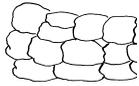


1. Nature Conquered



4:8 And the children of Israel ... took up **twelve stones** out of the midst of Jordan, ... and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there.

Standing between the Israelites and their inheritance was a great obstacle. The Jordan river overflowed its brushy banks at floodtide. The flooded Jordan might be called an obstacle of nature. Was there a power that could conquer the forces of “nature,” even death itself? The way to the promised land and the inheritance God had promised was through Jordan.

The priests, in obedience to God’s command, stepped into the river bearing “...*the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth.*” That ark was symbolically the very throne of the God of the universe. He had chosen to seat Himself there in the midst of His people. The Israelites stood back now with a space between them and the ark and watched as the Lord went down into that place of death. The waters of Jordan parted and the obstacle of nature, the death that blocked their entrance, was overcome.

Stones were placed on the opposite bank as a memorial of *how* the Israelites were safely brought into their inheritance. (See Joshua 3 & 4).

2. The Place Where He Was



4:9 And Joshua set up twelve **stones in the midst of Jordan**, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day.

Closely related to the first stones is the marking of the very place where the priests with the ark had stood in the middle of the Jordan. Stones were placed in the riverbed in the very spot *where* the ark had been. These “stones of remembrance” were used to instruct future generations, particularly the children.

One might envision a father standing with his child by the Jordan and explaining how the Israelites had been brought into the land. Gazing down into the water he

could point to those stones and explain where the ark had to go in order to overcome the obstacle of death. (See Joshua 4).

The stones on the bank showed that *God* brought them into the promised inheritance. But the unseen stones *in* the Jordan showed them where God had to go to get them there.

The believer in Christ is never to forget how it was that he was brought into such a great inheritance in Christ. We must ever have before us where it was the Lord had to go to secure that inheritance for us. God has established for the church the regular observance of the Lord’s supper as one of the primary means of bringing these great truths before Christians as a corporate body.

3. The Flesh Judged



7:26 And they raised over him [Achan] **a great heap of stones** unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger.

When the Israelites went into the land of Canaan they went in not only to claim their inheritance but also to execute the wrath of God. They were instruments in His hand to bring His judgment on an ungodly Canaanite civilization. God had announced to Abraham 400 years before that once His longsuffering had reached its limit His judgment would come. That time had now arrived.

It was vital that the Israelites agree with God’s judgment. So when a city was declared a “cursed city” or placed under “the ban,” all was to be utterly destroyed. Such was the case with Jericho. Achan, however, took of the “accursed thing.” In doing so he failed to agree with God’s judgment and thereby incurred the judgment of God against himself.

Achan saw certain items, lusted after them, took them, and hid them in his tent. When the Israelites suffered defeat in an attack on the city of Ai, the cause was re-

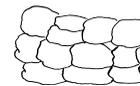
vealed as “sin in the camp.” Achan had committed his act of disobedience to fulfill his fleshly desires. It was a costly mistake not only for him, but also for his family and the nation as a whole.

The sin of the individual had to be dealt with and the flesh judged before corporate victory ensued.

So it is today – those who do not agree with God’s judgment against sin will one day face the very judgment of God!

Achan was stoned and “they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day.” The stones in the “valley of trouble” (*Achor*) mark the incident.

4. Sin Judged



8:29 And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until eventide: ... that they should take his carcass down from the tree,... **raise thereon a great heap of stones**, that remaineth unto this day.

Chapter 8 records the victory of the Israelites over the city of Ai. Sin in the camp had been judged. Where Israel had once suffered defeat, they now realized a great victory. The city of Ai was burnt. The king of Ai was hanged on a tree until evening. His body was then taken down, cast at the gate of the city, and a great heap of stones raised there which, “*remaineth unto this day.*” These stones memorialized the victory realized when sin was judged and God’s side taken against sin.

5. Law Established



8:31 ... As it is written in the book of the law of Moses, **an altar of whole stones**, over which no man hath lift up any iron: and they offered thereon burnt offerings unto the LORD ...

One of the great objectives of God was the establishment of the law in the land before His people would be permanently settled there. The people gathered on Mt.

Ebal and Mt. Gerizim to read the blessings and the cursings of the law. What a mighty work God had done! Hear the law of God ringing out in the land of Canaan! There, an altar was erected of whole stones “*over which no man had lift up any iron.*” This was a work of God!

Romans 8 reminds Christians that “*what the law could not do...*” God accomplished by the death of His own Son. His objective is stated in the following verse which says, “*that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us ...* .” Joshua wrote on the stones a copy of the law. (See Joshua 8:30-35).

PICTURE of CHRIST

The same mount Ebal where the law was written and where the cursings were pronounced for disobedience is where the altar was to be erected. The altar was for sacrifices acceptable to God. Its stones were to be whole – ones that an iron tool (human workmanship) had never touched. Whole stones would be what God created in their natural state. Thus the same place that brought cursings would also provide a sacrifice (without human works) for the sinner unto God.

Not only has the law *of God* brought us cursings but also the Christ *of God* by His cross sacrifice has provided acceptance unto God by being made a curse for us. This is accomplished without the sinner doing any works of the law. (Gal. 3:10-13).

6. Enemies Put Down



10:27 ... And they took them [5 kings] down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and **laid great stones in the cave’s mouth**, which remain until this very day.

