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HOW ISRAEL CROSSED JORDAN

– *NOVEMBER 30.* – *JOSHUA 3:7-17.* –

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee." – *Isaiah 41:10.*

UNDER Divine direction, the hosts of Israel removed from the high bench of the Jordan Valley down to the river three days in advance of the time appointed for the crossing. The Jordan River, as usual at this season, was overflowing its banks. Ordinarily about ninety feet wide, it is supposed to have been about five hundred feet wide at this time.

The Canaanites in general and the people of Jericho in particular, although expecting an invasion, would not expect it at a time when the river was impassable and when bridges were little known. The Israelites, too, must have had various opportunities for exercising faith or doubt in respect to soon entering Canaan. The fact that nothing is mentioned respecting doubts or fears or murmurings implies that their experiences in the wilderness had taught them valuable lessons of faith in God and trust in Divine appointments.

The crossing day came, and Joshua, by Divine instruction, directed the priests to bear the Ark and to go before the people, proceeding to the brink of the river until their feet were in the water. As their feet touched the water, it began to recede and they to advance, until finally they [R5345 : page 330] stood in the middle of the stony bed of the Jordan, still bearing the Ark of the Covenant, which represented the Divine promise under which they had left Egypt and were hoping for grand results.

The hosts of Israel, lining the banks of the Jordan for miles, crossed over from Moab to Canaan. Thus the crossing was entirely accomplished. Twelve large stones, representing the twelve tribes,

were taken from the bed of the Jordan and piled on the shore as a monument or memorial of God's aid, while twelve stones from the shore were placed in the bed of the river as a similar memorial. Finally the priests followed the people to the Canaan shore, and shortly thereafter the waters began to return to the river bed, as before.

HOW THE MIRACLE WAS DONE

The fact that we may now know with considerable certainty just how this miracle was performed should not in the least detract from its value. With God nothing would be a miracle, since He of His own power is able to accomplish His will in every respect. Many things are miracles simply because we do not understand the Divine processes. We are miracles ourselves, fearfully and wonderfully made. The growth of the plant, the flower, or even a blade of grass, is a miracle to us – something wholly beyond our power, and in a general way considerably beyond our comprehension as a process.

The account tells plainly that the heaping up of the waters was in the direction of Adam. This place has been located with considerable certainty by Prof. Wright as situated seventeen miles above Jericho, on the Jordan. The waters became in a heap, a lake, the Professor assures us, by reason of a land-slide which choked the narrow passage in the river, where there were steep banks. The character of the soil in that vicinity would be favorable to the blocking of the narrow channel of the Jordan there by the slipping of the hillsides. Indeed, history tells us that a similar slide took place in the same vicinity in A.D. 1267, damming up the Jordan for several hours and leaving the bed of the river below quite dry, the waters draining off to the Dead Sea.

Prof. Wright says, "So striking is this conformity of the facts to the conditions indicated by the Biblical account, that geologists can find but little difficulty in believing the written record. At the same time the written record is so precise itself, and so free from fantastic

elements that the literary critic cannot well consider it as anything but the original, unvarnished tale of an eyewitness."

The marvel of the story is that the Divine marching orders were so timed as to suit the circumstances and conditions exactly.

THE LESSON WAS IMPRESSED

The memorial stones were to bear witness to future generations of this great act of Divine providence on behalf of Israel. Joshua admonished, "When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones? then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up from before us, until we were gone over: that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty; that ye might fear the Lord forever." – Joshua 4:21-24.

ENTERING INTO CANAAN REST

St. Paul, in Hebrews 4:5-8, gives us the suggestion that Israel's entrance of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua typified the entrance of the Church into the rest of faith and special privilege under the leadership of the antitypical Joshua, Jesus. The Israelites had rest from their wilderness journeyings. It was a wonderful change for them, a blessed change, yet it was not the full realization of all that God had promised them. That full realization will be attained only in Eden itself, and as a result of Messiah's glorious work of Restitution. Following the Apostle's lead, we perceive that the experiences of Israel up to the time when Moses died represented the Law Dispensation, which ended at the Cross. The Gospel Dispensation, beginning at Pentecost, is typified by the crossing of Jordan and the taking possession of the land, Canaan signifying rest.

"We who believe do enter into rest" – in proportion to our exercise of faith. He who exercises much faith may have much rest, and may conquer, and possess quietude. He who has less faith will have less rest and will be able only partially to enter upon his privileges. The storming of Jericho and the other cities of Canaan typified the warfare of the New Creature, begotten of the Holy Spirit, against the things of the flesh, the desires of the flesh, the weaknesses and depravities of the flesh. The Lord's word to those who would enter into His rest is, "Be strong and of good courage. Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed. The Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest."

Those lacking faith entered not at all into Canaan, but died in the wilderness. So we read, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the Election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Only the faithful will constitute God's Elect. Only these can pass from the old to the new conditions. Only these pass from death unto life without actually dying. Throughout this Gospel Age, God has been making up Israel's deficit by calling a similar class from all nations, peoples, kindreds and tongues. Each one is called upon to exercise faith and cross over Jordan, in the sense of beginning a new life – a life of devotion to God, a life of warfare against sin and the entrenched weaknesses of his own flesh.

We agree with the Apostle's words that "We who believe do enter into rest." All of God's consecrated people can testify that they have a rest, a peace, a joy, a blessing, which the world can neither give nor take away – and this in proportion to their loyalty and faithfulness. Yet even all this is not sufficient. God has in reservation something far better. Respecting this the Apostle declares, "There remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God." – Hebrews 4:9.

That Heavenly rest will be entered by the perfecting of the New Creatures in the First Resurrection. Their loyalty and faithfulness

having been demonstrated in fighting the good fight of faith against the world, the flesh and the Adversary, the Lord promises them a glorious change, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" – a share in His own resurrection to the perfection of the Divine nature, "far above angels, principalities and powers" and in association with Himself in the glorious Messianic Kingdom, by which the world of mankind is also to be blessed. – Luke 12:32.

THE SABBATH OF THE LORD

St. Paul intimates that the seventh day of the Law Sabbath typified the present condition of the Lord's people enjoying rest, peace and Divine favor even under imperfect conditions; but the true Sabbath will come for us when we shall have experienced our resurrection change. Then we shall have rest from sin. We shall also have rest from our own weaknesses and imperfections; **[R5346 : page 331]** for all of these will be gone. The New Creatures will be beings without flaw, blameless and irreprovable. "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

The weaknesses of others will no longer cause us unrest. The rest of the glorified condition of the Church will be perfect. But before we can enter into that rest, we must here show our worthiness by fighting the good fight of faith and by laying hold on eternal life, upon the conditions which are offered us, walking faithfully in the Master's footsteps.

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