

God Will Give You Dry Ground

Joshua 3:1-17

(2 Samuel 6:1-7)

PICTURE: The picture of George Washington crossing the Delaware is certainly a defining moment in our nation's psyche. Israel crossing Jordan and inheriting God's 400-year-old promise is an event of national importance to Israel.

They were delivered from Egyptian bondage 40 years ago and have wandered in the wilderness for about that same time. Just like crossing the Red Sea changed everything for Israel, so crossing the Jordan River does something unique for Israel.

Last week we saw how the news of Israel's success over Egypt and two kings in the wilderness led to Rahab's confession of faith in Israel's God

2:10-11 - *For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction.^[a] "And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.*

This event is so big that Joshua takes 2 chapters to cover it, in part because it harkens back to two important events in Israel's history: the Red Sea crossing and Sinai and the 10 Commandments.

Ch 3 = preparing to cross

Ch 4 = building a memorial to commemorate the crossing

Ch 1 – Joshua told the people they have 3 days to prepare to cross. He used the time to send spies into the land

Ch 2 – Rahab aided the spies because she was a believer in Israel's God

Ch 3 – Israel crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land

First: The Beauty of Christ, Our Ark Who Goes Before Us. 1-6

If you travelled with us to Israel last time, you will remember that we passed through Shittim and our guide, Jeremy, took the time to point it out to us.

Our attention turns to vs 3-4 & 6.

Picture: Ark of the Covenant

a) The Ark of the Covenant

It is so easy to see how Jesus *"interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself"* (Luke 24:27).

The ark was the most significant object in Old Testament worship.

Picture: Tabernacle

The Tabernacle was about 150ft x 75 ft with curtains about 7 ½ feet tall.

It was placed in the Holy of Holies, a 15x15 cubicle at the pinnacle of the Tabernacle

Picture: Ark of the Covenant

The ark was about 4ft by 2 ½ feet by 2 ½ feet. It weighed approximately 650lbs or 160lbs per man on a pole.

- A wooden box – Jesus in his humanity
- Overlaid with gold – Jesus in his divinity
- Containing:
 - Aaron’s rod that budded – Jesus as the Resurrection
 - Manna – Jesus as the bread of life

John 6:32-33 - Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

- The unbroken Ten Commandments – Jesus as the Law Fulfiller

Matthew 5:17 - Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

- A mercy seat, including the angels, was made of one single piece of gold covered the box
 - Two cherubim looking down on the mercy seat

Luke 18:13 - the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful [hilasterion = a mercy seat] to me, a sinner!’

He had no idea that God had answered his cry in the person who told the story to the rich young ruler

On the Day of Atonement – Yom Kippur – last Tuesday, Sept 18th - two goats were sacrificed in different ways:

- a) Propitiated – covered by the goat that was slaughtered
- b) Expiated – taken away in the goat who was banished to the wilderness

For CG Leaders: The sufficiency and completeness of the sacrifice of Christ is seen in the two goats. The blood of the first goat was sprinkled on the ark, ritually appeasing the wrath of God

for another year. The second goat removed the sins of the people into the wilderness where they were forgotten and no longer clung to the people. Sin is both propitiated and expiated God's way—only by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Propitiation is the act of appeasing the wrath of God, while expiation is the act of atoning for sin and removing it from the sinner. Both together are achieved eternally by Christ. When He sacrificed Himself on the cross, He appeased God's wrath against sin, taking that wrath upon Himself: "*Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*" ([Romans 5:9](#)). The removal of sin by the second goat was a living parable of the promise that God would remove our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west ([Psalm 103:12](#)) and that He would remember them no more ([Hebrews 8:12](#); [10:17](#)). (<https://www.gotquestions.org/Day-Atonement-Yom-Kippur.html>)

- The High Priest sprinkled blood on the mercy seat
- The Shekinah glory of God rested there

John 1:14 - And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

When Mary came to the empty tomb, she found -

John 20:12 - And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.

Just like on the ark of the covenant

1 Peter 1:10-12 - Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, "inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories." It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

V 3 - As soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it.

V 6 - And Joshua said to the priests, "Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people.

