

# The Tale of the Living Stones

## Կենդանի Քարերուն Պատմութիւնը

In the Bible we find people who had special encounters with God, and they wanted to erect monument to commemorate these moments. These stones would remind them how God rescued, protected, and delivered them from danger. These people made vows at these places where they had a special experience with God.

Today, I preach to you standing in front of the Armenian Genocide Memorial Monument of Fresno, which reminds us of the tragedy of our Genocide by the Turkish government and our amazing story of survival.

It is a miracle that I am standing here and talking to you. Each Armenian has a story to tell of how their grandparents survived the Genocide. So here I am in front of those stones that were erected in 2015 on the campus of California State University in Fresno on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Genocide. It is a place of pilgrimage for us, to come face to face with our history and a great reminder of God's mercy over us.

What are some biblical monuments that we can review?

- **Bethel** (God's House)

**So early in the morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. <sup>19</sup> He called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of the city was Luz at the first. <sup>20</sup> Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, <sup>21</sup> so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, <sup>22</sup> and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you." (Gen 28:18-22)**

-Let me start with **Jacob**. He had a dream, he woke up and said, "**Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it**" (Gen. 28:16). Jacob used his "pillow" stone as the foundation for a monument and set it as a pillar. Several years later he returned to that place and built an altar; he poured oil on the stone

and named the place Bethel, which means **God's house**. **He truly experienced God's presence in that place**. And anyone who passed from that land would see **that stone monument and worship God**.

- **Gilgal (Circle of Stones)** (Joshua and passing river of Jordan)

When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, <sup>2</sup>“Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man, <sup>3</sup>and command them, saying, ‘Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests' feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.’”...

The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they encamped at Gilgal on the east border of Jericho. <sup>20</sup>And those twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. <sup>21</sup>And he said to the people of Israel, “When your children ask their fathers in times to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ <sup>22</sup>then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.’ <sup>23</sup>For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, <sup>24</sup>so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.” (Joshua 4:1-3; 19-24 ESV)

God told Joshua to ask twelve men to bring along a stone, one for each tribe. When they passed the Jordan River, they laid them down in a circle and made a monument in a place called Gilgal.

Why?

So they could tell their children about God's amazing miracle. The Lord, Yahweh helped the Israelites to pass the river (like the Red Sea). So that **all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever**. **(Stones of God's rescue and deliverance)**.

What are those stones telling to them and to us? **“God longs for us to proclaim His goodness to future generations.”**

### **-Ebenezer (The Stone of Help)**

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer; for he said, “Till now the LORD has helped us.”<sup>13</sup> So the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter the territory of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. (1 Samuel 12:12-13 ESV)

It is another amazing story. Samuel brought a major change in the life of the Israelites. The leadership was corrupt and not listening to God. Samuel was a man of God. He even became their judge. He led the Israelites to win the war over the Philistines. And Samuel erected a stone, a monument called Ebenezer meaning Stone of Help (also it means till now the Lord has helped us). This monument tells us that **ALL GLORY goes to God.**

How about in the NT with Jesus. Are there any “stones” that worth mentioning?

### **-Peter, the Rock, the foundation of the church**

In the Gospel of John, when **Simon** was introduced to Jesus, Jesus gave him a new name: “**You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas**” (which means **Peter, Rock**).”(John 1:42 ESV)

Then we read in Matthew where Jesus explains why Simon is called Peter:

And Jesus answered him, “**Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.** (Matthew 16:17-18 ESV)

Indeed, **the church became the living stone,**

a stone which talks and witnesses even today and tomorrow. The church is built on one foundation, **Jesus Christ who is our Cornerstone.** (**The Stone of the foundation, the cornerstone**).

## How about this Monument?

Today what are those stone telling us Armenians and all the people of the world?

These stones are telling us:

1. **The genocide did not and will not stop us from worshiping God.** This is our **Bethel.** This is a place where we remember our encounter with our Lord and our God, and we come to worship HIM. We will offer our lives as living sacrifices. Nothing will stop us from worshiping our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. **This monument will remind us that our God is the one who delivered us.** It is our Gilgal, the place where the “tribes” of Armenians brought with them their memory stones from Marash, Aintab, Mousadagh, Kharpert, Izmir, Van and Moush and so on...

What a good location for this monument in the center of a college campus where hundreds of students walk by every day. This is a testimony of our faith to them and to our children. Our God is a God of amazing miracles. The Lord, Yahweh helped us pass “the river” and the desert to arrive to new lands even to have an independent Armenia. **(Stones of God’s rescue and deliverance).**

### **3. Those stones are our Ebenezer, our stone of help. All glory goes to God**

We live post resurrection of Jesus. Jesus gave new meaning to the stones.

On Palm Sunday when some ordered him to silence the people from shouting Hosanna he said stones will cry out.

He looked to the temple and he knew those temple huge stones will collapse one day, and indeed it did happen 70 AD

Jesus gave a new meaning to the temple stones. He became the new temple. Then He invited each of us to become temple of God. **We are now the LIVING STONES, telling the story of Jesus shaping our lives.**

**That is my identity. My Armenian and American identity is shaped daily on the Corner Stone who is Jesus himself.**

Peter, the rock, says:

**As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, <sup>5</sup> you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. <sup>6</sup> For it stands in Scripture:**

**“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone chosen and precious,  
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” (1 Peter 2:4-6)**

**This monument should remind us this.** Should remind us to be Christ centered people serving the Lord and sharing the Good News with anyone from any nation and culture.

This is my message of April 24. I celebrate life today. I remember the pain, but I move forward with talking about the risen Christ in our nation.

Those stones are our Bethel, our Gilgal, and our Ebenezer.