



MEMORIAL STONES IN THE JORDAN



Memorial Stones in the Jordan River

What is it about your faith that makes it real?

For me it's the bible itself. It's over two thousand years old for the newest writings, most averaging twice that age, and it has something new every time I read it. The discoveries I make excite me as if they were new revelations of truth. The second reality is the mystery of the preached word, and the ability it has to change believers when they hear it. Of course, you know I'm not talking about gospel regeneration or the new birth coming by preaching.

I'm referring to how one can take the lessons from preaching and apply them to your life and see change and impact. Maybe rediscovering the joy of your salvation or finding Jesus revealed in your life in a tangible way. That's why we go to services, and that's why we keep returning to the place when we feel the Lord's presence time and time again.

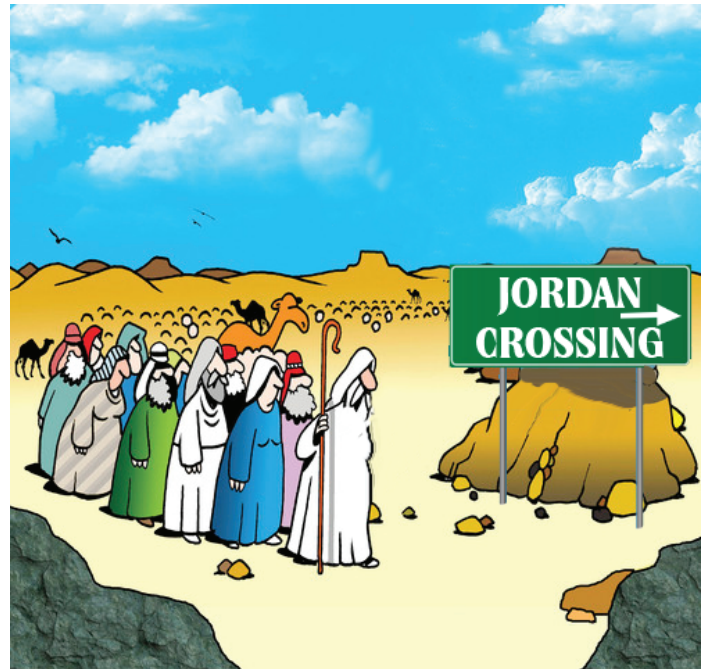
There are special places used more than once in scripture. The upper room – for example, we find used for the last supper and the gathering at Pentecost. Mt. Moriah, where Isaac was to be slain, tradition holds to be the same place as the threshing floor David purchased; it is the site of the temple mount and perhaps Jacob's ladder. Some historians are keen to locate the Garden of Eden over the same region of Jerusalem. They make a very strong case.

Jacob returned to the place where he had felt the presence of God. And John the Baptist immersed followers at a place where he knew the glory of God had been.



Jhn 10:40 And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode.

Jesus walked nearly sixty miles in order to be baptized of John at this particular place. And it's a place that was marked by 12 stones.



In the book of Joshua,

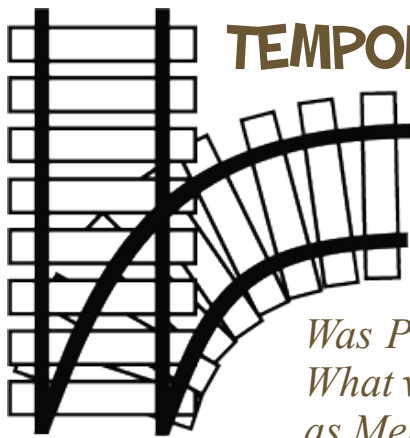
it's time for the children of Israel to end their wandering and pass over Jordan into the land God had promised.

The Lord gives instructions to Joshua that the priests are to carry the ark of the covenant to the edge of the water. When they reach the brink, the water will part and the ark will stand still in the Jordan. The children of Israel – about a thousand feet away, will pass through the Jordan dry, in the same manner as their fathers passed through the Red Sea and were baptized unto Moses.

The scriptures describe the scene as the priests stepped into the Jordan river:

Jos 3:15 And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,)

Jos 3:16 That the waters which came down from above stood [and] rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that [is] beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, [even] the salt sea, failed, [and] were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.



TEMPORARY SIDE TRACK

Inspiration declares the waters of the Jordan rolled back all the way to the cities of Adam. We all have our friendly debates and pet subjects, taking sides of a position and trying to prove it biblically. *Was Judas a child of God?*

Was Paul born again on the road to Damascus or just converted? What was Paul's thorn in the side? Was it Christ that met Abraham as Melchizedek or a man? Was Adam a child of God?

