

# A Practical Study of JOSHUA

## “The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

### Study Number Four – Joshua 4:1-24

As we come to Joshua chapter 4, let's direct our attention to a New Testament passage to set the stage:

#### Luke 22:14-20

And when the hour had come He reclined at table, and the apostles with Him. And He said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” And having taken a cup, when He had given thanks, He said, “Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.” And having taken some bread, when He had given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.”

Now there's a phrase there that stands out in the text that illustrates the principles:

“this do in remembrance of Me.”

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It seems like so many times in the scripture God wants us to remember important events by memorizing them. And so we're having that take place.

In Joshua chapter 1 we called it the COMMISSIONING. Joshua's taking the place of Moses.

In Joshua chapter 2 we have the SPY episode as the two spies go into the city of Jericho.

In Joshua chapter 3 they CROSSED THE RIVER. God parted it for 20 miles of dry riverbed and they made their way across the river.

Now we need to get in our mind the magnitude of this. Two and a half million people now are on the west bank and in the land. And we are titling this chapter—THE MEMORIALS.

Now when we think of memorials, we think of physical death don't we? We go to a memorial service to memorialize a person or to remember the things that were special about them and the contribution they made to our lives. And that's altogether fitting that we would do that.

In this study we're going to see some memorials erected. And these memorials have a very special purpose—let's get into it.

**v. 1 When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua,**

“When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua,”

The word “When” ties us into chapter 3, picking up where we left off. When we’re obedient the Lord has new instructions for us.

When he had finished the instructions of crossing the river, the Lord speaks once more.

The chain of command is the Lord speaks to Joshua and Joshua speaks to the people. And the Lord’s getting ready to speak to Joshua again.

What’s going on on the west side of the river? They’ve just gotten across. It’s better than the Super Bowl or winning the World Series. Frankly there is so much joy and fulfillment and happiness, we can see singing, we can see dancing, we can see laughter, we can see pure joy. And there’s so many southerners in the bunch, there’s a few rebel yells of ecstasies and yee-haws. All the things that they’ve been missing for all these years are now theirs. They’re in the land! They’ve seen God work in a mighty way, and so there’s great joy.

Now what does the Lord say?

**v. 2 “Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe,**

“Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe,”

Remember when we got into the excitement of crossing the river, the Lord said choose 12 men, and we were to hang onto that until this next study and we’ll get the job description of those 12 fellas? Well now we’re returning to it and we’re going to see what these 12 guys are supposed to do—one from each tribe.

**v. 3 and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.”**

“tell them”—verse 3—“to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.”

“Tell these men to get some pretty good sized boulders out of the river—each one of them take one—and take it to the campsite where you’re going to be tonight and put them down there because we’re going to use those a little bit later.”

Now the campsite is going to be at Gilgal. Gilgal is about 4 or 5 miles from the riverbank and it’s about 2 miles from the city of Jericho—to give you an idea of where all this is getting ready to happen. So they get the 12 stones.

**v. 4 So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe,**

“So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe,”

**v. 5 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,**

“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,’”

**v. 6 to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’”**

“to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, “What do these stones mean?””

**v. 7 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.”**

“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.”

What do they signify? The Ark of the Covenant going across that river—the waters were cut off and stopped. And this is going to be the memorial.

What is that? That’s a memorial of God at work.

Do we have any memorials in our life that God has worked?

Do we know where we became a Christian? Do we ever love to go back there to that spot and relive that experience of being set free from sin and death and being given the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ? Do we have that?

We have these sacred spots where decisions were made. This is to be a memorial forever—these stones that are going to be set up.

Now remember one of the ways we can get a handle on what’s being taught in the chapter is by the repetition of phrases. Now here’s a few that recur here in chapter 4, so we can see them stand out.

For instance, the “middle of the Jordan” occurs **FIVE TIMES** here in the chapter.

The “priests” are mentioned **SEVEN TIMES**.

The “ark” EIGHT TIMES.

“What do these stones mean”—TWO TIMES.

And “the Lord” is mentioned FOURTEEN TIMES.

So that kind of gives us the framework for building on the passage as to what is really meaningful. Evidently there’s something very meaningful about the middle of the river, and so we’re going to want to focus on that a little bit as we begin to try to apply what this passage means to us.

