

# REMEMBERING GOD'S WORKS

## JOSHUA 4



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*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*Remembering God's Works*  
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## Joshua 4: Introduction

The writer devotes an entire chapter to what might not seem like a very significant event – the erecting of two heaps of stones to commemorate the work of God.

The work unfolds gradually. At first, only those bearing the stones are told the reason for their mission. The people are left to watch and wonder as those heavy boulders are fetched and delivered into the camp.

Meanwhile, Joshua adds to the mystery by constructing another heap of twelve stones on the dry river bottom, precisely where the ark stood, holding back the water. While the people would ultimately be instructed as to the meaning of the heap of stones in the camp, nothing more is said about that pile in the river.

We must remember the Lord's work on our behalf, even if we cannot understand it all, and if the means we employ to remember His works are fraught with mystery and wonder.

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## 1 Twelve Men, Twelve Stones

*And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying: "Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe, 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 4.1-3*

*Reflect.*

1. Now the twelve men appointed in chapter 3 will accomplish their assigned task. Why do you suppose God thought it necessary to reiterate in verse 2 the instructions He had given in Joshua 3.12?
2. The instructions of Joshua 3.12 are here expanded (v. 3). This is typical of how God has led His people thus far – only as much instruction as needed. Was God teaching the people to wait on Him?

*Think about it.*

We note again the repetition of “all” and “completely crossed over” from Joshua 3.17. That seems to be important. But Israel is not yet finished at the Jordan River. The twelve who were appointed in Joshua 3.12 are now given more detailed instructions concerning their commission.

Twelve men – one from each of the twelve tribes – are to return to the dry river bed and retrieve twelve stones, one each. The stones are to be collected from a particular place and deposited in a particular place. We can imagine the people of Israel looking back from the west bank of the Jordan and wondering about this strange undertaking. Why are these men heading back into the river bed? What are they doing?

The people would not be told the meaning of this effort until the end of chapter 4. They would have had time to watch these men at work, view the stones as they were set down in the camp, and observe as Joshua assembled the stones into a heap (and as he piled up twelve more stones back in the river bed). There must have been much murmuring and speculating about the meaning of this project. Sometimes it pleases God to leave us to wonder for a while, until, by further revelation, He reveals the beauty and significance of His frequently strange or curious commands.

This is what the New Testament does for the Old, and what Jesus does for the whole story of Israel.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. What do you make of that pointed repetition in verse 1 of the words of Joshua 3.17? For now, make a mental note of that phrase “all Israel” or “all the people.” It will become important later on in the book of Joshua.
2. The place from which the stones were to be selected is significant, as was the place where they were to be deposited. Explain.
3. These stones would have been fairly heavy and probably rather large (v. 5). What can you imagine was going on in the minds of God’s people as they watched these twelve men struggling with these stones?

*“The twelve patriarchs destined to become twelve tribes were arranged to be a type and pattern of the number of the apostles. So were the twelve fountains in the desert and twelve stones taken from the bed of the Jordan. We leave it to the student of the law to find deeper proof of all this.” Peter Chrysologus (380-450 AD)*

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*Lord, thank You for tearing out my heart of stone and giving me a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36.26, 27), so that I...*

*Pray Psalm 116.1-14.*

Here is a psalm celebrating the saving work of God. Like the stones Israel gathered from the Jordan, this psalm can remind us of God's grace and mercy and lead us to renew our confession of faith and commitment to Him.

**Psalm 116.1-14** (*Mit Freuden Zart: All Praise to God Who Reigns Above*)

I love the Lord because He hears my cries and pleas for mercy.  
Because He bends to me His ears, my prayers shall ever thus be.  
The snares of death encompassed me; hell's grip could not unloosened be;  
Distress and anguish pressed me.

I called to God, "O Lord, I pray, my soul redeem with favor!"  
The Lord is gracious in His way, and righteous is our Savior.  
His mercy to the simple flies; He lifted me up to the skies –  
I rest in Him forever!

Full well the Lord has dealt with me; my soul from death He delivered.  
My weeping eyes, my stumbling feet, He has redeemed forever.  
Forever I before His face shall walk with those who know His grace,  
And dwell with them forever.

Afflicted, I believe His Word, though lying men would undo me.  
What shall I render to the Lord for all His blessings to me?  
Salvation's cup I lift above and call upon the God of love  
And pay my vows most truly.

## 2 The Memorial Stones

*Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; 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, that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' 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 4.4-7*

*Reflect.*

1. Is there a role for art in the life of faith? How about in your own walk with the Lord?
2. Art conveys ideas and meaning. Has any work of art spoken to you in a way that encourages you in your faith?

