

Remember God's Actions

Lesson Scripture: Joshua 4

Focus Scripture: Joshua 4:14-24

Key Verses: *(Joshua said) "When your children ask their parents in time to come, 'What do these stones mean?' then you shall let your children know, 'Israel crossed over the Jordan here on dry ground.'" Joshua 4:21b-22*

JOSHUA 4:14-24 (NRSV UE)

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

15 The Lord said to Joshua,

16 "Command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant to come up out of the Jordan."

17 Joshua therefore commanded the priests, "Come up out of the Jordan."

18 When the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord came up from the middle of the Jordan and the soles of the priests' feet touched dry ground, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks, as before.

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

20 Those twelve stones that they had taken out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal,

21 saying to the Israelites, "When your children ask their parents in time to come, 'What do these stones mean?'

22 then you shall let your children know, 'Israel crossed over the Jordan here on dry ground.'

23 For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you crossed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we crossed over,

24 so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty and so that you may fear the Lord your God forever."

JOSHUA 4:14-24 (KJV)

14 On that day the Lord magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life.

15 And the Lord spake unto Joshua, saying,

16 Command the priests that bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of Jordan.

17 Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan.

18 And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before.

19 And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.

20 And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.

21 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?

22 Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.

23 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:

24 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.

KEY TERMS

- **Ark of the Covenant** – The Ark of the Covenant, Ark of God, or “chest of the covenant,” was a sacred, gold-plated wooden chest holding the tablets of the Ten Commandments given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. It also symbolized God’s presence and represented the moral laws that bound God’s relationship with Israel.
- **Gilgal** – Served as the Israelites’ first campsite in the Promised Land and acted as their primary military and spiritual headquarters during the conquest of Canaan.

INTRODUCTION

In the Bible, the Levitical priests were the male descendants of Aaron from the tribe of Levi. They were specifically set apart by divine command to serve as mediators between God and the people of Israel. Their primary importance lay in maintaining the nation’s holiness through the sacrificial system and teaching the Mosaic law. In the book of

Joshua, we see the priests also serve to carry the Ark of the Covenant. In this passage, they become the bearers of the law, the sign of Israel’s obedience to God, and the physical bearers of the key covenant responsibility of the Israelites. This moment establishes the priests as intercessors for the people as they transition into their new status of a sovereign nation. With Joshua as the new leader, the Israelites now see the

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continued presence and power of God manifest in miraculous events that defy the laws of nature. Joshua serves as the prophet leader who carries the mantle passed on by Moses but most importantly instituted by God. This event is memorialized as the turning point for the people. They are now entering into a new stage

of freedom that is noted by nations across the region.

TELLING THE BIBLE STORY

This migratory moment of the Israelites served as validation of Joshua’s leadership (Josh. 4:14). The miracles performed through the Ark’s priestly

procession through the Jordan River served to promote Joshua in the eyes of the people, confirming that God was with him as he had been with Moses. The Ark of the Covenant is primarily known as the physical manifestation of God's presence among the Israelites. It serves as the focal point for miraculous events that facilitated the conquest of the Promised Land. It replaced the pillars of cloud and fire that led the nation into the wilderness, becoming the primary guide for their movement and a symbol of divine leadership. When the priests carrying the Ark stepped into the Jordan during its flood stage, the waters upstream stopped flowing, piling up in a heap near the city of Adam. The priests stood in the middle of

the riverbed with the Ark, allowing the entire nation to cross on dry ground (Josh. 3:14-17). This phenomenal event mirrors the conquest over the Pharaoh of Egypt as the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. As the priests carrying the ark caused the Jordan River to part, the people passed through safely. Upon Joshua's command,

the priests came out of the river and as their feet touched dry ground, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place (Josh. 4:18). Stones were placed as a memorial for the children of future generations to see (Josh. 4:22). These markers would represent the divine sovereign will and power of God as well as God's care over the people. God's orchestration of this event was executed through Joshua's obedient leadership and further

displayed through God's authority over nature. With God, nothing could stand in their way. In addition, the presence of the Ark represented God's covenant faithfulness. Since the ark housed the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments it also functioned as a reminder of the required obedience to

the law, and their legal and spiritual bond with God.

