

# Joshua 4:1-9 – Stones of Remembrance for Dominion

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Henry, Pulpit, Trapp, Poole, Delitzsch, JFB, Gill, Bezuyen, Calvin, Clarke, INT,

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: When a woman looks at her ring finger and notices the stone that is there she is drawn back to that time when her husband proposed. Maybe she recollects what she was wearing, or where they were, or what they were eating when he proposed. Indeed, the rock in her ring is her rock of remembrance. That rock has meaning for her. Even a lady who has been married 40 or 50 years often blushes when you ask her about her engagement ring!

Similarly, God knew how much his Bride needed to remember his love so that she did not stray when she saw all the wealth of Canaan. So he carefully instructed his bride to make and use a sign of remembrance. You will hear about this today.

Our headings are:

**God calls for stones of Remembrance**

**Israel Responds to God's Call for Stones of Remembrance**

Our goals are: **That you will hold dearly to the signs of remembrance that God gives to you so that you will remember whose you are and will be encouraged to fight the good fight for the advancement of Christ's kingdom.**

## **God calls for stones of remembrance**

1 And it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over the Jordan, that the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying: 2 "Take for yourselves **twelve men from the people, one man from every tribe**, 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."

**1. God told Joshua to choose 12 men from the 12 tribes of Israel to gather one stone each from the Jordan River**, carry them to Gilgal on the west side of the Jordan, and set them as a memorial of God's mighty deliverance.

### **2. But why did God choose to use stones for this memorial?**

**a. Stones last a long time and God wanted them to remember him for a long time. Additionally, stones from the river would have been sealed** stones – made smooth by the water flowing over them over many years.

**Jacob set up stones to remember the permanent blessings of God to his church**. He named the place where he had the dream and where God promised him to build his house, Bethel – house of God. Genesis 28.

**Samuel set up a stone of help** to remember God's victories to his people. 1Samuel 7.

**Christ used "stone" symbolically of Peter – whose name meant "rock" – to show the church would last a long time.**

**Matthew 16:18** "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the **gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.**

Of course the ultimate Rock is Jesus Christ himself – the eternal rock, and you are established on him.

**Psalms 62:6** **He only is my rock and my salvation**; He is my defense; I shall not be moved.

**Psalms 61:2** From the end of the earth I will cry to You, When my heart is overwhelmed; **Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.** 我心沮丧的时候，我从地极向你呼求；求你领我到那比我更高的磐石上面去

**b. These stones from the Jordan had not human work on them** - they were natural stones. They were most appropriate to use. God wanted to make sure that man could not take any credit for what he did.

**3. How did the 12 men arrange the stones? We don't know exactly, but they were** arranged in a way that it had some notable and recognizable meaning. But what a difference this was from 40 years before when they probably were building the great pyramids of Egypt to honor the Pharaohs! Now they had a simple arrangement of stones to remember Jehovah, creator of heaven and earth.

### **4. And why did God use 12 stones for this memorial...why not 7 or 3?**

**a. God wanted a representative from all 12 tribes of Israel to show that they were all part of the covenant.** God even wanted the 2 ½ tribes on the east side of the Jordan to remember this deliverance as well.

**b. The number 12 is used symbolically/figuratively through the Scriptures.**

In Judges 19, a Levite cut his wife into **12 parts and sent one part to each tribe of Israel** to show the need of Israel working together to purify the land.

Jacob had **12 princes in his family**.

There were also **12 springs** of water in Elim for God's people to drink and live. Exodus 15.

There were **12 stone pillars** at Sinai. Exodus 24.

There were **12 stones representing** the 12 tribes of Israel on the priest's chest. Exodus 39.

There were **12 loaves of bread** always in the tabernacle. Leviticus 24:5. Twelve basketfuls were left over after the Lord's miracle.

There were **12 silver plates** at the dedication of the altar along with **12 sprinkling bowls**, **12 gold dishes**, and **12 spoons**. Numbers 7:84.

There were **12 each of the animals sacrificed** as part of the sacrificial system. Numbers 7:87.

There were 12 governors in Israel. 1Kings 4.

Elisha/Elijah set up **12 stones** to make an altar to represent the prayers of all Israel. (1Ki 18:31).

There were **12 disciples**. Matthew 10:1.

The **heavenly city had 12 foundations**. Revelation 21:12-14.

**5. Notice how God stopped men in the busy-ness of their lives to make sure they remembered what he did** for them.

## **Israel Responds to God's Call for Stones of Remembrance**

4 **Then Joshua called the twelve men** whom he had appointed from the children of Israel, one man from every tribe; 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**, 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?**' 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." 8 And the children of Israel did so, **just as Joshua commanded**, and took up twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, as the LORD had spoken to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them to the place where they lodged, and laid them down there.

