

# *Joshua 4*

## *Crossing the Jordan Part Two*

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March 23, 2026

### **Read Joshua 4**

**Remembering the structure of the Book of Joshua** CROSS TAKE DIVIDE  
SERVE

**Elements of the story** The crossing – Memorial stones – the Parting of the waters of the river Jordan – Israel’s army crossing into the Promised Land – Exaltation of Joshua

- The narrative of the chapter 4 does not follow the linear unfolding of the events (similar to chapter 3)
- There are basically three main themes in chapter 4:
  1. Setting up of the memorial stones and their significance
  2. Exaltation of Joshua
  3. Further description of the crossing of the river Jordan and more redemptive-historical significance of the event revealed
- The most of the narrative in chapter 4 is devoted to the memorial stones – the motif of the memorial stones is interspersed with the details of the crossing and exaltation of Joshua
- The chapter ends with a divine revelation of the similarities between the crossing of the river Jordan and the crossing of the Red Sea

## Memorial Stones The command to set them up and their significance

- The setting up of the memorial stones is the second of the two main events depicted in chapters 3 and 4
- Twelve representatives of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel are commanded to gather twelve stones from the bottom of the river
- It is a beautiful God's provision of the way to commemorate the miraculous crossing of the Jordan – for how else could they collect the stones from the bottom of the river but by the might of the LORD God who parted the waters of Jordan
- From the amount of space the event occupies within the narration, we may conclude that setting up the memorial stones was of momentous importance.
- In fact, it appears that there were two sets of stones set up: one in the Jordan River (v.9 possible reference in Matthew 3:7-9) and another at Gilgal (19-20). Why the need for the memorial:
  1. First, it is a sign of God's grace. The Lord knows the feeble state of His children and He wants to encourage them by reminding them about His mighty acts, about Himself.
    - It is remarkable that they are to remember **His** mighty acts, **His** gracious ways with them, **His** deliverance of them, **His** revelation to them (through Joshua)
    - It is the intimate knowledge\remembrance of the LORD God and His mighty deeds that serves the people of Israel many a time as sole and sufficient encouragement
    - This intimate knowledge of the LORD God and of His deeds is also the only legitimate basis for a meaningful prayer life (see for example Psalm 89, 91, 86 and many others)
  2. Second, *the greatest enemy of faith may be forgetfulness* (Dale Ralph Davis) – see Deuteronomy 8
  3. Third, the need for the memorial of the LORD God's mighty acts implies that these types of acts are not the norm in the

redemptive history; otherwise the next generation of the Israelites would have 'their own' mighty acts of God by which they would remember the LORD.

- It is important to notice this – that this pattern is present from the beginning in the redemptive history: the LORD God acts in history in a supernatural way but NOT in a uniform way (not the same way all the time).
  - That is why the Lord graciously provides us with His special revelation explaining the events of redemptive history so that we may know how to understand those events and learn more about Him.
4. Fourth, the memorial stones serve a didactic purpose. They are set with the next generation of Israelites in mind.
- The covenant that the Lord established with Moses extends to the next generations
  - The Israelites as the people of God had covenantal duties regarding their own children – they had to teach them about the LORD God and His mighty acts.
  - We do the same today – by catechizing our children
  - We can see here a display of the LORD's care for the future generation of the children of Israel. This generation (at the time of the writing of the Book of Joshua) would probably not see the might of the LORD displayed openly, yet He wants them to know about it by preserving the memory of the miraculous crossing of Jordan.

**Joshua's exaltation motif** God's promise fulfilled:

1. God promises to exalt Joshua before all Israel (3:7)
2. God fulfills His promise (verse 14)
3. *as I was with Moses so I will be with you*
4. *...they stood in awe of him, just as they had stood in awe of Moses, all the days of his life* because of Joshua's unique relationship with the LORD

**Further details of the crossing** Additional information regarding the crossing:

1. The text confirms the miraculous character of the crossing – the waters of the river parted at the exact time when the priests’s feet crossed the banks of the river; the waters returned to their normal flow as soon as the feet of the priests entered the dry land on the other side of the river
2. The creation – redemption motif (see Genesis 1:9)
3. The Israel crossed the river Jordan as an army ready for the battle; when crossing the Red Sea the Israel’s army left the enemy territory; when crossing the Jordan the army of Israel entered the enemy territory
4. The date of the crossing (tenth day of the first month – verse 19) is the same day as the first Passover (before the crossing of the Red Sea); thus the redemption that begun is Exodus 12:2-3 came to completion in Joshua 4:19 (Keil).
5. We have a redemptive-historical transition from the slave to the heir (of God’s promise)
6. The ending of the chapter 4 gives us the divine authority to relate the crossing of the Jordan river to the crossing of the Red Sea
7. This is the first instance of the *recapitulation* motif within the redemptive history. Some other examples:
  - Matthew 2:15 *out of Egypt have I called my son*
  - Jesus tempted in the wilderness vs. Adam tempted in the garden
8. The ending of the chapter also gives us the proper meaning and significance of the event – the meaning for the covenant keepers is different from the meaning for the covenant breakers:
  - The crossing of Jordan is for the Israelites the sign *that the living God is among them*
  - It is an encouragement that the LORD God will deliver the land to the children of Israel (3:10)

- The revelation of the mighty God so that the Israel *may fear the LORD your God forever* (4:24b)
  - For the peoples of the earth, the crossing of Jordan is the revelation of the mighty and awesome God of all the earth *so that all the people of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty* (4:24a).
9. The extraordinary character of drying up the waters of Jordan can point only to the Creator of heaven and earth.
  10. The power and might displayed in this event should fill the hearts of the Israelites with hope that the LORD God is more than able to drive out the nations from the land.
  11. It is the same type of encouragement that we today have in our Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection: *And God raised the Lord and he will also raise us up by his power* (1 Cor. 6:14).