
Joshua 4

Joshua 4:1–24

Memorial Stones are Set up by Israel

Outline of Chapter 4:

- vv. 1–8 Twelve stones from the River Jordan are placed on land
- vv. 9–14 Twelve stones from the land are placed in the Jordan/the 2½ tribes cross over
- vv. 15–18 The priests leave the water and the Jordan River returns to overflowing its banks
- vv. 19–24 They camp at Gilgal and Joshua explains why they placed the stones there

Charts:

Introduction: Joshua 4 deals with a memorial which was erected to commemorate the crossing of the Jordan dry-shod. Simply, all that will occur is that twelve representatives, one each from each of the twelve tribes, will take a stone from the middle of the Jordan, and they will pile these stones up in Gilgal as a sign to future generations of what had gone before. The purpose of the holding back of the Jordan and the holding back of the sea of reeds is also given in this chapter—so that all the people of the earth will know how mighty is the hand of God. It is also to be a teaching aide to the descendants of the Israelites for years to come. What God was looking for was some consistency in the testimony of those who had seen the miracles with His Word. Recall, that *with two or more witnesses, a testimony may be established*. What happened is so phenomenal that it is difficult for anyone to believe; therefore, generations to follow had the testimony of God's Word; they had the testimony of their elders; and they had the testimony of the stones. Unbelievers do not like to admit it, but they have heard the testimony of God over and over again. God has spoken to them many times. They have had to drown out what God had to say with their own negative volition. I recall as an unbeliever lying about being a believer so that He would not witness to me again.

There is not a lot of reason for chapters 3 and 4 to be separated. Many commentators take them both together. NIV Study Bible: *In this account the author uses an "overlay" technique in which, having narrated the crossing to its conclusion (ch. 3), he returns to various points in the event to enlarge on several details: the stones for a memorial (4:1–9); the successful crossing by all Israel (4:10–14); the renewed flow of the river after the crossing was completed (4:15–18). The final paragraph of ch. 4 (vv. 19–24) picks up the story again from 3:17 and complete the account by noting Israel's encampment at Gilgal and the erecting of the stone memorial.*¹ Barnes, speaking to the same topic, wrote: *A certain completeness and finish is given to each division of the narrative, and to effect this the writer more than once repeats himself, anticipates the actual order of events, and distributes into parts occurrences which in fact took place once for all.*² I.e., Joshua does not give the events of this and the previous chapter in chronological order; furthermore, he repeats himself at times, in order to give a fuller understanding of what took place.

Now let me give you J. Vernon McGee's summary of the chapter, which is short and to the point: *Twelve men are appointed to take twelve stones out of the Jordan River and twelve other stones are set up in the midst of the Jordan River as a memorial. The priests carrying the ark pass over the river, and the water of the river returns to its normal flow. God magnifies Joshua.*³ Now that you have a general rundown on what will occur in this chapter, let me quote Edersheim: *It was fitting that a miracle similar to that of the Exodus from Egypt should mark the entrance into the Land of Promise; fitting also, that the commencement of Joshua's ministry should be thus a glorious pledge of future victory in the might of their God (ver. 10), while to their enemies it was a sure token of the judgment about to overtake them (Josh. 5:1).*⁴

¹ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 291.

² *Barnes' Notes*, Baker Books, ©1996; Vol. II, p. 357.

³ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 29.

⁴ Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History Old Testament*; ©1995 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; p. 305.

McGee, again: *Some of the important things to remember in this chapter are that the Ark goes before and divides the Jordan River—not the rod of Moses. The Ark goes before, carried by priests. Christ goes before us through death, but goes with us through this life. Jordan is typical⁵ of Christ's death, not ours.⁶* Don't misunderstand what is going on here. All of this book is a literal recount of what occurred. However, this book of Joshua is also rich in meaning. Actual historical occurrences in the Bible are often fraught with a second meaning and even a third meaning. We will find the same thing out when we enter into the prophetic books. There are several prophecies which serve double-duty; i.e., they speak of two events, both near and far. Much of what really occurred in Jewish history serves double-duty as well. It has real and actual historical significance and also has a deeper, theological meaning. We have to be careful here—there is a great movement to allegorize the Scripture every chance one gets (in fact, there is a lot of that in the Charismatic movement because many of the pastors are spiritually sloppy and lazy and do not study Scriptures as they should⁷).

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Twelve Stones from the River Jordan Are Placed on Land

Literally:

Smoother English rendering:

Then it came to pass when [lit., as which] all the nation had finished to pass over the Jordan, then Y^ehowah said unto Joshua, to say,

Joshua
4:1

So it came to pass when the entire nation had crossed over the Jordan, that Jehovah spoke to Joshua, saying,

As we find throughout most of the book of Joshua, Joshua begins most of his sentences with a waw consecutive. This generally sets up a sequence of events. However, these events do not have to be sequenced chronologically. God could have spoken to Joshua on just one or two occasions, and Joshua records the directives given by God in sequence. With each directive, Joshua states what followed the directive.

The verb is the Qal imperfect of the verb *to be*, and then we have the compound of the preposition *ka`āsher* (כַּאֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *kah-uh-SHER*], which is the preposition *kaph* (כ) (No Strong's # BDB #453), which, means *like, as*; and the relative pronoun *`āsher* (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *uh-SHER*] (Strong's #834 BDB #81), which means *which, when or who*. Together, literally, we have *as which*; however, it means *as which, as one who, like as, according as, as, when*. Strong's #834 BDB #455.

The next word is *all of or [the] entire*, followed by the masculine substantive *gōwy* (גוֹי) [pronounced *GOHee*], which you recognize as *goy*. This word means *people, nation*; in the plural it is used predominantly (if not exclusively) for Gentile nations (Gen. 10:5 Lev. 20:38 Deut. 28:65). In the singular, this often stands for the nation Israel (Gen. 12:2 17:20 Num. 14:12 Joshua 4:1). Strong's #1471 BDB #156.

We find two Qal infinitive constructs, preceded by the *lāmed* preposition, which most smoothly translate into our English as participles. In the middle of the verse, we have the verb *to cross over, to pass over*; and at the end of the verse we have *to say*.

“Take to yourselves out from the people twelve men, one man one man from a tribe;

Joshua
4:2

“Take out from the people twelve men, one from each tribe;

⁵ This is one of the very few instances where J. Vernon is technical; this means that the Jordan River and the some of the activity pertaining thereto speaks symbolically of Jesus Christ in His death, and not of our death.

⁶ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 32.

⁷ Hence, this is why the ones who are saved are holy rollers in the first place. They have but a two-fold interest in Scripture: (1) to backup and justify their psychotic behavior (tongues) and then parlay this into the positively scary *being slain in the spirit* and *being drunk in the spirit* (I do not capitalize *spirit* here because they serve a different spirit than the Spirit of God); and, the Scriptures (2) give them a springboard to say a lot of incredibly stupid things.

We've had almost this exact same phrasing before back in Joshua 3:12, so we will not repeat the exegesis here. As mentioned before, it is unclear whether Joshua chose twelve men in anticipation that God would want a memorial erected, or whether this was in response to Joshua 4:2. The wording is so similar as to suggest that Joshua was repeating the order from God in Joshua 3:17 from this verse (on the other hand, it could suggest that Joshua has a very limited vocabulary in recounting these events). Given the latter truth, this would still suggest that the order came from God first and then Joshua gave the order, indicating that Joshua 3:17 and 4:2 are not in chronological order. Joshua 3:12 would indicate that and indicate that Joshua, in his recollection, jumped the gun in calling out these twelve men. Since they did not have cut and paste word programs in those days, what Joshua wrote stayed and he makes mention of the mandate in this verse. There is no contradiction and there is nothing out of the ordinary as to what happened. This particular order precedes what occurred in Joshua 3; it immediately follows God's directive to Joshua in Joshua 3:7–8. This order was given prior to crossing over the Jordan and Joshua had the men set aside prior to crossing over the Jordan. It is in this chapter that the purpose of these twelve men is stated.⁸ Joshua would not personally choose the men but do as God had ordered, allow the tribes to pick the men out (that is the plural of the first verb and its suffix).

“And command them, to say, ‘Take up for yourselves from here out of a midst of the Jordan from [the] standing-place of [the] feet of the priests—having been stabilized—twelve stones and you [all] will carry them with you and you [all] will have deposited them in the place where you are lodging the night.’ “

Joshua
4:3

“And command them, saying, ‘Take twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, from where the priests are standing, and carry them with you and lay them down where you are bivouacking tonight.’ “

In this verse, we have the Qal imperative of *nâsâ'* (נָשֹׂא) [pronounced *naw-SAW*], which means *to take up, to lift up, to bear up*. Strong's #5375 (and Strong's #4984) BDB #669. Then we have the phrase *to yourselves* (or, *for yourselves*) and the *mîn* preposition (*from, away from, out from*) followed by the demonstrative masculine singular adjective *zeh* (זֶה) [pronounced *zeh*], which means *here, this*. Strong's #2063, 2088, 2090 BDB #260. Where these stones will be taken from is masculine singular construct of *matstsâ'v* (מַצְטָאֵב) [pronounced *matz-TZA^BV*], which means *standing-place, station, garrison, post*. It comes from a verb which means *to stand up, to stand up perpendicular*. Strong's #4673 BDB #662. The lack of a definite article here means that this is not the only place where the Levites would be stationed. Therefore, it is *a* stopping point, *a* standing-place. As we cover these minor points of grammar, you may be thinking that this is overkill; that with a narrative like this, there is no need to go into the Hebrew. For me, there are two reasons: (1) Old habits die hard, and, (2) when we find a word used in a simple narrative where its meaning is clear and undisputed, this helps us in other areas of Scripture where the same word is used by a greater intellect than Joshua, such as Job or Moses.

This place where the priests are standing is described by the Hiphil infinitive absolute of *kûwn* (כּוּן) [pronounced *koon*], which means *to erect (to stand up perpendicular), to establish, to prepare, to be stabilized*. The Hiphil is the causal stem—they have been caused to stand (had God not held back the waters, they would have been swept under). An infinitive absolute is a verbal noun which can serve as a noun, a verb or an adverb. This is a part of speech which stands alone; although as a complementary adverb, where we have the same verb in a different stem and/or configuration, it serves to intensify the meaning of the verb. I translated this *having been stabilized*, which is more passive than causative. Other renders are: *established* (describing the standing-place; Young); *with firm footing* (Rotherham); *standing-firm* (NASB, one of the better renderings, to my way of thinking); *stood firm* (KJV, NKJV, *The Amplified Bible*); *stood* (NRSV). The verse had to be modified in other ways in order to use some of these other renderings. Strong's #3559 BDB #465. The priests walked out into the water, into a shallow area, and waited for the water to stop.

