

# What Are These Stones?

Joshua 4:19-24

## INTRODUCTION:

- A. **Joshua 4:19-24** - “Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho.  
 20 And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal.  
 21 Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What are these stones?  
 22 “Then you shall let your children know, saying, ‘Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land’;  
 23 for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over,  
 24 that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.”
1. God’s people, the Israelites, under the leadership of Joshua, have just entered the land promised to their forefathers.
  2. Notice the events of the past.
    - a. 400+ years of bondage in Egypt had ended.
    - b. Moses had led Israel for some forty years prior to his death in the land of Moab.
    - c. The law of God had been given.
      1. To the people of the exile from Egypt at Mt. Sinai. Exodus
      2. To the people of the inheritance at Moab. Deuteronomy.
    - d. The Jordan River has been crossed via dry ground.
    - e. The children of Israel are now in the promised land . . . but what do they do first?
  3. Under Jehovah’s instructions, Joshua establishes a “memorial” by having each of the twelve men he had chosen to remove a stone from the Jordan. These 12 stones were then placed as a memorial of their passing through the Jordan River.
- B. Memorials are for the purpose of reminding us of certain events. They serve as valuable lessons to succeeding generations.
1. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier
  2. The Lincoln Memorial
  3. The Washington Monument.
  4. Memorial Day (Last Monday in May) Not a place but a day – Memorial Day
  5. Spiritual memorial - The Lord’s Supper each Sunday

- C. Later when those who saw these stones would ask, “What are these Stones?”  
The KJV renders the question, “What mean these stones?”
1. In asking, an important question will have been raised.
  2. In answering, some valuable lessons will be taught.
- D. What might have been some of the possible answers that were given?

**What Did These Stones Mean? - THESE STONES MEANT THAT GOD IS A GOD OF PROVIDENCE.**

- A. He cares for His people.
- B. He provides for His people.
- C. God had made provisions for His people in the past.
1. Examples:
    - a. Joseph to prepare the grain to preserve the Hebrew nation.
    - b. Moses raised up to be God’s deliverer.
    - c. Manna & quail provided in the wilderness.
    - d. A law to live by.
    - e. Protection from their enemies.
    - f. His presence to guide them. The cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.
    - g. A new leader to succeed Moses.
    - h. Miraculous parting of the Jordan River for them to cross over to Canaan.
  2. Even though time and again Jehovah provided for them, it was important that they be reminded of God’s graciousness and God’s provisions for them.
- B. God continues to provide for his people under the Christian dispensation.
1. **Romans 8:28** - “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”
  2. **1 Peter 2:9** - “Then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.”
  3. **Romans 8:35-39** - “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?  
As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’  
Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.  
For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

C. God's people today are the spiritual Israel . . . the church. His providence to it is so abundant.

**What Did These Stones Mean? - THESE STONES MEANT THAT EACH SUCCEEDING GENERATION MUST BE TAUGHT ABOUT GOD.**

A. **Joshua 4:21-22** - "Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?' Then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land.'"

1. Why? Note **verse 24** - "That all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever."
2. Some things should not be forgotten.
3. Some things should always be remembered.

B. In Deuteronomy 6:1-9, Moses charged the people to teach their children, their grandchildren, etc.

1. God wanted to make sure that his people knew the law.
2. This teaching was to be kept alive throughout future generations.
3. What God wants to be taught should be taught the way God desires it to be taught.

C. This obligation to teach children is enjoined upon parents.

1. **Ephesians 6:4** - "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."
2. If we do not teach our children, the world will . . . but:
  - a. The world will not teach them right things . . .it will teach them wrong things.
  - b. The world will not teach them about eternal things . . . It will teach them about temporal things.
  - c. The world will not teach them about spiritual matters . . . It will tech them about earthly matters.
  - d. The world will not teach them about the value and sacredness of human life . . . it will teach them to abort it and euthanize it.
  - e. The world will not teach them about God . . . It will teach them that God does not exist, and if God does exist, He doesn't care about them.
- 3 The world teach your children is the poorest substitute for parents teaching their children.
4. Friends, one untaught generation could very well take the church into apostasy.
  - a. Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders at Miletus. **Acts 20:29-31** - "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse

things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”

b. Paul charged Timothy to warn the Ephesians about a different doctrine.

**1 Timothy 1:3** - “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia-- remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine.”

c. In spite of these special warnings, just a few years later the Ephesians left their first love. **Revelation 2:4** - “Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”

D. How easy it is for man to slip away from the simple gospel and go in search of strange gods. We MUST . . . We MUST, teach our young people the way of righteousness.

