



A Systematic Expository Study on the book of JOSHUA

Study 9: SIGNIFICANT MEMORIALS OF GOD'S SUPERNATURAL ACT Joshua 4:1-24

Two piles of stones were set up when Israel crossed Jordan; one on the bank on the Canaan side of the river, the other in the midst of Jordan. They were memorials or monuments of remembrance. They were to serve as a constant reminder of God's power who performed a mighty miracle of dividing Jordan for them to walk through and come into the Promised Land.

A mighty miracle was wrought when God dried up the Red Sea and led His people out of Egypt but no monument was erected there. God did not intend to have His people dwell in wilderness or to go back to Egypt. No son of Jacob was to be there to ask, **"What mean these stones"**? God wanted His people to dwell in Canaan. This was that good land that God had promised, **"a land which God careth for; the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year"** (Deuteronomy 11:12).

Leaving the wilderness behind and entering the Promised Land, the Lord wanted Israel to erect memorials that will always remind them of His miracle of mercy. Memorials of God's mercy are many in the Old Testament. There was circumcision, the memorial of God's covenant with Abraham; the stone set up at Bethel, the memorial of Jacob's vision; there was the Passover, the memorial of the deliverance from Egypt; the manna and Aaron's rod in the ark, the memorial of the miraculous feeding of the Israelites in the wilderness and the selection of Aaron and his children for the office of high-priesthood; there was also the memorial of Israel's victory over the Philistines in 1 Samuel 7:12.

The memorials are for our encouragement and enlightenment. They have their outlook towards the past and towards the future. They serve a double purpose; they keep alive precious memories and awaken lively hope and faith in us, exciting gratitude and strengthening faith.

INDESTRUCTIBLE MONUMENTS FOR THE CHRISTIANS' EDIFICATION

Joshua 4:1-9; Deuteronomy 27:1-5; Joshua 24:24-27; 1 Samuel 7:8-12; Psalm 111:2-4; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

The stones were for a **"sign"**, a **"memorial"** to prevent this great miracle from being forgotten. Israel had a tendency of forgetting God's goodness. In Psalm 78, we are told again and again that **"They forget His works and the wonders He had showed them"**. The crossing of Jordan dry shod was the first miracle, which marked the entrance of the people of Israel into the land of Canaan. It was God's purpose that this spectacular manifestation of His power and love be held in perpetual remembrance.

We owe it to ourselves to remember all God's benefits, for the recollection of them in green pastures and still waters when we are weak. It is inspiration when we are depressed. It gives the joyous sense of being loved. It purifies the soul by gratitude. It binds us by the sweetest of all bonds to God's service. It brightens the future by the radiance, which at once is most trustworthy. It moves us on in our pilgrimage trusting God and taking courage.

These memorials were not made of clay, which could have been washed away by rain, but of stone, something that would endure, that could give testimony to many generations. All through these generations those piles of stones remained and inspired the children of Israel by their blessed memories. The Lord has given an enduring memorial to the church in the institution of the Lord's Supper. **"The Lord Jesus took bread and when He had given thanks, He break it, and said, Take eat: this is My Body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My Blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come"** (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

INDEFATIGABLE MINISTERS: OUR CONSTANT EXHORTATION

Joshua 4:10-18; Isaiah 28:16; 2 Samuel 23:10; Joshua 3:17; Numbers 32:20-32; Romans 12:11; Ecclesiastes 9:10.

"For the priest which bare the ark stood in the midst of Jordan, until everything was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to speak unto the people" (Joshua 4:10). Those priests occupied a place

both of honour and of danger, yet they acted with implicit obedience and patient fortitude. They bore the ark and stood firm while the waters “**rose up like a heap**” held back by God’s invisible Hand. They remained in the post of duty for many hours until the vast host of Israel crossed over to the other side. It was a severe test of their faith, courage and patience. These priests have left the ministers of Gospel an example to continue steadfastly in their duty until the people of God pass over and reach the Promised Land. Their example serves as a model for all ministers of Christ to have uncompromising fidelity, undaunted courage and patient endurance.

“And the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying, command the priest that bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of Jordan. Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, come ye up out of Jordan”(Joshua 4: 15-17). It is indeed striking and very instructive that the priests did not take a step until they were Divinely authorised through their leader, Joshua. Patiently they waited even after all the people had passed over, until God told them to move! They did not act on their own impulse or initiative, but faithfully waited God’s time. These priests did not quit their position till Joshua who had commanded them hitherto, ordered them from thence, nor did he thus order them till the Lord commanded him. So obedient were all parties to the Word of God, and so entirely confident were they of His protection. It is our challenge that we ministers of Christ’s Church should render unquestioning obedience to God and leave the consequences with Him. While standing firm in our post of duty as He has commanded us, we need not entertain the least fear or hesitation.

“And the people hastened and passed over” (Joshua 4:10). The people had thoughtful consideration for the priest; the slower their movement, the longer the priests would have to stand bearing the ark. Unnecessary delay on the part of the people would have put more strain on the priests. The practical lesson is that God’s people should do everything in their power to make the spiritual lot of God’s ministers easier. That can be done by promptly responding to their instructions and doing what needs to be done quickly. There is another reason why “**the people hastened and passed over**”. They were anxious to enter the Promised Land! They had spent a long time in the wilderness and had dreamt much about putting their feet on the Promised Land. Now the time had come and they “**hastened and passed over.**” Christians should be eager and anxious to leave the wilderness behind and make haste to enter into the promised land of victory and triumph, where milk and honey flow.

Israel’s deliverance from Egypt is a type of the sinner forsaking the world, believing in Christ’s atoning blood, and becoming saved. Christ is our Passover Lamb. Israel passing through the Red Sea is a type of Water Baptism for the believer after being born again. Israel at Mount Sinai, where God would have written His Law on the fleshly tables of their hearts if they had believed and drawn near, is a type of our sanctification. Israel crossing Jordan into Canaan, the land of promise, is a type of the great experience God has for us – baptism or immersion in the Holy Spirit. The Christian, after being saved and sanctified, is ready to enter into his Promised Land -the glorious land of plenty that is his through the experience of the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

INSTRUCTIVE MEMORIALS FOR OUR CHILDREN’S EDUCATION

Joshua 4:6,7,19-24; Exodus 12:24-27; 13:14,15; Deuteronomy 6:20-25; Isaiah 38:19; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15; Psalm 78: 3-7.

“When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, what mean these stones? Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land” (Joshua 4: 21, 22). The memorial of stones was not only for the encouragement and edification of Israel’s present generation but also for the enlightenment and education of the coming generation. It was a provision made for the passing down to their children a record of God’s dealings with His people. Children are inquisitive and parents are to satisfy the enquiries of their children and use their questions to teach and train them in the way of the Lord. It is not enough merely to provide food and clothing for the body and secular education for the mind; their moral and spiritual needs must not be neglected. “**Godliness is the best learning**”. The deepest impression is often created in childhood. The clay is then easily moulded; the tree has not yet grown stubbornly crooked, and can be straightened; the white paper, if not quite a blank, has still much space left for godly teachings. Let every Christian parent tell his children the story of salvation, taking it from the pure source of Holy Scripture. If the story of redemption is told by the parents until it takes root in the hearts of the children, the gospel will become an element of vital power in the heart of the rising race. When we obey this precept in letter and spirit heartily and faithfully, our obedience will raise godly children and mighty ministers for the next generation. “**That ye might fear the LORD your God for ever**” (Joshua 4: 24).

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