

Courageous

Claiming Canaan, Lessons from the Book of Joshua

Lesson 6: Charged (4:1-24)

"There are memorials, both public and private"ⁱ. Some erected in plain view, *"that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty"* (Joshua 4:24, NKJV). Others hidden beneath the torrents, witnesses to their builders *"that God honors faith and works on behalf of those who trust Him"*ⁱⁱ.

From the midst of the Jordan, twelve men took twelve stones upon their shoulders, but upon reaching the other side, they were to *"lay them down"* (1:8). These stones were to remind Israel that their *"reproach had been rolled away"* (5:9); they were not to be carried about as reminders of their carnality, spiritual defeats and failures. *"Old things [had] passed away; all things [had] become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The remembrance of all that God had accomplished on their behalf would keep them in Canaan when the battle became fierce. And *"if any Israelite had gone back over the Jordan into the wilderness, the stones in the bed of [the] river would have cried out against him"*ⁱⁱⁱ. *"Without Me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5), *"but with [Me] all things are possible"* (Matthew 19:26).

Read Joshua 4:1-7.

1. With what task were the twelve Israelite tribe leaders charged?
2. For what reasons were they to do this?
3. *"What do these stones mean to you"* (4:6)? Share an event that forever changed the trajectory of your relationship with God.

4. How long were the people to remember this event? As you progress with Christ, why mustn't you forget what God has accomplished in the past?

5. Many commentators relate the crossing of the River Jordan to a second "baptism". What is meant by this? Read Romans 6:1-23.

6. In the same way the Israelites were to leave the wilderness behind, we are to let go of the carnal life as we embrace life with Christ. Name one thing that you sense God wants you to leave on the other side of the Jordan.

Continue reading: Joshua 4. verses 8-14.

7. What were the twelve men to do with the stones once they arrived at their lodging place? (v.8) Figuratively, what might this mean?

8. What must the leaders of the tribes of Ruben, Gad and Manasseh have thought as they shouldered the stones and laid them down on the other side?

(According to Numbers 26:7, 18, 34, the adult male population of the tribes of Ruben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh was 136,930. Here, only 40,000 (less than twenty-nine percent; less than one in three) honored their commitment to Moses and Joshua to cross over before Israel armed for war.)

9. What occurred afterward? (Joshua 4:9) Who set it in its place? Why was it important to erect a monument in the midst of the Jordan?

10. Some commentators state that "except when the Jordan was in flood, [the river memorial] would be visible at all times throughout the year"^{iv}. Others believe that this memorial remained hidden. Explain the significance of both public and private monuments.

11. Now read Matthew 3:1-9 and Luke 1:16-17. List John's purposes at Bethabara, the "place of crossing" (John 1:28).

12. To what stones might John be referring in Matthew 3:9? (Joshua 4:8-9, 20-21)

13. What impact could these stones have on those who were willing to receive John's message? (Matthew 3:9)

14. Do you believe your witness of what God has accomplished can have the same effect?

15. Return to Joshua 4. How long did the priests remain in the midst of the Jordan? (v.10-11; 2:17) How does this speak of our Priest, Jesus Christ, upon the cross? (John 19:30)

Read Joshua 4:15-24.

16. Torrents of water returned as the soles of the priest's feet touched dry land, covering their path. If for any reason they sought to return to the wilderness, what stood in their path? Why might they attempt to return?

17. The name Gilgal means "circle or rolling". It is also translated "the reproach has been rolled away" (Joshua 5:9). What reproach had been left behind? Why is this key to victorious living?

18. Whose reproach was rolled away when the Christ's tomb was found empty? (Consider Mark 16:1-4.)

19. Note the date of their crossing, then read Exodus 12:1-5. What occurred exactly forty years earlier?

20. Why is the timing significant?

21. Return to Joshua. "*When, [not if], your children ask their fathers*" (4:21). Whose responsibility was it to convey what God had done? For what reasons do many neglect to do this today?

22. According to Deuteronomy 6:1-9, how was this to be carried out?

23. Read Judges 2:7-10. While it is every man's choice whether he walks with God, what reason is given for the successive generations' unfaithfulness?

24. Return to Joshua 4. To who were these stones to bear witness? (v.24)

25. What were future generations to learn about God by looking upon these stones?

ⁱ Pastor Joe Focht, Sermon, Joshua 3-4.

ⁱⁱ Wiersbe, Warren. (2003). The Bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament History. (Joshua 4:1-24, p.32). Colorado Spring, Colorado: Cook Communications.

ⁱⁱⁱ Redpath, Alan. (2013). Victorious Christian Living: Studies in the Book of Joshua. (p. 68). The Redpath Family.

^{iv} Redpath, A. (p.63).