

April 17, 2011

PERPETUATING THE MERCY AND GRACE OF GOD

Joshua 4: 1-9

**PERPETUATE:** to cause to last indefinitely. **MERCY** and **GRACE** are (eternal) attributes of God. **No one** can (or needs to) make them last indefinitely. **Their** duration is without question. **What** I mean by my title concerns the knowledge/understanding of God's **MERCY** and **GRACE** in saving a people in Christ **ALONE**.

**This** is knowledge and understanding that none of us has by nature. **God** has to teach us. **We don't** know unless/until He does. **Those** who are taught in each generation desire this knowledge and understanding to continue. **So, we** declare what God has taught us of His **MERCY** and **GRACE**. **We** pass it on to the **NEXT** generation. **That** is the **SENSE** in which we **PERPETUATE THE MERCY AND GRACE OF GOD**.

**We** need to make a short distinction between God's (temporal) **MERCY** and His (temporal) **GOODNESS** and His (eternal) **MERCY** and **GRACE**. **Temporal** simply means temporary. **It means** for a time. **Eternal** (of course) means forever (no distinction of time).

**All men** are the benefactors of God's (temporal) **MERCY** and His (temporal) **GOODNESS**. "**He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.**"

**Are you healthy? Are you** (financially) successful? **Do you** enjoy economic and religious freedom? **These** are all the products of God's (temporal) **MERCY** and His (temporal) **GOODNESS**. **All men** receive from God's hand **IN THIS WAY**.

**But,** God blessed the nation Israel (temporarily) in a **SPECIAL** way. He gave them a land. His (temporal) **MERCY** gave them that which they did not **DESERVE**. His (temporal) **GOODNESS** gave them that which they had not **EARNED**.

**Look** at Nehemiah 9: 25, "**And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness.**"

**Israel** **NEEDED** a land. **They** **NEEDED** a place to settle down. **But,** they **NEEDED** a land **THEY** did not conquer by **THEIR** efforts. **They** **NEEDED** a land they did not **WORK** to obtain. **Conquering**, (obtaining by **YOUR** efforts), puffs up. **It brings** arrogance. **It** brings boasting. **They** **NEEDED** a land that was the **GIFT** of a Sovereign God. **So,** God gave them **rest** from their wanderings in the wilderness. **By His** (temporal) **MERCY** and **GOODNESS**, He gave them the land of Canaan.

**But,** there is a **greater** lesson here. **In many** ways the nation Israel is a **TYPE** of the Church. **National** Israel is a **TYPE** of what the Bible distinguishes as Spiritual Israel. (**We** will see some

scriptures on this later in the lesson.) **God's** (temporal) dealings with National Israel are a PICTURE of His (eternal) dealings with His Church.

**By His** (temporal) MERCY and GOODNESS God gave National Israel deliverance from their bondage in Egypt. **The** blood of the Passover Lamb kept them safe from God's wrath. **By His** (eternal) MERCY and GRACE God gave His Church deliverance from their ölegalö guilt and condemnation by Christ's obedience unto death. **Christ's** blood forever keeps them safe from God's wrath.

**By His** (temporal) MERCY and GOODNESS God gave National Israel örestö from their wilderness wanderings. **He gave** them the land of Canaan. **By His** (eternal) MERCY and GRACE, He gives His Church örestö from their ögoing aboutö to establish their own righteousness before God. **He brings** them to Christ for all of salvation.

**This** generation of National Israel EXPERIENCED the (temporal) MERCY and GOODNESS of God. **In these** first nine verses of Joshua 4, God commanded, Joshua directed and the children of Israel took part in an action designed to preserve the memory of this day.

**They** were commanded to gather stones from the ömidst of the Jordan), take them into the land of Canaan and build a ömemorialö of this event.

**These** stonesö were intended to stand öforeverö as a MEMORIAL to God's MERCY and GOODNESS to them as a nation. **Their** action this day would remind them of this event. **It would** prompt others to ask them about their ömiraculous entryö into the land of Promise.

**To the** nation Israel these stones were to be a REMINDER to themselves, as well as, future generations that they **had what they had**; they **were what they were** by the (temporal) MERCY and GOODNESS of a Sovereign God.

**As a TYPE**, Israel's action reminds the Church that **we have what we have; we are what we are** by the (eternal) MERCY and GRACE of God in Christ.

**Israel's** action this day was designed to PERPETUATE (to carry on the memory of) this monumental event in their lives.

**And**, to the Church (i.e. those taught by God in each generation); to those taught by God of His MERCY and GRACE in Christ, Israel's action was one that PERPETUATES THE MERCY AND GRACE OF GOD. **And**, it does so for three reasons. Their action:

1. **INCLUDED** (all) Israel.
2. **Exalted** Christ and not man.
3. **Would** (continually) remind them and (continually) prompt others to ask of this day, this event.

**FIRST**, the action of National Israel this day was designed to PERPETUATE THE MERCY AND GRACE OF GOD because it INCLUDED (all) Israel. **Twelve** (chosen) men completed this action. **EVERY** tribe was represented. **Even** those two and one-half tribes who had chosen to settle in Gilead and NOT Canaan were NOT excluded.

Look at Joshua 4: 1-2; 4, “**And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying,**

**2 Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man.**

**4 Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man:”**

**Twelve men** were chosen, one from each tribe. **Twelve men** completed the action commanded. **But**, these twelve men REPRESENTED (all) Israel. **ALL** the children of Israel are said to be partakers in this action.

Look at Joshua 4: 8, “**And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the LORD spake unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there.**”

**The ONLY** prerequisite for taking part in the action commanded of Israel this day was to be a member of one of the twelve tribes of Israel on this (particular) day. **Each** tribe was INCLUDED. **No** tribe was EXCLUDED.

As **no** ðtribeö of Israel was EXCLUDED from having a part in this ðactionö, in this day, in this memorial, in like manner, no ðtongueö or ðtribeö or ðnationö is EXCLUDED from the MERCY and GRACE of God in Christ.

Look at Rev 5: 9-10, “**And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;**

**10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”**

**The MERCY and GRACE of God in Christ is (not) EXCLUSIVE but INCLUSIVE. No** kindred, tribe, or nation is EXCLUDED. **But**, **SOME** from EVERY nation are INCLUDED.

**It does** not matter where you were born, or who your parents are, or what your economic status in this world is, God has a people of EVERY nation. **And**, these people (chosen/redeemed) will EVERY ONE (without fail), say of Christ, **õthou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood”**. **They** will (each one) say of Christ, **õThou art worthy”** of all praise in the matter of salvation.

**When** sinners hear Godø Gospel, they hear about the salvation that is by the MERCY and GRACE of God. **They** hear of a salvation that NO sinner DESERVES. **They** hear of a salvation that NO sinner OBTAINS by THEIR efforts. (I.e. They hear of a salvation that sinners have NOTHING to do to GET and NOTHING to do to KEEP.) **They** hear of the salvation that has been conditioned on and accomplished by Christ ALONE.

**THAT** is salvation by öfreeö GRACE. And, like the song says, öAnd, if öfreeö GRACE, why not for me?ö **If God** has chosen **SOME** out of **EVERY** kindred, tongue, and nation, öwhy not me?ö **If Christ** has redeemed **SOME** from all nationalities, why should **ANY** sinner be **EXCLUDED**? **NO SINNER** is who looks to Christ **ALONE**.

**So**, the **FIRST** way Israel's action this day **PERPETUATED** the **MERCY** and **GRACE** of God: It **INCLUDED** (all) Israel.

**SECOND**, Israel's action this day **PERPETUATED** THE **MERCY** AND **GRACE** OF **GOD** because it **EXALTED** Christ and not man. **Joshua** commanded these twelve men to take up stones from "**the MIDST of the Jordan**". **Take** them from a riverbed that was 10, 12, (maybe) 20 feet deep. **Take** them from the middle of a river that was (normally) overflowing with water. **Take** them from the place where men **COULD NOT** go **UNLESS** God intervened.

**Look** at Joshua 4: 3 & 5, "**And command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night.**

**5 And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of Jordan, and take ye up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel:"**

**What** I see here is Israel entering into a deliverance that was (clearly) not by the power of man but of God. **I see** Israel being the recipients of and partakers in a deliverance that **EXALTED** Christ and not man.

**The ONLY** reason these twelve men could enter into the ömidst of Jordanö was because the Ark of the Covenant (which **TYPIFIED** Christ) preceded them there and remained until each one ötook a stone upon his shoulderö as God commanded them to do.

**Perhaps** as an effort to further emphasize this crossing as **God's work** and **not man's**, Joshua set up twelve öotherö stones. **These** were in addition to those the children of Israel carried to the west bank of the Jordan. **Joshua** set these twelve stones up in öthe midst of Jordanö.

**Look** at Joshua 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."**

**These** stones were (probably) stacked one on top of another so that they reached above the top of the river or at least could be clearly seen in the clear water by those crossing over or passing by.

**The** meaning of these stones is unclear. **They** could be Joshua's way of providing a **SECOND** witness of Israel's great success this day. **Like** Moses commanded, öBy the mouth of two witnesses shall a matter be established.ö

**Look at Deuteronomy 19: 15, “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.”**

**Joshua** could have been just providing a SECOND witness (a SECOND Memorial) to Israel’s miraculous entry into Canaan.

**But**, I, rather, think Joshua’s action in setting up these twelve stones was more in line with what Paul wrote to the believers at Ephesus.

**Look at Ephesians 2: 12-13. Paul tells the Ephesians here that at one time, “...ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.**

**13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.”**

Now, look at Ephesians 2: 19-22, “**Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;**

**20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;**

**21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:**

**22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”**

**Joshua** is a type of Christ. **He set** up these twelve stones, twelve to represent ALL Israel, and twelve (perhaps) to represent the twelve apostles who would go forth in the world with the message of God’s free GRACE in Christ (the Gospel), from which Christ would build His Church.

**And**, Joshua set these stones up “**in the midst of the Jordan**”. **He set** these twelve stones up on that which Christ ALONE (typified by the Ark) had provided. **Christ ALONE** cut off the waters of Jordan. **Christ ALONE** provided access to that riverbed. **There** is no action (no CONTRIBUTION) by man here. **It is** all about Christ. **It is** all about what God has done for sinners by the doing and dying of Christ ALONE.

**The Church** in the Scripture is the Israel of God. **And**, the scripture is clear that the Church (the Israel of God) will ALL be saved. **They** will ALL be brought to REST in Christ ALONE for all of salvation.

**Look at Isaiah 45: 17, “But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.”**

**The Israel** who “**shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation**” is the Church. **Those** in the world who will not be “**ashamed**” (i.e. put to the blush/put to flight/caused to flee from their refuge) are those who make up the Church. **Those** who will not “**be confounded**”

(about who their Savior is or about how God is Just to justify them based on Christ's imputed Righteousness ALONE), is the Church.

Look at Galatians 6: 14-16, "**But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.**

**15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.**

**16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."**

The Church is made up of those sinners CHOSEN by God from every kindred, tongue, tribe and nation before the foundation of the world. It is those sinners REDEEMED by Christ at the Cross. It is those sinners CALLED by the Gospel in each generation.

It is those sinners founded on that which Christ ALONE provided (His life, His death, His blood, His Righteousness, His satisfaction to the law in precept and penalty). In each generation Christ will place each of His elect in that building of which He is the chief cornerstone.

