

May 27, 2007 by Steve Brandon



He Remembers!

Malachi 3:16-18

1. Who does God Remember? (verse 16)
2. How does God Remember? (verse 16)
3. Why does God Remember? (verses 17-18)

Tomorrow is designated by our government as federal holiday. The last Monday of May each year is when we celebrate Memorial Day. It's a day in which we, as a nation remember those who have fought to preserve the freedom of our land. Particularly, this day is for honoring those who have died in the line of duty. Our freedom in America has come with a price. We need to remember this fact.

Our nation makes much effort to remember these people. Throughout our country, memorials have been built in which the names of those who have died in battle are inscribed upon granite or marble monuments. On this day, the gravesites at many national cemeteries are graced with flags of the United States of America. The government shuts down. Schools are closed. Many people are given the day off. This holiday is a good thing. It forces us to remember these fallen soldiers. It forces us to remember the sacrifice that they made to keep our country free.

The sacrifice that our servicemen is very real. In fact, I just received an email late last night from a member of our congregation, whose son-in-law (Brad) is in Iraq fighting right now. He wrote,

There was an IED incident on Saturday in Iraq in which 3 soldiers in Brad's unit were killed and 2 were injured. Fortunately, Brad was not one of them. Unfortunately, 3 families will be burying their family members sometime in the next 2 weeks. Among those are Brad's roommate. His name was Clayton. He had just recently returned to Iraq from stateside. He was here because his wife gave birth to a baby girl and then unexpectedly lost all use of her legs. She now has feeling back in her legs, but will be going through physical therapy to learn to walk again. And all the while she will be dealing with a 2 month old, and the grief of being a widow. Please pray for her. Her name is Haidy. Clayton and one of the injured soldiers (Brong) were the other Christians in Brad's unit. Clayton helped Brad through his rough days. (Becca says that of all the guys there Clayton was the most ready to meet his Lord.) So basically Brad is on his own now. He really needs your prayers to help him get through the next few months. I'm asking you to please remember him in prayers whenever you can. Thanks. The other injured soldier's name is Ford. He is not a believer.

Just as we have remembered those who have served our country, in our text today, we will see God making special efforts to remember those who serve Him. Consider our text.

Malachi 3:16-18

Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. "They will be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him." So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

In many ways, this section of Scripture is the climax of Malachi's oracle. It's the point in the book when God's character is demonstrated to be very different than the character of the people of Israel. They may have had a memory lapse. But the LORD will never forget. Before we jump into this section, it would be very worth our while to review briefly the book of Malachi, so that you can see how climactic it is.

I trust that you remember the titles of my messages throughout Malachi. The first week, I surveyed the entire book with a message entitled, "**Don't Forget the LORD.**" My message was entitled this way because the people of Israel had indeed forgotten the LORD. Our task as been to learn from their negative examples and don't do as they did. They forgot the LORD, but we ought never to forget. In subsequent weeks, every single one of my messages began with the words, "**Don't Forget...**" Beginning in chapter 1, verses 2-5, my message was entitled, "**Don't Forget His Love.**" The people of Israel had forgotten God's love for them. "How have You loved us?" was their cry (in 1:2). The LORD needed to remind the people of His love for them.

In chapter 1, verse 6 all the way through chapter 2, verse 9, my three-part message was entitled, "**Don't Forget His Honor**" (parts 1, 2, and 3). The people of Israel had forgotten God's honor. We rightly give honor to a father. We rightly give honor to a master. But, the people of Israel were failing to honor the name of the LORD. In verse 6, the LORD asked, "Where is My honor?" Throughout this section, the LORD showed Israel the ways in which they were failing to honor Him. They were offering up blind, lame and sick sacrifices (1:8). The priests were despising the altar of the LORD (1:13). The priests were failing in their words and in their actions (2:8).

In chapter 2, verses 10-16, my message was entitled, "**Don't Forget His People.**" Israel had neglected to act faithfully to each other. They

"dealt treacherously" with one another (2:10, 11, 14, 15, 16). They weren't faithful to their heritage, profaning the covenant of their fathers (2:10). They weren't faithful to their community, making marriage bonds outside the covenant (2:11-12). They weren't faithful to their marriages, divorcing their wives (2:13-16).

