

agan tribe.

ne day he suddenly announced that he was going to a place led Bethel. That place had special meaning for him. It was e than just a lonely spot out in the wilderness.

t was a place where Jacob first had a personal encounter with

. It was there while he was still a young man that he was re of the claims of God upon his life. Something happened

acob in Bethel that day - he never forgot it, and for many s it looked as if he had forgotten it, but his dramatic ouncement that he was going back told his family that at el the stones he had erected there to mark the spot where ame to grips with God; and so upon announcing this to his ly, they set out to this place where these stones were. mean these stones?

actly what made him go back to Bethel is not clear - aps he was disgusted with himself, he was tired of his ures, his misery was due to having left God out of his life, some of his lost nearness to God, he wanted to feel again. enesis 35 Jacob said to his household, put away the strange from among you, and change your garments, be clean, lets and go up to Bethel, God hath appeared to me. And so with command they set out.

ck to Bethel. The place where he had had better days and he had walked and talked with God reminded him of his

What Mean These Stones?

Introduction: - Most of us have our ways of aiding our mem- ory. We either circle a date on a calendar, or we write a note and put it in a prominent place - quite often we've heard people say, tie a string around your finger. Nations also have ways of remembering too. National holidays, monuments are erected to remind of our heroes in by gone days. We forget too easily and too soon.

For many people the most valuable piece of real estate is a tiny plot of ground 8 feet long and 4 feet wide set off on a quiet hillside, and on certain days they go to that place and spend a little while remembering. I think maybe this is healthy in some ways, if one does not leave his heart there. Silent stones - we remember all the love, the heartaches, the accomplishments of the loved ones who have passed away. Names and dates are timeless, that are engraved on these smooth granite surfaces that stand before us.

In Cuba the tombstones become resting places for tired pedestrians who make their visit to the cemetery like a social event. They take the family for a picnic and among the grave plots there is the buying of soft drinks and icecream from vendors - a noisy crowd.

In the oriental cemeteries relatives of ten place food and drink on the graves of their beloved so that their spirits will

not go hungry.

In the courtyard of Trinity Church, New York City where patriots of our nations infancy are buried - or you might visit Punchbowl National Cemetery or you might visit one of the islands where we have row after row of gleaming white crosses which remind us that freedom is not cheap or easily kept.

We might go to Washington to the monument of Lincoln's Memorial, others and we feel that these stones stand for something very important.

Joshua, the son of Nun, the leader of the Hebrew people after the days of Moses, who had passed on from the scene, participated in a great event, the entrance of the children of Israel into Canaan, and he knew how hard it had been, and how God had been with them throughout every ordeal. Joshua and his people felt that they needed some tangible monument that would remind them of the goodness of God, so he called the people together one day.

And he told them to take 12 stones, he gives the account of it in verse 1 thru vers 7 here- and these stones, he said shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel forever. Here is the monument set up and he said in years to come your children are going to be asking, "What mean these stones - What mean ye by these stones?"

3.
Now in the Bible and around this world there are some stones that have memories and memorials values to them that perhaps we should look at - and I should like for us to look at 3 or 4 of these, and we'll come back to our text in the closing idea.

I. The Stones at Bethel Our first visit will take us back several thousand years, back even before Joshua's time to a lonely spot in the wilderness in a place called Bethel and a man of God named Jacob. Every SS child knows some of the details about Jacob's life.

They know how he wrestled with an angel-they know about the tricks he played on his father-in-law, they know how he made him work for 7 years to get his daughter, then gave to him not the woman of his love, and he had to work 7 more years for the one he really loved. He is a fascinating character, but there were some flaws in his life - he was a very likable fellow.

But when he was in middle age, his past misbehavior began to catch up with him- his meanness began to find him, and he had some serious problems in life, and he wanted to leave this old wicked life and way of life - he had family troubles - he had business troubles - he had wife trouble - he had neighbor trouble

He lied, he stole, he killed and lived a terribly corrupt life and this kind of life (paid off) as it always does in misery and unhappiness. The final blow came to him when his daughter ran off and began living as a common law wife with a man from

8.

from village to village mending kitchen utensils.

