who wonders if they haven't tried that and been disappointed, we must ask them: "Have you really tried this? Have you truly walked according to God's word, trusted in Jesus and been disappointed?" Perhaps your disappointment is actually in your flesh

Donald Campbell has a wonderful closing comment - How could this sensational event occur? Many insist that this was no miracle since the event can be explained as a natural phenomenon. They point out that on December 8, 1267 an earthquake caused the high banks of the Jordan to collapse near Tell ed-Damiyeh, damming the river for about 10 hours. On July 11, 1927 another earthquake near the same location blocked the river for 21 hours. Of course these stoppages did not occur during flood season. Admittedly God could have employed natural causes such as an earthquake and a landslide and the timing would have still made it a miraculous intervention. But does the biblical text allow for such an interpretation of this event?

Considering all the factors involved it seems best to view this occurrence as a special act of God brought about in a way unknown to man. Many supernatural elements were brought together:

- (1) The event came to pass as predicted (Joshua 3:13, 15).
- (2) The timing was exact (Josh 3:15).
- (3) The event took place when the river was at flood stage (Josh 3:15).
- (4) The wall of water was held in place for many hours, possibly an entire day (v. 16).
- (5) The soft, wet river bottom became dry at once (v. 17).
- (6) The water returned immediately as soon as the people had crossed over and the priests came up out of the river (4:18).

Centuries later the Prophets Elijah and Elisha crossed the same river on dry ground to the east (2 Kings 2:8). Soon thereafter Elisha crossed back over the river on dry ground. If a natural phenomenon is necessary to explain the Israelites' crossing under Joshua, then one would have to conclude that two earthquakes occurred in quick sequence for Elijah and Elisha, which seems a bit presumptuous.

By this great miracle, the crossing of the Jordan River at flood stage by a nation of about 2 million people, God was glorified, Joshua was exalted, Israel was encouraged, and the Canaanites were terrorized.

For Israel the crossing of the Jordan meant they were irrevocably committed to a struggle against armies, chariots, and fortified cities. They were also committed to walk by faith in the living God and to turn from walking according to the flesh as they had often done in the wilderness.

For believers today, crossing the Jordan represents passing from one level of the Christian life to another. (It is not a picture of a believer dying and entering heaven. For the Israelites Canaan was hardly heaven!)

It is a picture of entering into spiritual warfare to claim what God has promised. This should mean the end of a life lived by human effort and the beginning of a life of faith and obedience. (ED; AND ALL GOD'S PEOPLE SAID "AMEN" LET IT BE SO LORD. AMEN). ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

Warren Wiersbe - It is instructive to contrast the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex. 14–15) and the crossing of the Jordan. The first crossing illustrates separation from the past (Egypt, the world), while the second crossing pictures entrance by faith into our spiritual inheritance in Christ. The enemy was defeated once and for all when the Egyptian army was drowned in the Red Sea, but the Jews had to win one victory after another when they crossed Jordan and entered Canaan. On the cross, Jesus defeated our enemies, but we have to walk and war by faith if we are to have daily victory. We "cross the Jordan" when we enter by faith into the victory experience of Rom. 6–8. ([Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament](#))

A C Gaebelein - How panic-stricken they must have become when they saw or heard of the great miracle and that God's people

had reached the other shore! But one person was calm in Jericho. One enjoyed peace and rest and did not fear. The one from whose window there streamed the scarlet-line.

George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 3](#)

And the priests—stood firm on dry ground. Stood fixedly and immovably in the same place and posture, neither pressed upon by the waters, nor sinking in the mire, nor shifting their position. It is probable, too, that they continued bearing the ark on their shoulders during the whole time of their standing. The miracle recorded in this chapter was in some respects more striking than that which marked the passage of the Red Sea, as in this case it could not be pretended that the water had retired from any natural cause. There was here neither wind nor tide, to the agency of which the effect could be attributed; and if the river was actually passed, at a high stage of its waters, without boats or bridges, the evidence of the miracle was irresistible—the current must have been suspended by a supernatural power.