

Twelve men appointed to build a monument of the west side of the Jordan

Before the crossing of the Jordan, twelve men were specially chosen^{□1}. They were not at first told what they would have to do. They were simply specially chosen men, twelve in all, representing each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Joshua 3:17 tells how the twelve tribes arrived safely at the western side of the Jordan. The first step in their laying hold of their inheritance has been taken. The twelve men of 3:12 arrived at the other side also.

□1 3:12

Then God spoke to Joshua again^{□1}. The twelve men are to go back to the middle of the dry riverbed where the priests are still standing. They are to choose twelve stones from the centre of the dry riverbed and carry them to the west side of the river where the Israelites are now camping^{□2}.

□1 4:1

□2 4:2-3

Joshua did as he was told. The twelve men were sent back to where the priests and the ark were still to be found^{□1}. They were to carry a large stone each^{□2}. Joshua explains: it will be a reminder of what had happened on that day^{□3}.

□1 4:4- 5a

□2 4:5b

□3 4:6-7

• The west bank monument – a replica of an underwater monument in the centre of the Jordan

The twelve men do as they have been instructed^{□1}. Then Joshua puts a monument of twelve stones half-way across the dry river bed^{□2}. The monument on the west bank is a replica of the underwater monument in the centre of the river. For most of the time the stones in the centre of the river will not be visible, because they will soon be covered by the water of the river. Perhaps on rare occasions when the river dries up they will become visible again. But the monument on the west side of the river will be a visible replica of what is in the centre of the river under the waters.

□1 4:8

□2 4:9

• The Jordan successfully crossed

The priests with the ark stay in the centre of the dry riverbed until the twelve tribes have crossed^{□1}. Then they too cross to the west side of the river^{□2}. The great barrier to the inheritance, the Jordan river, has been successfully crossed over. In accordance with what had been arranged previously the two and-a-half tribes which eventually will live east of Jordan for the moment travel with the other tribes to help them in the conquest^{□3}. The two-and-a-half tribes included forty thousand fighting men^{□4}. The successful crossing resulted in Joshua's leadership being well established^{□5}.

□1 4:10

□2 4:11

□3 4:12

□4 4:13

□5 4:14

The Purpose of the stones

The narrative goes back to the event of 4:11 and tells it in fuller detail. The priests were commanded to come up out of the Jordan^{□1}. As soon as they reached the west side the waters started flowing again^{□2}. The camp was established on the tenth day of the first month and the stones were set

□1 4:16-17

□2 4:18

up at Gilgal. Joshua explained to the people, as he had before explained to the twelve men, the purpose of the stones which were made into a monument in Gilgal on the west side of Jordan^{□3}.

□3 4:19-24

1. Joshua was aware of the tendency to spiritual forgetfulness

1. Joshua was aware of the tendency to spiritual forgetfulness. The day when the waters of Jericho were held up was an amazing miracle. Some miles upstream God shook the earth with some kind of earthquake that blocked the river. A few miles downstream, the river simply dried up! At the very moment when the priests stepped into the water, the river ceased to flow. In the hot sunshine, the river was dried in a very short time.

• *An amazing miracle!*

What an amazing miracle it was! Our God does wonders on behalf of His people. He is not simply an idea or a religious invention. God is the living God. Idols are dead but the God of the Bible is the living God!

Yet Joshua knew that within a few generations people would forget all about the amazing thing that God did on this day. We are all so self-centred and forgetful.

2. Joshua wanted people to remember their spiritual history

2. Joshua wanted people to remember their spiritual history. Countries become great because of what God does for them. There are countries in the world that became great because of what God did in them hundreds of years ago. But now they have forgotten that it was God who did it! They are the 'developed nations', they say. They take to themselves the credit for what they are. But they have forgotten their own history. The greatest nations in the world are ones where the gospel of Jesus Christ was once preached in power.

• *That the children should know*

Joshua wanted the young people of Israel to know that their greatness as a nation came because 'the hand of the Lord is mighty'¹. Joshua hoped that children would ask about these stones. Their parents and teachers would then have a chance to tell them of what God did on this tenth day of the first month at the River Jordan near Gilgal. Their parents would say 'There is a pile of stones like this one, in the middle of the river. It was put there by Joshua at a time when the river was totally dry. God did it. The hand of the Lord is mighty!'

3. Joshua wanted the Israelites of future days to enter into the experience of knowing God

3. Joshua wanted the Israelites of future days to enter into the experience of knowing God. Joshua said, 'I am doing this so that you may fear Yahweh your God for ever'¹. That generation knew God in a closer way than any generation of Israel. 'You followed me in the wilderness', said God through Jeremiah centuries later. 'Israel was holy to the LORD'². Joshua wanted there to be some who would never forget. He hoped that through this monument some would fear Yahweh for ever. Some would know that 'the living God'³ is the living God still. When we know what God has done before, we look to Him to show Himself again as the living God.

□¹ 4:24

□¹ 4:24

□² Jeremiah 2:2, 3

□³ see 3:10

		<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p> 
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