

13.03 Crossing Jordan (Joshua 3:1–17; 4:1–24)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows.

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that should not be read aloud. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- “Joshua” Flash-a-Cards by A Beka Book, Pensacola, FL, 1985, and/or pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional needed materials.
- River rocks (smoothly rounded ones) large and small

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Tips and terms are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson.

Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *memorial*: a monument set up to remember a person or event
- *fearing God*: “The awareness that God observes every part of my life. That means I walk closely with Him as I make my way through life. I follow Him in obedience to His commands . . . trust His promises . . . and His warnings, and respect His threats” (Glen Knecht, an ARPC pastor).

Scripture: (ESV)

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. 2 At the end of three days the officers went through the camp 3 and commanded the people, “As soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it. 4 Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about 2,000 cubits in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before.” 5 Then Joshua said to the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.” 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. 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.”

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.

4:1 When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, 2 “Take twelve men

from the people, from each tribe a man, 3 and command them, saying, ‘Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests’ feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.’” 4 Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe. 5 And Joshua said to them, “Pass on before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, 6 that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ 7 then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.”

8 And the people of Israel did just as Joshua commanded and took up twelve stones out of the midst of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, just as the Lord told Joshua. And they carried them over with them to the place where they lodged and laid them down there. 9 And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant had stood; and they are there to this day. 10 For the priests bearing the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the Lord commanded Joshua to tell the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua.

The people passed over in haste. 11 And when all the people had finished passing over, the ark of the Lord and the priests passed over before the people. 12 The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh passed over armed before the people of Israel, as Moses had told them. 13 About 40,000 ready for war passed over before the Lord for battle, to the plains of Jericho. 14 On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they stood in awe of him just as they had stood in awe of Moses, all the days of his life.

15 And the Lord said to Joshua, 16 “Command the priests bearing the ark of the testimony to come up out of the Jordan.” 17 So Joshua commanded the priests, “Come up out of the Jordan.” 18 And when the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord came up from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests’ feet were lifted up on dry ground, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks, as before.

19 The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. 20 And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. 21 And he said to the people of Israel, “When your children ask their fathers in times to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ 22 then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.’ 23 For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, 24 so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.”

Introduction/Review:

Have you ever gone camping and anticipated a great event to take place the next day—something like river rafting or moving to a new place to live? Then you might be able to imagine a bit of the excitement Israel experienced as they anticipated, after about four hundred forty years of history, the imminent conquest of their promised land.

Two spies had come back from Jericho to inform Joshua that the people in the land were truly fearful of their coming. God was going to destroy them, and they knew it.

Two and one-half tribes (Reuben, Gad, one-half Manasseh) claimed land east of the Jordan River. They had promised to help their brothers fight while their wives and children remained at home.* They were ready.

Story:

Getting ready

Now last-minute preparations to enter Canaan were underway. Joshua told the people to get ready ✓by

preparing food because in only three days they would pass over Jordan to go into the Promised Land. Moving from Shittim to the Jordan put them right next to this river they were to cross. As the hours and days ticked down in the camp, officers spread word through the army: “When you see the ark of the covenant being carried, follow it. Stay 2000 cubits behind it.”

How far is 2000 cubits? [Have students do the math.] If one cubit equals 1½ feet, then 1½ x 2000 cubits = 3000 feet,] City blocks vary in length, but if an average block is 300 feet, 3000 feet divided by 300 feet is about ten city blocks. That is from the church almost to the hospital in our town. [Teacher, describe ten blocks’ distance in your town.]

Joshua continued his instructions: “You are to follow 2000 cubits behind the priests so that you will know where to go because we haven’t gone this way before. God will do wonders tomorrow.”

Getting close

The third day dawned. God said to Joshua, “Today I will show the people I am with you as I was with Moses. Command the priests to bear the ark of the covenant right up to the brink of the waters of the Jordan. They shall actually stand still *in* the Jordan.” (Hmmm. I wonder what standing *in* the Jordan means.)

Before they moved out, Joshua related to the people, “God will show you that you will drive out seven nations before you.” Joshua listed all these seven nations, and I will repeat them for you just so that you will be somewhat familiar with their names when we hear them again: the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. ✓At least two of these nations, the Canaanites and Amorites, had giant inhabitants.

“Now,” continued Joshua, “this is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that He will without fail drive out from before you all these people: When the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the Lord of all the earth shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the Jordan River shall be cut off from flowing. The waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap.”

If God could make water stand in a heap, He surely could drive out all those people. Would He really do it?