In chapter 2:17, through chapter 3, verse 5, my message was entitled, "**Don't Forget His Justice.**" The people of Israel saw how those engaging in wickedness were not being punished, as they thought they should be. They even claimed that the LORD looked down with favor upon the wicked. "Where is the God of justice?" was their cry in verse 17. They had forgotten that God's justice was very real, it simply comes in His time, not our time.

In chapter 3, verse 6-12, my message was entitled, "**Don't Forget His Faithfulness.**" The people of Israel had forgotten that the LORD was faithful to His covenant (verse 6). They had forgotten that He was faithful to all who repent from their sins (verse 7). They had forgotten that He was faithful to those who give (verses 8-12).

Last week, in chapter 3, verses 13-15, my message was entitled, "**Don't Forget His Ways.**" Israel had forgotten the ways of God. God works differently that we do. God lifts the lowly (verse 13). God weighs the heart (verse 14). God delays the judgment (verse 15).

And this week, we see the reverse of all of this. Rather than observing Israel forgetting the love of God, the honor of God, the people of God, the justice of God, the faithfulness of God, and the ways of God, We see the LORD remembering. He is remembering His people. This is God. He doesn't forget. We may forget, but He remembers us. Appropriately, the title of my message this morning is simply, "**He Remembers!**" My aim this morning is that you would find a tremendous encouragement in my words.

My outline this morning is simple. It consists of three questions. "Who? How? Why?" (1) Who does God Remember? (verse 16); (2) How does God Remember? (verse 16); and (3) Why does God Remember? (verses 17-18). First of all, ...

1. Who does God Remember? (verse 16)

We see these people identified in the first half of verse 16. "Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name." (verse 16).

Twice in this verse these people are identified as "those who feared the LORD" (verse 16). The idea here is that they respect His authority, knowing that He will punish evildoers. At the very end of this verse, we see these people described as those who "esteem His name" (verse 16). The idea here is that they have thought of His name and have regard for His name, treating Him as He deserves. Apparently, not all in Israel had forgotten the LORD. There were some who had remembered what they had been taught. In so remembering, they sought to live worthy of Him.

It may have been few, but certainly, there were some. Certainly, there were some who had observed the destruction of Edom and the preservation of Israel and had the spiritual insight to conclude, "The LORD must really love us, so as not to destroy us as He did to them. We are equally worthy of their fate. It can only be God's kindness to us that has spared us" (Mal. 1:2-5).

Certainly, there were some in the land who trusted in the law and brought the best from their flock to offer up as sacrifice before the LORD (Mal. 1:8), thereby honoring the LORD through their actions. Certainly, there were some who were keenly aware of the covenant that God had made with His people, which compelled them to deal faithfully with their neighbors and in their marriages (2:10-16). Certainly, there were some who had the insight that though it appeared that the wicked were being blessed, it was only because God's justice was being delayed. Certainly, there were some among the people of Israel who knew the faithfulness of God, who regularly confessed their sin, gave their whole tithe, and were blessed by it. Certainly there were those remembered the ways of God and sought with humility to cultivate a genuine heart of love toward God that trusted Him.

If pressed, we could possibly even name some of these people. To begin with, we could mention Malachi. He was the author of this book, writing the message of the LORD. We can only assume that he was faithful. It may even be that Ezra and Nehemiah were still around. We know that they came in the early days to help rebuild Jerusalem, its walls as well as its temple. If they were still alive when Malachi wrote, they were certainly old men. But, they certainly would be considered among those who feared the LORD. In extended sections of both Ezra and Nehemiah, we have recorded chapters in which they led the people of God in confessing their sins. Such confessions come about because the people have regard for the LORD. They feared His name!

I want for us to spend some time looking at this in Ezra, chapter 9. In this chapter we have a great picture of one who fears the LORD. It's an entire chapter devoted to the story of Ezra hearing of the sins of the people and confessing them to the LORD. The context of Ezra 9 picks up at the end of chapter 8, where Ezra tells the story of how he and several other Levites made the journey from Babylon, back to Jerusalem. Rather than trusting in the protection of the kings "troops and horsemen" they "fasted and sought [their] God" for protection (Ezra 8:22-23). The LORD "listened to [their] entreaty" (Ezra 9:23) and delivered them safely to Jerusalem. They put the treasures in the temple and worshiped the LORD, the God of Israel, by offering up sacrifices to Him.

At the beginning of this chapter, we read, ...

