

Hebrews – The Water Crossers 10-13-02

The Jewish people are called Hebrews. It is interesting to search the origin of that word. Some believe that Shem's son Eber is the source. Since in Greek, the name can be Heber. Eber had two sons, Peleg and Joktan. Abraham descended from Peleg, and only Abraham's descendents through Isaac are called Hebrews. What about all the other descendents of Eber? If Eber is the source of the name then why are not the other descendents called Hebrews?

Another possibility is that of the root meaning, 'to pass over'. Abraham crossed the great Euphrates, (Joshua 24:2) forsaking his known world, to venture out by faith to a land God said He would show him. In Genesis 14:13 Abraham was called, 'Abraham the Hebrew' or 'Abraham, the one who passed over'. The author of Hebrews tells us that Abraham was looking for a city that has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. (Hebrews 11:10) He left his world behind to cross that natural barrier and venture out on faith, into the unknown. He left a world of culture to go after God, abandoning all else. The natural barrier of the Euphrates didn't deter him.

The third possibility is that Abraham made beer. He brews. No – I'm just seeing if you are awake this morning. My daughter would call that a 'Papa joke'.

I prefer the second meaning – the water-crosser. There were other water-crossers before and after him. Noah crossed the great water. He left his world behind and entered into the ark. He left a world filled with violence and corruption, and landed on a cleansed earth. Abraham lived in Chaldea in which was the city of Babylon. We know the religious practices there were vile. He, too, was called from a world filled with flesh to a new place (Genesis 12:1). He left the sophisticated world of Babylon to herd animals amongst nomads and warlord kings.

The Children of Israel followed Moses through a water-crossing. On one side was Egypt and all that they were familiar with. There were delicious foods and spices and though the work was hard, they knew what to expect. But there was also the worship of false gods and the demands of the taskmasters. 2 Cor. 6:16-18 (NIV) *16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." 17 "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." 18 "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."*

God calls people out of the world and its corrupt ways to be children of God. He calls us to separate ourselves, and that is the same idea as crossing the water, going to the other side. We leave behind the accepted way to seek out God's way. That is when God adopts us as His own and becomes a Father to us.

Commented [Q1]: 2 Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshiped other gods.' Josh 24:2 (NIV)

Commented [Q2]: 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. Heb 11:10 (NIV)

Commented [Q3]: 1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. Gen 12:1 (NIV)

The people that crossed through the water with Moses unfortunately did not come out new creations. They brought the desires of the things of Egypt with them. They came out physically but their hearts did not come out of Egypt. Truly crossing the water and separating yourself is a heart issue. We can go through the religious motions, but unless our heart is changed we may as well be back on the other side.

The Children of Israel followed the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night until they came to the next water crossing. They stopped at a river, the Jordan. Here was another chance to truly be water crossers in their hearts. They refused to take the step. They let fear and desire for personal comfort hold them back. They were afraid of what was on the other side. They said they would rather go back over the water they crossed before, back to Egypt, than to venture out again into the unknown. That was a clear indication that their hearts didn't cross over with their bodies. That generation died in the wilderness. They refused to go forward and God did not allow them to go back. The next generation, however, chose to cross the Jordan and fight the battles on the other side, and God gave them great victories and abundant blessings.

The prophet Elijah and Elisha both crossed the Jordan together. Elijah was on his way to the city that Abraham sought. He had a fiery taxi come pick him up after crossing the Jordan for the last time. Elisha went back to the Jordan to see if God would part the water for him. He was leaving the land of being a follower and stepping onto the other shore as a leader. He was going from the land of the disciple to the terrain of the prophet.

