

**Crossing the River Jordan**

• *Laying up treasure in heaven by what we do on earth*

In traditional Christian language, 'Crossing the River Jordan' into the promised land is often thought to be a picture of death, but that is entirely mistaken. Inheriting the promises of God has to be achieved before we die!

Getting to heaven for a Christian is quite secure. Jesus has given him eternal life and the Christian will not perish. Our inheritance is not heaven; it is laying up treasure in heaven by what we do on earth.

The crossing of Jordan puts before us the way in which God overcomes obstacles to the inheriting of His promises. It gives the principles that are involved in overthrowing a great barrier to the fulfilment of God's purpose and the attaining of our inheritance. How do we make progress in doing God's will, triumphing over obstructions along the way? How do we achieve the impossible? The crossing of the Jordan will give us the answer.

**1. The people are following God**

1. **The people are following God.** They are in God's will and are following God's instructions. They do not know how they will pass over Jordan but they are looking to God to do something wonderful. They leave the Shittim area, to the east of the river Jordan and camp by the river<sup>□1</sup>. The ark leads the procession. It represents God Himself. The people will have to follow the ark<sup>□2</sup> and yet they must leave a space of about a kilometre between themselves and the ark<sup>□3</sup>. First they sanctify themselves. For the Israelites this was a matter of being ceremonially clean, washing clothes, leaving aside earthly pleasures and focusing on what God was calling them to<sup>□4</sup>. They have only to follow God's instructions; God will then do something wonderful for them<sup>□5</sup>.

□1 3:1

□2 3:2

□3 3:3-4

□4 compare Exodus 19:10, 14-15

□5 3:5

**2. Joshua and the priests are honoured**

2. **Joshua and the priests are honoured.** The people are following God but they are doing so through Joshua who is the mediator of God's instructions to them. Joshua gives the word of command to the priests and the crossing of Jordan begins<sup>□1</sup>. It is a day when Joshua himself is exalted<sup>□2</sup>. Everything is taking place through his leadership and by following Joshua the people achieve God's will and move forward in attaining their inheritance. Joshua requires that the priests shall stand in the centre of the dry river-bed<sup>□3</sup>. Joshua, assisted by the priests, will superintend the crossing of the river.

□1 3:6

□2 3:7

□3 3:8

• *Joshua represents Jesus*

For the Christian, Joshua represents Jesus; and the priests represent Jesus' work as our priest in heaven. The priests remind everyone of the blood of the sacrifices offered every day.

The work of the priests gave daily purity and made it possible for those who were called to do God's will and receive the promised inheritance.

• *It is the ministry of Jesus our great high priest which gets us to our inheritance*

The Christian's position is parallel. By the blood of Jesus the Christian has eternal redemption and daily cleansing<sup>□1</sup>. Because Jesus is our great high priest 'those who are called may receive the promised inheritance'<sup>□2</sup>. It is the ministry of Jesus our great high priest which gets us to our inheritance. This was marked out even in Joshua's day by the intermediaries, Joshua and the priests. Actually 'Jesus' and 'Joshua' are Greek and Hebrew versions of the same name. Jesus is our Joshua. He leads us in overcoming every barrier against the achieving of His will.

□1 compare Hebrews 9:12, 14

□2 Hebrews 9:15

**3. The people are putting their faith in Joshua's faith.**

• Joshua's utter and total confidence

• Crossing every barrier

• Trusting His faithfulness

**3. The people are putting their faith in Joshua's faith.** Joshua 3 marvellously illustrates the eleven verses in the New Testament which tell us we are to live by the faith (or the 'faithfulness') of Jesus: <sup>□1</sup>, each of which refers to the 'faith of Christ' (but not in all translations; the King James or 'Authorised' Version is at its best in these verses).

The people are willing to trust Joshua. They are following him; Joshua is being exalted in the eyes of the people. Joshua himself is acting with utter and total assurance. He is completely confident about what will happen. He has total assurance concerning the promise of God. He tells the people what God has said<sup>□1</sup>, and gives the people a clear prediction of what will happen<sup>□2</sup>. His predictive words are to be the basis of their conviction that other Canaanites will be conquered as easily as the people of Jericho<sup>□3</sup>. The ark will go first<sup>□4</sup>. Twelve representatives of the people will follow<sup>□5</sup>. As the priests step into the water a miracle will take place at Adam several miles upstream (see map on page 8). The water will temporarily stop flowing and a dam of water will build up some miles away<sup>□6</sup>. Verses 10–13 are the words of Joshua. He has total assurance of faith. If the people have any anxieties or doubts they have simply to trust in what Joshua is telling them. **They are putting their faith in his faith.**

All of this illustrates how the Christian lives by the faith of Jesus. It is Jesus who leads us across every barricade to doing God's will. He superintends our progress by the power of His blood and by His intercession.

The people set out<sup>□1</sup> and it happened just as Joshua said it would<sup>□2</sup>. The priests went first but then stopped on the dry ground in the middle of the river and stayed there until the entire nation had crossed over<sup>□3</sup>.

This is the way we achieve God's purpose for our lives. We cross every barrier by putting our faith in Jesus our heavenly Joshua. Our faith may be wobbly, weak and worried – but Jesus has perfect faith. If we cannot trust our own faith – and we cannot – then we trust His faith (or His faithfulness). 'I live by the faith(fulness) of Christ<sup>□1</sup>'. Jesus and His priestly ministry superintend everything I do. In that way I get to my 'promised land', the area of life which God wants me to conquer for Him.

<sup>□1</sup> Romans 3:22, 26; Galatians 2:16, 16, 20; 3:22; Ephesians 3:12; Philippians 3:9; James 2:1; Revelation 2:13; 14:12

<sup>□1</sup> 3:9  
<sup>□2</sup> 3:10

<sup>□3</sup> 3:11  
<sup>□4</sup> 3:10  
<sup>□5</sup> 3:12

<sup>□6</sup> 3:13

<sup>□1</sup> 3:14  
<sup>□2</sup> 3:15–16  
<sup>□3</sup> 3:17

<sup>□1</sup> Galatians 2:20



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