

final preparations to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

## TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 2

1. How many men did Joshua send to spy out the land?
2. What was the name of the harlot into whose house they entered?
3. What kind of a ruler was over Jericho?
4. In the midst of what kind of farm produce did the spies hide?
5. What was the name of the king of the Amorites whom the Israelites had conquered?
6. What was the name of the king of Bashan whom Israel had conquered?
7. By what means did the spies escape from the harlot's house?
8. How long did the spies hide in the mountains?
9. By what sign was the harlot to identify her house?
10. What was the harlot's statement of faith in God?

## A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 3

- Vv. 1- 8 *God's instructions to Joshua.* Joshua and the people of Israel moved from their camp at Shittim to the banks of the Jordan. Just before they crossed over into Canaan, God spoke again to Joshua and gave him final instructions about the passage. A thrill of excitement must have run through the entire camp as they came to this thrilling moment.
- Vv. 9-13 *Joshua's instructions to the people.* Joshua ordered the Levites which carried the Ark of the Covenant to go before the people but to stop at the edge of the river. Joshua also

commanded the people to take twelve men from among them, one man from every tribe. These men were to select stones to carry out of the Jordan and use in the construction of a memorial.

Vv. 14-17 *The parting of the Jordan.* Although the river was in flood stage at the time, God wrought a mighty miracle as He caused the waters which ran down from the north to stop, and also prevented the waters from the south from flowing back into the river bed. Dry land was exposed, and the people of Israel were allowed to march across on dry ground. The priests who bore the Ark of the Covenant stood firm on dry ground where the water had been until all the people of Israel had passed over into Canaan.

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *God makes known His will to man.* God does not leave man alone in darkness to grope in an effort to find out the will of God. God had made known His will in an unmistakably clear way. He gave explicit instructions to Joshua as the people of Israel prepared to cross over into the Promised Land. He has given all mankind His will as they seek to know what is expected of them in their effort to reach an upper and better kingdom.
2. *God's people march in faith.* The people of Israel must have been sorely tried as Joshua ordered them to march forward toward the banks of the swollen Jordan River. The priests themselves led the way, and their faith must have been sorely tried as they were ordered to step down into the water and march forward as if they were to

attempt to walk across the flooded stream. Such is often the case of the believer as he is asked to do something for which he cannot see a reason. It is at this point where the Christian walks by faith.

3. *Obedience to God brings victory.* God does not always work in the same way. When the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea, Moses held up his staff over the water. The people of Israel may have been expecting Joshua to do something similar, but Joshua himself was in the background as they crossed the Jordan River. The priests took the lead. As they obeyed, God parted the waters of the Jordan. The people who had come to this point in faith and obedience were then enabled to cross the raging river on dry ground. In the spiritual realm such experiences are repeated day by day by those who trust and obey. They march forward to victory as they obey God.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### *God's Instructions to Joshua 3:1-8*

And Joshua rose early in the morning and they removed from Shittim, and came to Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over.

2 And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host;

3 And they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it.

4 Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore.

5 And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.

6 And Joshua spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people. And they took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people.

7 And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.

8 And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan.

1. *Where was Shittim?* 3:1

Shittim was Israel's last camping place east of Jordan before entering Palestine. The camp is described as being in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan by Jericho (Numbers 22:1). Here Israel stayed, and the people were ensnared. They began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. As they called to them to sacrifice to their gods, the people ate of the abominable sacrifices and bowed down to their gods (Numbers 25:1, 2). The camp itself must have been quite extensive, for it is described as being by the Jordan from Beth-jesimoth even to Abel-shittim in the plains of Moab (Numbers 33:49). The word Shittim is an abbreviation of Abel-shittim. It has been identified as Tell el-shamman in the plains of Moab opposite Jericho. Trees still fringe the upper terraces of the Jordan with a green border. It was near Mount Peor, and the heathen god which was worshiped here was known as Baal-peor (Numbers 25:3). As soon as the spies who had been sent out from Shittim returned to the camp, Joshua lost no time in making the final preparations to cross Jordan. He rose early on the next morning and commanded the

Israelites to move to the banks of the Jordan. At this point they paused before they passed over into Canaan.

2. *Why did the Israelites stay three days at the side of Jordan?* 3:2

In the first place, Israel was preparing to pass into an enemy's country. They not only had an army to prepare, but there were all the people (including wives and children) and all their possessions to move. The river had first of all to be crossed. Hence, it must have been necessary to make many preparations. This would easily occupy two or three days. Moreover, at this time Jordan was high and was seen to overflow its banks, so it was impossible to cross the fords. They were obliged to wait until this obstruction was removed. These three days were in addition to the three days which they had spent in waiting for the return of the spies.

