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There I was, standing with my feet in the River Jordan when God touched my spirit with the scripture in Joshua 3.

Joshua 3:14-4:7 (NIV)

<sup>14</sup>So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. <sup>15</sup>Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, <sup>16</sup>the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (that is, the Dead Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. <sup>17</sup>The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.

4 When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, <sup>2</sup>“Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, <sup>3</sup>and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, from right where the priests are standing, and carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight.” <sup>4</sup>So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, <sup>5</sup>and said to them, “Go over before the ark of the LORD your God into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, <sup>6</sup>to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ <sup>7</sup>tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.”

I pondered this scripture as I stood in the water of the Jordan River. As our bus got ready to depart the Jordan River Baptismal site our guide told us to look across the river and in the distance was Mt. Nebo. We were at the exact spot where the Israelites crossed into the promise land.

So, let me show you on the map of Israel where we were. The light blue at the top of map is the Sea Of Galilee and the light blue at the very bottom is the Dead Sea. The Jordan River runs between the two. The red arrow points to the baptismal site. The white arrow is pointing to Jericho. Down in the Right-Hand corner the yellow star is Mt. Nebo. The Israelites had spent 40 years wandering in the desert only to come up on the eastern side of the Dead Sea where Moses went up on Mt. Nebo and God showed him the promised land. He looked across the Plains of Moab, across the Jordan River to Jericho.

This is the view from the top of Mt. Nebo that Moses would have seen just before he died. The picture is hazy with the water vapor coming off the Dead Sea on the left. Today, Mt. Nebo is in the country of Jordan. Now, this is looking from Israel across to Mt. Nebo. The arrow pointing to the Jordan River is the baptismal site we were at. You can see what a large expansive area the Plains of Moab is beyond the Jordan River. This is where the Israelites camped before crossing into the promised land. On the road leading up to the baptismal site we saw military lookout posts and barb wire fences with signs saying “Danger, Mine Fields.” This was some of the land that had been fought over in the Arab-Israeli War. The baptismal site had just been opened the year before we got there.

With the death of Moses, Joshua becomes the leader of the Israelite people and takes them into the Promise Land. According to Numbers 26:51 there were 601,730 men ready to enter the Promise Land. If you add women and children to that total, it is estimated that there was at least 2 ½ million people camped out on the Plains of Moab ready to cross the Jordan River. That must have been quite a sight.

Our scripture says as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, <sup>16</sup>the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam, while the water flowing down to the Dead Sea was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. On the map the white arrow is pointing to Adam. The distance is about 20 miles from

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Adam to the Dead Sea at the bottom of the map. The 2 ½ million Israelites crossed the Jordan within these 20 miles and then camped on the plain between Jericho and the River Jordan.

This crossing over on dry land was a re-enactment of Moses bringing the Israelites out of Egypt and crossing the Red Sea because the ones who had come out of Egypt had died and now this was a new generation of people who had been born during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Someone from each tribe was selected to carry a stone from the middle of the Jordan to the place where they camped outside of Jericho at Gilgal.

The stones were to mark the miracle of the crossing over the Jordan on dry land. Joshua 4:19-20 says “<sup>19</sup>On the tenth day of the first month the people went up from the Jordan and camped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho. <sup>20</sup>And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan.” Today no one seems to be able to say for certain where these stones of remembrance are since they have become part of the rocky Israeli landscape. Even though these particular stones have become lost to the ordinary land, the story of the miracle that God performed during the crossing of the Jordan remains, as it was the beginning of Israelites taking possession of the land that God had promised to them. Deuteronomy 11:24 says “Every place where you set your foot will be yours: Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea.” Today outside of Jericho, where it is believed Gilgal was, there is a stone structure that is shaped like the sole of a sandal. In fact throughout Israel there are a total of six of these structures. No one knows for sure what these structures are, but some have named them the footprints of God. As the Israelite people took possession of the land, they used stones to remember God’s miracles. It took a miracle of God and obedience to God’s instructions to change their wandering ways.

Throughout history God’s obedient people have cried out to God for a miracle to change the course that the world has been on. Today is such a time, we are in need of a miracle from God to stem this worldwide pandemic. To describe what is happening in our world today, I have heard words like this is unprecedented, this is of biblical proportion, we are in a divine reset or divine pause and even a time divine rest. If this really is something of Biblical proportion then perhaps, we may need to draw near to God and seek his will and desire for us during this time. When we begin to look at the world’s situation with spiritual eyes, we become aware of the huge spiritual battle that has been and is taking place over the souls of people and the control over the earth.

