

220710-4 Jos 4, The Stones Witness to the LORD's Mighty Power—CThurman

In the previous chapter the officers commanded all the people that when they saw the Kohathites bear up that ark of the LORD then they were to begin following after it; but they were to be sure to keep a distance of 2,000 cubits between them and it so that they might know which direction to go. In the meantime Israel was to sanctify themselves because the LORD was about to work miraculously. I think that the people of God appreciate best what the LORD is doing when they are living holy lives; separated from the world to walk with Jesus Christ.

The next day Joshua gave the commandment for the priests, the Kohathites, to take up the ark and move forward before the camp toward the Jordan River. Then he gathered Israel around him to tell them that by what the LORD was about to do they would know that the living God was among them to drive out the nations of the Gentiles that were presently on *His* land. (cf. Deu.32.43; Hos.9.3) He further told them what to expect when the priests' feet touched the brim of the flooded Jordan River, that it would divide and heap up to the north. Then the priests would continue walking into what miraculously became a dry river bed, and in the midst of the river stand still in that place until the nation had *cleanly*, completely crossed over.

Chapter four:

- 1-8 – Twelve men take stones *from* Jordan to remember the miraculous crossing.
- 9, 10 – Joshua also sets up 12 stones *in* Jordan.
- 11-13 – The account of all that crossed over Jordan.
- 14-18 – The priests commanded to come out of Jordan.
- 19-24 – A final statement of all that was done and why.

Chapter 4

1-8 – Twelve men take stones from Jordan to remember the miraculous crossing.

1 ¶ And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan,

clean, the Hebrew **קָטַף**, in Qal pret. is tss. 3.16 *failed*, 17 *were clean*; 4.1, 11; 5.8 twice, *had done*, *had made an end*; here the verb is treated as an adverb.

At the end of the last lesson we reminded everyone that when Israel broke camp that they formed into ranks for the march. This is found in Nu.10.11-28. (Setting up and taking down the tabernacle is the duty of the sons of Levi. [Nu.2.17]) The march was under four standards or banners but very likely there were fifteen ranks or files [described in detail below].

1. Under the standard of Judah were the tribes of Judah, Issachar, Zebulun (201,300 warriors), perhaps forming the first three ranks.
2. Behind them was the 4th rank of Gershon (the tent, coverings, curtains [door, gate, and court hangings, and those cords transported via wagons), & the 5th rank of Merari (boards, bars, pillars, sockets and all pertinent vessel transported via wagons, pins and cords to the court [Nu.3.36, 37]).
3. Then followed the standard of Reuben. Under this standard were the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad (106,430 warriors), the 6th, 7th, and 8th ranks.
4. Behind them and centered according to the 4 standards of the camp of Israel is the family of Kohath. Kohath also forms the 9th rank. Kohath bare all of the tabernacle furniture, inside and outside, the veil in the holy place, and all pertinent vessels on their shoulders. (Nu.3.31; 4.5-15; 7.9)
5. The standard of Ephraim is next. This standard included the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh and Benjamin (130,800 warriors), which formed the 10th, 11th, and 12th ranks.
6. And last of all is the standard of Dan. This standard included the tribes of Dan were Dan, Asher and Naptali (163,200 warriors). they formed the 13th, 14th, and 15th ranks.

The ark of the covenant led the camp forward being borne by four Kohathites that carried the ark. (cf. Nu.4.15; 10.33, 35)

**that the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,
2 Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man,**

It was in Jos.3.12 Joshua commanded Israel to select one man out of every tribe. Here at this text (4.2) the LORD commands Joshua to take those same twelve men which Israel had selected out as they were told.

3 And command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan,

כִּוֵּן

out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm,
from the place where stands fixed the priests' feet,

out of the place where ... stood, מַצֵּב, a masc. noun, also v.9, the place where ... stood, and also tss. the garrison (1Sa.13.23), station (Is.22.19).

firm, tss. from the Hebrew verb כִּוֵּן, coon, with the English to be established, to prepared (Jos.1.11; 4.4, he had prepared), to fashioned, to be firm (Jos.3.17; 4.3), to be fitted, to be ready (Jos. 8.4), to be meet, to stand, to order, to direct, etc.

twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night.