3. *Who were the priests, the Levites?* 3:3

We are not to understand these as ordinary Levites, but the Levitical priests who were entrusted with the Ark. According to Numbers 4:4, the Kohathites were appointed to carry the holy vessels, which included the Ark of the Covenant, on the journey through the desert. It was the priests, however, and not the Levites who were the true bearers and guardians of the holy things. We may see this from the fact that the priests had first of all to wrap up these holy things in a careful manner before they handed them over to the Kohathites. Thus, they might not touch the holy things and die. On solemn occasions, when the Ark was to be brought out in all its full significance and glory, it was not the Levites but the priests who bore the Ark of the Covenant. All priests were Levites but not all Levites were priests. Priests were the direct descendants of Aaron. Aaron was the son of Kohath, who was one of three sons of Levi. The Levites were descendants of Levi and might have been from the

family of Gershon or Merari as well as the family of Kohath. To identify these Levites as being full priests would be a mistake. We might call them priestly Levites inasmuch as they had the responsibility to carry the holy vessels which were under the direct care of the priests. The distance between the people and the Ark was set at two thousand cubits. Two thousand cubits would be equivalent to three thousand feet, making the distance something like three-fifths of a mile. During the wilderness wandering it was customary for the standard of the tribe of Judah to be carried at the forefront of the band. Those who marched with him were in this first group and then followed along the sons of Gershon and Merari who carried the curtains, boards, and other parts of the Tabernacle itself. Behind these Levites came the standard of Reuben and with him were those who marched in his contingent. It was only at this point that the Kohathites moved forward bearing the vessels of the sanctuary. They in turn were followed by the standard of the camp of Ephraim and those with him. In the final group in the normal order of march were those associated with the camp of Dan. This crossing of the Jordan was an unusual march, and the Ark was set far in the forefront.

*4. Why did the Ark go before the people? 3:4*

The Ark was carried at a distance before the people not so much to show them the road as to make a road for them. In dividing the Jordan, God was leading them to Canaan by a way which they had never traversed before, i.e. by a miraculous way. The Ark was kept in the sanctuary, the Tabernacle, their holy meeting place. The chamber housing the Ark was called the Holy of Holies. The Ark itself was the holiest of all the holy furniture in the holy place. As such, it signified the very focal point of God's meeting place with the people of Israel. When

it led them in crossing Jordan, it was thought God Himself was going before them.

5. *Of what did the people's sanctification consist?* 3:5

This sanctification did not consist in their washing their clothing, for there was not time for this. Neither did it consist in merely changing their clothes, which might be a substitute for washing (Genesis 35:2). This consecration was more than the abstinence from connubial intercourse (Exodus 19:15), for this was only the outward side of sanctification. It consisted in spiritual purification also. This was turning the heart to God, in faith and trust in His promise, and in willing obedience to His commandments. Only in such a frame of heart and mind would Israel be prepared for God's leading them into the land of promise.

6. *How was God to magnify Joshua?* 3:7

Joshua was to be glorified before Israel. The miraculous guidance of the people through the Jordan was only the beginning of the whole series of miracles by which the Lord put His people in possession of the Promised Land and glorified Joshua in the sight of Israel in the fulfillment of his office as He had glorified Moses before. Moses was accredited in the sight of the people as the servant of the Lord in whom they could trust by the miraculous division of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:31). Joshua was accredited as the leader of Israel, whom the Almighty God acknowledged as He had His servant Moses, by the similar miracle, the division of the waters of Jordan.

7. *What was the Ark?* 3:8

The Ark of the Covenant is described by several different titles. Some of these are listed here as follows:

1. "Ark of God" (I Samuel 3:3)
2. "Ark of the Testimony" (Exodus 25:22)
3. "Ark of the Covenant of Jehovah your God" (3:3)

It was something like a chest. The dimensions were given as follows in Exodus 25:10:

1.  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cubits long
2.  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cubits high
3.  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cubits broad

Converting the cubit into feet and inches, we would find the Ark was three feet and nine inches long, two feet and three inches high, and two feet and three inches wide. The chest was constructed of acacia wood which was a fine grained, light and wear-resistant wood found in the Sinaitic area. All of it was overlaid with gold, and it was provided with rings at the four corners through which staves could be thrust enabling carriers to pick up the Ark and move it very handily. Across the top of the Ark was a mercy seat, evidently something like a lid since the dimensions given are the same as the width and length of the Ark. \*Above the mercy seat were two angelic forms whose wings reached out over the mercy seat and touched in the middle. This central piece of furniture of the Tabernacle symbolized the abiding presence of God among His people. As it was carried before the armies of Israel, it signified their God was leading them when they crossed over into Canaan.