The most important thing is the Lord’s saying, “the rocks that you see tell you that I keep My promises.” That’s a pretty good truth.

“The rocks, when you look at them, tell you that I keep My promises. You’re on the west bank and you’re in the land that I promised you and I keep My promises.”

Now lest we minimize this whole business of having sacred spots in sacred places, this just doesn’t happen here. And it doesn’t happen in the Upper Room when Jesus takes some bread and cup and said, “This do in remembrance of Me, every time you break the bread and drink the cup.”

Abraham for instance had his Hebron. He had his Oaks at Mamre where the altar was built.

And we find Jacob had his Bethel, and he had his Peniel where he wrestled all night with the Lord.

And so many of these biblical characters had their special sacred spots where they went to meet the Lord—and that spot was very, very special for them.

**v. 8 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.**

“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.”

Now when we get to verse 9 we could miss something here. There are TWO MEMORIALS here. There’s one in verse 9 and then we’re going to see one just a little bit later in the passage.

Now don’t miss this one in verse 9 just because we saw the twelve guys pick up their rocks and head to Gilgal. That’s one—and we’ll talk about that one a little later.

Now there’s another one in verse 9.



**v. 9 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.**

“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.”

There is a memorial in the bottom of that river—and that’s MEMORIAL #1. Joshua took 12 stones, after the fellas had left with their 12, and built a memorial right in the middle of the river where the priests stood.

Now why did he put one in the river? The 12 stones in the river are representative of the DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST. It’s the place of the Ark in the river, and the Ark speaks of Christ.

If we were to ask, “Joshua, why’d you put those rocks in the middle of the river?” He wouldn’t say, “Because of the death of Christ.” Okay? He would say, “That’s the place God was faithful to me. That’s the place where God kept His promises so I want something in the river to remember what took place. And I know those rocks are there because I stood there too and I put them there. And God is faithful to me.”

But if we take the two memorials and we apply scriptural typology to it, we’d say the 12 stones in the river refer to the DEATH OF CHRIST, and the 12 stones in Gilgal refer to the

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST. It's the beginning of a brand new life.

And the significance of that is when we become a Christian we experience the death of Christ, that we might experience NEW LIFE on Resurrection ground! And so we'll see the death and the resurrection of Christ in these two memorials.

It's the death of Christ, not the death of the believer that's celebrated here. Remember, going into Canaan is not the death of the Christian like so many hymn writers have said. It is the death of Christ and the resurrection on the other side—and we'll have more to say about that in a little bit.

**v. 10 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,**

“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,”

Now he was careful to do everything and the Ark stood in the middle of the river all of this time while they were doing it.

“just as Moses had directed Joshua.”

Isn't that next phrase funny?

“The people hurried over,”

Now don't knock them. Okay? If we had to go over what was just a flooded river and it'd been dried out and there's a wall of water 20 miles up the way, how would we respond to that?

We are of the mentality that it's okay to trust God as long as we have a hold of it. But when it's totally in God's hands, that's a horse of a different color.

We can trust God with our eternal destiny but we're afraid He'll blow the next 24 hours. It's like we have to have a handle on it a little bit because if we don't it's pretty scary.

If we think running through airports is fast, we haven't seen somebody run through a dry river bed. Some of these guys—probably the runners in the bunch—got a real good start before they ever took off across and it was just “Woo Wee! I'm glad to get on the other side!” And they “hurried” across.

Why? Well they knew sure as they got halfway across they'd get caught in a flash flood. That God would change His mind and turn it loose and here it would come and they'd be swept away.

See don't get too hard on them. Sometimes we think that we might get caught in a flash flood. So we have to decide whether or not we could risk our life.

And so here they are hurrying through the river to get on the other side. And it wasn't hurrying just to get over there. It was hurrying because there was a wall of water up the way and they knew it would come at any minute. And sure enough, they might get caught.

**v. 11 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.**

“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.”

Now as soon as they got up on the river bank, what's the natural thing to do? It's to turn around and look back and say, “Golly, I was over there on the other side just a little while ago and that was a flooded river.”

But what's the other thing—what would be the normal thing to do? It's to keep your eyes on the Ark isn't it? He told them don't keep your eyes off the Ark. Where the Ark goes, you go.

