

*Joshua 3* records Israel's preparation for crossing the Jordan River and entering the Promised Land. *Joshua 4* records the completion and the commemoration of that great event where God shows Himself to be faithful and powerful to fulfill His promise made to Abraham over 400 years before (*Gen. 12:7; 15:7-15; 17:8; Acts 7:1-5*). There are four prominent entities in this event:

(1) JOSHUA leading the nation into the physical land of promise is prominent as a picture of the LORD JESUS CHRIST leading all of His people (God's elect, both Jew and Gentile) into the Promised Land of salvation and eternal life (*Jos. 3:7; 4:14; Heb. 4:8-10*). Their possession of the land was by one man, Joshua. Our spiritual possession of all the blessings and benefits of salvation is by ONE MAN, the GODMAN, CHRIST JESUS (*John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5*). The plurality of false religion (i.e. "there are many ways to God," or "many ways to heaven") is a lie spawned by unregenerate people promoting false religion and false gospels. Just as God appointed and equipped Joshua for the task of bringing this nation into the Promised Land, God the Father appointed and equipped His Son for the task of bringing His spiritual children into the Promised Land of eternal life and glory (*Isa. 9:6-7; Heb. 2:14-18; 10:5-14*).

(2) THE ARK OF THE COVENANT going before the nation, as the assurance of His presence and power and as a means of God setting them apart physically and ceremonially (*Jos. 3:1-6, 10-11, 14-17*), is prominent as a picture of God's spiritual and eternal mercy and grace to His spiritual children based on His justice satisfied and righteousness established by the blood of Christ - His finished work to establish righteousness for His people before God (*Heb. 9:14*). It is a picture of the assurance of God's presence and power eternally with all His people in Christ. The ark originally provided safety to the Israelites in their journey to the Promised Land. The power of the ark was manifested several times and enemies were scattered. When priests carrying the ark stepped into the River Jordan, the water stopped flowing and all the Israelites were able to cross. Recall that the Ark was covered with the mercy-seat where the blood of sacrifice was sprinkled. It represented the powerful and merciful presence and power of Almighty God. God used it in dealing with the physical nation of Israel in a temporal, physical, and ceremonial way, both as the ground of their ceremonial and temporal relationship and acceptance with God, and as a means of removing physical obstacles and providing physical power for their deliverance and victories (*Heb. 9:13*). Our Ark is Christ, our mercy-seat is Christ. We are forgiven of all our sins by His blood and justified before God by His righteousness imputed to us. We are given spiritual life by Christ Who conquered death and arose from the dead as our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer.

(3) THE JORDAN RIVER is prominent to show without doubt that Israel's crossing was ALL OF THE LORD, ALL OF GOD'S GOODNESS AND POWER. This is a picture of the eternal salvation of spiritual Israel being ALL OF THE LORD and ALL OF GOD'S GRACE AND POWER IN AND BY THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. The Jordan River has come to be a symbol of death. When the people following Joshua arrived at the Jordan, the river was at flood stage, transforming it from its typical 100-foot width to a daunting mile-wide, raging river. Israel's entrance into Canaan was completely blocked. But as soon as the priests dipped their feet in the river's edge, God stopped the flow of water, and the people crossed on dry ground. The priests carrying the ark of the covenant stood in the middle of the riverbed until the whole nation had passed over (*Joshua 3:14-17*). God drying it up is a picture of Christ removing all the obstacles that hinder us from entering into the great salvation that He has worked out for us.

The great waters of our sins, the need for righteousness, the need for spiritual life from the dead. Again, our eternal salvation and life is ALL OF GOD and ALL CONDITIONED ON CHRIST. Like Israel was powerless to carry themselves over to the Promised Land, we are powerless to save ourselves. We cross into salvation by God's power and grace based upon the power of Christ to "dry up" all of our sins by His death on the cross and to work righteousness by which God has justified us. Like Israel had to cross over the Jordan on dry land by faith in God, we who are eternally saved have God-given faith by which we cross over from the world to believe in Christ Who brings us to repentance (*John 6:44; Eph. 2:8-10*).

So, the nation Israel, as God's chosen people, following the ark across the Jordan on dry ground into the Promised Land is prominent as a picture of SPIRITUAL ISRAEL (again, God's elect from every nation - all who believe in Christ) entering into the promised land of eternal salvation because Christ has cleared the way of every obstacle (sin, Satan, death, the Law) that would hinder them from receiving salvation and all spiritual blessings through the glorious Person and finished work of Christ (*John 6:37-45*). As we shall see in a later lesson, the Promised Land is not a picture of heaven. There are no enemies in heaven. But while we are on this earth, even as sinners saved by grace, we face enemies daily - the world, the flesh, and the devil. All our enemies have essentially been defeated by our Savior.

(4) THE TWELVE STONES commemorate how all twelve tribes of the nation Israel and all the individuals in those tribes (none excepted) crossed over Jordan into the Promised Land by the power of God (*Jos. 4:1-7, 20-24*). This is a picture of how ALL OF GOD'S ELECT who make up the nation of SPIRITUAL ISRAEL will cross over into the promised land of eternal salvation by the grace and power of God in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. IT WAS AN EFFECTUAL DELIVERANCE OF ALL OF GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE (*Jos. 3:17; 4:1,10,11; 5:1*), and Christ's death on the cross is the effectual redemption and deliverance of all of God's chosen people (*John 6:37-40; 12:31-33; Rom. 8:33-39*).

God gave Joshua instructions to appoint twelve men, one from each tribe. The men were each to retrieve one stone from where the priests had stood in the riverbed bearing the ark of the covenant. The stones of remembrance were not to come from the shores of the Jordan but the center, emphasizing that Israel had crossed over on dry land. The number twelve can be found in 187 places in God's word. *Revelation* alone has 22 occurrences of the number and multiples of twelve. Twelve is considered a perfect number in that it symbolizes God's power and authority, as well as serving as a perfect governmental foundation. Here, it symbolizes the completeness of the nation of Israel as a whole. It is a picture of the completeness of the whole church of Jesus Christ, the total number of His sheep for whom He died and arose again (*John 10:11-16, 27-30*). Not one of the elect, not one for whom Christ died will miss salvation and eternal glory. His death, His righteousness imputed, demands their salvation.

These stones were to be remembered and commemorated throughout their generations (*Jos. 4:4-7, 22-24*). Joshua's stones of remembrance are just one monument in a series of memorials commemorating the mighty acts of God on behalf of the people of Israel (*Ex. 13:3-6; 24:4; Deut. 27:1-8; Jos. 22:9-12; 24:24-28; 1 Sam. 7:12*). To everyone else, the stones were just a heap of rocks, but to the people of God, they were a constant and joyous reminder that God was their God and a powerful God, working wonders on behalf of His people. This is a picture of how we are continually to preach and hear the Gospel of our salvation to remember that our God is faithful. His promises never fail (*Lam. 3:22-23; 2 Cor. 1:20; Heb. 6:13-20*). We see this in the New Testament ordinances of baptism (*Matt. 28:19*) and the Lord's Supper (*1 Cor. 11:25-26*).