

Remembering

Remembering God's Promises

Foundation

Bible passage: Joshua 3 & 4

This incident is more about remembering what God did, but behind it lie His promises. Joshua led the people of Israel to the edge of the land which God had promised to give them. God had made the promises hundreds of years before and when they were led out of slavery in Egypt they went to the very edge of the promised land. But there the people had lost their nerve, they saw the obstacles ahead, became afraid and did not trust God. At first, they refused to go forward and then God told them they could not (of course some who refused to go forward when God told them to do so now decided they would go forward when God told them they could not). As a result, the people lived in the wilderness for forty years and there all but two of the adults from that time died outside the land.

“So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.”

Forty years later they were on the edge of the promised land again, this time being led by Joshua. There were still obstacles ahead but this time the people were ready to trust God and His promises (for a time).

The first obstacle was the River Jordan which was in flood, overflowing its banks, at that time of year and dangerous to cross. The crossing of the Jordan is described in Joshua chapters 3 and 4. God told the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant to go and stand in the shallow water on the edge of the river. As soon as they did so the



water stopped flowing and soon the riverbed was dry enough that people could start crossing.

Whilst everyone crossed the priests with the Ark stood in the middle of the river. When the people had crossed over Joshua did two things.

First, at the command of God, he had twelve strong men pick up large stones from the middle of the river and carry them over to where the people would camp that night at Gilgal. There was one man from each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Secondly, Joshua also set up a pile of twelve stones in the middle of the river bed where the Priests holding the Ark were standing (4.9). When the river started flowing again this pile of stones was completely covered with water. No one would see these stones, but they were still a testimony to what had happened.

The twelve stone carried out of the river were set up at Gilgal. It is clear that these were to help people in the future remember what had happened. Children would ask their parents what the stones were doing there and the parents could then explain how God had brought the people into the land in such an amazing way. They were also, a reminder that God keeps His promises, even when those promises are made long before and for centuries no-one could see how they were going to come true.



God gave the people of Israel various ways to remember what He had done and what He had promised.