

# Joshua 4 Commentary

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[Paul J Bucknell - Biblical Foundations for Freedom](#)

LAND ALLOTMENTS  
(Joshua 13-21)  
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JOSHUA A BOOK ON SPIRITUAL WARFARE and REST HOW TO POSSESS YOUR POSSESSIONS			
CONQUEST OF THE PROMISED LAND		DIVISION OF THE PROMISED LAND	CLOSE OF JOSHUA'S LIFE
ACTION		ALLOCATION	APPEAL
Josh 1:1-5:15	Josh 6:1-12:24	Joshua 13:1-21:45	Josh 22:1-24:33
WARLORDS IN CANAAN		LANDLORDS IN CANAAN	

ENTERING CANAAN	CONQUERING CANAAN	DIVIDING CANAAN	
SECURING THE LAND		SETTLING THE LAND	
Preparation	Conquest	Possession	Consecration
ca. 1 Month	ca 7 Years	ca. 18 Years	

[See also more detailed Chart by Charles R Swindoll](#)

**Joshua 4:1 Now when all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying,**

- **had finished crossing:** Jos 3:17 De 27:2
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE CROSSING COMPLETED

Observe the overview charts above, noting especially that these first 5 chapters are preparation for conquest of the promised land.

One might subtitle Joshua 4 "What Do These Stones Mean?" (Joshua 4:6, Joshua 4:21).

**Paul Apple's** "big idea" in Joshua 4 - Establishing physical memorials to spiritual milestones reinforces the reality of God's power in our lives and enhances our worship.

**Cyril Barber** comments "The way in which the Bible records the entrance of the Israelites into the Promised Land leaves us with the impression that it was accomplished with relative ease. Like complimentary bookends the text of Scripture reads: "Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed" (Josh 3:1). This is followed by "and when all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan ..." (Josh 4:1 NASB). Little space is given to the logistics involved." ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

**Now when** - Young's Literal has "and it cometh to pass." Joshua had obeyed and the nation had obeyed and crossed and now he receives new revelation. There is a principle - obedience to the truth read will lead to greater illumination. John 7:17 says "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself."

**All the nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying-** This verse repeats almost the same words as in Joshua 3:17 "all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan." Clearly the Spirit wanted this point emphasized. Israel was now in the Promised Land. Notice that Yahweh is giving Joshua his instructions/commands step by step.

**Matthew Henry Concise Commentary** - Verses 1-9. The works of the Lord are so worthy of remembrance, and the heart of man is so prone to forget them, that various methods are needful to refresh our memories, for the glory of God, our advantage, and that of our children. God gave orders for preparing this memorial.

**Wayne Barber** on remember - The word "remember" is used 168 times in Scripture. Think it might be important? The word "remind" is used 9 times, so 177 times from Genesis to Revelation, God uses that very thought; to remember, to be reminded. I don't know about you, but the hardest lessons I'm having to learn are the ones I thought I already knew. You see, it's interesting, God can do great things in our life, and then we turn right around and act as if He doesn't even exist

**Brian Harbour** - Praise is the spontaneous response of a child of God to an expression of God's grace. However, it's easy for us to forget that what we are and what we have are results of what God has done for us. We need tangible reminders in our lives to give praise to God continually. What we need, the Israelites needed as well. That explains what happened in chapter 4.

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### Joshua 4:1-9 Stones Of Remembrance

My old Bible isn't in one piece anymore. Its once gilt-edged pages are worn with the work of time and my fingers. Bible drills and youthful exuberance have given this tattered copy of the sacred Scriptures more character than any other book in my office.

Despite its condition, I can still read two poignant scribblings from my youth. One quote reads, "This Book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this Book." The other, written when I was 18, says, "God's will is also my will. Whatever He says to do, that's what I'll do."

The Israelites of Joshua's day placed "stones of remembrance" by the Jordan River. They were to remind their children of the remarkable providence of God as He guided His chosen people into the land of promise.

Like those stones, the statements I penned in my Bible long ago keep calling me back to important truths. They recall my own journey from childhood to the present as God has directed me through His Word to know His will.

What reminders from the past protect your heart, guide your steps, and occupy your mind? Thank God today for the great truths of the Bible that keep calling you closer to Him. Consider them your stones of remembrance. —Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

The Bible stands like a rock undaunted  
'Mid the raging storms of time;  
Its pages burn with the truth eternal,  
And they glow with a light sublime.  
--Lillenas © Renewal 1945 Hope Publishing Company

The Word of God is a map to help us chart our course through life

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**Irving Jensen** - A survey of Joshua 3 and 4 reveals the underlying intent of the historical record of Israel's movements at this time. The following chart will be helpful in understanding the basic organization—somewhat hidden—of these two chapters: ([Rest-Land Won Everyman's Bible Commentaries](#))

JOSHUA 3:1–5:1			
3:1-17	4:1-14	4:15-4:18	4:19-5:1
Crossing the Jordan			Camping at Gilgal
People	12 Leaders	Priests	All
Leadership Prominent Here			Strength Prominent Here

**Joshua 4:2 "Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from each tribe,**

- **twelve men:** Jos 3:12 Nu 1:4-15 13:2 34:18 De 1:23 1Ki 18:31 Mt 10:1-5
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Related Passages:**

Joshua 3:12+ "Now then, **take** for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe.

**ONE MAN TAKEN  
FROM THE 12 TRIBES**

**Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from each tribe**- This same command was given in Joshua 3:12 but it was not explained at that time. Apparently the 12 had already been chosen. Even though 2.5 tribes would occupy the land on the eastern side of the Jordan, the 12 men from each tribe symbolized the unity of the nation.

**Guzik** - Israel was now on the other side of the Jordan—in the Promised Land. But what is life in the Promised Land like? Is it one glorious vacation time after another? No; for Israel it was a place of battle, but most of all, it was a place of trust—they knew they had to trust God with every thing they had, because the challenges only got bigger in the Promised Land—but so did the blessings.. Most of us would have wanted to rush on through and take care of Jericho—why not take advantage of the time when they are all afraid of you? But God is never in a hurry; and He knows that beyond us doing something, we must be something for Him—so He takes time out to conquer Israel spiritually before they can conquer Jericho under His guidance. ([Joshua 4 Commentary](#))

**Twelve** is repeated 6x in 6v in Joshua 4 (2x of men and 4x of stones) - Josh 4:2 Josh 4:3 Josh 4:4 Josh 4:8  
Josh 4:9 Josh 4:20

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George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

**2. Take you twelve men, &c.** Heb. כִּי לָקַחְתֶּם kehu lâkem, take ye for yourselves, pl., though addressed to Joshua; an usage of speech founded upon the union between a leader or ruler, and his people. Nothing would appear from the phraseology itself to intimate that any such command had been before given, but as we know there had, ch. 3:12, the twelve men here spoken of are to be understood of those already chosen to this service.

Joshua 4:3 and **command** them, saying, '**Take up** for yourselves twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet are standing firm, and carry them over with you and lay them down in the lodging place where you will lodge tonight.'

- **the priests feet:** Jos 3:13
- **twelve stones:** Jos 24:27 Ge 28:22 De 27:1-26 1Sa 7:12 Ps 103:2 11:4 Lu 19:40
- **lay them down:** Jos 4:8,19,20
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### 12 STONES FROM JORDAN RIVER BED

**And command** (imperative) them, saying, '**Take up** for yourselves twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet are standing firm, and carry them over with you and lay them down in the lodging place where you will lodge tonight' - The **twelve stones** were to taken to their first place of encampment in the Promised Land at Gilgal (Joshua 4:19-20) which was about 1.25 to 2 miles west of the Jordan River.

**Cyril Barber** points out that "In reality, two memorials were set up, the one at Gilgal and the other in the River Jordan...The memorial at Gilgal commemorated what happened, and the memorial in the River Jordan commemorated where it happened. In the past our nation's leaders have erected memorials to great men and women, and some memorials have commemorated events in our nation's history. For example, visitors to our nation's capital are shown the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument, the Grave of the Unknown Soldier, and much more. These memorials serve as reminders of our heritage. And our calendars pinpoint other important events—Easter, Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Reformation Sunday, Thanksgiving, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Hanukkah, Christmas and New Year's Eve followed by New Year's Day—to name only a few. And to these events each of us adds the birthdays of those nearest and dearest to us, as well as our anniversary and the anniversaries of family members. All remind us of God's goodness. ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

Note the repetition of the location **the middle of the Jordan** - 6x in 6v- Josh 4:3 Josh 4:5 Josh 4:8 Josh 4:9, Josh 4:10, Josh 4:18 (cf Josh 3:17). Other words repeated in Joshua 4 are priests 8 times (in 7v), the Ark 7 times (in 7v), what do these stones mean 2 times and the LORD 14 times (in 12v).

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George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

**3. Command ye them.** Another instance of the phraseology noticed above. Joshua is addressed conjointly with the people, or, perhaps, rather with the officers, and required to give the annexed order.

**Leave them in the lodging-place where ye shall lodge this night.** This was Gilgal, as appears from v. 19, 20, a place somewhat more than six miles from the river Jordan.

Joshua 4:4 So Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe;

- **whom he had appointed:** Jos 4:2 Mk 3:14-19
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## UNHESITATING OBEDIENCE

So Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe- Note that Joshua obeys the LORD without hesitation.

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George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

**4. Whom he had prepared.** Whom he had before chosen and appointed to that work, with a command that they should hold themselves in readiness for it. The stones were probably each of them as large as one man could conveniently carry.

Joshua 4:5 and Joshua said to them, "**Cross** again to the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel.

- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## RETRIEVAL OF TWELVE STONES

**And Joshua said to them, "Cross again to the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel** - These would have been fairly large stones since they would be carried on their **shoulder**. Is is appropriate that they were to select their stones from the place where the **Ark** was located as it is the Ark (the LORD) which is the reason they were able to cross.

As the following passages show, the stones serve two purposes (1) an educational tool concerning their deliverance by God and (2) a testimony to all nations of the greatness of God.

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George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

**5. Pass over before the ark.** These twelve men had probably hitherto remained, from motives of reverence, somewhat behind the ark, perhaps near to the eastern bank of the river. They are now commanded to advance, and picking up the stones near the place where the priests stood, to 'pass over before the ark,' and thus emerge from the bed of Jordan, and when arrived to deposit the stones in the place commanded. Otherwise the words must be understood to imply, that after passing over with the congregation, the twelve men were to pass back again to the place where the ark stood, and thence transport the stones; which we cannot but regard as a violent construction.

Joshua 4:6 "**Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?'**

- **a sign:** Jos 22:27 Ex 12:14 13:9 31:13 Nu 16:38 Isa 55:13 Eze 20:12,20
- **when your:** Jos 4:21 Ex 12:26,27 13:14 De 6:20,21 11:19 Ps 44:1 71:18 78:3-8 Isa 38:19 Ac 2:39
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Exodus 12:26-27 "And when your children say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?' 27you shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the LORD who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes.'" And the people bowed low and worshiped.

Exodus 13:8-9, 14 You shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the LORD did for me when I came out of Egypt.' 9 "And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt. (13:14) "And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' then you shall say to him, 'With a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7" You shall

teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

Deuteronomy 6:20-24 "When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean which the LORD our God commanded you?' 21 then you shall say to your son, 'We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand. 22 'Moreover, the LORD showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household; 23 He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers.' 24" So the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God for our good always and for our survival, as it is today.

## **TWELVE STONES SERVE AS A MEMORIAL SIGN**

**Let this be a sign ('oth) among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you-** The 12 stacked stones would be a visible reminder of God's faithfulness and His power to keep His promises. The importance of teaching one's children about Yahweh's faithfulness and power cannot be overemphasized.

**THOUGHT** - If we as parents do not tell them about God and Jesus, they certainly will not hear it in our post-Christian, essentially pagan society, in America. How are you doing parents? Don't leave it totally up to the Sunday School teachers. Your children need to hear about Jesus from your personal experience. After all, they are daily witnessing the reality of your testimony, while they only have an hour with the Sunday School teachers. Of course this begs the question, does my life match the testimony of my lips? Children are very observant!

**FORGETFULNESS** - We all tend to forget things (at 75 I should know!), including things accomplished by God. Little wonder that in Moses' "lecture" to the second generation he repeatedly alluded to their potential to forget God. Ponder some of Moses' repeated warnings about forgetfulness (at least 8 in Deuteronomy) - Deut. 4:9; Deut. 4:23; Deut. 4:31 = (THIS ONE SPEAKS OF GOD'S "GOOD MEMORY!"); Deut. 6:12; Deut. 8:11; Deut. 8:14; Deut. 8:19; Deut. 9:7; Deut. 25:19

**Cyril Barber** - The key to sound parenting is threefold: It is made up of involvement, modeling, and instruction. If our children have been reared in an atmosphere of respect, where they are encouraged to voice their opinions, then their inquiring minds will lead them to ask questions; and each question will give us the opportunity to teach them truths they otherwise might not learn. Unfortunately we often look upon our children's questions as distractions from whatever we are doing, and so miss an opportunity to cultivate their God-given curiosity. ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

**J Vernon McGee** has an interesting comment - Now, when the children of Israel crossed over the river, they became citizens of Palestine. They became forever identified with that land—so much so, that today, even at this hour, they speak of the Jew in Palestine. And when he is out of that land, he is spoken of as the "wandering Jew."

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**Sign** (Lxx translates with [semeion](#)) ([0226](#)) **'oth** means a signal, a mark a miracle and is used to describe amazing events such as God bringing Israel out of Egypt (Ex 4:8, 9, Nu 14:22) or a sign serving to authenticate the message as from God (1Sa 2:34, 10:7, 9) in contrast to the signs from false prophets (Dt 13:1, 2). Oth is used in Joshua 2:12 when Rahab seeks a "pledge" (sign) of truth ("a solemn pledge") and in Joshua 24:17 where Joshua testifies to Israel that God had down "great signs."

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### **Joshua 4:1-18 Questions**

Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks. —1 Peter 3:15

A young boy was in a church service with his grandfather. Full of curiosity, the boy kept asking, "What does that mean?" Grandpa quietly explained everything that was going on. When the minister began his sermon, he took off his watch and placed it on the podium. The boy whispered, "What does that mean?" Grandpa, who had heard many long sermons that sent the service into overtime, answered, "Not a thing, sonny. Not a thing."

That's a funny story, but there's a serious side to it. The boy's barrage of questions may have irritated some people, but the grandfather knew that children have an inquisitive nature that makes them open to spiritual truth.

According to today's Bible reading, Joshua knew that too. He knew that children of future generations would ask about the pile of stones in the Jordan River. So he told parents to use the opportunity to tell how God had miraculously parted the waters of the

Jordan (Josh. 4:6-7).

Since questions can open the door for us to witness about our faith, we should invite them from children or adults. If we are friendly, moral, kind, and peaceful under pressure, people will notice. And some will even ask how we can live this way. Then we will have the opportunity to share with them the life-changing message of the gospel. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, help us live in such a way  
That people ask and want to know  
How they can have real joy and peace  
While living in a world of woe.  
—Sper

God gave you a message to share—don't keep it to yourself!

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### **Joshua 4:1-9 Family Stories**

These stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever. —Joshua 4:7

In her book *The Shelter of Each Other*, Mary Pipher gives advice on rebuilding troubled families. She explores how today's children sometimes overuse TV and video games to the exclusion of informal instruction received from extended family.

She gives an example of a family reunion where the youngsters are given a video to watch in the back room so the adults can talk undisturbed. Dr. Pipher believes this diversion actually deprives kids. Children need to mix with the older generation so they can hear the stories of aunts, uncles, grandparents, and parents. This helps them learn from those who have gone before them.

The Old Testament places a high value on children being taught their spiritual heritage. After God parted the waters of the Jordan River, Joshua was instructed to take 12 stones from the river to create a memorial for future generations. "When your children ask . . . 'What do these stones mean to you?' then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off. . . . And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever" (Josh. 4:6-7).

We need spiritual interaction between generations. Remember, Bible stories are often family stories. And our children need them and us.

Godly forefathers make good teachers.

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### **Antidotes for Spiritual Amnesia by David Merkh**

As I took the old, rusty plug from the knickknack shelf, the memories returned. As rookie missionaries in Brazil, we had just completed a retreat with 15 seminarians in the interior. Driving down a deserted dirt road, our engine clunked, then ground to a halt. On inspection we discovered an oily trail snaking its way all the way back to the site of the retreat. Our wounded car had been slowly bleeding to death, the victim of a cruel mechanic who had changed the oil but failed to secure the plug. It was gone. When we reached town, we needed to replace the plug, add some oil, and try to coax the car back to civilization. We found a store, where the auto parts manager told us, "Sorry, sir, but I haven't got that part." Back in the street, a voice called from behind. It wasn't the Lord, but He couldn't have spoken louder in an audible voice. Reaching in the back of his car, a man pulled out a familiar, rusted, old plug. "I live far out of town. I saw this plug on the road. I don't know why, but I threw it in the back of my car, and forgot about it-until now, when I heard you talking to the parts manager." Not only had we found a replacement part—we found our missing plug. Once again, God reminded me of His faithfulness. I felt ashamed for ever doubting. He reminded me that He cares for every detail in our lives and, more than that, I had another memorial of God's faithfulness. When people hear the word "memorial" they often think of places like Mount Rushmore or the Washington Monument. Each of these landmarks commemorates highlights in our history and keeps them alive in the national conscience.

For the Christian, memorials commemorate God's faithfulness and remind us of His interventions on our behalf. As tangible symbols they prod us to recall milestones along life's highway, moments when God dramatically dissipated the fog and gave us a glimpse of His sovereign care. Memorials rehearse life's miracles, big and small. God prescribes memorials as antidotes for spiritual amnesia.

I replace the old plug and remove a cancelled check from another cubbyhole. "Daddy, tell me the story again about The Check." "Honey, Mommy needed \$3,000 or she'd have to drop out of college. At the last minute, God gave her even more than she needed. Mommy finished school, we married, and now we're living happily ever after!"

Who needs memorials? We all do, because our memory banks tend to misplace those incredible times when God intervened in our lives. Memorials jog the memory, drawing us back, inviting us to relive the thrill of cuddling a long-awaited child, or remember the

drama of being protected from a near tragedy.

In the Old Testament, symbolic reminders of God's grace abound. Piles of stone prompted generations to recall the miracle of crossing the Jordan River. Altars built by the patriarchs, and the Ark of the Covenant served as visual aids reminding Israel of God's gracious deeds on her behalf. The rainbow still reminds us of God's promise never to flood the entire earth again.

The New Testament perpetuates the role of memorials. Baptism illustrates one's identification with Christ. The celebration of the Lord's Supper dramatically recalls Christ's broken body and shed blood: "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:24). We need memorials because we can't afford to forget.

We also need memorials because they assure us of God's love and faithfulness today. The same God who healed a child, provided a job, placed groceries at our doorstep or a check in the mailbox still walks with us today. Memorials remind us, "He didn't bring us this far, to leave us!"

Today, The Check and an oil pan plug occupy their own special cubbyholes as memorials to God's faithfulness. His faithfulness in the past encourages us to persevere in the present.

How do we create memorials? As our family began brainstorming, we thought of key events in our lives and how God had proved Himself faithful. These we listed on a sheet of paper divided into columns, including the date, event, and its significance. That experience alone revealed to us not only how much God had done, but also how much we had forgotten.

Next, we decided on a strategy for "memorializing" these events. A good memorial should be tangible, easily accessible, and readily associated with the event (not overly abstract). While diaries, journals, and other written records can help commemorate the past, few people consult them with any frequency. Photo albums, audio cassettes, and videotapes have a better track record. Our family especially enjoys putting together a "time capsule" containing the year's highlights on miniature scrolls and including newspaper headlines, photographs, coins with the current date, and symbolic objects reminding us of key events. We "bury" the time capsule in a corner of the house or yard, to be dug up at a future date.

Copying a model my in-laws had used for years, when we married my wife and I built our own miniature house, using more than 50 empty matchboxes. Each box would represent a year of our married life. On anniversaries we record special events from that year on a tiny scroll and deposit it in our matchbox house. Our memorial house now looks back to 14 years of God's faithfulness, but also anticipates many more years of blessing ahead.

Gary and Anne Marie Ezzo of Growing Families International introduced us to the concept of a shadow box memorial. The shadow box is a curio cupboard which can be easily purchased at a department store or even made at home. Unlike the matchbox house, which contains written reminders of God's faithfulness on tiny scrolls, the shadow box contains cubbyholes of varying sizes appropriate for placing small symbolic reminders of your life's journey. The Ezzos suggest passing on replicas of the family shadow box to your children on their wedding day. It now ranks as our family's favorite means of recalling a heritage rich with accounts of God's presence and protection.

The shadow box concept works well in other contexts as well. For example, when our church celebrated its 15-year anniversary, we celebrated with a worship service full of testimonies of God's faithfulness. Each testimony included a memorial object which was symbolically placed in a large curio cabinet. The shadow box is placed in the church's foyer as a constant reminder of all God has done.

I am reminded of yet another example of God's protective care. It had been a long day, and we were all relaxing by watching a video in our home near São Paulo. Keila, our fifth child and still a newborn, lay contentedly on her quilt on the floor. I picked her up to enjoy some "daddy-daughter time," and we played while watching the program. Then I felt a tickling sensation on my toes, looked, and saw a brightly colored coral snake gliding over my bare foot, then under Keila's quilt. He was small but very dangerous—especially to an infant.

