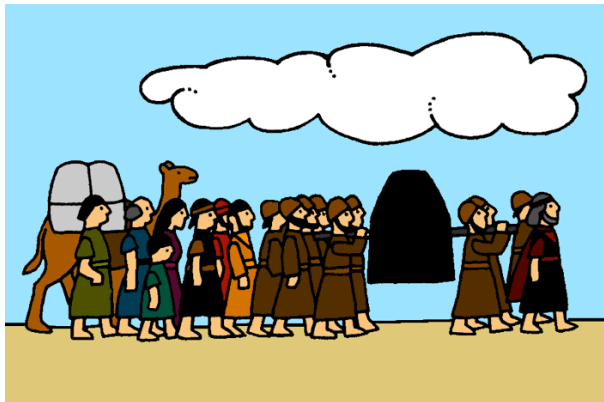


Crossing the Jordan



Scripture Reference: [Joshua 3-4; 5:10-12](#)

Suggested Emphasis: We should remember the things the Lord does for us.

Memory Verse: “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth . . .”

[Ecclesiastes 12:1](#)



Background
Study



Story
Introduction



Telling
the Story



Review
Questions



Songs



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Activities



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Story Overview:

After forty years of wandering in the desert, it was time to cross over the Jordan River and take the land that God had promised. Joshua followed the Lord’s special instructions. He told the priests to carry the Ark of the Covenant and begin walking into the Jordan. Even though the river was at flood stage, it immediately stopped flowing. While the priests stood in the middle of the dry riverbed, Joshua instructed all of the people to walk through to the other side. When everyone had finished

crossing over, the priests followed. As soon as the priests stepped onto the new bank the water in the Jordan River began flowing again. Food was abundant in the new land so the manna and quail that God had provided stopped. To help the Israelites remember all that He had done for them, the Lord had them pile twelve large stones from the middle of the Jordan, one on top of the other, to make a memorial.

Background Study:

The people of Israel were preparing to cross the Jordan River to enter the Promised Land. Joshua commanded the people to listen to the words of the Lord ([Joshua 3:9](#)) because the next morning God was going to do wonders among them. Forty years earlier the people had listened to the words of ten spies so they were not allowed to enter the land ([Numbers 13](#)). This time, Joshua does not ask for reports or opinions. He simply leads the people in obeying the Lord's commands.

God told Joshua that when He helped the people cross the river, Joshua would be exalted in the nation's sight; the people would know that God was with Joshua just as he had been with Moses. Moses led the people across the Red Sea and now Joshua was leading them across the Jordan. It is interesting to note that the name "Joshua" means "Yahweh (God) is salvation." The Greek name for "Joshua" is "Jesus".

This crossing was very significant. It was the official entry into the Promised Land. Think how the Jordan River plays a figurative significance in so many of the songs we sing. We often compare crossing the Jordan River with crossing from this life into our future "promised land" of heaven. "I Won't Have to Cross Jordan Alone" "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand" "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" and more.




Joshua directed the people in a procession across the river. It took faith to start across. The river was at flood stage, and the waters did not part until the feet of the priests carrying the ark of the covenant touched the water ([Joshua 3:15-16](#)). The Lord did not reveal how they were going to cross. He simply told them to step into the water (now that's stepping out in faith!). The ark symbolized the presence of the Lord. Having the priests carry the ark in front of the people showed that God was leading them into the new land.

After the crossing, Joshua continued to obey God's commands. He used twelve stones—gathered by one man from each tribe—from the dry riverbed to build a memorial. The memorial was to remind Israel of what God had done for them ([Joshua 4:1-7](#)). There are some textual variations concerning the stones and the monument that was built from them. The NIV speaks of only one monument. It is built at the place where they camped (Gilgal). Some versions mention the Gilgal monument but also add that Joshua built a second monument in the middle of the riverbed where the priests stood with the ark ([Joshua 4:9](#)). You might see one or both monuments in some picture books or visual aids. Whether there was more than one monument or not, today's story will be concerned with the monument built at the camp where everyone could see it. If there was another monument, it would have been covered over with water. The monument in the camp would have been visible to all so that children would see it and ask what it meant ([Joshua 4:6-7](#)). Since Gilgal was to be the Israelites' base camp for quite some time, the monument would be seen often.

Although not covered in today's class, we find that unfinished business was taken care of at the Gilgal camp ([Joshua 5:1-9](#)). Circumcision seems to have been ignored since leaving Egypt. The Lord was about to lead His covenant people in possessing the land. He wanted them to fulfill the covenant right of circumcision which marked them as His people.

([Joshua 5:10-12](#)) The people also celebrated the Passover. As soon as they began to eat the bountiful food of the land of Canaan, the manna stopped. Now they were in the land of plenty.