Now that the Ark is in the river and they're over here, naturally we have this gigantic mass of people looking at everything down there in the dry riverbed. And they've watched Joshua put up that first memorial down there so they're all standing there watching.

Now verse 12 tells us something else that happened.

**v. 12 The men of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over, armed, in front of the Israelites, as Moses had directed them.**

“The men of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over, armed, in front of the Israelites, as Moses had directed them.”

Remember the Reubenites, the Gaddites and the half-tribe of Manasseh? Those were the two and a half tribes that when they killed the Amorites on the east side of the Jordan, wanted to stay over there and not go into the land. And remember, Joshua straightened them out in chapter 1. He said, “Now Moses told y’all that you could stay over here, but your fighting men are gonna fight for your brothers until the land is possessed and then y’all can go back again.”

So they made an agreement that they’d do that before they would. So if we can get in our mind’s eye, the Aggie band playing the Aggie War hymn and you’ve got they’re dressed out in military paraphernalia and they have all their weapons ready—why? Well they don’t know what they’re going to hit as soon as they get across. People aren’t just going to welcome them when they get over there.

Now granted, these people ought to be singing “This land is your land” and high-tailing it out of there if they wanted to save their lives, but they’re entrenched and there’s going to be a war all the way through here.

This is going to be rough as they have to get involved in fighting the battle of possessing the land. So there's 40,000 of these fellas from the two and a half tribes that are going to fulfill their commitment of military duty. They've left enough men and the wives and the children and all of their things in their settlements on the east bank, but now they're over here to carry out their commitments. Verse 13 tells us how many.

**v. 13 About forty thousand armed for battle crossed over before the Lord to the plains of Jericho for war.**

“About forty thousand armed for battle crossed over before the Lord to the plains of Jericho for war.”

And they're all ready to go.

**v. 14 That day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they revered him all the days of his life, just as they had revered Moses.**

“That day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they revered him all the days of his life, just as they had revered Moses.”

What's significant about that? In chapter 1 the Lord said, “Now Joshua, don't worry about it. Just as I was with Moses so I'm going to be with you. I'm going to exalt you before the people.”

In Joshua 3:7, just before they got ready to cross over the river, he said:

### Joshua 3:7

... “Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses.”

Okay what’s happening? God fills his promises again.

We can’t find any place in the Bible where God promises something that He doesn’t fulfill. And that ought to get us excited! If we’ve received Christ as Savior, He has promised the gift of eternal life and He will never fail to keep His promises. He just does!

We’ll never be able to accuse Him throughout all eternity that He ever failed to keep His promise. And here again is a beautiful illustration of that. Joshua’s points are going way high up, as far as the people are concerned. He is now taking the place of Moses.

People are starting to put bumper stickers on their chariots saying, “Moses who?” Now it’s Joshua. He is the big hero. He is the man of the hour and that’s all because God has faithfully fulfilled His promise.

### v. 15 Then the Lord said to Joshua,

“Then the Lord said to Joshua,”

**v. 16 “Command the priests carrying the ark of the Testimony to come up out of the Jordan.”**

“Command the priests carrying the ark of the Testimony to come up out of the Jordan.”

**v. 17 So Joshua commanded the priests, “Come up out of the Jordan.”**

“So Joshua commanded the priests, ‘Come up out of the Jordan.’”

**v. 18 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.**

“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.”

This big wall of water sweeps down the dry riverbed as they watch it.

Okay, what is the significance of that water coming back? Two things.



That water speaks of the waters of judgment. Restrained by God's hand miraculously until things are done, and then it comes down like a wall of water.

When we think of water we always think of judgment in the Bible because Noah and Shem, Ham and Japheth and their wives got on the boat and were secure, then the waters of judgment came.

There's another great illustration in 2 Thessalonians 2 where the Holy Spirit, who is symbolized by water, is the great restrainer. And in essence He is the restrainer of judgment.

That means that we, as long as we're here as Christians and we have the Holy Spirit living within us, the fires of judgment are not going to fall upon this world. The Rapture of the church took place and the Christians are gone, the Spirit of God goes and 2 Thessalonians 2 tells us that then the fires of judgment begin to fall. The book of Revelation describes it.

When he who is restrained is taken out of the way, then it all happens. The wheels come off and it falls apart, and this is the picture.

