**What Do These Stones Mean?**

**Introduction**

The book of Joshua is an exciting book because it sees so many of God’s promise come true to the nation of Israel (21:45; 23:14). Israel enters the Promised Land and begins to settle the land that God gave them. During this time, Israel is at a high point in their religion (there are exceptions to this). As they make their journeys and adventures God instructs them to remember certain events by memorializing them with piles of stones. These stones will serve as reminders and learning tools for the future generations. What do these stones mean?

* Joshua 3-4
* Joshua 7-8
* Joshua 10
* Joshua 24

**1. Joshua 3-4: Crossing the Jordan**

Israel has been forced to wonder in the wilderness for the past 40 years due to their rebellion against God’s command to enter (Num 13-14). Now it is time to enter. They have spied out the land (Josh 2) and the are ready to cross the Jordan River. They are to be led by the priests carrying the ark of God (3:3). Everyone is to be consecrated, i.e. holy and set apart (3:5).

Two sets of stones set up:

a) In Jordan (4:9)

b) Gilgal (4:1-8, 19-20)

This will provide opportunities to teach your children (4:6-7, 21-24). Children are naturally curious. I hear, “Daddy, what is this?” all day long. God wants parents to take advantage of the natural curiosity that children have to teach them about God. What does God want remembered about this event and why is it such a good teaching opportunity?

a) Living God is among you (3:10); ***God living among us has an impact.***

* Ex 25:8: God dwelling among his people means worshiping Him
* Ex 29:43-46: Israel will be set apart from the other nations
* Lev. 11:45-46; 19:2: Be holy for God is holy

***God does not just want us to pass on bare facts to our children, He wants us to teach our children about who He is.*** As we teach our children about the Lord, we are to teaching them about worshiping God? I don’t mean how we are right and everyone else is wrong, but how to worship God in spirit and truth (Jn 4:24).

We are to teach them about being different from the world. We are to show them the difference between the clean and the unclean. We are to be separate from the world (James 4:4-5).

We are to show them how to be holy and reflect God Himself. God set apart Israel to be special (Lev 20:26) and He has called us to the same (1 Pet 1:16; 2:9-10).

b) God’s power (4:24)… used to help God’s people (3:10)

Be amazed and in awe of God’s power! His power is unparalleled. He can control nature. God’s power is used to help those who serve Him. To serve this God means His is on your side and using His power for you! This is not the only time he has dried up a river to make a way for His people (4:23).

c) God wants everyone to know about Him (3:11; 4:24)

God wants everyone to come to him. He is Lord of all the earth (3:11) and wants all the earth to know the Lord is mighty (4:24). This will change how you interact with other nations. The goal is to win the other nations for God (Ex. 19:3-6). We teach our children everyone they meet is made in the image of God and God wants them to be saved.

d) Fear the Lord (4:24)

God wants this event to impress upon the people the need for lifelong service to the Lord. When you see who God is then we should be motivated to serve Him all of our days. When we see who God is we should have the desire to share serving Him with our children.

**2. Joshua 7: Story of Achan**

Achan’s story really begins in Joshua 6 with the battle against Jericho. God places everything under the ban only allowing the precious metals to be given to the house of the Lord (6:17-19). He warns the people not to covet the things they see (6:18). Achan violates the ban (7:1).

Israel loses their next battle to at the city of Ai (7:2-4) and the people are discouraged (7:5). Joshua morns and prays to the Lord (7:6-9) who informs him that sin is in the camp because the ban has been violated (7:10-11). Achan is caught and confesses (7:20-21). His whole family and all his possessions are stoned, and a pile of stones is raised over him (7:25-26).

What teaching lessons come from this?

a) Sin (disobedience) leads to death

b) Sin affects an entire nation (7:25; our sin affects more than just ourselves)

c) How foolish to long for temporary possessions (he lost his life over things)

**3. Joshua 8: Victory over Ai**

Israel attacks Ai for a second time and this time gains the victory. The city is destroyed and a pile of rocks is raised over the king of Ai (8:29). While chapters 7 and 8 are connected what can we learn from these stones?

What teaching lessons come from this?

a) God is the best commander, and His plans result in victory (8:1-2)

b) How much sorrow could have been avoided by obedience

c) Sin should bring refocusing on God and His law (8:30-35)

d) Victory should motive us to worship and renew (8:30-35)

**4. Joshua 10: Victory over 5 Kings**

Five kings assemble against Gibeon (10:5) because they are afraid of Israel’s growing power and alliance with Gibeon. Gibeon is a great city (10:2) yet it fears these five kings (10:6), but God tells Joshua to take courage (10:8). God sends hailstones down on the enemy (10:11) and allowed to sun to stand still (10:12-13). They celebrate their victory and pile stones over the courses of the kings (10:25-27).

What teaching lessons come from this?

a) The power of the enemy is no match for God

b) Victory comes only by the hand of the Lord (10:14, 42)

* This can also be seen in the story with Ai (8:29)
* Israel’s part in the battle is barely covered!

c) God has guaranteed you victory; go fight on the winning side

**5. Joshua 24: Law-Stone witness against people**

Chapter 23 is an address to the leaders of Israel (23:2) and chapter 24 is an address to people of Israel (24:1). Joshua gives Israel a choice to follow the Lord or idols (24:1-15). They claim they will (24:16-18) but Joshua doubts they will follow through (24:19-24). The people confirm their devotion, and they make a covenant (24:24-25). Stone set up (24:26-27). What teaching lessons come from this?

a) Reminder of promise to serve God and not deny Him (24:25-27)

On the most basic level the stone was set up to remind Israel of their promise to serve the Lord. This is a promise they repeat three times in this chapter.

* 24:16-18: Will not serve idols, God’s deliverance, and help
* 24:21: We will serve the lord
* 24:24: Serve the Lord and obey His voice

b) God’s protection and provision

* Fighting for you (23:3, 5, 10; 24:11-12, 18)
* Egypt, Balaam, conquest of land
* Providing houses you did not build and food you did not plant (24:13)

c) Choice to serve the Lord

Joshua does not assume that the people will serve the Lord simply because they are part of the nation of Israel. Everyone must make their own choice to serve the Lord. Many of their forefathers served idols (24:2, 14) and they will have to make the choice of what God they serve.

The choice of who to serve cannot depend on anyone else, but must be yours alone.

d) Service to God is not easy

Joshua’s response to the people after the claim they will follow the Lord (24:16-18) might come as a surprise to us (24:19-20). Most of the time we used to downplay the seriousness of what it takes to serve the Lord. We say things like, “You are already a good person, there is not much you would have to change.” We act like it is simply a small, and even easy thing to do. Yet, Joshua wants Israel to know just what they are getting themselves into.

* 23:6: Be very firm
* 23:8: Cling to God
* 23:11: Take diligent heed (you better really watch yourself); Love the Lord
  + Love the Lord: Make sure your love of God is greater than world; Make sure Love of God keeps pulling you back to Him
* 23:7, 12; 24:14: Several things trying to pull you away (nations, idols)
* 24:14: Sincerity and truth (24:14)
* 24:19: Jealous God (not going to put up with spilt loyalty)
* 24:23: Remove idols; incline heart
* 24:26-28: Make this day an important memory (you devoted to serve God)

Does it sound like Mt 16:24-26 is an easy path?

e) Choice must be today

Joshua tells the people to choose “today” who they will serve. They know the options and they have seen how the Lord has helped them (23:3; 24:7, 17). The time for the decision is at hand! It is not time to put it off nor to think about it and consider your options. You have the information, it is time to decide. What will our answer be?