

Setting up a Stone

Joshua 4:1-8

I hope that each of you have enjoyed this holiday weekend. Tomorrow will be observed as Memorial Day. For many it simply signals the start of the summer season, the beginning of cook-outs, picnics, and vacations.

These are times that we all enjoy with family and friends, but I hope that Memorial Day means more to us than the beginning of summer. It is a day set aside to honor the memory of those who have given their lives in the line of duty defending the freedoms that we all hold dear. Had it not been for the courageous sacrifices of soldiers, we would not live in a free society today. I am grateful for those who stood so that I might be able to worship today.

As we consider Memorial Day I trust that we are reminded of the ultimate sacrifice that was made for all mankind as Jesus gave Himself as the atonement for sin. Had He not been willing to die we would yet be in our sin.

For the Christian every day ought to be Memorial Day. We need to be constantly aware of the provision that was made for us and our relationship with the Lord. Our text today deals with such an attitude. God's people were making the crossing into the Promised Land and they were instructed to set up a memorial, a constant reminder of God's goodness in their lives.

I want to use [V.7](#) as our text verse today as we consider the timeless [principles](#) revealed. I want to preach on the thought: [Setting up a Stone. Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.](#) As we think on this passage today, keep in mind that all of this was done as a reminder of the goodness and grace of God in the lives of His people. This memorial stood as a profound reminder to the people. It was a reminder of:

I. The Power of God – As the people set up the stones of remembrance surely they were reminded of the power of God in their lives. Much has happened during the wilderness journey. In all of that, God was faithful. They must have thought of:

A. His Deliverance – Because of disbelief and rebellion, all who were 20 years of age and older died in the wilderness with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, but I am certain there were those who remembered the time of captivity in Egypt. After 430 years of dwelling in Egypt, much of that time enslaved in bondage, God brought His people out with a mighty hand!

- I am convinced that it would do us good to set up a stone of remembrance for our deliverance as well. We too were dwelling in a foreign land, apart from God, enslaved to the bondage of sin and He brought us out through the provision of His shed blood upon the cross.

May we never get over the price that was paid so that we might be redeemed from sin and reconciled to God! I fear that with time we grow complacent about our salvation. We lose the awe and appreciation of all that Christ did for us.

B. His Guidance – We cannot think of the deliverance of Israel and the wilderness wanderings without considering the guidance of God. All that were delivered had been born in Egypt. Being enslaved was all they knew. Moses was likely the only one who had ever been outside the borders of Egypt. They had no idea which way to go as they left Egypt. God led them to the Red Sea and when it seemed as if they would all perish, He parted the waters and led them across on dry land.

- As they journeyed in the wilderness having no idea where Canaan was, God led them with His providential hand. He guided their steps and led them to the land of promise. Has He not led our lives as well? Where would we be today had God not been there to lead and guide us?

C. His Providence – I stand amazed as I read about the provision of God for His people in the midst of a barren wilderness. Their lives stand as a resounding testimony that God is more than able to meet our needs!

- **Manna** – Ex.16:14-15 – And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. [15] And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat.

- **Clothing** – Deut. 29:5 – And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot.

- **Protection** – Time will not permit to read the countless verses that deal with God's hand of protection upon His people as they journeyed in the wilderness. These were people who had been enslaved in Egypt with no weaponry or means of defense and God sustained them!

- Has God not been good in our lives? Has He not blessed us far more than we could ever deserve? Surely we need to be reminded of His providence!

D. His Patience – Consider the many times that the people murmured and complained in the wilderness. Think of the times they wished to be back in Egypt. Rather than being thankful for their deliverance, they murmured against God. He was merciful and patient, continuing to guide them and meet their needs.

- I sure am glad that we serve a patient and longsuffering God. He doesn't throw the clay away, but instead continues to mold us and make us.

E. His Abundance – Just delivering them from Egypt would've been enough, but God had much more in store. Num.13:23 – And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs. Num.13:27 – And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. We too have received His abundance!

I. The Power of God

II. The Presence of God (5) – And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of Jordan, and take ye up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel: As the people journeyed through the wilderness, setting up the Tabernacle as they stopped along the way, they carried the ark of the covenant along with them. This was the most prized possession that Israel had. It was honored and special to them. As they set up these stones as a memorial, they were reminded of the presence of God.

➤ **God's presence rested upon the ark.** It was kept in the Holy of Holies behind the veil and it was there that God's presence dwelt between the cherubims on the ark. The high priest was the only one who ever had the privilege of entering behind the veil, but the people enjoyed the benefit of having the presence of God in the camp!

I have experienced the Lord's presence in this place and it would do us good to be reminded of that. We need to seek after the Lord and desire His presence among us! Our children need to experience the presence and power of God. It would do us good for them to ask, **what mean ye by these stones?**

➤ **Being near the ark ensured being near the Lord.** We must keep in mind that the Spirit had not indwelt believers in that day. His presence was not manifested as it is today. The people were assured that being near to the ark would keep them near to the Lord. Now they had to be right in their hearts, but there were blessings associated with the presence of the ark.

The saved are indwelt with the Holy Spirit and we can enjoy His presence wherever we are, but the principle remains the same. We need to be reminded of the need to stay near to the Lord. Being close to God translates into receiving His blessing and power.

➤ **God was near to them in the midst of Jordan.** As those appointed to take up a stone stepped into the Jordan, God was near to them as the ark rested upon the banks of the river.

What a blessed promise and reminder of the goodness of God. We may have to wade through some troubled waters in this life, but we do not have to make the trip alone! God will be there to lead and guide us in this journey. If He has brought us to it, He will lead us through it.

I. The Power of God

II. The Presence of God (5)

III. The Promise of God – All of this was done to provide a reminder of the promise and provision of the Lord. Let's consider this glorious promise and the hope that it brought. Notice:

A. The Tribes (2, 4) – Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, [4] Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man: The promises of God were universal; none were excluded or overlooked. God was faithful to each tribe of Israel and in essence to all of the people. Every individual who stood there that day shared in the promises of God!

- Isn't that a blessing in our day as well? I am confident that we all could set up a stone of remembrance for the goodness of God in our lives. None of His children are excluded or overlooked. We all have the same access to the throne of grace and we are all recipients of His goodness.

- Aren't you glad that all He requires is simply being a part of the family? The children of Israel were blessed because of their inheritance; God had chosen them as His people. We are not expected to be from a certain lineage or possess a particular amount of wealth. God just blesses those who belong to Him!

B. The Testimony (6-7) – That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? [7] Then ye shall answer

them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever. Surely there were small children who would not remember the blessings of that day. There were those who would not remember how God proved Himself faithful in the wilderness journey. These stones were set up as a memorial to the goodness of God and a reminder to the people.

- It does us good to brag upon our Lord once in a while. It does us good to be reminded of His blessing and share that with others. The world needs to hear of our God and the hope that He gives. We need to let the world know about our Savior, the One who gave Himself so that they too might be saved. The church needs to declare the goodness of God and keep Him ever before our lives in sharp focus!
- How long has it been since we have born witness of what Christ has done for us? May we not be guilty of silence when it comes to the things of God!

As we think of Memorial Day, I pray that we will be reminded of all that we have received in Christ. I pray that we will be thankful of His abundant blessings and especially our salvation. We need to ensure that coming generations are familiar with the God we serve.

If you are here today and you have never met the Lord, today would be a great day to receive Him. If Christ has dealt with your heart, now is the time to come to Him!