

20251019 Looking Ahead and Not Behind – Duane

Isaiah 43:16-19

Jerusalem had been destroyed, and Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had taken the Israelites into captivity. The nation was under God's judgment for their sin and rebellion. By the time Isaiah wrote these words, Israel had been in exile for many years, and no doubt, they had grown deeply discouraged.

In their despair, the people began to dwell on the "former things"—the past deliverances and victories. They threw a pity party, their theme song drawn from Psalm 137:1: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion."

Isaiah 43:17 briefly recalls one such deliverance: how God parted the Red Sea to rescue them from the Egyptians. Trapped with nowhere to turn, the Israelites watched as God not only saved them but utterly destroyed their enemies. Surely, they recounted other times in the wilderness when God protected and provided for them.

But then came God's shocking declaration through the prophet: **"Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert"** (verses 18-19).

This is the heart of our message this morning. From these verses, I see two vital truths:

1. **Don't dwell on the past.**
2. **Look ahead to what God is doing.**

1. Don't Dwell on the Past

Too many people today are trapped in the past. **"I remember when..."** or **"Those were the good old days."** God commands in verse 18, **"Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old."** The Hebrew phrase for **"do not remember"** goes beyond mere forgetting; it means **"don't get so stuck in the past that you miss God's work in the present."**

When God says this, He's urging us not to become so fixated on yesterday that we overlook what He can—and will—do today. That said, God *does* encourage us to remember certain pivotal moments;

- Feasts for the Israelites to celebrate His faithfulness
- The Passover to recall their exodus from Egypt,
- Feast of Tabernacles to remember His provision in the wilderness.

The point? We look back—not to dwell, but to build faith.

Think of driving a car. The rearview mirror is essential for occasional glances, but your primary focus must be forward, guiding your direction. Yet God presses further in verses 18-19: Forget the old patterns. A *new* thing is breaking forth. Paul says in Philippians 3:13-14, **"But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."** Better things are ahead.

- Consider Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, as a living example.

2. Look Ahead—The Need to Embrace the New

We don't dwell in the past because God is *always* doing a new thing. ***"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it shall spring forth"*** (v. 19). Isaiah calls his people to faith by recalling past deliverances, then pushes further: *Expect something fresh*. God doesn't repeat the same script every time. Dwelling on the past, assuming He'll act identically, limits Him. He surprises us. Indeed,

God is always doing new things:

- 2 Corinthians 5:17: ***"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."***
- Revelation 21:5: ***"Behold, I make all things new."***
- Isaiah 65:17: ***"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth."***

The new is always bigger, better than the old. Jesus captured this in John 14:12: ***"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father."***

Consider: Jesus healed by the hem of His garment (Matthew 9:20). But in Acts 5:15, Peter's *shadow* healed multitudes. In Acts 19:12, handkerchiefs touched by Paul drove out demons. Greater works, indeed!

As 1 Corinthians 2:9 promises: ***"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*** ***"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it shall spring forth."***

Closing: Step Forward in Faith

In wrapping up, hear God's words again: ***"Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."***

The past was good, but God says: Don't camp there—the future outshines it.