

Joshua 4:1-24

“Two memorials”

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I. Intro

In Exodus 15 Moses wrote a song of victory with the opening stanza as *“I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!”* This is a song of redemption of how the Lord delivered the people out of the hands of an oppressor. But in Joshua chapter 4 we have two monuments; one seen in the land of promise the other hidden under the Jordan.

1. The one on the land of promise was at Gilgal (which name means *rolling or wheel*). This one speaks of movement forward into the victorious Christian life. It is for this reason that it is visible and to be both visited and spoken of to next generations.
2. The second one lay under the Jordan out of view but never to be forgotten as it spoke of two things that though hidden ought to always remain. The word Jordan is a combined word that means “Jor” or spread and “Dan” or judging, ***thus it speaks of self judging:***
 - a. Death to the self centered life and a renewed trust and obedience to the living God.
 - b. The full emersion in the Holy Spirit (River of Life) empowerment to enter into more of His presence in our lives.

The monument at Gilgal was to be a sign that spoke of God faithfulness, His goodness and greatness to keep that which He has promised His people.

II. Vs. 1-9 Momentum verses monuments

Vs. 1 The Lord was in control of all the activities at the Jordan River that day. He told the priests when to enter the river and when to leave and go to the other side. He told the water when to roll back and when to return. Both the water and the people obeyed Him, and everything worked out as God planned.

Each one of those 3 million Israelites crossed over on dry ground. There wasn't any that drown but all were baptized in the Jordan experience. I can imagine the celebration of those 3 million as they stood at the rivers edge hugging each other giving high 5's and dancing about as what had been promised 500 years earlier they now had.

Saint's there is a word for you and I in this as we can get all excited when the hunt we've planned for a year, the tag we have for that bull elk and the numerous scouting trips have culminated in us bagging the trophy elk of our dreams. Oh the celebration, we have him already mounted and hung on the wall to display to all who will come over. Ah but what about our advancement and victory into the presence and promises of our Lord? Do we equally dedicate ourselves to obtaining more of Him in our lives? Are we equally excited about the possibility of sharing the stories of victory of the conquest of the furtherance of His grace in our lives? Don't get me wrong I don't want to put a damper on your hunting exhibition, I just want us to get as excited about the things of Christ as we do the other things we enjoy!

Vs. 2-7 These stone were not mere pebbles; according to verse 5 stones that had to be carried upon their shoulder. **They were to make a monument out of the large work of the Lord on their behalf for the sole purpose of sharing with the future generations God's greatness, in other words the monument was to make God famous not their crossing.** This is one of the major reasons why we fail in trusting God, we simply forget what things He has done for us in the past. There was the pillar of stones in the midst of the Jordan that could be better seen when the waters returned to normal and perhaps stood out of the water when there was drought. **There will be seasons in our lives when we are going through a spiritual drought where we will need to gaze across the Jordan and recall the fact that the God who worked mightily in the past still desires to do so.**

This memorial was of God's faithfulness not man's greatness, it was to commemorate the fact that God is a promise keeper even when we are promise breakers. We need to build a memorial of the multiple times where God's faithfulness has been displayed so that we can tell our sons and daughters how great God is. **Far too often I forget what God has done for me in the past and so I'm prone to doubting Him in the present.** Friends, what a privilege it is for us to share personally and make God famous by the countless times He has kept His promises in our lives.

Vs. 8-9 Israel was finally in the land of promise and two monuments were set up; **but life in the land of promise pursuing God's presence would not mean they were at Club Med. Instead it would be a land fraught with battle's and obstacle's, that is the reason for the monuments to remind them and future generations that God is not just the One who worked in the past He is the One who works in the present and future as well.**

As we consider this scene in light of Jericho; I believe there would have been a tendency to rush ahead, to strike while you have momentum in stead of building a monument. But God has a lesson here for us: **That the preparation of the soldier is more important than rushing into battle. It takes God more time to get us ready for the fight then it does to defeat the enemy!** The Lord brought them to a place where they would recall God's faithfulness and power and not rely upon their own.

Why did God instructed them to set up two monuments? In verse 8 we are told that the 12 men one from each tribe was to take a stone and carry it upon their shoulders to the land of promise. But according to verse 9 Joshua also set up a monument in the midst of the Jordan where the feet of priests had stood with the Ark of the Covenant, to which Joshua informs his readers that they are still there to this day. Yet we are told in verse 18 that once the priests who

were carrying the ark hit the land of promise the water in the Jordan returned to flood stage. This means that *the 2nd memorial was hidden under the river!* *There always remains a work of the Spirit that is invisible to all but you and the Lord it is a secret work of brokenness in each person's heart and it is only visible by going deep into the river of living water.* We like to talk about the memorials that all can see but they are only as valid as what the Lord has done deep in each person's heart.

III. Vs. 10-18 Two testimonies

Vs. 10-13 It says that the people "*hurried and crossed over*" there was no delay, no procrastination instead anticipation and desire to be nearer to the Lord in the land. Listen for just a moment to the plea, won't you "*hurry and cross over*"?