John the Baptist invited everyone to enter into the water. The water symbolized death. He told them they all needed to die to their old ways. If we have been honest with God the last few weeks, if we were serious when we nailed our idols and obstacles to the cross, the things that get in the way of a deeper relationship with God, then we entered into the death of the cross through Jesus. We entered into the water of death and burial. 2 Cor. 5:15-17 (NIV) *15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

God has been inviting us to become Hebrews, water-crossers. He has invited us to leave behind the old and start again in a new land with a new way of operating. The old way was fleshly, prideful, focussed on self, but the new way is centered on Jesus Christ and all that He is and all that He means to us. The new way is not about trying hard but about letting His life flow through us. Instead of anger, we operate in gentleness. Instead of forcing things, we trust in God. Instead of directing, we let Him direct. Our eyes are on Him. We have entered into a death to self. We may have to cross the Jordan a number of times to go deeper into the death of our will and our ways, but we are now

Hebrews, the water crossers. Let us never look back to Egypt, but forward to the battles that lay before us in the Promised Land.

When Solomon built the Temple with the Lord's blueprints, before the priests could enter the place where they ministered to the LORD, they had to pass by the sea of molten brass. It was a huge bowl 15 feet across with spigots through which they drew water to cleanse themselves. They had to ceremoniously pass through the sea to come into the presence and service of the LORD. This is just like the reality in heaven where before the throne is a crystal sea. If you approach the throne you must cross the sea. You must be a water-crosser to enter the presence of God.

No flesh shall live in His presence. Moses worried about seeing God and living. You have to die to see God. You must be a dead man walking. By that I mean dead to the ways of man and being your own god. When Jesus said, take up the cross and follow me, He was saying, "Accept the sentence of death." You see, once they were condemned, the Roman judge would tell them to take up the cross. They were as good as dead. They only had to carry it to the place of execution. Jesus was saying that we must accept death to our will and ways to cross over and live a life that is empowered with His presence, to really be a Hebrew.

One side of the water is the world, our will, our way. The other side is the presence of God where all is Jesus. It is a place in Him. In Him we are the righteousness of God. In Him there is life. In Him I can access God. In Him I am fruitful. In Him I reach out to the lost with compassion. On this side of Jordan I get lost in Him. I find the wonder of letting His life flow through mine, making my life significant because of His presence.

Jacob ran from his brother Esau in fear for his life. He had tricked him and deceived his father. In the middle of a strange land he lay down and slept. There was a great ladder in his dream. Angels were ascending and descending, from this world to the presence of God. The ladder is none other than a picture of Jesus. He is our bridge from this realm to that (John 1:51). He is our way from worldliness to the presence of God. Jacob had to cross the water too. In fact, he had to cross it twice, just as the Children of Israel were later asked to do. The first time he crossed his heart was not changed. He went through all the motions and thought God was blessing him because he was pleasing God. Before he crossed the second time he met with God and found out he couldn't please God without the life of God. He needed to be crippled to cross over with a new heart. His new heart made the old land that he came from new to him.

For those of you who aren't familiar with all these Bible stories let me tell you that when you read them you will find they all have one thing in common. They are about God changing people. Those Bible characters find they have come to a barrier in their life and they must change to go forward with God. Stepping out into the unknown is frightening for them. It is an upheaval of all they have become familiar with to throw themselves completely upon God.

Commented [Q4]: 51 He then added, "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."
John 1:51 (NIV)

For a month now we have been hearing about dying to self. I have good news for you. Now it is time to start talking about living in God. We need to start living in Jesus. We need to step up out of the water onto the other shore as water-crossers, Hebrews. We look for a city unlike any other on earth. The city is the gathering of Hebrews who have also found this new land. It is the house of God. It is the wonder of His presence. As we gather together we are focussed on one thing, the One who brought us through the water, our Deliverer, Jesus. There will be some who, when facing that battle for this Promised Land, refuse to believe our leader Joshua (same name as Jesus) can lead us to victory. Oh, you better trust Him, because the alternative is going back and I wouldn't want to be crossing the sea going that direction if I were you. I don't think God will even let you go back. You can choose to die in the wilderness. That would be walking by sight and insisting on your own way, instead of walking by faith in a love relationship with God. You might think there was something of value back there in the land of your origin— but you have forgotten what a hard taskmaster sin is. The real value is all ahead of us, following our Savior and letting His life shine through us as we walk by faith and not by sight.

