

Joshua Chapter 4: The Crossing of the Jordan River and Stones of Remembrance
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INTRODUCTION

The parting of the Jordan River had several purposes: (1) confirm Joshua's leadership over Israel, 3:7, (2) show Israel that God would drive out the people of the Land, 3:10, (3) terrify the people of the Land, 4:24; 5:1, and (4) cause Israel to fear their God, 4:24. It was a miracle that Israel was to remember forever, 4:7, 21-24. What does it teach you about God today?

Israel's History Prior to Joshua Chapter 1

- God frees Israel from Egypt (Ex. 12:29-41).
- God leads Israel to the Promise Land, but they refuse to enter (Num. 13:1-14:12).
- Israel is cursed to wander in the wilderness for 40yrs (Num. 14:20-35).
- Moses is not allowed to enter the Promise Land (Num. 20:5-12, 24; 27:14).
- Joshua is appointed by God to replace Moses (Num. 27:15-23; Deut. 31:14).
- God brings Israel back to the Promise Land (Num. 33:40-56).

Joshua Chapter 1: *Victory before Entering the Land*

Israel is about to enter the Promise Land and God guarantees them victory before setting one foot on the Land. The key to their success will be God's Word; they must know it thoroughly in order to obey it. God also encourages Joshua personally and guarantees him victory in the battlefield—immortality in battle, 1:5.

Joshua Chapter 2: *The Two Spies Confirm God's Word about the Promise Land*

Israel begins to see God's faithfulness to give them the Promise Land. The two spies reveal that the people of Canaan are terrified of Israel because of what God did to the Red Sea 40yrs earlier and recently what He did to the two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og.

Joshua Chapter 3: *The Parting of the Jordan River and Israel's Crossing*

God continues to strengthen Israel as they get ready to conquer the Land. He performs a miracle that confirms Joshua's appointment as Israel's next leader (3:7) and shows Israel that their God will drive out the Canaanites (3:10).

Joshua Chapter 4: *The Crossing of the Jordan River and Stones of Remembrance*

4:1-3, the Lord commands Joshua to gather the 12 stones of remembrance.

4:4-8, Joshua commands the 12 men to gather the Stones of Remembrance that will be used as a memorial to the miracle of the Jordan River crossing.

4:9, Joshua sets up a different set of 12 stones at the exact place where the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant stood, which was to be a memorial that would remain at the Jordan River indicating where the miracle crossing took place. These stones would eventually be washed away due to the Jordan River flooding every year.

4:10-11, the nation of Israel crosses the Jordan River and the Ark of the Covenant follows the nation after everyone has crossed.

4:12-13, the men from the tribes of Reuben, Gad and ½ tribe of Manasseh are once again mentioned as in chapter 1. This again reinforces the fact that these tribes kept the oath they made to Moses in Num. 32 that they would join their brothers in battle for the Promise Land. However, only 40,000 men total from these three tribes crossed the Jordan. Since there were actually 136,930 men of war from these three tribes (Num. 26:7: Reuben had 43,730, Num. 26:18: Gad had 40,500, and Num. 26:34: Manasseh had 52,700), does it mean that the rest who didn't cross are rebelling like the Exodus generation who refused to enter the Promise Land in Num. 13-14?

No, if we look at the account in Num. 32 when they made the promise to Moses, Moses allowed some of their men to stay behind to build cities, folds for their sheep, and homes for the women and children that would stay behind. So these three tribes have kept their word to the Lord to fight with their brethren for the Land.

4:14, the Lord keeps the promise He made to Joshua in 1:5 (cf. 3:7) that He would be with him as He was with Moses. God uses the parting of the Jordan River to establish Joshua's leadership over Israel as He used the parting of the Red Sea to establish Moses' leadership of Israel. God's always true to His Word!

4:15-18, The Lord commands Joshua to instruct the priests to come up from the Jordan River after the nation has crossed. And as soon as their feet touch dry land (the edge of the Jordan), the walls of water come down and the River overflows its banks again.

4:19, 40yrs earlier Israel prepared to leave the land of slavery, Egypt, by preparing the Passover lamb on the 10th day of the 1st month, Ex. 12:3.

4:20-24, the purpose of this miracle crossing of the Jordan is so that all the nations of the world will know that Israel's God is mighty and not just another god worshipped by men. It is also to teach Israel to fear her God forever.

Conclusion: This miracle was supposed to teach Israel something about their God, that He is powerful and a keeper of His Word. Do you know Him this way, do you know Him to keep His word when He tells you *I will never leave you nor forsake you* (Jos. 1:5, 9)? Have you forgotten that He is alive and powerful and able to deliver you as He did Israel?