

Living Monuments

Please open your Bibles to: Joshua 4:1-9

Tomorrow is Memorial Day. The day set aside to remember and honor those who lost their lives serving the country in battle.

In all of the wars in which the United States has been involved there have been well over 1,000,000 deaths in battle, there have also been other deaths in the theater of battle and even more who died serving the country during war but not directly in the theater of battle.

There are 136 United States national military cemeteries around the world and many State sponsored military cemeteries as well.

Monuments abound in the nation's capital and around the country dedicated to remembering those who gave their lives in the service of our country.

It is with honor that we remember those who gave their lives for the freedom we enjoy today.

Monuments are important. They help us to remember.

Today we will be reading about a monument set up by the Israelites in the Old Testament.

(Outline account of Joshua chapter 3)

Finally the time had come for Israel to enter the Promised Land ...

The assembly camped just across the Jordan river from Jericho ...

The Priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant were to go ahead of the assembly ...

They were crossing the Jordan at harvest time ...

The Jordan river floods at harvest time ...

(Show picture of Jordan river as it usually looks and Jordan river at flood stage ...)

When the priests entered the Jordan the water flowing downstream continued on and the water upstream piled up “in a heap” a great distance ...

The priests stood in the middle until the entire nation had crossed ...

Let’s continue the story by reading from Joshua chapter 4: Joshua 4:1-9

(Prayer for help with today’s message)

Joshua 4:21-24 (Picture of pile of 12 stones near river)

“[Joshua] said to the Israelites, ‘In the future when your descendants ask their parents, “What do these stones mean?” tell them, “Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.” For the LORD your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The LORD your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea when He dried it up before us until we had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the LORD is powerful and so that you might always fear the LORD your God.’”

Military memorials and Memorial Day holidays are supposed to help us remember those who gave their lives in defense of our nation.

In the same way a pile of rocks like this was supposed to help the nation of Israel remember the great works of the Lord on their behalf.

What was the greatest memorial Israel had to Yahweh their God?

The temple in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was called “The City of God”

The temple in the Jerusalem was the Temple of the LORD

The inner most chamber of the Temple of the LORD was the Most Holy Place or the Holy of Holies

In the Most Holy Place was the Ark of the Covenant

The cover of the Ark of the Covenant was the Mercy Seat or the Atonement Cover

Three times each year all of the men of Israel were to gather at The City of God where the Temple of the LORD was located.

Why? What was the purpose of all of this?

To remind them of what the LORD had done for them.

The Lord God established these memorials for the same reason that we have Memorial Day. Why? Because it is easy to forget!

If you are from a family who has never had anyone give their life in the service to the country it is easy to turn Memorial Day into just another Monday off.

But, whether we have had a family member give their life for the country or not, we need to be reminded of the sacrifice.

Because we are forgetful people and need to be reminder often the LORD God established Jerusalem and the Temple and the Most Holy Place and the three annual festivals because the generations who had witnessed the great acts of the LORD were gone.

That does not mean that the LORD was no longer performing great acts of His strength on behalf of Israel, but, the people needed to be reminded.

Here's the thing. We know that the presence of the LORD is everywhere, right? But the people of Israel did not have direct access to the LORD.

Only Prophets and the High Priest had direct access to the LORD in the Old Testament.

The people could not go into the Holy of Holies and ask the LORD for forgiveness.

How do we know this?

Hanna prayed to the LORD but the LORD used Samuel to deliver the answer to her prayers. **(1 Samuel 1:16-17)**

King Josiah wept and mourned when he found out how wickedly Judah was behaving but the LORD used Hulda, the woman prophet, to reveal the answer to his prayers.

(2 Chronicles 34:14-28)

The LORD was there and yet separate from the people.

Then came Jesus! The eternal Son of God came to live among us and to bring atonement for our sins; to pay the penalty for our sins with His own blood on the cross of Calvary.

That was great but Jesus was also providing something even better to come.

What actually happened when Jesus died on the cross? What happened in the temple? The curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was torn in two by God Himself.

