

Some days you wake up and you know it will be just another routine day. You do the essentials for your physical body, you have your meals, you'll have a chat with a few people, you might read a book, watch the telly, do a bit of shopping, as well as read the Bible and pray a little. It's just like hundreds of other days you've had. If you keep a diary or a captain's log, then you would have written many similar entries before.

Occasionally you get days that are very different. You might have been expecting them to come for weeks or months. Exam results or political elections (I'm looking forward to this Thursday) or a family member getting married. Occasionally a significant day may be unexpected and it's not welcome. You might be involved in an accident or get bad news from a doctor.

The first Reading shows us that the Israelites were just about to experience a significant day. Forty years before Moses had led them out of Israel. They'd been in slavery for several hundred years and God had brought them through the Red Sea, whilst Pharaoh and his army had been killed. Things looked great, but the Israelites were so keen on going back to Egypt that instead of going straight to the Promised Land, which would have taken about eleven days, they wandered around the desert for forty years. They grumbled and complained to their leader Moses. They also stopped worshipping God sometimes and worshipped idols.

Due to this sin, nearly all of the Israelites that had left Egypt died in the desert. Those that had been born in the desert would have heard the many stories of what God had done for their parents and grandparents. They would have known about the different plagues that God brought in Egypt, the origins of the Festival of Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea and the manna and quail that God supplied for them. However, much of this oral tradition was just their relatives talking about what God had done for them – how God had been continuously faithful to them, despite their unfaithfulness to Him. Many of the younger Israelites had never known God's miraculous power for themselves. Today was going to be different. Today was going to be significant. Today the younger Israelites were going to see God's mighty miraculous power.

What was this miracle then? How did God show His supernatural power? The Israelites had to cross the River Jordan. In the Spring when they were there, the Jordan is in flood due to snow melting up in the mountains. You can imagine how treacherous it would be to cross, even if you were a fit person. Trying to cross a flooded river is dangerous and shouldn't really be attempted. There were probably two to three million people that were to cross, as well as animals and carts with their provisions on. The Jordan was an impenetrable barrier to them. Nothing is impossible to God though.

The Israelites were commanded to consecrate themselves before they crossed. They had to wash themselves and their clothes and not have sex. In effect they were saying to God that we trust You, we know that You will deliver us and that we're just turning up with ourselves, whilst You do something amazing for us.

God did do something amazing. As soon as the Ark of the Covenant, that was being carried by some Levites entered the Jordan, the water stopped and the Israelites were able to cross what had been an impossible barrier beforehand.

It must have taken quite a while for so many people to cross the flooded Jordan, but as soon as everyone was over and the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant went to the other side, then the waters flowed like they had done a few hours before.

"You have never been this way before." That was part of the first Reading. We heard in the second Reading "Look at the nations and watch – and be utterly amazed."

Other Bible versions say similar things.

Look around at the godless nations. Look long and hard. Brace yourself for a shock. Something's about to take place and you're going to find it hard to believe. (The Message)

Look among the nations and watch! Be astonished and *stare* because something is happening in your days that you wouldn't believe even if told. (Common English Bible)

I'm glad I'm alive now. I get to meet all of you, but also, I feel strongly that God is on the move. I've been following Jesus as my Saviour for 36 years and God has been faithful to me through the good parts and hard parts of life. That's *not* a surprise though.

Isaiah 43:2 –

When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up—the flames will not consume you. [The Living Bible]

God *does* want to surprise in the coming months and years though! How? I don't precisely know!

The country is in a mess. *Great* Britain? No, it's not! As we consecrate ourselves and humbly come to God, asking Him to do something wonderful and amazing in our country then things are going to change! As we put ourselves right with God and really take His commands and ideas seriously, so our society will change.

What new things are you going to allow God to do in your life. It's easy to say how this country needs God because of the mess we're in and not look closer to home. What surprises will you allow God to do in your life?

Are we prepared to give everything we own and possess over to God? Are we willing to say, "God, be in charge of my life. God, I want You to direct me and lead me so that You are honoured in the way that I think, speak and do things."

God has made us new creations through Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection. That's amazing, but God hasn't finished His amazing work in us yet! Let's recognize that God wants to *continue* to show us amazing and surprising things. He loves us. He knows us. God wants what is best for us! The best is being committed to following Him, to consecrate ourselves and then to be ready for Him to work through us in any way He chooses.