

THE LAND AT LAST

Joshua
Joshua 3:1–4:18
1406 BC

OVERVIEW

BIBLE TRUTH

God keeps His promises.

BIBLE VERSE

The LORD will do the thing that He has promised.

2 Kings 20:9

LEARNER GOAL

I understand that God is faithful and keeps His promises to His people.

LAW & GOSPEL

We are hesitant to trust in God's promises, preferring to remain in the desert of our sins.

God keeps His promise to save us through His Son, Jesus, and leads us to our heavenly home.

SCRIPTURE SNAPSHOT

For forty years, the Israelites wandered on sandals that didn't wear out and daily doses of manna. Following Moses' death, Joshua prepares to lead a new generation into the Promised Land. This time, the floodwaters of the Jordan River stand in the way, but hearkening back to the Red Sea crossing, the people pass through on dry land and gather twelve stones as a memorial to God's faithful care for His people.

LESSON PREP

BASIC Read Joshua 3:1–4:18 and notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

MORE TIME Read the leader devotion, found in the digital resource center.

IN DEPTH Read "The Ark of the Covenant" on page 203 of *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

SUPPLY LIST

FOR THIS LESSON

- Cardboard box, blue fabric
- Brown paper grocery bags
- River rocks
- Acrylic paint and brushes
- Jump ropes
- Cardstock
- Puffed corn or frosted mini shredded wheat cereal
- Cornmeal
- Newspaper

FOR EVERY LESSON

- Bible
- Device with prepped music
- Copies of downloadable activity page
- Copies of Enduring Faith Page
- Supply Box

LAUNCH

Plan your lesson by reading through the options in each section. Choose the activities that will best fit your learners, and mark those boxes to guide you as you teach the lesson.

BEGIN

- Follow the Order of Opening Worship, use the Lesson Opening, or do both (part of the planning resources in the digital resource center).
- Sing songs using music found in the digital resource center, or sing your own favorite songs.

PRAY

Dear Lord, be with us today as we learn how You always keep Your promises to us. Bless our time together. In Your name we pray. Amen.

SAY

- Do you like going to new places? In today's lesson, God's people are going to a new land to live. It's a place God promised they could live. God kept His promise to them. He keeps His promises to us too.
- Have you ever had to wait for a promise to come true? Maybe the promise of a gift or a trip to Disney World or Six Flags? Today we'll hear how God kept His promise to bring the Israelites into the Promised Land!

LEARN

Show your Bible, and remind the children that all the stories in God's Word are true.

TELL THE BIBLE NARRATIVE

Choose one of the options on the next page to tell the Bible narrative.

DO THIS!

Use one or more of the following activities to talk about the Bible narrative after you've read it.

- FOR A LARGE GROUP** Divide the students into the priests and the Israelites. Read the Bible narrative, guiding them to create freeze-frames to illustrate the story.

- Frame 1: The priests carry the ark as the other Israelites keep their distance. (Excited and awed pose)
2: All stop at the edge of the overflowing river. (Scared)
3: They remember how their fathers cried and complained. (Crying pose)
4: But these Israelites trusted God. (Arms raised to God)
5: The priests step into the river. (Priests in the river)
6: The Israelites cross over. (Israelites crossing)
7: Twelve men gather stones. (Gathering stones)
8: Joshua makes a memorial. (Joshua stacking stones)
9: The Israelites will remember. (Point at rock memorial)
10: All are in the Promised Land. (Rejoicing pose)

- FOR VISUAL LEARNERS** Use props to help tell the story: a cardboard box for the ark of the covenant, blue fabric for the river, wadded up brown paper grocery bags for the stones.

TALK ABOUT IT

Choose a few questions that best fit the learning level of your group.

- What promise did God keep when He helped the Israelites cross the Jordan River?
- What was the purpose of the twelve stones that Joshua set up as a memorial?
- Who tells you about what God has done for you?
- What promises has God made for us today?

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

Guide discussion using these key points.

- God kept His promise to bring His people into the Promised Land. God had made that promise to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and to all of Israel.
- The stones were to remind the Israelites of what God had done for them.
- Let children share who tells them about Jesus.
- God promised to send a Savior. God promises to always be with us. God promises to take care of us.



CHRIST CONNECTION

God kept His promises to the Israelites. Many years later, Jesus, our Savior, was born, and God's greatest promise was fulfilled.

BIBLE NARRATIVE FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

STORYTELLING DIRECTIONS: Have children do the actions and make the sounds in the story with you as you tell it.

God's people lived in the desert for long time. God promised to take care of them, and He did. Many years went by. Babies were born. *Rock a baby.* The babies grew and grew until they were all grown up. *Using hand, start low and raise it higher and higher.*

God gave His people a new leader called Joshua. He told Joshua to it was time to leave the desert and go to the land He promised to give them. But God's people had a big problem. A river blocked the way! The water in the river rushed and swirled. *Make swishing sounds and move hands around.* It was too deep for them to wade through it. They didn't have a boat to cross over it.

I wonder . . . how do you think God's people got across the river to the Promised Land? *Pause for answer.*

Let's find out.

God made a way for them! God told Joshua, "Have the priests carry the ark of the covenant into the Jordan River. When they do this, I will make the water stop so the people can cross on dry ground." The ark of the covenant was a beautiful box covered in gold. The Ten Commandments and other special church things were inside it.

