

# **Memorial Day: We Must Honor It; Lest We Lose It** (Romans 1:20-21)

The longer I live, the more important I understand memorials to be; especially because God Himself places a high value on memorials. Perhaps that surprises you, but I'll explain later.

Freedom is NOT free. Indeed, the price of the freedom and prosperity we enjoy has been immeasurably high. So, it is right to honor and be thankful for those who bore the cost, for those who paid the ultimate price.

**Memorial Day**, praise God, is a time to pause and consider what the day truly memorializes: 1) the exceeding high price of freedom - and to remember the ones who paid it; 2) it is also a time to reflect and reconsider the importance memorials have in one's life; and 3) to understand where memorials came from, that is, who was the Originator of them. For me, knowing this has made a big difference.

**Memorial Day** - even over my lifetime, unfortunately - has diminished in significance. I remember a time when many wore a red poppy as the day approached. Poppies were sold at nearly every store. The red poppy was, as I was told and often reminded, a symbol of "remembering." In particular, it commemorated military personnel who died in war. Its history went back many years, to the early 1900's. Today, however, they have nearly vanished. Similarly with Memorial Day, it too receives less and less emphasis; even since my boyhood days its importance has great diminished. For Christians, however, who are to be characterized by **thankfulness**, our thankfulness for this memorial must not fade (cf. Romans 1:21, Col. 3:17); Rather, we must honor it - it is worthy of honor - lest we lose it.

## **Memorial Day: a Time of Remembrance and Thankfulness -**

(NOTE: Scripture puts a great emphasis on the importance of "remembering": Deut. 4:9,23; 8:2,11,14,17-18,19; 9:7,27; 32:6,18; (cf. also: 1 Cor.11:24,25: "in remembrance of Me").

Memorial Day is a day to seriously reflect on and gratefully remember those who died in service to our country. All the rich blessedness of our country's liberties, peace, security and prosperity has come at a very high cost. "Freedom is not free," and many have given the ultimate sacrifice of their lives to protect and preserve the wonderful liberty, security, opportunities and prosperity that we daily enjoy. It is exceedingly right to remember their sacrifice and their loved ones whose sacrifice was also so very great.

A periodic visit to Fort Snelling National Cemetery, in Minneapolis, (next to the Mpls. International Airport) makes a deep impression and brings home a greater appreciation for this Day and the importance of “remembering.” It seems like an endless sea of grave sites: 225,000 graves. The experience is a very valuable one.

### **Memorial Day:**

Originally called *Decoration Day*, from the early tradition of decorating graves with flowers, wreaths and flags. *Decoration Day*, originated in the years following the Civil War and became an official federal holiday in 1971. *Memorial Day*, honors men and women who died while serving in the U.S. military. Indeed, the weekend is about more than barbecues, blockbusters and the beach. It's a time to *honor* those who have served our country, especially those who died in that service.

For some people Memorial Day has become just another three day weekend. For others it is an important day. Memorial Day began as a way to honor those who gave their lives in service to our country. While we do not observe national holidays in the church, that does not mean Memorial Day is unimportant. It is very important. As Christians we are called to be good citizens, to support our country and to pray for our leaders.

“Memorial Day matters because it leads us to remember the great sacrifice military personnel have made to create and defend the many freedoms we enjoy. In this nation we have not lived under the tyranny of a totalitarian state, we have the right and privilege to agree or disagree with positions of the government and the party in power, ... freedom of religion and many other choices. We have more freedoms than [could be listed here]. Since freedom is normal for us we don't notice it. Freedom is one of those things we only tend to notice when it is threatened or gone. [But freedom is not free.]

Use your freedom well. [It came at a high cost. This Memorial Day and those in the future,] remember those who have sacrificed so much for our nation and the freedoms we enjoy; remember those who sacrificed so much to create and defend the freedoms we live with.” (“Why Memorial Day is Important” by Pastor Tom, 5/24/2011; Christ Our Savior Church)

Wisely so, the high cost of our freedom and those who gave their lives to secure it, has been memorialized in a special day we call “Memorial Day.”

Memorial Day is a remembrance that we must work to protect and keep alive; it is a reminder to be **thankful** to God and for those who have made the ultimate sacrifice - giving of their own lives so that others might reap freedom's rich, sweet and treasured benefits. We must keep it alive and make the necessary effort to pass along its importance to future generations.

**Memorials: Their Great Value** (Surely to perpetuate the memory of people, times and things important to perpetuate) -

What is a Memorial? - simply, a memorial is an established remembrance of a person(s) or event (Webster. Most often it is a monument, a special day, or special observance, or some other form of remembrance).