The ark of the covenant, the monument, circumcision, and the Passover were all ways to remember the power of the Lord and what He had done for the people. The children in your class can explore ways they can remember the Lord. As we see in today's story, the Lord used visual aids!

-  [What happened before this story?](#)
-  [What happens after this story?](#)
-  [List of all Bible stories and themes on this website.](#)

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Way to Introduce the Story:

Bring a few keepsakes to class today. These could be special gifts that someone has given you or an item that belongs or belonged to someone special (a book, photo, letter, an old ticket stub, jewellery, toy, etc.) Talk about how you remember that person or the event every time you see the item. Ask the children to share some of the things that help them remember someone. “We have been studying about the Promised Land for many weeks, now. Today we are going to read about the people finally entering the land. It was a very special day that the people would remember for a long time. God wanted to make sure they would remember so He had the people build something to remind them. Every time they saw the item they would remember the day. Does anyone want to guess what the item was? (Let them guess) All right, let’s listen to the story and see if we can find out.”

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The Story:

There was only one river to cross and the Israelites would finally be in the land that God had promised them. Joshua was a good leader and he knew that God would take care of them. He knew that the new land would be very good. Sometimes people called the land the land of “milk and honey” because they loved to drink milk and eat honey. They thought that would be a good way to describe the land.

It was harvest time when Joshua told the people that it was time to cross the river. At harvest time the Jordan River was always so full of water that it overflowed its banks. The people could look across the river and see the beautiful land of Canaan with its green grass and its tall trees and its fields of golden grain. But they could not cross the river because it was too deep and too swift.

The Lord told Joshua His special plan. He told Joshua to gather the priests together and have them carry the ark of the covenant and walk straight into the Jordan river! The people were to follow them. This must have seemed really scary for everyone

but they obeyed God. They remembered how He had always taken care of them. He would take care of them today!

The priests picked up the big gold box—the ark of the covenant—and started walking toward the water. The water was fast and looked very dangerous but they just kept walking. Then an amazing thing happened. As soon as the priest's feet touched the water, the water stopped flowing. The river dried up wherever the priests walked. It was just like when the Red Sea parted for Moses. They took the ark and carried it to the middle of the Jordan River and then stopped. While the priests stood with the ark, all of the people passed through to the other side. They didn't even get wet.

God wanted the people to always remember how He stopped the Jordan River. He told Joshua to choose twelve men (one from each tribe). The men went to the middle of the river, where the priests stood, and gathered one large stone each. The men carried the twelve stones over to their camp beside the river and put them into a large pile. The Lord told the people that, from now on, when anyone saw the pile of twelve stones, they would remember the special day that the Lord helped them cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

After everyone was finished crossing the river (the people and the soldiers) the priests came up out of the river. As soon as their feet touched the dry ground on the bank of the river then the water all rushed back and the river began to flow again. The water was just as fast and deep as it had been before.

The Israelites made camp at Gilgal where they had put their stones. As everyone looked at the stones they must have thanked God and thought about what He had done for them.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download these illustrations and slideshow.](#) Be selective. Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review Questions:

1. Which river did the Israelites have to cross to enter the Promised Land?
Jordan River
2. What did the Priests carry when they crossed the Jordan River? The ark of the covenant
3. What happened to the rushing water of the Jordan when the priests stepped into it? It stopped
4. What did the Israelites pick up from the middle of the Jordan River? 12 stones
5. Why did the Lord tell Joshua to have the men pile the twelve stones together? So they would see it and remember what the Lord had done for them.

Song Suggestions:

- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Read about another way Israelites remembered the Lord (Numbers 15:37-41) and make tassels.

Crafts:

- Make a relief map of the Promised Land. It should be dry by next week so

that you can paint it. Each week you will be able to add more details as you learn more about Canaan. Instructions on how to make a relief map at <http://www.squidoo.com/salt-dough-maps>

- Paint today's memory verse on a flat stone or find 12 stones to glue together to form a monument.
- Make a place mat by writing the memory verse on a large paper and decorating
- Cut twelve stone shapes out of sandpaper. Children glue the "stones" on paper to make a remembrance like the Israelites did. [click here for pattern.](#)

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for "Crossing the Jordan" printables to print \(A4 paper\)](#)

[Click here for "Crossing the Jordan" to print \(Letter size-USA\)](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Crossing the Jordan colouring page & puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Crossing the Jordan River colouring page \(Ministry to Children\)](#)
- [Various crafts using stones \(The Spruce Crafts\)](#)
- [How to make mosaic stepping-stones \(HubPages\)](#)
- [Old Testament worksheets \(HubPages\)](#)
- ["Journey to the Promise Land" activities \(Christian Crafters\)](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/entering-and-conquering-the-promised-land/>

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