Today, a small plastic snake lies coiled alongside an old oil plug and The Check—memorials to God's protective care.

As I carefully returned each object to the shadow box, I couldn't help but thank God for such a wonderful heritage. To others, these miniatures might seem like junk gathering dust on the shelf. But for my children, my wife, and me they speak of a living God Who still works in the lives of His loved ones.

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#### George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

**6. That this may be a sign among you.** A sign that shall permanently remain among you; a monument or memorial; a conspicuous object which shall be a standing witness of the wonderful event that has this day happened. Heaps, or pillars of stone, in



commemoration of great events, such as covenants, victories, &c., have been common among all nations from the earliest ages. See Gen. 31:46; Ex. 24:4. In the present case, though there was no inscription on the stones, yet from the number of them, and from the place where they stood, it would be evident that they pointed to some memorable transaction, and of this it was to be the duty of each generation to keep its successors informed. It would likewise serve as a standing proof in corroboration of the matter of fact to those who might, in after ages, question the truth of the written history. The record of this great event might indeed be read in the sacred writings, but God, who knows the frame of his creatures, and how much they are influenced by the objects of sense, kindly ordered an expedient for keeping it in more lively remembrance from age to age. So he has provided the sacrament of the Lord's supper to aid our understandings and affect our hearts by sensible symbols, though the same great truths which they represent are plainly delivered in words in the inspired oracles.

**When your children ask, &c.** Heb. **כי ישאלון בניכם** ki yishâlun benêkem, when your sons ask; i. e. your descendants; not little children merely, but your posterity of whatever age. Thus 'children of Israel' is equivalent to 'sons of Israel, or Israelites.'

**In time to come.** Heb. **מחר** mâhâr, to-morrow, often used in the original to signify indefinitely all future time. Gen 30:33. In like manner 'yesterday' is used in a general sense for all past time, as Heb. 13:8, 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.'

What mean ye by these stones? Heb. **מה האבנים האלה לכם** mâh hâ-ebâdnim hâÛlleh lâkim, what these stones to you?

**Joshua 4:7 then you shall say to them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.' So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever.'**

- **the waters:** Jos 3:13-16
- **memorial:** Jos 4:6 Ex 12:14 28:12 30:16 Nu 16:40 Ps 111:4 Isa 66:3 \*marg: 1Co 11:24
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **GOD'S WORK IS TO BE MEMORIALIZED**

**then you shall say to them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.' So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever** - They were to teach their children the great miracle that Yahweh had done for the nation. Moses had warned the nation about the danger of forgetting Yahweh (see Dt 8:11-14+).

**THOUGHT** - Memory is a sad thing to lose, especially when it comes to the great and mighty deeds of the Lord. **Forgetfulness is one of the greatest enemies of faith.** Remembering God's great acts in our life undergirds our trust in Him. Forgetting His great acts tends to cause our faith to falter. Have you told your children and grandchildren the great things God has done in your life? If you are a believer, you need to tell them of His miraculous deliverance you experienced when you were born again.

Memory is also the wellspring of praise. Truth remembered must issue forth in faithful actions of genuine obedience => ultimately that is Real Worship, when you bow your knee in every area of your life to the only One worthy to be praised.

**Dale Ralph Davis** has an insightful comment on the memorialization of this unique event in Israel's history - We can almost see it now. Fifteen years post-Jordan time an Israelite father and his six-year-old son are strolling through Gilgal National Park. The lad spots an imposing pile of stones. He counts twelve, and exclaims, 'Hey, Daddy, what are those stones for?' The son's curiosity now becomes the occasion for communicating to him the news of Israel's astounding God and how he unleashed his power for his people. There is an implication here. If Yahweh so insists that Israel remember this day, it implies that this event was unique and that Yahweh does not usually work with such visibly raw power. If Yahweh did something of this magnitude every fifth Wednesday or so, why should Israel need to remember Jordan Day? Apparently, this sort of miracle will be infrequent. Yahweh's standard method of retaining his people's fidelity is not by frequent and dazzling displays of power but by faithful witness and teaching of those particular acts in which he had already demonstrated his care for his own. The pattern of remembering carries over for the church. We continue to remember the utterly unique act of our Redeemer in the Lord's Supper. Even our children whisper to us as we take the elements, 'What does that mean? What is that? What are you doing?' And even there we can whisper our brief witness back to them. Why this remembrance? Lest we begin to regard the cross as a piece of furniture rather than the throne of the Shepherd who soaked up the wrath of God for the sins of his flock. ([Focus on the Bible Commentary – Joshua: No Falling Words](#))

## Joshua 4:7 Rushmore Reminder

These stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever. — Joshua 4:7

Today's Scripture: Joshua 4:1-24

In 1941, sculptor Gutzon Borglum completed his work on Mount Rushmore. The 60-foot-high granite heads of four US Presidents now stand like sentinels of democracy over the Black Hills of South Dakota. The imposing likenesses of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt remind visitors of our nation's heritage and history.

God told Israel's leader, Joshua, to take 12 stones from the middle of the Jordan River for a similar purpose ([Josh. 4:1-7,20-24](#)). The Lord wanted future generations to have a memorial to their national history. He wanted them to remember that as He parted the Red Sea to get them out of Egypt, He also parted the Jordan to get them into the Promised Land. He wanted them to live not only in the present, but with the reminder of the values, faith, and experiences of their founding fathers: Moses, Aaron, and Joshua.

God understands our human nature and knows that "out-of-sight, out-of-mind" occurs all too often in our spiritual lives. We need physical reminders of spiritual truths. We need to pile up stones, write journals, and tell family stories to help us remember the miracle of God's provisions that neither we nor our children can afford to forget. By: Mart DeHaan

### Think About It

- How has God shown Himself to be faithful to you and your family in the past? How can you make sure you'll remember? With whom can you talk about it today?

Precious memories of yesterday can be precious moments today.

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**Rod Mattoon** - Believers need memorials to remind them of God's greatness.

1. In **Church**—The Lord's Supper has been instituted by the Lord.
2. **Personally**—Memories should be monuments. Memories such as:
  - the day you were saved.
  - the times when God answered your prayers or saw you through a trial.
  - miraculous provisions of God.
3. **Nationally**—Christmas is a time of celebrating the birth of Christ. Easter time is a time of celebrating His resurrection. Thanksgiving is a time to celebrate God's provisions and blessings. ([Treasures From Joshua](#))

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**George Bush** - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

**7. Then shall ye answer them, That the waters, &c.** This clause, as appears from the original, requires to be supplied thus, 'Then shall ye answer, These stones are designed to commemorate the fact that the waters,' &c. Such is undoubtedly the true grammatical dependence of the conjunction that.

**Cut off before the ark.** As it were, at the sight of it, at its first approach. The clause respecting the cutting off of the waters of Jordan occurs again in the same words towards the end of the verse, to intimate, perhaps, the wonderful character of the miracle, and that a fact of such a stupendous nature should be repeated again and again in the hearing of those who were to be instructed.

**A memorial unto the children of Israel.** To them particularly and primarily, but not exclusively; for the monument was calculated to be a witness and a standing reproof also to the heathen nations around.

**For ever.** For an indefinite period of time; as long as the nation should endure.

**Joshua 4:8 Thus the sons of Israel did as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, just as the LORD spoke to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel; and they carried them over with them to the lodging place and put them down there.**

- **did as Joshua:** Jos 4:2-5 1:16-18
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## IMMEDIATE UNQUESTIONING OBEDIENCE BY THE TWELVE

Thus the sons of Israel did as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, just as the LORD spoke to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel and they carried them over with them to the lodging place and put them down there - While their obedience may seem to be a small point, keep in mind that the Jordan's waters are still being held back. They did not know how long the "divine dam" would last and so they could easily have feared going back into the river bed.

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George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

8. **The children of Israel did so.** That is, the twelve men, who acted as the representatives of the whole body of the children of Israel and therefore bear their name. A company or community is often said in the Scriptures to do that which is done by their constituted agents.

**Joshua 4:9** Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan at the place where the feet of the priests who carried the ark of the covenant were standing, and they are there to this day.

- **set up twelve:** Ex 24:12 28:21 1Ki 18:31 Ps 111:2-4
- **and they are there:** Ge 26:33 De 34:6 Jdg 1:26 1Sa 30:25 2Sa 4:3 2Ch 5:9 Mt 27:8 Mt 28:15
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A SECOND MEMORIAL IN MIDDLE OF JORDAN

**Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan at the place where the feet of the priests who carried the ark of the covenant were standing, and they are there to this day** - This is a second memorial and this one is in the actual river bed and appears to have been set up by Joshua himself. These 12 stones marked the spot where the priests stood with the Ark. Some writers have suggested that it is possible that these stones might be visible at times when the Jordan River was lower (as in a drought).

**Donald Campbell** suggests that "This was apparently done on Joshua's own initiative and expressed his desire to have a personal reminder of God's faithfulness at the very beginning of the Conquest of Canaan." ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament](#) or [Here](#))

We sometimes need reminders of God's love and of His action on our behalf.

**TSK** - These words might be written by Joshua at the close of his life, or perhaps be added by some later prophet. It seems from this verse, that there were two sorts of stones erected as a memorial of this great event: twelve at Gilgal (ver. 20,) and twelve in the bed of the Jordan; which last might have been placed on a base of strong stone work, so high as always to be visible, and serve to mark the very spot where the priests stood with the ark. Drs. Kennicott and Shuckford, however, would read here with the Syriac, {mittoch,} "from the midst," instead of {bethoch,} "in the midst;" and render, "And Joshua took up the twelve stones (taken) from the midst of Jordan," etc. But this reading is unsupported by any MS. yet collated; and it appears wholly unnecessary.

**Rod Mattoon on memorials** - 1. In Church—The Lord's Supper has been instituted by the Lord. 2. Personally—Memories should be monuments. Memories such as: \* the day you were saved. \* the times when God answered your prayers or saw you through a trial. \* miraculous provisions of God. 3. Nationally—Christmas is a time of celebrating the birth of Christ. Easter time is a time of celebrating His resurrection. Thanksgiving is a time to celebrate God's provisions and blessings. ([Treasures From Joshua](#))

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Some commentators see considerable symbolism in the 12 stones in the middle of the Jordan and the 12 stones on the shore (actually at Gilgal). While I am not absolutely convinced this was intended by the Spirit as an application, it is certainly possible, so here are the comments for your pondering as a good Berean (Acts 17:11)...

**William MacDonald** - The stones in the riverbed speak of identification with Christ in death. Those on the west bank speak of identification with Christ in resurrection. ([Believer's Bible Commentary](#).)

**J Vernon McGee** - Now this section has great spiritual significance for us today. In an attempt to get the full

significance of this, I am quoting from Phillips' book (which is not a translation, but is an interpretation), Romans 6:1–4: "Now what is our response to be? Shall we sin to our heart's content and see how far we can exploit the grace of God? What a ghastly thought! We, who have died to sin—how could we live in sin a moment longer?" Now when did we die to sin? "Have you forgotten that all of us who were baptized into Jesus Christ were, by that very action, sharing in his death? We were dead and buried with him in baptism, so that just as he was raised from the dead by the splendid revelation of the Father's power so we too might rise to life on a new plane altogether." My friend, may I say to you that Christ went unto death for you and me, and that is set before us here in the Book of Joshua. Twelve stones were put into the water of death. Those twelve stones were placed in Jordan to speak of the death of Christ. And the twelve stones taken out of Jordan and put on the west bank represent the resurrection of Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ died over 1,900 years ago, and Paul makes it clear in the sixth chapter of Romans that we are identified with Him in His death. It is too bad that the word baptize was transliterated and not translated. It is a Greek word baptizo, and its primary meaning here has no connection with water. It speaks of identification. We are identified with Christ in His death; and when He died, my friend, He died for us. His death was our death. When He arose from the dead, then we arose from the dead. And we are joined today to a living Christ. It is only in the measure that we are joined to Him that you and I can enjoy all spiritual blessings. I trust that you realize that. We have become identified with Him! ([Joshua 4](#))

**Rod Mattoon ([Treasures From Joshua](#))** - Joshua not only took twelve stones out, but also put twelve stones in the Jordan where the priest stood. They are there to this day. The first memorial is one of sight ... what is seen. The second memorial is one of faith ... what is not seen.

- \* The Death and the Resurrection of Christ was not seen by us. We accept it by faith.
- \* Heaven has not been seen by us. We accept it by faith. One day our faith will be sight.
- \* Hell has not been seen by us thank God. We too accept this by faith.

We see another message in these stones. The stones in the river remind us of the death of Christ, being buried and hidden. The stones on the outside of the river speak of His resurrection.

The memorial stones would also protest against those who would try to cross back into the wilderness or return to Egypt. Christians do not need to go back into the old lifestyle either. God has given you power for victory.

The worldliness of the believer causes the empty tomb of Jesus to cry out too! We have resurrection power to live the Christian life. The fact that the stones were covered in the midst of the river speak also of the old life that was buried and now they are to walk in newness of life (Romans 6).

Unfortunately, many Christians get away from the Lord and go back to the old sinful lifestyle. Robert Robinson wrote the wonderful hymn, "Come, Thou Fount" when he was twenty-three years old. The third stanza of the hymn says, "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love." Robert was expressing a battle already taking place in his life, for later in his life Robert backslid and got far away from the Lord. While riding a stagecoach one day, a worldly Robinson heard a woman humming his hymn. She later engaged him in conversation and asked what he thought of the song. Robinson was broken and overcome with emotion and said to this lady, "Madam, I am the poor unhappy man who wrote that hymn many years ago and I would give a thousand worlds if I had them, to enjoy the feelings I had back then." Sin doesn't give, it takes.

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#### **QUESTION - [What is the significance of the stones of remembrance in Joshua 4:9?](#)**

**ANSWER** - After the people of Israel supernaturally crossed the [Jordan River](#) to enter the Promised Land, God commanded Joshua to "choose twelve men, one from each tribe. Tell them, 'Take twelve stones from the very place where the priests are standing in the middle of the Jordan. Carry them out and pile them up at the place where you will camp tonight'" (Joshua 4:2–3, NLT). These stones of remembrance would serve as a permanent national reminder and a memorial to future generations of the miraculous river crossing.

Joshua's stones of remembrance are just one monument in a series of memorials commemorating the mighty acts of God on behalf of the people of Israel (Exodus 13:3–6; 24:4; Deuteronomy 27:1–8; Joshua 22:9–12; 24:24–28; 1 Samuel 7:12). To everyone else, the stones were just a heap of rubble, but to the people of God, they were a constant reminder that Yahweh was a personal and powerful God, working wonders on behalf of His people.

When the people following Joshua arrived at the Jordan, the river was at flood stage, transforming it from its typical 100-foot width to a daunting mile-wide, raging river. Israel's entrance into Canaan was completely blocked. But as soon as the priests dipped their feet in the river's edge, God stopped the flow of water, and the people crossed on dry ground. The priests carrying the ark of the covenant stood in the middle of the riverbed until the whole nation had passed over (Joshua 3:14–17).

Then God gave Joshua instructions to appoint twelve men, one from each tribe. The men were each to retrieve one stone from where the priests had stood in the riverbed bearing the ark of the covenant. The stones of remembrance were not to come from the shores of the Jordan but the center, spotlighting the fact that Israel had crossed over on dry land.

Each of the stones of remembrance represented one of the tribes of Israel. The number *twelve* is repeated five times in Joshua 4:1–8, emphasizing the unity of the tribes as one nation under Joshua's leadership.

The twelve stones of remembrance would now serve as a perpetual sign and memorial. Joshua piled them up in Gilgal, where the Israelites set up camp. "Then Joshua said to the Israelites, 'In the future your children will ask, "What do these stones mean?" Then you can tell them, "This is where the Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry ground." For the LORD your God dried up the river right before your eyes, and he kept it dry until you were all across, just as he did at the Red Sea when he dried it up until we had all crossed over. He did this so all the nations of the earth might know that the LORD's hand is powerful, and so you might fear the LORD your God forever'" (Joshua 4:21–24, NLT)

Remembering the past plays a vital role in the identity of any nation. Sociologists claim that a society aspiring to endure must become "a community of memory and hope" (Waltke, B. K., "Joshua," *New Bible Commentary: 21st-century Edition*, ed. by D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, and G. J. Wenham, Inter-Varsity Press, 1994, p. 241). God repeatedly directed ancient Israel to set up monuments and enact rituals such as the Passover (Exodus 13—14). Each tribute marked a significant historical memory that would offer future hope for the nation that God had claimed as His own.

Crossing the Jordan represented a major change for the nation of Israel. Their wilderness wanderings were over. No longer would Israel be fed with manna provided by the hand of God (Joshua 5:12). From now on, the people would need to walk by faith in God's promise to give them a land flowing with milk and honey (Exodus 3:8).

God sent the ark ahead of the people into the overflowing waters to encourage their faith. The ark represented God's presence, His very self, going before them and opening the way for them in their new walk of faith. Just as God had [parted the Red Sea](#) to deliver Israel from bondage in Egypt, so also would He spread open the Jordan to lead them into the Promised Land. Remembering God's miraculous provision and presence gave the children of Israel the courage to follow Him into this new territory fraught with conflict and enemies to conquer.

With stones of remembrance, the Israelites built a monument to commemorate their crossing over from the old way of life into the new in the [Promised Land](#). The pile of twelve stones reminded Israel of what God had done for them—that He cared for His people, kept His promises, and went before them in victory to conquer the land of their inheritance. This is the message the stones declared to Israel, and this is what they say to us today.

God is faithful. His promises never fail (1 Kings 8:56). With the assurance of His presence and the reminder of His mighty power, the Lord bolsters our faith whenever He asks us to follow Him into new areas of battle and conquest. We can let these stones remind us, too, that unless we step out in faith and get our feet wet as the priests did, we'll never fully experience the new life of faith and freedom that Christ has opened up for us as our inheritance in Him (Galatians 5:1; 1 Peter 2:16). [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

**9. Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan.** As it is evident from the connexion that this was actually done by the twelve selected persons above mentioned, it is ascribed to Joshua only as commanding and superintending it, just as the building of the temple is ascribed to Solomon. Two sets of stones therefore were erected in memory of this miraculous passage, one at Gilgal, the other in the bed of Jordan. Should it be asked how the latter could serve as a monument, placed as they were in the middle of the stream, and liable to be concealed below the surface, we answer, that as nothing is said of their being each of them, like the others, of a size suitable for one man to carry, they might have been vastly larger, and so based upon a lower heap as to be generally visible, and thus indicate the very spot where the priests stood with the ark; for it is to be remarked, that the Jordan, at its ordinary stages, is not a deep river, and that its waters are remarkably clear and transparent, so that an object like this might probably always be seen except in the time of a high freshet. From the native force of the Heb. term for 'set up,' which is properly to 'rear up,' to erect,' i. e. to raise to a considerable height, it may be reasonably inferred that they were placed so as to be ordinarily visible.

**In the place where the feet of the priests—stood.** Heb. תחת מצב רגלי הכנים tahath malztzab raglê hakkohanim, under the

standing-place of the feet of the priests. It was here that the stones were to be created but from whence they were taken is not said. From aught that appears in the text they might have been gathered in the adjacent fields, as some commentators have imagined.

**And they are there unto this day.** Either the words of Joshua, who wrote this history near the close of his life, and about twenty years after the event occurred, or added at a subsequent period by Samuel or Ezra, or some other inspired man by whom the sacred canon was revised.

**Joshua 4:10 For the priests who carried the ark were standing in the middle of the Jordan until everything was completed that the LORD had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. And the people hurried and crossed;**

- **were standing in the middle of the Jordan** Jos 3:13,16,17 Isa 28:16
- **according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua:** Nu 27:21-23 De 31:9
- **the people hurried and crossed:** Ex 12:39 Ps 119:60 Pr 27:1 Ec 9:10 2Co 6:2 Heb 3:7,8
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### ARK CARRIED BY PRIESTS PAVES THE WAY

**For the priests who carried the ark were standing in the middle of the Jordan until everything was completed that the LORD had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua** - Recall that the people were required to maintain a distance of 2000 cubits from the priests and the Ark (Josh 3:4+).

**And the people hurried and crossed - Message** - "no one dawdled!" The Hebrew word for **hurried** is [mahar](#) (see below) and the Lxx translates it with [speudo](#) meaning to do something as quickly as possible (used with this meaning in Acts 22:18). While some commentators feels hurried describes the ease with which the Israelites crossed (which is true), one can only imagine there was a sense of let's [get a move on](#) and get across this dried up river bed while it is still dry!

**Pulpit Commentary** - This must have been a majestic sight. While the people "hasted" to cross, either that they might effect the passage during the day, or, more probably, because they crossed in fear and trembling, partly in spite of, and partly because of, the miraculous interposition on their behalf, the priests bearing the ark of God, the visible symbol of His presence, stood solemnly still at the brink of the river, nor did they stir until every one of that mighty host had passed over. Then, when all had safely crossed, the ark of God was borne across the bed of the river, and as soon as the soles of the priests touched the highest point that the waters had reached on the other side, they returned to their place, and all was as it had been before. Well might the Israelites erect a double memorial of a scene so wonderful as this! ([Joshua 4 Exposition](#))

**Matthew Henry Concise Commentary** - Verses 10-19. The priests with the ark did not stir till ordered to move. Let none be weary of waiting, while they have the tokens of God's presence with them, even the ark of the covenant, though it be in the depths of adversity. Notice is taken of the honour put upon Joshua. Those are feared in the best manner, and to the best purpose, who make it appear that God is with them, and that they set him before them.

