

Memorial Day 2024

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Memorial Day is an American holiday, observed on the last Monday of May, honoring the men and women who died while serving in the U.S. military. Memorial Day 2024 will occur on Monday, May 27. Originally known as Decoration Day, it originated in the years following the Civil War and became an official federal holiday in 1971. Many Americans observe Memorial Day by visiting cemeteries or memorials, holding family gatherings and participating in parades. Unofficially, it marks the beginning of the summer season. Since Memorial Day began in the 1860's following the Civil War, the celebration and remembrance of it has faded over time. People have the fun picnics, the water skiing, the warm weather, etc. but forget its original purpose. This seems to be the way people have diminished many memorials throughout history.

Having a "memorial day" is not out of the ordinary when it comes to the Bible. There are several different "memorials" that were established by men of God as God instructed them. Let's start off with the first one that comes to mind and is recorded in the book of Exodus.

Exodus 3:15: And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this *is* my name for ever, and this *is* my memorial unto all generations.

God is going to tell them what to do in order to establish a memorial for His efforts in getting them out of bondage and captivity.

Verse 16 Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and *seen* that which is done to you in Egypt: **17** And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey. **18** And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel, unto the king of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath met with us: and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days' journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God. **19** And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. **20** And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go. **21** And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: **22** But every woman shall borrow [*or, request*] of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put *them* upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

Here, we see God telling Moses to tell the children of Israel to remember what God is going to do for them in getting them out of bondage and captivity. All of the jewelry and gold that they would take out just wasn't enough to have them remember God's deliverance. In fact later on, they would ended up melting down all of it to make a golden calf to worship!

In addition to taking Egypt's silver and gold, God needed to set up something else for their "memorial day." This occurred as part of the establishing of the memorial of Passover, when the angel of death would "passover" their houses as they obeyed God's command.

Exodus 12:12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute

judgment: I *am* the LORD. **13** And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye *are*: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy *you*, when I smite the land of Egypt. **14** And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. **15** Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. **16** And in the first day *there shall be* an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save *that* which every man must eat, that only may be done of you. **17** And ye shall observe *the feast of* unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever. **18** In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even. **19** Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land. **20** Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread.

There's the establishment of the memorial of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This celebration not only celebrates what God did for Israel, but it will also be significant for understanding what, when and how the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made as THE PASSOVER LAMB for all time.

The Passover is still celebrated today by religious and secular Jewish people, but its significance has become somewhat obscured by other traditions. IN addition to this memorial, God established two more feasts for a total of 3, that would be celebrated for seven days, with exception of the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, (which is only a one day celebration). Truly, these feasts would be a memorial celebration of what God had done, and what God will do. It was to be a festive occasion.

Deuteronomy 16:13 Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine: **14** And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast [or, have a good time!], thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that *are* within thy gates. **15** Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice. **16** Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the ¹ feast of unleavened bread, and in the ² feast of weeks, and in the ³ feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty: **17** Every man *shall give* as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee.

These 3 feasts were a memorial, if you will. A time to celebrate and remember. Similar in some respects to our Memorial Day and our Thanksgiving celebrations. Let's look at another one. Bear in mind, this is not ALL of the memorials in the Bible, but these are significant.

Joshua 4:1: And it came to pass, when all the people were clean passed over Jordan, that the LORD spake unto Joshua, saying, **2** Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, **3** And command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night. **4** Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man: **5** And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of Jordan, and take ye

up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel: **6** That this may be a sign among you, *that* when your children ask *their fathers* in time to come, saying, What *mean* ye by these stones? **7** Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.

Where are these stones located now? No one really knows. Some believe that the stones were placed in the river bottom, but we know from scripture that isn't true, because that is not what the instructions were. **Verse 3** says plainly: "Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place, where ye shall lodge this night." They did not leave them in the riverbed, but took them with them and stored them where they were camping. Then we get to **verse 19**...

Verse 19 And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho. **20** And those twelve stones, which they took out of Jordan, *[not in the riverbed!]* did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. **21** And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What *mean* these stones? **22** Then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. **23** For the LORD your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over: **24** That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD, that it *is* mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God for ever.

As indicated here, the stones were set up in Gilgal. Gilgal means, "circle of stones." These stones were set up in a location on the eastern side of the Jordan River in this place called Gilgal. Exact location unknown. But this memorial served its purpose during Old Testament times. The stones were to remind them of what God did for them in crossing the Jordan on dry ground by a miracle. Remember! Don't Forget! Keep it in your head! And celebrate the miracle that God did for you. But as time went on, this traditional memorial has faded away also .

Next, I would like to go to the New Testament to see a memorial established by Jesus Christ himself.

Matthew 26:20 Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is *[or, represents]* my body. **27** And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; **28** For this is *[or, represents]* my blood of the new testament **[covenant]**, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Here at this last supper, Jesus instituted a memorial for his approaching death. It is a memorial to be recognized and one that may be participated in by all born-again believers until he returns. Back when we had this memorial prior to Resurrection Sunday, we discussed this great memorial instituted by Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread: **24** And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. **25** After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me. **26** For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. **27** Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the

Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. **28** But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. **29** For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. **30** For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

Notice that this bread and wine are to be taken "in remembrance" till the Lord comes, or until the Lord returns. That is why it is a memorial rather than a sacrament (which is a rite with a mysterious meaning). We are to give proper remembrance of Jesus Christ and the accomplishments of his death.

Jesus died as Israel's last and true **Passover** Lamb. Because he was the ultimate Passover Lamb, there is no need for any more Passover sacrifices or meals because Jesus Christ was the final sacrifice.

Hebrews 10:9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first [covenant], that he may establish the second [covenant]. **10** By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.

The Old Testament has been superceded by the accomplishments of Christ, and the establishment of God's promise of the New Testament.

Jeremiah 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: **32** Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: **33** But this *shall* be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The Passover meal has been replaced with holy communion, which is the memorial of Jesus Christ's death. The cup of wine represents the blood he shed to atone for sins. The bread represents his body, which memorializes the accomplishments of his bodily sufferings to bring us physical deliverance.

Whereas Passover memorialized the children of Israel's deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, holy communion memorializes the believers' deliverance from the bondage of sin and its consequences. Communion is the only memorial God has given whereby Christians remember the atonement of His Son. And it is a memorial that, when done properly, brings immediate benefits.

So, this Memorial Day, let's not forget its true intention and remember those who died for our freedom in this country. Let's also remember that God is the One who instituted memorials in the first place. And let's especially remember the memorial of Christ's death, resurrection, ascension, and his sending the Comforter on the Day of Pentecost, which is something to enjoy as a memorial.

God bless you,



Jack Northart