

[NOTE TO THE READER: On the first Sunday following Mother's Day each year, the Booher Cemetery (near the building of the Mill Creek Church of Christ) has a "Decoration Day," at which time relatives of those who are buried in the memorial park gather to decorate the gravesites and fondly remember those who are interred in the cemetery. On Sunday afternoon, May 20, 2007, Blake was invited to present the main address to those assembled for that occasion. His remarks were warmly received, and deeply appreciated, by all those in attendance. While his comments were not a "sermon," per se, we nevertheless felt that they deserved to be posted on our Website along with Blake's other lessons. We believe you will enjoy, and profit from, what Blake had to say.]

## "A MEMORIAL FOREVER"

Presented by

**Blake Brown**

In the Old Testament book of Joshua, we find one of the best-known stories of the entire Bible. Moses had just died, and Joshua was now ready to lead the people of Israel into the land of Canaan. The first city that God had promised to give to the Israelites was the city of Jericho. But before the people of Israel entered Canaan, God told Joshua to do something rather unusual. He told him to have the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant to take the Ark and go stand in the middle of the Jordan River. As soon as they did, the waters of the river stopped flowing, and the Israelites were able to walk across on dry land into Canaan and begin their march toward the city of Jericho.

But before they went on to capture the great walled city, there was one thing they had to do first. Listen carefully to God's instructions to Joshua.

"Take twelve men, one man from each tribe, and tell each man to carry a stone with him into the land of Canaan. When you have crossed over the Jordan River, use those stones to build an altar that will become a memorial. Then, when your children ask you in the future, 'What do these stones mean?,' you can tell them that the waters of the River Jordan were dried up so that the Ark of the Covenant could be carried across the river at the command of the Lord. And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever."

The Bible then tells us:

"And the children of Israel did as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones and carried them over to the place where they lodged, and built a memorial there. And those stones serve as a memorial to this very day" (Joshua 4:1-9).

Take a look around you today. What do you see? You see **grave stones** that, just like the stones in Joshua's time, "serve as a memorial to this very day." But a memorial is intended to **remind us** of something. Throughout human history, people have always built memorials to help them remember important people, places, or events. In America, for example, you can visit the Lincoln Memorial, which is dedicated to one of our country's greatest presidents. You can pray quietly at the Tomb of Unknown Soldier, which honors the men and women of the United States armed forces who gave their lives defending our great nation. Or you can stand in awe beside the Declaration of Independence as you remember the dedicated patriots who died so that we could be free.

But let me ask you a question: “For what do the grave stones that you see all around you here **today** serve as a reminder?” Or, to put the question another way: “Why have we assembled here this afternoon?” These grave stones are intended to remind us of people who lived before us, who loved us, who sacrificed for us, and who, in one way or another, gave their lives for us. Some of the people buried in these graves may have been soldiers who lost their lives fighting for our freedom. Some of the dead in this cemetery may have been mothers who died giving birth to a baby—a baby who, like me, grew up and is now standing here remembering just how precious mothers really are. Some of the people in these tombs may have been fathers who set a good example for their children, and who then died, leaving those children behind to set a good example for their own children. Some of the people who inhabit this “city of the dead” in which we now stand may have been brothers or sisters who died too soon and departed too quickly.

Therefore, as we stand here today looking at these grave stones, let us remember the words of Joshua: “And these stones shall be a memorial forever.” Let these grave stones remind us of mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and friends who loved us, who sacrificed for us, who lived for us, and who, in some instances, even **died** for us. Today, let us utter their names with pride, and let us remember their deeds with fondness. Through the actions they carried out during their lifetimes, and through the memories they left behind after their deaths, it can be said of them that they, like Adam and Eve’s son Abel, “being dead, still speak” (Hebrews 11:4).

Yes, these grave stones do indeed “serve as a memorial to this very day.” But the people whom we have come to remember today left behind a much more permanent memorial than just a pile of rocks. They left behind important parts of themselves as they gave birth to us, reared us, taught us, loved us, and finally said good-bye to us. Let us honor them not only by cherishing their memories, but also by living our lives the very best we can each and every day—to show them that their efforts on our behalf were not in vain.