One of the first verbs describing what the twelve men would do is the Hiphil perfect of *'â^bvar* (אָבַר) [pronounced *aw-BAHR*], which means *to pass over, to pass through, to pass, to go over*. In the Hiphil, it means *to set apart, to cause to sound, to pass over, to cause to pass, to put away, to pass through, to conduct, to carry over, to make*

⁸ And, here is a footnote of little or no consequence, but this is the first time that the footnotes of my Scofield Bible, my NIV Study Bible, my NASB, my NKJV Bible and Barnes Notes all give the exact same reference, Joshua 3:12.

proclamation, to do away, to take away, to bring, carried, made, have brought. When the men caused the stones to pass over, they were carrying the stones. Strong's #5674 BDB #716. So far, this gives us: "And command them, to say, 'Take up for yourselves from here out of a midst of the Jordan from [the] standing-place of [the] feet of the priests—having been stablized—twelve stones and you [all] will carry them...'"

The next verb is the Hiphil perfect of *nûwach* (נִוַּח) [pronounced *NOO-ahk*], which means *to rest, to cause to rest, set down, lay down, deposit, leave.* Strong's #5117 (and #3240) BDB #628.

We have a couple of cognates which follow. First we have *in the* and the masculine singular substantive *mâlôwn* (מָלוֹן) [pronounced *maw-LOHN*], which means *inn, lodging place, camp.* Strong's #4411 BDB #533. The last verb is a bit difficult; it is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of *lûn* (לוּן) [pronounced *loon*], which means *to lodge, to pass the night, to spend the night.* Strong's #3885 BDB #533. Even though the perfect tense is generally used for completed action, God uses the perfect from the standpoint of His perfect omniscience, knowing that his mandate would be obeyed. What is difficult is that this is followed by the preposition *in* which has a masculine singular suffix, referring back to the *lodging place, the camp.* The verb is preceded by a relative pronoun; Young renders this: *...and placed them in the lodging-place in which ye lodge to-night.* In other words, Young places the relative pronoun and prepositional phrase together. *Tonight* is literally *the night.* The fulfillment of Joshua's order is found both in Joshua 4:8 and in 4:20. It is common for our minds to think in a very chronological order. My desire in studying the Word of God is to take it in a chronological way, so that I see the unfolding of divine revelation. That is how my mind works. The Hebrew mind, at that time, or, if you will, the eastern mind did not think that way. They often gave a brief outline and then filled in the details afterward. We do something like that. We are taught in school to outline our thoughts before writing an essay; many of us scratch out a couple of catchy phrases, a few ideas, and then place them in some sort of order before writing our essay. The Hebrew did not have a scratch pad. He could not go back and erase; nor could he cut and paste. So, it would seem natural for a writer of that time to set up the general event and then to fill in the specifics. Setting up the event is akin to our outlining prior to writing an essay or a persuasive paper.

Again, so that our mind can grasp this: God gave Joshua certain orders on the other side of the Jordan, orders which Joshua recorded in two or three different places in Scripture, listed sequentially as they would be obey in time (and possibly sequentially as they were given). Then the twelve men were chosen. Then the priests walked out to the water and stood in the Jordan. The river not only dried up, but the drying process may have been supernatural, providing a dry ground over which the Israelites could walk. The entire nation crossed during that one day. They would all lodge together in one place that same night. They crossed to the other side, and Joshua took note of the 2½ tribes who marched with them, fully armed for war. The twelve men who were chosen each stopped on their march and took a large stone with them and laid them down on the other side of the river. They picked up one stone each from the dry ground and carried these stones back to the Jordan River and (probably) stacked them one on top of the other out in the middle of the Jordan where the priests stood. This way anyone could walk by and, even during the heavy flooding season, see this stack of rocks stand above the water (my guess is that the priests stood knee deep or so in this water to begin with). Then the twelve men and the priests left the Jordan River, the priests being helped out of the water. The men possibly carried the stones further to what would be called Gilgal and stacked them there. This information will help us follow Joshua's recording of the events in the subsequent verses.

I will allude several times to the Hebrew way of thinking and ordering his thoughts. Let me give you the viewpoint of Keil and Delitzsch: *This [the order in which the narrative proceeds in the book of Joshua] makes it appear as though God did not give the command to Joshua till after the people had all crossed over, whereas the twelve men had already been chosen for the purpose (ch. 3:12). But this appearance, and the discrepancy that seems to arise, vanish as soon as we take the different clauses,—which are joined together by vav conscutives, according to the simple form of historical composition adopted by the Hebrews, "and Jehovah spake, saying," etc. (vv. 2, 3); "and Joshua called the twelve men," etc. (v. 4),—and arranger them in logical order, and with their proper subordination to one another, according to our own modes of thought and conversion, as follows: "Then Joshua called the twelve men,—as Jehovah has commanded him, saying, 'Take you twelve men out of the people,' etc.,—and said to them," etc.*⁹

⁹ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 36.

A memorial accomplishes several purposes. When the people walked through the midst of the Jordan River, dry-shod, it was an amazing sight. Right where there had been water perhaps an hour before was now dry, even though this was the spring time of the heavy rains where the banks overflowed. God was not going to do hundreds upon hundreds of miracles for these people—He did a few spectacular miracles and the memorial was placed there to always remind them what occurred and that they were a part of it. The placement of the memorial also was the beginning of a conversation between a father and his son, and mother and her daughter, about the deliverance of Y^ehowah of the Jewish people. Had just one or two parents made mention of this, then such a tale would have been passed off as some old wives tale; however, most of the population of Israel told their sons and daughters who, in turn, told their sons and daughters. From this verbal testimony, based upon this pile of stones at Gilgal, we have a separate confirmation of the text of Joshua. Certainly, this confirmation was only good for a couple of generations, but that was long enough for the book of Joshua to be accepted as part of the canon of Scripture.

The Joshua called unto the twelve men whom he had confirmed out from the sons of Israel, one man one man out from a tribe.

Joshua
4:4

Then Joshua called to the twelve whom he had affirmed out from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe.

What Joshua had done was the Hiphil perfect of kûwn (כּוּן) [pronounced *koon*], which, again, means *to erect (to stand up perpendicular), to establish, to prepare, to be stabilized*. Gesenius also gives additional meanings as *to confirm, to set up, to maintain, to found [a city]*, among others. Strong's #3559 BDB #465. We just had this word in the previous verse; as usual, you will note the more limited vocabulary of Joshua. Joshua did not personally choose these men; somehow, the each tribe chose one man. Joshua just confirmed or acknowledged the choice.

Then Joshua said to them, “Pass over before faces of [the] ark of Y^ehowah, your God unto a midst of the Jordan and take up for yourselves each one stone upon his should according to a numbering of [the] tribes of [the] sons of Israel;

Joshua
4:5

And then Joshua said to them, “Cross over before the presence of the ark of Joshua, your God, to the middle of the Jordan and take up one stone per man; one stone per tribe.

Let's just look at some other renderings, if we could:

The Amplified Bible

And Joshua said to them, Pass over before the ark of the Lord your God in the midst of the Jordan, and take up every man of you a stone on his shoulder, as is the number of the tribes of the Israelites;

The Emphasized Bible

...and Joshua said unto them: Pass ye over before the ark of Yahweh your God into the midst of the Jordan,—and lift ye up each man one stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel;

NASB

...and Joshua said to them, “Cross again to the ark of the LORD our God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel.

Young's Lit. Translation

...and Joshua saith to them, ‘Pass over before the ark of Jehovah your God unto the midst of the Jordan and lift up for you each, one stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel,...

Joshua is simply obeying the orders of God from vv. 2–3, almost word-for-word. The phrase *before the faces of the ark* could be less literally rendered *before [the] ark* or *before the presence of [the] ark*. I don't see these men as standing out apart from the tribes of Israel. There would be a certain amount of milling about and others who were there. So that everyone does not stop and pick up a stone, Joshua tells them to take up one stone per man one stone per tribe. It is probably time to look at the **Doctrine of Twelve—only started**.

“In order that this may be a sign among you [that] when your sons inquire in time to come, to say, ‘What the stones the these to you?’

Joshua
4:6

“In order that this might be a sign among you so that when your children inquire of you in times to come, saying, ‘What is the meaning of these stones?’

This verse begins with the compounded conjunction *l'ma'an* (לְמַעַן) [pronounced *l'-MAH-gahn*], which means *for the sake of, on account of, to the intent of, to the intent that, to the purpose that, in order that*. This preposition emphasizes the cause or purpose of the action. Strong's #4616 BDB #775. This is followed by the Qal imperfect of the absolute status quo verb *to be*. The subject of the verb is the demonstrative adjective *this*. Together, they would be rendered: **“In order that this may be...”** This is followed by the noun *sign* and the *bêyth* and the masculine substantive *qere^{bv}* (קֶרֶב) [pronounced *KEH-re^{bv}*], which means *midst, inward part*. With the *bêyth* preposition, it means *in the midst of, among, into the midst of* (after a verb of motion). Strong's #7130 BDB #899. With this noun is the 3rd person masculine plural suffix. **“In order that this may be a sign among you [all]...”**

The next phrase is, literally, **“...when your sons inquire...”** In some codices and in 4 early printed editions, we have the additional words *of their fathers*.¹⁰ This is followed by the adverb of time *mâchâr* (מָחָר) [pronounced *maw-KHAWR*], which means, literally, *tomorrow*; but figuratively can stand for *in time to come, in the future, down the road* (chronologically speaking). Strong's #4279 BDB #563. This is followed by *to say*, **“What the stones the this to you?”** Altogether, this gives us: **“In order that this may be a sign among you; [that] when your sons inquire in time to come, to say, ‘What [are] these stones to you?’**

Throughout the Law, there are various things done to provoke questions on the part of the children to their fathers. When God gave Moses instructions for the first Passover, He said: **“And you will observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever. And it will come to pass about when you enter the land which Jehovah will give you, as He has promised, that you will observe this rite. And it will come to pass when your children will say to you, ‘What does this rite mean to you?’ that you will say, ‘It is a Passover sacrifice to Jehovah Who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He struck down the Egyptians, but spared our homes.’”** (Ex. 12:24–27a; see also Ex. 13:13–16 and Num. 16:39–40). **“When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean, which Jehovah commanded you?’ Then you will say to your son, ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt; and Jehovah brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand. Furthermore, Jehovah showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household. And He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers. So Jehovah commanded us to observe all these statutes, to far Jehovah our God for our good always and for our survival, as it is today. And it will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all these commandments before Jehovah our God, just as He commanded us.”** (Deut. 6:20–25).

