

Joshua 3:6-17 | Sunday August 9, 2026

In Joshua 3, Israel is at the bank of the Jordan River, waiting to see the Ark of the Covenant move. God was leading the nation in a unique way, by only using the Ark instead of the pillar of fire or the cloud. God is present with His people and is holy. Due to this, Israel had to set themselves apart as morally and ceremoniously pure and stay 3,000 ft. away. Even with these instructions, the ark was triple covered. God went to great lengths to lead His people. They had not gone that way before, and God wanted them to know where to go by looking to Him. The nation was to watch the Ark and let God lead them by it.

Joshua 3:6-10 ESV

(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.

(7) The LORD said to Joshua, "Today **I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel**, that they may know that, **as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.**

(8) And as for you, command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, 'When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.'"

(9) And Joshua said to the people of Israel, "Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God."

(10) And Joshua said, "Here is how you shall know that **the living God is among you and that He will without fail drive out from before you** the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites.

God had promised to do a wondrous thing in the sight of Israel, and He was going to use it in multiple ways. When Israel was able to cross the Jordan, Joshua would be exalted. Just as Israel knew God was with Moses because of the Red Sea crossing, at the Jordan River Israel would know that God was with Joshua. God also wanted His people to trust that He would without fail drive out the people from before them. As He performed this wondrous deed, **God wanted the people to know that He was the living God and would be active in the promised land.**

Psalms 42:1-3 ESV

(1) To the choirmaster. A Maskil of the Sons of Korah. As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for You, O God.

(2) **My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.** When shall I come and appear before God?

(3) My tears have been my food day and night, **while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?"**

The author of this psalm is in agony. He has been distressed and tearfully crying out night and day. He is full of doubts about where God is. **His soul thirsts for the living God.** He desperately needs a God who is not only big and powerful but also active and personal. **He needs a living God who can be relied on and trusted.**

By performing this incredible miracle of having Israel cross the Jordan, God wanted His people to know that He was the living God and could be trusted. God uses simple logic; if He is powerful enough to provide a way for Israel to cross the Jordan, then He would be powerful enough to, without fail, drive out the people from the promised land. **If God can stop a raging river, then He can stop the attacks of the Canaanites or Amorites.** God uses this same logic with us as

believers.

Romans 8:31-32 ESV

- (31) What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who can be against us?**
(32) He 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?**

God was willing to have Jesus step out of eternity and take on weak human flesh. God did not stop there but was willing to have Jesus suffer and die on the cross. If God was willing to give Jesus, God Himself, to us, then what eternally good thing would He ever hold back from us? **The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are meant to prove to us that our God is the living God.** It is meant to show His personal love and tremendous power. **Everything that comes into our lives is to be filtered by this amazing truth.** Just as Israel was to filter life in the promised land through the truth that they learned at the Jordan River. God proved to them and to us that He was more than adequate for whatever we would face. He is loving, powerful, and at work in our lives. He is the living God.

Joshua 3:8; 11-13 ESV

- (8) And as for you, command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, ‘When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, **you shall stand still in the Jordan.**’”
(11) Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is **passing over before you into the Jordan.**
(12) Now therefore take twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man.
(13) And when **the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the LORD**, the Lord of all the earth, **shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing**, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap.”

God gives Joshua clear instructions as to how He will stop the Jordan and let Israel cross it. The priests are to stand still in the Jordan. In order to do this, they will need to enter into the raging river. God promises that when their feet hit the water, then the river will stop. These instructions are not accidental. **God is showing us a very important principle in what it looks like to grow in our trust of Him.** To see it, though, we have to compare this miraculous crossing to Israel’s other miraculous crossing, the Red Sea. God uses both of these crossings in unique and separate ways in Israel’s story.

Exodus 14:9-14 ESV

- (9) The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.
(10) When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and **they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the LORD.**
(11) They said to Moses, **“Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?** What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt?
(12) Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? **For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.**”

(13) And Moses said to the people, **“Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will work for you today.** For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again.

(14) **The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”**

Israel was finally able to leave Egypt after God miraculously protected them during the Passover. The firstborn male from each household died unless the family had spread the blood of the Passover lamb on the doorposts of their house. **It was through the blood of the lamb that Israel was saved and redeemed out of Egypt.** Yet, once Israel saw Pharaoh’s army pursuing them, fear set in quickly. Notice that the Israelites are absolutely confident that they will die in the wilderness. They saw two options: live as Pharaoh’s slaves or die. This is after seeing all 10 plagues. Moses knew that God was going to provide salvation from Egypt. **God would be the one who would do it; they only had to be silent.**

Exodus 14:19-22 ESV

(19) Then the angel of God **who was going before** the host of Israel **moved and went behind them,** and the pillar of cloud moved from before them **and stood behind them,** (20) coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. **And there was the cloud and the darkness.** And it lit up the night **without one coming near the other all night.**

(21) Then Moses **stretched out his hand over the sea,** and the LORD drove the sea back **by a strong east wind all night** and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

(22) And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea **on dry ground,** the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

(23) **The Egyptians pursued and went in after them** into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

God does something truly amazing: the pillar of cloud moved behind Israel and stood between Egypt and Israel. This kept the Egyptians from attacking, and **it also made it impossible for any Israelites to go back to slavery in Egypt.**

Moses does exactly as he was told and lifts His staff (Ex 14:16) and stretches His hand over the sea. No one was asked to enter the Red Sea until after it was divided and the path was fully dry. Israel had the cloud behind them, keeping them from retreating, and walls of water on each side. **Their only choice was to move forward.** As the cloud moved with Israel, the Egyptians pursued after them.

