

"I shall make mention of the lovingkindness of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted to us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has granted them according to His compassion and according to the abundance of His lovingkindness!" (Isaiah 63:7, NASV)

"I will tell again (!) of the faithful, gracious acts of Yahweh and praise Him for everything He has done for us--the wonderful goodness, the riches of His mercy, which He has shown to the house of Israel, and the abundance of His endless love!" (Isaiah 63:7, Passion Translation!)

What a great lead-in for our lesson last night!

Remember our lesson last week, on Isaiah 62, where God declared that "He would not be silent until Israel's righteousness goes forth like brightness and her salvation like a torch that is burning, and nations see her righteousness and all kings her glory"! On that day (still to come!) when Israel will be called by a "new name," and be "a crown of beauty," and "a royal diadem in the hand of the Lord"! When they will no longer be called, "Forsaken"! And their land no longer called, "Desolate"! But called, "My Delight Is In Her," and their land, "Married"! (Isaiah again using the metaphor of marriage to illustrate the intimacy, and permanency of the relationship that God desires between Himself and His people--and between Him and "the land"!)

Then God also declared that He would appoint "watchmen" on the walls of Jerusalem who were to constantly remind Him, in fact, "give Him no rest" until He makes Jerusalem "a praise in the earth" and ends any domination by foreigners over them (all of which, we suggested, seemed more for the watchmen's benefit and comfort, rather than for our sovereign Lord who has no memory lapse, or any hesitation, in fulfilling His predetermined will!)

Then, in verse 10--with a prophecy still to come to pass--where God gives a command for His people to "clear the way...build up the highway, remove the stones, and lift up a standard over the peoples"--for "Behold! Their salvation comes"! And (on that day!), they will be called, "The holy people"! And Jerusalem, "Sought out, a city not forsaken"!

And that set the scene, and the tone, for our lesson last night on Isaiah 63--where Isaiah gives us the awesome, prophetic picture of God, in the person of His Son, the Anointed One of Israel, coming (in His second advent, at the close of the Great Tribulation) as a "Warrior" to take vengeance on His "enemies," represented by the nation of Edom! (The Edomites, descendants of Esau, were the perennial enemies of Israel)! It is His "day of vengeance," as well as the "year of redemption," when He comes to restore His relationship with His people (Israel!). Isaiah describes Him as "majestic in His apparel, marching in the greatness of His strength, and speaking in righteousness--as the One who is 'mighty to save"! His garments are "sprinkled, and stained, with the lifeblood of those He has 'trampled,' in what Revelation 14:19 describes as "the great wine press of the wrath of God"!

But it's also the great day of salvation for Israel! And Isaiah takes the occasion to "make mention (to "tell again"!) of the lovingkindness of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us, and (particularly!) the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He granted them according to His compassion and the abundance of His lovingkindness"!

"Surely they are My people," declared the Lord...so He became their Savior...and in His love and in His mercy He redeemed them...and lifted them and carried them all the days of old"! But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; therefore, He turned Himself to become their enemy...and fought against them"!

Then, Isaiah writes (in verses 11-14), that "His people remembered (and obviously longed for!) the days of old, of Moses..."! And asked (rhetorically!): "Where the One is who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock..who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them, who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, who divided the water before them to make for Himself an everlasting name...who led them through the depth, like the horse in the wilderness, where they did not stumble...and gave them rest"!

Then, having "looked back at," and extolling God's goodness and past faithfulness to Israel, he issued a solemn prayer of repentance for the nation--beseeching God (in what Wiersbe describes as "one of the greatest revival prayers in Scripture") to "look down from heaven and see from His holy and glorious habitation" the current desperate condition of His people! And wondering and pondering, and then bewilderedly raising the question (as MacArthur puts it) of "whether God had somehow changed the way He felt towards Israel?"! And so appeals for 'new mercies' such as He had exhibited toward the nation in the past"! Constable describes it as "an intercessory communal lament"! (Motyer calls it "a passionate prayer of intercession, 'storming the gates of heaven' with every tool he could use"!)

Here are some of his laments, followed by what seem like overly bold and inappropriate (?) questions (and accusations!) to pose to a holy and sovereign God! "You are our Father, though Abraham doesn't recognize us, and Israel doesn't know us," declares Isaiah! "You, O Lord, our Father, 'our Redeemer from of old' is Your name! (So) "where are Your zeal and Your mighty deeds...and why, O Lord, do you cause us to stray from Your ways and harden our heart from fearing You? Return for the sake of Your servants, the tribes of Your heritage! Your holy people possessed your sanctuary for a little while, (and now!) our adversaries have trodden it down! We have become like those over whom You have never ruled, like those who were not called by your name"! (Wow! Is Isaiah really accusing God of "causing" Israel to "stray from His ways," and "hardening their hearts"? Only in a "judicial sense," writes Constable! "It was only because they had chosen to continue in sin that He judged them by allowing sin to dominate them"! The apostle Paul explains in Romans 1:18-32 that when people "do not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, He gives them over to a depraved mind to do those things which are not proper"! How sad!)

But Scripture assures us that God did not, and still has not, withdrawn His zeal, or in any way given up on Israel! Wiersbe writes that "God will have no rest till He accomplishes His purposes for His people, and that the world will have no peace till He succeeds! Therefore, he asks us to "give Him no rest" but to (constantly!) intercede for Israel and Jerusalem, for the prayers of His people are an important part of the program of God"! (And His "mighty deeds" are yet to come!)

Thank the Lord for the "abundance of His lovingkindness" (and His grace and mercy!) toward each of us! And pray ("storm the gates of heaven"! ) for the peace of Jerusalem!

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