

Joshua

September 20, 2009

Joshua 3-5

I. **Getting Ready to Cross into the Land: Josh. 3:1-3**

After 40 years, the people are ready to cross over into the land. How do you think that they felt? How excited/apprehensive were they?

The OT uses inclusive time. So, when it says after three days, it could have been:

Day 1 Left Sittim/arrived at Jordan

Day 2 Camped by the Jordan

Day 3 Break camp/crossed the Jordan

Note the time table for reconciling this chapter with 1:11 is a little difficult. The spies might have gone out and returned before 1:11. Telling the relative timetable in Hebrew is difficult. The timetable might be:

Occurs First 1:1-9

Occurs Second Chapter 2

Occurs Third 1:10-18

Occurs Fourth Chapter 3 with some overlap with 1:10-18

Note the potential overlap in 1:11 and 3:2.

II. **Follow the LORD: Josh 3:4-12**

The preparations continue. We see a major part is for the Israelites to consecrate or keep themselves holy...by doing exactly what the LORD tells them.

In verse 7, since Joshua is God's appointed, he will get some of the glory when God produces miracles, such as the parting of the Jordan River. This exaltation for Joshua is not for his own sake since it will allow him to serve the LORD all the more and others will know that Joshua speaks for the LORD. If Joshua is exalted by the Israelites, what is the benefit of the LORD? As crossing the Red Sea was a great miracle associated with Moses, so crossing the Jordan is a great miracle associated with Joshua.

Notice the continuing use of "know" in verses 4, 7, and 10. After 40 years in the wilderness with only manna to eat, do the Israelites need more assurances from God?

This verse contains the other time in the OT that the following phrase in verse 10 is used in Scripture:

Num 16:28

28 Then Moses said, "This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea:

NIV

In these three chapters especially, and generally throughout the book, we see the Israelites in transition. We see the power being transferred to Joshua from Moses. We see them leaving behind their wondering wilderness years to settle down in the Promise Land. God seems to be telling them that He will be with them in the land and will continue to demonstrate this, if they follow Him.

III. Crossing the Jordan: Josh 3:13-17

Crossing of the Jordan is the second of the big three miracles of the book of Joshua. Some attempt to provide a natural fulfillment of this miracle. One might be possible, but we can never verify that it happened. So why bother? God would have had to work a miracle one way or another. Besides, the water heaping up apparently as the priests step into it makes a natural fulfillment a difficult task in this case.

In the dry season, it is easy to cross the Jordan, but now we were at its flood stage. The Priests were moving on faith. They did not know how they would cross. Apparently the river goes from flood stage to stopping its flow very quickly.

The wording is a little bit difficult to understand, but what is clear is that there was a lot of room for the Israelites to cross the Jordan. The usual interpretation is that the water was heaped up from where they crossed all the way back to Adam. However, the heap might have been from Adam to Zarethan, but that makes it tough to understand how the river could have gone from flood stage to dry in moments.

Notice that “dry ground” is mentioned twice in verse 17. If the river had simply stopped flowing, the ground would not have been dry. Indeed, the mud would have been so great that it might have swallowed some of the people.

IV. Crossing the Jordan, Again: Josh 4:1-18

Most of this chapter is aimed at retelling the crossing in more detail. This is an important event. Giving a summary of an important event, and then retelling it in more detail is something that we see in the OT.

Notice verse 18 also used the term “dry ground,” but now for the opposite bank which has never been under water. This is an emphasis of the miraculous nature of the crossing, that the river bed was dry during the crossing.

V. First Passover in the Land: Josh 4:19-24

The date is the day that the Passover lamb is selected. Chapter 5 has the Passover celebration in it.

Ex 12:2-3

2 "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. 3 Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.

NIV

Gilgal is the first of the religious bases used by Joshua and the Israelites. The other two are:

- Shiloh (18:1)
- Shechem (24:1)

Samuel used Gilgal as his base.

As with the original Passover in Egypt, God appears to be ready to battle again for the Israelites by showing His power (see also the end of Chapter 5), as per:

Ex 12:12-13

"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn — both men and animals — and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD.
NIV

The crossing appears to have two additional purposes beyond simple allowing the Israelites to travel from one side of the flooding Jordan to the other:

- "All peoples on the earth might know...the LORD"
- "[Israelites] might always fear the LORD"

VI. They're Coming! Josh 5:1

Josh. 5:1

5:1 Now when all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings along the coast heard how the LORD had dried up the Jordan before the Israelites until we had crossed over, their hearts melted and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites.
NIV

First, notice the use of "we" in the verse, indicating an eyewitness participant in the crossing.

Obviously God is working as this verse is also an allusion to:

Josh 2:10-11

10 We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. 11 When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below

NIV

Ex 15:14-16

14 The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia. 15 The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away; 16 terror and dread will fall upon them. By the power of your arm they will be as still as a stone — until your people pass by, O LORD, until the people you bought pass by.

NIV

VII. Circumcision of the Men: Josh 5:2-9

Another new beginning, the circumcision of the men in the Promise Land.

Apparently, the Israelites had not been circumcising during their wilderness travels and are being commanded to start again. It is not clear when they stopped circumcising. The only record appears in this chapter. Apparently, part of the reason...maybe all of it...is that those who rebelled were no longer worthy to perform circumcision. Therefore, the Israelites had stopped circumcising until all of them had died.

Deut 2:16-18

16 Now when the last of these fighting men among the people had died , 17 the LORD said to me, 18 "Today you are to pass by the region of Moab at Ar.

NIV

The last of those who had rebelled had died within the last year.

Somehow, circumcising all the men does not appear to be the most practical way to get an army ready for a big battle (of Jericho). Of course, the real resource in the battle is the LORD; therefore, if He commands it, one should obey Him.

VIII. Manna's End: Josh 5:10-12

Another transition is occurring. In this chapter, they start eating the produce of the land, and the manna stops coming. For the entire lives of the Israelites, manna has been their main food. What kind of impact do you think that it would have made on them when it stopped falling.

IX. The "Man": Josh: 5:13-15

Joshua sees a "man" who later identifies himself as the commander of the army of the LORD. The purpose of the presence of the being is simply to point out how ready the LORD was to fight for the Israelites.

The nature of the "man" is much debated. As commander of the LORD's army, he had to be some kind of celestial being. Some identify him as the Angel of the LORD, while others identify him as the LORD.

We cannot be sure since Scripture does not tell us, but a couple of reasons why he might be one or both of these beings:

- Joshua worships him and is not rebuked
- The mentioning of the Holy Ground

Certainly, this being sounds a lot like the one from:

Isa 59:15-17

15 The LORD looked and was displeased that there was no justice. 16 He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm worked salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. 17 He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak

NIV

Within the book of Joshua, we see Joshua following in the footsteps of Moses and repeating some of his experiences. The Holy Ground comment reminds us of Moses in his first recorded visit to Mt. Sinai and his encounter with the Angel of the LORD or the LORD Himself.