

# THE LAND AT LAST

Joshua  
Joshua 3:1–4:18  
1406 BC

## BIBLE TRUTH

God keeps His promises.

## LEARNER GOAL

I can relate the narrative to how God will one day fulfill His promise to bring His redeemed people into the promised land of the new creation.

## BIBLE VERSE

The LORD will do the thing that He has promised. 2 Kings 20:9

## 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

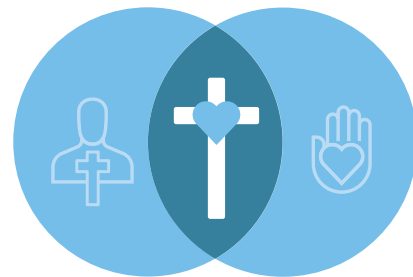
For forty years, the Israelites wandered on sandals that didn't wear out and daily doses of manna. Following Moses' death, Joshua prepares to lead a new generation into the Promised Land. This time, the floodwaters of the Jordan River stand in the way, but hearkening back to the Red Sea crossing, the 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 the narrative and study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible (TLSB)*.

**MORE TIME** Read the section "Archaeology and the Promised Land" in *Concordia's Complete Bible Handbook*, pages 81–85.

**IN DEPTH** Read "The Peoples of Canaan" on page 345 and the "Construction of the Ark" on page 159 in *TLSB*.



## CONNECTING IDENTITY & CALLING

### IDENTITY: WHO AM I?

Christ has found me and leads me from sin and death to new life.

### CALLING: WHY AM I HERE?

I trust God's promises and daily remember and thank Him for His faithfulness to me.

## GROWING IN FAITH FOR LIFE

*See how this lesson builds on learning for each age.*

### ADULT

I can relate the narrative to how God will one day fulfill His promise to bring His redeemed people into the promised land of the new creation.

### YOUTH

I can share how God is faithful and always keeps His promises.

### ELEMENTARY

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

### EARLY CHILDHOOD

I know God keeps all His promises.



### LEADER NOTE

For the opening question, remember that this can be a touchy subject. In our sinful and broken world, broken trust and broken promises can often lead to much hurt. The point of this lesson is that God keeps His promises. If people start sharing only negative experiences with betrayal, carefully move your learners into the text to look for signs of God’s faithfulness.



### BONUS ACTIVITY

Make connections between the crossing of the Jordan and the crossing of the Red Sea (Genesis 14). How are they similar? different? What big themes are repeated in the narratives where God used water to deliver His people in the Old Testament (Noah, the exodus, crossing the Jordan)?

# LAUNCH

## WELCOME

Welcome the group and open in prayer. It may be a good time to take prayer requests; pray for those requests either now or at the conclusion.

## REVIEW

Review the Bible Truth, Learner Goal, and Bible Verse. Then, begin with the opening reflection question on the lesson handout.

## OPENING REFLECTION

We’ve all been burned by people who haven’t kept their promises. Name an instance when someone kept an important promise to you. What did that ultimately mean to you?

# LEARN & LIVE

## JOSHUA 3:1–6

### BIBLE COMMENTARY

After forty years of waiting, the reports of the spies, the transfer of leadership to Joshua, and the blessing of the Lord Himself, it is finally time for the people to enter the Promised Land. Yet God has His people wait three days on the bank of the flooded, raging Jordan River. As they wait, they remember His promises to them, His faithfulness to them, and His covenant. He alone will do the miracles that will lead them into the Promised Land to take possession of it. Then, the ark of the covenant goes forth before the people, and God prepares them to witness another miracle.

### REFLECTION QUESTION

What does the text tell us about the ark of the covenant and what it represents for God’s people? What does it reveal to us about how God works His promises?

### REFLECTION HELPS

The gap between the people and the ark not only shows that God should lead but it also gives a better perspective for more people to view what’s going on. God alone worked deliverance. The ark not only was the chosen throne of God among His people but it also served as a visual representation of His promised covenant among them. God leads the way, showing His faithfulness to His promises.

