

**Studies in the Book of Joshua**  
**Lesson 3 - Joshua 3:1-4:24**  
**The Abundant Life**  
**Crossing of the Jordan**

Like our New Testament Joshua, Joshua arose early in the morning to meditate on the Word and to prepare himself for the day's duties. It was not left for Joshua to invent a method of crossing the flooded Jordan, for God gave him all the instructions necessary. The key word in this chapter is ark, used ten times. Of course, the ark symbolized the presence of God. The ark went before the people to lead them, and it was kept in the midst of the river until the entire nation had passed over. Christ always goes before His people and opens the way, but the people must sanctify themselves and be ready for God's leading. God was going to lead the Jews in a new way, and they had to be ready.

At the Exodus, God had proved Himself Lord and the true God beside whom the gods of Egypt were but harmless idols. Now God would prove Himself the "Lord of all the earth." All the gods of the heathen nations would fall before Him! God would prove His power by holding back the waters of the flooded Jordan and permitting His people to cross over on dry land.

It is instructive to contrast the crossing of the Red Sea 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 Romans 6-8.

The Jews could not get victory in Canaan and overcome the enemy without first going through Jordan. Nor can Christians today overcome their spiritual foes unless they die to self, reckon themselves crucified with Christ, and allow the Spirit to give them resurrection power.

**Read Joshua 3:1-17 and answer the following questions**

1. What is the setting of this story? (3:1)
  
2. What specific instructions did the officers give to the people regarding their journey?
  
3. Why was it necessary for the Israelite people to consecrate themselves? (3:5)
  
4. For what reason did God choose to praise Joshua in the eyes of the Israelites? (3:7)
  
5. How were the Israelites to know that God was with them and would drive out their enemies from the land of Canaan? (3:10-13)
  
6. What happened when the priests who were carrying the ark reached the Jordan River?

**Read Joshua 4:1-24 and answer the following questions**

7. Why did the Lord tell Joshua to choose twelve men from among the Israelites? (4:2-3)

8. Why were stones taken from the Jordan riverbed?
  
9. How did the people of Israel respond to the miracle God performed on their behalf? (4:14)
  
10. What specific tradition did Joshua instruct the Israelites to initiate?
  
11. According to Joshua, for what two reasons did God perform this miracle? (4:24)
  
12. Why do you think God instructed Joshua to set up a physical reminder of the miracle He performed?

### **Great Life Lesson on “Crossing the Jordan”**

God wanted Israel to learn important lessons from the miracle of crossing the Jordan river. God demonstrated that He was with Joshua as He had been with Moses. The ark of the covenant was God’s throne on earth. Literally, the Lord went into the dangerous river first, demonstrating His role as Israel’s protector. The same God that went with Joshua and the Israelites into the Jordan is here with us today.

*“When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.”*  
Isaiah 43:2 NLV

Second, the Lord revealed that His wonder-working strength would enable the people to conquer every enemy they faced. Most of the year, the Jordan river was about one hundred feet wide and only three to ten feet deep. However, when the Israelites crossed, it was at flood stage, overflowing its banks. Nothing but the mighty hand of God could have parted it and made it safe for people to cross. No enemy can overcome God's mighty power.

Almost all the people of Israel who had witnessed the crossing of the Red Sea in their escape from Egypt had died. Parting the Red Sea reinforced God's love for this new generation.

Crossing the Promised Land also represented a break with Israel's past. When the Manna stopped, it forced the people to conquer their enemies and subdue the land God intended for them. Through baptism in the New Testament, the Jordan River is associated with crossing over into a new life of spiritual freedom.