The priests picked up the ark. *Pretend to lift a box and put it on your shoulders.* Then they stepped down into the water. *Step, step, step.* Guess what? God made the water stop rushing. He dried up the ground. Hooray! *Put hands in the air.* The priests stood on dry ground in the middle of the river. They held up the ark of the covenant, and God's people walked through on dry ground. *Step, step, step.* Now they were in their new land! God kept His promise.

When all the people were across, God told Joshua, "Choose a man from each of the twelve big families. Have each man pick up a big stone from the river." Joshua told the men to do this. *Pretend to pick up a big stone.* Then Joshua piled up the stones on the other side of the river in the Promised Land. *Pile up the stones.* The stones were a memorial to show that God had helped them. It would remind the people and their children what God did for them. God kept His promise to bring His people into the Promised Land. *Point up, then fold hands.* Thank You, God!

God kept His promise to send Jesus to be our Savior. God keeps all His promises!

BIBLE NARRATIVE FOR OLDER CHILDREN

After forty years of wandering in the desert, it was time for Israel to cross the Jordan River into the land God had promised to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. God told Joshua to command the priests to carry the ark of the covenant to the riverbank.

Joshua told the people of Israel to follow the ark but not come too close to it.

The priests walked right up to the edge of the water, but there was a problem. It was the rainy season, and the Jordan River was flooding out of its banks. Anyone who stepped into the water would get knocked over and swept away!

Would the Israelites trust God enough to step into that flooded river?

Almost forty years before, God had promised their fathers that He would protect them and give them the Promised Land. But their fathers did not trust Him. They stayed in their tents crying and griping and complaining.

But these Israelites were different. The Holy Spirit had given them strong faith, and they trusted God's promise.

The priests boldly stepped down into the rushing river and God cut off the waters. The waters piled up very far

upstream. The riverbed instantly became dry ground. The priests carried the ark out to the middle of the river, and stood still.

Then the huge group of Israelites, around two million of them, began crossing the Jordan River.

Joshua commanded twelve men, one from each tribe, to go to the place where the priests were standing with the ark. Each man picked up a rock from there. **They carried their twelve rocks over to the shore and set them down. Joshua set these up as a memorial.**

When all Israel was across, the priests came up out of the river and stepped onto the shore. Right away God released the water and it roared down the riverbed again, returning to flood stage.

Whenever the Israelites went back to visit that place, they would see the rock memorial. Parents would tell their children that those were the very same rocks that were in the Jordan River where the ark stood on dry ground. **God had held back the waters of the Jordan River so that the people of Israel could pass through to the Promised Land.**

LIVE

Choose from the following activities and crafts to help connect Bible learning to life.

God's Promises Bookmarks

Make copies of the downloadable activity page for this lesson by accessing the digital resource center.

Give students crayons or colored pencils to color in God's promises. Encourage students to cut out each verse to use as a bookmark and to share with friends and family. Print the page on cardstock to make the bookmarks more durable.



Rock Reminder Craft

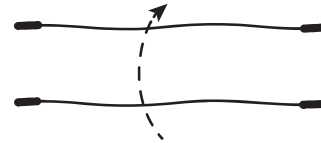
Bring in river rocks for the students. Let each student paint a rock with acrylic paint. When dry, add a cross with a permanent marker or black paint to remind them that God keeps His promises in Jesus.



Crossing the Jordan

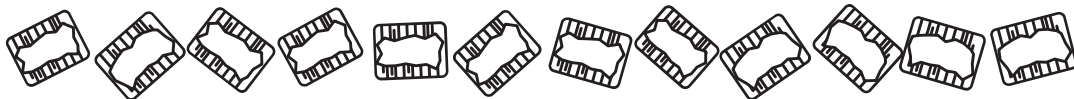
Place two jump ropes parallel to one another on the ground, about two feet apart. Pretend the open space is the Jordan River. Have the children listen for instructions on how to cross: hop, skip, crawl, and so forth. Say, **Could God's people cross the Jordan by hopping? skipping? walking? No, it was way too deep and dangerous! How did they get across? God made a dry path through the river! God promised to bring them to the Promised Land. We can find God's promises in the Bible. God keeps all His promises.**

Ask the children to name some of God's promises to them (e.g., to send Jesus, to forgive them, to hear their prayers, to care for them).



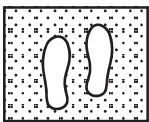
Twelve Stones Snack

Give each child twelve pieces of puffed corn cereal or frosted mini shredded wheat cereal. Have them try to stack their cereal. Ask, **What did Joshua make with the twelve stones from the river? What did he want the people to remember when they saw the stones? How do you remember what God has done for you?**



Sand Pictures

Trace around children's feet on cardstock. Let children color their footprints. Put a thin layer of glue over the rest of the page and sprinkle cornmeal over it for sand.

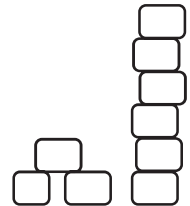


Review how God helped the people walk through the river on dry ground to the Promised Land. Ask, **How does God help us and keep His promises to us?**

Memorial Stone Stacking

Before class, make "memorial stones" for this activity. Lightly stuff a brown paper grocery bag with crumpled newspaper. Slip a second paper bag over the open end of the first to make a large paper block.

Make at least twelve blocks. Have children stack the blocks as high as they can.



LEAVE

SAY

God always does what He says He will do. He promised to bring His people to the Promised Land, and He did. He promised to send Jesus to be our Savior, and He did. He promises to love and care for us, and He does. God keeps all His promises!

PRAY

Dear God, thank You for loving us and for helping us. Thank You for keeping Your promise to send Jesus to be our Savior. Help us to always trust in You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.