

THE NECESSARY, LONG-AWAITED CROSSING OF THE JORDAN RIVER: A PICTURE OF FAITH AND OF GOD'S GREAT POWER TO LEAD HIS PEOPLE JOSHUA 04:15–24

Introduction

Picture the greatest inheritance imaginable sitting out before a person, the longing for the inheritance gnawing away at the person's heart. The inheritance is his; it has been promised and guaranteed. The person will receive the inheritance. But obstacles or barriers stand in the way, and they must be removed before he can receive the promised inheritance.

This is a picture of the inheritance the Israelites were to receive, the inheritance of the promised land. Ever since the birth of the Israelites that began with their forefather Abraham, God had promised the inheritance of the land to His people. For hundreds of years, the promise of the land had been taught to the children. The promised land and the great hope it offered were the major theme of the teaching of the Israelites. Most if not all Israelites were gripped by a deep-seated longing for the glorious inheritance promised them by God. Now, finally, the long-awaited crossing of the Jordan River was to take place. God's people were to enter the promised land. The inheritance for which they had so long hoped was finally to become their possession. Their faith in God was now to be rewarded. This is the subject of this great passage of Scripture: *The Necessary, Long-awaited Crossing of the Jordan River: A Picture of Faith and of God's Great Power to Lead His People into the Promised Land (Spiritual Conquest and Rest)*, Joshua 3:1-4:24.

- I. The problem: a flooded Jordan (v. 1).
- II. The message of faith: the only way to cross and enter the promised land — the way of faith (vv. 2-13).
- III. The walk of faith: the only way to experience the power of God (vv. 14-17).
- IV. The witness of faith: seen in the LORD's orders to build a memorial as a witness (vv. 1-9).
- V. The obedience of faith: seen in the crossing of the Jordan (vv. 10-14).
- VI. The result of faith: camping, living in the promised land (vv. 15-19).
- VII. The purpose of faith: seen in Joshua building the memorial at Gilgal (vv. 20-24).

I. Joshua 04:15–19 Result of Faith: The First Day in the Promised Land

There is the result of faith. At long last, the results of the Israelites' hope and longing was experienced. They were in the promised land, actually standing on the ground that was part of their inheritance. Excitement, joy and rejoicing filled the air. Note the scene as the power of God continued to work:

1. The LORD ordered Joshua to command the priests to come up out of the Jordan River (vv. 16-18). Joshua gave the command and the priests, no doubt rejoicing, came up out of the river carrying the Ark.
2. The waters were immediately released by God — just as the priests' feet touched dry ground — and the swift and dangerous waters of the Jordan quickly returned to its flood level (v. 18).
3. The wonderful result of faith was then realized (v. 19). The people were spending their very first night in the promised land. On the tenth day of the first month, the Israelites camped and spent their first night in the promised land. They camped at Gilgal just east of Jericho.

For so many years the people had been longing, anticipating, looking for this day to come. Now — at long last — the day had finally come. Excitement, joy and rejoicing filled the air. As they set up camp, pockets of people could be seen singing, talking excitedly, praying, sharing their hopes and dreams with each other, and praising God. Little children could be seen running all about playing their games with a new excitement, for this was the land they had heard their parents talk about so much for so long. What a day of rejoicing this must have been for these dear people of God. Their faith in God's promise had borne fruit. They were now standing in the promised land of God.

Thought 1. Faith in God bears fruit. If we trust God, God will work in our hearts and lives. God will honour our faith. God has made promises to us just as He made promises to the Israelites. Just as He fulfilled His promises to them, God will fulfil His promises to us. There is only one condition: we must believe God, have faith in His promises. God will do exactly what He promises us — if we will just believe Him.

Mat 21:21 *Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done."*

John 14:2-3 *"In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."*

Heb 13:5-6 *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"*

2 Tim 1:12 *That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*

2 Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Gen 28:15 *I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.*

Deut 33:27 *The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemy before you, saying, 'Destroy him!'*

Psa 28:7 *The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.*

Psa 31:19 *How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear [trust] you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.*

Psa 31:23 *Love the LORD, all his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full.*

Psa 34:7 *The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear [trust] him, and he delivers them.*

Psa 37:28 *For the LORD loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever, but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off.*

2 Chr 16:9 *For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war.*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Isa 46:4 *Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.*

II. Joshua 04: 20–24 The Purpose of Faith: Seen in Joshua Building a Memorial

There is the purpose of faith. This is seen in Joshua's building the memorial at Gilgal.

1. One of the purposes of faith is to teach the power of God to children, that they might always fear Him (vv. 21-23). Once the memorial had been constructed, Joshua obviously called all the Israelites together in a memorial service of thanksgiving. He challenged the people to be witnesses to their children and to all future descendants. He challenged them to bear testimony to the fact...
 - that God had dried up the Jordan so that His people could cross over into the promised land
 - that God did to the Jordan just what He had done to the Red Sea
2. A second purpose of faith is to teach the power of God to all the peoples of the earth (v. 24). This is the dear, straight forward purpose declared by Joshua. God had worked the miracle for all the peoples of the earth. The miracle was to be a strong testimony to God's power so that all people might fear God. All the earth was to

know the power of God's mighty hand. Every person — both Israelite and Gentile — is to fear the LORD God. Every person is to acknowledge...

- that He alone is the living God
- that He alone is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe who possesses all power
- that He alone has all the power to cut off the flow of rivers
- that He alone has the power to cause rivers to flow
- that He alone has the power to split asunder the seas of the world
- that He alone has the power to cause the waters of the seas to flow back together again.

All people are to know that the LORD God is living and is to be feared. He alone is the living and true God, the Omnipotent LORD of the Universe. He and He alone is to be feared.

Thought 1. The power and fear of God are to be taught. We must know the power of God. He is the living God, which means that He is omnipotent, possessing all power, the power to do any thing and all things. The power of God is awesome, incomprehensible, beyond anything people can think or imagine. Because of His power, we must heed the warning: fear God. By fear is meant to hold Him in the highest esteem, honour and reverence. It also means to acknowledge His awesome justice and judgment and to shrink from what can happen to us if we fail to fear Him as we should.

(1) God is living, possessing all power. He is omnipotent, able to do all things.

Therefore, we must acknowledge and teach the omnipotent power of God to all children and generations of people.

Mat 8:26 He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

Mat 9:6 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home."

Mat 19:26 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Mat 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

Mark 4:39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

Luke 1:37 "For nothing is impossible with God."

John 17:2 "For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him."

Rom 16:25-27 Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith — to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Eph 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.

1 Chr 29:12 Wealth and honour come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all.

Job 42:2 “I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.”

Psa 115:3 Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.

Isa 43:13 Yes, and from ancient days I am he. No one can deliver out of my hand. When I act, who can reverse it?

Job 26:12 By his power he churned up the sea; by his wisdom he cut Rahab to pieces.

(2) God is to be revered and feared. We must teach the reverence and fear of God to all children and all generations of people.

Mat 10:28 “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

Luke 1:50 His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

Acts 10:35 But accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

1 Pet 1:17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

1 Pet 2:17 Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king.

Isa 8:13 The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread.

Eccl 12:13 Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.

Deut 10:12 And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Psa 31:19 How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.

Hab 2:20 But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him. ■