

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

This weekend, here in the United States, we celebrate Memorial Day.

Now, Memorial Day weekend is more than a simple long weekend that includes outdoor barbecues and stuffing our faces with hot dogs and watching cars go in a circle on TV.

It is a day that has been set aside for us to remember all those brave servicemen and service women who answered our country's call to service and they paid the ultimate price for it.

Brave young men and women who died protecting our freedoms.

So we remember what they did for us –

It is only by God's grace and because of their great sacrifice, that we can come together and assemble, worship Him, fellowship with each other, and read the Word of God.

There are many places on the earth where what we are doing here today would be illegal.

China has the underground churches - many Christian groups have to meet in secrecy in order to do a bible study or to worship Him.

So we are truly blessed. May we never forget.

And I say that because we do forget.

We are even warned about forgetting in the scriptures.

**[Deu 8:11 NKJV] 11 "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today,**

**In our text this morning, we will see God command the Children of Israel – and us as well - to set up memorials.**

And we will see in our text the reasons and the significance of having these memorials in our lives.

**Let's pray...**

**[Jos 4:1-24 NKJV] 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.' " 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. 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. 10 So the priests**

who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the LORD had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua; and the people hurried and crossed over. 11 Then it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over, that the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed over in the presence of the people. 12 And the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses had spoken to them. 13 About forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho. 14 On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they had feared

Moses, all the days of his life. 15 Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, 16 "Command the priests who bear the ark of the Testimony to come up from the Jordan." 17 Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, "Come up from the Jordan." 18 And it came to pass, when the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come from the midst of the Jordan, [and] the soles of the priests' feet touched the dry land, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and overflowed all its banks as before. 19 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."**

In our text last week, the Children of Israel have finally crossed over the Jordan River.

They took the necessary step of faith and we read in chapter 3 that when the feet of the priests carrying the ark of the covenant – as soon as it touched the raging Jordan River, God raised a wall of water and the Children of Israel crossed on dry ground.

So, one would think that because they have a little momentum, the most obvious thing to do at this point would be to march into the first city and start battling right?

Jericho is right down the road. What are we waiting for???

In our Christian walk, one of the dangers that we encounter after a spiritual victory is that we begin to lose sight of who gave us the victory.

We set our sights on the next obstacle that impedes our Christian walk and when we fail or things don't go our way, we stumble.

We begin to doubt our faith – why God??? Why did You allow this to happen???

And because we stumble, we become reluctant to take the next step of faith.

We fall into a spiritual pothole and we don't grow.

We don't partake of that abundant life that we are promised.

That is why memorials or spiritual landmarks are important in our Christian walk.

And that is what we see the Lord command Joshua here at the start of chapter 4.

**[Jos 4:1-3 NKJV] 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.' "**

As soon as everyone had crossed over the Jordan, the Lord speaks to Joshua.

I asked you to make a note of this because we will see Joshua being guided by the Word of God.

They couldn't march into Jericho because God had not commanded them to march into Jericho.

And one of the things we are going to see in the book of Joshua is that success depended upon strict obedience to God's word.

Notice that it was as soon as the Children of Israel had finished crossing the Jordan that the word of the Lord came to Joshua.

You see, God gives us directions from point A to point B – our human nature wants God to reveal to us A to Z.

The problem with that is that if God gave us points A to Z,

- We would stop seeking Him
- We would no longer be walking in faith

- We would definitely start picking and choosing the points we are going to adhere to. I really don't like point D through F Lord so I am going to take a different path.

Crossing the Jordan was A to B, B to C is God commanding them to build a memorial.

And we saw God command Joshua last week to select twelve men.

The purpose of these twelve men was that they were the ones that were going to gather these stones from the midst of the Jordan.

But they could simply pick any twelve stones; they had to be in the area of where the priests stood with the ark as the Children of Israel crossed the Jordan.

I also asked you to underline that last portion of verse three where these twelve men were supposed to carry these stones to the place where they were going to lodge that night – and that is because we will find out that the place where they are going to lodge is Gilgal

And Gilgal is about an 8 mile walk from where they crossed the Jordan.

So hopefully they didn't pick up too big of a stone.

**[Jos 4:4-5 NKJV] 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,**

This memorial that was to be built was to demonstrate that the twelve tribes were united.

