

**Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**  
**Bible Study Notes**  
**1-11-23**

**Joshua 4**

**Joshua To Set Up A Memorial Of The Crossing – Verses 1-3**

**When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, <sup>2</sup>“Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, <sup>3</sup>and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.”**

**4:1-3** Israel was now on the other side of the Jordan — in the Promised Land. But what is life in the Promised Land like? Is it one glorious vacation time after another? No, for Israel it was a place of battle, but most of all, it was a place of trust — they knew they had to trust God with everything they had because the challenges only got bigger in the Promised Land — but so did the blessings.

**4:1-3** Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm Each tribe was to send a representative to take a stone — undoubtedly a large one — from the dry riverbed where Israel had crossed over, so the stones could be set up as a memorial.

**Joshua To Set Up A Memorial Of The Crossing – Verses 4-7**

**<sup>4</sup> So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, <sup>5</sup> and said to them, “Go over before the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, <sup>6</sup> to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ <sup>7</sup> tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.”**

**4:4-7** After the people safely crossed the river, what would be next? Conquering the land? Not yet. First, God directed them to build a memorial from 12 stones drawn from the river by 12 men, one from each tribe. This may seem like an insignificant step in their mission of conquering the land, but God did not want his people to plunge into their task unprepared. They were to focus on him and remember who was guiding them. As you are busy doing your God-given tasks, set aside quiet moments, times to build your own memorial to God's power. Too much activity may shift your focus away from God.

**4:4-7** Most of us would have wanted to rush on through and take care of Jericho — why not take advantage of the time when they are all afraid of you? But God is never in a hurry, and He knows that beyond us doing something, we must be something for Him — so He takes time out to conquer Israel spiritually before they can conquer Jericho under His guidance.

**Joshua To Set Up A Memorial Of The Crossing – Verses 8-9**

**<sup>8</sup> So the Israelites did as Joshua commanded them. They took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, as the LORD had told**

Joshua; and they carried them over with them to their camp, where they put them down. <sup>9</sup> Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant had stood. And they are there to this day.

**4:8-9** The purpose of this memorial was so that the people of Israel could teach their children about the great things God had done; so that the work of God would not be forgotten among the generations. We often fail in our trust in God because we forget the great things He has done, and often the faith of our children is weak because they have never been told how great God is and how real His working is in our lives.

**4:8-9** Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan: Joshua also set up a pile of memorial stones in the very bed of the river Jordan, so that when it was lowered in a season of drought, those stones could be seen and would testify of the time that God had completely dried up the Jordan. Especially in a time of drought, we need to remember the great things God has done.

### **The Nation Passes Over – Verses 10-13**

<sup>10</sup> Now the priests who carried the ark remained standing in the middle of the Jordan until everything the LORD had commanded Joshua was done by the people, just as Moses had directed Joshua. The people hurried over, <sup>11</sup> and as soon as all of them had crossed, the ark of the LORD and the priests came to the other side while the people watched. <sup>12</sup> The men of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over, ready for battle, in front of the Israelites, as Moses had directed them. <sup>13</sup> About forty thousand armed for battle crossed over before the LORD to the plains of Jericho for war.

**4:10** So the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished: The priests stood with the ark of the covenant for the entire time it took the nation to cross over. The visible token of the presence of God had to remain in the river through the entire crossing.

**4:12** And the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the children of Israel: The people content to settle on the east side of the Jordan stayed on their side of the Jordan but sent their armies over to fight on behalf of the rest of the nation, just as they had promised (Joshua 1:12-16).

### **Joshua Exalted By God – Verse 14**

<sup>14</sup> That day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they stood in awe of him all the days of his life, just as they had stood in awe of Moses.

**4:14** The Israelites revered Joshua for his role in leading them across the Jordan River. He, like Moses, would receive Israel's praises generation after generation. Although Israel was not a world power at that time, Joshua's reputation for handling his responsibilities God's way brought him greater glory than if he had been a hero in a "superpower" nation. Doing right is more important than doing well.

### **Waters Returned To Their Place – Verses 15-18**

<sup>15</sup> Then the LORD said to Joshua, <sup>16</sup> "Command the priests carrying the ark of the covenant law to come up out of the Jordan." <sup>17</sup> So Joshua commanded the priests, "Come up out of the

Jordan.” <sup>18</sup> And the priests came up out of the river carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD. No sooner had they set their feet on the dry ground than the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and ran at flood stage as before.

**4:15-18** The waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks as before: The manner and timing with which the Jordan returned to its natural flow show that this event was supernaturally arranged by God.

### **Stones Are Set Up As A Memorial In Gilgal – Verses 19-20**

<sup>19</sup> On the tenth day of the first month the people went up from the Jordan and camped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho. <sup>20</sup> And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan.

**4:19-20** They camped in Gilgal: Gilgal will become their base of operations for the conquest of the entire Promised Land. Therefore, it was appropriate that the first work at Gilgal was to set up a memorial to God’s great works.

### **The Purpose Of The Memorial Stone – Verses 21-24**

<sup>21</sup> He said to the Israelites, “In the future when your descendants ask their parents, ‘What do these stones mean?’ <sup>22</sup> tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’ <sup>23</sup> For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. <sup>24</sup> He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God.”

**4:21-24** The memorial of 12 stones was to be a constant reminder of the day the Israelites crossed the Jordan River on dry ground. Their children would see the stones, hear the story, and learn about God. Do you have traditions—special dates or special places—to help your children learn about God’s work in your life? Do you take time to tell them what God has done for you—forgiving and saving you, answering your prayers, supplying your needs? Retelling your story will help keep memories of God’s faithfulness alive in your family.