

Joshua 3:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

This verse describes the fulfillment of God's promise—the miracle occurred exactly as predicted. The phrase 'stood firm' (amad nakon, עָמַד נָכוֹן) emphasizes stability and security; the priests weren't tentatively balanced but firmly established on dry ground. Their position 'in the midst of Jordan' (betok hayarden, בְּתוֹךְ הַיַּרְדֵּן) meant they stood in the riverbed's center while waters were supernaturally held back upstream and downstream. The repeated phrase 'on dry ground' (becharavah, בְּחֶרֶבָה) echoes Exodus 14:22, 29, deliberately connecting this miracle with the Red Sea crossing. God doesn't provide merely damp or muddy ground but completely dry passage. The phrase 'all the Israelites' (kol-Yisrael, כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל) stresses corporate participation—the entire nation, perhaps 2-3 million people, crossed. The final phrase 'until all the people were passed clean over' (ad asher-tamu kol-hagoy l'avor, עַד אֲשֶׁר-תָּמוּ כָל-הַגּוֹי לַעֲבֹר) indicates the miracle's duration; waters remained stopped until every last person safely crossed. This demonstrates God's patience and care for His people, holding back the waters supernaturally for the hours or days required.

Historical Context

Crossing 2-3 million people plus livestock through the Jordan riverbed required significant time, yet the miracle persisted throughout. Ancient military forces

would have been vulnerable during such a crossing, but God's supernatural intervention protected Israel from attack. The priests' courage in stepping into flood-stage waters before seeing the miracle demonstrates faith—they had to get their feet wet before waters parted. This contrasts with the Red Sea where Moses stretched out his rod first; here, priestly obedience precedes visible miracle. The crossing occurred during Passover season (Joshua 4:19), connecting Israel's entrance into Canaan with their deliverance from Egypt 40 years earlier. This timing emphasizes the unity of God's redemptive acts—the same God who delivered from slavery now brings into inheritance. The generation that witnessed this miracle would remember it as undeniable proof of God's power and faithfulness, strengthening their courage for the conquest ahead. Caleb and Joshua, the only adults who saw both the Red Sea and Jordan crossings, witnessed God's bookend miracles framing the wilderness period.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does the priests' courage to step into flood waters before seeing the miracle teach about the relationship between obedience and experiencing God's power?
2. How should God's care in keeping the waters back 'until all the people were passed clean over' encourage you about His patience and attention to every believer's needs?
3. In what ways does the dry ground through Jordan foreshadow believers' passage through death into resurrection life?

Interlinear Text

וַעֲמַד ו	הַכֹּהֲנִים יָם	נִ, שְׂאִי	הָאָר וִן	בְּרִית	יְהוָה ה
stood	And the priests	that bare	the ark	of the covenant	of the LORD
H5975	H3548	H5375	H727	H1285	H3068
בְּחֹדֶם הַ	בֵּית וֶן	יַרְדֵּן:	הָיָה	וְכָל	יִשְׂרָאֵל ל
on dry ground	in the midst	Jordan	firm	H3605	and all the Israelites
H2724	H8432	H3383	H3559		H3478
בְּחֹדֶם הַ	עַד	אֲשֶׁר	תִּמּוֹ	הָגַדּוּ	לְעַבְרָה
on dry ground	H5704	H834	clean	until all the people	over
H2724		H8552	H3605	H1471	H5674
יַרְדֵּן:					
Jordan					
H3383					

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 14:29 (References Israel): But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

Exodus 14:22 (References Israel): And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.

Isaiah 25:8 (References Lord): He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.

Psalms 66:6 (Parallel theme): He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him.

Joshua 4:3 (Parallel theme): And command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve

stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night.

2 Kings 2:8 (Parallel theme): And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

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