But there's another thing that's even more important than that. When that water started flowing back in that river it was God saying, "I want to tell you something. I've made up your mind for you. There's no way of getting out of this. You are now in the land. You aren't turning around and going

home unless you're going for an awful long walk to get around the river. You're in the land."

God never made armor for the back. He never meant for us to turn and retreat. It means face forward and get after it, and fight the good fight.

"Y'all don't have any way to retreat now. Get on with it. I've blocked all possibilities of you getting back across."

Now if we wanted to see those two wetted together—blocking the retreat and also giving judgment—all we have to do is put down Exodus 14:26-31 that describes it:

### Exodus 14:26-31

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen." So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it. Then the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen—even Pharaoh's entire army that had gone into the sea after them. Not even one of them remained. The sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians. And Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. And when Israel saw the great power which the

Lord had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

That's putting the two things together.

**v. 19 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.**

“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.”

Now that's just a little trip of 4 or 5 miles. They get up there and they set up camp. And they're setting up camp at a place called Gilgal.

Now Gilgal is in a lot of the Bible studies of characters. We see it in the life of David. We see it in the life of Elijah and Elisha.

What does the term “Gilgal” mean and how does it fit here?

The term “Gilgal” can mean “circle.” But there's another meaning of it that probably fits better, and that is “to roll away”—to roll away the reproach—as we're going to see in the next study.

Sin is a reproach to any people. And to fall short of what the Lord wants for our life is to be a reproach to the Lord. If we decide that we're tired of wandering in the wilderness of our

carnality, living in the flesh rather than in the spirit, and we go across our Jordan into the land that the Lord wants to give us—as we go into that land, our reproach is going to be rolled away.

God looks down and He sees us as a reproach to people who are around us and we're a reproach to Him. He says "You're lukewarm and neither cold nor hot. You make me sick." (see Revelation 3:16)

And to believe God and to walk in and possess what God has given us so graciously is in the process to roll away the reproach.

In the book of Titus there were two phrases that came out of that book. The one phrase has to do with the beautifying or the adorning of the teachings of God. And the other phrase has to do with the opposite of that. It was the distorting of truth by our lives. And we don't want that.

We don't want people looking at a distorted concept of the truth by the way they see us. We would rather adorn the truth by a real victorious Christian life, walking with God in a meaningful way. And so Gilgal has to do with the rolling away of one's reproach.

Now listen to Alan Redpath in *Victorious Christian Living* as he describes this:

(Victorious Christian Living by Alan Redpath)

Do you know what that word “Gilgal” means? It means that “the reproach has been rolled away.” I want to say here that any believer, man or woman, boy or girl, living in the wilderness of carnality and spiritual defeat and failure, is a reproach. But if we have established a bridgehead, and have crossed over Jordan, the reproach has been rolled away, and Gilgal [then becomes] the place of resurrection.  
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Which we’re going to see in memorial number two.

**v. 20 And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan.**

“And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan.”

Alright, now the second memorial is in the campsite. If we look at the invisible stones in the river—that’s a place where God is faithful. If we look at the visible stones on the other shore, that’s the power of God going before us to give us the land.

The power of God is demonstrated in the Resurrection and raising Christ from the dead. The death of Christ as he died for sins is a faithful God who has come all the way to Calvary to pay the price for our sins.

Now how does that fit us? How does that get into the typology

of what we've looked at?

Remember Egypt is BONDAGE—that's before we become Christians.

We cross the Red Sea, we're freed from bondage—that's SALVATION—when we receive Jesus Christ as Savior.

We can come up to the river and take what God has for us or we can choose to live in the flesh rather than in the spirit, and wander around in the wilderness with no direction.

Then we realize we're tired of that and we don't like spitting sand and we would really love to have the refreshing experience of drawing upon an adequate Christ, so we come to our Jordan. Our Jordan is a place of DEATH to us. We have to die to what we want, to be raised to the newness of life as to what He wants.

It's saying to God, "I want to let You lead. I want to let You live in me. I want to let You love through me. So God I'm coming to my Jordan. Open up a way and give me the land of rest and peace that You promised will be mine."

The last verse of Mark Clarkson's song "So Send I You" illustrates the trust of what we're getting ready to say about crossing our Jordan. Listen to these words.

