

Text: Exod. 3:13-17

Title: "The Memorial of God's Name"

Time: 5/28/2023 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: A memorial is something that helps us remember, and our nation's Memorial Day holiday helps us remember the sacrifices of those who gave their lives for our freedoms.

In his profound and instructive "Gettysburg Address," Abraham Lincoln made a statement which should be true, but sadly is not. He said, "The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here."

The truth is that the world has remembered better the details of the five-minute "Address" of Gettysburg than the details of the three-day battle there. Lincoln's speech that day has served as a memorial to the battle and the causes of freedom which those men all gave their lives for that day. Only Civil War experts remember that there was a Battle of Chancellorsville, because there was no Lincoln address to serve as a memorial for that battle. We need help remembering, and memorials provide that help.

God knows that we need help remembering important truths. Throughout their history, the people of God have remembered important truth because God gave them a memorial to celebrate. We even have some memorial days in Scripture.

We read this about the feast of the Passover in Exod. 12:14, "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 forever." God gave a special day to be a memorial and to help His people remember their exodus from slavery in Egypt.

The Days of Purim were another holiday that is specifically called a memorial day or day of remembrance in Scripture. It was a holiday that caused God's people to remember His protection from their enemies in the foreign land of their captivity. (Esth. 9:27-28, "The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every year; and that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed.")

Our God is a God who makes use of memorials and memorial days. This morning I would like us to focus on a very special God-given memorial in this passage – the memorial of God's name. Notice with me three things about God that the memorial of His name helps us remember.

I. God's name is a memorial to remind us that He is a person (Exod. 3:13).

Illustration: Our nation's Civil War came to an end on June 2, 1865. The first Memorial Day celebration was held three years later, on May 30, 1868, a day when Americans from North and South united to put flowers on the graves of Confederate and Union soldiers and to remember their loved ones who had died. Our Memorial Day is tied espe-

cially to our Civil War, and our Civil War was connected especially to the cruelty of chattel slavery.

In 1807 Congress had passed a law against the importation of slaves, and from that time on ships that carried slaves for trade between the states had to file manifests of the slaves they had on board, which included the name of the slave. You can view the content of those manifests at our national archives website.

What is striking about these manifests is that the name given each slave is only a first name. There is no surname or family name. Most American slaves did not obtain a surname until after emancipation. Because slave owners had no desire to know these people personally, they felt no need to know their true name.

Application: The memorial God gives His people in this passage is His name (vv. 13-15). During this period of Israel's history, God's people were suffering under the cruel bondage of slavery in Egypt. As God gives them His name, He does so while assuring them of His interest in who they are and in all that they had been experiencing (v. 16).

We must not treat the Lord the way slaveowners treated their slaves, with no desire to know His name. He is not some nameless force beyond our comprehension and experience. He is not the nameless "man above." He has a name; He knows our name; and He wants us to know His name. He made us; He has visited us; and He has seen all that we have ever thought, done, or experienced (v. 16).

Modern man finds himself in a situation in which he has no God with a name who knows his name and who cares to help his need. Whereas the Bible begins with a person – "In

the beginning God,” the academy today begins with an impersonal big bang, an idea that the James Webb Telescope is now discrediting. Under the rubric of this materialism, everything – man included – is ultimately no more than a cog in a mindless, nameless, impersonal machine. There is no God there with a name who can know our name.

Slaveowners used to view their slaves that way, and Satan has used doctrines of demons like scientific reductionism and evolution to convince those under his tyranny that they should treat God this way as well, as the nameless one.

In the face of these lies about the way things are, God has revealed His name to us to remind us that He is a person we can know, One who knows us, and One who is well-acquainted in a caring way with our slavery. Jesus will explain to His disciples on one occasion that even the hairs on our head are all numbered. He cares about even that detail.

God’s name is a memorial to remind us that He is a person.

II. God’s name is a memorial to remind us that He does not change (v. 15, “this is my name forever”; “all generations”).

Illustration: Rebranding is an idea we hear a lot about in the business world. The idea stipulates that as each new generation of customers comes along, the way the company is marketed to that new generation must change to keep up and attract the new generation to come.

