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JOSHUA 3:1 Joshua rose up early in the morning; and they moved from Shittim, and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel. They lodged there before they passed over.

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The Israelitish camp removes from Shittim to Jordan, Jos 3:1. The officers inform them how they are to pass the river, and the distance they are to keep from the ark, Jos 3:2-4. Joshua directs the people, Jos 3:5, Jos 3:6; and the Lord gives directions to Joshua, Jos 3:7, Jos 3:8. He delivers the Lord's message to the people, and foretells the miraculous passage and division of Jordan, Jos 3:9-13. The priests, bearing the ark, enter the river, and immediately the waters are cut off, and the priests stand on dry ground, in the bed of the river, till all the camp passes over, Jos 3:14-17.

Verse 1

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Joshua rose early - Archbishop Usher supposes that this was upon Wednesday, the 28th of April, A. M. 2553, the fortieth year after the exodus from Egypt. From Shittim, where they had lately been encamped, to Jordan, was about sixty stadia, according to Josephus; that is, about eight English miles.

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JOSHUA 3:2 After three days, the officers went through the midst of the camp;

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Verse 2

After three days - These three days are probably to be thus understood: As soon as Joshua took the command of the army, he sent the spies to ascertain the state of Jericho; as we have seen Jos 1:12. They returned at the end of three days, or rather on the third day, and made their report. It was at this time, immediately on the return of the spies, that he made the proclamation mentioned here; in consequence of which the people immediately struck their tents, and marched forward to Jordan.

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JOSHUA 3:3 and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then you shall move from your place, and follow it.

JOSHUA 3:4 Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Don't come near to it, that you may know the way by which you must go; for you have not passed this way before."

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Verse 4

About two thousand cubits - This distance they were to keep,

1. For the greater respect, because the presence of the ark was the symbol and pledge of the Divine presence.

2. That the ark, which was to be their pilot over these waters, might be the more conspicuous which it could not have been had the people crowded upon it.

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JOSHUA 3:5 Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves; for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you."

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Verse 5

Sanctify yourselves - What was implied in this command we are not informed; but it is likely that it was the same as that given by Moses, Exo 19:10-14. They were to wash themselves and their garments, and abstain from every thing that might indispose their minds from a profitable attention to the miracle about to be wrought in their behalf.

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JOSHUA 3:6 Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people." They took up the ark of the covenant, and went before the people.

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Verse 6

Spake unto the priests, saying, Take up the ark - It is remarkable that the priests, not the Levites, whose ordinary business it was were employed to carry the ark on this occasion. Calmet conjectures that this was because it was probably carried without being wrapped up in its curtains, as it always was when the Levites carried it. Though it was the business of the Levites, the sons of Kohath, to carry the ark; yet on certain occasions the priests alone performed this office.

1. In the present case.
2. When they encompassed Jericho, Jos 6:6.
3. When it was carried to the war against the Philistines by the priests, the sons of Eli, 2Sam 15:25.
4. When David sent it back to Jerusalem, at the time he was obliged to fly from it, through the rebellion of his son Absalom, 2Sam 15:25; and,
5. At the time that it was taken out of the tabernacle, to be deposited in the temple; see 1Kgs 8:6-11.

These were the most solemn occasions, and on such alone, we may presume, the priests performed this office instead of the Levites. In all their former marches the ark was carried in the center of this immense camp; (see the scheme at the end of Num 2:2 (note) of the book of Numbers); but now it was to proceed at the head of the army, and to go before them, and at such a distance, about three quarters of a mile, that the whole camp might see it as their guide.

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JOSHUA 3:7 The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to magnify you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with you."

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## Verse 7

This day will I begin to magnify thee - By making him the instrument in this miraculous passage, he did him honor and gave him high credit in the sight of the people: hence his authority was established, and obedience to him as their leader fully secured. What must have confirmed this authority was, his circumstantially foretelling how the waters should be cut off as soon as the feet of the priests had touched them, Jos 3:13. This demonstrated that the secret of the Lord was with him.

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JOSHUA 3:8 You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.'

