

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

many are just now distressed. He has considered what Criticism and Science and Philosophy have to allege against the revelation of the Will of God contained in Holy Writ, or against the dogmas inferred from it by the doctors of the Church; and while admitting the force of whatever can be fairly advanced against the current interpretations of the Bible, he finds in it for himself, and for those who listen to him, truths which go deeper than Criticism can reach, and are of too divine a substance for doubt to tarnish. He has glimpses of the larger purer faith that is to issue from the disturbing process in which the things that can be shaken are being removed, in order that the things that cannot be shaken may abide with us in fairer and completer forms. It is impossible to read such sermons as those entitled, "The Two Revelations," or "God's Church wider than Man's," or "The Work of the Spirit in Modern Life," without feeling that, like the men of Issachar, he has "understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do," and to believe.

His style answers to his method and spirit. It is simple and telling, with that scholarly reserve and self-restraint which is so much more impressive than rash and turgid speech. He is fair and candid; and, while eminently reasonable, speaks with an accent of sincere and strong conviction. In fine, a new and able expositor makes his appearance in this striking volume; and, accordingly, we give him our "Welcome, and Well done!"

EDITOR.

BIBLICAL NOTE.

JOSHUA iv. 9.—This verse, as it stands in our Version and in the LXX., is very puzzling. It says that "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." In the verse immediately preceding, we are told that "the children of Israel did 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." This is intelligible enough. In commemoration of a ford having been miraculously made for them at a time when the Jordan was overflowing its banks, twelve stalwart men, one from each tribe, were to take as many stones from the bed of the river, and set them up in the first camping-place, to preserve the memory of the wonderful interposition. The water-worn stones from the Jordan would tell their own tale as to their having been in some river-bed, and, by their dissimilarity to anything in Gilgal, would excite inquiry in after times as to how they came there, and with what design they had been set up. But why should Joshua erect a second cairn in the course of the Jordan itself? How long would one stone remain upon another in a river subject to such a periodical rush of waters as took place every spring when the snows of the Lebanon melted?

The difficulty arises simply from mistranslation. The literal translation of the verse is as follows (preserving the same order of the words as in the Hebrew): "And the twelve stones Joshua raised in the midst of Jordan from under the place where stood (*lit.* the station of) the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant." Thus far the sense of the verse is parenthetical, its design being to record where the stones came from that were set up at Gilgal. Then it concludes the account of what was done, as narrated in the previous verse, by adding, "and they are there unto this day."

But how could this obvious sense have been missed? The answer is, Simply because the same word (*hēquim*) is used for the act of raising the stones out of the bed of the river and for the act of setting them up in Gilgal; but one is as common a meaning of the word as the other. Our Version entirely misses the force of the preposition *thachath*, *under*, *from under*, and renders it *in*. The necessity for doing this, in order to make any tolerable sense, should have been sufficient warning that the true meaning of the verse had not been found.

It may seem a small matter whether Joshua erected one cairn or two, but an obscurity which gives an air of improbability to a passage of Bible history is not a small matter; and in this case the obscurity is removed by a very simple suggestion, and a more faithful translation of the whole verse.

E. W. SHALDERS.