

General Church Education



Crossing the Jordan

Joshua 3

Lesson 5

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 4: The Lord Is the Hero

For ages 9-10

Crossing the Jordan

Joshua 3

Teacher Background

For many generations the children of Israel lived in Egypt. During that time they became wealthy. The Writings compare this wealth to the wealth of true ideas a person learns during childhood. As the Israelites left Egypt they crossed the Red Sea. Spiritually this pictures the dawn of a new state, a state of *living* by the true ideas learned from obedience during childhood. The children of Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years before they were ready to enter Canaan, the Promised Land. We spend much of our lives wandering too, sometimes doing what is right, and sometimes making mistakes. A person choosing to follow the Commandments and live a heavenly life must eventually “cross Jordan” to “enter Canaan”. This happens when the person starts acting from the motivation of loving the Lord and doing His will, not simply obeying Him.

Crossing the Jordan River was the first step in fulfilling the Lord’s promise to Abram. Priests carried the ark of the covenant, containing the Ten Commandments, into the river. As their feet touched the water, the flood water rushing downstream from Mount Hermon to the Dead Sea stopped. It was held back upstream so the people could cross on dry land. This pictures the way the Ten Commandments can hold back false ideas in our lives. When the children of Israel finished crossing and the water flowed again, the water represented clear truths in the Word that introduce a person into heavenly life. Because of this, John the Baptist later baptized people in the Jordan River.

Key Ideas The ark containing the Ten Commandments led the children of Israel into the land of Canaan.

- True ideas from the Word have the power to lead us to heaven.
- The Lord can separate us from selfish feelings and thoughts, as He parted the Jordan River.

From the Writings

“Since the ark signified the Lord, miracles were performed by means of the ark. The waters of Jordan were divided by it, so that the children of Israel passed over on dry ground.... This signifies introduction into heaven. Spiritually, the children of Israel mean the faithful, who, after enduring temptations, signified by wanderings in the wilderness, are brought into the church; for Canaan signifies the church and Jordan signifies the first entrance into it. The waters of Jordan signify introductory truths. These are truths from the literal sense of the Word. But here the river Jordan signified the falsities of evil which lead to hell, because Canaan was then filled with idolatrous nations, which signify evils and falsities that constitute hell. They had to be driven so that there might be a place for establishing the church. Because the waters of Jordan then signified the falsities of evil they were divided and kept back so that a passage might be given to the children of Israel, who were to represent the church.” *Apocalypse Explained* 700.11,12

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Vocabulary

sanctify—to make holy by receiving the Lord

ark of the covenant—the ark containing the Ten Commandments from the tabernacle

priest—a man from the tribe of Levi who served in worship

Preparing to Cross the Jordan River

The day the children of Israel were to cross the Jordan River was a great day. At last the Lord's promise would be fulfilled. The children of Israel would enter the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob so many years before. They had dreamed of this day for many years. After years of living in tents, they would finally build homes and plant their own gardens, vineyards and olive trees.

The children of Israel had wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Every man who was older than twenty when they left Egypt had died in the wilderness—except for Joshua and Caleb. Do you remember why they were allowed to go into the land? Joshua was now eighty-six years old. All the other men were younger than sixty years. So Israel was a nation of young, strong, well-trained soldiers who were ready to conquer the land.

The People Sanctify Themselves

On the day before crossing the Jordan the children of Israel were to get ready for a great miracle. They were to sanctify themselves. "Sanctify" means to make holy. They washed themselves,

and offered sacrifices to the Lord. The priests sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices on the people, and put olive oil on them. Everyone worshiped the Lord.



Crossing the Red Sea

Let's think back to what happened when the children of Israel escaped from Egypt. Right after Pharaoh let them go they quickly went as far as the Red Sea. The Red Sea is an inlet of the Indian Ocean. There, the children of Israel were trapped by the Egyptians behind them and water in front of them. The Lord commanded Moses to

lift up his rod and stretch his hand out over the water. A strong east wind blew through the water and miraculously dried it up. The water rose up like a wall on either side, and the children of Israel walked through the water on a path of dry ground.

The Jordan River

As the children of Israel looked into the promised land, they faced water again—this time in the river Jordan. The Jordan River flows rapidly down from Mount Hermon (9232 feet *above* sea level in the north to the Sea of Galilee. From there it flows more gently down to the Dead Sea (1412 feet *below* sea level in the south. The Jordan was not always hard to cross, but the children of Israel arrived at harvest time. During harvest, rains flooded the river, so it spilled over its banks. The water was deep and flowed fast. Only a miracle could help the people cross safely with their families, livestock, tents and supplies.



The Ark of the Covenant

While the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness the Lord gave them the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. At the Lord's command, Moses built an ark, a beautiful wood box covered with gold, with golden cherubim on the lid, to protect them. The ark was kept in the most holy part of the tabernacle. Whenever the children of Israel moved, the priests protected the ark with special coverings, and the ark led the way forward. It would now lead the people into the Promised Land.

The Power of the Ten Commandments

The waters of the Jordan rushed from the mountains to the Dead Sea. Dead Sea water is so salty for fish and plants to live in it. It is the lowest place on earth, more than a thousand feet below sea level. Similarly, hell is the lowest part of the spiritual world. The rushing flood of water was like false ide-as that tell us to do what is wrong, and lead us down towards hell. The Ten Commandments are the only thing that can stop bad thoughts, just as the ark containing the Ten Commandments was the only thing that could stop the Jordan River.

Crossing the Jordan River

As soon as the feet of the priests carrying the ark touched the Jordan River, the waters far upstream stopped and rose up in a heap. The rest of the water flowed down to the Dead Sea, so the priests holding the ark stood on dry ground. It was a miracle! The priests stood still, holding the ark

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in the riverbed, until the children of Israel were all safely across. It must have taken a long time for so many families and animals to cross.

