

File No. 39

JOSHUA 3:1 – 5:1

Joshua 3:9–12

CROSSING THE JORDAN

(SBS Bk 2 Story No. 3)

Story Notes

The ark represented God going before Israel to destroy their enemies (Num. 10:33–36). It was God's throne and the sign of his covenant relationship with them. As he was their Leader, so he would see to it that they were provided for as his people. After Israel's arrival at the edge of the Promised Land, there is no more mention of the pillar of cloud or fire that had led them to this moment (Deut. 1:32–33), but now, they were to follow the ark as they had followed the pillar. The God whose presence was over the ark was their leader in battle; apart from him, they would not know where to go or how to fight.

Joshua was made great among his people, but only with a view to Israel knowing that God was among them. Joshua carried out God's commands and made sure everyone knew it was God who did it. God became King over Israel when he led the people to himself at Sinai. It was he who had loved them, sanctified them, and given them his law and made them his people (Deut. 33:1–5).

Bringing a people to live in God's freedom is a miracle. Overcoming the opponents of that freedom is also a miracle. The opening up of the River Jordan is the completion of what was begun at the Red Sea. If there is no miracle here, neither is there any miracle to save us from this world so as to live in the works of God. Joshua made sure Israel could remember this miracle by having actual stones taken from the river bed and built into a cairn by its side. People could come here and say, 'This happened at this place'.

It has been traditional to see this crossing as a type or anticipation of a Christian passing over the river of death into the land of eternal rest. Negro spirituals using this terminology may come to mind.

Entering our rest in *Hebrews* is a reference to the future but with a present expectation. Christ upholds all things by the word of his power and, having purged us from our sins, is seated at the right hand of God. So, of course, Christ can lead us into God's rest. It would be criminal negligence and personal insult not to enter now. So, pay attention to his word!

We should be actively entering that rest, crossing Jordan, destroying strongholds and living in peace in our new possession of all things (I Cor. 3:21).

With Israel on the other side, the priests brought the ark up from the river bed and the river returned to its flooding. No one but God could have done this, and God was there among them to ensure that it did happen.

Israel had been baptised into Moses (I Cor. 10:2). We are baptised into Christ (Rom. 6:3–4). He is our 'Joshua' (his name in Hebrew and the name 'Jesus' in Greek both mean 'Jehovah saves'). Our entry into God's rest and into our inheritance is through his death and rising. We could not have planned such a victory for ourselves, and even now, we cannot sustain it. God in Christ has been among us and is among us still. He will bring us to the goal.

God had cared for Israel in the wilderness by miraculous means. It was no less miraculous that Israel now stood in their inheritance and tasted of the natural produce of the land.

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