

## The Book of Joshua



Crossing the Jordan with the Ark

# The Book of Joshua

Bible Study – Good Shepherd Lutheran Church – Collinsville, Illinois

## Chapter Four

### The Twelve Memorial Stones (4.1-9)

1. The Three-fold Sequence: The LORD Commands Joshua / Joshua Commands Israel / Israel Complies

#### Why is this sequence important?

One of the important themes of Joshua is the transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua. Just as the LORD spoke to Moses, so the LORD speaks to Joshua.

2. All of Israel crosses the Jordan. The ark remains in the middle. The stones are picked up from the very spot where the priests are standing.

The sixth century Madaba Mosaic Map identifies the location of "Galgala" (Gilgal) where the twelve stones were erected. Lit. *Galgala to kai dwdekalithon*



#### In what other ways are we reminded that God is present with us in the midst of all trials and troubles?

- Deut. 31.6-7 6 "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you." 7 Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it.
- Psalms 23.4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

Psalm 46.4-7 There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. <sup>5</sup> God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn. <sup>6</sup> The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. <sup>7</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

Isaiah 43.1-3 But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. <sup>2</sup> When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you. <sup>3</sup> For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place.

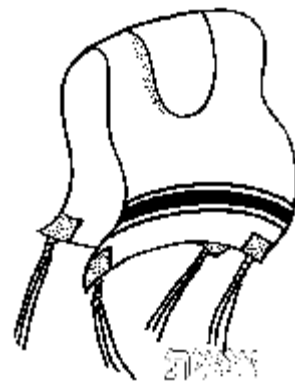
Matthew 28:19-20 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

2 Tim 4.17-18 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. <sup>18</sup> And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!

### 3. Memorials have been used before.

Gen 28:18 Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it.

Num 15:37 Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>38</sup> "Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their



generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners.<sup>39</sup> "And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined,<sup>40</sup> "and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.<sup>41</sup> "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD your God."

### **How can tangible reminders of God's Word help us?**

Sculpture, art, jewelry, music, certificates can be used to remind us of God's Word. We are not iconoclasts. But we must avoid the temptation to seek supernatural power in any memorial. In 2 Kings 18.4 the Israelites in Hezekiah's time were worshiping the bronze serpent, calling it Nehushtan. Veneration of icons, "super charged" rosaries, prayer clothes, the communion elements, etc. can divert our attention away from the real purpose of the memorials.

#### **4. "To this day"**

This demonstrates the historicity of the account. Later readers could have checked on the author's statements. However the stones did not remain their forever. The Hebrew word *olam* sometimes means a long period of time as in Joshua 24.2.

### **The Priests Come Up and the River Flows**

#### **5. Reuben, Gad, and the Half Tribe of Manasseh**

Special emphasis is given to the fulfillment of this command. In 1.12-18 they were required to go ahead of their brothers. The number 40,000 is troubling. In the census of Numbers 26 there were over 110,000 in these tribes. Did some stay back in the Transjordan to protect their families?

#### **6. We are told that the people "feared" Joshua in 4.14**

**What does it mean to fear God? What does it mean to fear God's leaders?**

**What about the old "Herr Pastor" custom?**

This is a good example of the Fourth Commandment: Honor your father and your mother. *What Does This Mean?* We should fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and other authorities, but honor them, serve and obey them, love and cherish them.

We should not honor or fear people because of their title, but certainly because of the important work to which they have been called.

**7. In 4.20 the twelve stones are finally erected for the memorial.**

It appears that the men first carried the stones across and later the memorial was established. There was also another memorial erected in the river bed itself. Either Joshua did this on his own, or he was commanded by God, and we do not know about the command. The author of Joshua does a lot of "leap-frogging" as he describes these events. This style of writing can be very engaging.

**8. The children are to ask about the memorial stones in 4.21.**

This is a very important teaching method, but a very difficult one to apply to unmotivated students. However, we should always recognize these opportunities and be prepared to halt everything to answer an important question! The Israelite children were also encouraged to ask a similar question regarding the Passover in Exodus 12.26 and 13.14.

**9. Note the final purpose of the miracle:**

Joshua 4.24 That all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.

Here we are again reminded that there is a greater purpose to the possession of the Promised Land.