Some examples: Ground Zero, NY City - 9/11; (places that have impacted me)  
Jerusalem: Yad Vashem; the Jewish Holocaust Museum; (NY and several others)  
Kiev, Ukraine; Chernobyl Nuclear Power-plant Disaster Museum;  
Washington D.C.: Vietnam War Memorial, and Arlington Cemetery (the changing of the guard ceremony);  
Moscow: Russian War Memorial, WWII - for 20 Million who died;  
Kiev, Ukraine; The Mass Burial Memorial for the Jewish Dead  
Fort Snelling National Cemetery, Minneapolis;  
For believers in Jesus Christ: The Lord's Table!!

**Why** is it important to have memorials? For several highly significant reasons:

1. Because memorials help us to **remember** that which is deemed highly important. For most, our memories are very short; our forgetters are so good! It is human nature to forget and even quickly to do so. But there are things in life too important to surrender to forgetfulness; so for these we need the help of fixed, recurring reminders: in other words we may need some type of memorial.
2. Memorials help *keep us connected* to specific and important events of the past - so that we *remember* and *do not forget* events and people that have had and continue to have a great significance on us.
3. Memorials foster **thankfulness**. Thankfulness is one of the greatest of virtues. The Bible has much to say about the matter of thankfulness, thankfulness to God and to others. Thankfulness is an essential part of Godliness. In the book of Colossians, in every chapter of the book (4), Paul exhorts Christians to be "thankful." Thankfulness requires that we pause to remember. Memorials are established pauses we need in order to be thankful like we ought!
4. Memorials **preserve for future generations** important events and remembrances. They provide an opportunity to pass the memory and its significance on. (cf. God's institution of the Passover: Exodus 12:14,26-27)

5. Memorials **inspire, instruct** and **change** us. Indeed, we want them to do so. By reflection and thankfulness, we are moved to pursue similar selfless, virtuous actions and to develop such exemplary character.

## Memorials: They're the *Wisdom* of the Creator

Who originated memorials? Where did the concept come from? The answer. The Originator of Memorials (you may be surprised to know) is **God Himself!** This alone puts a great significance to importance of both having and honoring memorials in life!

Such as:

1. In Gen. 2:1-3, God set up a *memorial* to remember Him as Creator and His wonderful work in Creation: He set aside the **seventh day** and invested it with special purpose and meaning. God *blessed* the day and made it *holy!* (Ex. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15)

*"And on the seventh day God finished His work that He had done, and He rested (a rest of completion, not weariness) on the seventh day from all His work that He had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all His work that He had done in Creation."*  
(Gen. 2:2-3)

- GOD's Original Creation is remembered by the Sabbath: the last day of the week (Gen. 2:2-3 and Exodus 20:8;11),
- GOD's *NEW* Creation is memorialized by the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week: Resurrection Sunday (see 2 Cor. 5:17: those in Christ form its beginning, while Revelation 21 and 22 foretell of its completion. God's new creation commenced with the resurrected body of JESUS!! What a beginning; and we thereafter) Sunday then - the *first* day of the week - commemorates the *NEW* work God is doing through Christ in us and by us!! To perpetuate the meeting of God's people on Sunday is no small matter.

Others Memorial the God Himself put in place:

2. **Passover:** God's Redemption of Israel from Egyptian Bondage
3. **Feast of Tabernacles**, or Booths: Israel's 40 Years in the Great and Terrible Wilderness: God's faithful, their own unbelief and disobedience.
4. The **12 Memorial Stones** set up at Gilgal: God faithfulness and power to bring Israel into the Promised Land
5. The Lord's Supper: The Greatest Redemption the Universe will ever know: the Son of God, "made Himself nothing, ... being born in the likeness of men ... humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of a cross."

But risen in triumph over sin and death, who saves all who come to Him by faith! Hallelujah, What a Savior!

The God of all-wisdom is the originator of memorials in life. Why? Because He made us; He knows us; and He knows how prone we are to **forget** and NOT remember. And God wants us to remember, to consider, to reflect, to be thankful, and to be changed by the significant events of life. So, God in His goodness, shows us the purpose and importance of memorials.

FINALLY, not just the high cost of our **national liberty** that we must remember and NOT forget. BUT even more significantly, the high cost of our spiritual and **eternal redemption**/salvation we must continually, daily keep alive to remember and not forget!!

Let us use this day, for more than the enjoyment of the extended weekend – or the day that now, for many, marks the beginning of summer. Rather, let purposely use this day, **MEMORIAL DAY**: 1) as a time to remember the high cost of the freedom, peace, security and prosperity we in America enjoy daily because of the great sacrifice many many others have paid for them. Let us be thankful to God and for them and their sacrifice; and 2) let us reflect on the Author of memorials, and how important remembrance is to Him; then give Him GLORY and THANKS for all that He has wonderful works!!