

Walking Through the Waters ... Again

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Miracles are, by their very nature, one-of-a-kind happenings. They are impossible things that turn out not to be so impossible at all... only they never repeat themselves. After all, they shouldn't have happened even once!

*But God doesn't see things the way we do. It's amazing how often we read about miracles that He actually **repeated**. In fact, when two Gospels tell the same story but with slightly different facts, it can be hard to tell whether it's the same story or two different ones.*

But there's no such problem with this story, because God says that He is repeating this miracle to make a point.

The story is told in Joshua 3:1-5:1.

Moses was dead.

So was every single Israelite over the age of 20 at the time they left Egypt.

That generation had refused to obey God.

They refused to enter the Promised Land when God commanded it,
so He refused to let them EVER enter it.

Of that generation, only Joshua and Caleb still lived,
because they had been ready to obey.

New spies had just snuck into Jericho, where they learned
the Canaanites were still as terrified of the Israelites as they had been
when Moses led them through the Red Sea forty years earlier.

So now God was commanding this new generation to enter the Promised Land...
and they were ready to go. There would be no disobedience this time!

All they needed was someone to lead them.

Before he died, Moses put Joshua in charge, so he'd be ready for this very day.

It would be his job to lead the young Israelites out of the wilderness,
to fight for their new home in Canaan.

But Joshua wasn't sure he was ready for the job.

After all, how do you take the place of a legend?

Every one of the "kids" knew what Moses had done—
how he had faced down Pharaoh,

humbled him with God's miracles,
led the Israelites out of Egypt

and destroyed the Egyptian army in the Red Sea.

How could Joshua ever hope to live up to *that*?

But God said to him, "You don't need to worry, Joshua.

Just do what I tell you and everything will be fine."

So Joshua obeyed.

For three days he sent leaders among the Israelites,
making sure everyone knew just what to do.

When they began their journey into Canaan, they were to follow
the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant,
a gold-covered box which God used to let the people know He was with them,
but they were to stay a safe distance behind it
because God was going to do a great miracle for them.

When they reached the Jordan River,
the wide river which they had to cross to enter Canaan,
they all stopped and waited.

And God said to Joshua, "Now is the time.
Now I'm going to show your people
that I have chosen you, just as I chose Moses.
Tell the priests to walk a few steps into the Jordan and stop."

So Joshua spoke to the people and said,
"Take a good look, my people, and remember what you see.
For today the Lord Himself will lead you into the Promised Land!"

And when the priests stepped into the river,
even though it was harvest season and the river was overflowing,
the water began to pile up near a town named Adam, upriver from them,
as if someone had built a dam there!
The rest of the water flowed away until the Jordan was a dry river bed.
So the people walked through on dry land,
just as they did when Moses led them through the Red Sea forty years before.

And the priests carrying the Ark just stood in the middle and waited.

Then God told Joshua to have the people pick up 12 big stones from the river bed—
one for each of the tribes of Israel—
and carry them across the river into Canaan.
They used those stones to build a monument where they camped that night,
so that future generations would be reminded of the day
God dried up the Jordan so they could enter the Promised Land.

And then Joshua built one more monument,
right in the middle of the Jordan where the priests with the Ark were standing.

Then, once all the people had finally crossed the Jordan River
and were safe in Canaan—
thousands and thousands of people and warriors—

the priests carried the Ark across the Jordan River
and joined all the people.
And once their feet touched the land of Canaan,
the water that had piled up at the town of Adam
suddenly rushed down and filled the Jordan River back to normal!

Then the people of Israel knew, without question,
that God was with Joshua, just as He had been with Moses.
And they built the stone monument at their campsite
where they spent their first night in the Promised Land,
just like God told them to.

But it wasn't just the Israelites who learned that God was with Joshua.
After all, EVERYBODY in the town of Adam saw that pile of water!
It wasn't long before everybody in Canaan knew that God's people were coming...

And they were terrified,
because now they *also* knew that God was with Joshua,
just as He had been with Moses forty years before.

*When God says everybody will know, **He means EVERYBODY will know.***