

“Why the Lord wants us to look forward”

Isaiah 43:16-21 NIV

“This is what the LORD says—he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, ⁽¹⁷⁾ who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick:

“⁽¹⁸⁾ **Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. ⁽¹⁹⁾ See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.**

“⁽²⁰⁾ The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the desert and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, ⁽²¹⁾ the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.”

The words of this text might seem unfamiliar to you.

Yet they describe a situation in which most of us find ourselves.

Think of a time you asked a physician about symptoms you suffered.

The doctor diagnosed your condition in technical lingo.

You said, “Doc, can you put that in layperson’s language?”

This happened to me recently when I thought I was losing sight in my left eye.

First the doctor defined my condition in medical terms.

Then he rephrased my ailment so this “amateur” could understand him.

He further said that my eye problem could be corrected fairly simply.

Norma and I went out of the clinic thankful and filled with hope.

Our Isaiah text makes little sense to most folks.

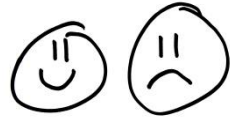
But when they hear this passage in layperson terms, I think they’ll be excited.

It brings hope and extraordinary insights.

When you look back at your life, does every memory make you smile?

When you look at your present situation, do you feel entirely positive?

Do you foresee a hopeful future?



If any of these questions made you grimace, great news is in store for you.

The Bible gives us positive perspectives.

We find superb promise.

Insights for profound change.

You won't find these prospects anywhere else.

Do you get a little squinty-eyed when I talk about the Bible?

Are you skeptical of this old book?

Consider what occurs every day.

In many ways, doesn't life, resemble a “king of the mountain” game?

People scramble to win and stay on top.

When first in Hollywood, Norma and I went to the filming of a few TV programs.

For one popular game show, we dressed hoping to be chosen as contestants.

We wore silly outfits; Norma put on makeup we thought might impress the producers.

Officials seated all of us ticket-holders in a room telling us that producers would be choosing the contestants soon.

They would lead us outside on the lot and we were to wait at a curb.

Producers would come out, look over us ticketholders, and choose the contestants.

“Do not move from the curb,” they ordered.

The producers soon came out a nearby door.

With several others, Norma and I stood obediently where we were told.

About a third of the original group mobbed the producers.

Guess whom the producers chose as contestants?

They picked the screaming “mobsters.”

You know the old adage about “the squeaking wheel getting the grease.”

That night squealing heels became contestants.

TV audiences love exuberance.

Entertainment duds bore us.

Life often resembles that selection process.

Obeys the rules and people run over you.

You must look out for yourself.

If you don't, no one else will.

So how do we survive?

This text intimates life-changing insights.

- **One, the Lord wants you to succeed. Other Bible texts such as 2 Peter 3:9 confirm this truth: “He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”**

God wants us all to win.

My life changed greatly when that truth finally sank through my upper mush.

We win, though, by honoring God and doing our best to follow his will in Christ.

We do not get caught in life's nasty swirl. We benefit from recalling the truth that the Old Testament is largely an How-not-to-do-it book. That's why Paul told first century Christians concerning the OT: **“Don't act as most of the people in the Old Testament did:”**

“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.”¹

We don't let the world press us into its mold.²

Or its crazy trends and fads.

People in the OT kept doing that.

We win by honoring God and obeying Him.

The Bible gives us two angles on winning: As we have seen, OT shows us How-not-to-do-things,

For example, *the OT Book of Judges* relates how people followed one fast-talking leader after another.

One phrase continually repeats:

“all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.”³

Want a preview of what's happening in the 21st century?

Read the *Book of Judges* and the parallels will amaze you

Ambitious wannabes suggest “bright ideas.”

¹ 1 Corinthians 10:11, 12 NIV

² Romans 12:2

³ See Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19: 1, 21:25

If the media likes the “bright idea” person, that opinion gets widespread publicity.

People glorify the speaker and they clamor to have the idea adopted.

Pollsters tell us how popular the idea is.

Talking heads argue the idea’s merit.

Few consider the Lord’s will.

Godly people don’t get sucked into the din.

If we expect the Lord’s favor, we consider whether the Lord approves our actions.

Want to avoid broken dreams and heart-breaking dead-ends? Check out the How-not-to-do-it book, the Old Testament.