*Think about it.*

God intends for the arts to have a significant role within the people of God. He employed a variety of artists and craftsmen in making the tabernacle and its furnishings and implements (Ex. 35-39). A variety of forms, textures, materials, and genre went into that lavish and colorful project, the purpose of which was to express the beauty and tangibility of God's covenant relationship with Israel.

In today's passage, Joshua informs the twelve men of their mission and its meaning. We recall that all Israel has finished crossing the Jordan (v. 1), so Joshua is now sending these twelve men back to the river bed, where the priests and Levites are still holding the ark. They will gather twelve stones from the place where the ark stood. The stones thus convey a dual meaning: the twelve tribes of Israel and the presence of the LORD. Because they were taken from the Jordan, they will also recall God's causing the waters to pile up in a heap while His people crossed. The form of this work of art – heavy stones – suggests permanence, like the presence and promises of God.

Joshua explains that these twelve stones will be "a sign among you" for future generations, a memorial to explain to those not present at the crossing just what had happened there.

Keep in mind that, at this point, Joshua is only instructing the twelve men (v.4). The rest of the people are left to wonder about their work. We can imagine that the twelve must have regarded this an important task and would have been very careful to select a proper stone to represent their tribe. The stones were probably large and heavy, as they had to be carried on the men's shoulders.

This heap of stones is not a work of art like the tabernacle, but it's a work of art nonetheless. Today we would say it was an example of abstract art (rather than representational) and even concept art, because it involved members of a community creating a project for the entire community. Art can play an important role in the life of faith. If it were not so, God would not have commanded it.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. Imagine you were asked to explain the meaning of these stones to a child. What would you say?
2. Do you think art – other than music – should have a more prominent role in your walk with and work for the Lord? Why or why not?

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3. Our Christian heritage is replete with works of art from many different genres. How might you begin to acquaint yourself with, and make use of, this great heritage of the arts?

*“God ordered twelve stones to be taken from the Jordan, and specified why, for he says, ‘When your children ask their fathers in time to come, what do these stones mean? Then you shall let your children know, Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground, for the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over,’ and thus the ark was saved and all the people. Shall we not then record with images the saving passion and miracles of Christ our God, so that when my son asks me, ‘What is this?’ I may say that God the Word became man, and that through him not only Israel passed through the Jordan, but the whole human race regained its original happiness?” John of Damascus (650-750 AD)*

*Thank You, Lord, for the many forms and works of art by which You are glorified. I want to learn more about this, so help me as I...*

*Pray Psalm 115.*

This psalm can help us think about the role of the arts in the life of faith. It is a work of art itself, and shows in its beginning and end how art can be used to glorify and praise the Lord. As you pray through it, let any works of Christian art come to mind – hymns, paintings, architecture, etc. – and give thanks and praise to God for each one.

**Psalm 115** (*Plainfield: Nothing but the Blood of Jesus*)

Not to us, O God, not us, But unto Your Name give glory!  
For Your love and faithfulness, Ever to Your Name be glory!  
Why should the nations cry, “Where is their God on high?”  
You rule us, Lord, on high: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Idols made by men’s own hand – Ever to Your Name be glory –  
See nor hear nor understand – Ever to Your Name be glory!  
They neither feel nor walk, nor can they speak or talk;  
All those who serve them fall, But unto Your Name be glory!

All who trust in Jesus yield – Ever to His Name be glory –  
Find in Him their help and shield – Ever to Your Name be glory!  
O Israel, trust the Lord! He helps us evermore!  
Fear Him obey His Word: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Blessings from our gracious Lord – Ever to Your Name be glory –  
Will attend us evermore – Ever to Your Name be glory!  
Bless all who fear You, Lord, all who obey Your Word,  
All who Your Name adore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

Grant us, Savior, great increase – ever to Your Name be glory!  
Bless us with eternal peace – ever to Your Name be glory!  
Heaven and earth are Yours; let every soul adore  
And bless You evermore: Ever to Your Name be glory!

### 3 Stones in the Jordan

*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. 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 4.8, 9*

*Reflect.*

1. This seems odd, doesn't it? Why would Joshua put stones in the river, since the river would be covering them very shortly?
2. The men were careful to set their stones down in "the place where they lodged." Was it important that everyone in the camp be aware of these stones? Why?