Some believe we won't see the first man in eternity, but I've always contended Adam was born again after the fall. I think there's sufficient evidence in scripture to make the case. I've used this verse in Jos 3:16 before, but I think I have a better proof now.

Back at the Jordan

While the Jordan is parted, the Lord instructs Joshua to have a representative from each tribe take a stone from the Jordan so a pillar, a memorial can be made. Joshua sets these stones up in Gilgal:

Jos 4:20 And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal.

And there's also an account where Joshua takes twelve stones to build a pillar.

Jos 4:9 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.



CONTRADICTIONS IN SCRIPTURE.

If you type in the phrase *bible contradictions* into a search engine on the internet, this story in Joshua comes up near the top. **Did they take the stones to Gilgal or did they build a memorial in or near the Jordan? Did they use 12 stones or 24?**

Yes.

They did both. I said at the beginning that reading scripture and discovering new things is what makes it real to me. I can read the same text dozens of times and then one day, a light comes on and illumination follows and there's something that's always been there but is suddenly new and exciting. I find that most so called contradictions are usually a failure to rightly divide the word of truth, and can be resolved with a little effort and prayer.

Joshua gathered twelve stones from near the ark. The others could not do that. They were instructed to stay about 1000 feet away. So in truth, we are dealing with 24 stones and two separate memorials. One by where the priests stood with the ark* in the Jordan, and one where they pitched in Gilgal. [*The Jordan overflowing at the time of this crossing, could have receded to leave the stones near the banks during drier times.]



This is what most historians believe remain of Joshua's first 12 stones. 4000 years after the fact, it's hard to pinpoint where the actual location and original stones might have stood. Modern graffiti covers these located near the Dead Sea.

Joshua could approach the ark because he had the spirit.

Num 27:18 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom [is] the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him;

Deu 34:9 And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.



The Lord intended this memorial to speak to future generations. (Jos 4:21-24) These twelve stones at the edge of the Jordan River were still standing when John the Baptist, by divine direction began baptizing there. This was a trade route on the road to Jerusalem, well traveled, and well known by the Jews. You couldn't look at those stones and not be reminded of the miraculous crossing of Jordan by Joshua.

THE PRIEST – History, Office, Tradition, Ceremony

John the Baptist was a priest. John was of the priestly line of Aaron as well as being a child of special promise of God; the one who would prepare the way for Messiah after the manner of Elijah. Had the priesthood of the day not been ruined, it's thought that John would have been the legitimate High Priest at the time when he commenced his wilderness ministry.

The priesthood, however, had become corrupt and had been bought by men with wealth and influence.





We know John's father was a priest and we find evidence of him ministering in Luke Chapter 1. There is no way to be promoted into the priesthood. The Jewish priesthood was to be passed down from father to son as long as it existed.

Exd 29:9 And thou shalt gird them with girdles, Aaron and his sons, and put the bonnets on them: and the priest's office shall be theirs for a perpetual statute: and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons.

Strict Rules, High Standards

The priesthood was a protected office. It's been said that if the mother had been taken in captivity and returned, her records needed great examination. A son born in captivity would have been ineligible to serve. But by the time John the Baptist appeared on the scene, the office no longer resembled what God had established through Moses. Only one high priest each year, yet through the corruption of bribes and sin, by John's day, there was one family dominating, and from scriptural account, more than one high priest:

Luk 3:2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

John Gill comments John 11:49: "And one of them, named Caiaphas,....being the high priest that same year; the high priesthood originally was not annual, but for life; but towards the close of the second temple, it came into the hands of the king, to appoint who would to be high priest; and it became venal; it was purchased with money; insomuch that they changed the priesthood once a twelve month, and every year a new high priest was made now this man being in such an high office, and a man of no conscience, and of bad principles..."

It's been said of this father/son-in-law combo that while one was serving as high priest, the other ran the money changing and animal bazaar near the temple and both profited greatly at the expense of the common people.

High Priest Corruption

A few years ago, a dwelling was excavated in Jerusalem, on the eastern site of the temple mount. It was revealed to be the dwelling place of the High Priest at or around the time of Christ. The floors, trimming, size and details of the site revealed an opulence that would be unequalled by today's Amazon or Microsoft billionaires.



This model is the mock-up made of the site.

The office being voided by man's corruption, we look to the Lord to reveal the true high priest.