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SANKOFA

Inanimate objects and relics often serve as reminders of important events and future commitments. This practice appears throughout the Bible and

continues today. One common example in the Old Testament is the use of stones. In Joshua, stones marked significant events, symbolized promises or vows (Josh. 24:7), and commemorated God's miraculous acts (Josh. 4:7). Families use similar memorials through photo albums, quilts, t-shirts, tokens, portraits, and heirlooms. Today, technology also allows memories to be preserved digitally, with photos restored or animated to tell a family's story across generations. In earlier times, parents might mark a wall to record a child's growth and milestones. Family trees and household keepsakes also help preserve the memory of people and events. These traditions create moments of remembrance that honor loved ones, recognize their faith, and affirm a commitment to carry their hopes into the future. A familiar example is the headstone, which marks the life of a loved one who has died. Even as church attendance declines and traditions are challenged, many still deeply value honoring their ancestors

through gravesites and family burial grounds. Churches around the world also remain places where history is made and remembered. These stones tell stories, preserve history, and renew vision. May we remember the stones laid in our own lives, churches, and Zion.

CASE STUDY

Placing the names of trustees on the cornerstones of African Methodist

Even as church attendance declines and traditions are challenged, many still deeply value honoring their ancestors through gravesites and family burial grounds.

Episcopal (AME) churches is a long-standing tradition. It is rooted in the necessity of compliance to doctrine and discipline, establishment of legal authority, and recognition of community leadership. It also serves as a reminder of the historical struggle of African Americans to secure property rights.

Trustees in the AME tradition are the legal custodians of church property, holding deeds and titles "in trust" for the denomination.

Legal ownership and proper stewardship in the 19th and early 20th centuries was crucial to clearly identify who held the legal title and rights to church

property. This was particularly important for black congregations operating in a racially charged and discriminatory environment that was known for dismantling and literally destroying the progress of Negroes. The physical cornerstone of church property served as a public, permanent record that the church trustees, who were usually free black men, held the deed and proof of ownership for the church. The laying and dedication of the cornerstone was an act to recognize the congregation and the community leaders. It is laid during a formal dedication ceremony, which memorializes the individuals responsible for the “temporal affairs” of the church, including building construction, securing funds, and land purchase. Listing their names honored their service and established the structure as a permanent place of worship, education, and community service. The cornerstone may also contain documents from the date of the building’s construction, with some similarities to a time capsule. The

cornerstone and other markers may also list the names of the pastor(s), builders, and architects, ensuring that the history is protected and shared for future generations.

LIFE APPLICATION

Joshua’s rise to leadership and his actions that followed presents an image of balancing vision, action, and deep spiritual dependence on God. His example offers a model for leadership in any context, whether in the ministry or secular environments. There are times when we face barriers and daunting obstacles that suggest the vision is unattainable. Yet, the Bible presents the faith found in Joshua, who is called by God to carry out the work begun by his predecessor and mentor, Moses. There comes a time when

you may be called upon to carry on the legacy started by a tremendous and well-known trailblazer. The mission may seem overwhelming. But those who believe in the Lord must trust in God’s

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plan and walk by faith in Jesus Christ. This does not negate careful preparation but instead suggests that God is always preparing the next leader in line. You must have courage when given these special assignments. Just as the warriors were prepared for battle, you must also be. Joshua led the people to the promise of a sovereign nation. His life illustrated completely that nothing is impossible with God.

Questions

1. Reflect on the great achievements of family members, ministry leaders, political figures, or historical figures who had to follow a great leader. What positive aspects stand out in their leadership role?
2. What has God called you to do in the past, and is sending you out to do in the future that requires faith and obedience?
3. What spiritual battles do you expect

to face in the future and how are you equipping yourself for them?

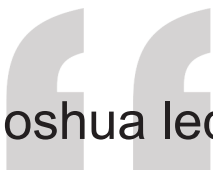
CLOSING DEVOTIONS

Closing Hymn: AMEC Hymnal #513, "Time Is Filled with Swift Transition"

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord, we your people are often faced with overwhelming odds against us. Whether we face them in our homes, our jobs, our communities,

and our countries, we need you to guide us through. These are times when we must rely on your presence and your power to take us through troubled waters and unknown destinations. But just as you have led those before us, we trust you, God, to lead us through to the promises you gave our ancestors and

the destiny you promised to all of us. May our hearts align with your Word, your commandments, and be enhanced and revealed in truth through the Gospel of Jesus the Christ. All this we pray in Jesus' matchless and precious name. Amen.



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HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS**September 14-20**

Monday	Deuteronomy 7:1-11 (Live as God's Treasured Possession)
Tuesday	Deuteronomy 7:12-26 (God Will Love, Bless, and Multiply)
Wednesday	Philippians 4:10-19 (Strengthened in Every Circumstance)
Thursday	2 Corinthians 10:1-5, 15-18 (Armed for Spiritual Warfare)
Friday	John 16:23-33 (Christ Has Conquered the World)
Saturday	Joshua 10:40–11:5 (God Fights for God's People)
Sunday	Joshua 11:6-9, 16-23 (God Brings Victory)