

Joshua 4:1-24 | Sunday August 16, 2026

Joshua 3:14-17 ESV

- (14) 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,
- (15) 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),
- (16) 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.
- (17) 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.

It is hard to imagine the tension and anticipation the Israelites felt as the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant approached the Jordan River. The Jordan River was normally **90-100 feet wide**. During its flood stage, the Jordan River was significantly wider, ranging **anywhere from 200 yards up to even 1 mile wide**. The Jordan floodplain would have been packed with tangled brush and jungle growth. Melting snow from the Anti-Lebanon mountains causes the river to surge and flow into areas it is not normally present in the rest of the year. On a practical level, this was the worst time ever to consider crossing the Jordan, and yet it was the best time for God to show His amazing power.

Israel must have held their breath for the critical moment when the priest entered into the water. Some probably wondered if the priest would be swept away. Others might have wondered if they would be asked to enter the water as well. Then God was faithful to His promise and amazingly stopped this raging river, and it stood heaped, a dammed-up wall of water

In **1267** and in **1927**, landslides caused by earthquakes in that region caused the Jordan River to stop flowing for 10 hours and 21 hours. God could have used an earthquake and landslide, yet there is no mention of an earthquake in Joshua. Also notice the amazing detail that once the water stopped, **Israel passed on dry ground**. A landslide might stop water, but it does not dry out a riverbed so that millions of people can walk over it. The Jordan River crossing is a tremendous miracle. **The water stopped very far away, in the city of Adam**, some **16-18 miles** away. This is no accident. God is showing that the First Adam, our flesh, needs to be held back and will be no help in the Promised Land, the spirit-filled life.

Galatians 3:1-3 ESV

- (1) O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.
- (2) Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit **by works of the law or by hearing with faith?**
- (3) Are you so foolish? **Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?**

Paul's argument to the Galatians is straightforward. How we begin our relationship with Jesus is how we are to continue to walk in our relationship with Him. We received the Holy Spirit by hearing

the gospel and responding in faith. **So we are to continue to walk in faith.** We did not receive the Holy Spirit by relying on our flesh to accomplish works, so why would we think that is how we are to walk now? The Spirit-filled life is not experienced by trying to perfect ourselves in our own flesh. We are not strong enough. **Our flesh, our sin nature that goes all the way back to Adam, does not help us live for God.** We will never grow and experience closeness with Jesus by trying to **perfect, complete, or finish** our walk in our own strength. The Spirit-filled life is found when we walk in faith, trusting in Him as we rely on the Spirit. We are called to be obedient in the Spirit-filled life, but the power to do so comes from the new life in Him and not from ourselves.

Romans 6:8-14 ESV

- (8) Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that **we will also live with Him.**
- (9) We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him.
- (10) For the death He died He died to sin, once for all, **but the life He lives He lives to God.**
- (11) So you also must **consider** yourselves dead to sin **and alive to God in Christ Jesus.**
- (12) **Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body,** to make you obey its passions.
- (13) Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been **brought from death to life,** and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.
- (14) **For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.**

As believers, we have been identified with Jesus' death and also His resurrection, His new life. The Spirit-filled life is when we walk in this new life. We are called to **consider; this word means to determine something by mathematical process, to calculate, to give careful thought to, and to let our minds dwell on.** We are to dwell on the fact that we are alive through Jesus. This means we are not to let sin reign, **literally become king over us.** As a believer, this is possible, and we are called not to let it happen because sin has **no dominion, control, or authority** over us. We are to stop treating sin like it is our king because it has no power over our new life.

An obedient walk with Jesus flows from understanding this grace. We are to present ourselves to God as those who were once dead but now are amazed that we are alive. **Too many of us as believers forget that we are alive.** We forget all the blood of Jesus has accomplished for us. This is why we are to dwell on what Jesus has done for us. We are to remember.

Joshua 4:1-8 ESV

- (1) When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua,
- (2) "Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man,
- (3) 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.'"
- (4) Then Joshua called the **twelve men from the people of Israel,** whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe.
- (5) 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,**

(6) that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, **‘What do those stones mean to you?’**

(7) 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.”**

(8) 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.**

God had Joshua appoint 12 men, one from each tribe, to approach the Ark of the Covenant and to pick up a stone from the specific spot that the priest stood. They were to carry these stones from the riverbed of the Jordan to the site that Israel was going to camp at that evening. **The stones were to be set up as a memorial forever.** They were to remind the people that the water of the Jordan was cut off when the Ark passed into it. Israel was to remember what God had done for them.

Psalm 145:3-6 ESV

(3) Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and **His greatness is unsearchable.**

(4) **One generation shall commend Your works to another,** and shall declare Your mighty acts.

(5) On the glorious splendor of Your majesty, and on Your wondrous works, I will meditate.

