

B. C. 1451.]

## LESSON II. CROSSING THE JORDAN.

[Oct. 14.]

Josh. 3 5-17.

[Commit to memory verses 5, 6.]



before the people.

7 And the LORD said unto Josh'u-a, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Is'ra-el, that they may know that, as I was with Mo'ses, 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.

9 And Josh'u-a said unto the children of Is'ra-el, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God.

10 And Josh'u-a said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaan-ites, and the Hitt-ites, and the Hiv-ites, and the Periz'-zites, and the Gir-gas-ites, and the Am'o-rites, and the Jeb'u-sites.

5 And Josh'u-a said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.

6 And Josh'u-a 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 be-

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

12 Now therefore take ye twelve men out of the tribes of Is'ra-el, 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.

14 And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents to pass over Jordan, and the priests bore 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 Zar'e-tan; 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 Jeri'cho.

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 Is'rael-ites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

## General Statement.

History records many "crossings" which were crises in the world, from the crossing of the Rubicon by Cæsar to the crossing of the Atlantic by the Pilgrim fathers. But there was none upon which such vast results depended as followed the crossing of the Jordan by the twelve tribes of Israel, for they brought not only a people to a country, but a religion to the whole world. If that host had perished by an attack of the Canaanites at the banks of Jordan the world would never have possessed the Bible, and the institutions of Christianity would never have been. If at any point in human history God might justly have intervened with a miracle, that point was when Israel stood ready to cross the Jordan and enter upon its inheritance. The manner of the entrance was designed to impress every Israelite with the consciousness of God's presence and help, with the safety of the people whose trust is in the Lord, and with the authority of their leader Joshua, and to awe the hearts of their enemies with a terror of Israel and its God. The host stands ready for its march, as if into the turbid current of the

river. In front stands the ark of the covenant, hidden beneath its curtains, and borne on the shoulders of the priests. In silence the bearers march until their feet press the margin of the river. Then a sudden change takes place in the scene. Thirty miles above it is seemingly dammed up between the narrow hills, and the water below recedes, shrinks down to a rill, and finally leaves its pebbly bed bare. Now the ark is borne onward until it reaches the middle of the channel. There it pauses, while the host of Israel marches past it, warriors in the van, women and children following, until the twelve tribes have trodden through the flood on foot. At the leader's command, twelve men, one from each tribe, gather each a stone from the bed of Jordan and pile them up as a monument on the western bank. The desert is forsaken, Canaan is reached, and in his own land Israel rests under the palm and eats the fruit of the field. Then the mysterious barrier is removed, and Jordan once more rolls over its accustomed channel.

## Explanatory and Practical Notes.

**Verse 5. Joshua said.** This command was given on the day before the crossing, bidding the people prepare for the marvels of the morrow. **Sanctify yourselves.** By sacred washings, by refraining from common employments and enjoyments, and by seeking God with their hearts. **To-morrow.** This would be the tenth of Nisan, the anniversary of the day when the lamb was chosen for the passover. **The Lord will do wonders.** The purposes of this miracle were: To encourage God's people by the revelation of his power; to bring them safely into their land, to enable them to triumph over their enemies, and to inspire the Canaanites with fear. (1) *Only for a consecrated people does God promise to do wonders.*

**6. Joshua spake.** He was now recognized as the successor of Moses and absolute ruler of the Israelites. **Unto the priests.** The sons of Aaron, whose duty it was to bear the ark, were to take precedence of the chiefs of the people. **The ark of the covenant.** A chest made of wood and covered with plates of gold, about forty-five inches long, by twenty-seven deep and wide. It contained the two tables of the law, and was the symbol of God's presence. It was kept covered while on the march and carried by the priests. **Pass over.** To the front of the host, in order to lead the way. **Before the people.** Between the ark and the people was an open space of two thousand paces, or nearly a mile, that all might see it and witness the miracle wrought at its approach. (2) *God's ministers should lead the way in God's work.*

**7. This day will I begin.** God had honored Joshua before (Exod. 24. 13; Deut. 31. 7), but not by working a miracle under his instrumentality. This v. is to be the first of many divine interpositions in aid of Joshua. **To magnify thee.** To show the people that Joshua possessed authority as God's representative. **In the sight.** As all would witness the miracle, so all would recognize Joshua's power. **I was with Moses.** In the plagues upon Egypt, at the Red Sea, and during the journey through the wilderness. (3) *God's promise is a sufficient warrant of success.*

**8. Command the priests.** They were to lead the way, and needed their orders before the rest. **Come to the brink.** At the shore of the river. **Stand still in Jordan.** They were to stand with their feet in the stream until the waters retired, then to advance to the middle of the channel, and there wait until the people had passed over. (4) *Let us not forget to honor the calm, confident faith that could issue such commands.*

**9, 10. Joshua said.** Speaking to the people through their elders. **Hear the words of the Lord.** These commands were not from Joshua, but from the Lord. **The living God.** A God who lives, a personal Being, as distinguished from the false divinities of the heathen, who had no real existence. (5) *There is a living God, who has power and authority, and happy are those who serve him. He will...drive out.* God drove them out, not Israel, except as God's instrument.