

Sermon Outline

“AND THE LORD GAVE THEM REST”: A CHRISTIAN READING OF THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

A MEMORIAL FOREVER (JOSHUA 4:1-10)

- I. The Testimony of the Lord Is Sure
- II. The LORD Gives New Instructions to Joshua (Joshua 4:1-3)
 - A. Israel has successfully crossed over the Jordan (4:1).
 - B. After Israel had crossed, the Lord addresses Joshua again (4:1-3).
 - 1. Joshua is to “Take twelve men...” (4:2)
 - 2. Joshua is to “*Command* them, *saying*...” (4:3)
 - C. The fact that Joshua is told to speak God’s Word emphasizes the centrality of the Word of God for his holy civilization.
 - 1. The Word of God regulates the life of God’s people.
 - 2. Apart from the sacred Word, we have no way of knowing what God wants us to believe and to do.
 - 3. The importance of God’s Word explains why Christians have a vested interest in the literacy of their children.
 - D. Joshua is to instruct the twelve men to do the following:
 - 1. They are to take twelve stones from the Jordan River.
 - 2. They are to bring the stones and lay them down in the camping place.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does God ask Joshua to do in 4:1-3? (2) What is the significance in God’s instructing Joshua to speak his Word?

- III. Joshua Delivers the LORD’s Instructions to Israel (Joshua 4:4-7)
 - A. Joshua summons the twelve men from the people of Israel (4:4).
 - B. Joshua instructs the twelve men (4:5).
 - 1. The men are to “Pass on before the ark of the LORD your God...”
 - 2. The men are to “take up each of you a stone...”
 - C. What is the purpose of taking up the stones? (4:6)
—It’s so that it will be sign forever to Israel.
 - D. How are the stones to function as a sign Israel? (4:6-7)
 - 1. Future Israelite children will ask their parents about the meaning of the stones.
 - 2. Israelite parents will respond with the story of how YHWH “cut off” the waters of the Jordan for Israel’s passage.
 - E. “So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever” (4:7).

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does Joshua instruct the twelve Israelites to do? (2) What is the function of the twelve stones?

IV. The People Do “Just as” Joshua Had Commanded (Joshua 4:8)

***Questions for reflection:** Why is the phrase “just as” important? How does this phrase relate to the underlying theme of obedience?

V. Joshua Sets up Twelve Stones (Joshua 4:9)

- A. Joshua sets up another memorial of twelve stones
 - 1. He set them up “in the midst of the Jordan.”
 - 2. He set them up “in the place where the feet of the priests...had stood.”
- B. The stones that Joshua set up are there “to this day.” This day refers to the day of Joshua’s writing, not necessarily today.

***Questions for reflection:** Why does Joshua set up this second memorial of stones?

VI. Preserving the Lord’s Works in Our Memories

- A. Keeping the Lord’s testimonies is a key duty the Lord requires of his people.
 - 1. Deuteronomy 6:17: “You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and *his testimonies*...”
 - 2. 1 Kings 2:3: “...keep the charge of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his rules, and *his testimonies*, as it is written in the Law of Moses...”
 - 3. 2 Kings 23:3: King Josiah “made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep his commandments and *his testimonies* and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul...”
 - 4. Deuteronomy 6:20-24: “When your son asks you in time to come, ‘What is the meaning of *the testimonies* and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God has commanded you?’ then you shall say to your son, ‘We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt. And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand...’”
- B. What is the connection between the testimonies of God and the commandments of God?
—The testimonies of God strengthen our obligation and resolve to keep his commandments.
- C. But we can probe this even further:
 - 1. The testimonies of God include his deeds of salvation toward Israel.
 - 2. The good deeds of God are therefore his good news/gospel to Israel.
 - 3. Keeping the testimonies of God involve keeping his gospels—especially the great Gospel of God’s salvation in Jesus Christ.

- D. Conclusion: The inspiration that is needed to sustain a life of obedience to God can only come when God's gospel testimonies are preserved as eternal memorials in our hearts!

***Questions for reflection:** What is the connection between the testimonies of God and the commandments of God? How do the historical stories of God's great works relate to God's commands?

VII. Tell the Gospel Testimonies, Ignite Gospel Obedience

The Lord God is calling us to build memorials to his great works in our lives. The memorials he has already appointed for us are key events in time and space—Scripture-teaching at home, the Lord's Day congregational worship, which includes the preaching of God's Word, the celebration of the sacraments, prayer, and Christian fellowship (Dt 6:6-9; Acts 2:42). These are the main memorials God commands his Church to uphold.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How does God want us to apply this lesson on memorials? (2) What are the memorials that God calls his Church to observe?

VIII. The Memorials Themselves Are not the Gospel

- A. But we must remember: *The main purpose of the memorial lies not in the memorial itself, but in the gospel truth which stands behind it.*
- B. Too often, we use the God-given memorials as badges of honor, as outward signs of our own piety rather than as memorials of God's grace.
- C. In the end, the memorials themselves are not God or his gospels.
- D. So let us not forget why the memorials are even there.
—They exist to help us recall the saving works—the gospels—of God.
- E. The greatest Gospel is not defined in Scripture as “going to church on Sunday,” or “remembering family worship,” or “encouraging one another.”
—*It is that God has brought the Lord Jesus Christ through the Jordan into the Land of Promise—and all of us who believe were counted in Christ!*
- F. We must come to the memorials of God with the intention of being reminded of the great works of our Lord YHWH—and to better worship him because of them.

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How are we not to treat the memorials of God? (2) How do we divorce the memorials of God from the realities of God's gospels? (3) What is the greatest Gospel for which we should be thankful?

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