Some believe that we are at the very beginning of a monumental reset for the world’s nations as well as a revival of God’s spiritual glory and power. If this is so, we need to be attentive to hearing and obeying God’s will for each of us and we need a way to remember this time so that our future generations will be able to experience it through our eyes. Perhaps you keep a diary or journal. That is a great way to remember how you experienced God in the midst of the stay at home time. In fact, my grandmother kept factual diaries throughout most of her life. She wrote about the 1951 polio epidemic because there were three of us in the family who were affected by the polio virus. This now has given us facts to go with the family stories that were shared with us throughout the years.

Another way to remember this time is to build a remembrance box or to even use stones that can be built up to tell the various aspects of this time and how God interacted with his people.

So let’s us build up the stones of remembrance for today. This flat foundational stone could represent for us the faith we have in Jesus, the one who is our solid rock, the faithful one. Even through all the chaos of the world’s situation we, God’s people have faith that The Lord, Jesus will see us through.

This gray rock is very heavy and with stripes on it. The pandemic has created many heavy burdens for people. The virus has left many seriously ill and even brought death to many, many families. But even in the midst of this horrible virus Jesus is the one who can bring healing for it is by His stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53:5). Many people have lost incomes and they worry and stress over the lack of finances, food, shelter and basic necessities. Let Jesus handle your burdens so you might enter into his rest.

If you try to handle your burdens yourself it will take chunks out of you or even break you apart leaving you scarred, bitter and angry. But there is a better way to go through this time as we allow God to put us back together and make all things new. The cracks that come from our hurts and wounds actually are the very places that God’s glory light shines through us. Jesus was wounded for our transgressions and when we give our

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wounds and hurts to Jesus he transforms them so they might be a glory light to shine the way for others who don't know Jesus.

In fact, during this time when we have to social distance and stay at home, many have been given a time to rest and to draw near to the Lord. When we spend time in the Lord's presence, we are filled with that glory light, we become like this holy rock. We may be full of holes that have come from our woundedness but God pours into us more compassion, more love for others, and more concern to care for God's people and his creation so that we might be his hands and feet in this world.

These stones of remembrance need to be surrounded by prayer for the hurting people and for an end to the covid-19 virus so that it will wither and die out. Prayer for the nations of the world and their financial and economic recovery. But most of all we need to pray for the ushering in of the great awakening that brings people to the Lord.

Often great moves of God are associated with special times on the Jewish calendar. Exodus 12 informs us that on the tenth day of the first month the people were to put the blood of the lamb on the door posts of their houses and then go into their house and shut the doors until the angel of death passed over them. It was also on the tenth day of the first month that Joshua and the people of Israel crossed the Jordan River remembering the time of Passover in the time of Moses. In the Jewish calendar this first month was named Abib until after the captivity and then the name was changed to Nisan. It was on the tenth day of Nisan that the sacrificial lambs were taken into Jerusalem to be examined for the sin sacrifice. It was on the tenth day of Nisan that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey to be The Sacrificial Lamb Of God. As the people shouted praises to Jesus some of the Pharisees told him to rebuke his disciples. But Jesus replies "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

Jesus died on the cross, but defeated death in his resurrection. This year it seemed as if all the world was experiencing the remembrance of Holy Week and the time of Passover sheltered in their own homes. No big celebrations but a time to reflect upon the moving of God in our own time. As we move out of this time, Covid-19 will be defeated, and this world will begin to live again, but the stones of remembrance will have a story to tell to the next generations.

In two weeks we will be celebrating Pentecost when the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples in tongues of fire with the sound of a mighty rushing wind. What if on this Pentecost, God's Holy Spirit touched us just like it did on the first Pentecost? We won't be able to gather together yet but what if God's miracle of Holy Spirit power and glory manifested in our own homes? Come, Holy Spirit Come. Let us pray.

O holy and gracious God. We long to see you awaken the entire world to your glory and power. May we remember this year as one of drawing near to you so that we might be your holy people headed into the great awakening. Amen.