

What is “On the Banks of the Jordan?”

Description

This website is about the journey myself and others are on as we try to navigate this thing called life. The name Jordan (which is also my name) in Hebrew means “descender, to go down, or flowing down”. It is located in the Middle East, and had many references in the bible. Very interestingly, the river is not deep or particularly wide, however in both biblical (2 Kings 5), and recent times it has been highlighted for being dirty, or polluted in spite of its “refreshing” qualities (we’ll explore this in later entries). To explain its significance I’d like to use 3 references of it in the bible. 1st, Genesis 32:10; Israel (formerly Jacob) is preparing to meet his older twin brother, Esau, again for the 1st time in 20 years, and as he is preparing to cross the Jordan for the 2nd time he recalls his previous status from 20 years earlier when he experienced his 1st encounter with God as he fled from Esau. Both of his moments on the banks of the Jordan river were highlighted by a personal encounter with God, where God communicated blessings to him that he was actually unworthy of; yet God chose him to accomplish his will. Though God communicated his promises/blessings to Israel on both encounters, it was ultimately Israel’s decision to trust God and move forward. The 2nd instance is the children of Israel over 4 centuries later as they are preparing to enter the promised land. In Deuteronomy, Moses gives a recap of the children of Israel’s journeys since their exodus from Egypt. This is important because I believe that before every major move there should be a time of reflection to assess where you’ve come from, your current position/state, and your believed/intended destination. Moses reminds them where they came from, the original promise that caused them to move, what they went through because of their own actions, and what they must do to ensure that they don’t lose the promise that God has given them once they enter the land he had promised to their forefather Abraham. He called heaven, and themselves both as witnesses to the commands that he was giving them to live by, and that ultimately their own word would condemn them if they went astray. The 3rd and most important instance I’d like to highlight is the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the Jordan. John the Baptist had been ministering to the people and preparing the land for Jesus’ ministry while also baptizing them symbolizing that they were “reborn”, and anew in the spirit. Jesus arrives one day to be baptized, and John recognizes that he is the Messiah, and tries to convince Jesus that he instead needs to baptize him, acknowledging that Jesus is ultimately the forgiver of sins. Matthew 4:13-16; Jesus informs him that his baptism must take place to fulfill his Father’s plan. As we know, Jesus arises out of the water and the holy spirit falls upon him leading him into the wilderness ultimately kickstarting his ministry. This event is important, because Jesus’ decision to be obedient on the bank of the Jordan was required to begin his mission as the Son of God, that would end in his elevation to the right hand of the father, and as the name above all names. I used these 3 instances to illustrate that the Jordan river is symbolic as the point of no return, or decision time. Your arrival on the banks of the Jordan is where you have to decide whether you will trust in God and walk with him, leaving your flesh, preferences, doubt, sin, unbelief, etc behind. I like the reference to the Jordan in Israel’s (Jacob) story because it implies that he crossed the Jordan twice, and each time God was making him a new promise of elevation to a new level. He was stripped of something that he could not take to the new level because it didn’t fit with what God was doing with him. The children of Israel also had to make the decision to leave what they knew, and had previously identified with on the banks of the Jordan, because they couldn’t be who they’d previously been, and who he was calling them to be at the same time. The

Jordan is symbolically a cleanse where God removes the former self as you cross, and when you arrive on the other side, you are a clean, baptized, and a “reborn” child of God fully equipped to do that which he has called you to do. We will find ourselves on the banks of the Jordan several times in life, each time having to make a decision of faith, trusting God for new mercies, but still believing and remembering that the same God that brought me over last time is faithful and just (1 John 1:9) to take me over this time. So as we all are standing on the banks of our Jordan, I ask you; “Are you ready to cross the Jordan with me?”

Reflection Time

Thinking back, what “Jordan moments” have you had in the past where you only made it with the Lord’s help? What upcoming “Jordan moments” are you depending on the Lord’s help with? What feelings, emotions, or thoughts do you typically feel when you’re “on the banks of the Jordan?” What do you do when you have these feelings? In what ways do you need to prepare yourself for you next “Jordan moments?”

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