

## **“If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”**

05.10 Central Team Retreat

In light of the 2030 Calling we'll take a look today at several “stone texts” – beginning with three Old Testament narratives. When we're back together we'll synthesize Jesus and the body of Christ into our “theology” of rocks! Rocks and stones are every where in the Bible. If you've ever spent time in that part of the world, you'll understand why they are a ready-made word picture for just about anything you want to talk about! In part one of our time this morning, you'll explore the use of rocks as markers and memorials. In Genesis, Joshua and 1 Samuel, filter your observations around this single question – “What purpose do the rocks fulfill? And why?”

The passages are formatted so you have room to mark them up a bit. You're not strictly limited to the question above. As you see significant clues about what is happening in these storylines please note them. Just realize there is a lot of ground to cover.

You'll have about 40 minutes to find a good spot, get settled with the Lord and look at these passages. After you've had a chance to study them individually, save about 10 minutes of your time for the reflection questions at the end. When we regather we'll take a few minutes to share our observations about each passage and discuss the reflection questions.

Please be back with the group by 9:15.

Enjoy!



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## Genesis 31

<sup>44</sup> Come now, let's make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a witness between us." <sup>45</sup> So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. <sup>46</sup> He said to his relatives, "Gather some stones." So they took stones and piled them in a heap, and they ate there by the heap. <sup>47</sup> Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, and Jacob called it Galeed. <sup>48</sup> Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." That is why it was called Galeed. <sup>49</sup> It was also called Mizpah, because he said, "May the LORD keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other. <sup>50</sup> If you mistreat my daughters or if you take any wives besides my daughters, even though no one is with us, remember that God is a witness between you and me." <sup>51</sup> Laban also said to Jacob, "Here is this heap, and here is this pillar I have set up between you and me. <sup>52</sup> This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not go past this heap to your side to harm you and that you will not go past this heap and pillar to my side to harm me. <sup>53</sup> May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us." So Jacob took an oath in the name of the Fear of his father Isaac.

v 47 The Aramaic *Jegar Sahadutha* and the Hebrew *Galeed* both mean "Witness heap"  
v 49 *Mizpah* means "Watchtower"

Part of Jacob's timeline – notice any patterns?

Gen 29:1 Jacob Meets Rachel
Gen 29:15 Jacob Marries Laban's Daughters
Gen 30:25 Jacob Prospers at Laban's Expense
Gen 31:1 Jacob Flees with Family and Flocks
Gen 31:22 Laban Overtakes Jacob
Gen 31:43 Laban and Jacob Make a Covenant
Gen 32:3 Jacob Sends Presents to Appease Esau
Gen 32:22 Jacob Wrestles at Peniel
Gen 33:1 Jacob and Esau Meet
Gen 33:18 Jacob Reaches Shechem



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#### Joshua 4

<sup>1</sup> 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." <sup>8</sup> So the Israelites did as Joshua commanded them. They took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, as the LORD had told Joshua; and they carried them over with them to their camp, where they put them down.<sup>9</sup> Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant had stood. And they are there to this day.

See also Joshua 22: The tribes of the Trans-Jordan risked being misunderstood when they built their own altar of witness on their side of the Jordan river.



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## 1 Samuel 4

<sup>5</sup> When the ark of the LORD's covenant came into the camp, all Israel raised such a great shout that the ground shook. <sup>6</sup> Hearing the uproar, the Philistines asked, "What's all this shouting in the Hebrew camp?" When they learned that the ark of the LORD had come into the camp, <sup>7</sup> the Philistines were afraid. "A god has come into the camp," they said. "Oh no! Nothing like this has happened before. <sup>8</sup> We're doomed! Who will deliver us from the hand of these mighty gods? They are the gods who struck the Egyptians with all kinds of plagues in the wilderness. <sup>9</sup> Be strong, Philistines! Be men, or you will be subject to the Hebrews, as they have been to you. Be men, and fight!" <sup>10</sup> So the Philistines fought, and the Israelites were defeated and every man fled to his tent. The slaughter was very great; Israel lost thirty thousand foot soldiers.

## 1 Samuel 7

<sup>3</sup> So Samuel said to all the Israelites, "If you are returning to the LORD with all your hearts, then rid yourselves of the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths and commit yourselves to the LORD and serve him only, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." <sup>4</sup> So the Israelites put away their Baals and Ashtoreths, and served the LORD only.

<sup>5</sup> Then Samuel said, "Assemble all Israel at Mizpah, and I will intercede with the LORD for you." <sup>6</sup> When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the LORD. On that day they fasted and there they confessed, "We have sinned against the LORD." Now Samuel was serving as leader of Israel at Mizpah. <sup>7</sup> When the Philistines heard that Israel had assembled at Mizpah, the rulers of the Philistines came up to attack them. When the Israelites heard of it, they were afraid because of the Philistines. <sup>8</sup> They said to Samuel, "Do not stop crying out to the LORD our God for us, that he may rescue us from the hand of the Philistines." <sup>9</sup> Then Samuel took a suckling lamb and sacrificed it as a whole burnt offering to the LORD. He cried out to the LORD on Israel's behalf, and the LORD answered him. <sup>10</sup> While Samuel was sacrificing the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to engage Israel in battle. But that day the LORD thundered with loud thunder against the Philistines and threw them into such a panic that they were routed before the Israelites. <sup>11</sup> The men of Israel rushed out of Mizpah and pursued the Philistines, slaughtering them along the way to a point below Beth Kar.

<sup>12</sup> Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us." <sup>13</sup> So the Philistines were subdued and they stopped invading Israel's territory. Throughout Samuel's lifetime, the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines.

### Two helpful details

- 1- Chapter 4 opens with a preliminary defeat from the Philistines costing Israel four thousand lives.
- 2- The events of chapter 4 and chapter 7 happen at the same location

## Reflection Questions:

What was the core challenge for God's people in each of these narratives?



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Sum it up in a one word/phrase identifier - completing the following sentences

1. In Genesis 31 rocks \_\_\_\_\_
2. In Joshua 4 rocks \_\_\_\_\_
3. In 1 Samuel rocks \_\_\_\_\_

What do the rocks say about God?

What realities about people do the rocks point to?

When you think about the 2030 Calling for your ministry context what would you consider an "Ebenezer stone" marking the right pathway or trajectory? Think of as many as you can – big or small.

**Naming your 2030 stone** (we'll do this together).

# The Stone is a Person!

(What do the following passages add to our biblical theology of rocks?)

## Isaiah 8

<sup>11</sup> This is what the LORD says to me with his strong hand upon me, warning me not to follow the way of this people: <sup>12</sup> "Do not call conspiracy everything this people calls a conspiracy; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it. <sup>13</sup> The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread. <sup>14</sup> He will be a holy place; for both Israel and Judah he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare. <sup>15</sup> Many of them will stumble; they will fall and be broken, they will be snared and captured."

## Isaiah 28

<sup>16</sup> So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic. <sup>17</sup> I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place.

## Psalms 118

<sup>19</sup> Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD. <sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter. <sup>21</sup> I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation. <sup>22</sup> The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; <sup>23</sup> the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

## Matthew 21

<sup>42</sup> Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? <sup>43</sup> "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. <sup>44</sup> Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed." <sup>45</sup> When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus' parables, they knew he was talking about them.

## 1 Peter 2

<sup>4</sup> As you come to him, the living Stone-- rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him-- <sup>5</sup> you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." <sup>7</sup> Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," <sup>8</sup> and, "A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message-- which is also what they were destined for. <sup>9</sup> But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.



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