When a high priest was to be initiated, the Jews conducted a ceremony. First, a mikveh (an immersion of the subject), followed by an anointing with oil, and then the father priest would confirm the son's right and lineage by publicly proclaiming "This is my son." Matthew 3:17

The Old Testament drawing to a close, and the last God called, spirit filled high priest arrives on the scene in fulfillment of prophecy. He came in the spirit and power of Elijah to make ready a people prepared of the Lord. *Mal 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:*

John is reported as baptizing in the country ‘about Jordan.’ We suspect he would be at this well known Joshua crossing, where the stones stood as a monument to God, in a area well travelled. When the multitude came to him – he called them a generation of vipers.

Luk 3:7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

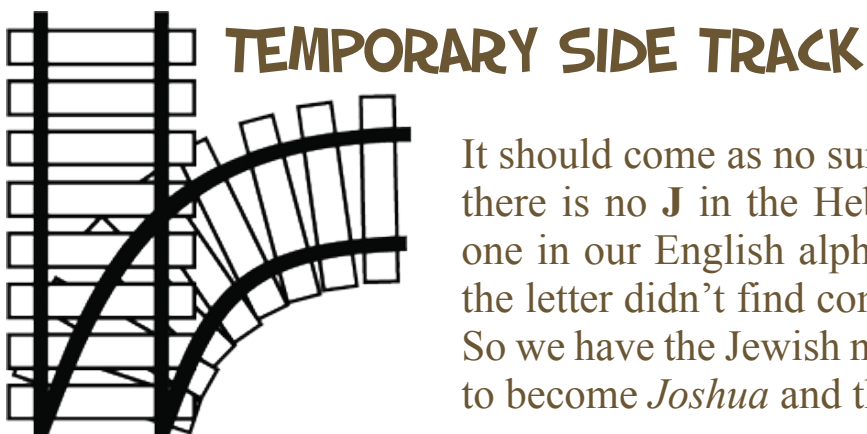
*Luk 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to [our] father: for I say unto you, That God is able of **SOME** stones to raise up children unto Abraham.*

What stones do you suppose John was speaking of?

SOME Stones? No, *THESE* Stones. Tradition says Jesus walked sixty miles to be baptized of John. From Galilee to the Jordan river, there is a place six or seven miles north of the Dead Sea, where Joshua and the Israelites passed over Jordan.



John then declares to the crowd one is coming called the *Lamb of God* – he looks up and here comes *Joshua*.



It should come as no surprise to teachers or historians that there is no **J** in the Hebrew language. And there wasn't one in our English alphabet until about 1634. Even then the letter didn't find common usage until the 17th century. So we have the Jewish name *Yeshua* pushed through Greek to become *Joshua* and then finally the English *Jesus*.

Jesus submitted to immersion by John, in spite of John's reservations, "*to fulfill all righteousness*". (Matt 3:15)

Why was Jesus Baptized?

We sometimes refer to baptism as the entry way into the church on earth. As Jesus submitted to the watery grave, so too should we follow His example.

Mat 3:15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer [it to be so] now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

Pay close attention to the verse in Matthew. Notice Jesus didn't say "suffer it to be so for it becometh *me* to fulfill all righteousness" – he said **us**. John has a part in this.



Jhn 1:31 And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.

John was not immersing Jesus for repentance for sin. Indeed, the sinless lamb has no need for repentance. John was, as God's legitimate high priest, initiating Jesus, whom he had identified as "the Lamb of God" into the priesthood. Not into the Levitical priesthood from the Aaronic line, for Jesus' lineage ran through Judah – not Levi. **Christ is superior to that priesthood.**

In Joshua, the waters of Jordan rolled back in two directions. When the Saviour was laid beneath the waves of the same Jordan, we see a beautiful picture of redemption that flowed from before the foundation of the world unto the sea of forgetfulness. John the Baptist, acting as the last high priest under the law, passes in type all the sins of the people under the Old Covenant unto the only one who could actually take them away. Legally, Jesus would carry these Old Testament sins with him to the Cross and put them away there.

Rom 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

And Jesus rose, being ordained of God, as a high priest forever, beginning His three and one half year priestly ministry. And as is the responsibility of the Father, to confirm the lineage of the son, we read in the immediate verse:

Luk 3:22 And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.



Introduced, Baptized. Now, the Family Tree

Luk 3:23 And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was [the son] of Heli,

Luk 3:24 Which was [the son] of Matthat, which was [the son] of Levi, which was [the son] of Melchi, which was [the son] of Janna, which was [the son] of Joseph,

This event has been rehearsed for ages by priests passing the office to their son, all pointing us to this one: Jesus, at the age of thirty is immersed by a true high priest, receives the Father's confirmation, and is anointed (*with the Oil*) of the Holy Spirit.