So send I you to leave your life's ambition  
To die to dear desire, self-will resign

To labour long, and love where men revile you  
So send I you to lose your life in Mine.  
(source unknown)

### Luke 9:23

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

That's a corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying. But if it doesn't die it abides alone, but if it does it brings forth much fruit. (see John 12:24)

Have we been through our Jordan? Are we on that Resurrection ground? Are we in fellowship with the Lord and do we sense Him working in our life significantly? And we're here filled with the joy of the Lord because we can see Him at work in directing and putting the pieces together in that gigantic picture puzzle of our life and making it all fit?

**v. 21 He said to the Israelites, “In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, ‘What do these stones mean?’**

“He said to the Israelites, ‘In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, “What do these stones mean?”’”

**v. 22 tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’**

“tell them, “Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.””

Arthur Pink has written quite an exposition on the book of Joshua. He put it together with a verse in the gospel of John that was very meaningful:

(Gleanings in Joshua by Arthur W. Pink)

[These stones were] to signify that Israel had not crossed the Jordan by their own ability, but because of the miracle-working power of God. It was a representation unto them that they had passed through the river’s bed dry shod. More especially, it was an earnest and *pledge* of what God would yet do for them.

Second, that monument was designed as a “memorial” that Israel had passed through the river of death, that they were now (typically) on resurrection ground, that *judgment lay behind them*. Israel upon the Canaan side of Jordan adumbrated that blessed truth expressed by [the] Redeemer in John v, 24, [Now listen to this. This just fits this so perfect. where He so definitely assures His people that each soul who hears His word and believes on the One who sent Him “hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.”

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That’s it! It’s moving into the abundant life that God has given us.

Now if we think that is an easy thing, we don’t have the



slightest idea of what's going on. They sent armed troops ahead of them before they went across. Right?

When we get into enemy territory, we have a lot of enemy territory to possess. The reason it might be so comfortable and so nice now, even though we don't have any direction in our life is, we and the evil one are going the same way. As long as it's like that, it's alright. Put up our shield of faith and go across the river, we're going to get the fiery darts just flying at us right and left.

And it's an amazing thing that we survive from day to day in endeavoring to possess new territory in a real walk with the Lord. If we're making a significant walk with the Lord, we aren't comfortable. And as Swindoll says it, it's three steps forward and two steps back. It is tough when we get serious about walking with God.

When we turn it over to God He's going to really start to rain on our parade and He's going to start to work in our life. He's also going to test us and prove to us to see whether He really meant business. And go on in and possess the land.

**v. 23 For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over.**

“For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until

you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over.”

Evidently Caleb is standing there by him. They’re the only two that had the Red Sea experience, and he told them about it. That’s like he’s saying, “See I told y’all this is how God did it. And none of you would believe me that He dried up the Red Sea. Now you had a real good look at it. He dried up 20 miles of the river. It’s the same God we had at the Red Sea 40 years ago. He just did it here so y’all could get a real good look at it. I told you so, now believe me.”

**v. 24 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.”**

“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.”

Now here are some verses:

Exodus 14:31

And when Israel saw the great power which the Lord had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.]

## Deuteronomy 3:24

O Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy strong hand: for what God is there in heaven or on earth, who can do such works and mighty acts as thine?

## Zephaniah 3:17

The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.

These memorial stones have the purpose of showing them that the Lord is mighty and He did a great work.

Now what do these memorial stones in Gilgal do?

This is going to be the campsite for almost all of their military campaigns. This is in the central part of the land they're going to move out of. The military strategies are going to drive a wedge through the middle then hit them in the south and then go to the north. And we're going to see all that unfold in much of the rest of the book of Joshua.

But basically the center of it is here at Gilgal. Why?

They can come back and they can look at these stones and they can be reminded of a God of the past. Why do we have memorials in the past? Because if God did it in the past, He's

sure adequate to do it in the present, and there isn't anything in the future that's going to blow Him out of the water.

That's why we put up memorials. That's why we're constantly reminded of God's great power! Because if He did it there in the past, He's the same yesterday—today—forever. He can do it now for us in the present as we face this new challenge and new opportunity. And He'll be the same way in the future. He'll take us all the way to the house.

And so it's a memorial in this sense to them of God's great ability to meet their needs while they are possessing the land.

Now let's go to a New Testament passage. But before we go there, here are the lessons because we're going to kind of wrap it up with an application of truth from another passage.