8. *Where were the priests to stop with the Ark?* 3:8

When the priests came to the bank of the Jordan, they were to stand still. They were to form a dam as it were against the force of the water which was miraculously arrested in its course and piled upon a heap. It took a great deal of faith for these men to step into the swirling waters of the flooded river, but their faith was rewarded by a miraculous intervention on the part of the triune God. As these priests stood there while the thousands of Israelites swarmed across the river, they stood as a symbol of God's abiding presence with His people. Only after men, women and children, flocks and herds had crossed over into



Canaan were the priests themselves to come up out of the Jordan into the Promised Land.

9. *What significance was there in the use of the Ark?* 3:8

Moses had divided the Red Sea by stretching over it his rod; Joshua was to do the same to the Jordan with the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark had been the appointed symbol and vehicle symbolizing the presence of the Almighty God since the conclusion of the covenant. Whenever the ordinary means of grace are at hand, God attaches the operations of His grace to them; for He is a God of order, who does not act in an arbitrary manner in the selection of His means.

*Joshua's Instructions to the People* 3:9-13

9 And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the Lord your God.

10 And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.

11 Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan.

12 Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man.

13 And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon a heap.

10. *Why call Jehovah a "living God"?* 3:10

Jehovah is called a "living God," in contrast with the dead gods of the heathen. God proved Himself to be liv-

ing and watchful on behalf of His people. His being in the midst of the people did not denote a naked presence but was to a striking degree manifested in extraordinary operations. His presence was seen in the manifestations of peculiar care. The God of Israel would now manifest Himself as a living God by the extermination of the Canaanites, seven tribes of whom are enumerated, as in Deuteronomy 7:1.

11. *Who were the peoples mentioned?* 3:10b

The Canaanites were, in general, the descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham, the son of Noah (Genesis 10:1, 6). The word *Canaan* was used to describe all the land west of the Jordan. The Hittites were the descendants of Heth. The word *Hittite* is the equivalent of "son of Heth" (see Genesis 23:5; cf. 25:9). They enter into the narrative of Israel's history at various times, such as these:

- a. Abraham's day (Genesis 15:20)
- b. Spies' day (Numbers 13:29)

Some think the Hivites were villagers and that the term *Hivite* is a general term meaning "villager." At times they are confused with the Horites. No name resembling the Hivite term has yet been found in the Egyptian and Babylonian inscriptions. Of them we learn they dwelt in Shechem (Genesis 34:2), at Gibeon (Joshua 9:7), and at the foot of Hermon (Joshua 11:3). They were peaceful and commercial (see II Samuel 24:7; cf. Judges 3:3; Genesis 34:10, 23, 28, 29).

The word *Perizzite* also signified "a villager," and so corresponds with the Egyptian *fellah*. Hence the Perizzite is not included among the sons of Canaan in Genesis 10:15-19.

The Gergashites, in the Septuagint called *Gergesaios*, are also mentioned in Genesis 15:21, Deuteronomy 7:1, and Joshua 24:11; but their dwelling place is unknown.

The reading *Gergesenoï* in Matthew 8:28 is critically suspicious, although this fits them best of all.

The Amorites were inhabitants of the mountain or heights, though the derivation from *'abmin, summit*, is not established. They were a branch of the Canaanites, descended from Emor (Amor), who were spread far and wide over the mountains of Judah and beyond the Jordan in the time of Moses, so that in Genesis 15:16; 48:22, all the Canaanites are comprehended by the name. They were west of the Dead Sea to Hebron (Genesis 13:18; 14:13, cf. Numbers 21:13).

The Jebusites were inhabitants of Jebus, afterwards called Jerusalem.

The listing of these names on various occasions emphasizes the fact of God's judgment which was to come upon each and every one of these people. None was to be spared. All were to be dispossessed.

12. *Was the Ark considered as having authority over all the earth? 3:11*

The Ark of the Covenant of the Lord is not called the ruler of the whole earth. The description of Jehovah as "Lord of all the earth" is very appropriately chosen for the purpose of strengthening confidence in the omnipotence of God. Here His government over all the elements of the world is exhibited. The Israelites had no doubt. The seas and rivers were under His control. The waters though liquid by nature became stable at His nod.