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**Hurried** (04116)(mahar) 1) (Qal) to hasten 1a) (Niphal) to be hurried, be anxious 1a) hasty, precipitate, impetuous 1b) (Piel) 1b1) to hasten, make haste 1b2) hasten (used as adverb with another verb) 1b3) to hasten, prepare quickly, do quickly, bring quickly. **Baker** writes mahar is "A verb meaning to hurry, to do more quickly, to hasten. It has the sense always of doing something quickly, in a hurry, hastily, or even rashly because of being in haste: to hasten to a location (Gen. 18:6); to modify any other verb adverbially in its performance (Gen. 19:22; 24:18; Ex. 2:18; 1 Sam. 23:27; 1 Kgs. 22:9); the infinitive mahēr is used various times as an adverb (Ex. 32:8); lemahēr indicates haste (Ex. 12:33; 1 Chr. 12:8). Used of counsel, it means rash, headlong advice that is quickly and easily hindered (Job 5:13). In its participial form, it indicates persons who speak hastily, too quickly (Isa. 32:4; Hab. 1:6). Used with lēb, heart, it refers to an agitated heart full of anxiety (Isa. 35:4)." ([The Complete Word Study Old Testament](#))

**Mahar** - 60 verses - act quickly(1), anxious(1), bring quickly(2), bring...quickly(1), do quickly(1), haste(2), hasten(3), hastened(1), hastens(1), hastily(1), hasty(1), hurried(10), hurriedly(2), hurry(8), immediately(1), impetuous(1), impulsive(1), made haste(1), make haste(1), make speed(1), prepare(1), quickly(16), quickly thwarted(1), rapidly(1), soon(2), swift(3). Gen. 18:6; Gen. 18:7; Gen. 19:22; Gen. 24:18; Gen. 24:20; Gen. 24:46; Gen. 27:20; Gen. 41:32; Gen. 43:30; Gen. 44:11; Gen. 45:9; Gen. 45:13; Exod. 2:18; Exod. 10:16; Exod. 12:33; Exod. 34:8; Jos. 4:10; Jos. 8:14; Jos. 8:19; Jdg. 9:48; Jdg. 13:10; 1 Sam. 4:14; 1 Sam. 9:12; 1 Sam. 17:48; 1 Sam. 23:27; 1 Sam. 25:18; 1 Sam. 25:23; 1 Sam. 25:34; 1 Sam. 25:42; 1 Sam. 28:20; 1 Sam.

28:24; 2 Sam. 15:14; 2 Sam. 19:16; 1 Ki. 20:33; 1 Ki. 20:41; 1 Ki. 22:9; 2 Ki. 9:13; 1 Chr. 12:8; 2 Chr. 18:8; 2 Chr. 24:5; Est. 5:5; Est. 6:10; Job 5:13; Ps. 106:13; Prov. 1:16; Prov. 6:18; Prov. 7:23; Eccl. 5:2; Isa. 5:19; Isa. 8:1; Isa. 32:4; Isa. 35:4; Isa. 49:17; Isa. 51:14; Isa. 59:7; Jer. 9:18; Jer. 48:16; Nah. 2:5; Hab. 1:6; Mal. 3:5

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#### George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

**11. In the presence of the people.** Who stood upon the bank beholding with admiration and awe the last act of this great miracle.

**Joshua 4:11 and when all the people had finished crossing, the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed before the people.**

- **the ark of the LORD:** Jos 4:18 3:8,17
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### THE PRIESTS AND THE ARK WERE FIRST IN AND LAST OUT

**and when all the people had finished crossing, the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed before the people** NET = "the priests crossed as the people looked on." NLT = "the priests crossed over with the Ark of the LORD as the people watched." The Ark of the covenant carried by the priests went first into the Jordan and after Israel had successfully crossed brought up the rear to speak. One gets the picture of the guiding, guarding hand of Jehovah before and behind the people. This recalls Moses' words in Dt 1:30 that "The LORD your God who goes before you will Himself fight on your behalf, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes." So one lesson the people should have received from the Ark going before and coming behind resulting respectfully in the opening and closing of the passageway (Josh 4:18), would be a strong reminder that He would not fail them nor forsake them in the next "impossible situation," that of the strong, equipped and experienced Canaanite military forces.

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#### George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

**12. Passed over armed before the children of Israel.** The original phrase here is precisely the same with that rendered in the preceding verse, in 'the presence of;' and, as we conceive, does not clearly intimate that they led the van, for the order of marching of the different tribes had been expressly prescribed in the wilderness, Num. 10; and it is not probable that it was departed from on this occasion. According to this order the tribe of Judah had the precedence. What is affirmed of the two tribes and a half here, we suppose, is, that in pursuance of their promises, ch. 1:16–18, they passed over 'in the presence' of their brethren, who were thus all witnesses to their fidelity.

**Joshua 4:12 The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over in battle array before the sons of Israel, just as Moses had spoken to them;**

- **The sons of Reuben :** Jos 1:14 Nu 32:20-32
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Joshua 1:14+ "Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but you (**sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh**) shall cross before your brothers in battle array, all your valiant warriors, and shall help them,

### THE TWO AND ONE-HALF TRIBES LEAD THE WAY ACROSS

**The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over in battle array before the sons of Israel, just as Moses had spoken to them** - The first group into the land was this military force. **Moses had spoken to them** in Nu 32:20-32 (see notes). Unlike the other 9.5 tribes, these 2.5 tribes were not hampered with families and possessions (for their families remained on the east side) and so were more readily able to lead the way across.

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**12. Passed over armed before the children of Israel.** The original phrase here is precisely the same with that rendered in the preceding verse, in 'the presence of;' and, as we conceive, does not clearly intimate that they led the van, for the order of marching of the different tribes had been expressly prescribed in the wilderness, Num. 10; and it is not probable that it was departed from on this occasion. According to this order the tribe of Judah had the precedence. What is affirmed of the two tribes and a half here, we suppose, is, that in pursuance of their promises, ch. 1:16–18, they passed over 'in the presence' of their brethren, who were thus all witnesses to their fidelity.

**Joshua 4:13 about 40,000 equipped for war, crossed for battle before the LORD to the desert plains of Jericho.**

- **crossed for battle before the LORD**, Eph 6:11
- **to the desert plains of Jericho:** Jos 5:10 2Ki 25:5 Jer 39:5 52:8
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### **MEN FROM THE 2.5 TRIBES EQUIPPED FOR WAR**

**About 40,000 equipped for war, crossed for battle before the LORD to the desert plains of Jericho-** The 2.5 tribes fulfill their promise to Moses and Joshua (Joshua 1:12–16+). Note the emphasis on their military readiness - **equipped for war...for battle**. Notice also the phrase **before the LORD** picturing the forces marching in front of the Captain of the Hosts as if He was personally inspecting each warrior.

When one compares the numbers of these 2.5 tribes with the census figures in Numbers 26:7, 18, 34, the total available males 20 years old and older would have been 136,930 men, so **40,000** men was only a representative number. This would assure that the women and children would have men to protect them into these men returned. And the **40,000** men from the 2.5 tribes would have had one goal and that was to fight and win the battles as quickly as possible so they could return to their families on the eastern side of the Jordan.

**13. Passed over before the Lord.** That is, probably, before the ark of the Lord, the symbol of the Divine presence. Otherwise it may imply 'as in the sight of the Lord,' 'religiously,' 'conscientiously.'

**Joshua 4:14 On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; so that they revered him, just as they had revered Moses all the days of his life.**

- **the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel** Jos 1:16-18 Joshua 3:7 1Co 10:2
- **so that they revered him:** Ex 14:31 1Sa 12:18 1Ki 3:28 2Ch 30:12 Pr 24:21 Ro 13:4
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### **Related Passages:**

Joshua 1:16-18+ They answered Joshua, saying, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. 17 "Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you as He was with Moses. 18 "Anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous."

Exodus 14:31 When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.

### **MISSION ACCOMPLISHED YAHWEH EXALTS JOSHUA**

**On that day the LORD exalted** (brought honor to) **Joshua in the sight of all Israel; so that they revered** (ESV - stood in awe of)



him, just as they had revered (respected or stood in awe of) **Moses all the days of his life** - NLT say "for the rest of his life they revered him as much as they had revered Moses." Yahweh's exaltation of Joshua was the fulfillment of His promise in Joshua 3:7+....

"This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you."

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#### George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

**14. Magnified Joshua.** Caused him to stand high in the esteem and respect of the people, so that they henceforth yielded to him the same reverential fear and ready obedience which they had done to Moses. God now fully confirmed his authority, and showed that He was with him. That honor is ever most to be desired which is the result of a strict, conscientious, and uniform observance of all the Divine precepts.

They feared him as they feared Moses, all the days of his life. The 'his' here may refer either to Joshua or to Moses. The latter is most accordant with the Heb. accents, and it avoids, moreover, a certain air of incongruity in the letter of the text, as if the Israelites on that day feared Joshua all the days of his life.

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#### Joshua 4:15 Now the LORD said to Joshua,

- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Now the LORD said to Joshua** - Part one of the conquest was finished. God true to His word to not leave or forsake Joshua **now** gives him additional instructions.

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#### George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

**15. The Lord spake unto Joshua, saying.** This may be rendered 'had spoken,' and the whole paragraph, v. 15–19, be considered as a detailed account of what is stated more generally, v. 11. These verses seem designed to acquaint us with the main ground or reason to which, under God, it was owing that Joshua was so signally magnified on that occasion. 'The priests did not quit their station till Joshua, who had commanded them thither, ordered them thence; nor did he thus order them till the Lord commanded him: so obedient were all parties to the word of God.' Scott.

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#### Joshua 4:16 "**Command** the priests who carry the ark of the testimony that they come up from the Jordan."

- Jos 3:3-6 Ex 25:16-22 Rev 11:19
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### JOSHUA COMMANDED TO COMMAND

**Command** the priests who carry the ark of the testimony that they come up from the Jordan- Obedience to this command would complete the miracle and show it was not coincidence but supernatural.

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#### Joshua 4:17 So Joshua commanded the priests, saying, "**Come up** from the Jordan."

- **Come up:** Ge 8:16-18 Da 3:26 Ac 16:23,35-39
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**So Joshua commanded the priests, saying, 'Come up from the Jordan** - The command come up is the Hebrew verb alah which means to go up or ascend and is rendered in the Lxx with the verb ekbaino (only in Heb 11:15 in NT).

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#### Joshua 4:18 It came about when the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come up from the middle

of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up to the dry ground, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place, and went over all its banks as before.

- **the soles:** Jos 3:13,15
- **that the waters:** Ex 14:26-31
- **and went over all its banks,** Jos 3:15 1Ch 12:15 Isa 8:8
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Exodus 14:26-31 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen." 27 So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. 28 The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh's entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained. 29 But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. 30 Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. 31 **When Israel saw the great power which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses.**

### THE JORDAN RETURNS TO FLOOD STAGE

**It came about when the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come up from the middle of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up to the dry ground, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place, and went over all its banks as before** - This timing is clear evidence that it was a supernatural event, a miraculous work of Yahweh. The fact that the soles of the priests had been the instrument God used to shut off and restart the flow of the Jordan would have been a vivid illustration to the people of their need to depend on the priests but even more to depend on the LORD. The return of the Jordan to flood stage meant there was no return for the nation now.

**No Turning Back** - Have you ever heard the expression "burn the boats"? It comes from **1519 during the Spanish conquest of Mexico**, when Hernán Cortés the Spanish commander, scuttled his ships so that his men would have to conquer or die. Basically, he created a point of no return for himself and his men.

**Alexander Maclaren** wrote, "The one point made prominent is the instantaneous rush back to the impatient torrent as soon as the curb was taken off. Like some horse rejoicing to be free, the tawny flood pours down, and soon everything looks 'as aforetime' except for the new rock, piled by human hands, round which the water chafed"

**Davis** comments that "The Jordan has been dammed since by collapse of banks or local earthquake. This happened in 1267, 1906, and 1927, the first for some ten hours, the last for over twenty-one hours. Whether Yahweh used secondary causes, such as the caving in of high banks upstream, we cannot tell." ([Focus on the Bible Commentary – Joshua: No Falling Words](#))

**Treasury of Scripture Knowledge** - As soon as the priests and the ark were come up out of Jordan, the waters of the river, which had stood on a heap, flowed down according to their natural and usual course, and again soon filled the channel. This make it abundantly evident, that the miraculous change which had been given to the river was not from any secret natural cause, but solely by the power of God, and for the sake of his chosen people; for when Israel's host had passed through, and the token of his presence was removed, immediately the waters went forward again: so that if it be asked, "What aileth thee, O Jordan, that thou wast driven back?" it must be answered, it was in obedience to the God of Israel, and in kindness to the Israel of God.

**Irving Jensen** has an excellent comment every Christian should ponder - The Christian's quest for the secret of victorious living is aided much by the experience of Israel crossing the Jordan. The major obstacle of the Christian's entrance into the rest-land of a victorious, abiding life is that which appears to be the impossible factor in his life. But the bigger the obstacle the greater the manifestation of God's might. God requires faith in the face of the obstacle, but He will always go before. According to the measure that one follows God's leadership, he will personally experience His might. And just as Joshua was God's representative leader, walking with his people and bringing them over, so Jesus, the Captain of our faith, invites the Christian to warm, intimate fellowship and sure, loving guidance by obeying His simple call, "Follow me." ([Rest-Land Won Everyman's Bible Commentaries](#))

**Joseph Parker** - Reading of this passage of the river we find one great omission. The omission was purposed. **There was no way**

**of retreat provided.** The river did not stand back until the Israelites saw what they could do with Jericho; no sooner were they over than the river came down as before, and Israel was locked up to his work. Thus God brings us into face-to-face conflicts; thus divine providence drives us into close quarters with the enemy. It is supposable that a host advancing to conquer a walled and ancient city might have had to bear the pressure of some sudden terror and might have desired to retire; but the river was rolling on to the Dead Sea, and there was no promise made that it should be cut in two again for the accommodation of timid or cowardly men. Some of us must be forced up to our work. We do not know what is in us or what we can do until there is no escape—battle, or death; battle, or victory. Let us bless God, I would again say, that we are sometimes scourged up to our work. To retreat is to be drowned: to advance is to achieve at least possible victory. There must be no going back again. We are bound to this holy work—taking the devil's citadel. There can be no reconstruction as to the terms of service and loyalty. We are committed to the overthrow of this city or kingdom, this evil or corruption, as the case may be. If we do not advance we shall be slain; if we try to run away we shall be drowned. "Quit you like men." Better fight and die honourably than run away and be as drowned dogs in the sullen stream. We are men who are committed, and cannot go back. ([Joshua 2 Commentary](#))

**F B Meyer** applies this passage - Evidently the presence of the ark was the one sufficient power by which those waters were restrained; for when the bearers regained the further bank, the stream flowed on as before (Joshua 4:18). Is it not thus that the presence of the Saviour, whom the ark and the priesthood typified, arrests the avalanche of judgment incurred by our sins, and stays the penalty which was our just dessert? And, in addition, we are reminded that we should put Him between us and every threatening stroke of man or devil. Let Him stand between your heart and your dread. Nothing can hurt you, if you shelter yourself behind His living grace and power. But oh, how bitter will be the anguish of those, who, in rejecting Christ, have thrust away the only screen from the waters of death and judgment! It is suggested also that these are held back, only because God's people are yet passing through. (Choice Notes on Joshua)

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#### QUESTION - [What was the significance of the Jordan crossing?](#)

**ANSWER** - The Israelites' crossing of the [Jordan River](#) on dry land was of tremendous significance to the Israelites. [Joshua](#) explained the significance of this event *before* it took place, stating, "This is how you will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. See, the [ark of the covenant](#) of the Lord of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the Lord—the Lord of all the earth—set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap" (Joshua 3:10–13). Their miraculous crossing affirmed God's presence with them and His promise to remove their enemies from the land.

Why did the Israelites build a memorial? Joshua said, "When your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' 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" (Joshua 4:6–7). The memorial was to serve as a lasting sign of God's work among the Israelites.

The conclusion of this event offers an additional insight into its significance and the reason for the memorial. Joshua 4:23–24 says, "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. 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." First, a comparison is made with the crossing that took place at the Red Sea under the leadership of Moses. This emphasis on God's miraculous provision was an ongoing sign to the people of Israel.

Second, there was an emphasis on the power of God. The miracle was done "so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful." No other god could compare in power. The gods of Israel's enemies were created things that had no ability to move water and provide dry passage across a river.

Third, the result of the miracle was that the Israelites would fear the Lord forever. The idea was that this miracle would leave the people in such awe that they and their descendants would talk about it and live in the [fear of God](#) and worship Him as a result.

God showed His power and presence in the crossing of the Jordan, and the memorial set up by His people served as a reminder of His might and why the Israelites should fear the Lord. Both the act and its memorial worked to point to God's glory, presence, and strength, which would empower the Israelites as they took possession of their land in the days ahead. Still today, a look at this powerful miracle reveals the greatness of God, and our only appropriate response—to worship and serve Him. [Gotquestions.org](#).

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#### George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

**18. The soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land** Heb. נתקו nitteku, were plucked up. As upon the entrance into

the river, the stream was cut off as soon as the soles of the priests' feet touched the water, ch. 3:15, so now as soon as they touched the dry land it again resumes its natural course. This would make it evident that the arrest of the river was the effect solely of Divine power, and not owing to any secret natural cause.

**Flowed over all his banks as they did before.** Heb. כִּתְמוֹל שְׁלִשְׁמֹם kithmōl shilshōm, as yesterday and the third day.

**Joshua 4:19 Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth of the first month and camped at Gilgal on the eastern edge of Jericho.**

- **the tenth of the first month:** Ex 12:2-3
- **Gilgal:** Jos 5:9 10:6,43 15:7 1Sa 11:14,15 15:33 Am 4:4 5:5 Mic 6:5
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Approximation Location of Gilgal Near Jericho

## THE E.T.A. FINALLY ARRIVES

**E.T.A.** means estimated time of arrival. For the nation of Israel, tragically that time had been delayed by disobedience for forty years but now had become a reality.

**THOUGHT** - Is your disobedience in some area of your Christian life delaying your "ETA" into some good work which God prepared for you beforehand that you should walk in them (even as Israel was not stepping forth on the Promise of God, beginning to possess their possessions)? (Eph 2:10+)

**Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth of the first month and camped at Gilgal on the eastern edge of Jericho** - This is a monumental day in the history of the nation, for it marked the inception of their beginning to possess God's promise to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a promise made hundreds of years earlier by the Covenant Keeping God. The first month would have been March-April which is called [Abib](#) (SEE [JEWISH CALENDAR](#)) by the Jews before their Babylonian exile and [Nisan](#) by post-exilic Israel. The nation of Israel was now prepared to fulfill its mandate to be the leading nation of the world, "the head and not the tail," "above" and not "underneath" (Dt 28:13+). God's intention was that as the leading nation, the nation of Israel would function as a clear (spiritual) light to show the godless nations the way to the living God Jehovah (cf Acts 13:47+, Isa 49:6).

**Keil and Delitzsch** state that "the crossing took place on the tenth day of the first month, that is to say, on the same day on which, forty years before, Israel had begun to prepare for going out of Egypt by setting apart the paschal lamb (Ex. 12:3)."

**Cyril Barber on the tenth of the first month** - God had been faithful. This reminder of the past prepared the way for the celebration of the Passover which we will read about in our next chapter ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

As the Israelites saw the waters of the Jordan flow over the path they had just trodden, they knew that now there was **no turning back!** This is the beginning of a new chapter in the great **history** of Israel, and this event indicates it is clearly **HIS-story.**"

This specific date should jog your memory if you have studied Exodus for on the tenth day of the first month was the fortieth anniversary of the preparation of the Passover Lamb which anticipated the exodus from Egypt...

Exodus 12:2-3+ "This month shall be the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year to you. "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this (FIRST) month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household.

**Davis** comments that "we might say this day had marked the beginning of redemption; now it marked its completion. What Yahweh began he brought to completion. Yahweh has written his faithfulness across another date on our calendars! Israel had been a slave; now Israel was an heir. ([Focus on the Bible Commentary – Joshua: No Falling Words](#))

**Campbell on Gilgal** - The name **Gilgal** means "circle," and may have been taken from an ancient circle of stones of pagan significance. If so, the more recent circle commemorating Yahweh's great work would serve to counteract the idolatrous association of the site. ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament](#) or [Here](#))

**Alan Redpath** applies **Gilgal** - Do you know what that word "Gilgal" means? It means that "the reproach has been rolled away." I want to say here that any believer, man or woman, boy or girl, living in the wilderness of carnality and spiritual defeat and failure, is a reproach (**ED**: See Pr 14:34). But if we have established a bridgehead, and have crossed over Jordan, the reproach has been rolled

away, and Gilgal is the place of resurrection (ED: AND "RESURRECTION POWER" - May Paul's prayer be true in your life dear believer. Amen - Eph 1:18-19+). ([Victorious Christian Living](#))

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**Mattoon** - Gilgal was a very important center for the nation of Israel.

