

Memorials

by Heath Rogers

Monday, May 26th, is Memorial Day. This federal holiday commemorates the sacrifices of the men and women who have died in military service to our country. It began as a means of honoring Union soldiers who died during the American Civil War. After World War I, the holiday was expanded to include those who died in any war or military action.

Memorials are important to our nation. They are established as a means of honoring individuals, remembering significant events, and recognizing the sacrifices that have been made on our behalf. Our memorials come in various forms: statues, buildings, the names of streets, historical markers, songs, holidays, etc.

Memorials are also important to God. This is shown in the fact that He saw fit to establish memorials for the benefit of His people. The Feast of the Passover was a memorial of God's sparing the firstborn of Israel as He brought the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. (Ex. 12:14). When Joshua led Israel across the Jordan River to occupy the Promised Land, he commanded that twelve stones (representing the twelve tribes of Israel) be set up in the midst of the river. "These stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever" (Josh. 4:7).

Why did God establish these memorials for His people? Because He knows that man has a tendency to forget. Moses warned of this: "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today... when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Deut. 8:11, 14). When people fail to take the time to remember, they soon forget the sacrifices that were made to secure the freedoms and blessings that they enjoy. A people that fails to remember will soon fail to be free.

The Lord has established a memorial in His church. It is called "The Lord's Supper." Paul wrote of this memorial in First Corinthians:

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus took the time to institute this memorial of His suffering and death on our behalf. When we partake of the unleavened bread, we are to remember the body of our Lord that was beaten and nailed to a cross. When we drink the fruit of the vine, we are to remember the blood that was given in our stead. The New Testament teaches that disciples are to observe this memorial every Sunday (Acts 20:7).

Why do we have to keep this memorial? Because when we fail to take the time to remember, we soon forget the sacrifice that was made to secure our freedom from sin, and when we fail to remember we

soon fail to be free.

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