Somewhere along the line he met and married a wonderful girl whose name we do not know. John's life took on a new quality, and one day he joined a little Baptist in Bedford, England. He became a lay preacher - he used every opportunity to speak while he continued his tinker's trade in the day time he preached at night.

Religious freedom was unknown in any real sense, and John was arrested by the authorities upon insistence of other preachers who were jealous - preaching without a license was against the law, and the Angleton church had the religious business sewed up in England. For more than 6 years John was in jail - he could have gained his freedom simply by promising not to preach again, but he preferred imprisonment of the body, rather than being in bondage of the conscience.

His family suffered and his anguish at many times was beyond imagination or description. His folks were deprived - he made shoe laces and sold them from prison to help support his family.

He began to write in what spare time he had, lacking proper materials he wrote on milk bottle stoppers - his vivid imagination and brilliant mind produced in 1648 the book which has become his monument on the bookshelves and in the hearts of millions - Pilgrim's Progress. When he died, his

5.

promises which he had made and had not kept. He wanted to lie down on his bed at night and be able to sleep untroubled. You know when a fellow has sin in his heart, in his mind and in his soul it is difficult for him to stretch out on his bed at night and find sweet rest and sleep. Jacob wanted again the friendship of his friends who trusted him; he had gone back on them he had dreams of his children that they would not learn of all of his wickedness, and so it was back to Bethel

Wasn't there a Bethel in your life too?

I have an idea there was somewhere along the line, that you became aware of the bigness of life, and where you called upon God to take your life, and where you made some promises and decisions.

What are you going to do with your life? Somewhere in the Church, somewhere or among somefolks you love, or friends or interested minister who helped you so much - or perhaps it was at home with godly parents you were trying to lead your own life and they helped you.

It might have been in a hospital room where the agony seemed like hours - and if you think back, if you think hard, you will brush away the cobwebs and remember your own personal battle.

What has happened since then? Where are you now? How far have you drifted from what you felt and said and did that day

at Bethel. The story of Jacob is the story of 'too many of us. Dress him in a suit, or put him behind an automobile wheel, or let him walk thru a super-market and Jacob would look like some people you know today.

So Jacob said he was going back to this pile of stones that reminded him of so many things - what do these stones mean? These stones remind you that you cannot avoid Almighty God. Somewhere along the road of life you must meet and deal with Him. Sooner or later, God must be reckoned with.

II. The Stones at Rome - As we journey today and look at some of these monuments and stones, I should like for us to take a brief look at some in Rome. For these (massive) accumulation of stones is arranged the most famous religious building in the world - the Basilica of St. Peter. Although, we do not always agree with all of those who occupy this big structure, yet it is a kind of a (fitting memorial) to the Big Fishermen, whose name it bears.

Peter, you know means rock - that was the name that Jesus gave him following his confession at Caesarea Phillipi when Peter said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. But Peter did not always act like a rock - his character sometimes ran over with jealousy, he was impatient, he had little patience. At times he was impulsive with a perfect talent for

saying and doing the wrong thing at the wrong time. He was very crude, he was uneducated. Even after spending several years with Jesus, Peter demonstrated an appalling lack of understanding of his true mission, and his denial of Christ certainly was at its zenith when he warmed by the enemies fire, but somewhere between Calvary and Penecost, the spirit of the living God got a hold on his heart, and changed him and he became a rock, and then Peter had patience, and he had power, and he had influence that he'd never had before.

This monstrous church building named in honor of this one who became a flaming evangel - what do these stones mean? These stones remind us that God is still in the business of changing lives. he is able to use some very unlikely material to accomplish his will in the world. Do you suppose there is another Peter in this congregation today.

III. The Stones of England - If we go out to Bunball Field, near London England there is a small cemetery in a quiet churchyard. There is a weatherbeaten headstone's standing guard over the grave of a man who lived in the 17th century by the name of John Bunyun.