We find somewhat of a fulfillment of this in Psalm 44:1–3, written hundreds of years later: **O God, we have heard with our ears what our fathers have told us, the work that You did in their days, in the days of old. You, with Your own hand drove out the nations; then You planted them; You afflicted the peoples, then You spread them abroad. For by their own sword, they did not possess the land, and their own arm did not deliver them; but Your right hand, and Your arm, and the light of Your presence, for you gave them grace. And again in Psalm 78:1–8: Listen, O my people, to my instruction: Incline your ears to the word of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old which we have heard and known and or fathers have told us. We will not conceal them from their children but tell them to the generations to come the praises of Jehovah and His strength and His wondrous works that He has done, for He established a testimony in Jacob and He appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should teach them to their children, that the generation to come might know, even the children yet to be born, that they may arise and them to their children, that they should put their confidence in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments and be not like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not prepare its heart and whose spirit was not faithful to God.**

¹⁰ When Joshua repeats this to his people, we have the same additional words in some codices in v. 21 as well.

Now this is not the same thing that Moses commanded Israel back in Deut. 27:2, when he said: “So it will be on the day when you cross the Jordan to the land which Jehovah your God gives you, that you will set up for yourself large stones, and coat them with lime, and write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over, in order that you may enter the land which Jehovah your God gives you—a land flowing with milk and honey, as Jehovah, the God of your fathers, promised you.”

What we have here are a number of laws, of signs, of memorials, all of which point toward Jehovah, the God of Israel, as the One and True God, and to Jesus Christ, Jehovah God in the flesh, Who walked among us. Today, we have little by way of ritual, to call our attention to our Lord. Primarily what God has given us today for ritual is the Eucharist, the New Testament extension of the Passover. That is spoken of in I Cor. 11:23–26. However, what we lack in ritual is more than made up to us with the availability of God’s Word. We take it for granted how incredible it is that we have God’s full Word that we can carry with us everywhere.

“And you will speak to them, “Which waters of the Jordan were cut off before [the] faces of [the] ark of a covenant of Y^ehowah in its passing over of in the Jordan; waters of the Jordan were cut off.’ And the stones the this will be for a memorial to sons of Israel unto ages.”

Joshua
4:7

“And you will say to them, ‘Herein, the waters of the Jordan were cut off in the presence of the ark of the covenant of Jehovah when it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.’ And these stones will be a memorial to the sons of Israel forever.”

Joshua finds himself repeating himself somewhat, but this does not appear to be a transpositional error of some scribe as the wording is not exactly the same. An interesting speculation as to whether God had to tell Joshua this or whether he figured it out for himself. There is certainly precedent in his life to recognize the reason for doing this. The fact of that God predicted this is well-established in Joshua 3:9, 13: *The Joshua said to the sons of Israel, “Come here, and hear the Words of Jehovah your God...and it will come to pass when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of Jehovah, the Jehovah of all the earth, will rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap.”*¹¹

So sons of Israel did so as commanded Joshua. And so they lifted up twelve stones from a midst of the Jordan as which Y^ehowah told unto Joshua according to a numbering of tribes of sons of Israel. So then they carried them over with them unto the lodging-place and then they laid them down there.

Joshua
4:8

Therefore, the sons of Israel did what Joshua commanded them: they lifted up twelve stones out from the middle of the Jordan River, as Jehovah told Joshua according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites. And then they carried them to their campsite and laid them down there.

As you see, this is almost plodding in a way. We have God’s command to Joshua, Joshua’s command to the people, and then the carrying out of this command by the people. This is the reason that I believe that Joshua figured out that God would stop up the waters of the Jordan, rather than was told that—Joshua lists each and every little command, then lists his command, and then writes of the fulfillment of the command. Vv. 1–3 is the command from God; vv. 5–7 is the command of Joshua; and v. 8 is the obedience of the command of Joshua.

I have two theories: what I want to hang with is that God’s order to Joshua was as abbreviated as we see above in v. 2–3 and that Joshua understood and stated the purpose of such an act. The second possibility is that Joshua either did not record all of what God said or could not remember word-for-word what He said. At first, I rejected the latter two views, because, in the first place, Joshua is probably not going to give more space to what he said than to what God said, if what they said was the same thing. His plodding style seems to indicate that he would say everything. Furthermore, it is possible that Joshua forgot exactly what God had told him and did not want to

¹¹ I need to be careful here. It is my contention that God only told Joshua half of the story and allowed Joshua to figure out the rest on his own. See my notes on Joshua 3:13.

quote his Lord and do it incorrectly; however, as Joshua writes this, he is guided by the Holy Spirit, Who brings all these things to his mind. God does not have to tell Joshua everything. He has studied God's Word, at the hand of Moses (he may have even been the scribe for Moses, although only at the end, if at all). He has studied under Moses and has seen first hand what God can do and does do and, even though Joshua is a simple man, he can draw accurate conclusions, unlike believers of today. However, upon further study, I now find myself leaning toward the idea that we are getting an abbreviated version of what God said to Joshua. In the following verse, Joshua will say, "[Come here and listen to the words of Jehovah your God.](#)" Then, much of what he will say is not found earlier in this chapter. I guess what I want to think, and I haven't ruled this out, is that God did not tell Joshua that the water would stop and that Israel would cross. In what is recorded previous, this is not mentioned. Based upon what he has seen and what he has learned, I must admit that I like the idea that Joshua drew some conclusions himself and that it was he who figured out that the waters would stop flowing.

As I write this, something else occurs to me. There is someone who will read or hear this, and then will start drawing goofy conclusions, expecting God to get them out of some sort of a jam through supernatural means. The majority of the jams that we find ourselves in, we got ourselves into through bad judgment and stupid decisions—in fact, anti-Biblical decisions. Most of the time it is to our benefit to see where these decisions lead us and to suffer the consequences of these bad decisions. A young unmarried Christian girl who allows herself to become pregnant made a lot of stupid decisions to get her to that point. No matter what she chooses, the results of that decision will be with her for the rest of her life. If she chooses abortion, she may possibly never become pregnant again; she may be wracked with guilt for the rest of her life. She may be troubled that she ended the life of her baby merely because he or she was going to be a tremendous inconvenience. If she gives the child away in adoption, she may feel less guilty, but for the rest of her life, she will regret not bringing that child up. And if she keeps the child, she has gone from child to adult, and no longer gets to live out the rest of her natural childhood. And she will find out within the first couple of hours, this child is quite a bit more than taking care of a cute puppy. Most young women in this position at least have the common sense to realize that something weird and supernatural is not going to occur to change what happened nor will anything happen to change the results of their decision. However, a believer might dig themselves into some financial hole over materialism lust, and then think that God is going to bail them out of the jam by letting them win the lottery or win big at the races or some other screwy idea. They think that they can make bad decision after bad decision and end up in great prosperity because they pray fervently to God. Get real. When you come to where you are as a result of a lot of bad decisions, take responsibility for those bad decisions and realize that the results of those bad decisions will be with you for a long time. This is to our benefit. Now, none of this discussion has anything to do with Joshua and the stopping of the water. However, I know how some of you think. You make goofy, unwarranted applications. Joshua is where he is as a result of a lot of good, divine-viewpoint decisions. He has come to the Jordan River over which he must lead two million people. Since he has seen God stop up the Sea of Reeds with his own eyes and since God has commanded him to take the people to the other side, then it is reasonable for him to conclude that God will stop the flow of that river.

There is also the matter of v. 20, which reads: [And those twelve stones which they had take out from the Jordan, Joshua caused to be set up at Gilgal.](#) My thoughts are that the twelve men brought the twelve stones out of the river bed and placed them temporarily at their campsite. Then they took twelve stones from the land and stacked them in the river bed; and then Joshua had them take the twelve river bed stones to a centralized location, later named Gilgal, where the stones were arranged (probably stacked, to match those in the Jordan). Keil and Delitzsch concur here, noting: The Hebrew word found here, *nûwach* (נַוַּח) [pronounced *NOO-ahk*] *does not signify that they set up the stones as a memorial, but simply that they laid them down in a their place of encampment. The setting up at Gilgal is mentioned for the first time in v. 20.*¹² *Nûwach* simply means *to rest, to set down, to deposit.* Strong's #5117 BDB #628.

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¹² Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 36.

Twelve Stones from the Land Are Placed in the Jordan/the 2½ Tribes Cross Over

And twelve stones Joshua caused to be set up in a midst of the Jordan in a place of standing of feet of the priests bearing an ark of the covenant so they are there unto the day the this.

Joshua
4:9

Then Joshua caused twelve stones to be stacked up in the middle of the Jordan where the priests holding the ark of the covenant had been standing and these stones remain there even to this day.

