

So That All the Peoples of the Earth May Know

Joshua 4:1-24

James 2:20-26, John 1:1-4 & 14-18 & Exodus 12:1-6

Just as Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible to introduce Israel to their God, so Joshua picks up that theme and writes to demonstrate the character of God, specifically that –

Joshua 21:43-45 - Thus the LORD gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. "And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands. "Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

That is Joshua's theme.

Moses understood that false gods were everywhere and that their influence was powerful, so he constantly called the people to remember God. Joshua understands the same thing.

- a) False gods are everywhere
- b) Our inclination is to trust something other than God

And so in chapter four, Joshua encourages Israel to remember God's faithfulness to miraculously get them across the Jordan River into the Promised land...as Joshua promised, "*the Lord will do wonders among you*" (3:5).

3:14-17 - *So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, "and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest),"the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho. "Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.*

Picture of Adam: The distance from Adam to the Dead is approximately 25 miles.

And that brings us to chapter 4.

Picture of Gilgal: Once across the Jordan River, Israel camps at a place called 'Gilgal' = Stone Circle and only a few miles from Jericho.

In this accomplishment, God has kept 400-year old promises to Israel. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses are all gone. But God is present and the same.

Joshua 1:5 - Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.

APP: Whose name would you put in the place of Moses? On whom do you lean? In whom do you trust? John and Alicia just spent time in Italy with our missionaries Nathan and Amy. When they parted, each couple...each person needed to remember that we do leave one another but God does not “leave” us or “forsake” us.

In this life, people and circumstances will change. Like Israel, we must remember that God is our constant.

*Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light*

*High King of Heaven, my victory won
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heav'n's Sun
Heart of my own heart, whate'er befall
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all*

First: God's Instructions to Remember the Jordan Crossing. 1-9 & 15-18

Before the priests carrying the ark left the Jordan River, Joshua sent 12 men, one from each tribe, into the Jordan to retrieve 12 stones for a memorial.

- a) *God commands the people to remember*
- b) *Each tribe was to remember*
- c) *To remember is to be like God, who remembers*
- d) *Israel needed to remember that God remembers*
- e) *God remembers mercy and wrath*

Numbers 14:18 - The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation.'

If God remembers what he has promised both in mercy and in wrath, it is important for us to remember that God remembers. When you remember God, you are living Christ-like.

Psalm 16:10 - For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.

Luke 23:46 - Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.

It is always in our best interest to be like Jesus

NOTE: In Isaiah 43:25, the Bible says that God doesn't remember our sins. But he doesn't forget them either. He simply chooses, because of what Jesus did, to treat us as our sins deserve.

It's impossible for you to forget that someone hurt you. We don't forget. But, like God, because of what Jesus has done, we treat people without regard to the offense. May those people who have hurt us be able to say about us -

Isaiah 38:17 - you have cast all my sins behind your back.

It is always in our best interests to be like God

Ephesians 4:32 - Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

In this fallen world, there is always someone you are forgiving

The memorial served as a signpost directing the people's attention to God so that they would never forget what happened on that remarkable day. Commemorating this event will also remind all Israel of the fact that God always keeps his covenant promises; both of mercy and wrath. Because we are a weak and sinful people always being pulled back toward sin, we need constant reminding of all that God has done for us!

- f) Once again, we see Joshua, acting as the forerunner of Jesus and mediating God's blessings.

God spoke to Joshua in vs 2-3 and Joshua spoke to the people in verse 4-7

Hebrews 1:3 - He is the...exact imprint of his nature,

Colossians 1:15 - He is the image of the invisible God,

When Israel trusted Joshua, they trusted God. When we trust Jesus, we are trusting God.

4:10 - *For the priests bearing the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to tell the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. The people passed over in haste.*

Second: The Balance Between Taking the Land and God Giving the Land 11-14

Jericho is only six miles away from the river crossing.

Even though the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of Manasseh were not going to live on the Western side of the Jordan in the Promised Land, they still passed through the Jordan with Israel and comprised the men who would fight for the land until God had given all of Israel rest from their enemies

Why didn't the Canaanites attack Israel while they passed through the Jordan river? The answer may be that Israel crossed the Jordan at its flood stage, something the Canaanites never would have anticipated

3:15 - (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest),

God chose for Israel to do this strategically and for the purpose of demonstrating his power to Israel and Jericho

Picture of Promised Land: There is a balance between God giving the land and Israel taking the land.

Genesis 13:15 - all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever.

Exodus 6:8 - I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.

Joshua 1:3 - Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses.

James told us that there is a balance between faith and works

James 2:20b-26 - ...faith apart from works is useless. Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²⁰You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²¹and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" —and he was called a friend of God. ²²You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. ²³And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? ²⁴For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

Philippians 2:12b-13 - work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

In the same way, Israel produces an army of 40,000 men for war who are, 2 chapters later, instead of laying siege to Jericho are just going to walk its walls. But...once the walls are down, Israel has to fight the fight.