They were all working together.

It was supposed to be a memorial for all of them.

**[Jos 4:6-7 NKJV] 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."**

Here we find the purpose of the memorial that God is commanding them to build.

It was to be built to remind them and the subsequent generations of the miraculous crossing that had just happened.

We are prone to forget the many things that God has done for us and by having memorials; we can be reminded of His faithfulness.

Not only does it help us remember but it is also a means for us to teach and remind our children of God's faithfulness.

One of the things that we see in scripture is the failure of the Children of Israel to teach their children God's statutes.

And because of it, they rebelled.

Turn with me to the book of Deuteronomy 6, let's look at the warning that Moses gives the Children of Israel.

**[Deu 6:6-8 NKJV] 6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.**

We have Moses exhorting the Children of Israel to not only teach them to their children but to demonstrate to them through the way they live.

I asked you to make note of the word frontlets –

Because the intention here is that God statutes were supposed to be ingrained in them – they were supposed to guide them.

However, many years later, when the Children of Israel return from the exile, they take these verses literally and to this day, you see Jews in Israel wearing these straps around their arms and these little boxes in the head that would include these pieces of paper with a rolled up prayer in it.

And I have a picture of an Israeli soldier as an example.

**[Jos 4:8-9 NKJV] 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. 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.**

So we see the obedience of the Children of Israel as they set up this memorial.

In verse 9, we see that Joshua sets up another memorial – this one is in the midst of the Jordan – the same place that the priests stood with the ark.

So there are two memorials, the one in Gilgal – the one that the 12 men are carrying the stones and the one here on the Jordan.

Now, this memorial was only going to be visible to the Children of Israel during times of extreme drought.

And it would be a reminder to them, especially in times of drought, the great things that God has done.

**[Jos 4:10-14 NKJV] 10 So the priests who bore the ark stood in the midst of the Jordan until everything was finished that the LORD had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua; and the people hurried and crossed over. 11 Then it came to pass, when all the people had completely crossed over, that the ark of the LORD and the priests crossed over in the presence of the people. 12 And the men of Reuben, the men of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh crossed over armed**

**before the children of Israel, as Moses had spoken to them. 13 About forty thousand prepared for war crossed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho.**

Last week, I mentioned that God is the one that leads us through the obstacles that impede our walk.

Here we see that it was His presence that held back the waters until everyone had safely crossed over.

We also see that the 2.5 tribes that decided to settle on the east side of the Jordan, they make good on their promise to Moses and they send troops to fight along with the other 9.5 tribes.

The forty thousand is just the number of troops that represented the 2.5 tribes.

**14 On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they had feared Moses, all the days of his life.**

This verse is the fulfillment of God's promise to Joshua that we saw last week in 3:7

Because Joshua was completely obedient to the word of God and because everything happened precisely as he told the people it would, the people feared him.

They were not scared of Joshua, they just revered him.

They respected him and his leadership because he was obedient to the will of God.

**[Jos 4:15-18 NKJV] 15 Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, 16 "Command the priests who bear the ark of**

**the Testimony to come up from the Jordan." 17 Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, "Come up from the Jordan." 18 And it came to pass, when the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD had come from the midst of the Jordan, [and] the soles of the priests' feet touched the dry land, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and **overflowed all its banks as before.****

Here we have instruction from the Lord and we have Joshua's response.

He responds with obedience.

And we see that as soon as the feet of the priest touched the dry ground – the Jordan returned to the way it was before the crossing.

Last week, we saw that when their feet touched the water – the water stopped, here we see the mirror opposite.

**[Jos 4:19 NKJV] 19 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.**

I asked you to make note of the day.

That is because the tenth day of the first month was when the preparation for Passover was supposed to begin. That was the day that the family selected the lamb that was to be slaughtered.

It was on the 14<sup>th</sup> day that the lamb would be slaughtered.

And next week when we go through chapter 5, we will see the Children of Israel partake of the Passover for the first

time in many years – for the most part they didn't celebrate it while they were in the wilderness.

**[Jos 4:20-24 NKJV] 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."**

There are many notable memorials throughout the world.

I was blessed to be able to go to the USS Arizona Memorial in Pearl Harbor about 17 years ago.

And there are others I would one day like to visit.