1. At Gilgal the first king of Israel was crowned (1 Samuel 11).
  2. At Gilgal, David was welcomed back after Absalom's rebellion. (2 Samuel 19)
  3. At Gilgal there was a school of the prophets under the leadership of Elijah and Elisha. (2 Kings 2 &
  - 4). ([Treasures From Joshua](#))
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**Gilgal - Holman Bible Dictionary** - name meaning, "circle," and probably referring to a circle of stones or a circular altar. Such a circle of stones could be found almost anywhere in Palestine and led easily to naming towns "Gilgal." The many references to Gilgal in the Old Testament cannot thus be definitely connected to the same town, since several different Gilgals may well have existed.

1. Gilgal is most closely associated with Joshua, but the number of Gilgals involved continues an unsolved question. After crossing the Jordan, Joshua established the first camp at Gilgal (Joshua 4:19 ). There Joshua took twelve stones from the bed of the river to set up a memorial for the miraculous crossing. Gilgal, the first foothold on Palestinian soil, became Israel's first worship place, where they were circumcised and observed the Passover. There God appeared to Joshua and affirmed his mission (Joshua 5:1 ). This Gilgal apparently became Israel's military base of operations (Joshua 9:6; Joshua 10:6; Joshua 14:6 ), though some scholars would identify this with a Gilgal farther north near Shechem. Joshua set up Gilgal as the border between Judah and Benjamin (Joshua 15:7; compare Joshua 18:17 ), though many Bible students think the border town must be south of the original camp. Ehud, the judge, passed Gilgal in his mission to slay the king of Moab (Judges 3:19 ,Judges 3:19,3:26 ). David passed through Gilgal as he fled from Absalom (2Samuel 19:15,2 Samuel 19:40 ). This Gilgal is often located at modern khirbet Mefjir, a little more than a mile east of Jericho. Others would locate it at khirbet en-Nitleh, two miles southeast of Jericho. Still others remain baffled at finding a location. The boundary town is often seen as khan el-Ahmar or Araq ed-Deir. The military camp is at times located at tell Jiljulieh east of Shechem but without archaeological support. This could be the same Gilgal of Deuteronomy 11:30 , if Joshua's original town is not meant. Gilgal was also one of the three places where Samuel annually held circuit court (1 Samuel 7:16 ). This could be near tell Jiljulieh or at Joshua's first landing place near the Jordan. Saul was both crowned and rejected as king at Gilgal (1 Samuel 11:14-15; 1 Samuel 13:14-15 ). Gilgal established itself as a major place of worship for Israel with ancient traditions. However, it also permitted worship associated with other gods and became the object of prophetic judgment (Hosea 4:15; Amos 4:4; Amos 5:5 ).

2. Elijah and Elisha were associated closely with Gilgal. At one time Elisha made his headquarters there (2 Kings 4:38 ), where Elijah was taken up into heaven (2 Kings 2:1 ). This was apparently tell Jiljulieh about three miles southeast of Shiloh, though it could still be Joshua's original Gilgal.

3. Gilgal of the nations is mentioned as a royal city near Dor (Joshua 12:23 ). The earliest Greek translation reads this as "kings of the nations in Galilee," which many scholars think is the original reading, a copyist of the Hebrew text using the word "Gilgal" since it had become familiar in the earlier chapters of Joshua. If the Hebrew Gilgal is original, its location is not known. See Bethgilgal; Elisha; Joshua; Samuel; Saul .

#### **Related Resources:**

- [What is the importance of Gilgal in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
  - Easton's Bible Dictionary [Gilgal](#)
  - Fausset Bible Dictionary [Gilgal](#)
  - Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Gilgal](#)
  - 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Gilgal](#)
  - International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Gilgal](#)
  - Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Gilgal](#)
  - McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Gilgal](#)
  - The Jewish Encyclopedia [Gilgal](#)
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#### **George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)**

**19. On the tenth day of the first month.** That is, of the month Nisan, just forty years, lacking five days, after their departure out of Egypt. This was four days before the annual feast of the Passover, and on the very day when the paschal Lamb was to be set apart for this purpose, Ex. 12:3; God having so ordered it in his providence, that their entrance into the promised land should coincide with

the period of that festival.

**And encamped in Gilgal.** In the place afterwards called Gilgal, ch. 5:9, for here the name is given it by anticipation. It is doubtful whether there was either city or town in that place before the arrival of the Israelites. It was situated near the Jordan, on the eastern extremity of the plain of Jericho. There are at present no certain traces of the name or the place in that region.

#### Joshua 4:20 Those twelve stones which they had taken from the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal.

- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### GILGAL: ISRAEL'S FIRST ENCAMPMENT

**Those twelve stones which they had taken from the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal-** Apparently the 12 men brought the 12 stones (Josh 4:3, 8), but the honor of setting up the memorial was given to Joshua. Gilgal was like Israel's [beachhead](#).

**Beachhead** - A beachhead is a temporary line created when a military unit reaches a landing beach by sea and begins to defend the area as other reinforcements arrive. Once a large enough unit is assembled, the invading force can begin advancing inland.

Between Jordan and Jericho in the area of Samaria, this was once a holy place to God (Jos 5:10-15; 1Sa 10:8; 15:21), but tragically afterwards was desecrated by idol worship (cf. Hos 9:15; Hos 12:11; Amos 4:4; Amos 5:5). What happened to these 12 "memorial" stones? A triumphant beginning does not guarantee a triumphant ending. Obedience well begun must be obedience well continued, so that we might finish the course (2Ti 4:7). Israel "stumbled" in their obedience and did not finish the course at this time in world history.

[Don Anderson](#) - We now have **twelve stones** in the bed of the river, and we have **twelve stones** at their first campsite in the land. The question that comes to us is "What is the significance of these two sets of stones?" We have already learned that they are to be a sign or a memorial that God has done a great work and has been faithful in the fulfillment of His promise. The **invisible** stones in the riverbed are a reminder to Joshua of the place where God was faithful. The **visible** stones set up at Gilgal are a memorial of the power of God to the children of Israel and the people of the earth.

**Matthew Henry Concise Commentary** - Verses 20-24. It is the duty of parents to tell their children betimes of the words and works of God, that they may be trained up in the way they should go. In all the instruction parents give their children, they should teach them to fear God. Serious godliness is the best learning. Are we not called, as much as the Israelites, to praise the loving-kindness of our God? Shall we not raise a pillar to our God, who has brought us through dangers and distresses in so wonderful a way? For hitherto the Lord hath helped us, as much as he did his saints of old. How great the stupidity and ingratitude of men, who perceive not His hand, and will not acknowledge his goodness, in their frequent deliverances!

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**Sidlow Baxter** - A faith that goes all the way with God leaves many a beautiful **'Ebenezer'** in its wake. The Jordan memorial stones were faith's witness to the power and faithfulness of God. There were two of these cairns or monumental piles-one on the west bank of the river, at Gilgal (verse 3), and the other in the river itself (verse 9), each consisting of twelve great stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel. The pile on the Canaan side of the Jordan witnessed to the faithfulness of God in His bringing Israel at last into the land promised to their fathers. The pile in the river itself witnessed to the power of God in holding back the swollen flood and cleaving a pathway across the river bed for the great host. In this fourth chapter, then, we have the witness of faith.

Those two memorial piles are symbolic. They witness to God's bringing His people right through the river and into the place of blessing. That preposition "through" really comprises the two ideas of "in" and "out" both in one. There must be both a going into and a coming out of to make the meaning of "through." Now the two memorial heaps in this fourth chapter of Joshua bear witness both to the going into and the coming out of the Jordan. Israel actually went down into that river basin; otherwise, how explain that submerged pillar of great stones amid stream? Israel actually came out on Canaan's side; hence that erection at Gilgal. Here is symbolic witness to a great truth: ever does a soul go down into that other Jordan - the death and burial of "selfism" - to find itself deserted. As surely as there is the "into" there is the "out of." God brings the now sanctified soul right through to the resurrection ground of "the heavnlies" in Christ. ([Baxter's Explore the Book](#))

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**A W Pink** - That monument of stones was designed first as a "sign" unto Israel. It was a message for their hearts via their eyes rather than ears. It was an enduring sermon in stone. It spoke of the goodness and power of God exercised on their behalf at the

Jordan. That word “sign” is a very full one—our Lord’s miracles are termed “signs” (John 20:30; Acts 2:22). The two wonders which Moses was empowered to work before his brethren were called “signs” (Ex. 4:1–9), they authenticated him as their Divinely-appointed leader and signified that the power of the Almighty was with him. In Deuteronomy 11:18, and Judges 6:17, “sign” has the force of token or representation-of Israel’s being regulated by God’s Word, and of the Lord’s granting success to the commission He had committed to Gideon. In other passages a “sign” was a portent or pledge of something concerning the future—1 Samuel 10:1–9; 2 Kings 19:29. In each of those senses may “sign” be understood in Joshua 4:6. That cairn of stones was to signify that Israel had not crossed the Jordan by their own ability, but because of the miracle-working power of God. It was a representation unto them that they had passed through the river’s bed dryshod. More especially, it was an earnest and pledge of what God would yet do for them.

Second, that monument was designed as a “memorial” that Israel had passed through the river of death, that they were now (typically) on resurrection ground, that judgment lay behind them. Israel upon the Canaan side of Jordan adumbrated that blessed truth expressed by our Redeemer in John 5:24, where He so definitely assures His people that each soul who hears His word and believes on the One who sent Him “hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” The reason why he shall not “come into condemnation” is because in the person of his Surety he has already been condemned and suffered the full judgment of God upon all his sins, and therefore, judicially, as federally united to Christ, he “is passed from death [that death which is the wages of sin] unto life”—that “life” which is the award of the Law, as it was “magnified” by the Saviour and “made honourable” (Isa. 42:21). As the ark of the covenant entered the river of death and judgment the flow of its waters was stopped until the ark had secured a safe passage for all who followed it; so Christ endured the unsparing wrath of God that by His atoning death those who were legally one with Him, and who are made voluntary followers of Him, shall be delivered from all future judgment. ([Gleanings in Joshua](#)) (Be A Berean with Pink - Read critique of Pink’s interpretative approach)

### F B Meyer Our Daily Homily

Those twelve stones did Joshua set up in Gilgal. (r.v.)

Not content with pitching a cairn of stones on the river’s bank, Joshua, at God’s command, set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests that bare the Ark of the Covenant stood. And often, as he came back to Gilgal, he must have gone out by himself to walk and muse beside the river, turning the outward and the inner gaze to the spot where beneath the flow of the current those stones lay hidden. They were a perpetual memorial of where the people had been, of the grace which had brought them forth, and of the position to which God had conducted them. Children in after days would gather round those mighty boulders and be instructed, and it is a great matter that the deliverances of God should be graven as with a pen of iron on the soft and yielding surface of the child’s heart; thus the coming generation shall revere and love the name of Jehovah.

The story of these stones is told again by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2. We were dead in trespasses and sins, and lay hopelessly in the grave, like stones in the heart of the river of death. But we were brought forth by God’s mighty hand and outstretched arm. We were raised up together with Christ. The resurrection of Jesus is the memorial stone of our position in the sight of God; from this we should never recede. How those old stones would have cried out, if Israel had gone back over the Jordan! And does not Christ’s empty grave protest against our living amid the pleasures and cares of the world from which He has gone, and going, has taken us also? This is not our rest; let us make good our standing in the risen

## Seven Stone Memorials in Joshua

Joshua 4:20	Gilgal	a reminder of God’s faithfulness in bringing Israel safely across the Jordan into the Promised Land
Joshua 7:26	Over Achan	a reminder of Israel’s potential for unfaithfulness and of the dire consequences that result
Joshua 8:28-29	over the king of Ai	a monument to Israel’s second chance and restoration
Joshua 8:30-32	Joshua engraves a copy of the law	a reminder of Israel’s duty to live in obedience to the divine “Torah,” or “instruction”
Joshua 10:27	over Amorite kings at Gibeon	a reminder of God’s gracious action in defending Israel’s covenant with a Canaanite city

Joshua 22:34	peace in the land of Gilead	a witness to the unity of the Transjordanian tribes with Israel west of the Jordan
Joshua 24:26-27	covenant renewal at Shechem	a reminder of Israel's duty to serve the Lord, who fulfilled every promise in bringing them into the land

#### George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

**20. Did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.** Heb. הֵקִים *hëkim*, erect, rear up. A foundation of stone-work or a mound of earth, was probably first laid, of considerable height, and then the twelve stones placed on the top of it; for twelve such stones as a man could carry six miles on his shoulder, could scarcely have made any observable pile or pillar of memorial; but erected on such a base as we have supposed, they would be very conspicuous, and strikingly answer the purpose for which they were designed.

**Joshua 4:21 He said to the sons of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?'**

- **When your:** Jos 4:6 Ps 105:2-5 145:4-7
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Joshua 4:6 "Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?'

### PEDAGOGICAL PURPOSE OF THE STONES OF REMEMBRANCE

**Pedagogical** refers to the principles and practice of teaching. The stones of remembrance were to be the parent's visual teaching aid to remind Israel for generations to come that it was Yahweh Who had brought them through the Jordan, just as He had taken their fathers through the Red Sea.

**He said to the sons of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying-** The memorial stones of remembrance were set up to prompt remembrance of God's mighty power and to prompt their children to ask about the purpose of the stones.

**What are these stones?'** This heap of twelve stones was a reminder of what God did for His people. The Jews were great believers in teaching the next generation about Jehovah and His special relationship to the people of Israel (Jos 4:6, 21; Ex 12:26; 13:14; Dt 6:20; see Ps 34:11-16; 71:17,18; 78:1-7; 79:13; 89:1; 102:18). To an unbeliever, the heap of twelve stones was simply another stone pile; but to a believing Israelite, it was a constant reminder that Jehovah was his or her God, working His wonders on behalf of His people.

It's unfortunate that this memorial at Gilgal gradually lost its spiritual meaning and instead became a site of idol worship (!!!) where the Jews sinned against God by worshipping there. The Prophet Hosea condemned the people for worshipping at Gilgal instead of at Jerusalem (Hos 4:15; 9:15; 12:11), and Amos echoed his warnings (Am 4:4; 5:5). Unless we teach the next generation the truth about the Lord, they will turn away and start following the world. These two heaps of stones were the first of several stone monuments that the Jews put up in the land. In obedience to Moses' instructions, they also set up the two "stones of blessing and cursing" at Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim (Dt 27:1-8; Jos 8:30-35). They raised a heap of stones over Achan and his household (Jos 7:25,26); and at the close of his life, Joshua set up a "witness stone" at Shechem (Jos 24:24-28; Judges 9:6). The two and a half tribes that lived east of the Jordan set up a "great altar" to remind their children that they were a part of the nation of Israel, even though the river separated them from the other tribes (Jos 22:10ff). (See chart of [Memorials](#) above).

**THOUGHT** - There is nothing wrong with memorials, provided they don't become religious idols that turn our hearts from God, and provided they don't so link us to the past that we fail to serve God in the present. Glorifying the past is a good way to petrify the present and rob the church of power. The next generations need reminders of what God has done in history, but these reminders must also strengthen their faith and draw them closer to the Lord.



**Guzik** - We don't remember the past great works of God so that we can live in a dreamland of the past, thinking that the best days of our Christian experience are behind us. We remember them as a point of faith, so we can trust God for greater and greater works in the future, because we have seen and experienced His past faithfulness. ([Joshua 4 Commentary](#))

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### **Joshua 4:1-6,20-24 Yesterday, Today, And Tomorrow**

That all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty. —Joshua 4:24

Recently I realized that all of the photos and mementos in my office represent the past. I considered removing them, but wondered if those reminders of people, places, and events might serve some purpose beyond nostalgia. To avoid being mired in the “yesterdays” of life, I needed to discover the value of those items for today and tomorrow.

When God's people crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land, He told their leader, Joshua, to choose 12 men, have each one take a stone from the middle of the river, and carry it to their campsite that night (Josh. 4:1-5). Joshua set up the stones as a memorial so that when future generations asked, “What do these stones mean to you?” they could tell them about God's faithfulness in holding back the water while they crossed (Josh. 4:6-7).

As followers of Christ, it's good for us to have tangible evidence of God's help in the past. Those mementos remind us that His faithfulness continues today, and we can follow Him confidently into the future. Our “stones” may also help others know that God's hand is mighty, as they encourage us to fear the Lord our God forever (Josh. 4:24).

The memories of what God has done for us can become building blocks for today and tomorrow. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Thinking It Over

- How has God shown Himself to be faithful to
- you and your family? What would help you to remember?
- Is there someone you can talk to about it today?

Precious memories of yesterday can strengthen our faith today and tomorrow.

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### **Joshua 4:1-24**

#### **TODAY IN THE WORD**

The words of Robert Louis Stevenson apply to Joshua's leadership style: “Keep your fears to yourself, but share your courage with others.” Joshua made every effort not only to be courageous himself, but also to use object lessons to instill courage in his people and, as we read today, their descendants.

Joshua commanded the tribes of Israel to make a memorial so that future generations would know that God was with Israel. And that's the overriding purpose of Israel that we see repeated over and over: so that all people in the world would know about God. In the first half of this passage, the focus is on bearing witness to future generations (v. 7). And at the end of the chapter, the focus expands to show that the end result of the miraculous crossing of the Jordan is to deliver the message of the glory of God to all people (v. 24).

The comparison between crossing the Jordan and the earlier crossing of the Red Sea indicates a parallel between the two events. After the Red Sea, God had given Israel the opportunity to enter the land of promise, but they failed to take hold of it. After crossing the Jordan, the opportunity once again arose, and Joshua got it right this time. This miracle would give him no excuse for failure, because he was now exalted in the eyes of Israel, and he had their full respect (v. 14). He had a devoted army of Israelites, including 40,000 from the tribes whose land had already been acquired east of the Jordan, and we'll soon read that he had an even greater, more powerful force at his disposal, as long as he remained faithful to the purpose God gave him.

Again, it's important to keep these battles in context, so that we never view God in the Old Testament as simply angry as compared to the graciousness shown in the New Testament. Joshua is a story of God's faithfulness and steadfast grace even in judgment. God doesn't change like fashions or cultural ideology. Israel is an instrument of God's grace, and their upcoming military victories aren't cold displays of an uncaring god. This is God showing His holy, eternal love for the prize of His creation, humanity.

**TODAY ALONG THE WAY** - Will the generations that follow know how God has worked in your life? We often look at evangelism as a ministry across cultural or geographical distances, but today's passage shows the importance of faith transcending the

generational gap as well. You don't have to build a monument to tell your story, but you should foster relationships with children in your church and family. Tell them your story of faith, so that they might know the power of God.

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## Joshua 4:1-24 The Stones

When your children ask . . . “What are these stones?” then you shall let [them] know, saying, “Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land.” —Joshua 4:21-22

Not long ago, our friends had a gathering at their house and invited a group of people who were all music lovers. Kevin and Ilse, who are both gifted musicians, requested that each person or couple bring a rock for a fire pit that was often the site for their evening musical jams. But they didn't want just plain ol' rocks. They asked that each one be marked with a name or date or event that indicated how or when everyone had become friends.

God felt that the Israelites needed a reminder of an amazing event in their lives. Although the Jordan River had been at flood stage, the Israelites had been able to cross over on dry ground because God had stopped the water from flowing (Josh. 3:13-17). Something similar had happened years before in an escape from Egypt (see Ex. 14:21-31). On this occasion, however, God instructed His people to build a memorial of stones so that in the future when children would ask about the stones, parents could remind them of the mighty hand of God (Josh. 4:23-24).

As God continually cared for the Israelites, He continues to provide for us today. What “stones of remembrance” will you use to remind your children, grandchildren—and even yourself—of the evidence of God's might? ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God's faithfulness we've known throughout the years,  
His oneness with us in our joys and tears;  
So many times the Lord has helped us through,  
Has answered prayer and given strength anew.  
—F. Hess

Remembering God's goodness is a good cure for doubt.

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## George Bush - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

**21. Shall ask—in time to come.** Heb. מחר mâhâr, to-morrow. See v. 6, 7. From their number, size, position, &c., and from there not being any others near them of the same kind, they would naturally excite inquiries, ‘How came these stones here? What is meant by them?’ This would afford to parents an excellent opportunity to turn to account the inquisitiveness of their children, to make them early acquainted with the wonderful works of God, and to train them up in his fear. We should encourage young people to seek instruction, and should be glad of every thing that may afford us an occasion of making known to them the wonders of redeeming love.

**Joshua 4:22 then you shall inform your children, saying, 'Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground.'**

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- Jos 3:17 Ex 14:29 Ex 15:19 Ps 66:5,6 Isa 11:15,16 44:27 51:10 Rev 16:12
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Joshua 4:6-7 (**PURPOSE OF THE STONES**) “Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, ‘**What do these stones mean to you?**’ 7 then you shall say to them, ‘Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.’ So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever.”

Deuteronomy 6:4-7+ “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 “You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

**PASS ON THE TESTIMONY**

## OF THE POWER OF GOD

then you shall inform your children, saying, 'Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground' - So what happened to the godly generation that was alive when Joshua died (Jdg 2:10,11)? Did they not tell their children about the great works of God that the children would learn to fear God forever (v24)? Or did they tell them and the children were apathetic, hearing but not caring with the result being that they did not know God or His works. Why might they have been apathetic toward the things of God? It could be that the pleasures of the Canaanite lifestyle were simply too seductive and they couldn't resist and were ensnared by the passing pleasures of the pagan licentious ways. And as Jesus said over 1000 yrs later, one cannot not serve 2 masters, for he will hold to one and despise the other, love one and hate the other (Mt 6:24). And so they **forgot** their God and then they **forsook** their God. And the downward cycle of the book of Judges began.