Read Joshua 3:1-17.

The Power of the Lord

The children of Israel were told to stay far away from the ark —2000 cubits or more than half a mile—as they crossed. The ark represented the Lord’s great power with the people. His Word has the same power for us today. Just as the Lord’s power held back the Jordan River, the Lord’s power through His Word can separate us from selfish thoughts and feelings. While this is happening the Lord may feel far away, just as the Israelites were far away from the ark. But we know that He is really always close, fighting for us during our battles and leading us towards heavenly life. The miracle of crossing the Jordan River was a sign that the Lord was with the children of Israel, and that He would drive out their enemies as they entered the Promised Land.

Discussion Questions

- Have you ever seen a river overflow its banks—perhaps during a storm? What was it like? Would it be safe to cross a river like that? How might children or animals cross a flooded river?
- During which season did the children of Israel arrive at the Jordan River?
- Harvest time is a time of gathering crops grown from seed planted in the ground. What seeds take root in our minds? How are they “gathered in”, like the harvest?
- We “cross the Jordan” by making a true idea part of our life through acting on it. For example, we may know it’s wrong to take others’ things. At first we might not take something because we don’t want to get caught. Later, we might not take something because the Lord says we shouldn’t. “Crossing the Jordan” is the difference between these two attitudes. Can you think of an example from your own life?
- Why did the ark have power? Why was it important for the ark to lead the way?
- What, today, has the power to lead the way to heaven?
- Why was the land of Canaan called the Promised Land? What promise does the Lord make to us?
- Compare crossing the Jordan River with crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 14). How were they similar? How were they different?
- Was the drying up of the Jordan River something only the children of Israel saw? Or could others see it too? (See Joshua 5:1)

Activity Overview | Crossing the Jordan

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan. Joshua 3:11

Projects

Choose one or two activities.

- Arise! (watch a video and learn a song)
- Diorama of the Children of Israel Crossing the Jordan
- Picture to color—The Children of Israel Crossing the Jordan (Joshua 3)

Additional Activity Ideas

- The miracle of the crossing of the Jordan took place through the power of the ark of the Covenant. Go to <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/coloring-page-ark-of-the-tabernacle-exodus25.pdf> for a coloring page that tells more about the ark.
- Create a model of the ark of the Covenant, online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/project-cut-and-fold-model-of-the-ark-of-the-covenant-exodus25.pdf>. This activity is ready to print, cut out and assemble.
- Watch a video about the tabernacle model at Glencairn Museum in Bryn Athyn PA, US, online at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/video-the-tabernacle-of-israel/>. The ark of the Covenant, with the Ten Commandments inside, was kept in the holy of holies.
- When the children of Israel were commanded to move, it was carried with a blue covering over it, protecting it. For multiple choice/fill in the blank review questions on crossing the Jordan, go to <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/activity-crossing-the-jordan-review-questions-joshua03.pdf>.

Activity 1 | Arise!

Watch a video of *Arise! Go Across Jordan*, online at <http://bit.ly/AriseGoAcrossJordan>. Learn the song using the music provided. A sing-along video is available at <http://bit.ly/AriseSingAlong>.

Arise!

Joshua 1

John L. Odhner

Am Em G

3. As I was with Mo - ses so I will be with you.
 5. This book of the law shall not de - part from your mouth,
 6. For then you will pros - per in all of your ways,
 8. For the Lord God is with you wher - ev - er you go,

Am Em C G Am7 *All But Last*
 C/D D7 *Last*
 G

I will not leave you nor for - sake you. (*go to first page*)
 But in it you shall med - i - tate day and night, (*repeat this page*)
 And then you will have good suc - cess. (*go to first page*)
 God's with you wher - ev - er you go! (*go!*)—

Last time ritard.

Activity 2 | Diorama of the Children of Israel Crossing the Jordan

Create a diorama of the children of Israel crossing the Jordan using the figures provided. If you are working with a group of children, print several copies of the people and make a larger crowd.

Materials Needed

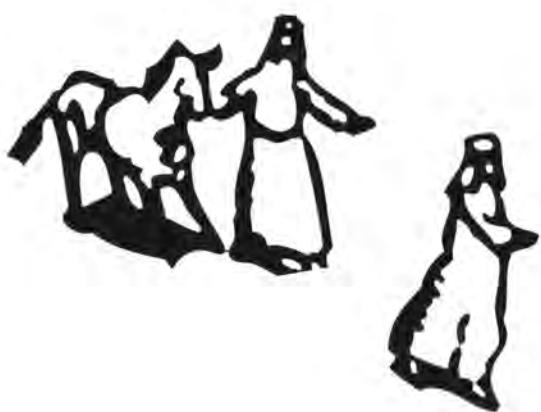
diorama figures printed on regular paper
colored pencils, crayons or markers
strips of stiff paper to create triangular stands for the figures
tape
cloths or colored paper to create a background, e.g. blue scarf for the Jordan river, neutral-colored sheet to be the ground
optional: simple props to complete the scene, e.g. small stones for the river bottom

Directions

1. Color the figures using colors of your choice, except for the ark.
2. The ark was protected with a blue covering when being moved from place to place. Color the covering blue. The priests are often shown with white robes.
3. Cut out the figures in groups. There is no need to cut carefully around each figure.
4. To mount a figure group for the diorama, fold a strip of stiff paper in half. Form a triangle by folding each end so that it creates a standing triangle. Tape to secure. (See picture.)
5. Tape a group of figures to one side of the standing triangle. Repeat until all figures are mounted.
6. Arrange the groups to show the children of Israel crossing the Jordan.



Diorama Figures



Diorama Figures



