

They Recalled when they come to their Senses!

Isaiah 63:11-19

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I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND BIBLICAL CONTEXT

People who do not have accurately written down history are liable to be *defined* by others as to **who** they are, **where** they come from, and **what** they cannot be or become! People who don't have a history written down by their own professional and faithful historians become *vulnerable to distortions* or being defined by other historians *who want to demonize, minimize or even attempt to exterminate them* (a case in point what Nazi Germany tried to do the Jews not to long ago!). If we know **who** we are, **where** we came from, **how** we got here, then *we will have a clear view into our future*. *If we don't know how we came to be, **we don't have a history to recall!***

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The adage "history repeats itself" was proven to be true because people/nations and individuals have the tendency to **forget** about the past or **disregard** what history teaches them about themselves. History has a way of teaching us what happens when we (as people, nation, community or individual) start thinking we are in control of the world by projecting ourselves better than everybody else. In the context of Israel, they always ended up in trouble they couldn't get out of every time they thought they were in control of their own destiny or they can do better on their own by rejecting God and bowing down to various idols. This attitude indicates that they either deny God was involved in their history or develop voluntary amnesia about their past! Either way, it is a rejection of their past – ***meaning rejection of God who gave them a past!*** As the Book of Judges, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1Chronicles and 2 Chronicles clearly show us, the Israelites failed to learn from their past mistakes generation after generation! Hence, the saying, "history repeats itself" is true! *It is a warning to all of us!*

B. BIBLICAL CONTEXT

The history of the Israelites is part of the eternal history written by God through His chosen servants – Moses, the Chroniclers, Prophets, ... Luke, Matthew, Apostle Paul, etc. Therefore, we know it is God who *initiated* them when He *called* Abraham and Sarah! (Genesis 12). It is God who **formed** them to be His *chosen* people. It is God who *gave* them their **New Identity** through

Jacob (whose name God changed to Israel). It is God who brought them out of Egypt even when they forgot who they were and what they were destined for! It is God who gave them the Law and made them into a nation when He brought them into the Promised Land through Joshua! *It is God who defeated many nations for them so that they can live freely and prosperously as an independent nation for the first time!* **It is God who gave them Identity and history! It is written!** However, the Israelites, many times, behaved as if God didn't do anything for them and went on "prostituting themselves" by worshipping various idols of foreign nations who didn't really accepted them or valued them! **Habitually, whenever the Israelites found themselves under the rule and oppression, for example, of the Babylonians (whose idols they loved), they recalled about the "good old days!"** But God in His Faithfulness **saved** them, **restored** what they have lost and put them back on the right path, again and again (v. 9). ***The Bible says, God did so because of the Promises He has made to Abraham, Jacob and David! God did it only because of His Faithfulness to His own Promises!***

II. THE LESSON: The Recalled when they came to their Senses!

1. v. 11. "Then His People Recalled the Day of Old."

Do you know why they "recalled the Days of Old?" It is because of verse 9 and 10! Let us now carefully examine the verses to gain insight and understanding.

- a) Verse 9a. This verse in Isaiah refers to scriptures such as Exodus 3:1-10 (vv. 7-10) in which God expresses His **deep concern** for the Israelites who were **suffering** under Pharaoh. In Isaiah, the *magnitude of God's concern* is expressed as "**In all their distress He to was distressed**" which compelled His to act mightily and "save" them. Of course, we know to what extent God extended Himself to rescue them, restore them, prepare them for their freedom, prosperity and future according to His Plan.
- b) Verse 9b. "In His Love and Mercy, He redeemed them; He lifted them up and carried them "all the days of the old." This verse gives us a glimpse into **the Heart of God**, so Loving, Compassionate and Tender in caring for His children!
- c) Verse 10a. The Wicked Response! In contrast, this verse shows us the kind of wicked and hard hearts the Israelites had! **Ungrateful, rebellious and incorrigible!** God didn't deserve such a response! God never deserves such evil response from anyone, especially, from those to

whom He has show abundant Grace, Mercy and Forgiveness! Their wicked response, the Bible indicates, *caused* The Holy Spirit “**to grieve!**”

d) Verse 10b. **The Payback!** Their wicked behavior which they *displayed repeatedly* **cause God to turn against them!** The Bible says, God “became their enemy and He Himself fought against them!” This is not only the *worse possible situation to be in*, but also most terrifying! We cannot be so foolish and wicked enough to try God’s patience! The Israelites began to reflect on their bad behavior only after they found out how much it costed them to face God as their “enemy!” God has many ways to express His anger and displeasure. Withholding rain (famine, sending fierce raiding armies (war), defeat (humiliation, loss of freedom, oppression, etc.), absence of God’s Presence (spiritually devastating!) – all of which are recorded in the Bible! ***It is the utmost terrible thing to have God as our enemy!***

2. vv. 11-14. Recollections of the What, Why, When and How things were in the Old Days!