Moving on

The anticipated time to cross over had come. The priests took up the ark of the covenant. At that time of the year—the first month, tenth day (in March or April)—the Jordan River was in flood stage, meaning that it wasn’t a nice, quiet flow of water. Rather, the river overflowed its banks and was a gushing torrent. How would the priests and people be able to get across that raging river?

The priests kept walking closer and closer to the flood. They were almost there. Keep walking?! How could they? Yet they did, and—as soon as their feet touched the brink of that water, SPLASH-SH-SH-SH-SH! SPLASH-SH-SH-SH-SH! The water on their right side coming from the north heaped up as if a dam had suddenly been built. All the way back to a place called Adam/Zarethan [locate], which was ✓probably at the mouth of the Brook Jabbok 20 to 30 miles upstream, water backed up.

Yes! The priests walked right into the middle of that river bed. Didn’t their feet get muddy? No! God totally dried up that wet ground! Right there *in* the middle of the river, the priests stood still until all the people hurried across to the other side. (✓Some sources say this crossing took twelve hours.)

Getting rocks

When all the people had passed over, the Lord said to Joshua, “One man from each of the twelve tribes shall pick up one large rock apiece from the middle of the river and carry it on his shoulders to the place where you will camp tonight. You will pile up those big rocks. That mound of rocks will be a memorial sign for your children.”

Joshua himself piled twelve rocks in the middle of the river bed while the priests stood in place with the ark of the covenant. When Joshua and the men had completed all of these tasks, he and the priests stepped out

of the river bed. As soon as their feet touched the river bank, the waters whooshed down again and overflowed the banks of the Jordan River.

That night Israel camped at Gilgal close to the city of Jericho. The soldiers, their wives, their children, their older relatives, their livestock, and all their possessions were finally in the land.

Reminding children

There at Gilgal the twelve men who had carried large stones out of the Jordan River placed them in a pile, a memorial mound big enough to stir up questions from their present and future offspring. Joshua said the children would ask in times to come, “What do these stones mean?” Then they could say, “Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground. The Lord God dried up the waters of the Jordan until Israel passed over.”

The Bible states, “That day God magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him as they feared Moses, all the days of his life.” So it was as God had said to Joshua, “I will show the people I am with you as I was with Moses.”

How was God with Joshua as He had been with Moses? What event in Moses’ leadership was like the event in this story? [Crossing the Red Sea.] “For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over.”

That pile of river rocks memorial testified to God’s great and mighty power—“that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty; that ye might fear the Lord your God forever” (Joshua 3:29).

Do you know that the hand of the Lord is mighty? Do you fear the Lord your God? Will you fear Him forever?

*The census taken in Shittim counted 110,580 men able to go to war from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and one-half Manasseh (Reuben 43, 730; Gad 40,500; one-half Manasseh 26,350). Only 40,000 soldiers ✓from these tribes crossed Jordan (Joshua 4:13). It appears, then, that ✓more than 70,000 able-bodied men remained with the women and children east of Jordan.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus:

“The ark was a type of Christ . . . whom we are to follow whithersoever he goes or directs” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/joshua-3-3.html>).

In addition, “Christ . . . is the way to the heavenly Canaan” (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/joshua-3-4.html>).

The origination of this crossing place on the eastern side of Jordan ✓is likely the very location where Jesus was baptized (Matt 3:9; John 1:28) (<https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/joshua-4-9.html>).

Activities:

- Play dough: rocks
- Snack: Vanilla pudding colored with blue food coloring to represent the Jordan River. Give each student about ½ cup pudding in a bowl. Have students move the pudding to the right side of their bowls. (Optional: Place 24 raisins in the “dry river bed” to represent the twelve stones carried out by the men and the twelve set up by Joshua in the middle of the river.) Have students spread the pudding back over the bottom of the bowl before eating it.
- Have students calculate the distance the Jordan receded (from near Shittim to the Brook Jabbok) based

on a map's key. (The map found at the very end of this lesson might be helpful for this activity.)