*Think about it.*

I'm going to let John Calvin (1509-1564) reflect on Joshua's strange act. From his commentary on Joshua: "Apparently there was no use of stones under the water, and it may therefore seem to have been absurd to bury stones at a depth. The others which were placed in Gilgal being publicly visible, furnished occasion for inquiry; but stones hidden from the eyes of men at the bottom of the water could have no effect in inciting their minds. I admit that a monument altogether buried in silence would have been useless. But when they talked among themselves of the evidence of the passage left there, the hearing even of what they did not see, strongly tended to confirm their faith. The ark of the covenant was shut up in the sanctuary and covered by a veil placed over against it, and yet its hidden splendor was not without benefit, when they learned from the Law that the covenant of God was deposited in it. It might also happen, that when the river was low, the tops of the heap would sometimes appear. But what I have already said is more probable, that though Joshua buried the stones in the middle of the stream, he did a useful act by establishing a testimony in presence of the people, which would afterwards become the subject of general conversation."

Unlike he did with the stones brought to the camp, Joshua did not explain the reason for these stones. People would probably have guessed that there was some connection between the stones they could see and those they could not, just as there was a connection between the ark they could see, the Law within it they could not see, and the God Who gave both Law and ark to the people.

Joshua sowed a little mystery into their experience with this act, and a little mystery in the life of faith can be a very good thing.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. Meditate on Hebrews 11. For those Israelites with Joshua, what were the *hoped for* and *unseen things* of their faith? What are they for you?
2. Assurance and evidence: These are the substance of true faith. The memorial stones would have provided *assurance* of God's presence, and the *evidence* of that assurance would have been Israel's obedience in claiming the land. What provides your assurance of faith, and what evidence should that assurance produce in you?
3. What do we mean by "mystery"? Do you agree that mystery is important to the life of faith? Explain.

*"Images are of two kinds: either they are words written in a book ... or else they are material images such as the twelve stones which he commanded to be taken from the Jordan for a second memorial (such a mystery, truly the greatest ever to befall the*

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*faithful people!) of the carrying of the ark and the parting of the waters." John of Damascus (650-750 AD)*

*Let Your Word and Spirit grant me increasing assurance, Lord, so that the evidence of my faith may be seen in...*

*Pray Psalm 12.*

Our faith must be rooted in the pure Word of God, which we wield as a Sword and Shield in an age of lies and deception. As you pray Psalm 12, ask the Lord to firm up your vision of unseen things by this one great Seen Thing which He calls you to read and mediate in day by day (Ps. 1).

**Psalm 12** (*Hamburg: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*)

Help, Lord! The godly cease to be; they who believe in Christ are few.  
Falsely the wicked confidently flatter, deceive, and mock Your truth.

Stop, Lord, the lips that utter lies, all those who speak with boasting tongue!  
See how Your holy Word they despise, while their own praises they have sung.

Rise up, O Lord, and rescue all Your precious children sore distressed.  
Save those who faithfully on You call; grant them deliv'rance, peace, and rest.

Your words are pure and proven true, like silver seven times refined;  
You will preserve Your Word ever new, and keep the heart to You inclined.

Proudly the wicked strut and stand; Your indignation builds on high.  
Men may exalt their wicked plans, but You will judge them by and by.

## 4 Safely across Jordan

*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. 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. 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. About forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho. 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 4.10-14*

*Reflect.*

1. What does it mean to say that the people “feared” Joshua? Should they have feared him?
2. Why was it important that “the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the children of Israel”?

*Think about it.*

Can you see the people hurrying to get across the dry Jordan River bed? I'd be hurrying, too! The writer makes a point to tell us that the two-and-a-half tribes crossed over before the rest of the people, and they were armed for battle. That practical step had two advantages: it made sure those tribes crossed the Jordan, as they had promised; and it would have encouraged the people as they crossed over to know that they were protected by 40,000 armed men waiting for them on the other side. That alone would have discouraged dawdling.

All this miracle, mustering, marching, and display of martial might happened at Joshua's command, as he carried out the word God had spoken to him and to Moses. Is it any wonder the people feared Joshua? Joshua's word had authority to get things done, but Joshua would need to make sure that what he commanded was always and only what God had given him. This would not always be the case, as we shall see.