Ezra 9:1-2

Now when these things had been completed, the princes approached me, saying, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, according to their abominations, those of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians and the Amorites. For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has intermingled with the peoples of the lands; indeed, the hands of the princes and the rulers have been foremost in this unfaithfulness."

This was the issue that we read about in Malachi 2:10-16. Rather than remaining faithful to the LORD and only taking wives within the covenant community, they had “intermingled with the peoples of the lands” (Ezra 9:2). In so doing, they had dealt treacherously with those of the covenant community.

Ezra’s sensitivity to the LORD was great. Beginning in verse 3, Ezra gives his testimony, ...

Ezra 9:3-4

When I heard about this matter, I tore my garment and my robe, and pulled some of the hair from my head and my beard, and sat down appalled. Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel on account of the unfaithfulness of the exiles gathered to me, and I sat appalled until the evening offering.

Ezra wasn’t the only one of the returning exiles who feared the LORD. You get a sense that there were others with him as well. Although, this number may have been small. But, the way they responded demonstrated their fear of the LORD. They were grieved. They humbled themselves. They “trembled at the words of the God of Israel” (Ezra 9:4). They were fearful of the punishment that God would bring upon them because of their faithlessness. For much of the day, they sat in contrition.

In Ezra 9:5, Ezra tells us what he did, ...

Ezra 9:5

But at the evening offering [just before sunset], I arose from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe torn, and I fell on my knees and stretched out my hands to the LORD my God

Kneeling in prayer, with hands stretched out is a posture of fear. He’s not coming to the LORD in arrogance or in flippancy in any way. He’s coming before the LORD as a subject begging for mercy would come before a king. Indeed, this is what Ezra prays.

Ezra 9:6-15

And I said, "O my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to You, my God, for our iniquities have risen above our heads and our guilt has grown even to the heavens. Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been in great guilt, and on account of our iniquities we, our kings and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity and to plunder and to open shame, as it is this day. But now for a brief moment grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us an escaped remnant and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage. For we are slaves; yet in our bondage our God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem. Now, our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Your commandments, which You have commanded by Your servants the prophets, saying, 'The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from end to end and with their impurity. So now do not give your daughters to their sons nor take their daughters to your sons, and never seek their peace or their prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it as an inheritance to your sons forever.' After all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and our great guilt, since You our God have requited us less than our iniquities deserve, and have given us an escaped remnant as this, shall we again break Your commandments and intermarry with the peoples who commit these abominations? Would You not be angry with us to the point of destruction, until there is no remnant nor any who escape? O LORD God of Israel, You are righteous, for we have been left an escaped remnant, as it is this day; behold, we are before You in our guilt, for no one can stand before You because of this."

What a great picture of a man who fears the LORD. He clearly knew how gracious the LORD had been to the nation. Though the fathers were unfaithful, and Israel had been led into captivity (9:7), God was still gracious to Israel. Ezra calls this “a brief moment of grace” (9:8). Ezra recalls how the LORD never forsook Israel in their bondage, but extended His lovingkindness to them, by granting them favor to support their return and reconstruction of Judah and Jerusalem (9:9). And yet, in return for God’s grace, they had sinned (9:10). They intermarried with the pagan daughters of the land (9:11-14). Ezra knows what sort of bargaining power he has before the LORD. He has none. The people sit as guilty and condemned and totally at the mercy of God. Look once again at verse 15, “O LORD God of Israel, You are righteous, for we have been left an escaped remnant, as it is this day; behold, we are before You in our guilt, for no one can stand before You because of this.”

What a great picture of what it means to fear the LORD. It means to fear the consequences of sin. It means to fear the wrath of the LORD that comes upon the sons of disobedience. Proverbs 8:13 says it this way, “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil.” At that’s what Ezra was doing. Because of his great fear of the LORD, he hated the evil that surrounded him. He sat appalled for hours, only to follow this with a prayer of confession and a pleading for fresh mercy to come. (Should we have time, we could pull the same principles from the life of Nehemiah, who also prayed in confession, like Ezra did. Both of these men are good models of what it means to fear the LORD.