This brings us back to the idea of remembering God. As we work, we remember God. As we parent, we remember God. As we study, we remember God.

IMP: Who are we remembering? Who are we thinking on? Who are we trusting in?

Joshua 3:7 - The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

Joshua 4:14 - On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they stood in awe of him just as they had stood in awe of Moses, all the days of his life.

Moses had his Red Sea crossing but had never been seen by the generation how crossing into Canaan. Now, Joshua has had his Jordan River crossing. The people transfer their trust from Moses to Joshua, from what they could not see to whom they could see.

For four thousand years Israel trusted in their invisible God. A God too big for temples, a God who created the world and so could not be pictured by anything in the world. A God who, except for a cloud by day, fire by night and Shekinah glory resting on the ark of the covenant once a year, remained ever-present but unseen.

John 1:1-4 & 14-18 - *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life,^{1a} and the life was the light of men....14-18 - And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son^{1a} from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") ¹⁶For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.^{1a} ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God; the only God,^{1a} who is at the Father's side,^{1a} he has made him known.*

Mark 4:39 & 41 - *And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. ⁴¹And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"*

Who is this? Who is Jesus? The unseen God, seen!

John 14:1 - *Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.*

How do we know we can trust him?

John 3:16 - *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

**Jesus loves me, this I know
For the Bible tells me so**

Third: Speaking of the Resurrection. 19 & 21-24

The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho.

Exodus 12:1-6 – *The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ²"This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. ³Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. ⁴And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish,*

a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.^[a]

In the next chapter, four days later, Israel is going to enjoy the Passover at Gilgal.

And what do we do at Passover? We, like Israel in these 12 stones, remember what Jesus has done for us! He has stopped the flood of God's wrath, endured the cross and given us dry ground on which to live for him.

Band

Two more things:

First - v 18 - *And when the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD came up from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up on dry ground, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks, as before.*

This exact same thing happened at the Red Sea. The Red Sea cut Israel off from Egypt. God has twice now cut Israel off from its past.

John 3:3 – You must be born again.

Once you cross the Jordan, the 2nd body of water, there is no going back....You are God's people and he is your God. Rest in what Jesus has done and don't worry about becoming an Egyptian or a wilderness wanderer again. It can't happen. I didn't happen. Did God ever reopen the Red Sea or Jordan River so that Israel, even in their worst disobedience, could walk back across into captivity? No.

Philippians 1:6 - And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Second – vs 23-24 - *For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.*

Genesis 18:19 - For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.

And what has he promised him?

Genesis 12:3 - in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

3:11 - *Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan.*

You are the reason Israel crossed the Jordan River. But you are not the only reason. “All the families of the earth” have yet to be blessed, and that’s why in Matt 18, Jesus renewed the charge to go into the world, just as he sent Israel into Canaan.

We remember, so that the world may know!

Community Groups:

1 – In the book of Joshua, Joshua continues Moses history of Israel, and particularly, Israel’s conquest of Canaan. What is his theme? *Joshua 21:45*

2 – In this passage, the people begin to trust Joshua just as they did Moses. Why is it dangerous to idolize people? In whom should we place our ultimate trust?

3 – Why was it important for God to encourage the Israelite’s to remember the Jordan crossing? *Except for Joshua and Caleb, none of this generation saw God split the Red Sea. This is their ‘Red Sea’ experience; to see the power of God on their behalf so that they, unlike the generation before them, who at Kadesh-Barnea, doubted God, will instead trust God when he says, “I’m going to give you this land.”*

4 – How does God “forget our sins?”

5 – How are we called to treat those who sin against us? Eph 4:32

a) The command – *Be kind...tenderhearted...forgiving...*

b) The model – *As God in Christ forgave you*

c) The reason – *God in Christ forgave you*

5 – Why did God wait to move Israel across the Jordan River until it was at its flood stage? How can we apply this to our lives?

6 – Talk about the balance between faith and works in Joshua? How are you at this balancing act?

7 – Why was important for God to exalt Joshua in the sight of Israel? He is teaching them about Jesus who is yet to come and in whom we must trust for our salvation. How does Joshua foreshadow Jesus in this passage? *God spoke to him and he spoke to Israel.* In this book? *Joshua’s victories were Israel’s.*

8 – Where and how does Jesus ask his followers to have the same trust in him as they had in the God whom they knew through the Old Testament? *John 14:1.*

9 – What experiences taught the disciples that Jesus was trustworthy as God? **Mark 4:39-41**

10 – Why did God bring Israel over to the Promised Land on the first day of the first month of the year? **Just like in the Exodus, they were starting over.**

11 – What was the point of the Passover for them? **They remembered past God's redeeming goodness and rejoiced in God's present redeeming goodness to them.**

12 – In the record of Scripture, you see God's past goodness. Speak to God's present goodness to you!

Next Week: God's Faithfulness in our Disobedience – Joshua 5:1-12