Joshua tells us that the 2 ½ tribes that choose to settle on the east side of the Jordan sent a portion of their men to fight but the rest remained content to live outside the presence and promises of God. Though all the tribes participated in the crossing not all crossed over as we are told that only 40,000 prepared for war of the 2 ½ tribes came across and based upon Numbers 26 the total number of the fighting force of these 2 ½ tribes was 110,580 men which means that very few of those tribes entered into what God had for them. *Only 29% of the soldiers entered into the land of promise and far less than this as the rest watched as everyone else walked on dry ground.* The visible token of the presence of God had to remain in the river through the entire crossing. And yet these memorials would stand as a witness against those who settle out side of the presence of the Lord. They had to go over and fight the battle but never enjoy the spoils and I'm afraid that there are far too many Christians who end up doing the same in their lives.

God didn't force them to enter into more of Him, there were memorials for these folks as well but they were *memorials of what might have been*, what could be theirs. I'm amazed how

easy it becomes for me to lose the perspective of eternity and start living as this life is where I'll spend eternity. *Just in terms of time and energy we spend a disproportionate amount of our resources of that which will soon be irrelevant and worthless.* Oh that we would gain a perspective of eternity!! *Our Lord will take us as deep and far as we want to go but not step further than we are willing to go with Him my friend.* If you have found yourself not going very far into the presence and promises of God, then it is not that He isn't willing to take you it is that you aren't willing to go!

Vs. 14 In John 1:28 we were told that Jesus was baptized in the Jordan at Bethabara. Now means *"House of passage" and it is so named this because this was the place where Joshua and the nation crossed over following after the presence of the Lord becoming immersed into the Spirit, inheriting the promises.* I wonder if Jesus was right over the spot where those stones were piled up in the Jordan I say this because we are told in Matthew 3:9 that John the Baptist told the religious leaders who had come out prior to Jesus baptism *"do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones."*

Vs. 15-18 When those priests came upon the bank of the land of promise the mighty Jordan flowed back to where it had been. There is power to live the Christian life that boggles the imagination of only you and I would die to self, take a step of faith, and be immersed in the Holy Spirit. Make no mistake about it friends there is power in the Holy Spirit as we sing our God is a *"Consuming Power"*.

IV. Vs. 19-24 What are these stones?

Vs. 19 There many places in the Bible where dates and days like this are listed and we read them with out any meaning to us personally. But if you go to Exodus 12:2-8 you will find this date, 40

years earlier, mentioned as it was this very day the Lord told Moses to tell the people to “*take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. A first born lamb without blemish, one that shall be killed at twilight and its blood sprinkled of the door posts and the lintel.*” **God brought them over on the very day in which the lamb was sacrificed four days before the Passover, to remind them that way of sanctification is the same as was their salvation through the blood of the Lamb!** Gilgal was about 2 miles from Jericho it was here

that:

- Israel crowned their first king at Gilgal (1 Sam. 11)
- Samuel thought Gilgal important enough to include it in his “ministry circuit” (1 Sam. 7:16).
- David was welcomed back after Absalom’s rebellion was subdued (2 Sam. 19)
- There was a “school of the prophets” at Gilgal in the days of Elijah and Elisha (2 Kings 2:1-2; 4:38).

To an unbeliever, the heap of twelve stones was simply another stone pile; but to a believing Israelite, it was a constant reminder that Jehovah was his or her God, working His wonders on behalf of His people. According to the Prophets Hosea and Amos the people started worshiping at Gilgal instead of at Jerusalem. **A monument that was erected to celebrate what God had done became a place where they worshipped what they had done. There is nothing wrong with memorials, provided they don’t become religious idols that turn our hearts from God, and provided they don’t so link us to the past that we fail to serve God in the present.** In two generations the people began to walk away from God. The responsibility was laid upon the fathers that it was their failure to teach them. **Glorifying the past is a good way to petrify the present and rob the church of power.** The next generations need reminders of what God has done in history, but these reminders must also strengthen their faith and draw them closer to the Lord.

The first thing these folks did upon entering the land was to set up a monument to God's greatness and faithfulness to fulfill His promises. That we would, each and every day, come and bow down to worship God before our Gilgal's, our alter of un-hewn stones that have been taken out of the depths of despair. God's work continues, it has no beginning or end and it is not dependent upon the situation, circumstance nor the generation. In 2 Chron. 16:9 we are told that *"the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him."* Our God desires to part the Jordan and bring you into more of Himself. In Jeremiah 29:11 we read, *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."* The Holy Spirit had Jeremiah write those words that the nation was being led away captive by the Babylonians. There awaits a future and a hope where God will show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. The second benefit of this memorial of stones was to the world who didn't know the living God that they may come to seek the true God who's *"hand is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever."* It's important that our children know of the greatness of our God and they we speak of our dependence upon Him. As we look at the people of God; the failure of the nation has always been in reaching the next generation. **God is not a God who once worked but is still working and desires to do wonders among us** (verse 3:5). In 1 Peter 2:4-5 we read that Jesus is *"a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious"*, and that we also are, *"living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."* **We been stacked together in the land of promise as a sign for all to look at God's faithfulness.** A sure sign that the Holy Spirit has worked is not the gifts saints it's that we have love for one another that is the true monument of the work of the Holy Spirit.