

Joshua
Dip in the Brink
 Joshua 3

Israel's experience in their Exodus from Egypt and their entrance into the Promised Land illustrates two similar, but significantly different, aspects of our salvation as believers in the Church.

Like Israel, our *exodus* from the kingdom of darkness was all the work of God. All we did was apply the blood Christ to our lives, as Israel did with the blood of the Passover lamb, and we were saved that very day.

Like Israel, *entering* into our promised inheritance as God's redeemed people, though similarly dependent on God, is significantly different from our *exodus*.

1. Like Israel, possessing our inheritance happens little-by-little, not all at once (**Deuteronomy 7:22**; cp. **Philippians 3:12-14**; **2 Corinthians 3:18**).
2. Like Israel, to possess our inheritance, we are required to work in the process. Whereas our initial salvation (our exodus) did not require good works, once we are made right with God by grace through faith (**Ephesians 2:8-9**), that faith leads us to do good works as we are progressively transformed to be more like Christ (**Ephesians 2:10**).

To enter the blessings of our inheritance, we obediently work out our salvation (i.e., live holy lives) as God works in us the desire and the ability to follow through (**Philippians 2:12-13**).

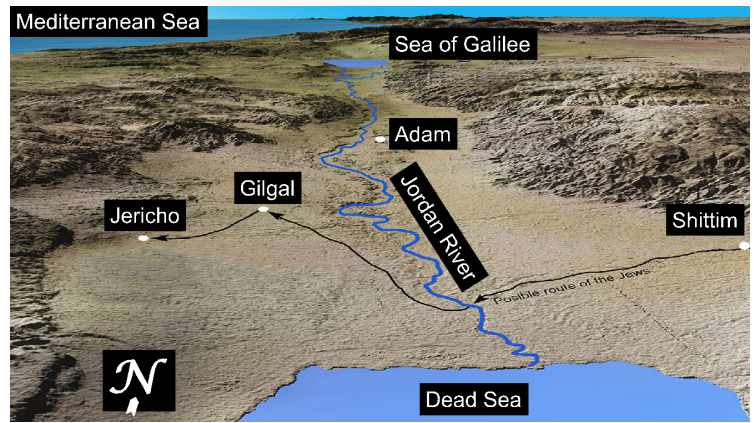
Joshua 2 - Joshua planned and prepared for active participation in the process.

Sending in spies was the prudent work of a wise general doing his part to prepare God's people to begin to enter into their inheritance.

When it comes to living the Christian life after initial salvation, St. Augustine said it well: *Pray like everything depends on God. Work like everything depends on you.*

Story

Joshua 3:1 *Then Joshua rose early in the morning and they set out from Shittim. And they came to the Jordan, he and all the people of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.*



As the account unfolds, several key themes emerge.

1. *God* - In every biblical narrative, God is the hero.

All four primary Hebrew names of God are employed in a single statement, putting God center-stage in the entire episode.

vv. 9-11 *Joshua said to the people of Israel, "Come here and listen to the words of **Yahweh** your **Elohim**." And Joshua said, "Here is how you shall know that the living **EI** is among you and that he will without fail drive out (the inhabitants of the land)—the ark of the covenant of the **Adonai** of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan.*

- **Yahweh** – God's personal and most important name
- **Elohim** – to swear by an oath; plural in form
- **EI** ("the living") – Strong One
- **Adonai** ("of all the earth") – Master/Lord of all creation

2. "the ark of the covenant" – All of what these names reveal about God is captured in this single piece of furniture.
3. "consecrate themselves" – **Exodus 19:10ff** = a washing of outer garments as a symbolic act of an inward dependence on God
4. "passed/passing over" appears 21 times in **chapters 3 and 4** (a single literary unit)

The root of "passed/crossed over" is *'abar*, which is also the root of *Hebrew* (Abraham - **Genesis 14:13**). Israel's entire salvation story as Yahweh's people was as "Hebrews," those who "passed over" bodies of water (Abraham over the Euphrates; Israel over the Red Sea and the Jordan).

Israel's salvation story is captured in their *crossing over* from paganism into a personal relationship with the living God, and what was true, literally, for Israel is true, spiritually, for us. In Christ, we have *crossed over* from death to life.

vv. 14-17 *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, and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest), the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off (i.e., the springs feeding the Jordan south of Adam). And the people passed over opposite Jericho. Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of Yahweh 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.*

Principle

Unlike initial salvation, our spiritual formation in Christ is not automatic and immediate; it's a process that requires us to work with God.

It wasn't until the priests, carrying the ark of the covenant, by faith *dipped their feet in the brink of the Jordan* that God did the astonishing thing.

When we, by faith, obey God's command, when we choose to work out what God has already worked in us, God does astonishing things in our personal transformation.

As we choose to put off the old self that is being corrupted by the world and put on the new self, that God created in us after his own righteous heart, we are able to become imitators of the living God! (**Ephesians 4:22-24; 5:1-2**)

Application

What's your raging Jordan? What's your Jericho? What "barriers" or "strongholds" stand between you and enjoying the abundant life Jesus offers you?

Like the Jewish priests carrying the ark, who, by faith, stepped in the brink of the Jordan, at the worst possible time, in flood stage, so each of us, as holy priests in God's kingdom (**1 Peter 2:9-10**) with the Gospel realities of God's power and presence before us, we can cross over our Jordans into the victory we have in Christ and conquer our Jerichos.

However, it won't happen if we don't move out and obey. If, by faith, we do not *dip in the brink*, if we are unwilling to work out what God has already worked in us, God will not do it for us.

Communion

The elements of Communion represent God's New Covenant with the Church as the ark represented his former Covenant with Israel.

Take this opportunity to *consecrate yourself, as Israel did when they prepared to cross the Jordan*, not with the ritual washing of your garments, because you have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ—you have already been washed.

Communion reminds us who we are and what we have because of the body and blood of Jesus. In him we have all we need for life and godliness—all we need to cross whatever Jordan to overcome whatever Jericho that stands between us and growing in Christ.

At the Lord's Table we get re-centered on the Gospel. We renew our perspective and realize, again, that God is for us. He is with us. He is in us, and he promises to work in us and through as we work to live, love, and lead like Jesus—to be imitators of the living God.