**1. In obedience to God, Joshua called the 12 representatives from the 12 tribes to gather 12 stones.** These were 12 large stones, stones that had to be carried on the shoulder of each man. But don't miss the context of Israel's obedience. Everyone would have been busy, tired, facing the enemy in Canaan, moving baggage, adjusting to a strange country, avoiding twisting an ankle on the stony ground, and wondering about food, but God put man's priority in order. They needed to stop and reflect 反思, like you have to do on the Sabbath. Do you forget the worship of Christ in the busy-ness of your lives? Hear the warning of the Psalmist!

Psalm 9:17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, **And all the nations that forget God.** God gave you the Sabbath so you can reflect and not forget what he has done for you.

**2. The men then set these stones up, at the direction of the priests, in a unique way so as to make it something memorable** 与众不同. How can we know they were set in a memorable way? We can conclude this from what God said. God said that the Israelite children would see the strange arrangement and would be inclined to ask: "Dad, what does this stone arrangement mean?" A regular pile of stone would not have meant anything to someone in Palestine. Piles of stones were common. And the fathers had to respond to their children and say these stones were a reminder that God stopped the raging Jordan's waters when his Ark reached the waters. John Calvin called Israel's setting up of the stones... "**zealous endeavors to propagate piety** 宣扬敬虔..." This was even a reminder to adults. God wanted to keep this ever fresh in their minds. He knew how easy it was to forget.

**Illustration:** You might see all those sad advertisements of how kids are starving in Africa around the holiday times...and then you commit to helping them...but soon the season passes...and the advertisements are gone...and you get back to your normal life and forget. God's rescue of his people and establishing them in Canaan was far too great a thing to let it pass from his people's mind. **Remember, God wants your worship and he threatens** 吓下 **hell on those who don't worship him.** So because of his great love for his people, **he gave clear instructions** of how he was to be worshipped and how he was to be remembered. Remember: Roll back the curtains of memory now and then. Show where you brought me from and where I could have been!

**3. Now when Israel crossed over to the west side of the Jordan, God called on them to stop and wait again.** Israel might have been eager to go and attack their enemies, but God told them to wait.

Why would God not allow them to go, didn't God care about their comforts? Didn't God want them to enjoy a normal meal...enjoy some fresh grapes...and wine...a sleep in a bed with a real roof over them?

**a. This was a trust/faith building exercise.** God wanted to reassure the Jews that no weapon formed against them would prosper. Trusting God would be their most potent 强效 weapon.

**b. God wanted them to learn that worship was a priority** for him and that Israel had to make it their priority as well. **Comforts can make one blind!**

**c. God faith-building in his people didn't end there with the brief wait.** You will soon find that there was one more incredible teaching moment God was going to have with Israel at this same spot...one that left them most vulnerable...as far as the world's thinking went...but was one of the strongest ways the Israelites would learn to trust God. They would subject themselves to circumcision 割礼

#### **4. Let me ask you two questions:**

a. Are you able to trust the Lord even when you think something needs to be done "yesterday" and God doesn't seem to be aware of your schedule?

b. Do you make worship a priority in your life, or do you think it is most important to be interested in other kingdom activities? To put it simply: Would you miss worship service to go to a pro-life rally? You shouldn't.

9 Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood; and they are there to this day.

**5. The Joshua went one step farther...not in changing worship, which is wickedness of the highest sort, but of showing a raging intense love for God.** He set up a second set of stones in the midst of the river so that the people of Israel could see it during the dry season. When Israel passed by during the dry season they would be reminded that God had greater power than the Jordan to sustain their lives. **(I do wonder if these were the stones, which were visible during the dry season, to which John the Baptist was pointing when he spoke!)**

Matthew 3:9 "and 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.

#### **Conclusion:**

God called on Israel to remember his great work among them and he gave them a specific and permanent way of remembering him. Joshua and Israel did exactly as God said. The Israelites arranged the 12 stones in a way to stoke the memory of the young and old in Israel. So when they entered into Canaan – the land which God promise them, they would always keep their eyes upon their covenant God (who would be symbolically present by the Ark of the Covenant). This same God would ultimately send the final Joshua, Jesus Christ, to redeem their souls.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: You don't have to carry heavy stones on your shoulders to remember your salvation. You have the signs of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Every time you see someone baptized, or when you participate in the Lord's Supper (a good reason for frequent celebration), always remember that the new Joshua, Jesus, led you to a place of safety and continues to be with you. You can then move forward, not with arrogance, but with trust, to bring the world under the dominion of Christ.

Finally, God spoke verbally to Israel as they crossed the Jordan, and God spoke through the Jordan River itself. The message was the same: "Trust and serve the living God!" Will you listen? Don't stay out of God's kingdom. You have no safety outside. Christ is your passage into the kingdom. He took the punishment for the world so men can be brought back to safety with God.