V 14 - So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people,

The ark precedes Israel across the Jordan just as Christ precedes us to victory

2 Corinthians 2:14 - But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession...

God gives Israel everyplace that Joshua's foot steps (1:3) because Joshua represents Christ who has won a new land for us in his death, burial and resurrection.

The ark precedes Israel into the Promised Land just as Christ as preceded us into that eternal Promised Land.

Joshua waited 3 days to see if the spies brought back news that God had given them the Promised Land.

The disciples waited 3 days for the news that Jesus was not dead but forever alive.

Just like the ark, *"Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf..."* (Hebrews 6:20)

Those 2 angel spies said –

"Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said" (Matt 28:5).

No wonder those 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus said:

"Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32).

V 4 - *Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about 2,000 cubits^a in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before."*

Because the ark symbolized God's presence, it needed to be carried 2000 cubits in front of the column—a distance of about a thousand yards. Just as the people of God nor their animals were not allowed to approach Mount Sinai lest they be killed—because God was present there—now they are commanded to keep their distance from the ark.

GOSPEL:

Exodus 25:10-16 - They shall make an ark of acacia wood. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. ¹¹You shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and outside shall you overlay it, and you shall make on it a molding of gold around it. ¹²You shall cast four rings of gold for it and put them on its four feet, two rings on the one side of it, and two rings on the other side of it. ¹³You shall make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. ¹⁴And you shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark to carry the ark by them. ¹⁵The poles shall remain in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it.

T - 2 Samuel 6:1-7

God struck Uzzah dead because Uzzah infringed on God's holiness (uniqueness). David made a mistake, but God didn't need Uzzah's help to maintain the ark's balance/wellness.

Psalm 66:5 - *Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.*

Psalm 68:35 - *Awesome is God from his sanctuary*

Job 37:22 - *God is clothed with awesome majesty.*

"Awesome" = "terrible."

God is a beautiful terror, terribly beautiful.

John 1:14 - *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The truth is that we are sinners like Rahab.

The grace is that Jesus saves sinners worse than Rahab.

When it comes to sin...

The truth is worse than you could imagine.

Grace is greater than you can believe.

Second: How We Follow Jesus 4-5

a) Watch the ark. v 4

Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about 2,000 cubits^(a) in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before."

b) Consecrate yourselves. v 5

"Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you."

This is a constant theme in Scripture.

- The Lord will work wonders among you
- Consecrate yourselves

Exodus 19:10-15 - *When Moses told the words of the people to the Lord "the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments "and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. "And you shall set limits for the people all around, saying, 'Take care not to go up into the mountain or touch the edge of it. Whoever touches the*

mountain shall be put to death. "No hand shall touch him, but he shall be stoned or shot;"¹⁴ whether beast or man, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain." "So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and consecrated the people; and they washed their garments. "And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman."

- God is holy
- Our first and most intimate relationship is with him

1 Peter 1:14-19 - As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, "but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, "since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." "And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, "knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, "but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

What does that mean? The blood of Jesus is sufficient to make you "holy in all your conduct" (15). Now that we are in Canaan, let's live like it. Let's live in the promises of God to make us new creatures. Let's not make excuses for our sin. Let's own it but not condone it. Don't be shy and don't lie. Let's confess it to God and to one another and live as God's peculiar, forgiven, changed people.

Third: The Dry Ground God Gives us. 7-17

17 - Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.

The Priests, holding the ark, kept back the flood as Israel crossed the Jordan River.

Jesus to Emmaus disciples: "Remember those priests. I did that for you. I held back God's wrath and made dry ground for you to move from being a sinner to a Christian."

If we have Christ, we have dry ground. If we have Christ, the wrath of God is held back.

T - Romans 8:31-37 - *What then shall we say to these things?*

What things?

8:1 - There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

8:11 - If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

8:18 - *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

8:28 - *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

8:30 - *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

Oh, those things!

This is what we say as a result of these things –

If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What is Paul saying? He is saying what Joshua is showing.

If God gave you Jesus, he will give you dry ground!!!