Thanks to my friend Steven Wright, who pointed out that the stones left in the Jordan would be a witness to God, Who *would* be able to see them, of His covenant faithfulness – much like the rainbow was in Genesis 9.12-17. Both parties in the divine covenant thus had memorials to commemorate this new epoch of the covenant promises of God. With the people safely across, and the twelve stones deposited in the Jordan River bed (v. 9), the priests and Levites carried the ark over in everyone's sight (v. 11 anticipates vv. 15-17). They would again bring the presence of the LORD into the midst of the camp, and we can imagine how much awe and confidence this would have inspired.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. Should church leaders command the fear of those they serve? Why or why not?
2. The Lord's Supper is a means whereby the Lord reminds us that He is with us always. Do you think we use this as well or as fully as we should? Should we enter this sacrament with more awe, wonder, and hope? Explain.
3. What should church leaders be learning from Joshua about how to lead God's people into His promises?

*“It seems to me the words ‘the people hastened to cross’ were not added idly by the Holy Spirit. For this reason, I also think that*

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*when we come to baptism for salvation and receive the sacraments of the Word of God, we should not do it idly or negligently, but we should hurriedly press on all the way until we cross over everything." Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

*I know You are with me today, Lord. Help me to focus on Your presence by...*

*Pray Psalm 114.*

Pray for your leaders, that they will remember the works of God, tremble before Him, and lead His people into a greater realization of His promises.

**Psalm 114** (*Duke Street: Jesus Shall Reign*)

When Israel out from Egypt went –  
They of God's gracious covenant –  
Out from a land of language strange,  
Into their midst Jehovah came.

He His dominion o'er them set;  
At His command the dark sea fled.  
Jordan subsided at His Word;  
Mountains and hills obey our Lord.

What ails the sea that it should flee?  
Jordan, that it should withered be?  
What makes the mountains skip like rams?  
What makes the hills spring up like lambs?

Tremble, O earth: the Lord is near!  
Jacob's great God is present here!  
He from the rock sweet water brings,  
Making the flint gush flowing springs.

## 5 No Turning Back

*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. Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, "Command the priests who bear the ark of the Testimony to come up from the Jordan." Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, "Come up from the Jordan." 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 4.14-18*

*Reflect.*

1. The people had participated together in a miracle of God, and they were now safely together in the land of Canaan, the Jordan flowing freely again, blocking any retreat. How would you have felt?
2. What were these people thinking regarding what lay ahead for them?

*Think about it.*

Here we get more detail about what was mentioned in passing in verse 11. Scripture often unfolds like that: first, a big picture, then more details of that big picture. Think: Genesis 1 and 2. Or John 1.1-18, and the rest of John's gospel. Or even the book of Acts and Paul's epistles. This *telescoping* of the Scriptures helps to hold the narrative together, encouraging readers to look forward and backward at the same time. It certainly reveals the mind of God behind the whole.

We see Joshua as a faithful communicator of God's Word. What God told him to tell the priests, he repeated exactly as the LORD had spoken to him. No funny stories, personal anecdotes, or parsing the Hebrew verb. Just the Word of God. Could God have told them Himself? Certainly. But this is not how the LORD has chosen to lead His people into His covenant promises. He appoints leaders, gives them His Word, and commands them to speak His Word to His people.

Great things happen when that simple formula is obeyed.

The Jordan River closed behind the people of Israel. There would be no returning to the plains of Moab. Like Cortez in Mexico, God had "burned their bridges," and now they must only look ahead. There must be no pining for Moab or the desert or Egypt. And they must not simply stand still at Gilgal. Focus on the promises of God, and the land where those promises would be realized, and press on.

This is excellent advice for the life of faith (cf. Phil. 3.7-15).

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. Would you describe your own approach to reading the Scriptures as looking "forward and backward at the same time"? Explain. Why is this a good idea?
2. Forty years earlier the people had approached the land with nothing but the wilderness behind them (cf. Num. 13.1-3), to which they retreated upon hearing the report of the spies. But that was a dead end; the Red Sea kept them from going back to Egypt, and the wilderness was not the land of promise. Do you see how God in His grace and wisdom helped His people forward by having them cross the Jordan into Canaan this time around? Explain.
3. What causes preachers and teachers to stray from the pure Word of God in their teaching?

*"The Lord exalted Joshua, for as he increased in age his strength became obvious [for all to see]. They rightly feared the son of*

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*Nun with a lawful fear as is fitting for service. And we rightly revere our Jesus with holy fear who stands by us for all eternity”*  
*Procopius of Gaza (465-530 AD)*

*Let Your Word lead and guide me each step of the way today as I seek Your promises and...*

*Pray Psalm 124.*

What “waters” are threatening to overwhelm you today? What traps or snares can you anticipate? You can’t turn back from them, so you should prepare for them now. Give them to the Lord and go forward into the day ahead.