The same philosophy has been applied to local churches at times. One newspaper article I saw put it this way: “Established churches will either change or wither as the changing social landscape works on them. Grandkids of immigrant settlers don’t stay around to fill pews as their parents did, and today’s work-force has become as rootless as

military families. The churches European immigrants built as ethnic havens lost that reason-for-being with assimilation. Though shrinking congregations may not like it, the tide has turned and won't turn back." The article was titled, "It's not your grandfather's church."

[www.marysvilleglobe.com/opinion/its-not-your-grandfathers-church-opinion/; accessed 5/24/2018].

Application: We do not find God rebranding His name in this passage in order to adapt Himself to the realities of a new "social landscape." Did you notice His repeated reference to "your fathers"? (vv. 13, 15, 16). He views this new generation of Israelites as Israel's "children" (vv. 14, 15). He emphasizes that this memorial, His name, is something eternal, something that is to be remembered in the same way by all generations (v. 15).

So what does the immutability of God's name say about whether or not our local church should be like our grandfather's local church? What it says is that Christianity is based on who God is and what His name means and not on what newspaper editorials call, "the changing social landscape." Christianity is about Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. It is not about sociology.

Ours is the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3), and it is a trust that we must deliver unadulterated to the generations that come after us (1 Tim. 6:20-21, "O Timothy, keep [guard] that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen").

If a believer is going to a church determined not to be the kind of church his godly grandfather would attend, he is going to the wrong church.

Today's "social landscape" knows nothing about the holiness that is intrinsic to God's name (see 3:1-6). Because God is holy, Moses could not come too close. He had to remove his shoes. That same reverence must characterize our worship of Him today. It matters not whether Moses preferred to keep his shoes on.

Because God's holy name has not changed, we find similar warnings in the NT — Heb. 12:28-29: "Wherefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve [worship] God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire."

When our approach to worship focuses more on accommodating our desire to "keep our shoes on," to entertain and accommodate our contemporary "social landscape," than it does on our unworthiness, our need for grace, and our need to reverence Christ, our worship becomes idolatrous for its self-service and lack of godly fear.

God's name is a memorial to remind us that we should want our grandchildren to know the same Christianity our grandfathers have known. It reminds us that Christians belong to a kingdom not of this world along with their brothers and sisters of every age, not to a modern marketing demographic. It reminds us that our God does not change, and He must be worshipped in reverence with godly fear.

III. God's name is a memorial to remind us that He has a plan to save us (v. 17).

Illustration: The exodus of Israel from the bondage of Egyptian slavery is one of the great biblical pictures from the history of Israel, which illustrate for us God's saving work of redemption.

This picture included the death of the Passover lamb, another memorial, whose blood was shed and applied in the form of a cross to the door posts of every household that escaped the final plague on Egypt, which was the death angel that killed the household's firstborn.

When the angel saw the blood, it passed over that home, which would soon know the blessing of the birth of a new nation, when God redeemed them out of Egypt and led them to the promised land.

Application: We are all born into this world enslaved to the bondage of our sin, under a cruel taskmaster who seeks our ultimate destruction, but for us too there is a God-given plan for an exodus from our slavery as there was for Israel. There is a promised land flowing with the milk and honey of God's forgiveness and justification. It is a plan of redemption, upon which God has put His name.

In fact, that plan begins with knowing God's name. As God begins to execute His plan for our salvation in the virgin-birth of a baby, He makes much of that baby's name. He is called *Immanuel*, "God with Us," for He is the Son of God incarnate in human nature. In addition, the angel told Joseph, "Thou shalt call His name *Jesus* (*Jehovah saves*), for He (*Jehovah*, the baby) shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). "Immanuel Jesus." This is God's saving name. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, dying for our sin, rising for our eternal life.

Conclusion: Do you know God's name in a saving way this morning? Do you see that He is a person who understands your situation and has provided salvation through which you may have a personal relationship with Him? He knows your name; He wants you to know His; do you?

Do you see that His name is *Immanuel* and *Jesus*, because He has a plan to save you from your sins, which was flawlessly executed by His dear Son? Will you make His plan for your salvation your plan by trusting that He died for you and arose again and by asking Him to be your Savior?

The Lord promises you that if you do, this will be a Memorial Day weekend you will never forget: “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching