

Made to Remember

By Paul Penner

Made to remember...

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”. And then it goes on to say ‘He created us **‘male** and **‘female**’ in His image’ (*Genesis 1:27*). Some people have difficulty believing that God created the world in 6 literal days as Exodus 20:11 and Genesis 1 state. Some favor the theory of evolution to explain origins. I have no difficulty believing the Biblical account as an accurate revelation of how the world began. But it’s not my purpose here to debate the matter and use up space to evaluate the pros and cons of either position. I am accepting the creation account for a number of reasons, but the clincher is ... that Jesus believed it to be literal and true. His references to the beginning consistently reflect His belief that there was a literal creation and that it happened just as Genesis records it. So, for me the matter has been settled.

For purposes of this article, I am interested in noting some of the language in the Genesis account. In particular, that God created us **‘male’** and **‘female’**. Whenever the Bible records names about God or names He has specifically given to people it reveals something significant about personal identity and attributes. And so it becomes important to note why God called us what He did. God said that He made us male and female. For right now I am interested in the word – **‘male’**. The word ‘male’ means *‘to mark so as to remember.’* (*source – Strong’s Concordance*). Something about our unique design and identity is wrapped up in how this descriptor relates to what God just designed. Having made us male reflects God’s purpose for our being. We as males were made to make special note to remember certain things. Okay, this begs the question – what are we to mark and remember? Does anything come to your mind? Maybe before you read on just take some time to think about what God might have had in mind.

Here’s where I go with this. Perhaps what God has **spoken** should be remembered? Perhaps we should mark **revelations** about our Creator who made us. It just makes sense to remember God and whatever He says. Jesus practiced this kind of awareness. He cited God’s word often. When He resisted the tempter in the wilderness He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 saying, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”* Jesus was remembering and taking action to avoid falling into temptation. When God speaks things happen! God has to be very careful about what He says because everything He says comes into being. The worlds were created out of nothing because He spoke. None of His words fail to happen (Isaiah 55). Thinking this through a little further, we weren’t just made to remember - we were made to **mark so as to remember** and be moved to action because of it. Doesn’t it make sense that we should remember His purposes which He has revealed... and to align ourselves with them? More recently, I have contemplated that we as males need to mark and remember the **covenants**, which we and our forefathers have entered into with God.

In fact Jeremiah 14:21 suggests that forgetting a covenant is forgetting the party (*ie. God or people*) with whom it has been made.

What is a covenant? And what are the different binding covenants that have been made between God and man? (*Is it significant that all of the covenants with God are established between God and males? And does it imply in Luke 1:72 that a covenant which a father has entered into is binding upon the children?*). A covenant is an irrevocable agreement between two parties with conditions, which cannot be broken without incurring the consequences of so doing that are written into the agreement. If the conditions are met, good things ensue (*ie. blessings*) and if failed, curses follow.

There are several significant covenants. I want to note 7 of these and give some brief commentary, especially on the last one. Firstly, between God and Adam (*Hosea 6:7*). Man failed, they got kicked out of the garden and death permeated. Secondly, between God and Noah (*Genesis 9:8-17*). As long as the earth remained God would not destroy it with a flood of water again. The rainbow was a sign of this promise. Thirdly, between God and Abraham (*Genesis 15:2-21*). At old age Abraham would have a son and become a great nation. If His children obeyed God, He would be their God forever. All the nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham's seed. The children of promise were given the land of Canaan as an eternal inheritance. What God does with Israel helps people know He is God. The part Abraham and his children had to fulfill was to circumcise every male. Fourthly, the Old Covenant was established by God with Moses on Mount Sinai and then entered into between God and the children of Israel. Those who kept the conditions of the covenant (*ie. the ten commandments*) would live forever and get to stay in the land. If they failed they would be subject to the curses under the agreement and go into exile and captivity. Fifthly, God & Aaron (*Numbers 25:10-13*). Aaron's sons would be priests forever. But they needed to avoid idolatry. Sixthly, between God and David (*II Samuel 7:13, 23:5*). Salvation would come through the birth of the Messiah into David's line. One from David's line would sit on the throne of Israel forever. And seventhly, the most significant covenant between God and man, is the **new covenant**.