Because of what I read in the NIV Study Bible, I thought it best that we see a couple of translations here:

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <i>The Emphasized Bible</i> | Twelve stones also did Joshua set up in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where stood the feet of the priests who were bearing the ark of the covenant,—and they have remained there until this day. |
| KJV | And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of <i>the</i> Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood; and they are there unto this day. |
| NASB | Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan at the place where the feet of the priests who carried the ark of the covenant were standing, and they are there to this day. |
| NIV | Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priests who carried the arks of the covenant had stood. And they are there to this day. |
| The Septuagint | And Joshua set also other twelve stones in Jordan itself, in the place that was under the feet of the priests that bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord; and there they are to this day. |
| <i>Young's Lit. Translation</i> | ...even the twelve stones hath Joshua raised up out of the midst of the Jordan, the place of the standing of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant, and they are there unto this day. |

As you can see, on one side we have Young and NIV, and on the other side we have all the other translations. So we had better tear this verse apart, and then interpret it. The verse begins with a *wâw* conjunction, allowing for the interpretation of either *and* or *even*. With Joshua's vocabulary, I would have expected the *wâw* consecutive. However, what we could have here is the concept of *in addition to*. We then have *twelve stones caused to be set up Joshua*. It is typical in the Hebrew to list the direct object, then the verb and then the subject. The verb is the 3rd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect of *qûwm* (קוּם) [pronounced *koom*]. In the Qal stem, it means *to stand, to rise up* (Gen. 37:7 Ex. 33:10 Prov. 28:12). In the Hiphil it means, among other things, *to establish, to fulfill, to cause to stand, to perform* a testimony, a vow, a commandment, a promise (Gen. 6:18 17:7 26:3 Num. 30:14). Its use here were indicate that these stones were stacked on one top of the other. Strong's #6965 BDB #877. This cannot be interpreted as *taken out of*. The preposition which follows is the *bêyth* preposition, *bê* (ב) [pronounced *b'*] which denotes proximity. It is translated *in, among, into, against, with, at, through, by*. Gesenius breaks this down into four classes. (A). It's primary use is with the ablative and it is generally rendered by our English *in*. When the thing referred to is a multitude or a group, then *bê* can mean *in, among, in the midst of*. It can refer to the limits of something, the boundaries within which something falls, e.g., *within* the gates (Ex. 20:10), *within* three years (Dan. 11:20). Once and awhile, this is used after verbs of motion, carrying the connotation of *into*. (B). The second class of usages has to do with the designation of *nearness* or *vicinity* or *motion to a place*, so as to be *at* or *near* it. Proximity is the key. (C) The third class of uses may be called the *bêyth* of accompaniment or of instrument, which is related to the notion of *nearness*. Here, *bêyth* may be rendered *with* or *by*. *With* can denote either instrumentality or accompaniment. (D) the 4th class refers to the motion to a place; it means *to, unto, upon, up to*. No Strong's # BDB #88. If we were taking the stones *out of* the river bed, we would have used the *mîn* preposition here. It is not a matter of translation, it is a matter of what is found in the Hebrew and in the Greek (*bêyth*'s Greek equivalent, *ἐν*, is found in the Septuagint). The next noun is the substantive *tâvekê* (תַּבְּעָה) [pronounced *taw-VEKÊ*], which means *midst*; when preceded by the prefixed *bêyth* preposition, it means *in the middle of, in the midst of*. We find this continually throughout the Pentateuch in connection with Yahweh dwelling in the midst of the Jews in the tabernacle (Ex. 25:8 29:45 Lev. 15:31); we also

find this word in Gen. 3:8, when our Lord walked in the midst of the garden. With the preposition *mîn*, it means *out from the middle of something, out of the midst of*. Strong's #8432 BDB #1063. In other words, in the Hebrew and in the Greek, they are stacking stones in the midst of the Jordan River. It is not a matter of interpretation as the NIV Study Bible implies, nor am I aware of any manuscripts which present a different view.

Now, at first, this verse threw me for a loop. Did Joshua have the stones placed where they lodged at Gilgal, or did he place the stones in the water? God's order was to take twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from the spot where the priests had been standing, and haul them over to where the Israelites were encamped that first night on the other side of the Jordan and to place them there. This was all fulfilled in vv. 8 and 20. Joshua also took twelve other stones, presumably from the land west of the Jordan, at his own initiative,¹³ and set these stones in the middle of the Jordan. There are a number of areas where believers with doctrine have done more than just the direct command from God. The most noteworthy is the building of the temple by Solomon. God did not command Solomon to do that; he chose to do it, and God gave Solomon His permission and blessing. Both the tabernacle and the temple represent our Lord Jesus Christ; we covered the former in the book of Exodus; we will cover the latter when we study Solomon. Furthermore, the tabernacle (the tent), represented the first advent of Jesus Christ; He walked here among us temporarily. The temple was a more permanent structure, representing our Lord's rule over this earth in the Millennium. **His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed** (Dan. 7:14). **"And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end."** (Luke 1:33). My point in all of this is that there are times when man will choose to do something which God has not given him direct command to do, but which is valid. In glancing at Barnes Notes, it appears as if we of a like mind here. *Another set of stones is intended than that before mentioned. The one set was erected by the command of God at the spot where they passed the night...the other by Joshua on the spot where the prests' feet rested whilst they bore up the ark during the passage of the people.*¹⁴

You should be aware that there are objections to this passage—not objections based upon the manuscripts which we have or upon any of the codices, but some have philosophical objections. They have assumed that this is a gloss—a passage which has been inserted at a later time. The problem of some authors is they are concerned (1) that the stones would be immediately washed away, (2) that we find no direct order from God to do this, and (3) the stones would not be able to be seen with the resumption of the flow of the Jordan. First of all, nothing is said of the size of these twelve stones; obviously, we are not speaking of twelve small, rounded stones. Very likely these were very heavy—close to the maximum that any individual strong man could move, and that they were flat so that they could be stacked. The priests were standing in shallow water originally, so that this memorial would be seen, even when the Jordan River resumed its flowing. And certainly, at some point in time, these rocks would have been moved, either by water or by man. That does not diminish their importance to the first few generations of Jews to observe this monument. We have already dealt with the *problem* of the lack of a direct order from God.¹⁵

Today, these stones represent the twelve hidden and scattered tribes of Israel—certainly, I realize that there are millions of Jews in the world today, as there should be, scattered throughout all the nations, as predicted in Lev. 26; and that many of these Jews even claim that they know from what tribe they came (even though their birth records, as I understand it, were destroyed at the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD). However, the Jews no longer function as God's chosen people, as a kingdom of priests, but they are there, hidden, right below the surface, to be called out of the midst of the Jordan, to be called out of hiding when their time comes. **And I heard the number of those who were sealed, 144,000 sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel, 12,000 sealed from the tribe of Judah; 12,000 sealed from the tribe of Reuben; 12,000 sealed from the tribe of Gad; 12,000 sealed from the tribe of Asher; 12,000 sealed from the tribe of Naphtali; 12,000 sealed from the tribe of Manasseh; 12,000 sealed from the tribe of Simeon; 12,000 sealed from the tribe of Levi; 12,000 sealed from the tribe of Issachar; 12,000 sealed from the tribe of Zebulun; 12,000 sealed from the tribe of Joseph; 12,000 sealed from the tribe of Benjamin.**" (Rev. 7:4–8). Notice that the tribe of Dan is missing. **"Dan will judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan**

¹³ I disagree with Scofield at this point.

¹⁴ *Barnes' Notes*, Baker Books, ©1996; Vol. II, p. 359.

¹⁵ And theirs is the view that God did order Joshua to do this, and he just did not record God's mandate to him, but I have already explained why that is unlikely.

will be a serpent in the way, a horned snake in the path that bites the horse's heel so that the rider falls backward." (Gen. 49:16–17). Ephraim, is also missing. Ephraim and Manasseh were the two half-tribes which came from Joseph.

There is a more common interpretation of this passage. Recall, if you would that our Lord was baptized in this Jordan River and His baptism meant when He went under water, He was fully identified with our sins; when He stepped out of the water, stood for His resurrection. When (and if) we were baptized, we were fully identified with Jesus in His death and we were washed of our sins. When we stood up and walked out of the water, we arose with Him in His resurrection, both to a new life on earth and a new life for eternity.

McGee gives us a similar view, first quoting from Rom. 6:1–4, Philip's *translation*:¹⁶ *"Now what is our response to be? Shall be sin to our heart's content and see how far we can exploit the grace of God? What a ghastly thought! We, who have died to sin—how could we live in sin a moment longer?"* Now when did we die to sin? *"Have you forgotten that all of us who were baptized into Jesus Christ were, by that very action, sharing in his death? We were dead and buried with him in baptism, so that just as he was raised from the dead by the splendid revelation of the Father's power so we too might rise to life on a new plane altogether."* My friend, may I say to you that Christ went into death for you and me, and that is set before us here in the book of Joshua. Twelve stones were put into the water of death. Those twelve stones were placed in Jordan to speak of the death of Christ. And the twelve stones taken out of Jordan and put on the west bank of the river represent the resurrection of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ died over nineteen hundred years ago, and Paul makes it clear in the sixth chapter of Romans that we are identified with Him in His death. It is too bad that the word "baptize" was transliterated and not translated. It is a Greek word baptizo and its primary meaning here has no connection with water. It speaks of Identification. We are identified with Christ in His death, and when He died, my friend, He died for us. His death was our death. When He arose from the dead, then we arose from the dead. And we are joined today to a living Christ. It is only in the measure that we are joined to Him that you and I can enjoy all spiritual blessings. I trust that you realize that. We have become identified with Him!¹⁷

McGee continues: *Now, when the children of Israel crossed over the river, they became citizens of Palestine. They became forever identified with that land—so much so, that today, even at this hour, they speak of the Jew in Palestine. And when he is out of that land, he is spoken of as the "wandering Jew."* Let us tie this fact up with another great fact: *When you, my friend, came to Christ, an accepted Him as your Saviour, His death became your death and His resurrection your resurrection. When you "wander" from this identity, even briefly, think of the tragic meaning.*¹⁸

McGee again: *Paul wrote a blessed truth to the Ephesians: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus"* (Ephesians 2:4–7). *When He died, He died for your sin that you might have life; and when He came back from the dead, His life was then your life. Now you are joined to the living God. My friend, that is one of the great truths of the Word of God.*¹⁹

Zodhiates: *The phrase "unto this day" signifies that when Joshua wrote this book at the end of his life (Josh. 24:26), these two pillars were still standing. For most of the year, the Jordan is a shallow river so the pillar*

¹⁶ Which McGee points out is really an interpretation, or a running commentary, as opposed to being a real translation. My less than literal verse is often the same—it's more of an interpretation or running commentary.

¹⁷ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 30.

¹⁸ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 31.

¹⁹ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 31. I may be leaving you with the impression that I like McGee. Many Bible expositors, including myself, sometimes sound unnecessarily complex. McGee had the gift of taking great and complex spiritual truths and placing them into simple language. Most anyone could understand McGee, but you could not accuse him of watering down what he taught. In his Thru the Bible ministry, he taught almost every major theological doctrine covered in any systematic theology book.

of stones in the center of it would be visible as a sign.²⁰ It is obvious by the comment of Zodhiates that he believes these stones were not placed in a circle, but that all twelve were stacked one on top of the other, both in the Jordan River and in the midst of their camp at Gilgal. This makes even more sense, since the name of Gilgal is not necessarily related to a *circle of stones* but to the fact that Jehovah rolled away the iniquity of the Israelites (Joshua 5:9).

