

Joshua 4 - Thursday, March 15th, 2012

(1) And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying: (2) "Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe, (3) and command them, saying, 'Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm. You shall carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight.' "

- Right out of the shoot, it's important to note that the Israelites have just been the recipients of the miracle of crossing the raging Jordan River.
- The last time God had performed a miracle of this magnitude was forty years prior when he parted the Red Sea for their parents in the Exodus.
- Now that they have experienced this miracle, the Lord tells Joshua how that they are to memorialize this miracle, with a total of twelve stones.

- This is interesting because, in scripture, the number twelve is symbolic of God's governmental perfection, and God's divine accomplishments.
- Replete throughout the pages of Holy writ, we find numerous examples of how it is that the number twelve is used to symbolize government.
- From the 12 Tribes of Israel to the 12 Disciples of Christ, the number 12 is found 187 times in the Bible with 22 of that 187 being in Revelation.

- In addition to the Biblical symbolism of the number 12, we have 12 months in a year, and twelve signs of the Zodiac, which pictures the Gospel.
- I believe this 12 stone memorial serves as a reminder of how it is that God can perfect us, accomplish for us, when He's allowed to govern us.
- In other words, if I will give God permission to do the miraculous in my life, He will perfect that which He had begun in the governing of my life.

Philippians 1:6 NIV being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

(4) Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; (5) and Joshua said to them: "Cross over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, (6) that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' (7) Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever."

- I love passages like this in God's Word because they speak to the importance for us as parents to communicate the miracles of God in our lives.
- Notice that these memorial stones would create enough of a curiosity in the minds of the children that they would be the ones who would ask.
- Here's what I'm thinking, the lessons learned are infinitely more powerful when our children ask us, as opposed to when we tell them instead.

- There's something else here that I think I would be grossly remiss were I not to point it out before we move on to verse eight. Consider this:
- It's thought that these stones would have been placed on the riverbed of the Jordan so as to become more visible during seasons of drought.
- What's so interesting about this is that the more severe the drought had become, the more visible these twelve memorial stones would become.

- So too is this true for me and you. The more severe those trials of drought and dryness are, the more visible the faithfulness of God will be.
- It's in those seasons of difficulty and hardship, that the greatest and grandest opportunities are presented for God to show Himself faithful.
- Not only to us, but, for us, and not only us, but for our children and even their children as well, which is why I love passages like this in the Bible.

(8) And the children of Israel did so, just as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, as the LORD had spoken to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and laid them down there. (9) Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood; and they are there to this day. (10) So the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished 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 over. (11) Then it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over, that the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed over in the presence of the people.

- I find it most interesting that included in the record is this seemingly obscure detail in verse ten of how "the people hurried and crossed over."
- Why did the Holy Spirit deem it necessary to have us know this? Here's a thought; their hurried crossing over was for the benefit of the priests.
- In other words, the priests, or pastors if you prefer, were not only ones to step out in faith, but they had to remain faithful till they all crossed.

F.B. Meyer - The people, hurrying down the bank to hasten and pass over ... [was] not that they were afraid of being caught in the rush of water; but that they might not overtire the waiting priests, patiently standing, the precious burden on their shoulders. Has not the patience of Jesus been greatly exercised during these long centuries? He longs to take his bride to Himself, to reap the harvest of his tears, and see of the travail of his soul.

- Also, notice that Joshua himself sets up twelve additional stones, which would have meant that there were actually a total of two memorials.
- One has suggested this is a picture of the two ordinances that were set up by our greater than Joshua, Jesus Himself in the New Testament.
- Here's how we get there, first we have the ordinance of water baptism, which is public, and second is communion which is private for believer's.

- One set of the twelve stones were visible for all to see publically, whereas the second set of twelve stones were invisible in the water privately.

(12) And the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses had spoken to them. (13) About forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho.

- These verses are a matter of record in the sense that they tell us how that the two and a half tribes followed through on their promise to Moses.
- By the way, let me hasten to say, that following through and keeping ones word has become a lost art in the church today, in this the last days.
- I would even venture to say, that Christians today seem to think that they can get away with dishonesty even more so than the business world.

- This issue has been such a baffling enigma to me over the years as one who has started and sold business and planted and pastored churches.
- The truth of the matter is that I have had those who do not profess to be Christians deal with me more honestly than those who do profess to be.
- Sadly, were the dishonesty that I was the recipient of personally in ministry done in the corporate world, the perpetrator would've been in prison.

(14) On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they had feared Moses, all the days of his life. (15) Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, (16) "Command the priests who bear the ark of the Testimony to come up from the Jordan." (17) Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, "Come up from the Jordan." (18) And it came to pass, when the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come from the midst of the Jordan, *and* the soles of the priests' feet touched the dry land, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks as before.

- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is that God had done exactly what He had promised Joshua that He would do.
- Namely, that He would exalt Joshua in the sight of all Israel in order that they might have a respect for him as they had for Moses before him.
- While this may sound like Joshua was put on a pedestal, I would submit it was more of an authorizing and deputizing of Joshua as their leader.

- I'll take it a step further and say that it wasn't just a respect for the leader it was to also come packaged with an exalting of the office he held.
- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the growing concerns within the church as a whole today was, this would be right at the top.
- Really, it's across the board as it relates to having respect for authority whether it's a parent, pastor, police officer, and even an employer.

Hebrews 13:17 NIV Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

(19) Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth *day* of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. (20) And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal. (21) Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What *are* these stones?' (22) then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land'; (23) for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, (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."

- If I were to organize this fourth chapter of Joshua into a three point sermon, and I am fully capable of doing that by the way, it would go like this:
- 1-Commemoration of God's Faithfulness in the Past 2-Exaltation with God's Leaders in the Present 3-Preparation for God's Battles in the Future
- The common denominator with all three of these is that they are really going to need all three of them once they get to the "Battle of Jericho."