**Psalm 124** (*Neumark: If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee*)

If You had not been with us, Jesus –  
Let all who love You say with pride –  
When foes rose up to fright and seize us,  
They would have swallowed us alive!

*Refrain v. 8*

Our help is in Your Name, O Lord,  
Who made creation by Your Word.

When all their anger flared against us,  
The flood would us have swept away;  
Torrents and waters sore had drenched us,  
Were not You all our hope and stay!

*Refrain*

Blessed be the Lord who has not given  
Us to our foes to be devoured.  
We shall escape and rise to heaven  
By His eternal grace and power.

*Refrain*

## 6 Joshua: Artist and Docent

*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. And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal. Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?' then you shall let your children know, saying, Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land"; 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, 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." Joshua 4.19-24*

*Reflect.*

1. Why do you suppose Joshua took so long to explain this heap of stones to the people?
2. How many purposes can you identify for this work of art?

*Think about it.*

Curiosity and speculation about those twelve stones must have been building. Joshua would not leave the people in the dark for long. By the end of the day, everyone in the camp would understand the meaning of this work of art.

Our text says that the final arranging of the stones was Joshua's work (v. 20). We're not sure what the final form of the monument was, but [let's assume a pyramid](#): five stones on the bottom (one at each corner and one in the middle, touching the other four), then four in the gaps between the bottom four and the middle stone, topped by two more, with perhaps the capstone balanced or wedged between those two on the top?

I don't know if that was the shape of the heap, and it doesn't really matter. The important point about the structure was that twelve separate stones were joined into one structure, representing the one nation of Israel made up of the twelve tribes descending from Jacob.

We note three purposes for this structure: first, that it might serve as a monument to recall God's miraculous deliverance of Israel into the land of promise (vv. 22, 23); second, as a witness of God's power to the peoples of Canaan and elsewhere who would see it (v. 24); and finally, to teach the people to fear the LORD their God forever.

Joshua is both artist and docent here, assembling the work and then explaining it to the people. While this heap is a work of abstract art, that doesn't mean everyone is free to impose their own meaning on it: "This is what it means to *me*." Joshua set the meaning which God had explained to him (vv. 4-7). The work might be admirable for many reasons – the smoothness and shape of the stones, the proportions and the whole, the way light would peak through and around the structure, etc. – but its artistic features were all together intended to the ends God determined and Joshua explained.

God Himself ordained the use of art as a witness to Him and His mighty acts.

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. Christian history contains nearly 2,000 years of a wide variety of works of art celebrating God and His works. Are we wise to remain ignorant of these works? Why or why not?
2. Why was it important that Joshua explain the meaning of these stones to the people? Why not just leave

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them to their own ideas about them?

3. Should churches teach about Christian art and its place in the mission of making disciples? Explain.

*“Moreover, the thing here principally treated of is the monument of twelve stones; for though it was formerly mentioned, a kind of solemn dedication is now related, namely, that Joshua not only erected a mound, but called the attention of the people to its use in enabling fathers to keep the memory of the divine goodness alive among their children. From his introducing the children asking, What mean these stones? we infer that they were arranged so as to attract the notice of spectators. For had they been heaped together at random without any order, it would never have come into the mind of posterity to inquire concerning their meaning. There must therefore have been something so remarkable in their position as not to allow the sight to be overlooked.” John Calvin, Commentary on Joshua (1509-1564 AD)*

*Lord, You have given us Your Supper as a memorial to Your saving work and to bring us more truly and deeply into participation in Your life. As I prepare for Your Supper, help me to...*

*Pray Psalm 132.*

This psalm, a work of poetic art, is a memorial to God's faithfulness in fulfilling His covenant with David. Concentrate on words that describe or allude to Jesus or His work – “dwelling place,” “tabernacle,” “Anointed,” “provision,” and so forth. Give God specific thanks for what these words suggest about the work of Jesus on our behalf.

**Psalm 132.8-18** (*Finlandia: Be Still My Soul*)

Arise, O Lord, come to Your resting place;  
Your holy presence meet with us in might.  
Clothe us with righteousness in Jesus' grace,  
And we will shout to Your divine delight!  
For David's sake, turn not away Your face,  
But look upon us in Your holy light.

Remember, Lord, the oath You swore to David;  
Do not turn back, do not deny Your Word:  
“One of your sons, with your throne I will favor,  
And He shall keep My cov'nant evermore,  
And walk within My testimonies ever,  
Thus He shall ever rule as Israel's Lord.”