Doctor Luke picked an odd place to tell us about the family tree of Jesus – or so it would seem. Christ has just come up out of the water and Luke starts talking about heritage. But as Priests of the Old Testament had to prove descent from Aaron, Luke knows this positioning of his text is important. Watch this path carefully: **It purposely misses Aaron and Moses** – yet goes back through David, Jacob, Isaac, Abraham, Shem, Seth and Adam.

Shem – son of Noah, is who the Jews traditionally say met Abraham, whom he called Melchizedek.

It will help our understanding if we look at Melchizedek as a designation, not a name. Just like Elder, President, and Pastor are all position titles, not personalities.

The Melchizedek priesthood preceded the law and was superior to it. The sacrificial law of Moses was necessary to be our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. It was a placeholder of sorts, and the Melchizedek priesthood was held in abeyance until perfection could be revealed. Jesus was that perfection.

In the Old Testament the priests could not be kings and the kings could not be priests. However, Jesus came as a King and he also came as a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Now Jesus has made those whom he has cleansed from sin, both kings and priests.



Paul is describing a position that could be filled by none other than Jesus. He sums up in one sentence the superiority of this priesthood:

Hbr 7:3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

The old priesthood confirmation of pedigree was burdensome. The tracking of the father and his lineage – can he be traced back to Aaron? The mother’s pedigree – was she ever in captivity? When did the grandfather and the father die? Was there a divorce or remarriage in the family? Was a widow taken by her husband’s brother to bear children and does that mar the line? When and where were they born? At what year did they enter the priesthood? And when did their priesthood end? Was the child born outside Israel? Is there an older brother who would be in line?

1Ti 1:4 Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.

A clear sign all this was ending: one of the most celebrated figures of the Bible, John the Baptist, has no lineage detailed. You can find his father and his mother, but you can’t glean much more than that.

Jhn 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, [but] grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Adam was a earthly high priest in the sense that he was charged with the keeping of the righteousness of the garden. The lineage in Luke purposely goes back to Adam when it could have easily missed him, as it avoided Moses and Aaron. To my thinking, Adam’s inclusive speaks well of his future state.



The transfer of authority and the ceremony is complete. John as the last legitimate high priest of the Old Testament has in type transferred the sins of the people onto the Messiah, (our eternal High Priest ending the Aaronic and Levitical priesthood) confirming the True, heavenly priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. This priesthood is not bound by the law of sacrifice, nor tied to the blood or bulls and goats, but is a priesthood pure, free of sin, perfect in obedience and righteousness, both pre-dating and overshadowing the weak priesthood of man.

The high priest was a picture of a sin bearer for the people – and Jesus comes out of the water having in picture the sins of the Old Testament laid on him, and heads into the wilderness – showing us like the scapegoat of old how our sins will never come back. He's going to be tempted after 40 days, one day for each year Israel wandered in the wilderness – and he is going to be tempted with food – just like Adam.



You remember the temptations. Satan telling Jesus to command some stones that they be made bread? NO! Command **THESE** stones be made bread. What stones? The stones of the memorial set up by Joshua. (Because Jesus is in Gilgal – where He knows the Lord has been.) **Command these stones** – surely they mean something to your God.

Not yielding to any of Satan's temptations, Jesus is victorious in the task of the great high priest and now tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin (Hbr 4:15).

The New Testament priesthood is called a "holy" and a "royal" priesthood. "Royalty" generally refers to kings. Thus the priests are also the kings.

1Pe 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

When do you become a king and a priest unto God?

Rev 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him [be] glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.



Not everyone that is born again is called into service. Some may never darken the doors of a church or praise God in an orderly assembly. They are children of God, but they are not kings and priests unto God.

Many believers fail to heed the call: *Jhn 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: And Jhn 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*

When do you become a king and priest to God? When you are submerged beneath that watery grave and arise to walk in newness and life. Those relative few God has sought out to worship him in spirit and in truth, from among the untold millions of believers are empowered to become sons of God. Not in the new birth sense, but in service.

What kind of priest are you made? Not an Old Testament priest, but a priest after the order of Melchisedec, with Jesus being our High Priest.

Jesus is a King through the lineage of King David.

2Ti 2:8 Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel:

Jesus is High Priest through the descending of the Spirit.

Hbr 5:6 As he saith also in another [place], Thou [art] a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Hbr 5:7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

*5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;
5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them*

We began with a look at the stones Joshua used to make memorials. It seems fitting to end with stones. Peter explains the holy priesthood.

1Pe 2:4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

2:5 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.

2:6 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.



2:7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

2:8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

EPHRAIM

DAN

MANASSEH

GAD

ASHER

MAPHTALI

ISACHAR

BENJAMIN

SIMEON

Zebulun

Reuben

JUDAH