**THE HAND OF THE LORD IS POWERFUL**

Joshua 4:1-24

Key Verse 24

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.”

**Introduction**



In chapter 3, with God’s mighty power the Israelites crossed the Jordan River. They were second generation that they didn’t really see God’s miracle that their parents’ generation had experienced. After crossing the Jordan River, however, God wanted them to know God more personally. God wanted His people to focus on Him and remember who was guiding them before advancing toward Canaan. Let us learn from today’s passage the importance of remembering who God truly is for us as well.

1. Read verses 1-9. What did the Lord tell Joshua to do? (1-3) What then did Joshua tell the twelve men to do? (4, 5) How were these twelve stones to help their future children? (6-7) What did the twelve men and Joshua do? (8-9)

1-1, Read verses 1-9.

When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, **2** “Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, **3** and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.” **4** So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe,**5** 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, **6** to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ **7** 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.” **8** 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. **9** Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=joshua+4&version=NIV#fen-NIV-5920a)] 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.

1-2, What did the Lord tell Joshua to do? (1-3)

***When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, 2 “Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, 3 and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.”***

* After 40 years of wandering in the desert, the Israelites had finally stepped into the Promised Land. According to God’s promise, they must have excited with the hope to occupy the Promised Land.
* But the very first command that God gave to Joshua was to choose twelve men and let them go back to the middle of the Jordan River where the priests were still standing with the Ark of the Covenant on their shoulders.
* The 12 men were to take up twelve stones and carry them and put them down where they stayed that night.

1-3, What then did Joshua tell the twelve men to do? (4, 5)

***4 So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe,5 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,***

* Joshua obeyed God as God had said. God knew the tendency of the Israelites that they easily forgot the great things He had done for them.
* Their fathers forgot the mighty God after crossing the Red sea with the powerful hand of God. When they faced with difficulties, they could not keep their faith.
* When Moses went up to Mount Sinai, they even rebelled against God by making a golden calf and worshipping it. When they lost the sense of history and memory of God’s mighty work, they lost their identity as chosen people.
* God didn’t want to see such a vicious cycle in terms of their sinful habit running in their families to forget God.
* That was why God wanted to set the twelve memorial stones to serve as a sign among Israel. Now as the new generation crossed the Jordan River, these twelve stones were to be a visual sign and a reminder of God’s love for the Israelites.
* As Israel would face many battles ahead of them, these stones would remind them that God would go ahead of them and fight their battles.
* Here the memorial stones were very meaningful and personal for the Israelites. Those stones were a visible reminder of the grace of God.
* These memorial stones were the landmark which indicated God’s personal guidance and love while whole people of Israel were crossing the Jordan River.

1-4, How were these twelve stones to help their future children? (6-7)

***to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ 7 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.”***

* It is like the cross of Jesus which is the sign of God’s amazing grace to us so we should remember it all the day of our lives.
* Likewise by remembering specific memorials that God has done for us, we can keep our identity as children of God and live according to God’s guidance.
* We learn here that God placed the utmost importance for the future generations to know Him and His mighty deeds.
* Children are very curious learners. The truths that are impressed on their heart at their young age can shape their entire life.
* Joshua’s hope for the twelve stones was that they would inspire the curiosity of their younger generations to know the God who cut off the flow of Jordan and led the Israelites to cross it over on dry ground.
* Joshua instructed that they had to plainly explain what God had done for them in the Jordan River when their children would ask about the meaning of the memorial stones.
* Our children also would be inspired by the story of our living faith when we testify what God has done for us in our life.

1-5, What did the twelve men and Joshua do? (8-9)

***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. 9 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.***

* The Israelites obeyed just as Joshua commanded them according to God’s words.
* Again God entrusts us with the responsibility to teach our children and our younger generations, and point them to the gracious works of God in our lives.
* When we experience God’s power in our life, we should tell and testify it to our children so that we can share the living God with our children.
* If it becomes our habit, our children would meet their God personally. May God help our younger generation to meet their God as we diligently teach and share the living God through our personal experience with him.

2. Read verses 10-18. Describe the actions of the priests who were carrying the ark of the covenant. (10-11) Why did the men of two and a half-tribes go in front of the people? (12-13) How did God exalt Joshua? (14) What happened when the priests came up out of the water? (15-18)

2-1, Read verses 10-18.

**10** 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, **11** 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. **12** The men of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over, ready for battle, in front of the Israelites, as Moses had directed them. **13** About forty thousand armed for battle crossed over before the Lord to the plains of Jericho for war. **14** That day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they stood in awe of him all the days of his life, just as they had stood in awe of Moses. **15** Then the Lord said to Joshua, **16** “Command the priests carrying the ark of the covenant law to come up out of the Jordan.” **17** So Joshua commanded the priests, “Come up out of the Jordan.” **18** And the priests came up out of the river carrying the ark of the covenant of the Lord. No sooner had they set their feet on the dry ground than the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and ran at flood stage as before.

2-2, Describe the actions of the priests who were carrying the ark of the covenant. (10-11)

***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, 11 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.***

* We see that as the nation of Israel crossed the Jordan River, new leadership is firmly established. God had used Moses to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt and performed wondrous miracles through him and the people respected him.
* But now as they entered Canaan, God raised Joshua to be His chosen servant and a shepherd for His people. God moved the hearts of the Israelites to obey Joshua just as he commanded them.
* The priests also stood with the ark of the covenant for the entire time it took the nation to cross over.

2-3, Why did the men of two and a half-tribes go in front of the people? (12-13)

***12 The men of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over, ready for battle, in front of the Israelites, as Moses had directed them. 13 About forty thousand armed for battle crossed over before the Lord to the plains of Jericho for war.***

* Just as they promised in chapter 1:12-18, they set a good example!

2-4, How did God exalt Joshua? (14)

***14 That day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they stood in awe of him all the days of his life, just as they had stood in awe of Moses.***

* God also confirmed his leadership as God had said in chapter 3:7. God’s word never fails!

2-5, What happened when the priests came up out of the water? (15-18)

***15 Then the Lord said to Joshua, 16 “Command the priests carrying the ark of the covenant law to come up out of the Jordan.” 17 So Joshua commanded the priests, “Come up out of the Jordan.” 18 And the priests came up out of the river carrying the ark of the covenant of the Lord. No sooner had they set their feet on the dry ground than the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and ran at flood stage as before.***

* After all the people hurried over and everything that God had commanded was carried through, God commanded the priests carrying the ark of the covenant to come out of the Jordan.
* As long as the priests stood firm in the Jordan, the waters stood still and the people were able to cross.
* And as soon as the priests came out and set their feet on the dry ground, the river Jordan rushed back to its flood stage.
* By this, God revealed them that the Ark of the Covenant, which represented His power and presence, was the only source of God’s salvation and protection for them.
* In the new land, it wasn’t the men power that would save them, it wasn’t their military strength that would save them, but only faith in God would be their rescue.
* Therefore, we should admit God’s leading power on our church to advance the gospel of Jesus to campus students.
* As we learn of this passage, let us take some time to remember how God has been with us and give thanks to his grace.
* Let us also place the promise of God at the front line of our pioneering work so that God may continue to be with us and use us to extend his kingdom.

3. Read verses 19-24. When and where did they camp? (19) What lesson in history did Joshua teach? (20-24) Why is it necessary to have a sense of God's history?

3-1, Read verses 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. **20** And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. **21** He said to the Israelites, “In the future when your descendants ask their parents, ‘What do these stones mean?’ **22** tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’ **23** For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=joshua+4&version=NIV#fen-NIV-5934b)] when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. **24** 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.”

3-2, When and where did they camp? (19)

***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.***

* **Gilgal** will become their base of operations for the conquest of the entire Promised Land. Therefore, it was appropriate that the first work at Gilgal was to set up a memorial to God's great works.

3-3, What lesson in history did Joshua teach? (20-24)

***20 And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. 21 He said to the Israelites, “In the future when your descendants ask their parents, ‘What do these stones mean?’ 22 tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’ 23 For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. 24 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.”***

* Joshua repeated the meaning of this event at Gilgal like a memorial service. There was an important purpose for their children that they would always remember that God's work did not begin with them and their time.
* In giving these stones as a memorial, God really wanted Israel’s descendants to know Him and to know who they are to Him.
* They were His chosen people. God did such amazing things for the Israelites so that they would fear Him and love Him and enjoy Him forever.
* God had a far greater vision for Israel than they could ever imagine. God’s powerful works of deliverance for Israel were not only meant for them but so that His power would be known to all peoples of the earth.

3-4, Why is it necessary to have a sense of God's history?

* That all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD: There was also a purpose for the world, so they would know that there is a God in heaven who can work miracles, a God they should seek with all their heart.

**Conclusion**

Today we have learned the purpose of the twelve memorial stones at Gilgal. We also learned how important it is to teach our next generation about God’s history and his love for us. Let us set up the memorials of God firmly in our lives and teach the meaning of it to our next generation. May God lead us and extend his kingdom in and out as we remember the powerful hands of God.

**One word: The Hand of the Lord is powerful!**