Lesson #1: God wants us to call to remembrance His mighty works.

It would be good for us just to take a spiritual inventory of all the great things God has done for us and think of those special places where we've met Him in a unique way. Maybe we're going to have to reach back into our childhood to think of some of those very special, special things and watch God refresh our spirit in that.

God wants us to call to remembrance His mighty works.

Lesson #2: The Lord always goes before us to lead the way.

It was the Ark that went before them.

Now Lessons #3 and #4 have to do with the two memorials.

Lesson #3: The stones in the middle of the river speak of our death and burial with Jesus Christ.

Lesson #4: The stones at Gilgal speak of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our new life in him.

Lesson #5: The people hurried over because they were still anxious and afraid.

It's scary leaving it all in God's hands.

Lesson #6: God has waited until now to exalt Joshua before the people.

The Lord keeps His promises and He's always right on schedule.

Lesson #7: The hand of the Lord is powerful.

Lesson #8: God is faithful to fulfill His promises to us.

Because that's true we ought to be joyful and expectant and excited about what He's going to continue to do in our lives.

Robert Foster in his book *Always Too Soon to Quit* talks about

the people on the day of Pentecost when God was faithful to fulfill His promise in the sending of the Holy Spirit. He says:

(Always Too Soon to Quit by Robert D. Foster)

120 people were waiting in Jerusalem. In their togetherness, they were united. Their hopes were high. Their hearts were all set to be lit and set aflame....

120 people were filled with the Third Person of the Godhead. They became fervent in spirit. They started preaching...healing...evangelizing...traveling...working...and writing. You may not understand all that took place but one thing is for sure...there were 120 people shaken and left with hearts burning for God.

Their thermostats had been turned up! The fire was in the furnace of their hearts and minds...not just in their emotions. This first century Optimists Club has had few equals in history.

(source unknown)

Cheerful, excited, overflowing and happy—this was their outlook and their attitude about life.

Now there's a New Testament passage that illustrates truth as we prepare to wrap it up.

We see the significance of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ as Paul saw it in:

## Romans 6:1-10

What then shall we say? Are we to continue in sin in order that grace might increase? [In other words, should we just keep on wandering around in our wilderness?] May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that in the same manner as Christ was raised up from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we too might walk in a new life. For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with him, in order that the sinful body may be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for the one who died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we are believing that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, no longer is dying; death is no longer exercising lordship over him. For the death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life that he lives, he lives to God.

Harry Ironside put it in poetic fashion when he said:

(Joshua, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther by H. A. Ironside)

Jesus died and we died with Him,  
Buried in His grave we lay;  
One with Him in resurrection,

Soon with Him in heaven's bright day.  
Death and judgment are behind us,  
Grace and glory are before;  
All the billows rolled o'er Jesus,  
There exhausted all their power.

p. 54

Have you made a decision? Have you made a commitment?  
Have you driven a stake? Do you have a memorial? Do you  
have a spot?

So many Christians today are rendered ineffective because  
they decide something on the basis of truth in their heart, but  
they never make a decision to memorize it. They don't tell  
anybody about it.

Maybe someone has a problem with alcohol and doesn't want  
to tell anybody. They don't want to make a decision to stop  
that thing. It's more important than that.

Or maybe someone is in a relationship they know is wrong  
and they don't want to stop it. They know that they need to  
and yet they won't do it—they won't surrender.

Or maybe it's something else that is really tearing them up.  
And privately they're saying as the Spirit of God speaks to  
them now—"I have to do that." But then they leave—and  
because they didn't drive a stake and they didn't memorize  
the thing—they're going to slip right out of it and slip right  
back in.



It's kind of like the fellow that was working on the top of his roof one day and he slipped and he fell. As he slid down the roof he came off of the edge of the roof and grabbed for dear life unto the gutter. He was hanging 20 feet above the ground. Immediately he prayed that great prayer, "Oh God, if You're up there, save me!" And God said, "Trust me and let go."

And he just hung on for dear life and pretty soon he looked back up and he says, "Is there anybody else up there?" That's the feeling. It's trusting to let God—we're scared and we don't want to do that.

