

# Enter at Your Own Rest

## Studies in the Book of Joshua

*"Full blessing in the Christian life is not bestowed except to eager, hungry people who press in to receive it"*

*Alan Redpath*

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### Text

Joshua 4:1-24

### Topic

Joshua retells the story of the crossing of the Jordan River  
With an emphasis on the stones that were taken from the riverbed

### Title

*"Everybody Must Get Stones"*

**Joshua 4:1** And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying:

**Joshua 4:2** "Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe,

**Joshua 4:3** 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.' "

**Joshua 4:4** Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe;

**Joshua 4:5** 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,

**Joshua 4:6** that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones *mean* to you?'

**Joshua 4:7** 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."

**Joshua 4:8** 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.

**Joshua 4:9** 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.

**Joshua 4:10** 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.

**Joshua 4:11** 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.

**Joshua 4:12** 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.

**Joshua 4:13** About forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho.

**Joshua 4:14** 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.

**Joshua 4:15** Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying,

**Joshua 4:16** "Command the priests who bear the ark of the Testimony to come up from the Jordan."

**Joshua 4:17** Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, "Come up from the Jordan."

**Joshua 4:18** 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.

**Joshua 4:19** 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.

**Joshua 4:20** And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal.

**Joshua 4:21** Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What *are* these stones?'

**Joshua 4:22** then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land';

**Joshua 4:23** 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,

**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."

## Introduction

Question: How many monuments were set up the day the Israelites crossed over the Jordan River in to Canaan?

The answer is *two*. Compare verse nine with verse twenty:

**Joshua 4:9** 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.

**Joshua 4:20** And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up **in Gilgal**.

One set of twelve stones was buried by water in the riverbed. Another set of twelve stones was raised up on the riverbank. Afterwards the Israelites found themselves walking in their new life in Canaan.

Buried... raised... walking in new life. It sounds a great deal like something you read in the New Testament Book of Romans:

**Romans 6:4** Therefore we were **buried** with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was **raised** from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should **walk in newness of life**.

The crossing of the Jordan River is a true historical event that is also a type that illustrates a foundational truth of Christianity.

Before they could walk in their new life in Canaan the Israelites had to understand their burial and resurrection.

Before you can walk in newness of life in Christ you have to understand you've been buried and raised.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 You Can't Live The Christian Life Until You Realize You Were Buried With Jesus, and #2 You Can't Live The Christian Life Unless You Remember You Were Raised With Jesus.

#1 You Can't Live The Christian Life  
Until You Realize You Were Buried With Jesus  
(v9-18)

Both monuments consisted of twelve stones – one stone representing each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Whatever tribe you belonged to you could see one stone in each monument that represented you.

The Israelite looked back on a stone representing him or her that was buried. The Christian looks back upon a Savior representing him or her that was crucified, dead, and buried.

Let's start with the twelve stones in the riverbed. If you were there you would watch as the water came rushing down upon the stone representing you until it was buried. It was as if you were being buried under that water.

It might be hard to grasp but the Bible teaches that, if you are a Christian, what happened to Jesus *physically* happened to you *spiritually*. I already quoted Romans 6:4 which said we were **buried** with Jesus. In verses six and eight of that same chapter you're told you were **crucified** with Jesus and that you **died** with Him on the Cross.

The Israelite looked back on a stone representing him or her that was buried. The Christian looks back upon a Savior representing him or her that was crucified, dead, and buried.

With that in mind let's observe the buried monument for insight about what it means to be crucified, dead, and buried with Jesus.

**Joshua 4:9** 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.

Are they still there? No. It doesn't matter because that is not what was intended. Once the water returned the stones could not be seen anymore – except by faith. The Israelites who had seen them knew

they were once there and they passed on their testimony to subsequent generations.

It's great to see. It's better to 'see' by faith. Jesus once said to a doubting Thomas, **because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed"** (John 20:29).

**Joshua 4:10** 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.

**Joshua 4:11** 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.

Notice how they ministered one to another. The priests were faithful to stand **in the midst of the Jordan** so that the people could **completely cross over**. For their part the people **hurried and crossed over** so as not to cause any extra burden for the priests.

**Joshua 4:12** 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.

**Joshua 4:13** About forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho.

These were men from the tribes who had already settled the wilderness side of the Jordan River. Though they kept their word to **cross over** and help their brothers **battle**, we'll see in subsequent chapters that they held back most of their army to protect their own material interests.