13. *Why did Joshua ask the tribes to take men from among themselves? 3:12*

The purpose for the selection of these men is made clear from the events described in chapter four. Each man was to be from a different tribe. Each of the twelve tribes was to have a man from among themselves to stand ready for Joshua's special orders. They were to select stones from the midst of the river bed and carry them out to the other

side. Since each tribe had selected a man from among themselves, each had a part in the memorial which was to be erected. These twelve men stood as representatives of the different tribes, and their participating in the endeavor together symbolized the unity which bound the Israelites in their effort to conquer Palestine.

*14. By what power were the waters to be stopped? 3:13*

The priests themselves had no power. The fact that they were standing in the water would not be sufficient reason for the waters to cease their flowing. They could not make a dam to hold back the waters. The Ark itself had no power to cause the waters to stop. It was the Lord of all the earth who performed the miracle. The fact that the priests stepped into the water demonstrated their faith in God. God chose their standing there as a symbol of the unconquerable faith through which miracles are granted.

*The Parting of the Jordan 3:14-17*

14 And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people;

15 And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,)

16 That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon a heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.

17 And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

15. *What is striking about the mention of the overflow of waters?* 3:15

Every attempt to explain the miracle by a natural occurrence is thereby prevented. Often a radical critic pronounces the clause a gloss, and endeavors to get rid of it altogether. The text enjoys integrity, and the statement is a matter of historical record. The fact that the Jordan was overflowing would explain why a miracle was necessary in order for the people of Israel to cross at this time. When the Jordan is flowing naturally, it is a very small stream. When the winter rains have raised the head waters, the Jordan flows through a wide extent of territory stretching from the hill country of Judea to the hill country of Perea. It actually forms a sea of water through which no group of people could cross without divine assistance.

16. *Where was the town called Adam?* 3:16

This city is not mentioned anywhere else. It is not, moreover, to be confounded with Adamah, in the tribe of Naphtali. The town of Zarethan, by the side of which Adam was situated, has also vanished. These towns were evidently located some distance upstream from the point at which Israel entered the Jordan River. It is useless to speculate that they were located at a point where the bluffs of Perea are close to the mountains of Ephraim, thus making a rather narrow passageway for the Jordan's waters. Some who would deny a miracle at this point suggest a rock slide may have dammed up the Jordan River from the north, thus enabling the Israelites to cross on dry ground. Even if God did use an earthquake or a rock slide to dam up the waters at this time, it was a miracle that the waters were stopped at the very moment when the priests stepped into the water. Such an occurrence would be a miracle of timing, but the narrative points to more than a miracle of timing. It was a miracle of

divine intervention into the affairs of man. It was performed by the prerogative and at the insistence of the Maker of heaven and earth.

*17. How long would it take this multitude of people to cross Jordan? 3:17*

It is said that the priests stood in the midst of Jordan in the bed of the river. All Israel went over upon dry ground. This could easily have been accomplished in half a day, if the people formed a procession of a mile or more in breadth. The people evidently did not pass across in single file or two abreast. They must have literally swarmed across the river in great exuberance as they saw what the hand of God was doing for them. Their anxiety about the coming campaign must have been relieved as they saw how God led them even in this initial stage of their attack on Canaan.

### TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 3

1. Where was Israel's camp before they crossed the Jordan?
2. How long did the people of Israel wait at the edge of the Jordan?
3. How much space was between the people of Israel and the Ark?
4. List three of the seven names by which groups of the inhabitants of Canaan were identified.
5. How many men were the people of Israel to select for Joshua's special task?
6. What time of year was it when the people crossed Jordan?
7. Near what city on the north were the waters stopped?
2. By what two names was the Dead Sea identified?
9. What town in Canaan was directly opposite the point where they crossed?

## JOSHUA

10. What article of tabernacle furniture was to go before the people?

### A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 4

- Vv. 1- 9 *The memorials of the crossing.* The purpose for the selecting of twelve men from among the tribes of Israel was finally demonstrated as each man took a stone out of the midst of the Jordan River and carried it to the western shore. Joshua himself set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the Ark of the Covenant had stood.
- Vv. 10-18 *The crossing completed.* Joshua was shown to be God's appointed leader as the crossing was successfully completed. After all the people had crossed the Jordan, the priests themselves came up out of the Jordan. When the priests came up out of the Jordan River valley, the water returned to its place and flowed over all its banks as it had done before.
- Vv. 19-24 *The purpose of the memorial.* God did not perform a miracle simply to make the expedition of the Israelites an easy matter for them. What He did was accomplished in order that the Israelites might fear God and all the people of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is mighty (v. 24).

### LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *The fathers are teachers.* God had commanded Joshua to select twelve men from among the tribes of Israel to bear stones up out of the Jordan valley. These were