כִּוֵּן

4 Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man:

fixed

And now Joshua reveals what these twelve men shall do. Aback of the selection which Israel and Joshua made is the LORD. The called these men

to serve. Whatever it is that the LORD would have them to do He would not charge them to do what they were unable to do.

Php 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

2Co.8.12 For if there be first a willing mind (to help the destitute saints in Jerusalem), it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

Here these twelve men didn't know what the LORD would have them do, but they were willing to be used in whatever way the LORD was pleased to use them. By faith the priest's feet became fixed upon dry ground in Jordan's dry river bed and so by faith these men were set apart and fixed to do the will of God. When that will if revealed, because they believe they will act. First they *must have faith in God*. Then they are fixed, firm and prepared to do the will of God.

Heb 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

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:

shoulder, שֵׁמֶרֶט, sh^e-kem, a masc. noun tss. shoulder (27), back (2), portion (1), consent (2).

The idea is that after all of the nation of Israel had crossed over the Jordan River to the other side, except for the ark of the covenant and the four men carrying it, that they were to turn back, come again into the dry river bed, and each of them take up a stone from the place where the four Kohathites were standing with the ark. Then they would come out of Jordan and carry those stones on their shoulders until they come to the place where they shall set up camp.

Reason for the twelve stones ...

6 That this may be a sign among you,

sign, a noun, tss. from the Hebrew אִיָּמָה, *ōhth*, tss. also *a mark, a token, an ensign*.

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.

reminder

(for the wonder/miracle which the LORD worked [Jos.3.5]).

The stones are witness to remind the succeeding generations of the nation of Israel of God's wonderful, miraculous, mighty power to cut off the flow of the Jordan River until the whole nation had crossed over on dry ground.

8 And the children of Israel *did so as Joshua commanded,*
(the twelve men acting in their behalf)

and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the LORD spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there.

The twelve stones are carried to the new camp site. Notice also that Joshua does something similar to what the twelve did by taking twelve stones.

Again, I cannot say for certain, but it is my opinion that these twelve men were out of every tribe according to the sons of Jacob. This would include everyone in Israel. Otherwise if according to the tribes which receive a land allotment, Levi would be excluded.

- Sons of Jacob
Reuben, Simeon, **Levi**, Judah, Zebulon, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, **Joseph** (would include Ephraim and Manasseh), Benjamin
- Tribes which receive a land allotment
Reuben, Simeon, Judah, Zebulon, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, **Manasseh, Ephraim**, Benjamin (Levi would be excluded)

vss. 9, 10 – Joshua also sets up 12 stones *in* Jordan.

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.

Be careful not to confuse the stones which Joshua set up *in the river* with the stones which the twelve men took *out of the river* and set up in what shall be called, Gilgal. (cf. v.20)

and they are there unto this day – This note, which is very likely from the pen of Joshua is from the perspective of an already completed book. This remarks essentially says, Look! after 25-30 years *they are there unto this day*.

10 ¶ For the priests which bare the ark stood in the midst of Jordan, until every thing was finished that the LORD commanded Joshua to speak unto the people, according to all that Moses commanded Joshua: and the people hasted and passed over.

hasted, Piel (intensive act.) fut. verb , מָהַר, mah-har, tss. *to carry headlong, to be rash, to be fearful, to be quick, soon, straightway, to be sudden, to make speed, to be ready, to make ready quickly, to be swift, to fetch quickly, shortly.*

and the people hasted and passed over – Abraham and Sarah entertained their unexpected, heavenly visitors with haste. (cf. Ge.18.6, 7) Rebekah hasted to water the camels of Abraham's servant. An answer to the prayer

of Abraham's servant. (cf. Ge.24.46) Joseph commanded his brothers to hasten and go up to their father Jacob, so that he might come down to him in Egypt. (cf. Ge.45.9) Israel ate the Passover lamb in haste. (cf. Ex.12.11) They departed Egypt in haste. (cf. Ex.12.33, 34) David hastened and ran toward the army of the Philistines to kill Goliath. Abigail hastened to meet David in an attempt to allay the anger her husband Nabal aroused by his foolish speaking to David and his men. The mother of our Lord Jesus hastened to tell her cousin Elizabeth of the news that she was chosen to give birth to the Savior of the world. The Lord Jesus commanded Zacchaeus to make haste to come down from the tree because He would abide at his house today. As the Lord Jesus was busy with His Father's business so we should be with our Lord's. There is a time for haste.