God dwells among us, and He will forever,  
To meet our needs and clothe us with His grace.  
He has to us sent Jesus Christ, our Savior,  
And made us His eternal resting-place.  
His foes are banished from His presence ever,  
But we shall reign with Him before His face.

## 7 In the Land of Promise

*Read Joshua 4*

*Reflect.*

1. It was important that the people of Israel should have tangible reminders of the presence of God with them as they crossed the Jordan and entered the land of promise. Why?
2. The Lord has given us His Supper as a tangible reminder of His presence with us. Do you think the Lord's Supper is as important to us as it ought to be? Why or why not?

*Think about it.*

The danger always exists that the people of God will trust more in their leaders and programs than in the Lord. The people of Israel witnessed the greatness of Joshua, and they feared him. They observed the military prowess of the armies of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. But while these leaders and fighters were important, the people must trust only in the Lord.

To that end, God reminded His people of the mighty work He had done for them. They watched as the Jordan River withdrew from the ark of the covenant and stood in a heap while they crossed. And they understood the meaning of the memorial stones, both those in the camp at Gilgal and those left behind in the Jordan.

Now they were in the land of promise, following trusted leaders and protected by armed warriors. Would they continue to trust in the Lord only, or would they and their leaders begin to put more confidence in the flesh? Would God give them another sign to remind them that they were His people and they must trust in Him?

*Meditate and discuss.*

1. Do we as God's people face the temptation to put more confidence in men than in the Lord? Can you give an example?
2. Do church members have a responsibility toward their leaders, to help them focus on and trust in the Lord? Explain.
3. Our calling as believers is to seek the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12), and to lay hold on His precious and very great promises (2 Pet. 1.4). Israel set up camp at Gilgal, but that was just the beginning of their mission. We build churches, hire pastors, and set up programs. But these are just the beginning of our mission, not the end of it. What is our mission?

*"For all our present life is designated as one day. Therefore we are instructed through that mystery not to put off our acts and works of righteousness until tomorrow but rather 'today'—that is, while we are living, while we are lingering in this world—to make haste to accomplish all things that pertain to perfection, so that on the tenth day of the first month, we shall be able to enter the land of promise, that is, the blessedness of perfection." Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

*As I think about the mission You have appointed for me today, Lord, I...*

*Pray Psalm 135.*

Reflect on God's sovereign power and saving mercy as you head out into your Personal Mission Field today. Give Him thanks and praise for what He has done and call on Him to help you go forward into His promises

*Remembering God's Works*  
*Joshua 4*

in the day ahead.

**Psalm 135** (*St. Gertrude: Onward, Christian Soldiers*)

Praise the Savior, praise Him, for His Name is good;  
Sing, for it is pleasant, to our glorious God!  
All whom He has chosen and redeemed by grace,  
Praise His Name together, praise Him in this holy place!

*Refrain v. 1*

Praise the Name of Jesus, you who serve His Word!  
Raise your voice and praise our good and glorious Lord!

Great and sovereign, Jesus rules o'er all above,  
Doing as He pleases, sovereign in His love.  
Clouds and seas obey Him, lightning, too, and rain;  
He the winds brings forth in pow'r and sends them back again.

*Refrain*

Egypt's firstborn fell to God's redeeming pow'r;  
Kings and nations crumbled in redemption's hour.  
He the land of promise to His people gave;  
Thus His Kingdom Jesus gives to all He's pleased to save.

*Refrain*

Evermore Your Name, O Savior, shall endure!  
Your renown throughout all ages is secure.  
For You have compassion, vindicating all  
Those who serve Your Name and on Your saving mercy call.

*Refrain*

Vain the nations serve the idols of their hands;  
Mouths and ears they have but cannot understand.  
Every idol vain is, lacking life or breath;  
All who serve them, like them, shall be lost to lasting death.

*Refrain*

Bless the Lord you people, all who love the Lord!  
Bless Him, you who trust His sovereign, holy Word!  
Bless the Lord from Zion, Him Who in it dwells;  
Praise Him! Lift your voices, all His grace and glory tell!

*Refrain*

*Remembering God's Works*  
*Joshua 4*

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. God took great care to impress His presence on the minds of His people. Why?
2. Do we today need tangible reminders of God's presence with us? Why or why not?
3. Do you think art should play a role in the church's calling to make disciples? Explain.
4. Now that they had crossed the Jordan, the people could begin making plans for the mission ahead. What would those plans have included? What is your church's plan for fulfilling its mission?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Joshua 4? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) to learn more.

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Thank you.