And the priests bearers of the ark their standing in a midst of the Jordan until a finishing of all the word which Y^ehowah commanded Joshua to tell unto the people as all which Moses commanded Joshua. So the people hastened and then they passed over.

Joshua
4:10

And so the priests who were bearing the ark, standing in the middle of the Jordan until the command of Jehovah to Joshua had been completed, and until the commands of Moses to Joshua had been completed; then the people quickly moved across the Jordan.

Joshua was acting on the orders of Y^ehowah, his God, and on the orders of Moses. The orders of Moses were to lead the people in his stead; to take his place at the head of Israel. The guidance of Moses was also found in the Word of God, which Joshua studied. Only recently, prior to his death, Moses told Joshua: **“And Jehovah is the one Who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”** (Deut. 31:8).

The phrase *as all which Moses commanded Joshua*, is not found in the Septuagint. Keil and Delitzsch’s remarks are interesting here: *[This phrase doe] not refer to any special instructions which Moses had given to Joshua with reference to the crossing, for no such instructions are to be found in the Pentateuch, nor chan they be inferred from Num. 27:23, Deut. 3:28, or 31:23; they simply affirm that Joshua carried out all the commands which the Lord had given him, in accordance with the charge which he received from Moses at the time when he was first called. Moses had called him and instructed him to lead the people into the promised land, in consequence of a divine command; and had given him the promise, at the same time, that Jehovah would be with him as He had been with Moses. This contained implicate an admonition to Joshua to do only what the Lord should command him. And if this was how Joshua acted, the execution of the commands of God was also an observance of the command of Moses.*²¹ Apart from what Keil and Delitzsch say that it was implied that Joshua do no more, the rest of the observation is apt. As has already been pointed out, there are times when believers have done things in the past with great spiritual impact which were not a direct result of a command from God. Our lives in the Church Age are filled with decisions that we make day in and day out which are not the result of direct command from God, but from our souls being filled with Bible doctrine and being led by the Spirit of God. In fact, that is the essence of our spiritual existence—so we can not imply that Joshua did not make any individual decisions nor can we infer that is what God expected of him. Over and over we see with Joshua a very methodical person who seems to tell us too much of the same thing over and over; so I personally his choice here with regards to the second memorial as initiative.

As I write this, I think of the Holy Roller movement and how far afield they have gone. This stuff about laughing in the spirit, being slain by the spirit, being drunk in the spirit—this is not initiative, this is psychosis or demon involvement. When you do things which are clearly outside the will of God, that is not spiritual initiative—that is heresy, degeneracy and/or soul rebellion. A careful study of God’s Word (and notice, I did not say *self*-study of God’s Word) is a guard against heresy. Our hearts and souls want to rebel against God—that is our nature. As I write this, I can think of several areas where my soul desires to rebel against God’s Word and several more areas that, apart from God’s Word, where I would do things differently. Apart from God’s Word and His guidance through His word, there are a lot of brick walls out there where I would be right now banging my head. That is the direction and the pull of my old sin nature. Apart from God’s Word, I have no spiritual initiative—I commit acts and make choices in direct opposition to God—that is the very nature of my fallen self. Any religious movement apart from the careful study of God’s Word is doomed to failure. Even if what they began with was essentially good and correct, their latter end will clearly reveal the leadings of their fallen nature.

²⁰ *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 579.

²¹ Keil & Delitzsch’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. II, p. 37.

It may appear to some that all I do is look through a few books and haul out a few quotes and waste a lot of time with Hebrew mumbo jumbo. Prior to this time, I had twenty years of outstanding teaching from Bob Thieme, the best of which came from his ministry in the late 60's and early 70's. It was from that time period of his teaching that I really formed a desire and appreciation for God's Word taught verse by verse. When I first heard him, one of the things which struck me was his continual references to the Greek and Hebrew, which did not interest me. I got the part of him going back to the history of that time, but we spent a lot of time with the original languages. Now, it is clear to me why—what is first and foremost is what does God's Word say? What did the writer mean and how did he expect his audience to understand what he said? How did the average person of that time period understand what was being said? That is first and foremost before we can even attempt to interpret what is in His Word. The best illustrations I can come up with are those which I have put before you several times—Jesus asserting to those around Him that He was equal to God and that He was God. Thousands of years later, we lose the impact of the statements and we water down what is there. For instance, in John 8:57–58, we have the following exchange: **The Jews therefore said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham came into being, I am."** Now, we can debate all we want to about the portion of this verse *I am*. One camp can say this is the famous *I am* spoken of Jehovah in the Old Testament, indicating that Jesus clearly asserted that He is God; and the other camp can assert that Jesus was just alluding to some previous existence. He was there in a past life; He was an angel during the time of Abraham, etc. However, those around him fully understood the implications of what He said. **Therefore, they picked up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple** (John 8:59). The crowd understood that language which was being used and responded as they would to anyone who blasphemed God by making himself equal to God. The key to the correct understanding and interpretation of that passage is not just the grammar but the reaction of those who listened to Jesus. How did they understand what He said? Let me give you another example: **Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, there bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My father, Who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."** (John 10:25–30). Jehovah's witnesses will argue the last line till they're blue in the face that Jesus was claiming to be one in purpose with God and that He was not claiming to be equal to God. But this totally ignores the context and the common understanding of what He said by the people He spoke to. They understood what He was saying. All we have to do is read the remainder of the context: **The Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?" The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out as God."** (John 10:31–33). When it comes to understanding what Jesus is saying, our default should be, what meaning did those around Him infer? Therefore, it is through the careful study of grammar, the original language and the vocabulary, along with the culture and historical peculiarities of that day, along with the context of a passage, that we begin to have a grasp of what was being said and what was recorded for our benefit. Once we have reached that point, then we can correctly interpret a passage and make application. So that there is no misunderstanding, this type of studying is not easy, nor is it casual. Bob claimed that he needed to put in 6–8 hours of study a day. I personally max out at 3 or 4 and on rare occasions, 5; and most days it is only around 2 hours. For me, it is like digging a ditch—you can do it for awhile, and even begin with some enthusiasm; but there is a point at which you need a long break.

My point in all of this is that you do not open the Bible, drop your finger on a verse, and use that verse to guide you for the day. If you were born on December 15th, you do not go to John 12:15 or to Matt. 12:15 to get your *life verse*. You do not take God's Word lightly and you do not handle it carelessly. Otherwise, your guidance and focus becomes clearly that of your old sin nature. I know from my personal history, both as an unbeliever and as a believer that I do not want my life guided by my old sin nature. I know that my nature is in rebellion to God. I know that my guidance should come from God's Word, carefully exegeted, and not frivolously handled. I am fully aware of how debased and misguided my natural self is and how I have to be properly guided.²²

²² Also, the previous paragraph is the correct application of the passage in James 5:16: **Therefore, confess your shortcomings to one another, and pray one for the other, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. We don't confess our sins one by one to one another. I am certain that you are interested in my particular brand of weakness and there may even be times when I am tempted to tell you; but, as Thieme used to point out, such an activity sets**

To give you an idea as to the part that previous training and present sources guide me in my study, I will write approximately 2½ pages during this morning study, where the material presented on 3/4th of Keil and Delitzsch's book²³ acted as the catalyst, as well as providing some of the material which I quoted from. Previous training and Bible study took over from there. There are other days when, after studying 5 pages of source material, I may put together 1½ pages of text, 90% of which is strictly quoted from the source material. However, apart from my previous training and apart from the work of hundreds of men upon whose shoulders I stand, I could not come close to understanding this material, much less explaining it.

And then it came to pass as which all of the people had finished to cross over then [the] ark of Y^ehowah crossed over and the priests before faces of the people.

Joshua
4:11

And then it came to pass when all the people had finished crossing over that the ark of Jehovah also crossed over with the priests in the presence of the people.

One of the problems with some English translations is that they occasionally obfuscate the actual events. Here, the priests have carried the ark out into the middle of the Jordan River and the river dried up. While they are standing there, the people walk across the Jordan, giving a wide berth to the ark (so that a large number of people can observe the priests standing with the ark in the middle of a once raging Jordan River. After they have crossed, or while they are crossing, twelve representatives take twelve stones from the river bed and take them to the other side for a memorial. And, while the people watch, these twelve (presumably) also carry twelve stones and pile them up in the midst of the Jordan where the ark is. So, understand that the priests walked into the water, the water stopped, the people then crossed over. Then we read in the NASB: And it came about when all the people had finished crossing, that the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed **before** the people [emphasis mine]. The casual reader or the critic might read this and say, "How can the people cross over first but the priests crossed over before the people?" The problem is simple. What is really said is that the ark and the priests crossed over in full view of the people; it crossed over as the people watched—the word *before* has nothing to do with time.

The priests with the ark have been standing in the middle of the Jordan River, dry-shod, knowing that any time the floodgates could burst and carry them away. Meanwhile, Joshua has men being chosen out from the tribes of Israel; they are taking stones from the middle of the Jordan and carrying them to the other side. Then they are taking stones from the dry land and hauling them over to where the priests are standing holding the ark. Once all of this is finished, then Joshua has the priests complete their own journey across the Jordan in front of all the people.

And so crossed over sons of Reuben and sons of Gad and a half of a tribe of the Manasseh armed before faces of sons of Israel.

Joshua
4:12

And the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh crossed over, armed for war, in the presence of the sons of Israel.

This verse begins with the wāw consecutive and the imperfect of the verb which means *to cross over*. This is not a progression of time, but of thought. These verses all go into evidence to support v. 14. What would be best is to read this together, and then to interpret what I have just said. **And so the priests who were bearing the ark, standing in the middle of the Jordan until the command of Jehovah to Joshua had been completed, and until the commands of Moses to Joshua had been completed; then the people quickly moved across the Jordan. And then it came to pass when all the people had finished crossing over that the ark of Jehovah also crossed over with the priests in the presence of the people. And the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh crossed over, armed for war, in the presence of the sons of Israel. They were 40,000 armed for war who crossed over in the presence of**

off a chain reaction of many sin natures taking over. When I begin to name my personal individual sins to you, you will take that opportunity to fall out of fellowship, and we have a chain reaction.