Haste seems to be rare thing today. By that I mean it's difficult to find people, especially younger people that are motivated and interested in doing the best that they can and serving others. The truth is, it's hard to find good help these days. A number of our children have begun to enter the workforce. Apply yourselves. Work vigorously. Do the best you can. Be dependable (on time & trustworthy).

Pr 10:26 As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.

vss. 11-13 – The account of all that crossed over Jordan.

11 And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over, that the ark of the LORD passed over, and the priests, in the presence of the people.

in the presence, in other words 'before their faces,' the Hebrew pl. noun פָּנִים, pah-neem, tss. with various prefixed prepositions, but refers to the *face*, and means *before*, the *presence* or presentation.

12 And the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, passed over armed before the children of Israel, as Moses spake unto them:

13 About forty thousand prepared for war passed over before the LORD unto battle, to the plains of Jericho.

Remember that, as I understand it, the rest of the military force of these tribes, Reuben, Gad, and the ½ tribe of Manasseh remained behind to protect their families, livestock and land.

Now the four Kohathites bearing the ark are commanded to come out of the dry river bed ...

vss. 14-18 – The priests commanded to come out of Jordan.

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

15 And the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,

16 Command the priests that bear the ark of the testimony, that they come up out of Jordan.

17 Joshua therefore commanded the priests, saying, Come ye up out of Jordan.

18 And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land,

dry ground, חַרְרָה, chah-rah-vah, a fem. noun tss. dry land, dry ground; Jos.3.17, twice; 4.18.

that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before.

As the priests reached the place where the Jordan River had been previously in its flooded state, when they lifted their feet from their then the waters returned.

vss. 19-24 – A final statement of all that was done and why.

19 And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.

in the border of, קֵצֵה, a masc. noun tss. the end of, the quarter, the edge, to border, to brink, to the brim, the uttermost part, the outside; cf. Jos.3.2, after; 3.8, the brink of; 3.15, the brim of; 4.19, in the border of; 9.16, at the end of; 13.27, the edge of; 15.1, the uttermost part of; 15.2, from the shore of; 15.5, the end of, the uttermost part

of; 15.8, at the end of; 15.21, the uttermost; 18.15, from the end of, 18.16, the end of; 18.19, at the end.

Now, again the narrator is referring to this place by the name Gilgal, but it was not given this name until chapter 5, and verse 9.

20 ¶ And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan,
(the twelve men of Israel's choosing)

did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.
raise up

did ... pitch, Hiphil (causative act.) verb of קוּם, qoom, tss. to raise, to raise up, to establish, to stand, to ordain, to confirm, etc.

Do not confuse these stones with the ones which Joshua set up in the Jordan.

21 And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones?

22 Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.

on dry land, יַבֵּשָׁה, is a fem. noun with the prefixed preposition בְּ, on; the root is tss. the dry, dry land, dry ground, but it means simply dry. The verb יַבֵּשׁ, yah-veysh, is twice in Jos.4.23, dried up.

23 For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over:

The miracle of heaping the waters of the Jordan River to stand in the north was as great a miracle as the LORD showed at the parting of the Red Sea.