(6) They shall speak of the might of Your awesome deeds, and **I will declare Your greatness.**

We are to reflect and talk about the greatness of God. One generation is to pass down the stories about what God has done to the next generation. We are to emphasize God’s majesty and awesome deeds. **These stones were to spark conversation.** Children are curious and would ask their parents what they mean. Israel was not to find a priest to answer the question. They were not to tell their children to wait for Sunday school. Parents were to declare who God is and share His awesomeness with their children. How else will the next generation, our children or grandchildren, know about who God is if we don’t tell them? **We should not leave it up to someone else to tell our kids about God.** We are to talk about Him and what He has done in everyday conversation.

Psalm 78:1-8 ESV

(1) A Maskil of Asaph. Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth!

(2) I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old,

(3) things that we have heard and known, **that our fathers have told us.**

(4) **We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and His might, and the wonders that He has done.**

(5) He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which **He commanded our fathers to teach to their children,**

(6) **that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children,**

(7) **so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God,** but

keep His commandments;

(8) and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.

We are not to hide from our children what God has done. The next generation learns so much about God and what it means to have a relationship with Him by how we live and talk about Him. **If our children think a relationship with Jesus can be summed up as simply going to church and not doing certain immoral things, then we are not doing a good job at all of telling the next generation of what God has done.** We are to talk about God in a way that they are drawn to trust in Him. In a way that they would learn they can set their hope in God. We are to tell of what Jesus' blood has accomplished for us. **We should talk more about our hope for the future that Jesus has secured than the problems we see around us.** We must be thinking about God's greatness and seeking to trust God if we are ever going to talk about Him in this way. We talk about what is on our minds and what we find exciting and interesting. Is God's greatness and His goodness something that excites us? These are not conversations that are only to happen at church but throughout everyday life. We are to have stones set up that draw us to talk about how great God is and how we can trust in Him.

Joshua 4:9-13 ESV

(9) 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.**

(10) 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.

(11) And when all the people had finished passing over, the ark of the LORD and the priests passed over before the people.

(12) 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.

(13) About 40,000 ready for war passed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho.

Joshua also set up another pillar of twelve stones to mark the spot that the priests stood with the ark. This memorial would not have been as easy to see as the one set up at the camp, as it was underwater. **This memorial would remind the people that only God could have accomplished stopping the Jordan River.** Joshua wanted all of Israel to know that at the time he wrote this book, those stones were still there. This almost serves as an invitation to go see the stones. **He did not want Israel to forget or stop talking about what God had done.**

Joshua 4:14-19 ESV

(14) 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.**

(15) And the LORD said to Joshua,

(16) "Command the priests bearing the ark of the testimony to come up out of the Jordan."

(17) So Joshua commanded the priests, "Come up out of the Jordan."

(18) 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.

(19) 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.

Israel developed an **awe, respect, and fear** for Joshua that day. They understood that God was leading Joshua just as He had led Moses. Israel watching the water rush back into place as the priests stepped out of the riverbed must have been amazing and awe inspiring. This confirmed once again God's supernatural hand on all the events. It also **closed the way of retreat**. Israel was now in the Promised Land with armies and giants ahead of them. They would need to rely on God more than ever as they enjoyed this good land He gave to them.

Joshua 4:20-24 ESV

(20) And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, **Joshua set up at Gilgal.**

(21) And he said to the people of Israel, "**When your children ask their fathers in times to come, 'What do these stones mean?'**

(22) then you shall let your children know, 'Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.'

(23) 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,**

(24) **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."**

This was Caleb's, Joshua's, Eleazar's (High Priest), and the Levites second water crossing. They had walked across the dry ground of the Red Sea, and now they walked across the dry ground of the Jordan. **Joshua points out that what God had done for us, He now did for you.** Joshua is making sure the next generation does not miss how important this was. He is putting into practice what He is encouraging them to do. He is showing God's might to the next generation so that they can have a reverential awe of who God is and trust in Him. **One of the greatest enemies to faith, to trusting God, is forgetfulness.** We forget how He has been faithful. We forget what He has done for us. We forget the prayers He answered in such amazing ways. We forget, so the new trial in front of us seems insurmountable. We forget who He is so we do not walk in a holy respect of God. As we forget, we start to rely on our own strength, as pride and other sins creep in. **This is why over and over in scripture we are called to remember.**

1 Chronicles 16:12 ESV

(12) **Remember the wondrous works** that He has done, His miracles and the judgments He uttered,

Psalms 20:7 NKJV

(7) Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; **But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.**

Psalms 77:11 ESV

(11) **I will remember the deeds** of the LORD; yes, **I will remember Your wonders of old.**

2 Timothy 2:8 ESV

(8) **Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead,** the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel,

This is a big reason why Israel continued to walk with God even after Joshua died. They had been told of the great works of God, **and they remembered.**

Joshua 24:31 ESV

(31) Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, **and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel.**