Getting back to Malachi’s point, we see that God remembers those who fear Him. In fact, one thing here that I love is that they aren’t even seeking the help of the LORD. Verse 16 says that “those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it.” We don’t know what they were speaking to each other about. Perhaps they were talking about the state of affairs in Israel, which wasn’t very good. Perhaps they were seeking to encourage each other to remain faithful, even when sin was all around. Perhaps they were rehearsing the Scripture with each other, to seek to know how to live righteously. We don’t know what they were speaking to each other

about. But, we do know that they weren't even seeking the LORD's help. It was the LORD who "gave attention" to their conversations and heard them.

This is tremendously encouraging! When those who fear the LORD are in desperate need of help, the LORD may choose to come and help, even when they even get to the point of seeking His help. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He said, "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. So do not be like them; for *your Father knows what you need before you ask Him*" (Matt. 6:7-8). Later in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said a similar thing, "Do not worry then, saying 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for *your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things*. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

The point of these passages isn't that we shouldn't ask God for help when we are in great need. We should ask and we should pray. But, the point is that God knows. And He very well may come and help, even when we don't ask.

I hope that these words come this morning as comfort to your souls. If you fear the LORD, you don't need much to worry about the difficulties around you. You may be surrounded by those who have plain forgotten the LORD and are acting like heathens. You may be trying your best to maintain your righteousness surrounded by evil doers. You may be desperately holding on to any promise in Scripture that you can find. Fret not, the LORD not only knows the difficulties you are going through, but will also remember your struggles.

2. How does God Remember? (verse 16)

God remembers by writing a book. Look once again at verse 16, "Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name."

As we read this verse, we might have all types of questions about this book. What sort of book is this? What sorts of things are written in this book? Where is this book? How will it be used? Fortunately, the Bible records for us several instances where similar book of remembrances are written. We can take these examples on earth and gain insight into what takes place in heaven.

The first instance comes in the book of Esther. Perhaps you remember the story. Ahasuerus had a falling out with his wife, Queen Vashti. Esther had become queen in her place. Esther had been raised by her uncle, Mordecai. It happened that one day, that Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate. In the course of conversation with others at the gate, he discovered that two of the king's officials, Bigthan and Teresh had become angry with the King Ahasuerus and were plotting to kill him. Mordecai had a vested interest in these things, because if the king dies, so will his adopted daughter, Esther. And so, Mordecai told Esther of what was taking place. And she, in turn, informed the king in Mordecai's name. There was an investigation into these matters, and Mordecai's words were found to be true. Bigthan and Teresh were hanged on the gallows. And in the presence of the king, a record of the events were written "in the Book of the Chronicles." (Esther 2:21-23). The whole story was written down.

Some time later, King Ahasuerus found it difficult to sleep one night. Rather than tossing and turning in bed, he got out of bed, awoke some of his servants and "gave an order to bring the *book of records, the chronicles*" to be brought in and read to him. One of the sections that was read was to him was the story about Mordecai unveiling the plot of Bigthan and Teresh. And the king said, "What honor or dignity has been bestowed on this Mordecai for this?" His servants replied, "Nothing has been done for him" (Esther 6:1-3).

And so, the king made plans to honor Mordecai. He was dressed in a royal robe, which the king had worn. He was set upon the horse on which the king has ridden. He was led through the city square on horseback. One of the noble princes proclaimed before him, "Thus it shall be done to the man whom the king desires to honor" (Est. 6:8-9).

I bring your attention back to this "book of records" (Esther 6:1) that was read to the king. This is much like the "book of remembrance" that was described in Malachi, chapter 3, "a book of remembrance was written before [the LORD] for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name" (Mal. 3:16). In fact, the same Hebrew words are used to describe this book. It was a "book for remembering."

And the LORD will use this book that He had written in much the same way that Ahasuerus used his book. It will stand forever as a testimony of those who feared the LORD and who esteemed His name. Never will it be possible for the LORD to forget the those who fear His name. He's got a book in which records all of the facts about them. This book is a perpetual reminder before the LORD of those who fear Him and esteem His name. In this way, it becomes a bit like a war memorial.

I remember visiting the U. S. S. Arizona memorial in Hawaii. On December 7, 1941, the Japanese came and bombed Pearl Harbor in a surprise attack. In less than 10 minutes, the ship was hit by two bombs that destroyed the forward part of the ship. It soon sunk to the bottom of the harbor, killing more than a thousand sailors (1177 soldiers assigned to the U. S. S. Arizona died on that day). This attack became the catalyst for the United States to enter World War II, as President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared war on Japan the following day (December 8, 1941). A few days later, Both Germany and Italy declared war on the United States (December 11, 1941).