הָאֵרֶץ

24 That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD,
land

that it is mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever.

mighty, is tss. from the Hebrew adj. חָזַק, *chah-zaq*, which is also tss. *stong, loud, stiff, hard, sore*; the verb חָזַק, *chah-zaq* is tss. *to be sore, to prevail, to confirm, to establish, to be stout, to have courage, to be strong, to seize, to encourage, to be hard, etc.*

That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD – First, by context, the immediate meaning of the words ‘*all the people of the earth*’ would refer to the nations that are presently dwelling in the land of Canaan, and so to the Gentiles there. Here, the *earth* is the land of Canaan. These stones which Joshua set up in Gilgal witness that the God of Israel is omnipotent, all powerful. It strikes fear into His enemies and the enemies of His people, Israel. To this time these nations have heard second and third-hand reports of the mighty power of God, but they are about to know first-hand the awesome power of the LORD. This land is the LORD’s land and the present inhabitants have polluted it with their wicked practices. And the LORD has promised to destroy them and drive them out.

De 11:12 A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.

For every sort of sexual transgression & child sacrifices:

Le.18.24 Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you:

25 And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.

But to expand upon the sense of this text and take it in its broadest meaning, it could be said that these stones, the very record of it in the word of God still witnesses to all men everywhere of the mighty hand of the

LORD, and all the people everywhere shall *know* the mighty hand of the LORD; that none can stay it. What He has purposed to do is infrustrable. He cannot be prevailed upon in any sense of the word so that what He has willed in Himself to do before the foundation of the world cannot come to pass. All His will shall be accomplished. So, all men will know that God the God revealed in our Bibles, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ and of whom Jesus Christ is the Son, He is God alone, and there is no other.

Ps.86.8 ¶ Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord [אֲדֹנָי]; neither are there any works like unto thy works.

9 All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord [אֲדֹנָי]; and shall glorify thy name.

10 For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God [אֱלֹהִים] alone.

Job 9.12 Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou?

13 If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him.

Dan.4.34 ¶ And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:

35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

One day all men shall know first-hand the mighty power of God. God will do as He has spoken!

Nu 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever – Second, again the primary meaning is that the children of Israel, this second generation which had come out of Egyptian bondage, might be reminded of the wonderful, miraculous power of God to bring them into Canaan through what had formerly been a flooded Jordan River. He brought them over on dry ground. This act was an awesome, but limited, partial, small display of the power of the LORD. He is far, far greater than any of the things we have seen demonstrated through nature about us or read of in the Scriptures. But as Israel sees these stones (or reads of it in the word of God) they are reminded again and again of the mighty power of God to bring them into the land of promise; and that reminder should move them to fear God so much so that they obey Him.

Notice the stones give witness to the mighty hand of God. The general attitude of the people of Israel toward the LORD is unbelief. It should have been the people that gave witness to the mighty hand of God. But because they were not yet able to do that I believe the stones did. I am reminded of what the Lord Jesus said to the unbelieving religious leaders of His day.

Lk.19.33 And as they

The Lord Jesus sent two disciples ahead into a nearby village to retrieve a colt of a donkey so that He might ride upon it as He came into Jerusalem, which was prophesied hundreds of years earlier. (cf. Zec.9.9) In this He presents Himself as Israel's king.

were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt?

34 And they said, The Lord hath need of him.

35 And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon.

36 And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way.

37 And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;

38 Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

39 And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

40 And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

In this 4th chapter of Joshua two sets of stones were set up, one in the river Jordan and the other in Gilgal. Both testify of the mighty power of God not only to judge the world but to save His people. The whole creation witnesses to the greatness of God.

Ps 19:1 « To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. » The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

Ro 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse ...

But the children of God should be living witnesses to the mighty power of God to save sinners. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Savior is the living Stone, the Rock, and we are living stones.

1Pe.2.4 ¶ To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

If we truly have believed in Jesus Christ to the saving of the soul we are no longer what we once were, dead in trespasses and sins, living after the lusts of the flesh, slaves to unrighteousness. No, by the power of His sovereign grace He translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son to walk in the light as He is in the light. We are no longer what we used to be. We are changed to walk by the faith of Christ in newness of life. We are His workmanship, created in Jesus Christ unto good works. We are as those two pillars of stones that Joshua set up, witnesses to the wonder-working power of God. We are *lively* witnesses to the mighty power of God working in us.