

Memorial Stones – *(Remember!)*

Purpose – To encourage us to remember the great things that God has done for us as we move to our promised land (the next phase of God’s plan for us).

What is a monument? Something erected in memory of a person, event, etc. There are many monuments around the world like:

- Statue of Liberty – a gift from France in 1886 as an emblem of friendship and of both countries desire for liberty.
- Eifel Tower – designed as the main attraction of the World Fair in 1889.
- Taj Mahal – completed in 1648 in memory of an emperor’s wife who died in childbirth.
- Pyramids of Egypt – built as a resting place for the pharaohs in preparation for the after-life.

What about us? Should we make monuments? What should we remember?

In Joshua 3, we read that God parted the Jordan river so that the armies of Israel could cross on dry ground. What were they told to do? They were told to take 12 stones from the river and carry them over with them to the other side of the Jordan:

Jos 4:1 - And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying:

Jos 4:2 - "Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe,

Jos 4:3 - and command them, saying, 'Take for yourselves twelve stones from here, out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm. You shall carry them over with you and leave them in the lodging place where you lodge tonight.

Here are a few questions that are worth considering:

Why stones?

These were not something carved, or taken from an animal, and not something in the image of something else. This would eventually lead to idolatry. These were not good luck charms, healing crystals, four-leaf clovers, or any other lucky signs, symbols or amulets. God does not want us to use any of these things. They are not harmless, but faith destroying, that change the focus of our faith to something else. These were common stones taken from the place where God had performed a great miracle. They came from the bottom of the river and would have had signs of erosion.

Why were they told to do this?

For a sign –

Jos 4:4 - Then Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe;

Jos 4:5 - and Joshua said to them: "Cross over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of the Jordan, and each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel,

Jos 4:6 - that this may be a sign among you when your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones *mean* to you?'

Jos 4:7 - Then you shall answer them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever."

1. A sign for them – another way of saying this would be a distinguishing mark, banner, flag, beacon, or monument. These 12 stones were both a marker, to mark the spot where God did such a great miracle, and something to remind them of what God did.

2. A sign for their posterity –
 - Jos 4:8** - So the Israelites did as Joshua commanded them. They took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, as the LORD had told Joshua; and they carried them over with them to their camp, where they put them down.
 - Jos 4:9** - Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant had stood. And they are there to this day.
 - Jos 4:10** - Now the priests who carried the ark remained standing in the middle of the Jordan until everything the LORD had commanded Joshua was done by the people, just as Moses had directed Joshua. The people hurried over,
 - Jos 4:11** - and as soon as all of them had crossed, the ark of the LORD and the priests came to the other side while the people watched.
 - Jos 4:12** - The men of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over, ready for battle, in front of the Israelites, as Moses had directed them.
 - Jos 4:13** - About forty thousand armed for battle crossed over before the LORD to the plains of Jericho for war.
 - Jos 4:14** - That day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they stood in awe of him all the days of his life, just as they had stood in awe of Moses.
 - Jos 4:15** - Then the LORD said to Joshua,
 - Jos 4:16** - "Command the priests carrying the ark of the covenant law to come up out of the Jordan."
 - Jos 4:17** - So Joshua commanded the priests, "Come up out of the Jordan."
 - Jos 4:18** - And the priests came up out of the river carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD. No sooner had they set their feet on the dry ground than the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and ran at flood stage as before.
 - Jos 4:19** On the tenth day of the first month the people went up from the Jordan and camped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho.
 - Jos 4:20** - And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan.

Simply stated, the stones were so that those after them (their children and children's children) would be reminded of what God did for them in bringing them into the promised land. God did a great miracle which should be remembered for generations to come.

3. A sign for all nations –

Jos 4:21 - He said to the Israelites, "In the future when your descendants ask their parents, 'What do these stones mean?'

Jos 4:22 - tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.'

Jos 4:23 - For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over.

Jos 4:24 - He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God."

That they may know that the hand of the LORD is powerful. What other God or creation of man could do such a miracle (twice)! This was no myth!

So, where are our memorial stones?

- I would like, this day, to take 12 stones from this place as a memorial:
- To remember those who have gone ahead of us
- To remember that God has brought us to this point in time and what He has done for us.
- So that our children and children's children will know what God has done for us.
- So that all the nations will know what God has done for us.