Pastor Richard Allen Farmer

Crossroads Church

5587 Redan Road

Stone Mountain, GA 30088

There is an old adage regarding the wardrobe of a bride on her wedding day. She is to wear “Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue”.

In this text, God addresses the something old, something new theme. There is no mention of anything borrowed or anything blue. :-)

Israel had a rich, storied past. God had been at work in and among them.

They could look back and see rituals and customs and traditions and ceremonies and commandments and prohibitions and allowances. Some of that which was in their past they were to bring into their present and were to take into their future. Other parts of their past, they were to discard.

The language of verse 18 is not ambiguous. Neither is it literal. Cf. Philippians 3:13. Throughout their life as a nation chosen to be in relationship with Yahweh, Israel has been commanded to remember. They are surely not now to completely forget the past, the former things. They are surely not being forbidden to remember what God has done in and among them. No. The text is an admonition to give memory a different place in your thinking. Memory is not to drive them. Consideration of the things of old is not to be their modus operandi as they move forward. Old Testament scholar Alec J. Mother says *the past can teach and illustrate but it must not bind.[[1]](#footnote-2)* They are to position themselves to participate in what God is up to, in and among them.

Listen to the language of the text: I **will** do a new thing. It is possible that Israel will miss what Yahweh does because they are holding on to that which is former and old. The rhetorical question is raised, “Shall you not know it?” That is, is it possible you might miss the new because you are holding on to the old?

These pilgrims, these nomads, have known wilderness and desert. God says He will make a road in the wilderness. He will create rivers in the desert. Well, *that’s* new! God will upset the natural order of things and do a new thing! Cf. 41:17-20. Isaiah references the Red Sea event in verses 16 and 17 and we are reminded that the same God who was at work in Israel’s behalf at the parting of the Red Sea is with Israel now. Even the animal kingdom will acknowledge this new action of God, says verse 20. All this will transpire because Israel is in relationship with Yahweh.

Exodus 6:7

*I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.*

Here is Yahweh saying, “I’ve got you. You are mine.”

The language of the potter takes over here. It is not merely that Israel relates to Yahweh on a certain level. Israel was *formed*, *created*, *shaped* by Yahweh. Cf. v. 1,7, 21.

This text references the first Exodus wherein God delivered His people from Egyptian slavery. It references a coming second Exodus wherein God will deliver His people from Babylonian captivity.

Hearing what God *has done* and what God *will do* should lead Israel to unbridled praise (v. 21).

Now you, my beloved Crossroads family, let us not dwell on the past in such a way that it becomes a *paralyzing past.* Rather, let us look to God and praise Him in advance for what He *shall* do.

**Illus.**

Some years ago, I read a book by Jan Carlzon titled, *Moments of Truth.* Carlzon was, at the time he wrote the book (1987), the chief executive officer of SAS Group, which operated Scandinavian Airlines System. Carlzon said there are 50,000 times each day when a person has some kind of interaction with Scandinavian Airlines. That interaction will determine whether or not a customer will choose SAS as *their* airline or not. Moving away from a centralized leadership model in which only upper management would make decisions, Carlzon gave every employee the authority to do whatever they had to do to turn every customer’s moment of truth into a positive one. He told the story of a customer who arrived at a ticket counter and realized he’d left his ticket in his hotel room. He assumed he’d have to purchase a new ticket. The ticket agent said that was unnecessary. “What hotel did you just check out of?”, she asked. The ticket agent dispatched a car to go to the hotel, retrieve the ticket and bring it to the customer. Carlzon goes on to write that in most companies that ticket agent wouldn’t have the authority to do that. That customer would probably never fly another airline if SAS was going where he needed to go.

**Application**

I want to deputize every one of you to do whatever you need to do to see that a guest in our building or one of our members receive such outstanding customer service that they will choose the Crossroads Church as their preferred community of faith. Ushers, do whatever you can, whatever you must, to see that a worshipper is served. If a person has a coughing spell in worship, get to them quickly with a bottle of water. If a young mother needs to nurse her child, escort her to a place where she can have privacy and feel safe...and loved. You may need to break a rule or two. Handle those interactions, those moments of truth, carefully. I heard of a recent incident in which a mother’s small children were getting restless in our worship. She got a snack for them (from the bread table in the entryway) and was going to feed the children in the parlor. Someone told her they couldn’t eat in the parlor. Wrong answer. We eat in the parlor regularly! Even if that were a policy, that Sunday it should have been suspended, by a person who recognized a moment of truth opportunity. New thinking. Forgetting the way we always do/did things and providing outrageous, memorable customer service or moments of truth.

John E. Burkhart, in his book, *Worship: A Searching Examination of the Liturgical Experience* defines worship as “a celebrative response to what God has done, is doing and promises to do.”

As Israel remembers what God has done and experiences what God is doing and eagerly anticipates what God will do, Israel is supposed to break out in praise.

Praise God for the new things springing forth.

Praise God for the highway in the wilderness.

Praise God for the rivers in the desert.

Praise God for the new people He is sending our way.

Praise God for how He’s stretching us. Amen

1. Motyer, Alec J. *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*  [↑](#footnote-ref-2)