Did this mean that we could now enter into the presence of the LORD ourselves, or, did it mean that the LORD Himself was coming out to us?

And then, what happened 50 days after Jesus was raised from the dead?

The Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers in the upper room!

Here's the thing.

The pile of stones where the Israelites crossed the Jordan is still a memorial (if it is still there) but almost no one will ever see it.

The Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem is no longer there and even if it was it is a memorial that only a handful of people around the world would ever get to see it.

What is the memorial that the LORD has put into place to be a witness to the world today?

It is in those who have placed their trust and faith in Jesus for salvation!

We ARE the memorial!

1 Corinthians 3:16

“Don't you (plural) know that you (plural) yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you (plural)?”

God's Spirit lives in us individually as a memorial to Him, and, God's Spirit lives in us as a body of Christ as a memorial to the LORD!

Do you get that?

As a Christian, I AM SUPPOSED to be a witness, a living memorial for the Lord!

As a Christian, I AM SUPPOSED to be a reminder, a living memorial, that there is a Savior and His name is Jesus!

As a Christian, I AM SUPPOSED to, “In my heart revere Christ as Lord. Always being prepared to give everyone who asks me the reason for the hope that I have. But, I must do this with gentleness and respect.”
(paraphrase of 1 Peter 3:15)

How can we do this? We must live holy lives driven by a passionate love for Jesus. This CANNOT be done in our own strength.

It MUST be done in loving and complete cooperation with the Holy Spirit!

When we are living a life that is righteous in the sight of God He can be a powerful witness, a powerful memorial, through us.

When we are claiming to be Christians but living a life of sin we are actually a witness, a memorial, against the Lord.

Let's use King Josiah as an example. - **2 Chronicles 34-35**

When Josiah became king at the age of eight, the southern kingdom of Judah was filled with pagan idol worship.

When he was 16 he began to seek the Lord.

At the age of 22 he began to destroy all of the pagan idol worship sites in the country.

At age 26 he started purifying and rebuilding the Temple of The LORD.

Then they found the Book of the Law – the holy Scriptures of Moses

When Josiah heard the Book of the Law and compared it to how the people of the land were living he immediately repented, sought the Lord and did everything he could to bring the country back to righteousness.

Now, let's compare that to our lives ...

Do you have idols in your life? Do you have things that you KNOW are displeasing to the Lord in your life?

In your home? In your work? In your entertainment?

If you do, are you ready to seek the Lord?

Are you ready to destroy anything in your home, in your work, in your entertainment that is ruining or impeding your witness for Him?

Are you a memorial of delight to the Lord or a memorial of shame?

After Josiah went through the land he went through the house of the Lord.

This cross we have here on the communion table?

Is it a memorial of where Jesus died for our sins or is it an idol?

What if someone in the congregation felt strongly that it was an idol?

Would we be willing to take it out of the church and not complain?

Is it a reminder or is it our god?

If someone did feel strongly that it was an idol and we decided to take it out and if that action caused division in the body of Christ what category would it put this cross in? Would it be an idol or a memorial?

When people come into this church what do we want?

Do we want people to admire our decorations or do we want them to feel the presence of the Holy Spirit?

We as individuals and as the local body of Christ, the Church, are memorials to the Lord.

We can be like the temple was when Josiah became king. We can be filled with so many worldly things that the world does not see any difference.

Or, we can be like the Temple of The LORD was after King Josiah had it purified and made holy again even though, in that case, it was too late to stop the judgment of God against the nation of Judah.

This Memorial Day let us take the matter prayerfully and seriously.

Are we memorials for or against the LORD as individuals.

If we are just playing at being a disciple of Christ we will be a memorial against Him.

If we whole heartedly give ourselves to Jesus we will be a memorial for Him.

There is only one path to this life of holiness and it is through Jesus.

Galatians 2:20

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Romans 12:1-2

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship.

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Final thoughts and prayer ...

Benediction Scripture

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

“May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it.”