- Starting at the 40-second mark, show a video of the Jordan River found at <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=jordan+river+at+flood+stage+&&view=detail&mid=AED46EBD037707C02290AED46EBD037707C02290&&FORM=VRDGAR&ru=%2Fvideos%2Fsearch%3Fq%3Djordan%2Briver%2Bat%2Bflood%2Bstage%2B%26FORM%3DHDRSC3>.
- Contrast (show the differences between) and compare (show the similarities of) Moses' crossing the Red Sea and Joshua's crossing the Jordan River. [Use the chart at the end of this lesson.]
- Sing "How Did Moses/Joshua Cross the Red Sea/Jordan?" (tune: refrain of "Battle Hymn of the Republic"). A song sheet and enlarged words are found at the end of this lesson. Go to the "Songs" page at teachingthebibleto kids.org for an audio and another visual aid.
- Review questions: (Game: For each correct answer a student may place a small river rock in a transparent container.)
 1. Where did Israel camp three days before they crossed Jordan? [By the Jordan.]
 2. Whom were the people to follow? [The priests carrying the ark of the covenant.]
 3. By what sign would the people know that God would drive out the nations of Canaan? [The priests carrying the ark of the covenant would stand *in* the Jordan River.]
 4. Why was the Jordan especially hard to cross at this time? [It was at flood stage.]
 5. What happened when the priests stepped into the water? ["The waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap."]
 6. Where did the twelve men take the twelve rocks after they gathered them from the river bed? [To the place where Israel camped that night, Gilgal.]
 7. What did Joshua do in the middle of the river? [He stacked up twelve rocks.]
 8. When did the Jordan's water return to its flooding flow? [When the priests stepped out of the river.]
 9. What would parents answer when children asked about the pile of large rocks in Gilgal? ["The God dried up the waters of the Jordan until we passed over as the Lord did to the Red Sea."]

Memory Verse[s]:

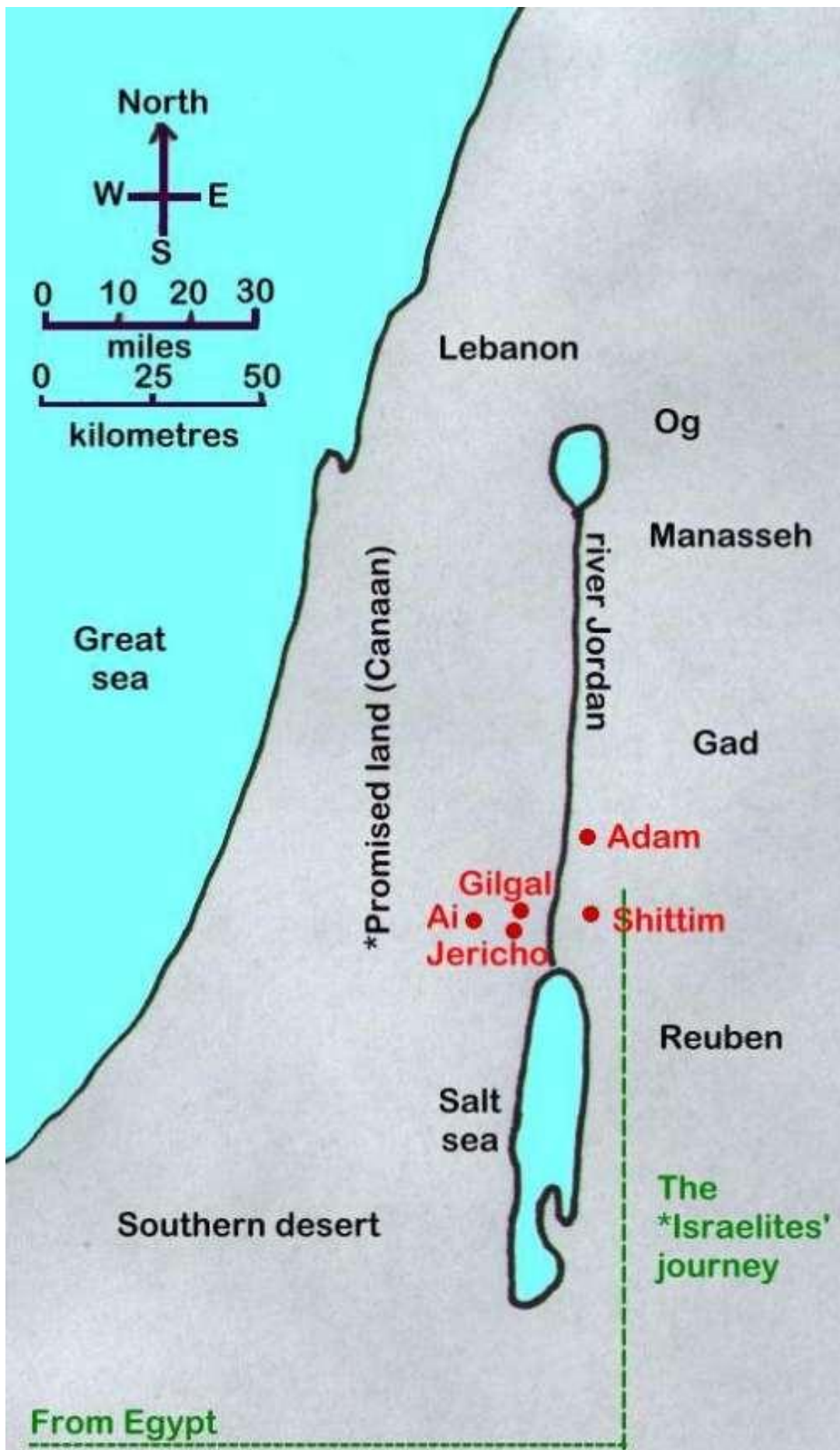
- Joshua 4:24: The hand of the Lord . . . is mighty. . . . Fear the Lord your God forever.