In verse 11, the Bible says, “**Then His people recalled the days of the old, the days of Moses and his people.**” Faced with God’s fierce anger and the devastating consequences of their wickedness, they yearningly began to recall the past – “**the days of the Old,**” which *they despised* before the floor gave out from under their feet and the roof came down crashing on them! It is interesting that the people who are benefiting the most from the fruits of the labor of their ancestors are the ones **who frown upon their past!** In our contemporary world, the young generation refer to the older generation with disdain, as “old fashioned,” or “old school” while they enjoy the freedom bought through hardships, tears and blood spilled by their ancestors! In the Book of Joshua, the Bible says, the generations after Joshua’s generation passed, they soon **forgot** their history and began to worship the idols of the very nations he conquered *which provoked the LORD to anger* (Judges 2:10-15). Therefore, God had to teach the Israelites a lesson by allowing the nations whom Joshua defeated to conquer them and oppress them! In their suffering, the Israelites **remembered** God and **recalled** what He had done for their ancestors and cried out to Him for help! The God raised judges who defeated the idol worshipping nations and restored their freedom and status as His people. After a while, they go back to being rebellious against God and *the cycle continued!* On many occasions, God showed them **His Angry Side** and what He can do to them! Then they would **recall His Good Side** by *remembering* how loving, merciful, kind, and protective of them God is. While they are in the mire, they yearn of the “**good old times!**” Their mouths overflow with *flowery language of*

nostalgic recollections of “**the Days of the Old.**” I mean, they went as far as the time of Moses when they found themselves in trouble! The Bible say, “Only then did the people **recall the days of old!** *Under pressure, how feeble and fickle one can be!* But thank God who gave us so many examples of faithful men and women who overcame adversities and triumphed over their enemies more powerful than they were because the LORD fought their battles! Thank God for **the Remnants** who never lost their faith under pressure and continued to maintain their integrity despite the challenges of this world!

3. vv. 15-16. Spiritual Revival depends on Acknowledging God to Reclaim Your Past!

Recollection and **reflection of “the Days of Old”** *awakened* their fading memories and *ignited* their spirits to *fervently call* on God and *acknowledge* Him as their **Father** and **LORD!** It is appropriate to acknowledge God as their Father because it is He who created them and *literally birthed* them from the **barren womb** of Sarah and the **dead loin** of Abraham! It is God who **multiplied** them through Isaac and Jacob (Israel) into millions over generations! God made them into a nation through Joshua and David. **So, it is God who gave them a history to remember!** It is appropriate for the Israelites to **acknowledge** Him as LORD because it He who subdued all the nations and gave them the victories which allowed them to experience freedom, affluence and nationhood! When they came to their senses, they remember God as their “Redeemer from of old” because they recalled how He rescued, restored and reestablished them as His own through Moses! They recalled that He gave them the Law and a New Identity in the One who Redeemed them! In recalling their history, who God is, how He chose them and became to be known as “the Redeemed of the LORD,” they were revived in their Spirit! As they **acknowledged** God as their Father, they **reclaimed** their glorious past which revived their hope in the future!

4. vv. 17-19. Pleading for Old Times Sake!

- a) Verse 17a. The Israelites are Confused in their Pleading. Let us be clear about this verse. I was troubled with this verse. The Israelites are putting the blame on God for their bad circumstances! It is in their question. “Why, O LORD, do you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so we do not revere You?” Wait a minute?! First, God didn’t cause them to “wander from [His] ways and harden [their] hearts! **It is their unfaithfulness, disobedience and stubborn ways caused them to “wonder” from His ways!** As a matter of fact, God has always tried to help them see things and their future in His ways! That is why God gave

Moses the Law to teach them right from wrong! Second, God didn't "harden" their hearts! Their unwillingness to receive all of the Goodness of God was the reason for the "hardness of their hearts!"

- b) Verse 17b. **They Got is Backward!** They are confused about their "position" relative to God's! God never went anywhere! So, He doesn't need to "return" to them! They are the ones who repeatedly decided to "turn away" from Him only to bow down to foreign idols! They are the ones who rejected God's Plan for them and chose to follow their own "path!" God is always Present and never changes! That is why God sent many prophets to plead with them to consider their unfaithfulness, repent and "return" to God!
- c) Verses 18-19. **Turn Against Them instead of Us!** The Israelites were trying to *redirect* God's anger toward the Babylonians *instead of repenting of their sins!* What about those Babylonians who came and destroyed Jerusalem, ransacked the Holy Temple, killed so many of us and carried some of us into exile! You know God, we are your people! They are not!!! "They have not been called by Your Name." ***It's like they don't want to admit that they are in the situation they are in because of their own wickedness!*** The Babylonians were only God's instrument of punishment! The Israelites had a consistent problem of admitting their guilt and owning their own faults. Instead, they tried to shift blame to others, including God, for the situations they found themselves in! Blaming others will neither fix our bad circumstances cause by our own stubbornness nor fix the "heart problem." Surrendering to God can fix all of our problems.

III. CONCLUSION

God and His Truth are constant. **God does not change!** Let us learn from history and continue to remain faithful and obedient to our God!