**Donald Campbell** quips that "A Jewish father was not to send his inquisitive child to a Levite for answers to his questions. The father was to answer them himself." ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament](#) or [Here](#))

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**George Bush** - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

**22. Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.** In commemoration of which remarkable fact, these stones are placed here.

**Joshua 4:23** "For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed, just as the LORD your God had done to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed;

- **He dried up before us:** Ex 14:21 Ne 9:11 Ps 77:16-19 78:13 Isa 43:16 63:12-14
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE TESTIMONY TO THE POWER OF GOD CONTINUES

**For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed, just as the LORD your God had done to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed** - The psalmist describes both of these waterless crossings writing "The (RED) sea looked and fled; The Jordan turned back." (Psalm 114:3)

**TSK on just as the LORD your God** - The parents must take that occasion to tell their children of the drying up of the Red Sea forty years before: "As the Lord your God did to the Red Sea." It greatly magnifies later mercies to compare them with those before enjoyed; for, by making the comparison, it appears that God is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Later blessings should also bring to remembrance former mercies, and revive thankfulness for them.

**Rod Mattoon** - A university professor noticed a student was about to fall asleep in class. So the teacher asked the student, "What is the greatest problem in our society ... ignorance or apathy?" The student replied, "I don't know and I don't care." Such was the case with the people of Israel. The results of these memorial stones was eventually failure (Judges 2:8-12+). They suffered from apathy and the Second Generation Syndrome. The land was partially conquered and the people became content with a partial victory. "We got some land now!" was their attitude. "Why should we bother to get anymore and risk death?" They became satisfied with second best. They failed because they neglected to fully obey the Word of God. In Joshua, obedience to God's Word played a big role, but in Judges it was hardly mentioned. May we learn from their mistakes. ([Treasures From Joshua](#))

**Cyril Barber** - Further information about the parenting process is found in 4:23-24, and this highlights the importance of our instruction. All too often we look upon history as boring, for when we took history courses in school or college we were required to memorize endless dates and seemingly unrelated facts. Here, a father's teaching of his child was to be grounded in personal experience as well as a knowledge of the past (4:23); and what child will not sit with rapt attention as his father recounts in simple terms the trials faced by Odysseus as he tried repeatedly to get back to his beloved Penelope or the courage of the early pioneers as they opened up the western frontier. ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

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**George Bush** - [Notes Critical and Practical on the Book of Joshua - Chapter 4](#)

**23. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you.** The parents are still supposed to be speaking to their children. It is remarkable that they address them as if they were living and present at the miraculous passage of the Jordan, whereas they then existed only in the loins of their fathers. But it is not uncommon for the sacred writers to speak of the nation of Israel, through every period of its existence, as if they were but of one generation, so that what really happened to those that lived at

one age, is said to have happened to those that lived at another, perhaps far remote. This gives us a very impressive idea of the light in which God viewed that people, viz., as morally one, as one great collective person continually subsisting. Thus Ps. 66:6, the writer speaks as if he and his contemporaries were personally present at the passage of the Red Sea, 'He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot; there did we rejoice in him,' though this happened ages before their time. So also our Saviour speaks as if the Jews of his day were living in the days of Moses, John 6:32, 'Verily I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven.' On the same principle Joshua speaks here.

**The Red Sea, which he dried up from before us.** This is another instance of the usage just adverted to. He speaks of the Red Sea's being dried up from before the people whom he then addressed, whereas none of that generation were now living except himself and Caleb, the rest of them having perished in the wilderness through unbelief and rebellion. It is also to be remarked, that this passage through the Jordan being here said to have been accomplished in the same manner with that through the Red Sea, the inference is legitimate, that the waters of that sea were actually divided like those of the river, and that they did not merely retire from the shore, as some have supposed.

**Joshua 4:24 that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, so that you may fear the LORD your God forever."**

- **all the peoples:** Ex 9:16 De 28:10 1Sa 17:46 1Ki 8:42,43 2Ki 5:15 19:19 Ps 106:8 Da 3:26-29 4:34,35 6:26,27
- **that:** Ex 15:16 1Ch 29:12 Ps 89:13
- **so that you may fear the LORD:** Ex 14:31 20:20 De 6:2 Ps 76:6-8 89:7 Jer 10:6,7 32:40
- [Joshua 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Exodus 9:16+ "But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you (Pharaoh) to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.

Deuteronomy 28:10+ "So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will be afraid of you.

Psalms 106:8 Nevertheless (Ps 106:7) He saved them for the sake of His name, That He might make His power known.

Deuteronomy 3:24 'O Lord GOD, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours?

Zephaniah 3:17 "The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.

### FAR REACHING EFFECT OF THE TESTIMONY

**That all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty([chazaq](#)), so that you may fear the LORD your God forever** - The supernatural crossing of the Jordan served to corroborate Israel's supernatural crossing of the Red Sea and destruction of the Egyptian army 40 years earlier. We will see in the next verse, Joshua 5:1, that these events had gained the full attention of all the pagan kings of the Promised Land!

Note the two fold purpose of the miracle of the Jordan river crossing - first to the world to know the power of Yahweh and second to Israel to fear Yahweh (in a reverential sense).

**Mighty** ([chazaq](#)) is translated in the Lxx with [dunamis](#) meaning power especially intrinsic power or inherent ability, to bring about miracles. In Joshua 14:11 Caleb uses it to describe himself and in Joshua 17:18 it describes the Canaanite iron chariots as **strong**.

**Guzik** - "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." ([Joshua 4 Commentary](#))

**Campbell** observes that "As the families of Israel spent their first night in the land, their hearts may well have been filled with uncertainty and fear. The mountains rising steeply to the west looked foreboding. **But then the people looked at the 12 stones taken out of the Jordan and were reminded that God had done something great for them that day. Surely they could trust Him for the days ahead.**" ([The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament](#) or [Here](#))

**THOUGHT** - Memorials of God's work in our lives today produce confidence in what He can do for us in the future. Do you have any personal memorials? The memorial every believer has is Jesus' sacrificial death which should give us confidence of what He is able to do for us today and the rest of our lives and throughout eternity.

And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you;**do** this **in remembrance of Me.**" 25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; **do** this, as often as you drink it, **in remembrance of Me.**" (1Cor 11:24-25)

Identifying with Jesus Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection is the foundation for victory over sin in our daily lives. Living in union with the indwelling Christ and His Spirit provides the way to victory.

**Cyril Barber** - The "**fear of the Lord**" (i.e., living in reverential awe of God) involves two polar thoughts. The one is repulsion and the other is attraction. When Peter began to understand who the Lord Jesus is, he said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Lk 5:8+) Later on, when some of the disciples were leaving Christ, He asked the twelve, "Will you also go away." To this Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go, for you have the words of eternal life" (cf John 6:66-68). In these two statements we have the ideas of repulsion and attraction. ([Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#))

#### **Related Resource:**

- [The Fear of the Lord](#)

[The Believer's Study Bible](#) - All the events since the plagues in Egypt had been intended to glorify the Lord to all the peoples of the earth. The emphasis in the OT is on Israel, but the Lord never loses sight of His purpose to bless "**all the peoples of the earth**" (Ge 1:28; Ge 12:3; Ex. 9:14-16; Ex14:31).

**Dale Ralph Davis** concludes this section noting that "There can be no doubt about the thrust of these chapters nor about the teaching Israel was to derive from this event. Joshua's preaching in Joshua 4:21-24 drives home the major point. Yahweh has done it again! He has put the Jordan River on the map of faith along with the Red Sea—so that gentile observers might have clear proof of his might and Israel might reverently and continually submit to his sway." ([Focus on the Bible Commentary – Joshua: No Falling Words](#))

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**Mighty** ([Q2389](#))(**chazaq**) means "strong" in the sense of "powerful" (including the power to resist) and is used both of God and of men. It occurs frequently with the nouns "arm" and "hand" to stand for "power," "strength" or "force." For example, it describes the saving power of God in rescuing his people from Egypt with a strong hand and a mighty arm (Exo. 3:19; 13:9; 32:11). It likewise describes the strong arm of Pharaoh (Ezek. 30:22), as well as the marvels wrought by God through the agency of Moses (Deut. 34:12). It describes the hardened faces and foreheads of the house of Israel, symbolizing their stubbornness and refusal to listen to the word of God as communicated through his prophets. Chāzāq is used to depict nouns as varied as the sword, the wind and the trumpet. During the Exodus of the Israelites, the same adjective occurs, this time describing the west wind which parts the waters, allowing the chosen people to pass dry-shod through the Red Sea (Exo. 14:21). And, in the account of Moses preparing to receive the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai during his journey to the Promised Land, the same adjective is used to convey the increasing volume of the shofar which resounded on the mountain (Exo. 19:16). War, sickness and famine are all described by chāzāq: Saul's battle against the Philistines (1 Sam. 14:52), the serious illness of the son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Ki. 17:17), and the severity of the famine which rages throughout Samaria (1 Ki. 18:2).

**Chazaq** - compulsion\*(3), fiercest(1), hard(2), harder(1), loud(1), might(1), mighty(20), obstinate\*(1), powerful(1), severe(3), stalwart(1), strong(19), stubborn\*(1), who is strong(1), who was stronger(1). Ex 3:19; Ex 6:1; Ex 10:19; Exod. 13:9; Exod. 19:16; Exod. 32:11; Num. 13:18; Num. 13:31; Num. 20:20; Deut. 3:24; Deut. 4:34; Deut. 5:15; Deut. 6:21; Deut. 7:8; Deut. 7:19; Deut. 9:26; Deut. 11:2; Deut. 26:8; Deut. 34:12; Jos. 4:24; Jos. 14:11; Jos. 17:18; Jdg. 18:26; 1 Sam. 14:52; 2 Sam. 11:15; 1 Ki. 8:42; 1 Ki. 17:17; 1 Ki. 18:2; 1 Ki. 19:11; 2 Chr. 6:32; Neh. 1:10; Job 5:15; Job 37:18; Ps. 35:10; Ps. 136:12; Prov. 23:11; Isa. 27:1; Isa. 28:2; Isa. 40:10; Jer. 21:5; Jer. 31:11; Jer. 32:21; Jer. 50:34; Ezek. 2:4; Ezek. 3:7; Ezek. 3:8; Ezek. 3:9; Ezek. 3:14; Ezek. 20:33; Ezek. 20:34; Ezek. 26:17; Ezek. 30:22; Ezek. 34:16; Dan. 9:15; Amos 2:14

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#### **Hampton Keathley - Meaning of the Memorial Sign**

**(1) A Memorial Sign to promote encouragement and reverence in all Israel and for all time** (Joshua 4:6a, 7b, 24b). The name Gilgal comes from a word which means "a wheel," which in turns comes from a word, ga<sub>l</sub>,lal, which means "to roll some object on, upon, away, against, from, unto." Gilgal means either "a rolling" or "a circle of stones." So, every time Israel would return to Gilgal

they would see the circles of stones and remember what God had done to role away the reproach of Egypt (note Josh. 5:9 which uses the verb ga,,lal). The very site of the stones was to be an encouragement, but also a reminder of the sovereign power of the Lord over nations and creation so they might fear the Lord forever and remain faithful to their purpose in the plan of God. (Compare Ex. 19:4-6; Deut. 4:1-9.)

**(2) A Memorial Sign to promote instruction to future generations**(Joshua 4:6b-7, 21-23). In two places in the chapter, covering five verses, parents are reminded of their responsibility for the communication of God's Word and His calling on their children, generation to generation. Parents dare not and cannot abdicate this to others. God charges parents with this privilege and responsibility. (Compare: Deut. 4:9; 6:6f; and Judges 2:1f; 3:1-7; 8:34; 21:25.)

**(3) A Memorial Sign of testimony to other nations**(Joshua 4:24a). Here God was again reminding Israel of her purpose as a nation of priests (Ex. 19:4-6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9-11). The application to us should be obvious. Christians are living stones of a holy temple, living memorials of the power of God. But we too face the threat of forgetting the Lord by forgetting our pilgrim character through preoccupation with the world.

By way of application, what are some of the things we regularly do and are called to do that form memorials of the saving grace of God and our calling as believers in Christ?

- Weekly assembling ourselves together (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:17ff; Heb. 10:23-25).
- Taking the Lord's supper, specifically aimed at remembering Him just as were the various feasts and special days like the Passover.
- Special services at various times of the year like Christmas, New Years, Easter, form wonderful times to focus on the Lord and to make this real in the lives of our children.
- By our daily personal time in the Word, through care groups, and fellowship with others. ([Joshua 3:1-4:24 Crossing the Jordan](#))

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**D L Moody** memorialized his mother at her funeral - At the funeral services he offered the most affectionate tribute to that mother's wisdom and loving devotion. Holding in his hands the old family Bible and the worn book of devotions, he stood by the form of the departed one, and said:

"It is not the custom, perhaps, for a son to take part in such an occasion, but, if I can control myself, I should like to say a few words. It is a great honor to be the son of such a mother. I do not know where to begin; I could not praise her enough. In the first place, my mother was a very wise woman. In one sense she was wiser than Solomon; she knew how to bring up her children. She had nine children, and they all loved their home. She won their hearts and their affections; she could do anything with them.

"Whenever I wanted real, sound counsel, I used to go to my mother. I have travelled a good deal, and have seen a good many mothers, but I never saw one who had such tact as she had. She so bound her children to her that it was a great calamity for them to have to leave home. I had two brothers that lived in Kansas and died there. Their great longing was to get back to their mother. My brother, who died in Kansas a short time ago, had been looking over the Greenfield papers for some time to see if he could not buy a farm in this locality. He had a good farm where he was, but he was never satisfied; he wanted to get back to mother. That is the way she won her family, she won them to herself.

"I have heard something within the last forty-eight hours that nearly broke my heart. My eldest sister has told me that the first year after my father died mother wept herself to sleep every night. Yet she was always bright and cheerful in the presence of her children. Her sorrows drove her to the Lord. I would frequently wake up and hear her praying. She used to make sure her children were all asleep before she poured out her tears.

"There was another remarkable thing about my mother. If she loved one child more than another, no one ever found it out. Isaiah, he was her first boy; she could not get along without Isaiah. And Cornelia, she was her first girl; she could not get along without Cornelia, for she had to take care of the twins. And George, she couldn't live without George. What could she ever have done without George? He stayed right by her, through thick and thin. She couldn't live without George. And Edwin, he bore the name of her husband. And Dwight, I don't know what she thought of him. And Luther, he was the dearest of all, because he had to go away to live. He was always homesick to get back to mother. And Warren, he was the youngest when father died; it seemed as if he was dearer than all the rest. And Sam and Lizzie, the twins, they were the light of her great sorrow.

"She never complained of her children. It is a great thing to have such a mother, and I feel like standing up here to-day to praise her. And just here I want to say, before I forget it, you don't know how she appreciated the kindness which was shown her in those early days of struggle. Sometimes I would come home and say, 'Such a man did so and so,' and she would answer, 'Don't say that, Dwight; he was kind to me.'

"Friends, it is not a time of mourning. I want you to understand we do not mourn. We are proud that we had such a mother. We have a wonderful legacy left us. What more can I say? You have lived with her, and you know about her. I want to give you one verse, her

creed. It was very short. Do you know what it was? I will tell you. When everything went against her, this was her stay: 'My trust is in God.' " ([The Life of Dwight L Moody](#))

**REVIVAL**  
**D Martyn-Lloyd Jones**  
**Expecting Revival**  
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**Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones** preached 24 messages on revival - [Click to listen to all 24 messages including the audios of the messages below](#) (Listen especially if you are in need of personal revival! And most of us are beloved! Sin is incessant and invariably seeks to take us down, to take us out of the life of revival in which we experience rest, freedom, power, communion, etc. And so it follows that revival is not "one and done," but is to be our lifestyle, our "[Maranatha Mindset](#)," until we finally, fully come face to face with our Bridegroom, the One Who brings us eternal bliss, "eternal revival" in glory!).

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? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. 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: 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 (Josh. 4:21–24).

We have up to this point, been considering the hindrances and the obstacles to revival, because obviously that is where we must of necessity begin. But that is not sufficient. Though we start there and realise that there are certain conditions and certain rules that must always be observed it is not enough that we stop there. We must go beyond that point, because if we do not we shall end in discouragement. Having examined ourselves, having seen the situation as it is, we see that the problem is surely and certainly one with which no human power is adequate to deal. It is because so many fail to see this that they are still bustling and busying with their various activities and organisations. There is no hope until we come to the end of that. The situation is such that man is impotent to deal with it. And that is why I say that we should rejoice in the fact that we can go on together now to look at this whole subject positively and a little more directly.

I would remind you again that this very question of the need of revival is of vital importance to the Christian Church, and the minds and prayers of Christian people throughout the world should be channelled and directed into the matter of this urgent need. I am going to quote some words by Albert Barnes, a famous expositor in the last century, because they seem to me to put this thing so perfectly. He wrote like this:

That day which shall convince the great body of professing Christians of the reality and desirableness of revivals will constitute a new era in the history of religion and will precede manifestations of power like that of Pentecost.

I am certain that that is absolutely right! The greatest problem confronting us in the Church today is that the vast majority of professing Christians are not convinced of the 'reality and the desirableness of revivals'. As I have pointed out, this is a subject that has scarcely been mentioned. Men and women have been so busy in other directions that they have not even thought of it, still less prayed urgently for it. And yet, as Albert Barnes says, it is surely most important that we should do so and therefore, anything that is going to help us to do it is of the greatest value, and one of the best aids that I know of in this respect is to consider the story of the great revivals of the past.

That is why, in this centenary year, we are reminding ourselves of what happened in 1859, that wonderful year in the history of God's people.

But let us be clear about this. We are not interested in all this merely from the historical standpoint. Our interest must never be merely an antiquarian interest. There is no point in reading about revivals just for the sake of reading the history in the stories. No, our motive and our interest must be to read and to study and to consider what has happened in the past, in order that we may discover the great principles that underlie this matter, in order, in other words, that we may discover what it is that we should be seeking and praying for in our own day and generation. It should be a utilitarian, rather than an antiquarian interest and motive, that should govern us. In other words, I suggest that we should make use of everything that we can find which tells us about a hundred years ago, in exactly the same way as God intended the Children of Israel to use the twelve stones that he commanded them to take out of the middle of the river of Jordan and to set up at Gilgal.

Now I am calling your attention to this interesting incident because it does seem to me to be speaking very directly to us at this present hour. Here God did something unusual, something strange, something marvellous and miraculous. He had delivered the Children of Israel first of all from their enemies, the Egyptians—he divided the Red Sea and they went through on dry land. And here they were, they had been in the wilderness for forty years, and there, on the other side of the river of Jordan, lay the promised land of Canaan, the place they were looking for, and longing for, the land of blessing, the land flowing with milk and honey. What a contrast to the wilderness!

Yes, but the question was how could they go through the river? And the answer was that God divided the waters of Jordan, and they went through—again on dry ground. And God, you remember, gave this commandment to Joshua, and Joshua in turn gave it to the people. Take out, he said, twelve stones from the very spot where the priests stood as they held the Ark. Take out twelve stones and then set them up there in Gilgal. And why? Well, the reason is given here in our text.

Now it seems to me that our remembering of the 1859 revival is comparable to these twelve stones that are there at Gilgal. Our position is this, and my whole business, as we study this subject, is, in a sense, just to create in you this very question, 'What mean these stones?' What is all this that you are talking about? What are these books and pamphlets? What are these meetings? What is this thing? We know nothing about it. As the Jewish Children in their day were going to ask, 'What mean these stones?', so I trust that the main outcome of our study will be to lead the men and women of our day to ask, 'What is this and what is its relevance to us?'

So let us continue with our consideration of these verses. The thing that strikes us at once, of course, is that it is most extraordinary that this kind of thing should be necessary. Would you not have thought that with an event like this in their history, there would be no need to remind any generation of the Children of Israel of this? They are so remarkable, these two incidents, the crossing of the Red Sea and the River Jordan, they are such outstanding events that you would have thought that there would never be any need to remind people in some visible, external, objective way of such things. Yet God gave the commandment because he knows human nature so well, and what he knows about us is that it is simply astonishing to notice how easily we can forget. Even a memorable event like this could soon be forgotten, could be blotted right out of the minds and the consciousness of subsequent generations of the Children of Israel. So, 'Put up the stones,' says God, so that they will be a reminder, the people will be arrested, they will say, 'What are these stones about? What does this mean?', and then the answer will be given to them.

Now this is one of the first things we all have to realise about ourselves, this tendency to forget. Yes, to forget even the greatest and the most wonderful things. It is true in every realm. I suppose that, in the last analysis, one of the most devastating effects of sin is the way in which it puts a paralysis upon the mind and even the upon the memory. This is not confined to religion, it is true in every realm. How soon are great men forgotten! Men who dominated the scene in their day and generation mean nothing at all to subsequent generations who, if they suddenly see a monument, say, 'Who was he? What did he do?' Though these men did such outstanding things in their time and their contemporaries thought that they would never be forgotten, time passes and other generations come; they are soon forgotten. 'A generation arose that knew not Joseph.'

There is nothing more transient than reputation, in that sense. But it is not only true of great men, it is true of great events. Some of the most outstanding events of history are soon forgotten. A generation arises that forgets all about the sacrifices of its forefathers, who may have fought even unto death for some great principle or for some great liberty. Generations arise that know nothing about it and are really not interested in it at all. They take all the fruits and all the benefits, and they never trouble even to ask, 'How is it that these things have ever come to us?' Now, that is human nature, is it not? What is the cause of this and, particularly, what is the cause of this in the realm of religion? Why does it become possible that generations will arise that will even forget a thing like this so that God has to give his commandment about these stones? Let me briefly suggest some answers to this.