Chapters 9 & 10 record, among other things, the great confederacy of kings that joined forces to fight against the Israelites. They were defeated by the third set of miracles recorded in Joshua. God rained down “...great stones from heaven upon them... [and] ...they were more that died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword” (10:11).

... That all the people of the earth

Also, "...the sun stood still and the moon stayed..." (10:13) until the enemies had been thoroughly defeated. The Lord that day "...hearkened to the voice of a man..." (10:14).

Five kings were executed. Their bodies were cast into the cave where they had been hiding and great stones were piled in the cave's mouth which the writer states "...remaineth until this very day" (10:27).

These stones were a great reminder of how it was the enemies were put down and God's salvation secured and maintained.

PICTURE of CHRIST

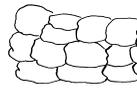
Joshua specifically records the accounts of six kings that Israel hung as cursed on a tree and then covered with stones. (The king of Ai in chapter 8 and the five southern kings here in chapter 10). But the Word of God records a total of 7 kings that Israel hung as cursed on a tree then covered with a stone. The kings were hung on a tree as a sign of being under the curse and judgment of God for sin (Deut. 21:22,23). In the six kings of Joshua it mentions for them all: "stones that remaineth *unto this day*" (8:29, 10:27). The heap of stones was a perpetual memorial of the judgment of God against their sin.

The 7th King. Jesus "the king of the Jews" was also consigned to a tree to be crucified as a criminal. As He hung on the tree the Jewish leaders said, "If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross ... let Him (God) deliver Him now, *if He will have Him.*" But God didn't save Him from the tree and they went away convinced that Jesus was cursed of God.

"They took Him (the Lord Jesus) down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre" (Acts 13:29). They then sealed it with a stone (Matt. 27:66). But this stone **does not** "remain unto this day" for God rolled it away and raised Him from the dead as Lord! He was being cursed for us!

might know the hand of the Lord,

7. Commitment Promised



24:27 ... Behold, **this stone shall be a witness** unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

Near the end of Joshua's life the people were challenged to give themselves unreservedly to the Lord. They were reminded of the difficulties they faced in serving the Lord. His holiness and His jealousy were brought before them. Joshua pointed to the people's tendency to vacillate and compromise. He warned them of the disaster that would ensue if they intermarried with the heathen nations around them. They would incur God's judgment if they disobeyed *Him because* they were in a covenant relationship with God.

Joshua set up a stone of witness (24:26,27); a witness of the covenant and the people's decision to follow the Lord. "The Lord our God *will we* serve, and His voice *will we* obey" (24:24).

The stone was there for a memorial and served as a reminder of their decision. From time to time they could measure the reality of their lives against what that stone represented.

But that stone is also a witness of the human heart. Despite their sincerity in promising to keep God's ways, Israel would fail miserably (Judges 2). Their history witnesses that man needs *something more* than making promises.

Perhaps we might even note a "spiritual order" of the lessons of the stones.

1. **Nature and Death Conquered** - Romans 1-4 - man is a guilty sinner by practice and nature and is "worthy of death." But Christ's death overcomes the "obstacles" that block the way to the salvation of God.
2. **The Place Where it Occurred** - Romans 4-5 - justification is not by our ongoing works of law but in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ who "died for us" on the cross.
3. **Sin in the Flesh Judged** - Romans 6-7 - "our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of

that it is mighty" Josh. 4:21,24

sin might be destroyed." "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing."

4. **Law Established** - Romans 3:31, 8:4 - "We establish the law" "The righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

5. **Enemies Put Down** - Romans 8:7,13; 31-39 - "The carnal mind is enmity against God." "... If ye through the Spirit do mortify [put to death] the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

6. **Covenant Established** - Romans 8:39, 11:27 - Nothing can "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Israel also will be saved by the new "covenant" of mercy in Christ Jesus by God's covenant faithfulness.

7. **Lives Yielded to Him** - Romans 12:1,2 - Believers are asked in response to a gospel of mercy to present their bodies as a "living sacrifice" to God in service and worship. This will involve a renewed mind knowing His will.

As we look back on the stones in the book of Joshua we can take a tour of the land of Israel via the stones. What lessons for our lives today!

There is no other way to enter into the blessing of God than through the death Christ died. He went down into that place of death to secure for us the great inheritance that we have in Him. All who fail to agree with God's judgment against sin will, like Achan, suffer the very judgment of God. The death that He died enables the righteousness of God's law to be fulfilled in us.

And if we are believers in the Lord Jesus, how do our lives measure against the decision of our hearts to follow the Lord?

Larry Price

Chronicle #6c of 'The Bible of God' series continues to look at lessons from the book of Joshua

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The Chronicles of the

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6b

Joshua The Witness of the Stones

Chronicle 6b is the second in a series of the sixth book of the Holy Scriptures, Joshua. The writer of the book Joshua notes the fact that certain memorial monuments of stones remained in the land at the time of writing. Repeated throughout the book is the phrase, "*unto this day*" or "*for a memorial*". But they were not there for their benefit only. We too can profit from **the witness of the stones**. Let's take a trip through the land of Canaan and view the memorial stones.

These stones stood as memorials for the children of Israel. They marked significant phases of the conquest of Canaan. Sometimes they stood as reminders of what things the Lord had accomplished. Other times, however, they were a reminder of a painful defeat suffered by the Israelites. Both served their instructive purpose for them in that day, just as they do for us today. (See 1Corinthians 10:11).