John's life was swept by turmoil, and he was in many ways a tragic figure. He was high-strung, neurotic, he became a heavy drinker by early manhood. A tinker by trade he wandered

says, "Give yourselves to God as living stones, to be built into a spiritual house where you can offer those spiritual gifts which are in keeping with the spirit of Jesus Christ"

For a christian, one worthy of the name of Christ, will not (wait for a tombstone) to be his memorial. A living stone is better than a dead one any day. He here compares a christian to a living stone, building a house like this church of which we are a part. When we talk about this church, we do not refer to the pretty bricks, but to the living stones, the people the wonderful, dedicated loving people who are the living stones and make up the real church. What do these

stones mean. (After they crossed over Jordan, after many weary heart-breaking years the day of inheritance had come, and they had passed through, and they had prepared food and they were within 3 days journey of crossing Jordan and going into the promised land, which the Lord your God will give us - in Joshua 1:1-2, God had promised this hundreds of years before that they would lift up their eyes and look to the north and to the south and to the east and the west and God was going to give all of that land to the seed of Abraham. And in Genesis also, we have this promise of arise and walk thru the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it, for I will give it unto thee - Gen. 13; 14 -15. -

pitiful pile of loans was sold to pay the debts and for years there was no headstone over his grave in Bunhill Field. But there is one now, and what does this stone mean over the grave of this pot-mender who turned a preacher? It means that (God's will is more important than the opinions of men, and failing God is more to be feared than the wrath of the majesties and kings. We can thank God for all of the John Bunyan's who rise up to remind us that no price is too high to pay to hold on to integrity and remain true to the principles of Jesus Christ.

IV. The Stones in China - We may go behind the bamboo curtain to see - it is really two stones, a double marker, identifying the place where two americans (John and Betty Stam) In 1934 Betty and John married less than 2 years were with their tiny daughter, Pricilla in a (small providence, Anhwei, China). They were missionaries - a wonderful occupation and yet difficult in the days of the chinese revolution, Persistant rumors of (communist) advance made them think about fleeing. While they were thinking about it, John continued to preach, and tried to stretch his luck from one day to the next in service for Christ.

(Dec. 6, 1934) word was brought that Russians were within a

few miles of the city. The Stams got their personal possessions together, told their native friends goodbye and prepared to flee; they never made it, soldiers met them at the door. Betty courtesly invited them in, she served them tea and food. They enjoyed this very much. After accepting the hospitality the soldiers took all of the money and valuables John had, tied him to a bedpost and locked Betty and the baby in another room. Later they were all taken to the city prison, and while in prison John was forced to write his christian friends asking them to ransom him for \$20,000. In his letter he wrote - quote "God grant you wisdom in what you do, and grant us fortitude, courage and peace of heart, may God be glorified by our life, or by our death."

At 10 o'clock on Saturday, Dec. 8th, the communist leaders made a proclamation in the village that the Stams would be executed in public as an example of what happens to the enemies of the people and friends of the chinese government at that time - Chiang Kai Shek. Every one was urged to come and watched the foreign devils die. School children were marched from their classes to watch the spectacle. The Stams were led with their hands behind their backs, and their outer clothing removed. They were taken thru the main streets to a little hill just outside the village, their baby daughter was left behind.

John was ordered to kneel. A huge sword in the hands of one of the communist was raised and as John spoke a few words which no one could hear the sword came crashing down with a force that completely severed his head from his body. Betty, trembling but did not cry out as she ran to the body of her husband. While she sobbed silently, the sword struck again, and she fell beside her husband. One in life and one in death they died for the Lord they had vowed to serve.

It was several weeks before the full story was learned from frightened chinese christians who marked the graves and later arranged for a proper memorial to be erected. Today their grave is behind the bamboo curtain. If the stones are still standing, doubtless a new generation of chinese, will come and look upon them and ask "What do these stones mean?"

We pray that someone reminds us there, or some christians whom being a christian means what it ought to mean to everyone who bears the name of Christ - that giving ones self in love for the name of Christ, and giving ones self in love for him and for the world is the priviledge and duty of every child of God.

V. What about the Stone in your life? All of us will have a stone someday, or maybe not. Suppose our children ask, what does this stone mean - what will generations yet unborn have to say about our monuments? someday in the future. First Peter 2:5

glad, I won't have to cross Jordan alone." Jesus died for my sins to stone, when the darkness I see, he'll be waiting for me, I won't have to cross Jordan alone".

What mean these stones, they mean a place of final rest - crossing Jordan, the entrance of God's people into Canaan's fair and happy land - a symbol of eternal and final rest, a picture of earthly rest when Joshua spoke to the tribes of Israel upon that momentous day they prepared to cross.