**Joshua 4:14** 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.

**Joshua 4:15** Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying,

**Joshua 4:16** "Command the priests who bear the ark of the Testimony to come up from the Jordan."

**Joshua 4:17** Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, "Come up from the Jordan."

**Joshua 4:18** 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.

The waters returned and the monument was buried. Even without the Book of Romans to explain the spiritual ramifications I think the Israelites would have gotten the symbolism. Their old life of wandering in the wilderness was over for good. They were dead and buried to that old life and had begun a new life of walking with God in the Promised Land.

But not every Israelite would apply that symbolism equally. The two-and-one half tribesmen and those they represented knew they would cross back over to the wilderness side of the Jordan River. Once the initial fighting was ended they would return to their old way of life.

A believer is crucified, dead, and buried with Jesus. But you might not always apply it to your life. Instead of being 'dead' to your old life **you can cross back over to the wilderness**. You don't lose or forfeit your salvation; that is not what this symbolizes. It symbolizes situations you find yourself in where you must decide if you are going to react as if you were dead.

Maybe you are tempted to sin. Well, sin has no power over a dead person! You can therefore always say *"No!"* to sin and continue to walk in newness of life rather than crossing back over to the wilderness.

Maybe you are tempted to selfishness. Well, if you realize you are dead to self you will instead respond with forgiveness, forbearance, longsuffering, and the like rather than demanding your 'rights' and defending yourself.

Many times daily a Christian must choose which side of the Jordan River he or she is living on. Then, too, there are various areas in my life where I may be living simultaneously on both sides. I may have victory in one area but be living carnally in another.

The soldiers from the two and one half tribes were an elite fighting force. Sure they came to help in the fight; but I dare say they enjoyed it! Anyone in a dangerous occupation would rather not have to engage. But you know you will and you are excited because it's what you trained for.

A lot of believers approach the Christian life that way. If it's something exciting or temporary, great; sign me up! But where I really live is in the wilderness of the world.

We can either stay dead or play dead.  
Let's quit playing and do more staying!

We can either stay dead or play dead. Let's quit playing and do more staying!

## #2 You Can't Live The Christian Life Unless You Remember You Are Raised With Jesus (v1-8 & 19-24)

The second monument was raised up on the riverbank. Those twelve stones were a constant reminder of the power of God available at all times to empower their walk in the new land.

Very simply put, **we are empowered as Christians at all times to walk in our new life.** Once again I reference Romans 6:4, -

**Romans 6:4** Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Because Jesus rose from the dead you are enabled and empowered to walk in the power of His resurrection.

The Israelites in Canaan are a type of you and I 'in Christ.' Our text rehearses their crossing and gives additional details about the monument.

**Joshua 4:1** And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying:

**Joshua 4:2** "Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe,

**Joshua 4:3** 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.' "

**Joshua 4:4** Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe;

**Joshua 4:5** 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,

**Joshua 4:6** that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones *mean* to you?'

**Joshua 4:7** 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."

**Joshua 4:8** 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.

Those **stones** had been buried in the middle of a mile wide riverbed under one-hundred fifty feet of rushing water. Now they were on the riverbank. God's power was indisputable.

When the apostle Paul gets around to applying the principles of Romans six he says,

**Romans 8:11** But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

You are power-full, not power-less, to walk in newness of life. You **can** live as if you were dead to sin and self and alive to God.

**Joshua 4:19** 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.

The tenth **day of the first month** was forty years to the day since the Lord delivered them from slavery in Egypt by having them choose



their Passover lambs. It is a reminder to us that all we are talking about is only possible because Jesus was crucified, died, was buried but rose from the dead.

**Joshua 4:20** And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal.

**Gilgal** will become their headquarters during the initial phase of conquest. It was a place of retreat, of supply, of strategy, of communication. Your devotional life with Jesus – wherever and whenever you have it – is your **Gilgal**. Go there often.

Whenever and wherever your **Gilgal** is, when you spend time with Jesus you understand that you are spiritually where He is – and He is in Heaven! Your real headquarters is in Heaven where every spiritual resource to war and walk on the earth is provided for you.

**Joshua 4:21** Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What *are* these stones?'

**Joshua 4:22** then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land';

**Joshua 4:23** 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,

**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."

The only way your children, and people you encounter, will know the power of God is if you give testimony to the resurrection of Jesus. You do it through words, of course, but most profoundly through your walk.

You and I decide where we 'live' spiritually. We can live on either side of the Cross of Jesus Christ. Let's live on the victory side rather than the wilderness side.