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## JOSHUA 3-4

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### SIMPLE STORY TOLD IN A STRANGE WAY!

JOSHUA GATHERS THE PEOPLE AND GIVES INSTRUCTIONS. THE PRIESTS AND THE ARK ENTER THE JORDAN. THE WATERS STOP. THE PEOPLE CROSS ON DRY LAND. MEMORIALS ARE BUILT.

Instead of a simple, linear crossing from point to point, the narrative goes around and around the river, before settling at a place appropriately named Gilgal (“Circle”).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Then Joshua rose early in the morning and they set out from Shittim. And they came to the Jordan, he and all the people of Israel, and lodged there before they passed over. <sup>2</sup> At the end of three days the officers went through the camp <sup>3</sup> and commanded the people, “As soon as you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God being carried by the Levitical priests, then you shall set out from your place and follow it. <sup>4</sup> Yet there shall be a distance between you and it, about 2,000 cubits in length. Do not come near it, in order that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before.”

<sup>5</sup> Then Joshua said to the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.” <sup>6</sup> And Joshua said to the priests, “Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on before the people.” So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people.

<sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> And as for you, command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, ‘When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.’ ”

<sup>9</sup> And Joshua said to the people of Israel, “Come here and listen to the words of the LORD your God.” <sup>10</sup> And Joshua said, “Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. <sup>11</sup> Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan. <sup>12</sup> Now therefore take twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man. <sup>13</sup> And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap.”

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<sup>1</sup> Hawk, L. D. (2000). [Joshua](#) (D. W. Cotter, J. T. Walsh, & C. Franke, Eds.; p. 58). The Liturgical Press.

<sup>14</sup> 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, <sup>15</sup> 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), <sup>16</sup> 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. <sup>17</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, <sup>2</sup> “Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man, <sup>3</sup> and command them, saying, ‘Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests’ feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.’ ” <sup>4</sup> Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe.

<sup>5</sup> And Joshua said to them, “Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, <sup>6</sup> that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ <sup>7</sup> then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.”

<sup>8</sup> And the people of Israel did just as Joshua commanded and took up twelve stones out of the midst of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, just as the LORD told Joshua. And they carried them over with them to the place where they lodged and laid them down there.

<sup>9</sup> And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant had stood; and they are there to this day. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> And when all the people had finished passing over, the ark of the LORD and the priests passed over before the people.

<sup>12</sup> The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh passed over armed before the people of Israel, as Moses had told them. <sup>13</sup> About 40,000 ready for war passed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho.

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> And the LORD said to Joshua, <sup>16</sup> “Command the priests bearing the ark of the testimony to come up out of the Jordan.” <sup>17</sup> So Joshua commanded the priests, “Come up out of the Jordan.” <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. <sup>21</sup> And he said to the people of Israel, “When your children ask their fathers in times to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ <sup>22</sup> then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.’ <sup>23</sup> 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, <sup>24</sup> 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.”

Joshua 3:1-4:24 (ESV)

## GOD’S PROPHET IS UPLIFTED

<sup>7</sup> 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 3:7 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.

Joshua 1:5 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> 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.

Joshua 4:14 (ESV)

## GOD’S PEOPLE ARE UNITED

REPETITION OF THE PHRASES “ALL ISRAEL” (3:1, 7, 17; 4:14) AND “ENTIRE NATION” (3:16; 4:1, 11)  
THE PEOPLES OBEDIENCE (3:6; 4:8, 18)

<sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; <sup>6</sup> and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.”

Exodus 19:5-6 (ESV)

**GOD’S PURPOSES ARE UNFOLDED (ECHO OF EXODUS = CREATION)**

IDENTITY OF THE PEOPLE = KINGDOM OF PRIESTS = ARK = PRESENCE OF YHWH

<sup>5</sup> Then Joshua said to the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.”

Joshua 3:5 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup> the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments <sup>11</sup> and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

Exodus 19:10–11 (ESV)

<sup>33</sup> So they set out from the mount of the LORD three days’ journey. And the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them three days’ journey, to seek out a resting place for them. <sup>34</sup> And the cloud of the LORD was over them by day, whenever they set out from the camp.

Numbers 10:33–34 (ESV)

FIRST MONTH = PASSOVER (EXODUS 12:2)

DRY GROUND = RED SEA (EXODUS 14:22)

PASSAGE THROUGH WATER (GENESIS 1:6) = NEW CREATION = NEW BIRTH

<sup>7</sup> then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.”

Joshua 4:7 (ESV)

MEMORIAL = BIBLICAL REMEMBRANCE = LIVE IN THE PRESENT IN THE LIGHT OF GOD’S PAST ACTIONS.

**GOD’S POWER IS UNRIVALED**

<sup>21</sup> And he said to the people of Israel, “When your children ask their fathers in times to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ <sup>22</sup> then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.’ <sup>23</sup> 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, <sup>24</sup> 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.”

Joshua 4:21–24 (ESV)

## APPLICATION:

**WE MUST LISTEN TO GOD'S PROPHET.  
WE MUST STAND WITH GOD'S PEOPLE.  
WE MUST JOIN GOD IN HIS PURPOSE.  
WE MUST TRUST IN GOD'S POWER.**

<sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup> Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

1 Peter 2:9-10 (ESV)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do you prepare yourself to follow God's will and direction in your life? What are some ways you can consecrate yourself to God daily?
2. How do you recognize God's presence and power in your life? What are some signs or reminders that God is with you and for you?
3. How do you remember and celebrate God's mighty deeds in your life? What are some ways you can share your testimony with others and pass it on to the next generation?
4. How do you respond to God's faithfulness and fulfillment of his promises in your life? What are some ways you can express your gratitude and obedience to God?