



“Standing Stones”

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I. We Are a _____ People (Romans 1:21)

Deuteronomy 8:11 “Take care lest you forget the Lord your God ...”

II. God Helps Us to Remember

Joshua 4:1-3 “When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man, and command them, saying, ‘Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests’ feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.’”

A. A Memorial to Thinking _____ (Psalm 78:1-7; 79:13; 89:1; 102:18; Exodus 12:26-27; Joshua 4:8)

Joshua 4:6-7 “that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.”

B. A Memorial to God’s _____

Joshua 4:9 “And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the covenant had stood; and they are there to this day.”

C. A Memorial to _____ to a New Life (Joshua 4:12-14)

Joshua 4:10-11 “For the priests bearing the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the Lord commanded Joshua to tell the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. The people passed over in haste. And when all the people had finished passing over, the ark of the Lord and the priests passed over before the people.”

D. A Memorial to the _____

Joshua 4:15-18 “And the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Command the priests bearing the ark of the testimony to come up out of the Jordan.’ So Joshua commanded the priests, ‘Come up out of the Jordan.’ And when the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord came up from the midst of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests’ feet were lifted up on dry ground, the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks, as before.”

1. God is Always On _____

Joshua 4:19 “The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho.

Exodus 12:3 “Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers’ houses, a lamb for a household”

2. A Place Called _____

Joshua 4:20 “And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal.”

E. A Memorial to the _____ Around You

1. So Your _____ Will Know

Joshua 4:21-22 “And he said to the people of Israel, ‘When your children ask their fathers in times to come, “What do these stones mean?” then you shall let your children know, “Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.”’”

a. It Starts With _____ Heart (Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

b. Be _____ (Deuteronomy 6:7a)

c. Use _____ Life to Point to God’s Work (Deuteronomy 6:7b-9)

• In Your _____

• In Your _____

• In Your Contact With Other People

2. So the _____ Will Know

Joshua 4:23-24 “For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.”

3. So _____ Will Know (1 Peter 2:5)

Joshua 4:24 “ ... that you may fear the Lord your God forever.”

Matthew 3:9 “And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.”



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1. Familiarize yourself with the Passage and the Gospels

- a. Read Joshua 4:1-24
- b. Read the book of Joshua several times (get to know the big story of the book)
- c. Identify the plot, setting, characters, and viewpoint of the narrator
- d. Identify positive or negative comments about people in the story
- e. Identify the narrator's remarks about God
- f. Notice comparison of characters

2. Introduction to the Passage

(Feel free to use this as a reference guide as you discuss the passage)

a. Literary Context:

Chapter 4 functions as the conclusion to chapter 3. After seeing God's hand guide the Israelites across the Jordan, God instructs them to build a memorial made of stones in remembrance of God's miracle to cut off the waters of the Jordan allowing the people to walk into the promised land. The ark of the covenant still has a central role in this chapter, since it represents God's reign and kingship over the nation. The waters were not cut off because of the people crossing, but because of the presence of the ark of the covenant in the water (*Joshua 4:7*). The twelve stones symbolize the 12 tribes of Israel, as a sign that the people should remember God's power and might over his people. The purpose of the miracle was to encourage the people to "fear the LORD."

b. Historical Cultural Context:

Memorial stones were quite common in the world of the Israelites. We see examples of this already happening by Jacob in *Genesis 28* and Moses in *Exodus 24*. Other nations did this as well, usually representing a deity or a sacred place of worship to that deity.¹ The Israelite's 12 stones do not represent the LORD, but the LORD's actions and miraculous power. The Ark is a symbol of God's presence rather than the stones. The stones were to remind the later generation about how God safely brought their ancestors into the promised land (*Joshua 4:21*).

3. Questions about the Passage

- a. What was significant about this miracle, that the Lord wanted them to set up memorial stones, compared to the earlier miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea? Why does this miracle require a physical marker, but the Red Sea crossing did not?
- b. What is significant about the mention of 40,000 troops ready for battle in *Joshua 4:13*? What message is God trying to send to the nations?
- c. The miracle of the Jordan river caused the people to know the Lord's might and thus fear the Lord (*Joshua 4:24*). How is this kind of fear positive rather than negative?

4. From the Passage to Life

- a. Israelites were commanded to set up a physical reminder of God's faithfulness in their lives (i.e. memorial stones). What physical reminders have you set up in your life to remind you of God's faithfulness to you in Christ? How do you regularly remember God's work in your life?
- b. The 12 stones were to be placed for the purpose of the next generation. What are some ways that you can pass down spiritual memories to remind your children and people in the next generation of God's faithfulness?
- c. Do you see the fear of God in Scripture as a positive or a negative topic? Consider *Deuteronomy 6:1-5* where there is a correlation between love and fear (Moses first talks about fearing God and then talks about love). (Also consider *Exodus 20:18-20*; *Hosea 3:5*; *Jeremiah 33:8-9* to see the positive side of fearing God)²

¹ John H. Walton, ed. *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel*, ZIBBC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 26.

² If you would like a well done study on the fear of God, consider *What does it Mean to Fear the Lord* by Michael Reeves (abridged edition).