The United States government has erected a memorial over that ship, that spans its sunken remain. Inside the shrine room, there is a list of all the sailors killed on the ship, lest we ever forget the fallen soldiers. lest we ever forget the surprise attack. Each year the memorial receives 1.5 million visitors, who come and hear the story of the attack on Pearl Harbor and pay their respects to the fallen soldiers. It's going to be very hard for the United States to forget what took place at Pearl Harbor. With a specific monument built, and with frequent visitors to the monument, the memory lives on!

And the same thing applies for this book of remembrance that the LORD had written. Forever etched in the annals of heaven is a record of those who feared the LORD in the days of Malachi.

A second illustration of this type of book can be found in the book of Ezra. In 538 B. C. Cyrus became king of Persia. The LORD stirred his spirit to support the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. And so, Ezra, and some 40,000 other Jews, who were held in captivity in Persia, returned to Jerusalem to restore the temple to the LORD God of Israel (Ezra 1:2-4). When they returned and begun the work, some of their enemies arose and attempted to distract them from their work.

They “discouraged the people of Judah” (Ezra 4:4). They “frightened them from building” (Ezra 4:4). Then they threatened them. They even “hired counselors against them to frustrate their counsel all the days of Cyrus, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia” (Ezra 4:5). For decades they were trying to thwart the work.

Eventually, with the return of Nehemiah and the beginning of the construction on the walls, the enemies of the Jews wrote a letter of accusation to Artaxerxes, who was then king. This was about 70 years after the Jews had first returned to Jerusalem under the blessing of Cyrus. The enemies told Artaxerxes of how the Jews “are rebuilding the rebellious and evil city and are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations” (Ezra 4:12). They then pleaded, “Now let it be known to the king, that if that city is rebuilt and the walls are finished, they will not pay tribute, custom or toll, and it will damage the revenue of the kings” (Ezra 4:13). They encouraged the king to search the “*record books*” to see what the history might reveal about the behavior of the Jews (Ezra 4:14-15). They concluded by informing the king “that if that city is rebuilt and the walls finished, as a result you will have no possession in the province beyond the River” (Ezra 4:16). Artaxerxes issued a search, and found some of the accusations true, and so, he ordered the work to be stopped (Ezra 4:21).

Ironically, King Darius issued another search, and found a scroll there in which the “*memorandum*” of the original decree of King Cyrus was found. Darius responded with a decree that the enemies hinder the work no more (Ezra 6:7).

When describing these “*record books*” and “*memorandum*,” the language is the same as we have in Malachi. Though these portions of Ezra were written in Aramaic, the words are translated the same. These are “books of remembrance”. They hold administrative authority for the governmental operations. So also will this book of remembrance that is written about those fearing the LORD in Malachi’s day. God won’t forget those who are His. He will remember you!

“God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints” (Hebrews 6:10). How does God remember? He can go to his book and read it. I love the way that Dave Deuel says it.

In light of the evidence for the consistent use of the memorandum (in Old Testament literature) (*spr zkrn*) and for its fairly well-defined function, the Malachi 3:16 passage may be explained as follows: God’s memorandum is on file in His royal archives for the great and terrible day of His visitation in battle against His enemies (cf. Malachi 4). On that day and when drawn from the royal archives, the memorandum will engage God’s administrative authority to spare the pure sons of Levi. But at that time, God will burn to the very roots the ‘chaff’ whose names do not appear in the memorandum. [\[1\]](#)

This leads nicely to our final point.

3. Why does God Remember? (verses 17-18)

Simply put, there’s a day that God is preparing for: His return. In fact, verse 17 tells us a bit of how He will deal with these people. “‘They will be Mine,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.’”

This day is often called, “The day of the LORD.” We see it referred to in chapter 4, verse 1, “‘Behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evil doer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze.’ Says the LORD of hosts.” We see it again in chapter 4, verse 3, “‘You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing.’ Says the LORD of hosts.”

Next week, we’ll spend a bit more time looking into the “day of the LORD” (as we deal with these verses). But it’s sufficient for us to know that this is referring to the day when the LORD establishes His kingdom. He will avenge the wicked and reward the righteous. It’s the day of judgment. It’s the day of reckoning. It’s the day when the LORD settles accounts with all who have ever lived! God’s judgment will come upon the unrighteous. God’s salvation will come to those who hoped in Him.