## Verse 8

Ye shall stand still in Jordan - The priests proceeded first with the ark, and entered into the bed of the river the course of which was immediately arrested, the waters collecting above the place where the priests stood, while the stream fell off towards the Dead Sea; so that the whole channel below where the priests were standing became dry. The whole camp, therefore, passed over below where the priests were standing, keeping at the distance of two thousand cubits from the ark; this they would readily do, as the whole bed of the river was dry for many miles below the place where the priests entered.

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JOSHUA 3:9 Joshua said to the children of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God."

JOSHUA 3:10 Joshua said, "Hereby you shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Hivite, and the Perizzite, and the Girgashite, and the Amorite, and the Jebusite out from before you.

## Verse 10

Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you - The Israelites were apt to be discouraged, and to faint at even the appearance of danger; it was necessary, therefore, that they should have the fullest assurance of the presence and assistance of God in the important enterprise on which they were now entering. They are to combat idolaters, who have nothing to trust in and help them but gods of wood, stone, and metal: whereas they are to have the living God in the midst of them - He who is the author of life and of being - who can give, or take it away, at his pleasure; and who by this miracle proved that he had undertaken to guide and defend them: and Joshua makes this manifestation of God the proof that he will drive out the Hittites, Hivites, etc, before them. With regard to the situation of each of these nations in the land of Canaan, Calmet remarks, that those called Canaanites chiefly inhabited what is called Phoenicia, the environs of Tyre and Sidon: the Hittites occupied the mountains, southward of the promised land: the Hivites dwelt by Ebal and Gerizim, Sichem and Gibeon, towards the mountains of Hermon: the Perizzites were probably not a distinct nation or tribe, but rather villagers, scattered through the country in general: the Girgashites possessed the country beyond the Jordan, towards the lake of Gennesareth: the Jebusites possessed Jerusalem: and the Amorites occupied the mountainous country in the vicinity of the western part of

the Dead Sea, and also that part of the land of Moab which the Israelites conquered from Sihon and Og.

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JOSHUA 3:11 Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passes over before you into the Jordan.

JOSHUA 3:12 Now therefore take twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, for every tribe a man.

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#### Verse 12

Take you twelve men - See the note on Jos 4:2.

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JOSHUA 3:13 It shall come to pass, when the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, even the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand in one heap."

JOSHUA 3:14 When the people moved from their tents to pass over the Jordan, the priests who bore the ark of the covenant being before the people,

JOSHUA 3:15 and when those who bore the ark had come to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark had dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the time of harvest),

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#### Verse 15

And the feet of the priests - were dipped in the brim of the water - Thus we find that every thing occurred exactly in the way in which Joshua had foretold it. This must have greatly increased his credit among the people.

For Jordan overfloweth all his banks, etc. - It has often been remarked that there was no need of a miracle in crossing Jordan, as it is but an inconsiderable stream, easily fordable, being but about twenty yards in breadth. But the circumstance marked here by the sacred historian proves that there was a time in the year, viz., in the harvest, that this said river overflowed its banks; and this is confirmed by another place in Scripture, 1Chr 12:15. As the miracle reported here took place about the beginning of April, a time in which rivers in general are less than in winter, it may be asked how there could be such an increase of waters at this time? The simple fact is, that the Jordan, as we have already seen, has its origin at the foot of Mount Lebanon, which mountain is always covered with snow during the winter months; in those months therefore the river is low: but when the summer's sun has melted these snows, there is consequently a prodigious increase of waters, so that the old channel is not capable of containing them; this accounts for the statement in the text that the Jordan overfloweth his banks all the time of harvest; and this was the time which God chose they should pass over it, that a miraculous interposition might be necessary, and that by the miracle they should be convinced of his omnipotence, who was not only their guide, but had promised to put them in possession of this good land.

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JOSHUA 3:16 the waters which came down from above stood, and rose up in one heap, a great way off, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those that went down toward the sea of the Arabah, even the Salt Sea, were wholly cut off. Then the people passed over right against Jericho.