Think about what sinners are GIVEN in salvation (NOT what they OBTAIN, but what they are GIVEN)! They are chosen and privileged to enter into that which Christ ALONE has attained.

And, National Israel's testimony of this day, this event was not to be what THEY had done to possess this land. It would be what God had done to GIVE them this land. The stones they carried to the west bank, as well as, the stones Joshua set up in the midst of Jordan, were NOT to be a reminder of THEIR efforts to obtain this land. They were, rather, to remind them of God's determination to GIVE them what they did not DESERVE and had done NOTHING to obtain.

Look at Joshua 4: 7, "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 forever."

Whether the stones carried by Israel to the west bank of the Jordan or those Joshua set up in the midst of Jordan, the action on both was designed to EXALT Christ. Both testified of Christ's work. Christ ALONE cut off the waters of Jordan. Christ ALONE provided access to the riverbed. Christ ALONE will build His church on the foundation He ALONE has provided.

And, that is the testimony of every Spiritual Israelite in each successive generation. They testify of Christ's work in delivering them from the wrath they deserve. They testify of Christ's work in making them holy, unblameable, and unproveable in the sight of God. And, they do that when the Spirit of God brings them to REST in Christ ALONE of all of salvation.

The SECOND way Israel's action this day PERPETUATED the MERCY and GRACE of God: It EXALTED Christ and not man.

**THIRD**, Israel's action this day was designed to PERPETUATE THE MERCY AND GRACE OF GOD because it would (continually) REMIND them and (continually) PROMPT others to ask of this day, this event.

**Look** at Joshua 4: 6, (Gather these stones from the midst of Jordan.) “**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?**

**Man** PERPETUATES the memory of those who have gone before. **They** carry on the memory of an event that happened in the past. **At the** entrance of many buildings you will see a plaque honoring some famous person or persons (Thomas Jefferson Memorial Library). **On** the sides of I-10 (east and west) Pearl Harbor Memorial Highway. **The** back windows of many automobiles (in loving memory).

**Man** PERPETUATES the memory of people and things. **The** action God commanded Israel to perform this day was designed to do the same thing. **It was** designed to REMIND them of this event and to PROMPT future generations to ask about it.

**These** stones would give the children of Israel opportunity to rehearse how God GAVE them this land; how Christ (TYPIFIED by both Joshua and the Ark) brought them in.

**Look** back at Joshua 4: 7, “**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 forever.”**

**The** children of Israel were commanded to answer those of their generation who asked, “What mean ye by these stones?” They were to tell them “...” **We** came over behind the Ark. **That** Ark was a PICTURE of Christ.

**What** do believers do today that PROMPTS our children (and others) to ask of our worship, of our God, of our Savior? **What** do we do to PERPETUATE (carry on) the MERCY and GRACE of God to the next generation? **We** preach the Gospel.

**We** declare a multitude saved from God's wrath by the death of Christ ALONE. **We** declare that same multitude Righteousness in God's sight by the imputed Righteousness of Christ ALONE. **We** declare what Christ has (already) ACCOMPLISHED for a multitude of God's choosing.

**That** is the ONE thing all of us by nature are ignorant of. **It is** the ONE thing that keeps sinners going about to establish a righteousness of our own. **It is** the ONE thing that keeps sinners looking WITHIN and NOT at Christ for ALL of salvation.

**God** commands believers in every generation to be ready to tell those who ask that **we are what we are, we have what we have** (in salvation) by the MERCY and GRACE of God.

**I will** close with a command issued by the Apostle Peter to the Church in every generation.

Look at 1 Peter 3: 15, “**But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.**”

**Learn** of a Just God and a Savior. Learn of Christ by whose imputed Righteousness God justifies the ungodly. **Learn** of the salvation that is (truly) by the (free) MERCY and GRACE of God.

**Be ready! Be prepared! And,** be anxious to participate in that which PERPETUATES THE MERCY AND GRACE OF GOD to our generation.

By Mark Pannell