## JOSHUA 3:7–17

### BIBLE COMMENTARY

The stage is set, so God now works His miracle. He begins by reminding Joshua of his new position as earthly leader of God’s people. Then, Joshua passes on God’s Word to the people, reminding them that the land will be given to them by God Himself, who would drive out the tribes of the people already living there. Though our modern sensitivities may find this rough, God makes it clear that this entry into the Promised Land would serve as a sign to the world of who He is. He is a God of justice and punishment for sins, but He’s also a God who cares for His people. In Christ, God has promised to bring us through the waters of death and the grave into our promised land of heaven and the new creation.

### REFLECTION QUESTION

Identify the different statements of God here to Joshua, then through Joshua to the people. What, in your own words, is God’s attitude toward His people? What does that tell us about God?

### REFLECTION HELPS

God makes many different statements to the people. These all show us God’s steadfastness to His promises and the lengths He goes to to demonstrate His lordship over all the earth.

## JOSHUA 4:1–10

### BIBLE COMMENTARY

With the people across, only the Levites carrying the ark of the covenant and the twelve men representing the twelve tribes remain. God has one more task. The twelve each take a large stone to use to make a memorial sculpture. Twelve more stones are set up in the river. Memorial stones or landmarks are important to God's people, regardless of the era. They remind of God's promises from generation to generation. These did not literally stand forever, but the mention of them stands as a memorial for God's people for all times.

### REFLECTION QUESTION

How were the twelve memorial stones to serve as teaching tools for parents to use with their children? What "memorial stones" do we have in our homes and congregation that we can use to teach the faith in a simple way?

### REFLECTION HELPS

As children asked what the stones meant, parents were to remind them of when the ark of the covenant passed through the waters and God fulfilled His promises. This miracle is the only way such a sculpture could have been built. We can use the questions of children in our congregation and homes as springboards for teaching the faith, or catechesis. The elements of the Divine Service also teach about who God is and how God keeps His promises.

## JOSHUA 4:11–18

### BIBLE COMMENTARY

As the Levites carrying the ark step out of the river, the waters return to their normal course. God had done a great miracle, but the work of His people was far from over. Some soldiers must go ahead to the plains of Jericho, armed for war. God's people must continue to rely on God for victory over the inhabitants of the Promised Land. Yet God has raised up Joshua to command the people, just as He had raised up Moses and would continue to raise up leaders to do His work. Joshua, a foreshadow of Jesus, continually showed God's fulfilled and yet-to-be-fulfilled promises to His people.

### REFLECTION QUESTION

The Hebrew name *Joshua* is translated into the name *Jesus* in Greek. Compare and contrast the role and work of Joshua in this narrative and Jesus in the New Testament. How are they similar and different in regard to God's promises?

### REFLECTION HELPS

Joshua's role was to lead the people from the wilderness through the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Jesus leads God's people through the wilderness of sin and separation from God, through death, to the promised land of the new creation. With Joshua, the battle was just beginning as God's people entered. In Jesus, the victory is already won and the promise of eternal life has been fulfilled.

## LEAVE

### FINAL REFLECTION

In Christ, God keeps His promises. Make a short list of promises from God's Word that God has made and keep for you.

### TAKE HOME

Equip your learners with ideas for taking the lesson into their households by giving them access to the Enduring Faith Page.

### CLOSE WITH PRAYER

If you haven't yet, take prayer requests or encourage a volunteer from the class to pray before you leave.



### BONUS ACTIVITY

Open the Small Catechism and see how the simple questions and answers are like those mentioned in the narrative.



### CHRIST CONNECTION

Christ has promised to deliver us into the promise of the new creation. We can be assured of this, even if we must wait to see it, because He is the God who keeps His promises.



### LEADER NOTE

Give each learner a note card on which to write the promises. Encourage each one to keep the note card as a reminder to recall God's faithfulness throughout the week.