Exodus 14:24-28 ESV

(24) And **in the morning watch** the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces **and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic,**

(25) **clogging their chariot wheels** so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians.”

(26) Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.”

(27) So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, **and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the LORD threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea.**

(28) The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of

Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, **not one of them remained.**

Throughout the night, over 2 million Israelites and the Egyptian army made their way through the Red Sea. The cloud kept them separated the entire time. Then in the morning watch, which was from **2 AM to sunrise (6 AM)**, God caused the Egyptian forces to be in a panic. All of a sudden they realized what they were doing and how dangerous it was. The dry ground became muddy, and their chariots began to get stuck. **Psalm 77:16-20** even hints that there may have been a massive thunder and rainstorm. At this point all of Israel was safely through the Red Sea, and God had Moses stretch out his hand again, and the water returned to its normal place and killed the entire Egyptian army as they fled directly into the crashing waters. God explains what important event the Red Sea represents.

1 Corinthians 10:1-4 ESV

- (1) For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were **all** under the cloud, and **all passed through the sea,**
- (2) and **all** were **baptized into Moses** in the **cloud** and in the **sea,**
- (3) and **all** ate the same **spiritual food,**
- (4) and **all** drank the same **spiritual drink.** For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

Israel was baptized into Moses. Baptize means to immerse in the sense of identification, like immersing yourself in a culture. Israel was identified in Moses, who is a type of Jesus. **It was Moses' faithful obedience that the rest of Israel benefited from, just as it is Jesus' faithful obedience that we benefit from.**

Israel's baptism into Moses represents our baptism by the Holy Spirit when we are identified with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:3-4 ESV

- (3) Do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?**
- (4) We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, **we too might walk in newness of life.**

This is not referring to water baptism but is the real event that water baptism reminds us of. Once someone believes in Jesus, they are identified with the cross and the resurrection. The Holy Spirit takes us and immerses us into Jesus. **This is not a second work or something that happens later into the Christian walk** but happens the very moment we believe in Jesus (Eph 1:13). For Israel, they believed in God's deliverer at the Passover. **The entire nation had trusted in the blood of the Passover lamb. This represented their salvation.** Then God brought them to the Red Sea and immersed them into Moses. **It is important to notice that no one was lost between the Passover and the Red Sea.** No one died or was even allowed to turn back. The passage emphasizes all. **Once you trusted at the Passover, you made it through the Red Sea.** The cloud made sure of it! The same is true for everyone who believes in who Jesus is and what He did. They are immediately baptized into Jesus the moment they believe; no one is left out. Yet even with all that God had done for His people, they still had a choice to faithfully walk and grow in their trust with Him.

1 Corinthians 10:5-6 ESV

(5) **Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.**

(6) Now these things took place as examples for us, **that we might not desire evil as they did.**

All were baptized at the Red Sea, and yet with most God was not pleased. Of that generation that trusted God at the Passover and Red Sea, **only Caleb, Joshua, and the Levites were able to enter into the promised land.** Israel was saved; they never stopped being God's people, and yet they were overthrown in the wilderness because they did not grow in their trust of God. This is meant to be an example for us to grow and learn to trust God and not desire evil like they did. Even though there is a new generation at the Jordan River, God continues to build on this picture. The Jordan River **is not** a picture of Israel being saved or being baptized into Joshua. **Crossing the Jordan River is a picture of learning to trust God and walk in obedience to Him.**

Joshua 3:14-17 ESV

(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,

(15) 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),

(16) 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. And the people passed over opposite Jericho.

(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.

Notice some of the key differences. **The priests were asked to take a step of obedient faith and trust that God would fulfill His promise.** God had told them exactly what He would do if they would get their feet wet. Now they had to take a step into the flooded, raging Jordan River. **Their soggy footprints are the key difference.** God performed an amazing miracle when they were willing to trust Him. **Their soggy footprints became firm, dry ground because of God's faithfulness.**

Also notice that the entire nation that wanted to cross made it over. We already know from **Joshua 1:12-18 that the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh** were staying on the other side of the Jordan. Only their soldiers crossed with Israel, and they will go back over the Jordan to get home in Joshua 22. There was no cloud pushing the people through. **Those who wanted to stay could.** God does not force us to grow and trust in Him but gives us opportunities to take a step of obedient faith.

Galatians 2:20 ESV

(20) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. **And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

As believers, we have been crucified with Jesus, and we have been given His new life. Now as we are still in this flesh, we are to live by faith to experience this new life. **We grow closer to God the more we have faith, the more we trust Him to fulfill His promises.** It is time for us to

get our feet wet and trust Him.

Ephesians 5:8 ESV

(8) for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. **Walk as children of light**
