

**Joshua 4:1 ¶ And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,
Joshua 4:2 Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man,
Joshua 4:3 And command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night.**

As I read through the chapter, I found the style of writing to be quite interesting. It seems that we are often being told what is coming and then backing up and restating some of what we have already been told.

Once all the people had made it across the Jordan River, the LORD tells Joshua to have the twelve men from each tribe (referenced in the previous chapter) to go back and take a stone (big enough to carry on one's shoulder according to verse 5) out of the middle of the riverbed and leave them at the place where they were encamped that night.

Joshua 4:4 Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man:

Joshua 4:5 And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of Jordan, and take ye up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel:

Joshua 4:6 That this may be a sign among you, *that* when your children ask *their fathers* in time to come, saying, *What mean ye by these stones?*

Joshua 4:7 Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.

Joshua 4:8 And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the LORD spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there.

Joshua did as the LORD commanded and had the twelve men that had already been chosen from each tribe to go before the ark of the LORD in the riverbed of the Jordan, pick up a stone to carry on his shoulder and bring it back. These stones were to be used to make a memorial that would be a testimony to future generations of the LORD's miracle on behalf of the people in bringing them across the Jordan on dry ground.

Principle: Parents should always be ready to give an answer for the works of God that testify to His power, greatness, love and provision for His people.

Joshua 4:9 And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day.

This verse seems to indicate that Joshua personally made another memorial of twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan River at the place where the priests stood with the ark as the people crossed over. Joshua notes that this memorial was still intact at the time he made this written record—indicating that it was some time after they had taken possession of the land.

Joshua 4:10 ¶ For the priests which bare the ark stood in the midst of Jordan, until every thing was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to speak unto the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua: and the people hasted and passed over.

Joshua 4:11 And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over, that the ark of the LORD passed over, and the priests, in the presence of the people.

Joshua 4:12 And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses spake unto them:

Joshua 4:13 About forty thousand prepared for war passed over before the LORD unto battle, to the plains of Jericho.

It is noted that the priests remained standing in the middle of the river holding the ark until everything that the Lord had commanded Joshua to do had been completed.

Joshua also notes that the children of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh crossed over with the rest of the congregation in compliance with their promise. It is also noted that only 40,000 out of the much larger number previously identified as men eligible to go to war. Some commentators reason that it was probably those considered to be the best soldiers, leaving the other men to take care of their families.

Joshua 4:14 On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life.

As noted at the end of the previous chapter, this miracle testified to the people that the LORD was with Joshua in the same way that He had been with Moses. The people accordingly gave him the same respect that they had given Moses.

Joshua 4:15 And the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,

Joshua 4:16 Command the priests that bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of Jordan.

Joshua 4:17 Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan.

Joshua 4:18 And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD were come up out of the midst of Jordan, *and* the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as *they did* before.

Joshua 4:19 And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth *day* of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.

The LORD told Joshua when to have the priests come out of the Jordan. When they did, the waters of the Jordan once again flowed as they had before the people crossed the river. It is noted that this was on the 10th day of the first month (the day normally designated for choosing the Passover lamb) and that they made camp at Gilgal east of Jericho.

Joshua 4:20 ¶ And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.

Joshua 4:21 And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What *mean* these stones?

Joshua 4:22 Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.

Joshua 4:23 For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over:

Joshua 4:24 That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it *is* mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever.

The twelve stones which the leaders of each tribe had carried out of the riverbed of the Jordan were used to erect a memorial at their encampment in Gilgal. Joshua instructed the people to use it as a teaching opportunity for their children. When the children asked what it was, they were to tell them about the miracle of how the LORD brought the people of Israel across the Jordan River on dry land. They were to emphasize the truth that the LORD was their true king. They were to remind them that this miracle was just like the one the LORD used at the Red Sea to deliver the people from Egypt.

Joshua went on to declare that these miracles were intended to let all the people on earth know that the LORD is almighty in power and authority—unlike their false gods. These miracles were intended to cause the people of Israel to reverence the LORD “your God” forever—time without end.

Sadly, we know that this was not to be.

The New Bible Commentary made an interesting observation: “Memory plays an important role in any society. Without a memory a person loses identity, and without a history to sustain it a society and the world around it become virtually phantom. Any society that hopes to endure must become, as sociologists put it, ‘a community of memory and hope’.”