When He leads, He empowers and enables. Let me describe what life should be like on this side of the river. As you go about your work, you do your work to please Him, as a good representative of His doing that task. In your leisure moments you open up your whole being to God. Looking up into His face, even if just for a moment, you smile in His face with a loving smile. You rejoice in His love and thank Him for it. You are constantly desirous of more of Him and so you ask, and the wonderful thing is, He answers. You ask Him what you can do to give Him more joy. He shows you. You praise Him from the depth of your being. You love Him increasingly. You adore Him. You sing to Him. You thank Him and see His hand guiding you in the most menial of tasks and the everyday routines of life. (See Phil. 4:4-9, 1 Thess. 5, 2 Peter 1 for new life)

There is a new song out with lyrics that sound like the writer has just come out on the other side of the river into a new land. They go like this, "I've been walking with a big grin, singing with my eyes closed, lifting up my hands. Lost in the moment sending up praises, now I think I understand. When I open up and let it go, I feel Your touch and then I know. I can never live without it, and I'm never gonna doubt it, everyday is new. There's nothing any better, I'll be singing it forever. I worship you." (by Mercy Me)

On this side of the river to live is to worship. Day by day you learn to live in unbroken communion with Him. You live with a constant eagerness to hear His instruction and obey. You are deepening your walk with Him without even realizing it. You are enlarging your capacity to fellowship with God. You increase in sweet, natural, moment-by-moment communion with Him. And all you want is more of the same.

You are sitting here this morning wondering if that could possibly be you. Be encouraged! You can have as much of God's presence and power in your life as

you desire. On this side of the river, the other side of death to self, there is as much as you are willing to receive. On the side you came from, sin blocked your willingness to increase in the things of God. But on this side, abandoned to Him, sin will come up, but you deal with it quickly and without question at the leading of the Spirit. Let me reiterate this wonderful truth, you can have as much of God's presence and power in your life as you desire. Hunger, ask, and obey, and you will surely receive. You can have revival fire regardless of what others do or have in their hearts. Your heart can feel the fire of God in the coldest surroundings. You can keep your heart so ablaze for God that your life is constantly marked by His presence and glory. The lamp in the Holy Place was to always remain lit. It was never meant to go out and be rekindled.

As I describe that some of you are about to leap out of your seats for joy, because you are standing on the shore and that is your desire. You can see the Promised Land and you are ready to charge on in. Others of you are still standing in the water of last week wondering whether to be a Hebrew or not. This death to self-stuff sounds a little too radical. If that is you, there is a need in your heart to get a vision of the wonder and greatness of God. You haven't yet had a revelation of the unfathomable love that God has for you. Ask God to show you! Ask Him to let you see how much He loves you!

When the Jewish people came back to their homeland after years of captivity the first thing they wanted to do was rebuild the temple. The problem was the Ark of the Covenant was gone. That was where the presence of God hovered. For five centuries they worshipped without the presence of God. They went through all the rituals and ceremonies. The priests performed round the clock ministry. They had lots of activity, but no presence of God. Sincere and according to the book but something was missing. I wonder if much of church isn't the same today. We go through the routine and sometimes we don't even realize God isn't in it. When God did show up they didn't recognize Him. Here they are performing all this service oblivious to the One to Whom it was all about.

On this side of the river, we stay in personal contact with Him. We sometimes enter into routines but we dare not continue them without His presence. If His presence is missing we stop and wait until He shows us how to proceed. I'm not interested in the routine. I don't want to go through the motions. If God isn't in it, let's not touch it. If God isn't leading, let's not go. We have lots of ideas on how to move forward, but I don't want to move unless He moves. Can we just wait until He moves?

We are standing on the shore of this new land. Some of us have been over here before, wandered around a bit, but I think God is inviting us to leave the shore behind and enter in. Last week you let go of the anchor that holds you back. Now you can move forward. You don't have to see with your eyes to take a step forward, you just need to see with your spirit and hear His voice calling you. What would life be like with Life Himself directing your days? Let's find out! Hebrews – Are there any Hebrews in the house? Lets go forward in faith to whatever God has in store for us. Amen?