The new covenant superseded the old covenants. It was better. It fulfilled the first, but added more and better promises. The previous covenants (*because of the weakness of the sinful nature passed on to us through Adam*) couldn't give us life. All of us eventually fail every one of the covenants no matter how hard we try. And the old covenant, which was meant to bring people life, couldn't because of that. Under the terms of the old covenant if we kept **all** we would live. But no one born of Adam could keep it fully (*James 2:10*) and so it became a means of condemnation rather than life. Sometimes I hear funeral homilies about people who have died and lived a good life – and sometimes it is inferred that if anyone deserved to go to heaven they did because of their personal goodness. Hey!? Somebody forgot the covenants! That's not what they say! If we trust in our good works we have to be **perfect**. If not and we depend on measuring up to the old covenant but we die – it proves we weren't perfect! If we could have satisfied the terms of the old covenant we wouldn't be at our funeral! Galatians 3 says, that 'by keeping the law no flesh will be saved'. Any violations under the law forfeited the promise of life. Until Jesus, (*who, because of His virgin birth & begotten of God*), no one had ever kept all the commandments of the old covenant. He alone could have lived forever as a sinless being. Had

He not allowed His blood to be shed and die on the cross He'd still be living. According to the terms of the old covenant one who obeyed all of its terms would never die. Only Jesus has met this criteria. Had Jesus' life not been taken from Him He would still be alive. But... then, the new covenant would not have been instituted. Alive, Jesus would have saved His own life only. But, if He died and paid our penalty for us then many could be spared eternal death. Only someone not paying for their own sins could pay in our stead the consequences of our failings.

This is the essence of the new covenant (*II Corinthians 5:21*). Jesus and God entered into an agreement. Jesus agreed to enter mankind through a woman (*the virgin Mary*). He agreed to live among fallen men and reveal what a God of love was like. And He did! He loves all of us as is. He agreed to be unjustly killed and finally to take our sin upon Himself and incur the full wrath of God for all failings committed under the first covenants (I John 2:2). According to this agreement if Jesus was willing to take the just consequences for our sins onto Himself, His father (God) was willing to place on Him all of His wrath against all sin (Isaiah 53:6) for all time. In that way the righteous judgment of God was to honor sinful man's choice to find life apart from God with all the consequences of that choice – having nothing to do with God or His good purposes. And that is spiritual suicide.

The new covenant was confirmed with Jesus' death and both parties (Jesus and God) fulfilled their obligations under the agreement. Jesus suffered the torments of hell in our place. In a covenant, when you fulfill the conditions, the blessings follow. Because Jesus accepted and received all of God's wrath for our sin, He would also receive all of God's goodness expressed in every imaginable blessing. All authority and power, blessing and honor in heaven and on earth were given to Jesus when He rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. And the beautiful thing is that Jesus wants to share it with any one who will recognize who He is, what He did on their behalf (*died for their sins and then rose again to demonstrate that He had finished paying for their sins*) and finally to let Him know that they want to follow Him (*prayer of repentance*). This is good news isn't it? That's what God calls it – the **good news!** It is the best news ever given to people! Ran out of room... more next time.

Ways to remember...

Last Communique I wrote an article entitled 'Made to Remember'. From what I have researched - 'remembering' and 'maleness' were meant to go hand in hand in God's plans for us. It's kind of funny when one thinks of how much better women seem to be able to remember than we as men do. However, contrary to our post-fall experience, God says that we as males were made to 'mark so as to remember'. So the question begs to be asked – what were we made so as to remember?

I entertained some things in the last newsletter from clues in the Bible... like remembering the words of God; the commands of God; the revealed purposes of God; the covenants made between God and man; the works of God in our midst (these are ones I have

noticed that we are told to remember – there may be more). Since we are to remember, are there ‘memory aids’ to help us in remembering? I think so.

