

Crossing the Jordan.

Joshua 3.

Sunday evening, September 27,2009.

I. A remarkable crossing.

A. As to the place and time.

1. When the Jordan river was at flood stage in late April or early May.
2. The name “Jordan” means “The Descender.”
Its waters pass through 27 sizable rapids and cascades between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea near Jericho. Besides these there are countless small rapids. The Jordan drops about 600 feet over 65 miles.
3. The Jordan at this location is normally about 180 feet wide, but at flood stage more than double that.
4. The current is normally about 4 miles per hour, but at flood stage about 10 miles per hour.
5. The Jordan is at its widest point here shortly before it empties out in the Dead Sea.
This is the place and the time the Lord Choose for Israel to enter the promised land.

B. As to the manner.

1. They build no boat or bridge to facilitate the crossing during the three days during which they moved from Acacia Grove to the banks of the Jordan.
2. They did not send their army across to go before them.
3. They send the Ark of the Lord before them, carried by unarmed priests.
4. The whole camp of the Israelites was to stay back 3000 feet, a little over half a mile. Presumably this was done so all Israel could clearly see the ark as they walked from higher ground to lower ground to the water’s edge.
5. When the Priests stepped into the edge of the water the current from upstream stopped, and the waters backed up for thirty miles. On the other hand the downstream waters continued to make their way to the Dead Sea. A dry pebbly bottom appeared, and the priests stood with the ark in the middle of the dry riverbed while all Israel passed by.
6. Strategically this is a remarkable event.
They did not send their armies ahead to conquer the land before putting their wives and little ones in harms way. The invasion of the promised land is done by all. Even their cattle and possessions come with them.

II. Some lessons to learn.

A. This was an exercise of the faith of the Israelites.

Strategically this arrangement did not make any sense, humanly speaking.

1. You do not send a band of unarmed men with the ark in the very front lines of your invasion.
2. You do not invade a country accompanied by your wives, children, cattle and possessions.
3. You do not invade a country without providing a way to retreat if things do not work out. This was a one way crossing, and they all knew it. If the Lord their

God did not come through for them they were finished, and they all knew it.

4. Would they rebel again in unbelief when faced with impossible odds as had their forefathers 40 yrs earlier?

Here we find Israel on a mission that is logistically impossible and strategically utterly foolish. What will they do?

5. Here we see them entrusting themselves to the ways and the wisdom of God, for better or for worse. No doubt this was a work of grace aided by God's providential dealings with their fathers 40 yrs earlier.

Not a mumble is heard; a holy reverence for, and a humble submission to the ways and wisdom of God seems to have possessed the nation, no matter how unconventional God's ways and wisdom were.

6. These events are recorded in scripture that we too might be possessed by this kind of reverence and humble submission. 1 Corinthians 10:11.

7. The nature of faith never changes:

- It is a leaving and a losing and a letting go.

Here Israel is made to leave her own carnal security and her own wisdom.

- It is a going without knowing.

Israel did not know what they would face on the other side of the Jordan.

- It is an entrusting ourselves to God in humble submission depending on His mercies alone.

- B. Here we have a fitting type of God's people crossing over to enter their eternal rest; the heavenly country.

1. Canaan represented the better and heavenly country as a type.

2. The Jordan river represents the separation between this world and that better and heavenly country.

- The Jordan corresponds to the veil hanging in the tabernacle and temple, separating these two worlds.

- It also corresponds to death and dying for the believer for there he crosses over.

- It corresponds to the separation and distance we experience in this world constituting us pilgrims and strangers, walking by faith and not yet by sight.

- It corresponds to sin, for sin is what separates us from God; man's fall brought about this separation.

3. Here we have the Lord Himself under the figure of the ark going well ahead of His people. The Lord is so far ahead of us in so many ways, and yet He puts Himself quite within our sights. Both the concepts of nearness and separation characterize our union with the Lord.

4. Here we have the Lord positioning Himself in the middle of the river, holding back the waters of judgment which surely would have drowned anyone attempting to cross, and doing so until the least and the last of His people have crossed over. What a fitting emblem of the positioning of the Lord Jesus Christ in the middle of the river of sin and its resulting judgment.

5. As Israel passed by the ark in the middle of the river, so do we at the Lord's table, as by faith and in the Spirit we are given glimpses of our promised land.