

Into the Promised Land - Joshua's Story
Lesson #48 - "The Memorial Stones" - Joshua 4:1-9
• HANDOUT •

► This lesson: In Joshua 3:12, prior to crossing the Jordan, the people were told to choose one man from each tribe for a task that was undisclosed. Chapter 4 opens by reporting the Nation of Israel had successfully crossed over, then repeats the command to select twelve men. But now the task for the twelve is revealed.

► **Joshua 4:1-3** • When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, "Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, 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."

Q: If we didn't know that Joshua had already been told to pick the twelve men in the prior chapter the way chapter 4 reads, it sounds like the twelve men were chosen after they had crossed over and then they had to go back to the center of the riverbed and pick up the stones and carry them to the Jericho side of the River. How are we to unravel this confusion?

Q: What were the specific instructions to the twelve men regarding the rock each was to carry to the Jericho side of the River?

Q: What was significant about these instructions?

**Again we see the Hebrew thought process at work.
We are now given details of Joshua's instructions to the twelve men he had chosen ...**

► **Joshua 4:4-6a** • So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, 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, to serve as a sign among you."

Q: What does it mean: "Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites?"

Q: How were the twelve men supposed to go before the Ark of the Lord into the middle of the Jordan? They were supposed to take the stones from the middle where the Priests were standing holding the Ark. They couldn't go before the Ark and go to where the Priests were standing with the Ark. How are we to understand this confusing statement?

Q: What is the purpose of these stones?

► **Joshua 4:6b-9** • In the future, when your children ask you, "What do these stones mean?" 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."

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. 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.

Q: What is significant about the statement: "the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD?"

Q: How should we view this water miracle in the context of the Exodus which Israel participated in over forty years before?

Q: How should we apply the story of the Memorial Stones to our lives today?

Q: The text states that the Memorial Stones are "there to this day." Where is "there?"

Now, once again, Israel's crossing the Jordan is described, this time as a summary, but with the added details about the ending of the Event ...

► **Joshua 4:10-14** • 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, 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.

The men of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over, armed, in front of the Israelites, as Moses had directed them. About forty thousand armed for battle crossed over before the LORD to the plains of Jericho for war.

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.

Q: What does the reoccurring statement, “just as Moses had directed Joshua” tell us?

Q: Why is there a notation made regarding the 40,000 men from the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossing over before the rest of Israel's tribes crossed?

Q: Why did they cross over fully armed for battle?

Q: Why does this part of the narrative close with “The LORD exalted Joshua?”

The Miraculous Event of Crossing the Jordan finishes with a flourish ...

► **Joshua 4:15-18 [NIV/NAS]** • Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Command the priests carrying the Ark of the Testimony to come up out of the Jordan."

So Joshua commanded the priests, "Come up out of the Jordan." And the priests came up out of the river carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD. No sooner had the soles of the priests' feet touched the dry land, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks as before.

Q: What does the passage make clear about the return of the waters of the river once the Ark was brought out of the River and onto the west bank.

Israel sets up camp and their base of operation & they set up the Memorial Stones at a place called Gilgal ...

► **Joshua 4:19-24** • 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. And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan.

He said to the Israelites, "In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' 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.

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."

Q: Until this scripture passage, we were told that Israel was camped for a prolonged period of time on the east side of the River across from Jericho. It was to Jericho that Joshua sent the spies. Now, suddenly we are told that Israel crossed to Gilgal, where Israel set up camp. Did Israel somehow miscalculate where they entered the Promised Land?

Q: What is one of the first things Joshua does after setting up camp?

Q: What does Joshua say these stones represent and how they are to be treated?

Q: What two-fold purpose does the Lord state for performing this miracle?

► **As Chapter 5 opens, we find Israel settling into Gilgal. Joshua begins to ready the people to face the task of dealing with the inhabitants of the Land. Two things must first be observed: Celebrating Passover and the ritual of circumcision. That is where we begin next time.**



Next Time • Lesson #49
"Radical Obedience at Gilgal "