There remaineth therefore, a rest for the people of God - "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth

yea, saith the spirit, they may rest from all their labors, late come Afternoon in high school - looking out across and their works do follow after them." The water - prayer - it - praying to - He took out + buried his feet - had crossing Jordan - his feet -

There the tree of life is blooming in the midst of the garden of God, and we may freely and fully eat and live forever. Nothing known to man is so wonderful and so blessed as the christians heavenly hope - there blind eyes can see, cripple bodies walk, broken-hearts will be filled with gladness "weeping may endure for a night, I make all these things new" We gain a better home in the mansions above - we gain a better body-we gain a better fellowship. What mean these stones? "From out my home of time and place, the floods may bare me far, I hope to see my Pilot face to face when I have crossed the bar."

I. May - Nov. 13. 60 - AM - 5. Nov - Nov. 29, 70 AM

When Joseph died after settled the house of Jacob in the land of Goshen, said to his brethren, I die, but you will carry my bones up hence, Moses in the third chapter of Exodus started to led the people toward the land of Canaan from the land of bondage. The day of March has come, a new home, the land of Canaan is just over the river, Oh, the glory of that memorial land of that hour.

This memorial is a symbol of our task, it is the thought and the literature of the world - crossing Jordan has come to mean far more than just the historical reference, as beyond the plains of Moab, to reach that little country of Palestine, the aspirations, the vision of their lives, the picture of courage and strength - this generation, their leader Moses dead, and now a new one has come on the scene, and they will cross that Jordan, the commands of God are clear and certain that we arise and go over the Jordan and that we possess the land which the Lord your God giveth us.

They were to go on, they would not dishonor him and fail him they would not stop there. This memorial, this stone also symbolizes our translation, crossing Jordan has become a symbol of our translation from earth to heaven. In sermon and in song, the passing of God's people from the country this, country to the heavenly - the long wilderness journey

14.
is at an end with its trials and its troubles. God's promised land lies just beyond over the chilly cold waters of Jordan of death in between. The old negro spiritual which says "stand by me" is wonderful - "when I am growing old and feeble, stand by me - when I am growing old and feeble, stand by me, when my life becomes a burden, and I am nearing chilly Jordan, thou lily of the valley, stand by me." He talks about the Savior in the end of that poem. Physical death is a dark deep river, and it seems to be the final enemy of mankind. But look, when the people approached the angry swollen waters, they divided, they were victorious. Could it not be that way for us, if we have dying grace - the angels will sing and there will be Jesus our Saviour - when Elijah and Elisha passed from Gilgal to Bethel - from Bethel to Jerico and from Jerico to Jordan the waters divided, and the glory of the presence of the Lord came down. Elijah went up in a chariot, and Elisha said "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof". It is every so with the christian.

"I looked over Jordan and what did I see, coming for to carry me home, anband of angels coming after me, coming for to carry me home, swing low sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home, swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home."

15.
Should I fear at this fire, at this death - no not at all. "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us" - and we have no fear of this, for death cannot keep his prey, Jesus, my Saviour, he tore the bars away, Jesus, my Lord - Up from the grave he arose, with a mighty triumph over his foes.

He arose a victor from the dark domain, and he lives forever with his saints to reign, He arose, He arose, Hallelujah, Christ arose." *Each year - Boston Poor Way - offering*
Angels - to the moon - Wm. G. Boyer - children and what mean ye True Things
What could be sweeter than the 14th chapter of John when *Send Gospel - Mrs. - prepare Mrs. Cross Jordan*
Jesus announces to his disciples the approaching, and they are *Memorial to our Condem - woman & alone could die*
in despair, death to them was the end, the grave was the final

event. In death he faces no defeat, it does not mean that he ceases to be - "I go to prepare a place for you, and I will come again and receive you unto myself." It is to go out to meet Jesus.

Robt. H. Coleman, who used to be the assistant at the First Baptist Church of Dallas had a favorite poem he liked to quote

An old hymn-at funeral services - "I won't have to cross Jordan alone" - and what a message - "When I come to the river at ending of day, when the last winds of sorrow have blown, there will be somebody waiting to show me the way, I won't have to cross Jordan alone - Oftimes, I am forsaken, and weary and sad, when it seems that my friends have all gone, there is one though that cheers me and makes my heart