²³ And, as a personal aside, Keil and Delitzsch is sometimes difficult to slug my way through because they stop and discuss a great many nuances of the Hebrew language and from there make assertions and points. Sometimes, they will say one or two things which will inspire me to write two pages, either expanding on a point that they made, or giving another side of the interpretation of the passage at hand. It is a marvelous commentary, one from which I can glean volumes of material, but one that the average Christian would have little or no use for.

Jehovah to do battle on the plains of Jericho. In that day, Jehovah caused Joshua to be exalted in the eyes of all Israel so that they revered him just as they had revered Moses all the days of his life. (Joshua 4:10–14). Joshua is issuing a great many commands. He has a force of 40,000 men who already have a place to live where their families are. They could listen to Joshua's command and determine that Joshua is one man and they are 40,000. They can just go home. However, through the holding back of the river, through the guidance of the ark and the setting up of the monuments, Joshua has gained the respect of his men; and all 40,000 men also crossed over to the other side of the Jordan, because in that day, God caused Joshua to be exalted before all of Israel as was Moses. In other words, the act which gained the obedience of the people was the holding back of the river. The evidence that Joshua was exalted before the people was the crossing over of the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh. All of this is tied together, and we sometimes lose sight of the forest when we examine the individual trees. However, when we pull this together, we can see the reasoning of Joshua, which gives us a better feel for the use of the wâw consecutives. There is such thing as a logical order, which may not correspond to the chronological order. Joshua clearly does not think chronologically, as opposed to the Greek, Luke, who thinks just like you and I do—very linearly and very chronologically.

This is also an interesting twist. Before all of Israel, the separate tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, those who will occupy the other side of the Jordan, cross over in full battle array in support of their brothers. When Israel went to war against some of the peoples on the east side of the Jordan, these 2½ tribes indicated that they were happy with the land that side of the Jordan. That is where they wanted to settle in. After some thought, Moses allowed this, with the stipulation that they would join their brothers in war against the Canaanites and the other peoples who populated the Land of Promise. The related passages are Num. 32 Joshua 1:12–18.

As 40,000 armed of war crossed over before faces of Y^howah to battle unto plains of Jericho.

Joshua
4:13

They were 40,000 armed for war who crossed over in the presence of Jehovah to do battle on the plains of Jericho.

As you know, one part of me wants the population of Israel to be cut to a tenth of what Scripture hails them to be. However, we find a consistency in the Bible when it comes to the numbers so given in the Bible. In the last census taken, which was of the males who were twenty years and older, we have 43,730 Reubenites, 40,500 Gadites, and 52,700 from the tribe of Manasseh. In order to go to war, not everyone is required to go to war. These are men between the ages of 20 and 40 (since their fathers had all been killed by God in the desert), and population growth would place a larger number closer to the age of 20 than to the age of 40. So, we are probably dealing with those between the ages of 20 and 25 and their commanding officers, a little less than a third of all of those who could go to war. In our own country, not everyone who is drafted and trained actually goes to war—not even during a world war. Furthermore, there would need to be some men left behind in the land where they took their wives and children as a prophylactic measure.

Barnes describes the plains of Jericho: *The plains of Jericho, consisting of the higher terrace of the Jordan valley, are almost seven miles broad. The mountains of Judæa here recede somewhat from the river, and leave a level and fertile space, which, at the time of Joshua's invasion, was principally occupied by a forest of palms. Hence the name "city of palms," Deut. xxxiv. 3.*²⁴

In the day the that, Y^howah caused Joshua to be great in [the] eyes of all of Israel so they revered him as which they had revered Moses all of [the] days of his life [lit., lives].

Joshua
4:14

In that day, Jehovah caused Joshua to be exalted in the eyes of all Israel so that they revered him just as they had revered Moses all the days of his life.

The first verb is the Piel perfect of gâdal (גָּדַל) [pronounced *gaw-DAWHL*], which, in the Qal, means *to grow strong, to become great, to grow up, to become mighty*. In the Piel, it means *to cause one to be magnified, to make one great, powerful, causing one to grow*. Strong's #1431 BDB #152. We then have a verb used twice; it is first found as a Qal imperfect then as a Qal perfect (the perfect generally indicates completed action and the

²⁴ Barnes' Notes, Baker Books, ©1996; Vol. II, p. 359.

imperfect generally indicates ongoing or future action). *Yârê`* (אֵרַר) [pronounced *yaw-RAY*] means *fear, fear-respect, reverence, to have a reverential respect*. Strong's #3372 BDB #431. Again, we have compound preposition and relative pronoun *ka`ăsher* (כַּאֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *kah-uh-SHER*], which is the preposition *kaph* (כ) (No Strong's # BDB #453), which, means *like, as*; and the relative pronoun *`ăsher* (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *uh-SHER*] (Strong's #834 BDB #81), which mean, together, *as who, as one who, according to [that] which, according as, according to what manner, because, as if, as though, as, just as, so as* (used of time). Strong's #834 BDB #455. I guess that I should also give this a little interpretation now—Joshua did not write this while going into battle against the Canaanites; he wrote this later (maybe, seven years later) at the end of his life at the end of the campaign. The people did not necessarily revere Joshua all the days of his life. He spent most of his life in relative obscurity, in the shadow of Moses. He stood in opposition to public opinion the first time that they were to enter the land. The leadership of Joshua was relatively short; probably less than a decade. Moses led the people for forty years; so *all the days of his life* refers to all the days of Moses' life.

We should also look at the phrase *in that day*. We have to realize that there was not the situation that on one day Joshua was thought to be a clown and on the next, the people respected him. However, on this particular time, more than any other, when the waters stopped in the Jordan before their eyes, the Israelites in general had a greater respect for Joshua than they had ever had before. This fulfills God's prediction to Joshua: **Now Jehovah said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, so I will be with you."** (Joshua 3:7). Now, prior to this, we had been given what God said, then what Joshua commanded his men, and then the carrying out of the command. The reason for the difference here is that back in Joshua 3:7, after God predicted that Joshua would be held in high esteem in the eyes of his countrymen, God then gave certain commands to Joshua which would have that result. After that, we have the fulfilling of those commands and it is the fulfilling of those commands, during which the River Jordan stops, that exalt Joshua.

Moses and Joshua were very, very different people. Moses was a genius in many fields and Joshua was, at best, a military genius who could read and write. God never chooses us on the basis of our personalities nor does he choose us based upon our innate abilities. We often have personalities that others find obnoxious, that others gravitate to, that others find to be pleasant. In the Christian life, this means nothing. What Joshua has that Moses had was doctrine in his soul and faith in God. Their personalities were never the issue in their spiritual service. One of the things which I find to be particularly loathsome is when a particular person believes in Jesus Christ and then goes about using his human talents in the human energy of the flesh thinking that he is doing something of worth.

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The Priests Leave the Water and the Jordan River Returns to Overflowing its Banks

Then Y^ehowah spoke unto Joshua, to say,

Joshua
4:15

Then Jehovah spoke to Joshua, saying,

Because of Joshua's frequent use of the *wâw* consecutive, it is hard to determine whether he is speaking of things which occur in a specific chronological order. A *wâw* consecutive, formerly and improperly known as *wâw* conversative, is a *w* (a *wâw*, [pronounced *wow*]) with a patah (ַ) [pronounced *wah*]. The *wâw* consecutive, indicates, in general, that consecutive action is being given.²⁵ Several *waw* consecutives in one verse grab us and tell us that we are in an historical narrative now which is chronological. The thrust of such a connective is essentially chronological or logical progression. Normally, the *wâw* consecutive indicates procession, however, it can serve to indicate contrast and be rendered *and yet* (see Gen. 32:31, which reads: "**I have seen God face to face and yet my soul is delivered.**"). Joshua thinks in terms of *wâw* consecutives throughout his book. No Strong's # BDB #253. However, interpretation is tough. Again, it appears as though Joshua takes a step, then

²⁵ Davidson's *Introductory Hebrew Grammar-Syntax*, J.C.L. Gibson, pp. 83–84; *Biblical Hebrew, an Introductory Grammar*, Page H. Kelley, pp. 145–146.

God tells him what to do; Joshua takes a step, and God tells him what to do. However, what I think is occurring, is that we have a series of commands given by God to Joshua all at once (or maybe on two occasions), and Joshua recorded the individual commands separately. God gave him, say, four commands all at once. Joshua lists these commands in the order in which they were given, but separates them by narrative which testifies to the fact that he followed God's orders. In other words, Joshua is listing the commands of God chronologically, but he is not grouping them together even though the commands were issued at the same time. The wâw consecutive means that this is the next order which God gave.

“Command the priests bearers of [the] ark of the testimony and they will come up out of the Jordan.”

Joshua
4:16

“Command the priests, those bearing the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of the Jordan.”

So far, I believe God has spoken to Joshua two times. He spoke to Joshua once in Joshua 1, and then again in Joshua 3:7 4:2–3, 16: **Now Jehovah said to Joshua, “This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. You will, moreover, command the priests who are carrying the ark of the covenant, saying, ‘When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you will stand still in the Jordan.’ Now, take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from each tribe, and command them, saying, ‘Take up for yourselves twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests’ feet are standing firm, and carry them over with you, and lay them down in the lodging place where you will lodge tonight.’ Now, command the priests who carry the ark of the testimony that they come up from the Jordan.”** Joshua is a military man and he has no trouble taking orders. When he records these orders, he does so along with their fulfillment.

This particular verse makes it obvious that we do not have all of this recorded in chronological order. Back in v. 11, we have the priests crossing before the people. Here we have the command by God for them to cross and in the next verse, we will have the command by Joshua for them to cross. In v. 18, we will see them cross, with the added information that the water then overflowed the banks at their exit from the Jordan River bed.

Therefore, Joshua commanded the priests, to say, “Come up out from the Jordan.”

Joshua
4:17

Therefore, Joshua commanded the priests, saying, “Come up out of the Jordan.”

Again, we have the way Joshua's mind works. God gives the command, Joshua relays the command to the proper people, and then they obey the command. Joshua treats each separate command, or series of commands as a separate incident; they are put together in his mind in a topical way. Back in vv. 11–13, Joshua was stating who had crossed before whom; pointing out that the priest crossed over the Jordan before all the people, as did the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh. In vv. 15–18, Joshua records the order from God to bring the priests out and his obedience to that order.