And then there is the other problem and that's the problem of the power of what holds us. The story is told in the Celebes Islands that the natives, in order to catch monkeys, would make a little gourd that was tightened very tightly around the neck by a lot of twine. Then they'd hollow it out and put rice down there and just hang it in the tree. The monkey would come along and he'd stick his slender arm down in there, grab a handful of rice and try to pull it back out and his hand wouldn't come out.

And so he screeches like crazy and the native comes and puts a cage around him. All he had to do was let go of the rice in the bottom of the gourd and pull it out and he's free.

We're just like that. We're going to hang onto our rice in the gourd and go down the river, rather than turn loose and surrender and let God work in our lives.

Do you have any memorials? Have you responded to God in significant ways?

What kind of memorial do you want to have when you die? Let's say that right now we're planning the memorial for our tombstone. What do we want on that? And are we working toward that?

We should want the **THREE F's: FERVENT, FAITHFUL and FRUITFUL**—that's all. Just put it on there!

And if our life is that, that's tremendous.

**FERVENT** in the spirit to study the Word of God.

**FAITHFUL** that we've finished our race.

**FRUITFUL** in that we took a few people with us when we went, because we shared Jesus Christ with them.

What's our memorial? What are we establishing by the life we live? Are the things that we're living in now related to those ultimate goals of leaving a memorial behind—that God really worked and He was faithful to us in our life?

Father, we come to You and thank You for this passage. It seems so historical when we first read it. It seems so routine, and yet how powerful it is as the Spirit of God clothes it with meaning and purpose for us. We struggle constantly with

those moments of surrender—of casting all our cares upon You. And then we pick it back up again because we're afraid You can't handle it. Forgive us for that. We just keep wandering around in the wilderness of our own making and You're waiting for us to surrender and to identify with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And be raised to newness of life where You're totally adequate to live in us. Thank You that Paul told us how to do it in that he was crucified with Christ, nevertheless he lived. Yet He didn't live—You lived in him. And the life which he now lived in the flesh he lived by the faith of the Son of God who loved him and gave Himself for him. And we just pray that You might clothe this truth with meaning and purpose and make us willing to surrender and to walk in the land and to live on resurrection ground. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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# A Practical Study of JOSHUA

## “The Path of Obedience Leads to Victory”

### Study Number Four – Joshua 4:1-24

### NOTES

v. 1 When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua,

v. 2 “Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe,

v. 3 and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.”

v. 4 So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe,

v. 5 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,

v. 6 to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’

v. 7 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.”

v. 8 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.

v. 9 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.

v. 10 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,

v. 11 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.

## NOTES

v. 12 The men of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over, armed, in front of the Israelites, as Moses had directed them.

v. 13 About forty thousand armed for battle crossed over before the Lord to the plains of Jericho for war.

v. 14 That day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they revered him all the days of his life, just as they had revered Moses.

v. 15 Then the Lord said to Joshua,

v. 16 “Command the priests carrying the ark of the Testimony to come up out of the Jordan.”

v. 17 So Joshua commanded the priests, “Come up out of the Jordan.”

v. 18 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.

v. 19 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.

v. 20 And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan.

v. 21 He said to the Israelites, “In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, ‘What do these stones mean?’

v. 22 tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’

v. 23 For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan just what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over.

v. 24 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.”

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Read Joshua 4:1-24 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

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2. What does the Lord command Joshua to do in verses 2 & 3?

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3. What is the significance of the stones, according to verses 6 & 7?

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4. How long did the priests remain standing in the middle of the Jordan, according to verse 10?

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5. What did the Lord do for Joshua, according to verse 14?

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6. What happened as soon as the priests carrying the ark reached dry ground on the other side of the river, according to verse 18?

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7. Where did the children of Israel set up camp once they got into the land, according to verse 19?

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8. Why did the Lord dry up the Jordan River for this crossing, according to verse 24?

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9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

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10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

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**LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:**

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

**LESSON #1:** God wants us to call to remembrance His mighty works.

**LESSON #2:** The Lord always goes before us to lead the way.

**LESSON #3:** The stones in the middle of the river speak of our death and burial with Jesus Christ.

**LESSON #4:** The stones at Gilgal speak of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our new life in Him.

**LESSON #5:** The people hurried over because they were still anxious and afraid.

**LESSON #6:** God has waited until now to exalt Joshua before the people.

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LESSON #7: The hand of the Lord is powerful.

LESSON #8: God is faithful to fulfill His promises to us.