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#### Verse 16

Rose up upon a heap - That is, they continued to accumulate, filling up the whole of the channel toward the source, and the adjacent ground over which they were now spread, to a much greater depth, the power of God giving a contrary direction to the current. We need not suppose them to be gathered up like a mountain, *instar montis*, as the Vulgate expresses it, but that they continued to flow back in the course of the channel; and ere they could have reached the lake of Gennesareth, where they might have been easily accumulated, the whole Israelitish army would have all got safely to the opposite side.

Very far from the city Adam - beside Zaretan - Where these places were it is difficult to say. The city Adam is wholly unknown. From 1Kgs 4:12 we learn that Zartanah was below Jezreel near Bethshean, or Scythopolis, and not far from Succoth, 1Kgs 7:46. And it appears from Gen 33:17, Jos 13:27, that Succoth lay on the east side of Jordan, not far from the lake of Gennesareth; and probably Adam was on the same side to the north of Succoth. It is probable that the Israelites crossed the Jordan near Bethabara, where John baptized, Joh 1:28, and which probably had its name, the house of passage, from this very circumstance. After all, it is extremely difficult to ascertain the exact situation of these places, as in the lapse of upwards of 3,000 years the face of the country must have been materially changed. Seas, rivers, and mountains, change not; and though we cannot ascertain the spot, it is sufficiently evident that we can come near to the place. It has been considered a lame objection against the truth of the Iliad that the situation of Troy cannot now be exactly ascertained. There are even many ancient cities and considerable towns in Europe, that, though they still bear their former names, do not occupy the same spot. There are not a few of those even in England; among such Norwich, Salisbury, etc., may be ranked, neither of which is in its primitive situation.

Right against Jericho - It would be impossible for the whole camp to pass over in the space opposite to Jericho, as they must have taken up some miles in breadth, besides the 2,000 cubits which were left on the right between them and the ark; but the river was divided opposite to Jericho, and there the camp began to pass over.

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JOSHUA 3:17 The priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan; and all Israel passed over on dry ground, until all the nation had passed completely over the Jordan.

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#### Verse 17

The priests - stood firm on dry ground - They stood in the mid channel, and shifted not their position till the camp, consisting of nearly 600,000 effective men, besides women, children, etc., had passed over.

1. Is it not surprising that the Canaanites did not dispute this passage with the Israelites? It is likely they would, had they had any expectation that such a passage would have been attempted. They must have known that the Israelitish camp was on the other side of the Jordan, but could they have

supposed that a passage for such a host was possible when the banks of the Jordan were quite overflowed? It was not merely because they were panic struck that they did not dispute this passage, but because they must have supposed it impossible; and when they found the attempt was made, the passage was effected before they could prepare to prevent it.

2. God now appears in such a way, and works in such a manner, as to leave no doubt concerning his presence or his power, or of his love to Israel. After this, was it possible for this people ever to doubt his being or his bounty? This, with the miraculous passage of the Red Sea, were well calculated to have established their faith for ever; and those who did not yield to the evidence afforded by these two miracles were incapable of rational conviction.

3. In some respects the passage of the Jordan was more strikingly miraculous than that even of the Red Sea. In the latter God was pleased to employ an agent; the sea went back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, Exo 14:21. Nothing of this kind appeared in the passage of the Jordan; a very rapid river (for so all travelers allow it to be) went back to its source without any kind of agency but the invisible hand of the invisible God.

4. Through the whole period of the Jewish history these miracles, so circumstantially related, were never denied by any, but on the contrary conscientiously believed by all. Nor did any of them in their revolts from God, which were both foul and frequent, ever call these great facts in question, when even so full of enmity against God as to blaspheme his name, and give his glory to dumb idols! Is not this a manifest proof that these facts were incontestable? and that Jehovah had so done his marvellous works that they should be had in everlasting remembrance? Reader, the same God who is over all is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. He changes not, neither is he weary: trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength; and He ever saves his followers out of the hands of all their enemies, and, having guided them by his counsel, will receive them into his glory.