Then it came to pass in a coming up of the priests bearers of [the] ark of a covenant of Y^ehowah out from a midst of the Jordan, the soles of the feet of the priests were pulled out unto the dry ground. Then waters of the Jordan returned to their place and then they went, as before beyond all of its banks.

Joshua
4:18

Then it came to pass when the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of God came out from the middle of the Jordan River, even while they were being lifted up to dry ground, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place so that they overflowed just as before over all its banks.

Some of the verbs are interesting here. When it comes to the feet of the priests, they go with the Niphal perfect of *nâthaq* (נָתַק) [pronounced *naw-THAHK*], which means *to pull, to draw, to tear away, to tear apart, to tear off*; in the Niphal, it means *to be drawn out of the water, pulled out of the water*. Strong's #5423 BDB #683. This indicates that they had to be lifted up from the bed of the Jordan River and it is possible that the water had begun to flow again. This verb gives the impression that the feet of the priests were moderately deep in mud and had to be pulled out—in fact, torn away—from the mud. Two million Israelites had trod across that river bed and,

although the water had quit flowing, it is likely that the bed was muddy. This is further substantiated by the use of the Hebrew word *chôreb* (חֹרֵב) [pronounced *khoh-RE^BV*], which means *extreme dryness, drought, heat*. This word is used for *dryness* as in the absence of dew. Strong's #2721 BDB #351. When we get down to v. 22, there will be a different word used for the dry ground of the river bed. This should indicate that, whether there was a supernatural drying process or not (which I am leaning against), the dryness of the land outside the Jordan was a different level of dryness from that of the river bed.

In the middle of the next sentence, we have the Qal imperfect of the very common verb *hâlak* (הָלַךְ) [pronounced *haw-LAHK^e*], which means *to go, to come, to depart, to walk*. Strong's #1980 (and 3212) BDB #229. This is followed by the kaph preposition and two adverbs. The first is *t^emôl* (לְמֹל) [pronounced *t^eMOHL*], which means *yesterday*; and is used figuratively for *recently, formerly*. Strong's #8543 and Strong's #865 BDB #1069. The second is *shil^eshôwm* (שְׁלֹשָׁיִם) [pronounced *shil-SHOHM*], which means *three days ago, the day before yesterday*. Strong's #8032 BDB #1026. Together, they simply mean *as before*. See Gen. 31:2 II Kings 13:5. This verse makes it clear that it was the ark which was uniquely related to the stopping of the river. When the ark was placed over the water, over the river that kept the Israelites out of the Land of Promise, that which kept them from God's blessings was removed. Once they have proceeded safely to the other side and the ark came out of the water, the river returned, overflowing its banks. What we have here are 2,000,000 people. What kind of a miracle could all 2,000,000 people observe first-hand? God wanted to be certain that for generations to come, the miracle of the holding back of the Jordan would stay with this people. When every father tells his sons about this incident and this is passed on, and confirmed by other sons of sons, the miracles stays with the Israelites for several generations.

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They Camp at Gilgal and Joshua Explains Why They Placed the Stones There

And the people climbed up out of the Jordan in the tenth to the month the first and then they encamped in an extremity of [the] east of Jericho. Joshua 4:19

So the people came up out of the Jordan during the tenth day of the first month and then they camped on the east border of Jericho.

The first verb is the Qal perfect of *ʿâlâh* (עָלָה) [pronounced *gaw-LAWH*], which means *to go up, to ascend, to rise*. Strong's #5927 BDB #748. This and the previous verse seem to indicate that there was a moderate amount of climbing up and out of the Jordan. We all become use to different things—on Galveston Bay or in parts of Folsom Lake, you can walk for a long time in the water on what appears to be level ground. There are other areas of Folsom Lake or the American River that are anywhere from a moderate to a sheer drop off. The indication is that we have something in between here. The people and the priests had to be lifted up out from the bed of the Jordan River.

The time given here is the 10th day of the first month, exactly 40 years after the first Passover in Ex. 12. It was only two months previous when Moses had addressed the people (Deut. 1:3). Thirty days of the time were spent in mourning for Moses, so this verse tells us that the book of Deuteronomy takes place during the very short period of time of one month.

Zodhiates: After crossing the Jordan, Israel camped at Gilgal for a while before the conquest of Canaan began. Several things happened at Gilgal which signified that the wilderness wanderings were over and that Israel was embarking on a new phase of her national history. First, Joshua had the people set up twelve stones as a monument to the miraculous drying up of the Jordan for their crossing (Josh. 4:19–24). Next, the young males were circumcised, which reinstated a practice that had not been kept for nearly forty years (5:2–9). With that accomplished (see ex. 12:48), they could then observe the Passover (5:10). Finally, and probably the most

indicative of the end of their wanderings, on the day after the Passover, the manna stopped, and they ate from the produce of Canaan (5:11–12).²⁶

And twelve the stones the these which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua caused to be set up in the Gilgal.

Joshua
4:20

And these twelve stones which were taken out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal.

Let's first go to the **Doctrine of Gilgal**. Since Gilgal is officially named in Joshua 5:9, that means that this verse was written after the events of Joshua 5. There is no mention of a battle here or any sort of confrontation. This would indicate to me that there was no city here until Israel camped there. There is a Gentile city Gilgal, probably alluded to in Joshua 12:23 and Deut. 11:30, but this is not the city to which we are referring. Although one might suggest that Joshua, prior to attacking Jericho, first attacked and conquered the Gentile Gilgal and that this battle was not mentioned in Scripture, this is unlikely, as we will see that God names this *city* in Joshua 5:9. Why name a city which already has a name?

As you will recall from our study of the Law, the stones were not to be the result of craftsmanship—that is, artisans were not to make of these stones some sort of artistic image. The reason for that is that we are not to incorporate any works into our relationship with God. Furthermore, we are not to make God in our image, which is what a stone cutter would be doing and it is what contemporary philosophy and religion does on a different level.

We have apparently set up two sets of stones; one outside of the water and one in the water. One represents man's testimony before man and the other, the one which is unseen and in the water, represents man's testimony before the angels.

Then he spoke to sons of Israel, to say, "When your sons ask in a time to come their fathers, to say, 'Wherefore the stones the these?'"

Joshua
4:21

The he said to the sons of Israel, saying, "When in the future your sons ask their fathers, saying, 'What do these stones mean?'"

The second times *sons* is used, it carries with it the 2nd person, masculine plural suffix, so that it reads *your sons*. This does not refer to the literal sons of those listening to Joshua but to their descendants; the word is used in both ways. Strong's #1121 BDB #119. This is because they will ask *their fathers*; otherwise, it would read, they would ask *you* (plural).

The first quotation begins with the relative pronoun *ʾăsher* (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced *ash-ER*], which generally means *that, which, when* or *who*. Strong's #834 BDB #81. *Ask* is modified by the adverb *mâchâr* (מָחָר) [pronounced *maw-KHAWR*], which means, literally, *tomorrow*; but figuratively can stand for *in time to come, later on, in the future, down the road* (chronologically speaking). Strong's #4279 BDB #563.

The actual question begins with the interrogative *mâh* (מָה) [pronounced *maw*] and it means *what, how*. The second time *mâh* is found, there is no preceding preposition. (1) *Mâh* can also be used as an exclamatory adverb *how*; as in "**How incredible is this place!**" (Gen. 28:17b). (2) *Mâh* can also be used as an interrogatory adverb *how* to express that which is impossible, as in "**How shall we justify ourselves?**" (Gen. 44:16b). These two uses are often followed by an adjective or verb. (3) *Mâh* can also be used as an adverb of interrogation, meaning *why, wherefore*. Strong's #4100 BDB #552. So what we have, literally, is: "**Wherefore the stones the these?**" Less literally, "What's the deal with these stones here?"

This same scenario was presented in Joshua 4:6; so, why is it repeated here? This is a simple answer—it is not repeated here; i.e., Joshua does not record this same incident twice. Before he said this when he was setting his men up to place the stones on the shore in the first place. The second time, he made this statement after the stones had been placed. Joshua gave the explanation twice because he believed in teaching and re-teaching. God's Word is important and it must be taught and re-taught. Furthermore, Joshua would not be speaking to the

²⁶ *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 580.

exact same audience in each case. In the first situation, he was probably speaking to the chief officers in his army, and, in the second, he was speaking to his people in general.

As an aside, I have often wondered with both Joshua and Moses just how many people they actually spoke to at any given time. As we know, in an auditorium of kids, if you have a good group who are engrossed, you can speak to a thousand or two. In a classroom with a few loudmouths, you cannot even speak to fifteen of them. That is from my own experience. My guess is that at any given time, an audience might consist of a few thousand at most. There could have been an elaborate system of communication during a message of Moses or of Joshua, but such a system is never alluded to in Scripture; i.e., it is possible that Joshua would speak a sentence or two, then a dozen men surrounding him and 200 feet away repeat these sentences to perhaps another group of men who repeat the sentences. In such a way, a significant portion of the population could have been spoken to. However, had such a system existed, I am certain that there would have been mention of it in Scripture. This leads me to believe that the attendance of the general population to any speech of Moses or of Joshua was maybe 1/1000th to 1/500th of the population. Copies of God's Word did not exist. In other words, the role of the common man in God's plan was pretty close to nil. As a nation and as an army, they followed Joshua's directives as delivered through a series of officers (this command system is alluded to); but the general population did not participate in God's plan as is done today. I am not saying this by way of bolstering up your self-esteem, but you have an important part to play in God's plan. In this dispensation, we all have a place, a part to play, a spiritual gift, a purpose. Don't misunderstand what is being said here—God does not need us; it is not as if His plan would come to a grinding halt, if you chose to get out of fellowship for the next dozen years. However, we are given the opportunity to participate in His plan. I know that I have used this illustration before. When I was a kid in 7th grade, I was not athletically inclined—not even a little (this describes pretty much my entire childhood, as a matter of fact). However, I participated in P.E. and didn't mind doing that. During a football game, our captain, Ed Nagle, an eighth grader, during the huddle, told me to go out for a pass. No one had ever told me to do that before. So I did, he threw it, I caught it, and we had a touchdown. Even though this was just a stupid P.E. football game, I still remember that to this day and that this big guy had me participate. For me, it was a proud and happy moment. God will send us out for hundreds of passes, if we so desire. We are given the opportunity to participate in His plan and we will be happy that we did.

