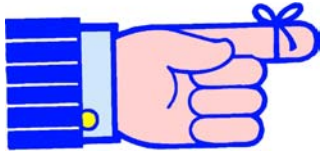


What and When God Remembers

By James McAlister



Though the concept may seem strange, the Bible occasionally declares that God "remembers" one thing or another. But we must not assume that God has "forgotten" something for a time—and then suddenly "remembers" it again. When God "remembers," He has simply determined that the time for action is at hand.

Interestingly, the accounts of God's remembrances encompass the full realm of human need—physical, spiritual, and emotional. Let me share three examples to illustrate a point.

Once Noah's ark was afloat, physical needs grew more acute as food supplies for man and beast steadily dwindled with no means of replenishment. Would the same God who had launched the ark allow its occupants to starve?

But at precisely the right time, God "remembered"—and acted. "But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided." Physical needs were satisfied.

Then after the waters had subsided, God established a covenant of great spiritual significance. He promised that seedtime and harvest, day and night, summer and winter, and hot and cold would continue as long as the earth remained. Furthermore, He promised never to destroy the earth by water again and initiated a physical reminder of His faithfulness to His promises: the rainbow.

Remarkably, God then promised to "remember" His own promises. "When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh

that is on the earth." Both rainbow and changing seasons serve as visible reminders that God follows up on His commitments.

But what about emotional needs? Consider Rachel, favored wife of the patriarch Jacob. She intensely desired children but was barren. Beset by both bitterness and jealousy, she demanded that Jacob give her children, lest she die.

Then suddenly, and even in spite of her imperfections and character deficiencies, "God remembered Rachel, and God gave heed to her and opened her womb." The recipients of acts of remembrance need not be perfect.

But we aren't like God, are we? Who hasn't been disappointed by a trusted friend who promised but didn't follow through? Then time gradually slipped on without a hint of remembrance or intention to fulfill.

In trekking the back roads of my mind, I encounter countless disappointments others have dealt me in just this way. Regretfully, I'm certain that when my acquaintances make the same painful journey, the times I've likewise disappointed them will be innumerable.

But as with the examples already cited, the consideration of unfulfilled promises is the signal to act. Remembrance coupled with action may not only resolve a disappointment, but satisfy a persistent need.

Though memory often takes us where we'd rather not go, it may also lead us where we really ought to be. And God forbid that we should ever forget that He never does.

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