The Hiroshima war memorial and 9/11 memorial are on my short bucket list.

But notice that that the memorial that God commands the Israelites to erect is just 12 stones piled up against each other.

That is because God wants our focus to be on Him and what He has done - and not necessarily the structure.

The structure is just there to remind us of God's faithfulness.

In verse 24, we memorialize these events so that all the peoples can come to know God as well.

In chapter two, we saw Rahab the harlot – a gentile - and she came to the point where she chose to help the spies because she feared the Lord.

How did she come to fear the Lord? Because she heard what the Lord had done.

So what kind of memorial stones should we as believers have?

- Communion, this one of the biggest memorial stones in our walk – once a month we remember, we memorialize what Jesus Christ has done – what He did on the cross,

what He is doing in our lives and what He will do upon His return.

- Our Testimony - We all have own testimony of God's faithfulness. Our own testimony is a memorial stone of what God has done in our life. We all know what we were and what God has made us.

That way, when we fail, when there are times of drought, we will remember that yes, He is faithful.

Always remember that we don't remember the past great works of God so that we can live in a dreamland of the past, thinking that the best days of our Christian experience are behind us.

We remember them as a point of faith, as an anchor, so we can trust God for greater works in the future, because we have seen and experienced His past faithfulness.

Amen.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

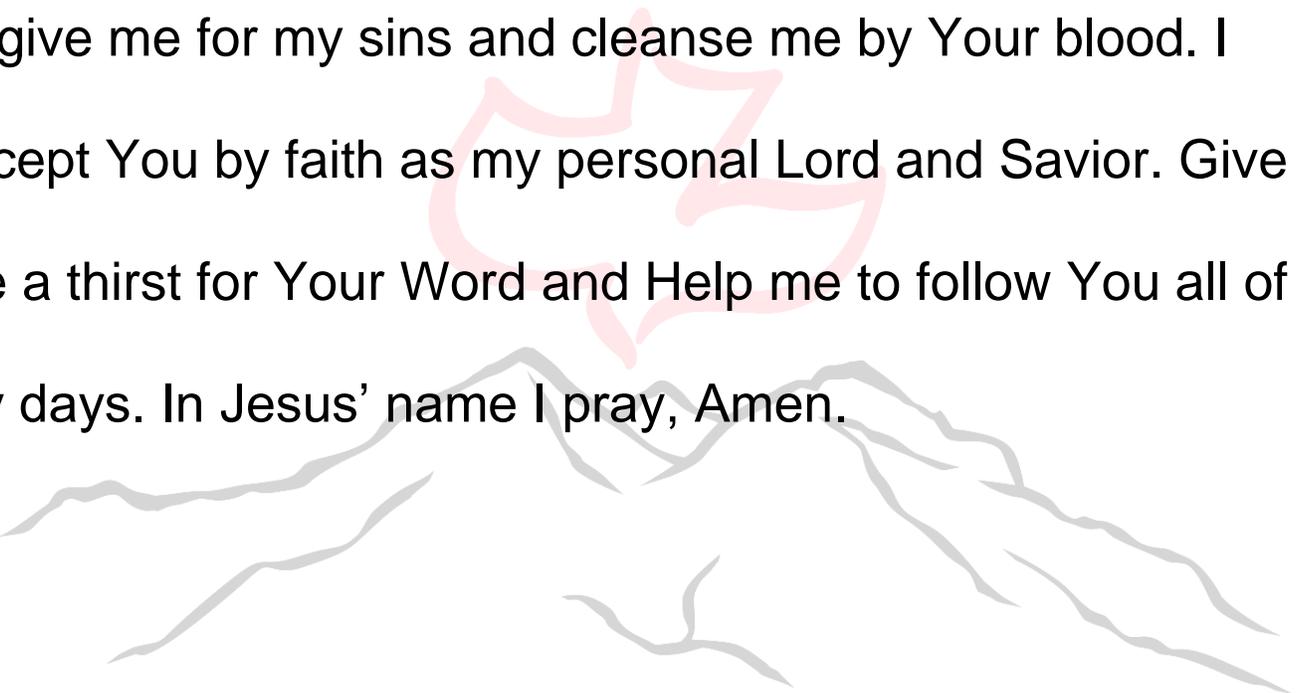
Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



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