

52.1 A Day to Remember

How is your memory? Do you easily forget things? Things to do? Or maybe you went to a room in your house to get something and then when you got there, you couldn't remember what you were going to get. By the way, it is called the "Great Hereafter" – What am I here after?

I've been impressed with Israel's treatment of their Memorial Day. At noon that day, everything and everyone in the country stops. The people stand in silent respect for their warriors who have given their lives for the sake of the nation. Reverence, respect, sadness, appreciation, honor, and duty swell in the hearts of Israeli citizens.

What saddens me for America is how lightly we treat our Memorial Day. Our treatment of Memorial Day reminds me of a time I visited with my server in a Mexican restaurant in Huntsville, AL. Cinco de Mayo was fast approaching and the employees of the restaurant were excited about their holiday. I asked my server what Cinco de Mayo was. He said it was a day to party. When I dug deeper and asked the purpose of the day, he had no idea. Too often Memorial Day is just a day off for Americans. It is just a "party day" of sorts. Only those directly impacted by the loss of their military family member seem to get the significance.

My father's family had two sons who served in Europe in World War II. Both of these young men were wounded and received the "Purple Heart" medals. One of those boys died as a result of his wounds. Do you think my grandparents, his parents ever took Memorial Day lightly? They knew the high price of freedom.

Remembering is important to God. It is the process of recalling the past, especially of the presence and activity of God in the history of his people. The process of remembering is not limited to mental recall. It implies acting in accordance with what is remembered. Remembering God's work in the past can lead to praise and rejoicing, and hope for the future.

God himself remembers. For instance, He remembers covenants – forever (Psalm 105.8). He remembers His Promises and wants us to remember.

Don't you know that every time Noah looked at the rainbow, he remembered God's covenant and promises? So should we. In **Genesis 9:11-17** (NKJV) we read:

¹¹ Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth. ¹² And God said: "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: ¹³ I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. ¹⁴ It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; ¹⁵ and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth. ¹⁷ And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."

When God remembers His covenant and promises, He intends to keep them. The same should be true for us. As we mentally remember what God has done for us, it can stir our hearts to faithfulness to Him. It reminds us of our commitment to Him.

Memorial Day is an official holiday in most states of the United States. It was observed on May 30 until 1971, when for federal employees, the date was changed to the last Monday in May. With the exception of Louisiana, all states observing Memorial Day adopted the change. It is also known as Decoration Day.

The custom of placing flowers on the graves of the war began on May 5, 1866, in Waterloo, NY, and Waterloo has been recognized by Congress as the official birthplace of Memorial Day. In 1868, Gen. John A. Logan, then president of the Grand Army of the Republic, declared that May 30 would be a day to decorate with “flowers the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion.”

After World War I the day was set aside to honor the veterans of all American wars, and the custom was extended to pay homage to deceased relatives and friends, both military and civilian. The most solemn ceremony conducted on Memorial Day is the placing of a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns located in Arlington National Cemetery.

Our Forefathers did not have “Memorial Day” but were respectful of memory and honor. Consider these two quotes:

“The establishment of Civil and Religious Liberty was the Motive which induced me to the Field – the object is attained – and it now remains to be my earnest wish and prayer, that the Citizens of the United States could make a wise and virtuous use of the blessings placed before them.”

George Washington in a letter to the Reformed German Congregation of New York City, November 27, 1783

“The people...are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty.”

Thomas Jefferson, Letter to James Madison, 1787

It is incumbent upon us to remember those who sacrificed for our inalienable rights and liberties. Many of our veterans laid down their lives for us, their posterity. They died for us at Bunker Hill and Lexington. They sacrificed for us at Gettysburg in Pennsylvania and Franklin, Tennessee. Our ancestors went into the trenches of WWI and stormed the beaches of WWII. Americans died in Korea, Vietnam, and the Middle East for US!

We remember the facts and maybe even some of the people. Let us also remember in order to act and save the liberties for which they gave the last full measure.

Let's Keep The Light of *Memory* Burning!