CAPITOL COMMISSION
Gospel Hope & Spiritual Strength for Government Leaders

MOPray

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Weekly Bible Study Schedule | Tuesday, February 25, 7:00-7:45 AM | HHR #3
Capitol Commission is NON-PARTISAN and MULTI-DENOMINATIONAL

INTRODUCTION

Joshua 4 is a powerful chapter that teaches us the importance of remembering God's faithfulness. After Israel crossed the Jordan River on dry ground God commanded them to take twelve stones from the river to set up as a memorial. These stones were a testimony to future generations of what God had done.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Joshua's leadership marks the fulfillment of God's promise to take possession of the Promised Land. In 2060 BC God called Abraham to leave his home country of Ur (Southern Iraq) to the Promised Land, Canaan. God established the covenantal promise of blessing on Israel with physical land and descendants as numerous as stars in the sky (Genesis 12 & 15). Moses led Israel out of slavery from Egypt crossing the Red Sea in approximately 1462 BC onto Mt. Sinai where Moses received the 10 Commandments and Israel entered into covenant with God. After 40 years wandering in the wilderness Moses died. And now, the mantle of leadership is on Joshua. His mission was to lead Israel across the Jordan River into the Promised Land (approximately 1422 BC) to reaffirm their covenant with God, and begin their conquest of Canaan eventually settled throughout the land.

PRESENCE

4:11-12 – The priests who were carrying the Ark stood in the middle of the river until all of the Lord's commands that Moses had given to Joshua were carried out. Meanwhile, the people hurried across the riverbed. And when everyone was safely on the other side, the priests crossed over with the Ark of the Lord as the people watched.

The Ark of the Covenant plays a central role throughout Joshua. It is a profound symbol of **God's presence covenant, guidance, and redemption**. It represented both **God's mercy and judgment**, and it prefigures Jesus Christ as the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan for Salvation. It is one of the most significant symbols of God's relationship with His people.

The Ark was seen as the **dwelling place of God's presence** on earth.

> God tells Moses: *"There I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the Mercy Seat."* **Exodus 25:22**

- **God's Presence** – The Ark represented His divine presence among His people (Exodus 25:22).
- **Covenant with Israel** – It symbolized God's **holy covenant** with Israel, holding the **law (Ten Commandments)** given to Moses.
- **Atonement and Mercy** – The **Mercy Seat** was where the High Priest sprinkled the blood of sacrifices on the **Day of Atonement** (Yom Kippur) **(Leviticus 16)** symbolizing God's forgiveness. The foreshadowing of **Jesus Christ's ultimate sacrifice** for humanity's sins (Hebrews 9:11-15). It symbolized that **God is holy**, and His presence is not to be taken lightly.
- **Guidance and Power** – The Ark was carried by priests when crossing the **Jordan River**, and the waters **parted**. It represented **God's leadership** over Israel, guiding them in battles and their journey.

PRIESTS

In the Book of **Joshua**, the **priests** played a vital role in leading the Israelites into the Promised Land, acting as mediators of God's presence, instruments of His power, and symbols of spiritual leadership. Their actions symbolized God's direct involvement in Israel's journey.

The **priesthood in the Old Testament** was established by God to **mediate between Him and His people, Israel**. The priests served as spiritual leaders, offering sacrifices, teaching the Law, and maintaining the covenant relationship between God and Israel. Their role was crucial in ensuring that Israel remained a **holy nation** set apart for God. Priests had the duty of **pronouncing blessings** over Israel (Numbers 6:22-27).

> *"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace."* (Numbers 6:24-26)

The **Old Testament priesthood** was a **shadow** of the **perfect High Priest—Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 7:23-28). In the **New Covenant**, every believer is called to be part of a **royal priesthood** (1 Peter 2:9), meaning we now have **direct access to God** through Christ!

POWER

4:19-24 - The people crossed the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month. Then they camped at Gilgal, just east of Jericho. It was there at Gilgal that Joshua piled up the twelve stones taken from the Jordan River. Then Joshua said to the Israelites, "In the future your children will ask, 'What do these stones mean?' Then you can tell them, 'This is where the Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' For the Lord your God dried up the river right before your eyes, and he kept it dry until you were all across, just as he did at the Red Sea when he dried it up until we had all crossed over. He did this so all the nations of the earth might know that the Lord's hand is powerful, and so you might fear the Lord your God forever."

"What do these Stones Mean?

- The twelve stones are a memorial or testimony of God's mighty power. It was a miracle not an act of humankind, not an accident, the earth was not titling to one side a bit too far, not a drought. These stones were a permanent reminder of God's miraculous power and faithfulness.

Tell the story to all generations. The word testimony in Hebrew is 'Aydooth' which means 'do it again with the same power and authority'.

Just as God was faithful to Israel, He remains faithful to us today. We have a story to tell our children, grandchildren, generations ahead of us. Tell them about God, miracles, answered prayers, healings, deliverance, friendships, spouse, food, water, shelter and more. Today, let's set up "spiritual memorials" in our own lives by remembering, and sharing.

> *"But watch out! Be careful never to forget what you yourself have seen. Do not let these memories escape from your mind as long as you live! And be sure to pass them on to your children and grandchildren.* Deut. 4:9

- Demonstrate His power to other nations. Only the God of Israel has ever parted the Red Sea. Only the God of Israel has ever parted the Jordan River. It was the LORD who fought Israel's battles. His abiding presence was always with them. There is no one mightier than Him. He is the Lord God – Supreme of the heavens and earth.

The twelve stones of Joshua 4 were more than just rocks; they were a testimony of God's faithfulness, a tool for teaching future generations, and a reminder of the power of God and what happens when God's people walk in obedience to His ways.

PURPOSE
The twelve stones serve as a powerful covenantal sign, reminding God's people of His promises, their identity, and their call to faithfulness. Whether, as memorials, in priestly garments, the Ark of the Covenant, they continually point to God's unchanging faithfulness and His redemptive plan.

God commanded Joshua to take **twelve men, one from each tribe**, to **gather twelve stones** from the Jordan and set them up as a **memorial** in Gilgal (base camp-center of operations) which holds significant historical and spiritual meaning for Israel.

The crossing of the Jordan symbolized a **transition from wilderness wandering to covenant fulfillment**. It was in Gilgal (Promised Land) that God stopped providing manna from heaven every morning.

> *And if the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey.* Numbers 14:8

First place they celebrated the Passover after crossing the Jordan River (Joshua 5:10). First place God instituted the practice of circumcision. It was a sign of relationship; Israel is God's and they are His. It was a point of identity.

God raised a post wilderness generation for faith and obedience to Him. Each serve to reaffirm the covenant and remind the community of the faithfulness of God.

APPLICATION: Take time to reflect on what God has done in your life. Who needs to hear about God's power?

Twelve Stones