

THE WITNESS OF FAITH: SEEN IN THE LORD'S ORDERS TO BUILD A MEMORIAL AS A WITNESS JOSHUA 04:01–09

Introduction

Picture the greatest inheritance imaginable sitting out before a person, the longing for the inheritance gnawing away at the person's heart. The inheritance is his; it has been promised and guaranteed. The person will receive the inheritance. But obstacles or barriers stand in the way, and they must be removed before he can receive the promised inheritance.

This is a picture of the inheritance the Israelites were to receive, the inheritance of the promised land. Ever since the birth of the Israelites that began with their forefather Abraham, God had promised the inheritance of the land to His people. For hundreds of years, the promise of the land had been taught to the children. The promised land and the great hope it offered were the major theme of the teaching of the Israelites. Most if not all Israelites were gripped by a deep-seated longing for the glorious inheritance promised them by God. Now, finally, the long-awaited crossing of the Jordan River was to take place. God's people were to enter the promised land. The inheritance for which they had so long hoped was finally to become their possession. Their faith in God was now to be rewarded. This is the subject of this great passage of Scripture: *The Necessary, Long-awaited Crossing of the Jordan River: A Picture of Faith and of God's Great Power to Lead His People into the Promised Land (Spiritual Conquest and Rest)*, Joshua 3:1-4:24.

- I. The problem: a flooded Jordan (v. 1).
- II. The message of faith: the only way to cross and enter the promised land — the way of faith (vv. 2-13).
- III. The walk of faith: the only way to experience the power of God (vv. 14-17).
- IV. The witness of faith: seen in the LORD's orders to build a memorial as a witness (vv. 4:1-9).
- V. The obedience of faith: seen in the crossing of the Jordan (vv. 10-14).
- VI. The result of faith: camping, living in the promised land (vv. 15-19).
- VII. The purpose of faith: seen in Joshua building the memorial at Gilgal (vv. 20-24).

Joshua 04:01–09 The Witness of Faith: Seen in the LORD's Orders to Build a Memorial as a Witness

There is the witness of faith. Great acts of faith stands as a strong witness to the LORD and His power. Because of this, great acts of faith should be remembered. The crossing of the Jordan River was a great witness to the power of faith in God. For this reason God ordered Joshua to build a memorial as a witness to faith in Him.

1. God ordered Joshua to appoint twelve men to help with the memorial, one from each tribe. The twelve men were to secure twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan where the priests stood (vv. 1-3). The men were to carry the stones to the place where the Israelites set up camp for the night.
2. Joshua immediately obeyed the LORD (vv. 4-5). He called the twelve men who had earlier been appointed for this very purpose (3:12). He sent them out to the middle of the Jordan where the Ark was being held, and they secured twelve stones that represented the twelve tribes of Israel.
3. The purpose of the memorial was to be a witness to the power of God (vv. 6-7). In the future, when the children saw the memorial, they would ask what the memorial meant. The Israelites were then to give a strong witness to the power of God, that the flow of the Jordan River had been cut off before the Ark of the LORD's presence.
4. The men did just as Joshua commanded (v. 8). They took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan and carried the stones with them to their camp site.
5. Joshua then gave a strong personal witness to God's presence and power (v. 9). He personally erected a memorial of stones in the middle of the Jordan as his own personal witness. Note, the stones were still there when the book of Joshua was written.

Thought 1. We are to bear strong testimony to our faith. If we have a genuine faith in God, then God has worked in our hearts and lives. We know what it is to trust God, to have faith in His power and help. We have experienced the conquering power of Christ in overcoming trials and temptations, problems and obstacles. By faith in Christ, we have conquered the passions of the flesh, the lust for the bright lights, indulgences, delicacies and stimulating pleasures of the world.

The power to overcome all this has come from God. God has given us the power to become more than conquerors because we have trusted Him. His power works in us to conquer because of our faith. Faith brings the power of God into our lives. Faith causes the power of God to work in us and through us. Faith conquers and triumphs over all. This is the witness of faith. Faith in God works because it focuses upon God. And when a person's faith focuses upon God, God honours the person. God does for the person what the person believes, just so the person bases his belief upon the Word of God.

We are to bear strong witness to our faith in God. We are to be strong witnesses for God. We are to arouse people to trust God, to have faith in Him.

Mark 16:15 *He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."*

Acts 1:8 *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Acts 5:20 *"Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life."*

Acts 4:20 *For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.*

Acts 22:15 *You will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.*

Acts 28:19-20 *“But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar — not that I had any charge to bring against my own people. For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.”*

2 Cor 4:13 *It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.*

Titus 2:15 *These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you.*

2 Tim 1:8 *So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.*

1 Pet 3:15 *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

Isa 43:10 *“You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.”*

Isa 63:7 *I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us — yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses.*

Thought 2. We must bear strong testimony to our children. We must teach them the way of faith, teach them to trust the LORD, to have faith in Him.

John 21:15 *When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”*

Deut 4:9 *Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.*

Deut 6:7-9 *Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door-frames of your houses and on your gates.*

Deut 31:13 *Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.*

Prov 22:6 *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. ■*