Perhaps the main causes are absorption with ourselves, and with our own particular age and generation, and particularly our absorption with our own activities. We are so self-centred, so busy doing what we are doing. We seem to be unaware of the fact that people lived in this world in past ages and centuries, before we ever came here. There is a morbid self-centredness and self-concentration. People's lives are bound entirely by their own circle, and how infrequently do they look out from inside it. Curtains of various descriptions are not new. There have always been Iron and Bamboo and other curtains. It is amazing to observe how small life can be. We live this circumscribed little existence, with our little activities, and we never look out beyond, and we are aware of nothing else. And, of course, added to that, there is a feeling, which is particularly characteristic of today, that the past cannot possibly help us, because of all our advances and all our wonderful knowledge, and our techniques and our astounding abilities. We are the masters. What has the past got to say to us? There is a great deal of that feeling, and it has been true, of course, of every generation before us, and it will be true of the generations to follow us. They will look back at us, if they do at all, and will just dismiss us. We are mere tyros in these matters.

But, in the last analysis, I believe that the explanation is—I repeat—this subjectivism of ours. And this subjectivism vitiates even our reading and our studying of the Bible. We are all so morbidly concerned about ourselves and our own problems that we even to go



to the Bible as a book which is going to help us with our problems. We want some help, we want this and that and we go to the Bible, as if it were some sort of dispensary to deal with the so called 'mumps and measles of our souls'. Our very approach to the Bible is so subjective instead of being objective. How often, I wonder, do we go to the Bible saying to ourselves, 'I am going to read the Bible because I want to see what God has done; I am going to read my Bible in order that I can look at God acting and intervening in history'? But, the Bible is not just a book that answers my little questions and tells me various things that I may want to know; the Bible is the record of the activity of God, the manifestations of God, God's mighty acts and deeds. I am going to look on. I am going to stand back and I am going to see what God, the Lord has done, 'that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty' (Josh. 4:24). The acts of God. But I am afraid we do not read the Bible like that any longer, do we? We want just a little word to help us. We want a nice little thought to start the day. We just want something before we offer up our brief and hurried prayer before we rush off. Beautiful thoughts. Do not misunderstand me. I am going to say a thing that can be grievously misunderstood. I verily believe that the main trouble of most evangelical people today is that they read their Bibles too devotionally, which means, I say, subjectively. And this mighty panorama of the acts of the living God is something that we seem to be unaware of and the result is that we need to be reminded of what God has done. It is all here for us, but we pass by, we do not notice, so we must put up some stones, some memorial, something to arrest attention.

This is a principle which you find in many places in the Bible. Look at the communion service, for example. The principle is exactly the same. We are so dull and so stupid as the result of sin, that we might even forget this, the death of the Son of God for us and his agony and his shame and all that he endured on the cross. And his eternal love for us, we could even forget that. So the Lord himself ordained and commanded that we should meet together and break bread and drink wine: 'This do in remembrance of me.' It is the setting up of the stones in Gilgal once more. We are such, and we suffer so much from this felt spiritual lethargy, that we need objective memorials, we constantly need tangible reminders, something outside ourselves that will lead us to ask, 'What does this table mean?' 'What mean these stones?' God condescends to our weakness, and our lethargy and our stupidity by providing us with external memorials of his almighty acts and deeds. And so it is that I, for one, thank God for 1959. Simply because it happens to be a hundred years away from 1859. You notice that I am holding on to this point and I am doing so for this reason. This is our eighth consideration of this question of revival and if I have not hitherto succeeded in rousing you to ask—'What means it?'—if there has not arisen in you this new interest and curiosity, it has all been in vain. It is not enough just to study all this and to be aware of something. Are we really becoming concerned as to what it all is? What does all this record mean? And I hope to show that the real and complete answer is given in these verses at the end of Joshua 4. It is all here. God, you see, has given his own explanation, and I have nothing to do but to hold it before you.

First and foremost, it means that we are reminded of facts. 'What mean these stones?' Subsequent generations are going to ask that question. They will be going along casually, perhaps out on a walk or on a journey, and suddenly they will see these twelve stones and they will say, 'What is the meaning of this?'

And the reply, said Joshua, will be, 'These stones are here as a memorial to something that once happened.'

History, not theories; not ideas, but facts. What is the meaning of the bread and wine? Oh, the fact—that he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. Our whole position depends upon facts. I wish that I could stop here and deal only with this because we are living in an age when there is a most subtle theological teaching which would have us believe that you can dispense with the facts and hold on to the teaching. It is a lie! 'What mean these stones?' Facts! Crossing the Red Sea, crossing Jordan, in this miraculous manner. Facts, facts of God.

And it is exactly the same with what we are celebrating this year. It is a simple actual fact of history that something amazing and wonderful happened a hundred years ago. Something literally took place in 1859 which was so much fact that it even began to be reported in the newspapers. And they very rarely report anything unless it is political. The only sermons they are interested in are sermons that introduce politics in some shape or form. They are not interested in spiritual matters, but they were actually reporting what happened in 1859. It became front page news. That was phenomenal! Facts. Acts. Something that belongs solidly to the realm of history.

But, as the explanation here tells us, this is not something utterly unique which only happens once. Did you notice, 'Then ye shall let your children know saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. 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'? I want to emphasise that point. What happened in 1859 is only one in a great series. It is but one example, but one illustration of something that has been happening periodically in the history of the Christian Church right through the running centuries. It is one example of what we call 'revival', a 'revival' of religion, and it is only one example. There have been many others.

Let me just give you a few illustrations in passing. Long before even the Protestant Reformation, there was quite a religious revival in this country associated with the name of John Wycliffe and the Lollards. That was a revival, as definitely as what happened in 1859. Then, of course, the same thing happened on the continent of Europe with that great man John Huss. There in Moravia, what

is now called Czechoslovakia, there was a real revival, associated with his name, and God used him as an instrument and as a channel. It was an amazing movement of the Spirit of God. They had it amongst the Waldensians in Northern Italy. It was a real revival. It happened with that great man called John Tauler,\* who was actually a priest and a preacher in the Roman Catholic Church. The Spirit of God came upon him and it led to a revival in his area. It was the same thing exactly.

Then, of course, there was the Protestant Reformation. Let us never forget that this was a revival as well as a reformation. We must not think of that as being merely a theological movement. It was that, but in addition there was a revival, the Spirit of God was shed abroad and people were listening to preaching. Preaching and the reading of the Bible were of supreme importance. That is a religious awakening. And that is what we mean by revival. You find it in the seventeenth century, and you have it, in an amazing manner, two hundred years ago, in the great Evangelical awakening associated with the names of Whitefield and the Wesleys and many, many others. You find it again at the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. And then there was this notable, remarkable event which took place from 1857 to 1859 in America, Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Sweden and in other parts of the world.

This, then, is only one in a series of events that have been happening throughout the long history of the Christian Church. And you will find, as you read the stories of every one of them, that they share certain things in common. They have the same general characteristics. God moved at Jordan, said Joshua, exactly as he did before, at the Red Sea. Certain general characteristics are common to all these experiences, in spite of time, in spite of country, in spite of civilisation, in spite of everything else.

So, then, what was it that happened a hundred years ago? What was this event that falls into this series? What is revival? We can define it, as a period of unusual blessing and activity in the life of the Christian Church. Primarily, of course, and by definition, a revival is something that happens first in the Church and amongst Christian people, amongst believers. That, I repeat, is true by definition. It is revival; something is revived and when you say that, you mean that there is something present that has got life. But the life was beginning to wane, to droop, and had become almost moribund, and some people said, 'That is dead, that is finished,' because they could not see much sign of life and activity. Revival means awakening, stimulating the life, bringing it to the surface again. It happens primarily in the Church of God, and amongst believing people and it is only secondly something that affects those that are outside also. Now this is a most important point, because this definition helps us to differentiate, once and for all, between a revival and an evangelistic campaign. To confuse these two things leads to much harm. There is nothing which is quite so foolish as people announcing that they are going to hold a revival. They mean an evangelistic campaign. Alas, this confusion was really introduced by Finney and it has persisted ever since. But it is a gross misunderstanding, it is a confusion of purpose. Let me show you the difference.

An evangelistic campaign is the Church deciding to do something with respect to those who are outside. A revival is not the Church deciding to do something and doing it. It is something that is done to the Church, something that happens to the Church. The two things are essentially different. You can have a great evangelistic campaign, but it may leave your church exactly where it was, if indeed it is not worse. I add that because I am being told constantly that the churches are suffering from what is called a 'post evangelistic campaign exhaustion', that as the result of campaigns, the prayer meetings and the regular meetings of the church are not so well attended. And the same is true of various other organisations, which promote such activities. Evangelistic campaigns, then, have reference mainly to those who are outside, but the whole essence of a revival is that it is something that happens to the Church, to the people inside. And they are affected and moved and tremendous things happen.

So then, what is it that happens? What is this? What mean these stones? What happened a hundred years ago in these various countries? The best way of answering that question is to say that it is in a sense a repetition of the day of Pentecost. It is something happening to the Church, that inevitably and almost instinctively makes one look back and think again of what happened on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. Let me give you some of the general characteristics.

The essence of a revival is that the Holy Spirit comes down upon a number of people together, upon a whole church, upon a number of churches, districts, or perhaps a whole country. That is what is meant by revival. It is, if you like, a visitation of the Holy Spirit, or another term that has often been used is this—an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And the terms are interesting because you see what the people are conscious of is that it is as if something has suddenly come down upon them. The Spirit of God has descended into their midst, God has come down and is amongst them. A baptism, an outpouring, a visitation. And the effect of that is that they immediately become aware of his presence and of his power in a manner that they have never known before. I am talking about Christian people, about church members gathered together as they have done so many times before. Suddenly they are aware of his presence, they are aware of the majesty and the awe of God. The Holy Spirit literally seems to be presiding over the meeting and taking charge of it, and manifesting his power and guiding them, and leading them, and directing them. That is the essence of revival.

And what does that mean? Well, there are general characteristics which you will find in every revival that you can ever read about. The immediate effect is that the people present begin to have an awareness of spiritual things and clear views of them such as they

have never had before. Now again I am talking about believers, members of the Christian Church when they suddenly become conscious of this presence and of this power, and the first effect, is that spiritual things become realities. They have heard all these things before, they may have heard them a thousand times and indeed many thousand times, but what they testify is this: 'You know, the whole thing suddenly became clear to me. I was suddenly illuminated, things that I was so familiar with stood out in letters of gold, as it were. I understood. I saw it all in a way that I had never done in the whole of my life.' That is what they say. The Holy Spirit enlightens the mind and the understanding. They begin not only to see these things clearly but to feel their power.

What are these things of which they become so aware? First and foremost, the glory and the holiness of God. Have you ever noticed, as you read your Bibles, the effect on these people as they suddenly realised the presence of God? Like Job, they put their hands on their mouths or like Isaiah they say, 'Woe is unto me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips.' What is the matter then? Oh, they have just had a realisation of the holiness and of the majesty and the glory of God. That always happens in a revival. It does not always happen in evangelistic campaigns, does it? There can be a lot of laughing and lightness, and obvious organisation in evangelistic campaigns. Never in a revival, but rather awe, this reverence, this holy fear, the consciousness of God in his majesty, his glory, his holiness, his utter purity.

And that, as we have seen, leads inevitably to a deep and a terrible sense of sin, and an awful feeling of guilt. It leads men and women to feel that they are vile and unclean and utterly unworthy and, above all, it leads them to realise their utter helplessness face to face with such a God. Or, like the publican depicted by our Lord in the parable, they are so conscious of all this that they cannot show their faces. They are far back near the door somewhere, beating their breasts and saying, 'God have mercy, on me, a sinner.' The holiness of God, their own utter sinfulness and wretchedness, their own unworthiness; they realise they have never done anything good at all. Before, they thought they had done a great deal, now they see that it is nothing—useless. Like Paul they begin to talk about it as dung and filthy rags. In their utter helplessness and hopelessness they prostrate themselves and cast themselves upon the love and mercy and compassion of God.

It always happens in the Bible. Read the accounts for yourselves. Whichever one you may read, you will always find it. This is the convicting work of the Spirit who takes charge of the situation. And people may be held in that state and position for sometime. Sometimes they have been in that state not only for hours but for days and weeks, and months, and they become almost desperate. Then they are given a clear view of the love of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ and especially of his death upon the cross. At last they see it. Oh, they had always believed it theoretically and they had stayed to a communion service, but they had never felt anything, it had never truly become real for them. They had believed it, yes, they were honestly trusting to it, but they had never felt its power, they had never known what it was to be melted by it, to be broken by it. They had never known what it was to weep with a sense of unworthiness and then of love and joy as they realised that 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Suddenly it all becomes real to them and they are given to know that the Son of God has loved them and has given himself for them. It becomes an individual and a personal matter: 'He died for me, even my sins are forgiven', and peace comes into their hearts; joy enters into them and they are lost in love and in a sense of praise of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

And this now becomes for them the one thing that absorbs them. If they meet anyone they talk about it at once, everybody is talking about it, it is the main topic of conversation, it is the thing that absorbs all their interest. They desire to be together now and to talk about these things and so they get together, and they hold meetings. They meet every night and they begin to talk about these things. They begin to praise God, and to sing hymns to his glory. And then they begin to pray, and there they are, hour after hour, night after night, longing to finish work so they they might get together with other people who have experienced this movement of the Spirit of God. And that, of course, in turn leads them to have a great concern about others who are outside and who do not know these things.

I am giving you a synopsis of what you read in the books. They begin to get a concern for the members of their own family, husband, wife, father, mother, children, brother, sister, who do not know that they are outside. They tell them about it, they feel they must. There is a constraint that is driving them. They talk about it to people, to friends and to everybody, and they begin to pray for them. Prayer is always a great feature of every revival, great prayer meetings, intercession hour after hour. They pray for these people by name and they plead, and they will not let God go, as it were. They are intent on this with a strange urgency.

And then, after a while, hearing of all this and seeing the change in those whom they have known for so long, these others who are outside begin to join the meetings and to say, 'What is this?' So they come in, and they go through the same experience. And so it happens and thousands upon thousands are converted. Indeed, the whole neighbourhood seems to be full of the Holy Spirit. He seems to be everywhere. People are not only converted in meetings, some are converted as they are walking to the meetings, before they have even got there. Some are converted at their work, in a coal-mine, on top of a mountain. Some are awakened in the middle of the night. They went to bed feeling as usual, but they are awakened with an awe-ful sense of sin and they have to get up and pray and plead with God to have mercy. Nobody has spoken to them at that moment—it is the Spirit of God that is acting. He is dominating the whole area. He is filling the lives of all the people.

That is what happens in revival and thus you get this curious, strange mixture, as it were, of great conviction of sin and great joy, a great sense of the terror of the Lord, and great thanksgiving and praise. Always in a revival there is what somebody once called a divine disorder. Some are groaning and agonising under conviction, others praising God for the great salvation. And all this leads to crowded and prolonged meetings. Time seems to be forgotten. People seem to have entered into eternity. A meeting may start at six thirty in the evening, and it may not end until daybreak the next morning with nobody aware of the passing of the hours. They did not have to provide coffee once or twice halfway through. When the Holy Ghost organises things, time, the body and the needs of the flesh are all forgotten.

A revival, then, really means days of heaven upon earth. Let me give you one of the greatest definitions ever written of what is true of a town when there is such a revival or a visitation of the Spirit of God. It was written by the great and saintly Jonathan Edwards about the little town of Northampton in Massachusetts in 1735.

This work soon made a glorious alteration in the town. So that in the Spring and Summer following it seemed, that is to say the town, seemed to be full of the presence of God. It never was so full of love nor so full of joy and yet so full of distress as it was then. There were remarkable tokens of God's presence in almost every house. It was a time of joy in families on account of salvation being brought to them. Parents rejoicing over their children as newborn, husbands over their wives and wives over their husbands. The doings of God were then seen in His sanctuary. God's day was a delight and His tabernacles were amiable. Our public assemblies were then beautiful. The congregation was alive in God's service. Everyone earnestly intent on the public worship. Every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth. The assembly in general were from time to time in tears while the Word was preached. Some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbours.

Jonathan Edwards: Works, London 1840, Vol I, p. 348.

There, then, I have given you a rough outline of what happens in revival. 'What mean these stones?' Well, that is exactly what happened a hundred years ago in all those different countries. It was the work of God—these visitations of the Spirit of God. Do you know about these things? Are you interested? Are you concerned? Are you moved? Do you not begin to see that if only this happened today, it would solve our problems? This is God visiting his people. Days of heaven on earth, the presidency of the Holy Spirit in the Church, life abundant given to God's people without measure. I trust that we have already seen and felt something that creates within us not only the desire to say, 'What is that fervour? Oh that we might know it. Oh, that it might happen to us', but also that we might feel it to such an extent that we begin to plead with God to have pity and to have mercy and to visit us in that way with his great salvation.

## Characteristics of Revival

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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? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. 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: 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. (Josh. 4:21–24).

We have seen some of the general characteristics of revival—a sense of the majesty of God, of personal sinfulness, of the wonder of salvation through Jesus Christ and a desire that others might know it. And we have seen, too, that in a time of revival people are aware of the presidency of the Holy Spirit over everything and the life of the whole community.

Now we must proceed to emphasise certain special points about revival which seem to me to be of very great significance. Firstly, it is characteristic of revival that people of all classes are affected by it, people of all ages, people of all temperaments, people of all intellectual types. That is a point that is well worthy of elaboration, though we shall not do so here, but I emphasise it for this reason. Here is one of the final answers to those who would dismiss evangelical conversion in terms of psychology. It is not confined to special types, to the so-called 'religious type'. One of the most striking things in the story of revivals is the fact that you get a cross section of every conceivable type and group in society, irrespective of class, age, temperament and everything else: a most astonishing feature, but one which is found with strange regularity in all the stories.

And then another characteristic is that a revival is something that comes, lasts for a while, and then passes. This is most interesting because it emphasises that revival is a definite action of God. It comes suddenly or gradually, works to some great climax and then it

ends perhaps suddenly, perhaps gradually. There is something discreet about it. Sometimes you can give the very date of its beginning and the date at which it ended, and that, as I say, is significant because it establishes once more that revival is the work of God and that it is not something which belongs to the realms of mere psychological experience. With the latter, as long as you have the stimulus and the factors, you continue to get results, but in revival that is not the case.

That leads us to the next point, which is that the results of revival are abiding. There are exceptions. There are some who fall back. But the great feature of revival is that the men and the women who are converted by this power that has entered into the life of the Church, continue. It is not that they come forward as the result of an appeal and you imagine that great things are happening, until you find afterwards that only ten per cent of them hold, which is the figure that is expected, I am told, by most evangelists. That is not the case in revival. In a revival it is an exceptional thing for people not to grow. They abide and they continue.

You will find that the literature bears this out. I have been reminding myself of it again. I have been reading a description given by a number of ministers a hundred years ago, and every one of them volunteers this self same point, namely, that the people were standing and were holding. It was not something that only lasted an evening. Of course they did not test their meetings, they did not call people to come forward. There again is an interesting point of difference between an evangelistic campaign and a revival. In an evangelistic campaign you have to plead with people to come forward, in a revival you do not—they come without your asking. That was put very well by a man who was in the revival that happened in the Congo in recent years. He wrote a little book about his experiences in which he brings it out very eloquently. I quote:

There I had been preaching for twenty years in that area and pleading with people to decide for Christ at the end of the meetings, trying to persuade them to come forward and I was not succeeding. But then this came, this happened and now there was no need to ask them to come forward.

The difficulty was in a sense to deal with the numbers who came. They would even come forward while he was still preaching, he could not stop them. That is something that you get in a revival. And the results are abiding.

There are certain concrete facts that can be given. Let me give you some figures. I have hesitated to do so because figures have, by now, become rather unrealistic in this age which attaches such significance to them. People do not wait to see whether they are true, they are so anxious to proclaim them immediately. Nevertheless, the figures are interesting. I am not emphasising that a given number came forward at the end of a meeting, I am going to give you figures of people who joined the Christian Church, and who continued to be active and zealous members.

It is said that from 1730 to 1745 in the United States, when the great awakening took place under Jonathan Edwards and the Tennants and others, that some 50,000 people joined the Christian churches. From 1857 to 1859 in the great revival that swept the United States, it is computed that half a million people joined the Christian Church. Notice my emphasis—joined the Christian Church. They were not admitted immediately. They were tested and examined; they were instructed as catechumens and they were trained. I am not talking about decisions. We have become so accustomed to that, but they did not do that sort of thing in those days. Let us get that right out of our minds. I am referring to people who, having given such clear evidence of their conversion and their regeneration, were admitted into the full membership of the Christian Church. Half a million a hundred years ago in the United States. 100,000 in Ulster alone joined the churches during that time and 50,000 in Wales. And when you remember the population figures you see the significance of these striking facts.