Handwork:

- Write with a permanent marker the memory verse on a river rock.

memorial

fearing God





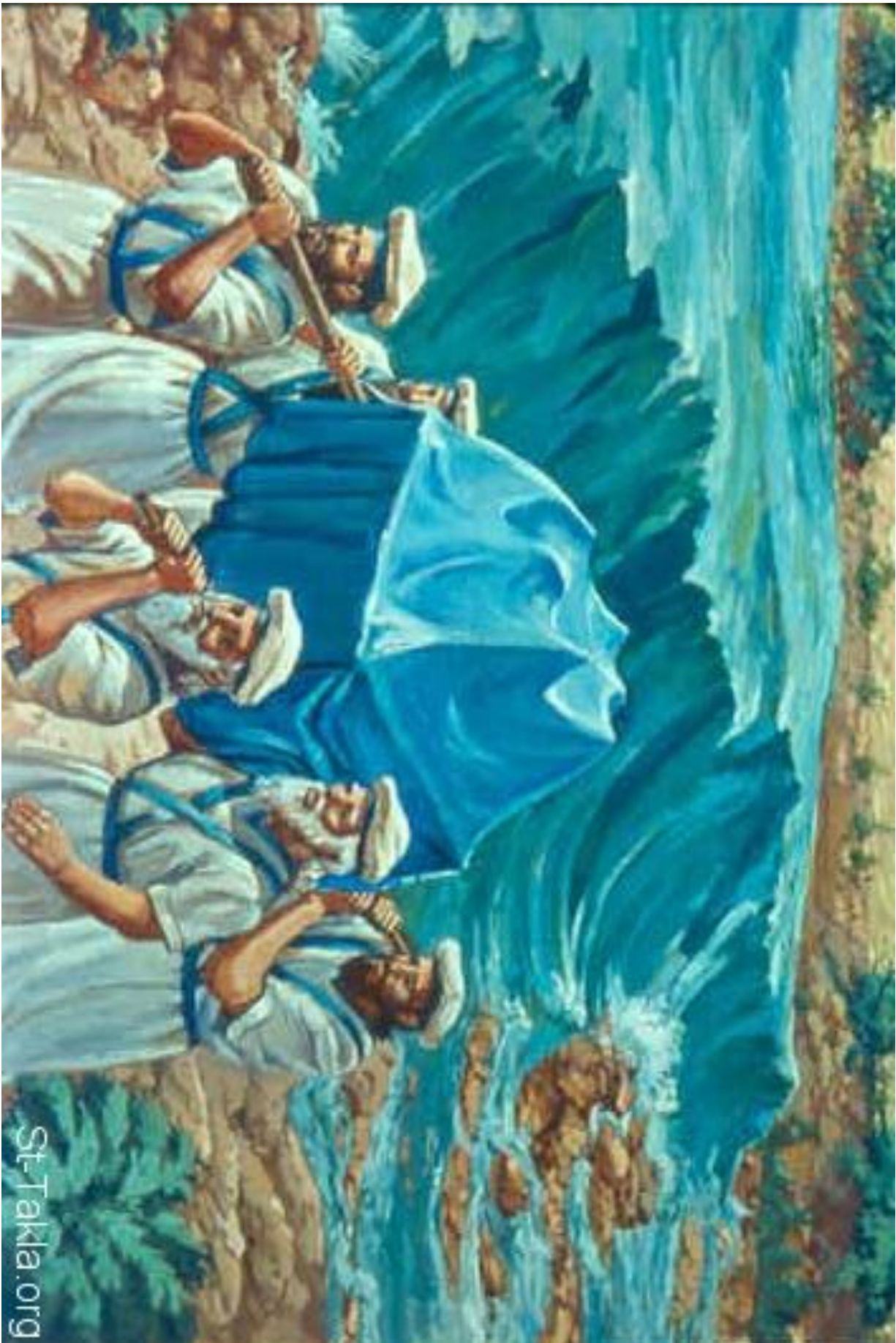


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Red Sea/Jordan River Contrasts and Comparisons

