

Joshua 2:1-24

Israel had moved their camp from Shittim to the edge of the Jordan River and three days later they crossed over into Canaan on dry ground.

God instructed Israel to take twelve stones from the river and set them up in Gilgal as a monument. These stones from the Jordan would provide a means for remembering and testifying to the faithfulness and power of God. As Christians, we can see that what God did for Israel, He also does for the church. He provides many means by which we can remember his great works of redemption.

Summary

In Joshua 4:1-24, the author continues his extended account of the pivotal event of the crossing of the Jordan, now turning the reader's attention to the twelve memorial stones Israel retrieved from the river.

1. Memorial Stones vv. 1-8

As the nation concluded its march into Canaan, God tells Joshua to select twelve men, one from each tribe, and command them each to take a stone from the place where the priests stood in the river-bed on dry ground and to carry the stones to the place where they will set up camp for the night (**Josh 4:1-5**). They represented the entire nation of Israel and also testified to the faithfulness and miraculous power of God.

These stones were to serve as a sign for the people. They were to direct the people's attention to the great act of God when he dried up the flooding Jordan and they would provide a teaching opportunity when their children asked about them (**4:6-7**).

The stones were also a memorial to Israel forever (**Josh 4:7**). They were to help later generations participate in all the benefits of the crossing.

Parents, Sunday School teachers, church members and elders need to find ways to channel children's curiosity to inquire about the most important things. One of the primary ways to accomplish that is to use the signs and memorials that God has given us; the Word of God and the sacraments

By these signs and memorials, we can know what took place in the past; and by remembering; by recalling with faith and appropriation, we can participate in them.

The people of Israel did as Joshua commanded (**Josh 4:8**).

2. Second Monument vv. 9-10a

Joshua then went into the midst of the Jordan, where the priests were standing, and set up another twelve stone monument (**Josh 4:9**).

These two monuments, like the two tablets of the law, served as a reminder or memorial both to God and Israel of what the Lord had done.

The first major section of the chapter concludes with a reminder that the water stood still so long as the priests stood still in the river (**Josh 4:10a**).

3. Brief Interlude vv. 10b-14

Next comes a brief intermission from the main event, which highlights two major themes of the chapter; unity and faithfulness, from a different perspective Joshua first 'fast forwards' the text to tell us that the people passed over in a hurry and, when that was complete, the ark and the priests passed over as well (**4:10b-11**). He then 'rewinds' at verse 12 where we learn that Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh remained true to their commitment and obeyed the word that Moses spoke to them. They had been blessed by the Lord and already possessed their land, but that did not mean they had nothing left to do. Grace-filled religion is not duty-free religion. This report also solidifies the emphasis on unity. The second feature of the interlude is God's exaltation of Joshua (**Josh 4:14**). God once again proved his faithfulness. He promised to exalt Joshua, who now moved beyond the role of general to that of covenant mediator and national leader.

4. Camp Gilgal vv. 15-24

After the priests climb out of the river onto the western bank, the Jordan resumes its course as a flooding torrent (**4:15-18**).

The picture is complete but by means of the monuments, not forgotten.

The final scene in this chapter takes us from the Jordan River to Israel's first camp in Canaan. Note, the date (**Josh 4:19**). Just four days before Passover; the very day Passover preparations were to begin (**Exod. 12:2-3**). Israel set up camp on the east border of Jericho (**4:19**). Is Israel going to position themselves like sitting ducks in the plains of Jericho and then take time to celebrate Passover?

Gilgal will become the base of operations for the southern campaign and the first land distribution (**Josh 10, 14**). Joshua set up the twelve stones from the Jordan here at Gilgal (**4:20**). He symbolically united the people as twelve separate stones became one monument to commemorate the mighty saving act of God at the Jordan. The memorials God has given us in His Word and His Sacraments display the same truth. After constructing the monument, Joshua again addressed the people telling them to explain the significance of this monument to future generations (**4:21-23**).

Why did the Lord do all of this? First, "so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty" (**4:24a**). Secondly, so Israel should 'fear the LORD [their] God forever' (**4:24b**).

How do we react to the mighty saving acts of God in Christ?

Do we use the means that the Lord has given to us the Scriptures and the sacraments, to remember those great deeds?

Do we seek to use these means to instruct our children and our congregations?

The God of our salvation gives us frequent reminders both of our former wanderings and estrangement as well the unity and reconciliation we have in Christ.

We must use the means he has provided to worship him and to recall frequently that Christ is the one, true source of everlasting joy.