It must also be emphasised that a great zeal for God and for holiness invariably becomes manifest in the members of the church and in these converts. The meetings are crowded. The people are anxious to work. Every enterprise and connection with the church is given a mighty stimulus. You can read, for instance, Edwin Orr's book on the 'Second Evangelical Awakening' which will give you striking facts in that respect. It will show you the number of things that came out of that revival of a hundred years ago. It was not some passing emotion, but something so deep and so profound that people were consumed with a zeal for God and for his name and for his cause. And furthermore, not only did the existing churches become too small, they had to build large numbers of new ones. You see, when there is a revival, it starts as I have shown, in the Church, and the Church is built up, whereas so often when you have evangelistic campaigns, the churches are left exactly where they were.

The numbers of men called to the ministry also increased enormously. This is something, too, that always happens in a period of revival. And then, speaking still more generally, in a time of revival you will find that the moral tone and the moral level, not only of the Church but of the world outside the Church, is visibly affected and raised. You can read statistics provided by the public authorities with respect to prosecutions in police courts and other courts for drunkenness and various other things and the figures are simply staggering. And it can also be seen how practices, evil practices that had characterised the life of a district or a town, suddenly disappear. There is a famous instance of this. There was a great preacher in North Wales about 150 years ago by the name of John Elias. He preached one sermon at a famous fair, a fair that was well known for its debauchery and vice and its sin and wrongdoing. That man by preaching one sermon put an end to that fair once and for ever. He killed it and it was never revived.

That is the kind of thing that you find occurring in a time of revival. But you can have great evangelistic campaigns and you might think from the reports you read that the whole country had become religious. Then you are given the figures for vice and crime and you see that they are not affected at all. That is never true in a revival. Even people who are not converted are influenced and affected. A sobriety enters into the life of the whole community and the general effects of revival will last for quite a number of years after the revival is over.

Now, up until this point we have been looking at the phenomenon of revival in general. But I do want to refer briefly to particular variations, which take place in different revivals, in different places and at different times. While they all share certain general characteristics, you do find these most interesting and, to me, fascinating variations. There are differences, for instance, in the way in which a revival starts; as I have said, it may be sudden or it may be gradual. A revival may come quite unexpectedly, or it may be the case that a number of people have been burdened and have been concerned and have been praying, perhaps over months or even years. Sometimes it is just a handful of people who have been concerned and burdened, and God answers. Have you read these stories? I do plead with you to do so. Read the facts and you will see some of these points illustrated.

Again revival may come in different types of meetings. Sometimes a revival breaks out in a prayer meeting, not some great crowded meeting, but perhaps a little prayer meeting with just a few people. In Northern Ireland it was really three men who met together regularly to pray, just three men. Sometimes it has only been two. It does not matter. In New York a hundred years ago it was one man who prayed alone for some time in that famous midday prayer meeting. So it may come in a prayer meeting or it may happen in a preaching service. It may even happen when an evangelist is holding a series of regular meetings. He may have planned an evangelistic campaign, but suddenly it becomes a revival, something quite different. There is no limit to the ways in which it may start. Jonathan Edwards tells us that he has no doubt at all but that the sudden tragic death of a person in that town of Northampton, in which he ministered, was probably the thing that really proved to be the factor that God used. A calamity, some strange happening, something that alarms people or astonishes them, something that makes them realise the fleeting character of life in this world, these are the things that God has often used.

So it may happen with a very small number or it may happen in a great crowd. God is not confined to numbers or to anything else. The Bible is full of examples of that. God's greatest acts have been done with small numbers, with 'remnants'. But it can equally happen with a great crowd. And that is why people who try to lay down rules and regulations—thinking that because it happened once in this way, it is going to happen again in the same way—are showing a complete misunderstanding of the laws of the spiritual realm. There are endless variations in the way in which it begins.

And then consider the variations in the type of man that God uses in revival. This is another most fascinating theme. Sometimes God has used very great men, men like Jonathan Edwards, one of the greatest philosophers of all time, possibly the greatest philosopher that the United States has ever produced. Everybody is agreed about his importance, even men who are not primarily interested in religion. That is why they are still reprinting his works. And he was the man whom God used above all others two hundred years ago in the New England states. Whitefield, too, by any assessment, was a great man, and a great orator. John Wesley by any showing was an outstanding man, a genius of an organiser, and a most able intellectual. Now all these men of the eighteenth century were undoubtedly men of remarkable ability, and they were the men God used to bring this great revival among the masses of the common people.

But here is the interesting thing. God does not always use men like that. He does sometimes, and that seems to be the general rule, because Luther, again, was naturally great, so was Calvin, and so were John Knox, and others. But, you see, he does not always use men of that calibre. When you come to a hundred years ago you find something very different. You find God now using simple, ignorant, unknown, most ordinary men. You find that in the United States and you find it in Ulster. How many of you have ever heard of the name of James McQuilkin? Well he was the man who was used in Northern Ireland a hundred years ago. James McQuilkin was a most ordinary man, but God laid hold of him and began to use him. It was exactly the same in Wales and the name of the man most used there was David Morgan. He was actually a minister of the gospel, but a very ordinary, unknown minister, a man of no gifts whatsoever. But God took hold of that man and used him and made him like a lion for nearly two years. Is this not something worthy of our careful contemplation? Should we not reflect upon it? God takes hold of the weak things of the world and confounds the things that are mighty. It is a part of the principle. It may be a great man, it may be a very little man. It does not matter.

Then think of the area in which a revival takes place and the spread of the revival. It may be very local and it may remain so. But it may involve the whole district. It may involve the whole country, or, as we saw a one hundred and two hundred years ago, several countries at the same time. All these facts are full of significance, especially when you think of the attacks of the psychologists who think they can explain away religious phenomena in terms of psychology. I am hoping to deal with that later.

But let us turn now to a vexed question, the question of the so-called 'phenomena' that are sometimes in evidence during a revival. Again, there is great variation here. Sometimes a revival may be powerful and yet more or less quiet. There may be a very deep and a very profound emotion. Large numbers are converted, but quietly. But it is not always like that. Indeed, it comes nearer to being

the rule in revival that certain phenomena begin to manifest themselves—phenomena such as these: men and women are not only convicted of sin, but they are convicted by an agony with respect to sin. It is not merely that they see that they are sinners and that they must believe in the Saviour, it comes to them with such overwhelming force that they become even physically ill. They are in a literal agony of soul. You remember the story of John Bunyan do you not? He tells in *Grace Abounding* how he had such an agony of conviction for nearly eighteen months that on one occasion he even felt envious of geese that were grazing in the field. He wished that he had not been born a man at all. This agony, this terrible conviction—you may get that in revival. People are in an agony of soul and groaning. They may cry and sob and agonise audibly. But it does not always even stop at that. Sometimes people are so convicted and feel the power of the Spirit to such an extent that they faint and fall to the ground. Sometimes there are even convulsions, physical convulsions. And sometimes people seem to fall into a state of unconsciousness, into a kind of trance, and may remain like that for hours.

Now all I am anxious to do at this point is to remind you of the facts. They are variable. They may be present, they may not be, but generally in revival you do get something along these lines. We must deal with this point later, because it becomes the focal point of the criticism that is generally levelled against the whole notion of revival.

So then, 'What mean these stones?' What are they telling us? Well, I have been answering that question. It is the kind of thing that happened in 1859. It is the kind of thing that always happens in revival. There are general features, and there are variable features. It is clear, therefore, that what we have to consider is this outstanding event which takes place from time to time in the history of the Christian Church.

But let me take it a step further. If those are the facts, what is the real character or nature of the facts? We must go back to our text. Here are people one day walking past Gilgal and they see these stones set up and they say, 'What mean these stones?' and this is the answer that they are to be given: '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.' The children of Israel are to tell the enquirers that these are set up 'that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that is mighty'.

These stones remind us of facts, miraculous facts. And if that were true of those stones it is equally true of every revival that has ever taken place. A revival is a miracle. It is a miraculous, exceptional phenomenon. It is the hand of the Lord, and it is mighty. A revival, in other words, is something that can only be explained as the direct action and intervention of God. It was God alone who could divide the Red Sea. It was God alone who could divide the waters of the river of Jordan. These were miracles. Hence the reminder of God's unique action of the mighty acts of God. And revivals belong to that category. Let me examine this. These events belong to the order of things that men cannot produce. Men can produce evangelistic campaigns, but they cannot and never have produced a revival. Oh, they have tried to do so many times, and they are still trying. Alas, Finney has led the whole Church astray at this point by teaching that if you only do certain things you can have a revival whenever you want it. The answer is an eternal No! And that is not my opinion. This is a question of fact. Have we not all known and watched and seen men who have been trying to produce revivals. They have introduced all Finney's methods, they have read his book, they know it by heart and they have tried to do what he teaches, they have tried to make people confess their sins, they have tried to make them conform, they have done everything that Finney said should be done, expecting revival as a result. They have done it all and they have brought great pressure to bear, but there has been no revival. A revival, by definition, is the mighty act of God and it is a sovereign act of God. It is as independent as that. Man can do nothing. God, and God alone, does it. 'Set up these stones.' Why? Well, it is to say that it is the hand of the Lord and it is mighty; it is the sovereign act of God, apart from men. And all the details I have just been giving you, fit into this and illustrate it.

But not only can men not produce a revival, they cannot even explain it, and that again is most important. I would lay this down as a part of the definition. If you can explain what is happening in a church, apart from this sovereign act of God, it is not revival. If you can possibly explain it otherwise, it is not revival. You see that is true of miracles. If you can explain a miracle it is no longer a miracle. That is why it is rather pathetic to see people becoming excited when a man publishes a book with a title *The Bible is True*. The writer is going to prove to us that the miracles of the Old Testament have happened. And what does he proceed to say? Well, he says that this sort of thing happens quite naturally and quite often. There is one illustration which I will mention in order to show my point. You remember when Moses struck the rock and water came gushing out? 'Ah,' says this man, 'we are now in a very happy position, we can really believe this.' On what grounds? During the last war, he continues, a number of soldiers in charge of a sergeant were doing a bit of work in a given place and the men were not doing the work to the satisfaction of the sergeant. So he said, 'Let me have that pick,' and he just took hold of it and accidently just happened to remove a bit of shale from the side of the hedge and water began to trickle out. We can believe, therefore, that when Moses struck the rock the water gushed out. And so we can believe in miracles. Is it not rather pathetic? If you can explain a thing it is not a miracle. A miracle is the direct, sovereign, immediate, supernatural, action of God and it cannot be explained. And that is the essential truth about a revival. You can not explain it.

There are no methods in a revival. If methods are used, you can understand the result, can you not? If you do certain things, you will

get certain results. The advertisers know all about that. If you use your methods correctly, you will get your results all right. People are very gullible, you can make them do almost anything you like. And we are living in an age of propaganda, an age which is suggestible. But no methods at all are used in revival. None. Read for yourself. No great crowds, no band, no choir, nothing whatsoever. No preliminary advertising. None of these things at all. And yet the thing happens. You cannot explain it in terms of the methods used, because there are none.

And then, look again at the men who were used. How often has it been the case in revival that you have had the same kind of thing that is described in Acts 4? This was the problem for the religious authorities in Jerusalem. Here was a man who was known to everybody, who used to sit every day at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple asking alms of the people—a man of forty years of age who had never walked at all. But suddenly this man was seen walking and leaping and running into the Temple and praising God, so that everybody knew it. And who had done this? Men called Peter and John. Who were they? This was the problem—ignorant and unlearned men! And yet, the authorities said in effect, 'We cannot deny that a notable miracle has happened and everybody knows it. But here is the enigma. Ignorant and unlearned men are responsible for this—fishermen. Is it possible? Can they have done it? They have no learning, they have no training, they have nothing, and yet it has happened. What can we do?' Men, you see, cannot understand it, they cannot explain it. The results are not commensurate with the powers implied. The answer is that it is God who is using these men.

Now, I have reminded you that it was like that in 1858 and 1859, and, too, in 1904 and 1905, the last major revival in the British Isles. The man that God used then was a man whose name was Evan Roberts and he was a very ordinary man. But he was the man that God used and you cannot explain that revival in terms of the man. That explanation is totally inadequate. And then take another argument. Look at the change in the man. Look at these apostles of whom we have been reading. Look at them before Pentecost, weak, helpless. Look at them after Pentecost, filled with a blazing power. See the courage with which Peter, who denied his Lord, is now fearlessly facing the hostile crowd and the authorities that have power to put him to death. Look at John Wesley, before May 24th, 1738, a complete failure in the ministry. But look at him afterwards. The same man with the same abilities, the same powers, the same everything, how do you explain the change? You cannot explain it in terms of Wesley. What is it? Oh, it is the Spirit of God that has come upon them. It is a miracle.

And so it was a hundred years ago in Northern Ireland and in Wales. I have mentioned a man called David Morgan, a very ordinary Minister, just carrying on, as it were. Nobody had heard of him. He did nothing at all that was worthy of note. Suddenly this power came upon him and for two years, as I have said, he preached like a lion. Then the power was withdrawn and he reverted to David Morgan again. The same man, you see. You cannot explain it in terms of men. There is only one explanation—'the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty'. It can take the things that are not, and confound the things that are, and ridicule them.

Consider the places where revival happens. Sometimes it starts in a big city, but sometimes it starts in a village or hamlet. I emphasise this point because it is to me the most glorious of all. You see, when man does something, he likes to do it in big cities, does he not? He does it in a big way and he feels that this is essential to success. But as we consider the revivals of 1857–59 may I use the expression 'the divine humour'? Where did they break out then? It was not in the capital city of Belfast in Northern Ireland, it was in a village you have never heard of called Connor. That is how God does things. When he sent his Son into this world he was not born in Jerusalem but in Bethlehem, the very least of the cities of Judah. Thus God, that we might give the honour and the glory to himself, makes it impossible that we can explain it in terms of men. It is in the Bethlehems, the Connors, the little villages that people have never heard of, that the mighty thing often happens. And it was exactly the same thing two hundred years ago. It was in that little town of Northampton in New England that the revival broke out. It was in a little hamlet called Trevecca in Wales that Howell Harris was suddenly laid hold of, and in another similar small village that Daniel Rowland was apprehended by God—places you have never heard of, that is how God does it.

And this is the wonderful thing—the next revival may break out in a little hamlet that you and I have never heard of. We people in these big cities of ours may be passed by and God may bring us to nought and do this mighty thing in some unknown little place with a small group of people. That can happen in revival. It can happen anywhere. Thank God! That is what makes life so romantic and so hopeful at the same time. There is no limit. And why is this? To show again that it is the sovereign work of God. You cannot explain it.

Neither, in the third place, can men control it. There is a sudden beginning. There is a sudden ending. You get variations during the revival and men seem to be utterly helpless. While it is perfectly true to say that we can quench the Spirit and be a hindrance, it is never true to say that if we observe all the rules and the conditions that we can produce revival. No. God keeps it in his own hands, beginning, course and end. In everything, we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit and his power.

But, lastly, think of its overwhelming character. 'What mean these stones?' These stones are there to tell us of 'the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty'. A revival is something which, when it happens, leads people to say, as the townspeople said in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, 'What is this? What is it?' It is something that comes like a tornado. It is almost like an overflowing tide, it is like a flood. Astounding things happen, and of such a magnitude that men are left amazed, astonished. Let me give you but one illustration



which is one of the most lyrical and one of the most wonderful. There was a preacher in Scotland three hundred years ago of the name of John Livingstone of Kilsyth. There was a marvelous day in the life of John Livingstone. He tells us himself in his autobiography that he was a very ordinary preacher. And yet, writing at the end of his life, he looks back and he says, 'You know, there was a day, I shall never forget it, in June 1630....' He was at a communion service at a place called Shotts. Have you ever read of the revival at the Kirk of Shotts? Read it, my friends, this is what happened. They had had their services; they had gone on over the weekend. John Livingstone and a number of others had been spending Sunday night after the services in prayer, and in conferences, as they called them, talking to one another about these things, and Monday morning came and John Livingstone had been asked to preach. He was out in the fields meditating, and suddenly he felt that he could not preach, that the thing was beyond him and that he was inadequate. And he felt like running away. But suddenly the voice of God seemed to speak to him, not in audible language, but in his spirit, telling him not to do that and that God did not work in that way, and it made him feel that he must go back. He preached, he tells us, on Ezekiel 36. And he said, 'I had preached for about an hour and a half. Then,' he said, 'I began to apply my message,' and as he was beginning to apply it, suddenly the Spirit of God came upon him and he went on for another hour in this application. And as he did so, people were literally falling to the ground, and in that one service five hundred people were converted.

Oh, modern people, I have to say this—unfortunately he did not test the meeting. I am not saying that five hundred came forward at the end, they did not do that sort of thing. Five hundred were convicted, some falling to the ground, having to be carried out. Others went out groaning in agony and were in this agony for days. But as the result of that one sermon, five hundred people were added to the churches—truly, permanently, soundly converted. That is the kind of thing that happens in a revival. And poor John Livingstone says that that kind of thing only happened to him on one other occasion. In a long life just these two days, but what days! Not John Livingstone, but 'the hand of the Lord', working in and through John Livingstone. A story, too, is told of a man preaching in a little town called Llanidloes, in Wales, who preached one sermon, and during the next six months a thousand people were added to the churches in the district round about that little town.

What is this? This is 'the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty'. At Pentecost you had miracles, speaking with tongues and many other things. They are variable, they do not always happen. But mighty things happen. Miraculous things happen, things that are beyond the explanation and the wit of men. And indeed, if you consult the men whom God has used on such occasions, they will all tell you the same thing. They suddenly, like John Livingstone, became conscious of a power coming upon them. Not themselves. Taken up, taken out of themselves. Given liberty. Given authority. Given fearlessness. Speaking as men of God with the boldness of the original apostles. They knew when the power came, they knew when the power went. You will read it in the journals of Whitefield and of Wesley and all the rest. This is the hand of the Lord. This is the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. It was because he knew so much about this that the Apostle Paul says 'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ' (2 Cor. 10:4-5). That is it.

Or, finally, look at it as it is described in Acts 2. Here are the apostles meeting together for prayer in the upper room. They had been doing it for ten days. Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing, mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. That is it. Not always the sound, but always the consciousness of the mighty wind of God. The Spirit of God descends upon preacher, prayers, praying people, those meeting in conference. The sound of a rushing mighty wind. The hand of the Lord, that it is mighty! Do we know anything about that my friends? Do you believe this? Do we believe the facts? Do we believe the explanation? Do we who claim to believe in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ still believe in miracles? In the possibility of miracles? Do we believe in God coming in and doing things that we not only cannot do, but cannot even understand, nor control, nor explain. Yea, I ask you, do you long to know such things? To see such things happening again today? Are you praying for such a visitation? For believe me, when God hears our prayers and does this thing again, it will be such a phenomenon that not only will the Church be astounded and amazed, but even those who are outside will be compelled to listen and to pay attention, in a way that they are not doing at the present time, and in a way that men left to themselves can never persuade them to do.

That is the meaning of the stones. That is why I am calling your attention to revival. This is what God can do. This is what God has done. Let us together decide to beseech him, to plead with him to do this again. Not that we may have the experience or the excitement, but that his mighty hand may be known and his great name may be glorified and magnified among the people.

## The Purpose of Revival

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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? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan

on dry land. 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: 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 (Josh. 4:21–24).

We have, you remember, been looking at the story in the Book of Joshua because it is a perfect illustration of why it is important for us to have monuments and reminders of the great things which God has done. We have seen that the principles on which God acts never vary. We are called upon to consider historical facts, significant and miraculous facts, and now we must move on to another aspect of this great subject of revival. What is the object and the purpose of it all? Here is this miraculous thing that happened. But why, why did it happen? Or, if I may put my question in a different way, and ask with reverence, why does God do this from time to time? For we have been reminding ourselves that what happened one hundred years ago is but one in a series of similar events. From time to time in the long history of the Church there have been these visitations, these outpourings of God's Spirit. Nothing is clearer in the history of the Church than that. Indeed, that does seem to be the history of the Church. There was a great outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. That visitation persisted for some time, but then it began to wane and finally vanished. The Church got into a powerless condition, so much so that some people thought the end had come. Then suddenly God poured out his Spirit again and the Church was raised up to the heights once more. For a time that persisted, but then it, too, gradually passed. So the history of the Church is a sort of graph of ups and downs. That has been happening throughout the running centuries.

Now, the question we are concerned with at this point is—why does God do this from time to time? And the answer is given us very perfectly in these verses that we are looking at now. The first reason given in verse 24 is this—‘that [in order that] all people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty’. This then is the first reason that is given. God does this thing from time to time, God sends revival, blessing, upon the Church, in order that he may do something with respect to those who are outside him. He is doing something that is going to arrest the attention of all the people of the earth. Here, we must always realise, is the chief reason for ever considering this matter at all. This is my main reason for calling attention to this whole subject of revival and for urging everybody to pray for revival, to look for it and to long for it. This is the reason—the glory of God. You see, Israel alone represented God and his glory. All the other nations of the world were pagan, they had their various gods and they did not believe in nor worship the God of Israel. But God had chosen Israel. He had made a nation for himself in order that through them, and by means of them, he might manifest his own glory and that they might bear this testimony to all the nations of the world. That was the real function of the Children of Israel, and the other nations were watching them and were ready always to scoff at them and to ridicule them. Whenever the nation of Israel was defeated, or seemed to be helpless, or was in any trouble, the other nations would always say, ‘Where is their God, the God of whom they have spoken so much and of whom they have boasted so much, where is he? Where is his power?’