Red Sea	Jordan
Moses stretched out his hand.	Priests stepped off the land.
They crossed at night.	They crossed in the light.
The Egyptians chased.	Israelites would soon waste.
The Egyptians were drowned.	Twelve stones were found.
Water walled on two sides.	Water walled on one side.
They crossed the Red Sea.	Jordan River it was to be.

They walked on dry land.

They hurried across.

Lots of water walled up.


Only God could do this!

How Did Moses/Joshua Cross . . . ?

Words by M. Alexander


Refrain to "Battle Hymn of the Republic"

1 (See instructions for singing below.)




M:How did Mo-ses cross the Red Sea? J:How did Josh-ua cross the Jor - dan?

5



M&J:How did Mo ses cross the Red Sea? How did they get a - cross? M:Mo-ses
Josh - ua cross the Jor - dan?

9




stretched out his hand. J:Priests stepped off the land. M:They crossed at night. J:They

12



crossed in the light. M:They crossed the Red Sea. J:Jor-dan Riv-er it was to be. M:The E -

15



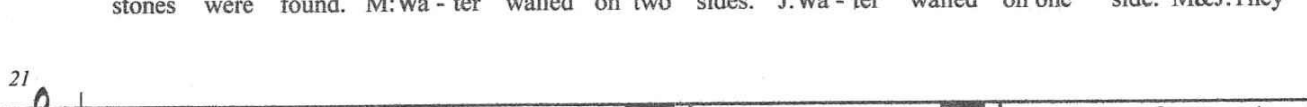
gyp - tians chased. J:Is - rael - ites would soon waste. M:The E - gyp - tians were drowned. J:Twelve

18



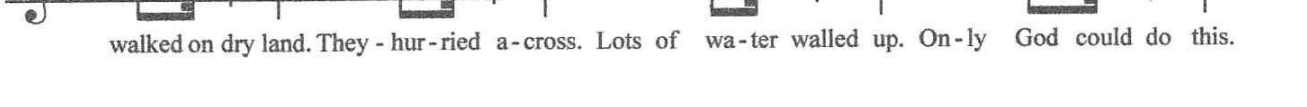
stones were found. M:Wa - ter walled on two sides. J:Wa - ter walled on one side. M&J:They

21



walked on dry land. They - hur - ried a-cross. Lots of wa-ter walled up. On-ly God could do this.

25



That's how Mo - ses crossed the Red Sea; That's how they got a - cross.
Josh - ua crossed the Jor - dan.

Divide singers into 2 groups; one group sings Moses' part (M), and the other group sings Joshua's part (J).

In the sections where two sets of words are shown, both groups sing their own words at the same time.

Where "M&J" are indicated, both groups sing together.

An audio may be heard on the "Songs" page at teachingthebibleto kids.org.

How Did Moses/Joshua Cross the Red Sea/Jordan?

M: How did Moses cross the Red Sea?

J: How did Joshua cross the Jordan?

**All: How did [Moses/Joshua] cross the [Red Sea/Jordan]?
How did he get across?**

M: Moses stretched out his hand.

J: Priests stepped off the land.

M: They crossed at night.

J: They crossed in the light.

M: They crossed the Red Sea.

J: Jordan River it was to be.

M: The Egyptians chased.

J: Israelites would soon waste.

M: The Egyptians were drowned.

J: Twelve stones were found.

M: Water walled on two sides.

J: Water walled on one side.

All: They walked on dry land.

They hurried across.

Lots of water walled up.

Only God could do this!

That's how [Moses/Joshua]
crossed the [Red Sea/Jordan].

That's how they got across.

(Tune: refrain from "The Battle Hymn of the Republic")

**LIMITS OF ISRAELITE SETTLEMENT AND THE
LAND YET TO BE CONQUERED**

JOSH. 13:1-7; 15:63; 16:10; 17:11-18
JUDG. 1:1-3:6

- City
- City (uncertain location)
- City specified by Judges 1 as not taken by Israel
- ▲ Mountain peak
- Limit of Israelite control
- Areas yet to be conquered