E. These stones mean that each generations needs to be taught about God.

### **What Did These Stones Mean? - THESE STONES MEANT THAT CONVICTION IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN CONVENIENCE.**

A. Jehovah desired these people to remember Him.

1. Jehovah desired that these people keep themselves away from pagan gods of the land into which they were going.

2. God wanted their allegiance and service out of the conviction of their hearts.

3. They were entering a land that had many false gods.

a. How easy it would be for them to mix and mingle with these false religions.

b. How easy it would be for them to be led astray.

c. They could have so easily embraced these false religions.

d. In fact, the Bible record shows that they continued to have this trouble throughout their days.

e. There would be plenty of convenience to serve the false gods in Canaan . . . to avoid doing so would require deep heartfelt convictions about the true God.

B. The child of God today is faced with the same dilemma as were the Israelites of Joshua’s day.

1. How easy it is when a Christian moves from one place to another, and not finding a faithful congregation of God’s people, to affiliate with those who teach and practice false doctrines.

2. It is so easy to do that which is convenient rather than that which is done out of conviction.

C. A Biblical principle is clearly taught in **2 Corinthians 6:14-18** - “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?”

And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Therefore Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.

I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

1. Paul is saying do not mix with unbelievers in any compromising relationships.
  2. Does this mean that we cannot be around unbelievers? No! How else would you be able to teach them.
  3. It does mean that we cannot enter into any relationship with the unbeliever that would cause us to be guilty of sin.
- D. These stones meant that we must serve God out of conviction rather than out of convenience.

### **What Did These Stones Mean? - THESE STONES MEANT THAT GOD'S PEOPLE NOT ONLY HAD A PAST . . . THEY ALSO HAD A FUTURE.**

A. There was no need for a memorial if this was the end.

1. The people had had a glorious past . . . the memories were dear.
  - a. They had been delivered from bondage.
  - b. They had been cared for time and time again. (Manna, quail, water, guidance, etc.)
2. Not only had they had a glorious past, they would also have a future.
  - a. **Joshua 4:21** - “. . . When your children ask their fathers in time to come . . . “
  - b. “In time to come” is future.
  - c. They needed to prepare each generation to tell the world about their God. If they didn't, who would?

B. Let's consider the Lord's church.

1. The church has had a glorious past.
  - a. Its place in Old Testament prophecy.
  - b. Its establishment in Jerusalem.
  - c. It's growth throughout the Book of Acts and the remainder of the New Testament.
  - d. Its having survived persecution and the Dark Ages, only to come out victorious again.
  - e. The fact that it still exists at all is a credit to the mighty providence of God.

2. **Colossians 1:23** - “If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”
    - a. There was a time when the gospel had been preached to the whole world.
    - b. Those people are dead and gone now.
    - c. We must be concerned with reaching the gospel to the people alive during our lifetime.
    - d. Who will tell the world if we do not?
    - e. **Ephesians 3:10** - “To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church . . . .”
  3. The church came through a glorious age during the restoration, when stalwart teachers of the truth met false doctrine head-on and reestablished God’s family on faithful ground.
    - a. We must continue the work God has assigned to the church.
    - b. This congregation is the result of the labors of faithful Christians who have sacrificed to see that the gospel is kept pure. The future demands that each one of us continue that task.
    - c. May we never rest on the laurels of the past.
      1. Certainly it is fine to remember them.
      2. Certainly we can continue to give thanks for those who have come before us.
      3. Certainly we can feel some sense of pride and accomplishment to this point in time.
    - d. But we must ever go onward and forward with the banner of truth.
  4. Truly we have a past, but we also have a future.
    - a. There are new generation yet unborn that shall depend upon what we are NOW . . . TODAY!
    - b. What a glorious past . . . What a glorious future.
- C. These stones meant that while we have a past, we also have a future.

### **CONCLUSION:**

- A. Our part in what is now past history may have varied.
  1. Some may have been too young to remember.
  2. Some may have been young converts and thus were not deeply involved at the time.
  3. But now we must put our shoulders to the harness and work for the future.
- B. “What are these stones?” They were a memorial for God’s people.
  1. They meant that God is a God of providence.
  2. They meant that each succeeding generation must be taught about God.
  3. They meant that conviction is more important than convenience.

4. They meant that God's people not had a past, but they also had a future

**C. God's Plan for Man's Salvation**