One tragic chapter after another relates stories of people who thought they were doing right, but didn’t consult God.

They always failed.

Paul: “Pay attention to the OT examples:”

The OT reliably tells How-not-to-do life.

Even more vital, The Old Testament (as does the New) emphasizes God’s supremacy.

Our Isaiah 43 text looks back at the day Israel saw God defeat earth’s mightiest army.

In Moses’ time, God helped a bunch of broke, helpless, over-worked slaves leave Egypt.

God weakened Egypt’s and Pharaoh’s resolve by sending ten plagues on them.

After Israel escaped, Pharaoh decided he didn’t want to lose his cheap work force. He sent his powerful army to bring Israel back.

Israel was totally unready to fight.

- Their families accompanied them;
- they carried all their belongings;
- they had no training; carried no weapons.

A sea lay in front of them; army chariots and horses pursued them.

No place to hide, they couldn’t call for help.

In distress, Moses complained to the Lord.

God said: “Don’t talk; walk toward the sea.”⁴

He surrounded the Egyptians with dense fog. Using strong winds and other forces, the Lord parted the sea and Israel walked through.

When Pharaoh ordered his troops to reclaim them, the waters collapsed on his army; the wheels on their dreaded chariots froze.

⁴ See Exodus 14

Pharaoh didn't have WD 40 for his chariot wheels and he forgot to send his navy.

In Isaiah's time, 700 years later, the Lord wanted Israel to look back at that event:

“This is what the LORD says—he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, (17) who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick...”

The past the Lord wanted Israel to focus on emphasized God's power and might.

- **What was their present condition?**

The outlook was bleak, not good

Entertainment, greed, and living a life of ease consumed people.

The Egyptians still threatened from the south.

A new foe, Babylon, arose in the north.

Because they followed popular opinion, not God, Israel was in more jeopardy than a sick cat at a coyote convention.

So we see this amazing statement: “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.”

The Lord wasn't just telling them to overlook their forefathers' bad decisions.

If he wasn't telling them to forget the mistakes of the past, what was he saying?

He meant: Follow God's will now, believe in His power, and he will take care of you.

Think of this additional insight: The Bible tells us that keeps God testing us.

Consider your present aggravations, problems, and challenges from this perspective:

Teachers test us to evaluate our progress.

God tests us to see whether we are growing in trust, faith, and love.

“Remember how the LORD your God led you through the wilderness for these forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would obey his commands.”⁵

⁵Deuteronomy 8:2 NLT; also Deut. 13:1-3 & Leviticus 14:34, 35 NLT

When challenges, problems, and obstacles arise, we remember:

- God tests our beliefs.
- He tests our behavior.
- He tests our trust in His power.

“(18) Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. (19) See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.”

In a department store the other day, Norma and I spoke briefly with a woman who wore a bright green t-shirt.

Bold letters on the front of her top stated:

**“Let your faith be stronger than your fear.”
That’s better than many things I’ve seen.**

**Unless we base our faith in God,
however, even faith eventually fails us.**

We keep looking for something to occur that will change everything so we can live happily ever after.

God’s Word tells us that this world is not our permanent residence; it’s a testing and proving ground.

If this world is a place of testing, it’s a mistake to plant too many roots.

How many floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, avalanches, earthquakes and natural disasters does it take to convince us?

Unless we put God first and remain faithful in Christ, we set ourselves up for disappointment.

Right after the Lord advised:

“Forget the past things,” he said:

“See, I am doing a new thing!”

In the Greek translation (The Septuagint) that many first century Jews used, the word “new” refers to something unusual, something never seen before.

The Book of Revelation uses the same word for “new” in chapter 21:

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. (2) I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down

out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

(3) And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.’

“(4) ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’

(5) He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’”⁶

Which place sounds better to you: this place of floods, tornadoes, cemeteries, and tears?

Or the New Jerusalem, where all things are entirely new and permanent?

“The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the desert and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I

formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.”

God always takes care of his people, but they must trust Him, obey Him and praise Him with great thanksgiving.

I pray that we shall use the coming days that God grants us to praise Him for his power, mercy, and love in Christ.

Your future _____



What is new with you?



**Bob Blair
PO Box 176
Cleghorn, IA 51014**

www.robertblairbooks.com

⁶ Revelation 21:1-5 NIV