Daniel spoke about that day describing in one of His visions, ...

Daniel 7:9-10

I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat, thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him, the court sat, and the books were opened.

Those who fear the LORD can have the assurance that when they come into the presence of the LORD, their name is in His books. Their deeds have been written down. They don’t have to rely upon the memory of the LORD. They can say, “LORD, let’s look at the books.” What is written down will serve as a reminder to the LORD of those who faithfully served Him while upon the earth, as an evidence of their faith in Him!

God is not like us in needing lists to remind Him. I’m always creating lists of things to do. My wife is the queen of lists. And we are trying to teach our son to use lists to help him accomplish his tasks. But, to assure our hearts, God writes it down for all to see and hear.

I love the way that the LORD expresses the security of those who fear Him. He says, “They will be Mine!” He will grab them. He will hold

them. He will not let them go. And He has taken every precaution to ensure that those who fear His name will be with Him in glory. This sounds like the words of Jesus in John 10:27-29,

John 10:27-29

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

We see the sheep in the hands of Jesus. Surrounding His hand is the hand of the Father, who is grasping onto those who are His as well. It's a great picture of the security of the believer. When God says, "They will be Mine!" It means that He will never let them go.

In His high priestly prayer, Jesus prayed for His disciples, "I am no longer in the world, and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are one. While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition, that the scripture would be fulfilled." (John 17:11-12)

If we believe in Him, Jesus guards us and keeps us, and protects us until that final day. When God puts His claim upon a soul, his future is certain. He records it in a book. He keeps them in His hand. They will not face the judgment. That's the idea near the end of verse 17, "I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him." This is how the universe works: on that day, when the judgment of the LORD falls, there will be two types of people. Those who fear the LORD, and those who don't.

For those who fear the LORD and have placed their hope and trust in Him, He will show mercy. He will show mercy through the blood of the cross. By faith in Christ, we become children of God (not children of wrath). God shows mercy to His children. And this day won't catch God by surprise. He has been preparing for this day.

My wife is pregnant, and due any day to deliver our fifth child. We have been preparing for this day for months. Yvonne has been out shopping at garage sales for baby clothes. She has purchased a new baby stroller and car seat (as our old ones are worn out). We have resurrected an old basinet for the baby. We have made plans for where the baby will sleep. We have had numerous discussions as to what we will name the baby. We have been thoughtful of our schedules. This past week, we have turned down some activities, needing to stay in town. This summer, we have planned our summer vacation around the coming of the baby. Even this morning, I noticed some boxes labeled 'maternity clothes', ready to be given back to those who let my wife borrow them. (Boy, is she ready to give them back!)

We don't know exactly when the baby will come. We are hoping that it comes this week. But, have been working to prepare for it. And God has been preparing for the day He returns to the earth. Are you prepared for that day? On that day, all of humanity will be divided into two groups. You can see how the people will be divided in that day in verse 18, "So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him." You could easily add (from verse 16), "between the one who fears the LORD and the one who doesn't fear Him." "between the one who esteems His name and the one who profanes His name."

See, when it comes down to it, all of humanity is divided into two types of people. Those who love Jesus and those who don't. And they will have drastically different futures. The Bible often separates people into two groups of people. There are the wheat and the tares. There are the sheep and the goats.

As I have thought about this day of judgment, it has caused me to think about all of the things that the LORD remembers. When describing the process of the final judgment, Jesus spoke of dividing humanity into two groups. To the one, He will say, "I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me" (Matt. 25:42-43). What amazing details this is to remember! To the sheep, Jesus made similar statements. He said, "I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me" (Matt. 25:35-36).

Can you imagine remembering such details in the lives of the six billion people who are alive on the planet right now? There have also been another six billion that have passed away. God remembers it all! Surely, His mind is able to remember it all. But, it seems as if He has kept a heavenly journal of some type, whose contents will be spilled on the day of final judgment. God is preparing for that day. Are you prepared?

The only way to truly be prepared for that day is to trust in Jesus. He's your only hope. Put your trust in Him, and God will remember you on that day. I hope this is good news for you today. I hope your souls are confronted, knowing that God remembers!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on May 27, 2007 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Dave Deuel, Masters Seminary Journal, Vol. 7, Num. 1, Spring 1996, p. 110.