Conclusion:

Given that Israel’s crossing of the Jordan was such a defining moment in Israel’s history, it is certainly not an accident that when Jesus seeks out John the Baptist in order to be baptized by him some thirteen centuries later, Jesus is baptized in the Jordan River, very near to the place where Israel crossed over into the land of promise.

We all know that God kept his word to Israel, but Israel failed to follow God. Jesus is not only the 2nd Adam (1 Cor 15:45) he is the 2nd son.

Matthew 3:13-17 - Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son,⁴⁰ with whom I am well pleased.”

In too many ways to recount, the ministry of Jesus is a reenactment of the history of Israel. In the earlier chapters of Matthew, Jesus went down to Egypt, returned to the wilderness of the Galilean hill country, and made his way to the Jordan River. Just as Israel came out of Egypt, wandered in the wilderness and then crossed the Jordan River, so Jesus is about to be baptized in the Jordan.

There is no dry ground for him. He endures its depth. (Ask your Presbyterian friends if Moses poured Red Sea water over Israel in a cup or if Joshua poured Jordan river water over Israel's head!!!) No, they went across on dry ground. In like manner, Christ was not sprinkled with God's judgement but immersed in it). And now that Jesus is about to embark upon his public ministry, Jesus comes to the Jordan River to be baptized, immersed, sunk in the Jordan, unlike Israel, unlike us, the obedient son, obeying the Father even to death.

John 8:28-29 - When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. ʘ And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.

Jesus is the greater Joshua. Jesus is the incarnated ark. Jesus is the dry ground that enables us to pass through life's raging river.

IMP: We will all pass through the river of life and death. But Christ will be there, in the middle of our Jordan, to see us safely to the other side.

BAND

Not only is Jesus the greater Joshua, he is also the true Israel, God's perfectly obedient Son.

- As Noah was saved from the world around by the waters of the flood,
- as Israel was rescued from Pharaoh's armies by the waters of the Red Sea,
- so Israel was granted entrance into Canaan by likewise passing through the water of the Jordan River.
- And Jesus begins his ministry following in Israel's footsteps

One day the true ark of God, the very God who saved Noah and Israel, underwent John's baptism in the Jordan. He stood between us and God's judgement. He underwent the raging flood, the Red Sea's torrent and the Jordan River's current. In so doing, he becomes the dry ground on which we stand and sing

*On Christ, the solid rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand...*

This is what it means for us to be baptized; to remember that Christ has undergone the Father's judgement on our behalf but come out alive forevermore.

He has done it for us. He has done it for you.

CGs:

- 1 – Read about Jesus with the Emmaus disciples in Luke 24:13-35.
- 2 – Describe the Tabernacle and its purpose.
- 3 – Describe the Ark of the covenant and its purpose.
- 4 – How did the Ark and its contents represent Jesus?
- 5 – Why was it necessary that the people of Israel watch the Ark as it crossed into the Jordan and stood there, keeping back the water?
- 6 – What is the publican asking God to do in Luke 18:13?
- 7 – How did the angels in the tomb hearken back to the Ark? What is the message? *(Christ has shed his blood, God meets with us at the cross and the resurrection proves it is all true)*
- 8 – How did God demonstrate his holiness in the way the ark was carried?
- 9 – Why did God strike Uzzah dead?
- 10 – Discuss the balance between “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.”
- 11 – According to 1 Peter 1:14-19, what is the practical value between redemption with silver and gold versus redemption by the ‘precious blood of Christ...’. *It makes us “holy” so that we can be “holy in all your conduct.”*
- 12 – God, in Christ, our Joshua, Ark and High Priest, gives us dry ground in the midst of a raging river. Explain the spiritual significance of that statement.
- 13 – Compare Romans 8:32 to this statement, *“If God has given us dry ground (Jesus) he will give us “Canaan” (all things).*
- 14 – How does Jesus obediently ‘relive’ Israel’s disobedience?
- 15 – What is the significance of that? *As the obedient Son, he contrasts Israel and does for them, what they could not do, not only winning our salvation but fulfilling Israel’s purpose, “in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 12:3).*
- 16 – What is your most significant take-away from this text?