In the order of listing above... **regarding His word**... we are to ‘*hide the words of God in our heart*’ according to Psalm 119:11. If you remember the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness (*Luke 4:4*) Jesus said, “*Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*” He remembered God’s word and resisted the Devil’s temptation to turn stones into bread. If you recall Genesis 1:29&30 one of the first things God spoke to Adam and Eve was about food... “*Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it...v. 30... I give every green plant for food.*” Notice any stones or gravel for lunch here? No, not for us! But for the devil it’s the dessert he deserves. Genesis 3:14 says of Satan, “*You will crawl on your belly and eat dust*”.

Regarding the commands of God... consider Deuteronomy 6:6-9 “*These commands that I have given you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (‘hang them on your fridge’ – my paraphrase)*” It goes on to say that after the people have acquired houses and possessions... “*Be careful that you do not forget the Lord.*” v. 12. I think it’s fair to say that we are at risk of forgetting eternal things the more we possess temporal things. God warns us not to let that happen. Take precautions.

Regarding the purposes of God... consider John 6:29... “*This is what God wants you to do, believe in the One He has sent.*” ...and Matthew 17:5b, “*This is My beloved Son. I am fully pleased with Him. Listen to Him.*” James says *don’t be like one who looks in the mirror and sees what he looks like and then forgets to do anything about it. I have gone to the office a few times without shaving. Even worse, I have known things about my soul-need and put off dealing with relationship matters that needed to be settled first like Jesus said in Matthew 5:24 “If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.”*

Regarding the covenants of God... it appears that forgetting a covenant is the same as forgetting the one with whom it is made (*ie Jeremiah 14:21*). The most important covenant (they are all important enough to remember! Right?) is the New Covenant. It is the Good News covenant! The New Covenant fulfills the previous covenants and under its terms the curses were placed on Christ and the blessing on us who accept the conditions set out to benefit from its terms. What are the conditions? To believe in Jesus for He is (the Son of God); that He died not for His own sins but for ours; and that He is no longer paying for sins because He has risen from the dead; and that we want to follow Him and let Him know this by calling out to Him in a heartfelt prayer that confesses these beliefs about Him and what He has done on our behalf and

asks His forgiveness and enabling grace to follow Him. (see *Romans 10:9,10 & 13*). We are to remember the new covenant by lifting up the cup in remembrance of Jesus and what He accomplished for us. (see *I Corinthians 11:23-25* and also *Psalms 116:13*).

Regarding the works of God... Look at *Exodus 20:24-25* (the verses immediately following the 10 commandments) which tells us, *"Build altars in the places where I remind you who I am (ie. do miracles in your midst), and I will come and bless you there. If you build altars from stone, use only natural, uncut stones"*. In keeping with this command the Israelites took up stones from the Jordan River when God dried it up to let them pass into the promised land recorded in *Joshua 4: 4-9* to memorialize God's demonstration of power and deliverance on their behalf. In *Joshua 4:21-22* it records, *"In the future your children will ask, 'What do these stones mean?' Then you can tell them..."* *Psalm 78:1-7* tells us to tell our children stories about miracles that God has performed in our lives so that they learn to reverence God and follow Him.

Is it possible that this is what was being practiced in *Luke 19:36-40*? *"As He rode along, the crowds spread their garments on the road ahead of Him. When He reached the place where the road started down the Mount of Olives, all of His followers began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the wonderful miracles they had seen. Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in highest heaven! But some of the Pharisees among the crowd said, 'Teacher rebuke your followers for saying things like that!' He replied, 'If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!"* Why the stones along the road? Were His followers marking the miracles Jesus was doing in their midst with stone piles? It may well be what Jesus was wanting the Pharisees to see!? Do you have any stone piles marking God's miraculous goodness in your life? We need to have stone piles and tell our children so that they and we remember God's works in our lives?