And so, the first reason for this miraculous act is—that all these peoples and nations ‘may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty’. God is vindicating himself, he is asserting his own glory and his own power. He is doing this in order that those on the outside, who scoff and speak in derision, may see something that will pull them up and arrest them and astound them. Now, we must never lose sight of this. It is the main reason for being concerned about revival. We should not seek revival in order that we may have experiences. I have described experiences that do take place in revival, but we do not seek revival primarily for their sake. There are people who do. There are people who always rush to meetings where any kind of experience is promised and they go the rounds from one meeting to another, people who are just itching and thirsting to have experiences, always thinking of themselves. But that is not the way in which it is put here, for the primary thing is the glory of God, the power, and the name of God, and the honour of God. So let us be perfectly clear about that.

There are people who are ready to jump at anything that will solve their problem or the problem of the Church. Some years ago the main sections of the Christian Church were not interested at all in evangelism. They despised it and dismissed it with derision. But today every section of the Church is talking a great deal about evangelism. And the reason is that they are seeing the churches becoming empty, so they will take up anything that may help them to solve the problem of church attendance or even church finance. And they would undoubtedly do likewise with respect to revival, but that is a terrible thing to do. No, our overriding, controlling reason for having any interest at all in these matters should be the glory of God. Does it grieve you, my friends, that the name of God is being taken in vain and desecrated? Does it grieve you that we are living in a godless age—an age when men have sufficient arrogance to speak in public and in private with sarcasm of the record of God's mighty deeds and actions?

But, we are living in such an age and the main reason we should be praying about revival is that we are anxious to see God's name vindicated and his glory manifested. We should be anxious to see something happening that will arrest the nations, all the peoples, and cause them to stop and to think again. So here is the first thing. You will find it constantly in the Scriptures. It is in many ways one of the leading themes, if not the leading theme, in the book of the Psalms. Read the Psalms and see those men praying for a visitation of God's Spirit. Every time it is in order that the heathen who are scoffing may be silenced. The Psalmist cries out to God that he should do something that will silence them. This is the end to which they are always looking, that God will do something and speak in such a way, that will call everybody to ‘Be still and know that I am God’ (Ps. 46:10). That is the great theme of Psalm 46.

The nations and their princes are all being addressed; these people who are arguing against God and querying whether there is such a God. 'And listen' says the Psalmist, 'here is the God who makes wars to cease; this is the God who arises and vindicates himself.' Then, having displayed his case, he says, 'Be still,' give up, give in, admit, 'that I am God.'

Now, that is the thing of which we are reminded here. God himself told Joshua to tell the people his primary reason for setting up this memorial—that he might thus manifest his glory and silence the people who are outside. And that is what revival has invariably achieved. It has caused those who are outside the Church and those who are inimical to Christianity to pay attention. For it is indeed a phenomenon. It is, as we have agreed, something miraculous. It is something that astounds them and causes them, of necessity, to stop, and to look, and to consider. Of course, their reason for stopping and considering may not be a good one, it may be sheer curiosity, but whatever it is, it does not matter, for it does make them stop and think. We have a classic example of this, of course, in Acts 2. It is the account of what happened on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out and we read that the people of Jerusalem and all the strangers who were gathered there, were arrested, and they said, 'What is this?'. A phenomenon. Something was happening, and they were forced to pay attention and Peter had to get up and give his explanation, you remember. That is always what a revival does, and I maintain that there is nothing short of a revival that will have that effect. We have tried nearly everything else, but it does not succeed. The masses of the people even if they show a temporary interest, show no more than that. No, men can never do anything that will have this effect. This is always the action of God. If I may put it bluntly and clearly, what is needed is not a stunt but the action of God that will stun people. That is the difference. Man can produce stunts. And he is very clever at doing that. He can think of something fresh and new, and he will advertise it, but the people know the whole time that it is man's doing. 'It's a stunt,' they say. Now, stunts will never lead to this desired position. But when God arises and God acts, then something is happening that will force men's attention. They cannot understand it. Here psychologists are left without any explanation. They can explain stunts without difficulty but they cannot explain this. That is the difference between man organising something, and God manifesting the right hand of his power and showing that it is mighty.

Now surely this is the crying need of the hour. We are aware of the position of the vast majority of the people of this country; church attendance constitutes but five per cent of the population. And though we may preach, and fast, and sweat, and pray, and do all we can, all our efforts seem to lead to nothing. What is needed is some mighty demonstration of the power of God, some enactment of the Almighty, that will compel people to pay attention, and to look, and to listen. And the history of all the revivals of the past indicates so clearly that that is invariably the effect of revival, without any exception at all. That is why I am calling attention to revival. That is why I am urging you to pray for this. When God acts, he can do more in a minute than man with his organising can do in fifty years. Let us realise this tremendous possibility, therefore, and plead to God to make known his power and to manifest his glory in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation of people—people that even blaspheme his holy name and deny his very existence. For God's sake, for the glory of his name, let us intercede and pray for a visitation of God's Spirit.

There, then, is the first great reason 'that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty'. The second reason is 'that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.' That is what I have been emphasising, that revival is of great value to the Church, as well as all it does for the world. That you might know, that you might fear the Lord your God for ever. So, what does it do for the Church? Let me enumerate some of the things that are taught here quite plainly.

The first thing it does is to give the Church an unusual consciousness of the presence of the power of God. 'That ye [the Children of Israel] might fear the Lord for ever.' Now, in the tenth verse of the previous chapter, it is put much more explicitly and powerfully—'And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you.' That is it. This is going to happen, said Joshua to the people, in order that you may know that the living God is among you. When you read this story of the Children of Israel, you will see very clearly that they needed to be reminded of that. Though they were God's people, though he had done so many things for them and to them, though he had brought them out of Egypt, though he had brought them through the Red Sea, though he had led them in the wilderness where their feet did not swell and where they never lacked food because he fed them with manna, the bread from heaven, yet they were constantly fearful and grumbling, looking at the other nations and peoples and their gods, hesitant and doubtful. They behaved in a manner which makes us feel that they were a people who did not realise their relationship to God. And God did this thing at the river of Jordan in order that they might know that the living God was among them.

Now, this is the supreme need of the Church today. In one way, the main trouble with the Christian Church as she is at this moment, the main trouble with every one of us in our daily life and living, is that we fail to realise that the living God is among us. What is the Church? It is this institution, this body in which God dwells. He has promised that. 'I will be in you. I will dwell in you. I will walk among you.' That is what he says. That is what he said to these Children of Israel (see, for example, Exod. 29:45–46). That is what is transferred in exactly the same way to the Christian Church. The Christian Church is not a human organisation and institution. She is as the Apostle Paul puts it at the end of Ephesians 2, a great building in which God dwells, an habitation of God.

This is an argument that is worked out in many places in the New Testament epistles. But the Church does not seem to realise that today. People will persist in regarding the Christian Church as just an institution, one institution among others, just a human organisation. But that is not the Church, the Church is this body in which God himself dwells. And what he does in revival is to

remind us of that. When God acts in revival everybody present feels and knows that God is there. Of course, we believe this. We believe this by faith. Yes, but we should know it. We should have a realisation of it. We should be conscious of his nearness. And that is what revival does for us. 'I am going to do this thing,' says God, 'then all of you will realise that I am among you, I am acting in your midst. I, the living God, have come down amongst you. I am in you. You are my people and I dwell in you and I walk in you.' That is what the Church needs to realise today.

But, of course, it is the very thing she does not realise. It is the thing we are always forgetting. But though I put that first, we must remember that God, at the same time, reminds us that the whole power that should be manifest in the Church is his power, that everything which the Church does should be a manifestation of the power of God. What is the gospel? Well, you remember the answer of the Apostle Paul, 'It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth'. (Rom. 1:16). How easy it is to forget that. How easy to preach it as a system, to preach it as a collection of ideas, or just to preach it as a truth. Ah, but you can do that without power. There are people, says the Apostle Paul, who 'have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof' (2 Tim. 3:5). Christianity is primarily a life. It is a power. It is a manifestation of energy. And as we realise that the living God is among us, we shall realise more and more this tremendous power.

That in turn will lead us to realise that the one thing that matters is that we should be rightly related to God, and always reliant on his power. The Apostle's great claim, you remember, in writing to the Corinthians is this—that when he came to them he did not preach to them with wisdom of men, it was not with 'enticing words of man's wisdom' (1 Cor. 2:1–4). He could have done that. He was a very able man and one who was learned and very well read. But though he was going to a seat of learning—there was a university in Corinth—and he knew the mentality of the Greeks, he did not approach them along that line at all. He tells them later that he became a fool for Christ's sake and many of them despised him because of that. But, says the Apostle, I did not come in that way. In what way, then? Oh, he says, 'in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God' (1 Cor. 2:5).

We all need to be reminded of this. Let me make a confession for all preachers. The outstanding temptation—the besetting sin—of every preacher, myself included, is that after you have prepared your sermons you feel that all is well. You have your two sermons ready for Sunday. Well, that is all right. You have your notes, and you can speak, and you can deliver your message. But that is not preaching! That can be utterly useless. Oh, it may be entertaining, there may be a certain amount of intellectual stimulus and profit in it, but that is not preaching. Preaching is in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. And a man has to realise, after he has prepared his sermons, that however perfectly he may have done so, that it is all waste and useless unless the power of the Spirit comes upon it and upon him. He must pray for that.

Yes, but not only he. Those who listen must also pray for that. How many people pray before they go to a service that the Spirit of God might come upon the preacher and use him and his message? The hearers, as well as the preacher must pray for that, otherwise they are looking to him and to his message. No, all together must look to God and realise their utter dependence upon the power that he alone can give. And whenever there is a revival and God's power is manifested, you need not urge people to pray, they do. They want to see more and more of it. Revival, then, encourages us to pray, and that is why it is good for us to read these accounts and look back on what God has done, that we may realise that the living God is among us. And we must pray to him to manifest this power.

Negatively, it means that it delivers us from any and every form of self-reliance, which is the curse of the Church. There is no difficulty at all in explaining the state of the Christian Church today, it is so perfectly simple. I will tell you why the Church is as she is today, it is self-reliance in the following forms.

First, reliance upon scholarship and learning. It came in about the middle of the last century. 'Ah,' people began to say, 'we are now becoming more educated and we have advanced. Of course we do not want the sort of thing they had in past centuries under Whitefield and Wesley and so on. We now want learned sermons.' And so they began to have them. And great attention was paid to form and to style and to diction. Sermons were published and it was obvious as the man was writing them that he had his eye on publication rather than on the service in which he was going to preach his sermon. Everything became learned and scholarly and philosophical and great sermons were delivered. And it is one of the main causes and explanations of the state of the Church today. Reliance upon human learning and knowledge and wisdom.

Then, secondly, of course, the reliance upon organising. In the last hundred years the Church has multiplied her organisations and institutions in a way that she has never done before in all her long history. There have never been so many sub-sections of the Christian Church as during the present century. Every thing is being organised; age groups, everything else. And there are head offices which send you the literature telling you how to do whatever your interest may be, how to handle children, how to handle young people, advice on this and that. All perfectly organised and yet look at the state of the Church. They are relying on the organisation.

Others rely on their own activities. As long as they are busy they think tremendous things are happening. And, of course, if you

organise and if you are active, it will be reported in the papers—they must have something to report. And people say, 'Tremendous things are happening. Look at it.' But what is happening? Look at the Church, that is the answer. No, my dear friends, we need to learn once more the difference between bustle and busyness and 'the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty'.

But when God acts and when people realise that the living God is amongst them, they are humbled, they are abased. Men do not count any longer. And the reports are not about what men have done but about what God has done and what happens to men as the result of God's action. A revival always humbles men, abases them, casts them to the floor, makes them feel they can do nothing, fills them with a sense of reverence and of godly fear. Oh, how absent that is amongst us. How men are standing forward. But when revival comes, men push back, they are humbled to the ground and the glory is given to God, because it is God's power that is in evidence.

Then my next point, of course, follows by a logical necessity. When all this happens the fear of men is taken away from us in every form. In Joshua 3:10 we read: 'And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites.'

The Children of Israel were about to enter the promised land and they had been hearing about all these tribes. The spies had been sent forward and they came back and said, 'You know, there are giants in that land and when we looked at them we felt that we were as grasshoppers.' And they were trembling, they were afraid of these great powers that they had got to meet when they entered the promised land. Here is the answer: when you know that the living God is amongst you, what are the Hittites, who are the Girgashites and the Jebusites, what are the whole lot of them put together? They become as nothing. The fear of men is taken away immediately when we realise that the living God is among us. And if ever the Church needed this it is now. The Church is so afraid. She is afraid of organised sin, and her argument is, 'We must be doing something because look at the world. It is attracting the young people, it gives them a happy pleasant Saturday night, entertains them, teaches them how to sing and do this and that. Well now, we must do the same thing. Bring in your pop group, or whatever it is, into your Sunday night service. That is what they like, you see.' The world is doing it and the young people say, 'I like it' and because the Church is so afraid that they are going to lose their young people they feel they must do the same. Oh, what a tragedy, what a departure from God's way.

The Church has been afraid of the young people for a long time and that is why she has multiplied these institutions to try to attract them. And she is afraid, too, of the lure of the modern world. People say, 'What can we do? We are up against the television nowadays. There was not television two hundred years ago. They had no radio, they had no cinema. There is our problem. We must do something,' they say. They are afraid of these organisations and powers. And, too, they are terrified of learning and of knowledge. 'Look,' they say, 'at what these experts are saying in the various radio and television programmes and our people hear these things. Is it intellectually respectable to be a Christian? Can you really talk about miracles still? And about dividing the Red Sea and Jordan? Surely people will not believe all that!' So we trim and modify our gospel, because we are afraid of learning and of knowledge and of science. That is what the Church has been doing for a hundred years and that is why she is as she is today. Then people say that Communism is spreading, and if it seems to succeed through using various methods, then we should use them too. They say that we must also make our literature more effective. All right, go on doing these things, but if you rely upon them you are already defeated.

There is no need to be afraid of any of these powers, they have always been there. There is nothing new about all this. The Christian Church has always had to fight the world and the flesh and the devil. She had to fight the Roman Empire at the beginning. She had to fight the malignity of the Jews. She has always had these enemies who are out to exterminate her. And the Church has often quaked and feared, but never when there has been revival, because then they know that the living God is among them 'and he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites'. He names them one by one, you see, as I have been trying to do. What have we to fear from all these things when the living God comes amongst us? Oh, for a touch of his power. Oh, that the Church might realise that this is the answer and then our fear of all our enemies and opponents would vanish like the morning mist. 'Fear Him, ye saints, and you will then have nothing else to fear.' That is how the writer of the hymn puts it and how right he is. Revival does that for us.

And so, to sum it up, it makes us look, and keeps us looking, to him, and dependent upon him. Our supreme need, and our only need, is to know God, the living God, and the power of his might. We need nothing else. It is just that, the power of the living God, to know that the living God is among us and that nothing else matters. So we wait upon him. We look to him. We cry out to him, as Moses did when he was standing before the Red Sea, not knowing what to do, and while the people were grumbling and complaining. God answered Moses and said, 'Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward' (Exod. 14:15). And on they went.

Stand then in His great might,  
With all His strength endued;

And take, to arm you for the fight,  
The panoply of God.  
Charles Wesley

That is what we need, my friends. And that is why I am urging you to pray for revival. We must look to him. God does this in order to give us encouragement. To show us that he is among us. And the reminder of what happened one hundred years ago should lead us to turn back to him. I say, forget everything else. Forget everything else. We need to realise the presence of the living God amongst us. Let everything else be silent. This is no time for minor differences. We all need to know the touch of the power of the living God. And let us continue and wait until we know it.

And then, of course, God does this in order to deliver us from our enemies; enemies without, enemies within. Yes God did all these things to bring his people out of Egypt, out of the wilderness, into the blessed land of Canaan. He does it, I say, in order to lead us to the land of blessing—Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey. What does this mean in the Church? It means that there has never been a revival but that it has led to praise and to thanksgiving, to enjoyment of the riches of God's grace. The great characteristic of revival is ultimately praise, adoration, worship, full enjoyment, full, unmixed and evermore.

But, in conclusion, let me just direct your attention to one other thing. We have considered this great fact of what happens in revival. We have considered the nature of the fact, the miraculous, the almighty power of God. We have asked the question, 'Why does God do this?' I want to ask a last question, 'When does God do this?' You want to know that, I hope. If you are longing and yearning, I am sure that you are asking the question, 'Oh, when is God going to do this? We have been praying, many of us for years. Nothing seems to happen. When does God send revival?' Well, the answer is here in this story of Joshua and it is confirmed by the history of the Church.

There seem to me to be two main factors here. The first is this. God always seems to do this after a period of great trial and great discouragement. The text, we have seen, reminds us of two occasions: The crossing of the Red Sea and the crossing of the river of Jordan. When does he do this marvellous thing? Oh, he does it then, after you have been in Egypt for a while, in the bondage, in the captivity, in the cruelty of Egypt, with the taskmasters and the lashes of their whips, trying to make bricks without sufficient straw. Bondage, aridity, cruelty, persecution and trial. He does it after Egypt. He does it also after a period in the wilderness. Here are the Children of Israel right before Jordan. Yes, but they had just been forty years in the wilderness, without a home, in the howling, barren wilderness with its storms and its trials, its testings, and its provings—all that had happened to them there. Read the story. And what a sad story it is. Yes, they had had a wilderness experience.

And on top of that they had had another calamity, which, to many of them must have seemed to be the end of all things: Moses, their great leader, had died. He had gone up on to a mountain and he had never come back again. The man who had come to them originally with a message from God and had addressed them in their utter serfdom when they were brokenhearted. The man who had led them through so much. He had gone. And a man called Joshua was left to lead them. Who was he and what was he? The position, you see, seemed to be utterly discouraging. Forty years in the wilderness and without a leader.

Ah, thank God for this. It is after such experiences that God sends revival. After Egypt, after the wilderness experience. God knows the Christian Church has been in this wilderness many a long year. If you read the history of the Church before about 1830 or 1840, you will find that in many countries there used to be regular revivals of religion almost every ten years or so. It has not been like that. There has only been one major revival since 1859. Oh, we have passed through a barren period, with that devastating higher criticism and the evil that it has done, in pulpits, in pews, everywhere. People have lost their belief in this living God and in the atonement and in reconciliation and have turned to wisdom, philosophy and learning. We have passed through one of the most barren periods in the long history of the Church. We have been like the prodigal son in that far country, spending our time in the fields with the swine and living on nothing but husks. Yes, we have been in bondage, we have been in fear, we have suffered persecution and derision and it is still going on. We are still in the wilderness. Do not believe anything that suggests that we are out of it, we are not. The Church is in the wilderness. But thank God it is always after such a period that God acts and does his mighty deeds and shows forth his glory.

The second factor in this story is also most important. It is not only after Egypt, or after the wilderness that God acts. The real moment, the moment of crisis, is when you are right up against the Red Sea, when you are actually on the border of Jordan. It is then he does it. You see, we can be forty years in the wilderness, but the mere fact of being in the wilderness does not produce it. No, it is not only in the wilderness, but when we have actually arrived at this critical position. If I may use modern terminology, God always seems to do this, when we are right up against it and so much against it that we are hopeless and helpless. You remember the picture at the Red Sea? The Children of Israel had been commanded to go on. Where were they to go? Well, they were taken to a point at which on the one side was Pi-hahiroth and on the other side Baal-zephon, two mountains, one on each side of them. Behind them were Pharaoh and his hosts and the chariots, the army of Egypt. And there were the defenceless Children of Israel with nothing to defend them at all—mountain here, mountain there, the enemy behind, and in front the Red Sea. It was a situation of

complete and entire hopelessness and despair, with the people grumbling and complaining, asking Moses what it all meant, and Moses had nothing to do but to fall before God. And then the answer came and the Red Sea was divided.

It was exactly the same here at Jordan. We are even given this interesting detail that the river of Jordan was badly flooded for long months at that time of the year. They could not possibly cross it. There they were, facing a flood. How could they get through? It was then that God arose and manifested the right hand of his power and gave a display of his glory. I just put this to you in the form of a challenge. Read the histories and accounts of every revival that has ever taken place and you will invariably find this, that the one man or the group, the little group of people, who have been used in this way by God to send revival, have always known a state of utter desperation and final despair. Every single one of them. Read the journals of Whitefield and Wesley. Read the life history of all these men. They have always come to this place where they have realised their utter and absolute impotence. Their final paralysis. There is the Red Sea. Here is the enemy. There are the mountains. They are shut in, they are shut down, they are crushed to their knees. it is always the prerequisite. It is always the moment at which God acts.

And that is what, I confess, troubles me and discourages me today. The Christian Church is still so healthy, so confident in herself, so sure that she only needs to organise yet another effort, some further activity. She has not come up to the Red Sea. She has never been to Pi-hahiroth and Baal-zephon. She does not know that experience and until she does I cannot see that we have much reason for anticipating a revival of religion and an outpouring of the Spirit of God. It may be, you see, that things infinitely worse than what we have already known will yet have to happen to us. You would have thought that two world wars would have done it, but they have not. You would have thought that the present position would have been enough, but it is not. God have mercy upon us. Until, I say, we arrive there at Pihahiroth, Baal-zephon, Migdal, with the enemy, the Red Sea, the utter hopelessness, Jordan in flood, the utter impossibility, and the final despair. May God bring us to that realisation. May he so reveal his own glory and holiness to us. May he reveal unto us our utter impotence and hopelessness. May we see these things in such a way that we shall cease from men and look only unto the living God. And then there is no question but that he will hear us and he will manifest his glory and his power.