

Twelve Stones

“Take you hence of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and you shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night,” Joshua 4:3

Joshua relays God’s message to the people exactly according to the words that God had provided to him. They were to bring twelve water-worn stones from the riverbed and set them up to mark the spot where they first entered into the Promised Land and they were to replace these smooth stones with twelve rough stones from the surrounding land. Though the effort to remove stones from the riverbed and to replace them with other stones might not have made immediate sense to Joshua, let alone to the people that he had to tell this to, he did not vary from what God had instructed him to say. The prophet Jeremiah was faced with a similar situation when God asked him to exhort a backsliding nation to repent. This was a message that would not be well-received by the masses who had, in their vain imaginations, turned to false teachings, yet God comforted Jeremiah in his task by saying, *“Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them”* (Jeremiah 1:17). We would do well to keep this in mind when telling others of what God has revealed to us from the Bible concerning living faith—no matter how others may react to our God-given message.

The simple boundary marker of twelve smooth stones in our text would, by the grace of God, cause future generations to ask what it meant, *“That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? 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”*, (Joshua 4:6-7). As we begin to understand the significance of these events we start to see that the physical act of entering the Promised Land for the first time parallels the experience of a penitent soul first coming into living faith. It is when a spiritually dead person is able, by the power of the

Holy Spirit, to truly believe the proclamation, *“Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee”* (Matt 9:2), that he experiences entry into that blessed land. The simple way a Christian thus places his trust in Christ is a sign which, by the grace of God, is sufficient to cause others to take notice, and to ask, why? All who have crossed over into living faith are instructed, like the Israelites of old, to preserve this experience forever for future generations to hear.

It was not the miracle of crossing the river that God was revealing but that of circumcision, *“And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way”* (Joshua 5:7). What is more, it is not the circumcision of the flesh but that of the heart that God wants to reveal to each of us today, *“... This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you ... And the children of Israel ... kept the passover”* (Joshua 5:9-10). God had forgiven their sins as evidenced by their willingness to keep the Passover feast. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us of the importance of blood in the Mosaic sacrifices, *“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission”* (Hebrews 9:22). In like manner God forgives our sins through the blood of Jesus.

The two types of stones present a message of God’s grace in themselves. The smooth stones signify that the Word of God, which the Bible often depicts to be living water, is, like natural flowing water that can smooth even the roughest of stones—the word of God can smooth the sin-roughened soul of man. The rough stones represent the sinful condition of heart before being exposed to flowing water. The landmark of smooth stones is an outward sign of this transformation of heart. We can see that it is vital that one be exposed to the word of God continually rather than just occasionally in order for the Word to take full effect on us. By the Israelites placing rough stones into the river we are reminded that it is never too late to seek God through the Word.

God warns us not to remove these stones, *“Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away*

flocks, and feed thereof”, (Job 24:2). It is not the stones per se that saves a soul but rather the conversion of the soul by the Word of God that matters; without these landmarks—outward signs of faith—how will others know to ask, *“What must I do to be saved?”* (Acts 16:30).

Therefore, we are to tell others of how we first came into faith thru the preaching, hearing and believing of the gospel of Jesus Christ, *“And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”* (Luke 24:47).

God’s Peace,

Charles Korhonen

Looking Ahead

Tapiola will host special services with Raino Mauno September 18-20th.

TAPIOLA APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH
P.O. Box 531
Houghton, MI 49931

Aug 2	Ken Storm	Holy Communion
Aug 9	Mathew Niemela	
Aug 16	Ken Storm	Confirmation Service
Aug 23	Charles Korhonen	
Aug 30	Herb Jarvi	

Online Broadcasts

From our webpage: <http://www.tapiolachurch.org/> you will see the mixlr live audio – we will be 'on the air' during our church services.

Summer Schedule

Sunday Service 10:00am.

Wednesday night Bible Study 7pm