“And you will cause your sons to know, to say, ‘On dry ground Israel crossed over the Jordan the this.’

Joshua
4:22

“And then you will explain to your sons, saying, ‘Israel crossed over this Jordan River on dry ground.’

We begin with the wâw conjunction and the 3rd person masculine plural, Hiphil perfect of yâda' (יָדָעַ) [pronounced yaw-DAHG], which means *to know*. Strong's #3045 BDB #393. The Hiphil is the causative stem, so it means *to cause to know*. Here is where a majority of the spiritual teaching took place—the fathers taught their sons. They learned from Moses and from Joshua and from observing the sacrifices and from the monuments which were set up and they passed these things on to their children.

As has been mentioned, the word for *dry ground* here is not the same as the word used in Joshua 4:18. The word found here is yabbâshâh (יַבְבַּשָּׁה) [pronounced yahb-^bvaw-SHAW], which means *dry ground, dry land*; but not to the point of complete absence of moisture. This was the word used when God caused *dry land* to appear out from the water during the six days of restoration (Gen. 1:9–10); it is used in Jonah 1:9 for the shore of the sea. In other words, this is ground which may contain some moisture; this is ground which is not covered with water. Because of this word being used rather than the word for absolute absence of moisture, there may not have been a supernatural drying of the ground. Strong's #3004 BDB #387.

McGee: *If we carry the spiritual lesson out in this passage, our conclusion can only be that we are to teach our children the Gospel. The business of parents is to give their children the Gospel. There is no privilege like that of a parent leading his child to a saving knowledge of Christ. My wife and I had the privilege of leading our daughter to the Lord. This is the responsibility of parents.*²⁷

²⁷ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 31.

“Which Y^ehowah your God dried up waters of the Jordan before your faces until your crossing over of just as Y^ehowah your God did to a sea of reeds which He dried up before our faces until our crossing over.

Joshua
4:23

“The Jordan that Jehovah your God dried up the waters of in your presence until you had crossed over—just as Jehovah your God did at the Sea of Reeds, which He dried up in our presence until we crossed over.

With this verse, Joshua is no longer quoting what the people will say to their progeny, but is teaching them what has occurred and they will put it into their own words.

After *before your faces*, we have the preposition *‘ad* (אד) [pronounced *‘ad*] which means *as far as, even to, up to, until, while*. Strong’s #5704 BDB #723. This is followed by the Qal infinitive construct (with a 2nd person masculine plural suffix) of *‘âḇvar* (אבאר) [pronounced *aw-BAHR*], which means *to pass over, to pass through, to pass, to go over*. Strong’s #5674 BDB #716. Usually the construct is followed by a related noun or a defining noun, e.g., *a crossing over of the Jordan*. However, this is followed by *ka’ăsher* (כאשר) [pronounced *kah-uh-SHER*], which is the compound of the preposition *kaph* (כ) (No Strong’s # BDB #453), which, means *like, as*; and the relative pronoun *‘ăsher* (אשר) [pronounced *uh-SHER*] (Strong’s #834 BDB #81), which means *which, when or who*. Together, they mean *as which, as one who, as, like as, according as, just as, when*. Strong’s #834 BDB #455. Joshua has used all of these words over and over again. An infinitive construct is a verbal noun which functions like the English infinitive or the English gerund. It can have prefixed prepositions, the definite article and pronominal suffixes. It can act as a subject, a predicate, as the object of a preposition. Even, rarely, it functions as a verb.²⁸

The verb with Y^ehowah is the Qal perfect of the very common verb *‘âsâh* (עשה) [pronounced *‘aw-SAWH*] which means *to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form*. Strong’s #6213 BDB #793.

Notice how at the beginning, Joshua speaks of *your* crossing over and at the end he speaks of *our* crossing over. The sign of the drying up of the Jordan was done specifically for the people to whom Joshua was speaking to. The sign of the drying up of the sea of reeds was done specifically for Joshua’s generation, most of whom were dead at that time.

Another thing to notice is to compare Joshua’s telling of this work of God and Moses’ telling of the parallel incident 40 years ago. Joshua was a meat and potatoes man—he had very little embellishment. Moses, on the other hand, was a genius in many fields, and would wax poetic about the experiences of Israel in the desert wilderness. **And the angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel; and there was the cloud along with the darkness, yet it gave light at night. Thus the one did not come near the other all night. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and Jehovah swept the sea by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided. And the sons of Israel crossed through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Then the Egyptians took up the pursuit, and all Pharaoh’s horses, his chariots and his horesmen went in after them into the midst of the sea. And it came to pass during the morning watch, that Jehovah looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion. And He caused their chariot wheels to swerve and He made them drive with diffciulty; so the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from Israel, for Jehovah is fighting for them against the Egyptians.” Then Jehovah said to Moses, “Stretch out your hadn over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen.” So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at day-break, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then Jehovah overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen, even Pharaoh’s entire army that had gone into the sea after them; not even one of them remained. But the sons of Israel walked on dry land through the midst of the sea, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Thus Jehovah delivered Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. And when Israel saw the great power which Jehovah had used against the Egyptians, the people revered Jehovah and they**

²⁸ This was paraphrased from *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 2277.

believed in Jehovah and in His servant Moses (Ex. 14:19–31). Do you now notice a slight difference of style between the writings of Moses and Joshua? This is one of the reasons that Moses wrote four books of the Bible, each of which is about triple the size of the book of Joshua.

“And a knowing of all of [the] people of the earth a hand of Y^ehowah that it [is] mighty in order that you [all] will revere Y^ehowah your God all of the days.” Joshua 4:24

“And so that all of the people of the earth will know that the hand of Jehovah your God is mighty and in order that you may revere Jehovah your God all of the days to come.”

The second reason for this sign is that it was a sign to the entire world that the God of the Israelites was the God of the Universe. There was no *all roads lead to Rome*, concept either in the Old Testament or in the New Testament. When the Israelites conquered other lands, they were continually admonished by God not to go after the gods of the people whom they had just conquered. There was none of this *they also worship Me, just in another way and using another name*.

This verse begins with the wâw conjunction and the Qal infinitive construct of yâda' (יָדָעַ) [pronounced yaw-DAHQ], which means *to know*. We will render this *a knowing of*. Strong's #3045 BDB #393. It is followed by *all of [the] people*. In order for this to make good English sense, we either drop the *of* or we insert a definite article.

Even though the construct rarely functions as a verb, here it does because *a hand of Y^ehowah* is preceded by the untranslatable word ʾêth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth], which denotes a direct object. Strong's #853 (and #854) BDB #84 (and #85). What all the people of the earth are to know is *a hand of Y^ehowah*. What they are to know about the hand of Jehovah is; and this is followed by the conjunction/preposition kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee], which means *when, that, for, because*. Strong's #3588 BDB #471. Then we have the feminine singular adjective châzâq (חַזַּק) [pronounced khaw-ZAWK], which means *strong, mighty* and is most often used with the substantive *hand*. Strong's #2389 BDB #305. This is followed by the demonstrative adjective hîy' (הִיא) [pronounced hee] and this can be translated *she* or *it*. Often this personal pronoun is translated *it [is]*. Strong's #1931 BDB #214.

The following conjunction is l^ema ʿan (לְמַעַן) [pronounced l^e-MAH-ġahn], which means *for the sake of, on account of, to the intent of, to the intent that, to the purpose that, in order that*. This preposition emphasizes the cause or purpose of the action. Strong's #4616 BDB #775.

At the end of this verse we have the masculine construct *all of* followed by the definite article and the masculine plural of yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced yohm], which means *day*. Strong's #3117 BDB #398. My thinking is that this is idiomatic for *all of the days to come*. Gesenius gives the renderings *in all time, perpetually, for ever, always*.

One of the purposes of the great works of God was to inform the rest of the world concerning His identity. **“Also concerning the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel, when he comes from a far country for Your name’s sake (for they will hear of Your great name and Your mighty hand, and of Your outstretched arm); when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, to revere You, as Your people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by Your name...and may the words of mine with which I have made supplication before Jehovah be near to Jehovah our god day and night, that He might maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel, as each day requires, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that Jehovah is god—there is no one else”** (Solomon’s dedication of the temple in I Kings 8:39–43, 60). **“And now, O Jehovah our God, I pray, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, O Jehovah, are God.”** (II Kings 19:19). Nevertheless, He saved them for the sake of His name, that He might make His power known (Psalm 106:8). **God, be gracious to us and bless us and cause His face to shine upon us that Your way may be known on the earth; Your salvation among all the nations (Psalm 67:1–2). Let them be ashamed and dismayed forever, and let them be humiliated and perish, that they may know that You alone, whose name is Jehovah, are the Most High over all the earth (Psalm 83:17–18).** See also Ex. 14:31 I Kings 18:46 II Kings 5:15.

What we have during this time is an entirely different dispensation and civilization; we did not have the lines of communication as before. A day or so after mentioning the exchange between Bill Gates and General Motors, I mentioned to a few other people and most of them who were hooked up to the net had heard this exchange already (I don't recall whether or not it was apocryphal or not).²⁹ In yesterday's world, there was a system of communication between nations which took place as a part of trading and bartering. Very little about the various countries would be relayed with the exception of spectacular information and signs—these were spoken of and carried around the world—just at a much slower pace than what we are used to. God the Holy Spirit used that information as the grounds for witnessing to the unbeliever of the ancient world.

McGee: *What God did for the children of Israel, He did for their benefit, your benefit, and mine. He did it that all the people of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is indeed mighty. This purpose was graphically fulfilled as soon as the Canaanites heard the news that the children of Israel had crossed over the Jordan.*³⁰

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²⁹ The exchange goes like this: Subject: Bill Gates takes on Detroit: At a recent computer expo (COMDEX), Bill Gates reportedly compared the computer industry with the auto industry and stated "If GM had kept up with technology like the computer industry has, we would all be driving twenty-five dollar cars that got 1000 mi/gal." Recently General Motors addressed this comment by releasing this statement: "Yes, but would you want your car to crash twice a day?"

³⁰ J. Vernon McGee, *Joshua Judges*, ©1976 by Thru the Bible Books; p. 32.