



14 Make a Memorial – Make a Cairn

Memorial Stones from the Jordan

God is going to have them have a day of remembrance.

4 Now when the entire nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, ² "Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from each tribe, ³ and command them, saying, 'Take up for yourselves twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet are standing firmly, and carry them over with you and lay them down in the encampment where you will spend the night.'"⁴ So Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe;⁵ and Joshua said to them, "Cross again to the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel. ⁶ This shall be a sign among you; when your children ask later, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' ⁷ then you shall say to them, 'That the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.' So, these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever."

Now turn over to verse 20

²⁰ As for those twelve stones which they had taken from the Jordan, Joshua set them up at Gilgal. ²¹ And he said to the sons of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?' ²² then you shall inform your children, saying, 'Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground.' ²³ For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed, just as the LORD your God had done to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed; ²⁴ so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, so that you may fear the LORD your God forever."

Let's pray.

The older I get, the harder it is to remember anything. The other day, I got into my truck and remembered that I needed to go in to get my wallet. I got out of the car, went into the house and forgot what I was going inside to get.

I am finding that I can't remember important tasks that need to get done each day. I remember the really big stuff like getting my sermons written, but I forget to drop into Walmart to pick up my Nexium or a bottle of shampoo. This inability to remember has also ended my ability to multi-task like I did when I was a young man.

Remembering things is important for many reasons. We are living in a time when people with evil intentions are seeking to wipe out any memory of those who formed our country and we will discount and forget the documents and ideals they used to be the bedrock of American society. Without a strong Constitution, the whole thing will come apart. The Founding Fathers knew there were imperfections with the new nation start-up, but they did a pretty amazing job of getting this thing going called America going. They knew there were problems to overcome, but they knew that history would work these things out. So why are they trying to remove statues of people that were instrumental or participatory in the making of this nation?

The reason is because if we forget who we are as a people, they will rewrite our history and we will lose our way. They will replace our past so that they can reengineer who we are and what is important to us.

This passage tells us that God wants us to remember things that are important. And, He especially wants us to remember the great things He has done for us along our journey. Yes, humans are quick to forget things that are important. Symbols and memorials help us to remember.

In this passage, God is erecting a memorial of something great that happened in the life of Israel. This reminded me of a great sermon I heard in Raleigh North Carolina. Sandy and I got married on a Saturday. I don't remember, but I think we just took the next day off. We had no car, so a week later we walked into downtown from our apartment (it was part of a big old house) and we listened to a sermon I will never forget.

It was given by a Scottish Presbyterian minister. He preached a sermon that was entitled something like "The Cairns in Our Lives". He explained that in centuries past, whenever a Scottish family left Scotland, before sailing they would often pile up a heap of stones as a remembrance of where they had lived, loved, and died for hundreds (if not

thousands) of years. In the Gaelic language, a "cairn" is the word for a pile. When we speak in Irish, we will point to the middle of the table and refer to the "cairn na prataí" there in them middle. That's the "pile of potatoes".

Cairns are a place you go back to to remember something significant that has happened in your life. You need that cairn to return to. It is a place of remembrance. I have several cairns in my life. I remember as a tiny boy hearing my mother share Christ to a neighbor. We were in the car on a starlit night in a driveway in Houston, Texas in the late 1950's. Momma shared with the neighbor that we all need a Savior, and in my mind's eye I can see that little boy, me, there up under the back window of an old chevy sedan, telling God in the words of a 4 year old that I too needed a Savior because there was something missing.

I see that little boy at summer camp at Camp Peniel in Marble Falls, Texas. Under the instruction of great counselors and Gordon Whitelock I was being instructed in how to go to God's Word for answers to life's big questions. Stones were being laid up in a heap in my heart. They were stones that I could return to again and again. These great verses are carved into my heart forever. They are a memorial to God's goodness, His faithfulness, and His character.

Call unto me and I will answer thee and show the great and mighty things which thou knowest not. (Jeremiah 33:3)

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not grow weary. They shall walk and not faith. (Isaiah 40:31)

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9)

He that knew no sin was made sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.(2 Corinthians 5:21)

I see a cairn on a cold day in February in 1979 when I took the gift that God had given me in a wife, and I pledged to Him that I would love her and honor her all the days of my life and keep myself to her and her only. With God's help I have done that. Yes, cairns are important.

I can go to other cairns when I wondered how I would ever be able to provide for the children that He put under my care. I remember asking Him to help me be the father I was supposed to be. I cried out to the Lord telling Him that I just didn't have the wisdom to be the kind of father I needed to be. His Word told me that if I lacked wisdom, I could ask God for it and He wouldn't hold anything back. (James 1) I remember faithfully making sure they were always in church and yes, I remember the cairn of pretending that the car was being pulled out of control into the Whataburger parking lot to have snacks and shakes after youth group on Sunday nights.

I remember the first night I slept in our new old house at Pleasant Hill. I was sleeping in the floor of the house surrounded by sawdust. A great storm came and I thought that the roof would be torn off of the house, and I cried out to the Lord. I remembered, *"For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, And My covenant of peace will not be shaken," Says the LORD who has compassion on you.*" (Isaiah 54:10)

Go back to verse 5 and look at it.

⁵ and Joshua said to them, "Cross again to the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel. ⁶ This shall be a sign among you; when your children ask later, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?'

Look also at verse 9. There's another cairn in the river. They put them where the feet of the priests were standing to remember what God had done.

These cairns were a testimony of the faithfulness of God to the nation of Israel. The Jordan separated them from defeat and they now have waded into the place of blessings. They were finally and forever no longer in Egypt, but in Canaan which was a picture of blessing and inheritance. Brothers and sister GO TO THE CAIRNS IN YOUR LIFE WHEN YOU NEED TO REMEMBER THE GOODNESS AND THE MERCY OF THE LORD.

When you find yourself stuck in Egypt, look back to the promises of God. When you find yourself paralyzed in Kadesh-Barnea, go back to the cairn when He promised you the Promised Land and He promised you an inheritance that has no fear. Visit the cairns in your life and write them down if you must to remember that God was ALWAYS there for you in your moment of distress and your moment of greatest need. God has taken you out, now let Him take you in.

When God saved you, He took you out to take you in. Once the Children of Israel crossed Jordan and entered into Canaan, there is no biblical account or record that they ever again said, "Would that we were back in Egypt".

It is so easy to forget where we've come from. Focus on those experiences where God has delivered you, and focus on the truth of His word in your present circumstances. Those are your stones of remembrance. Remember it wasn't Joshua's idea to make a memorial of stones. It was God's idea. We are so quick to forget the things that God has done for us. We are so needy. God fulfills one need and we're immediately bringing up another one, never pausing to truly be grateful or to reflect on the greatness of what He has done.

It was God who told them to take *12 Stones from the middle of the Jordan and put them where you stay tonight. Each to take a stone on their shoulder to "serve as a sign among you," and in the future when your children ask, you tell them.....the stones are to be a memorial.* (that's something that calls to memory.... That's an altar that points to God's power to deliver.)

When's the last time you built a remembrance of something God did in your life? We all have the memorial of the cross where we left the sin of Egypt, but find the other cairns that were taken out of the river and put on the banks along the way.

Let us pray.