

Amnesia



Humans have suffered from “Spiritual Amnesia” starting at “The Garden”, and going right up to today. When we look at Noah and the Patriarchs we almost wonder how God was able to execute His plan to “Conquer Satan, Sin, Death, and Make a People for Himself for His Glory and Our Good” with drunks, liars, usurpers, deceivers, poor parents and slave traders. Then again that’s all He ever has had to work with **Isn’t It**, when God spoke to them they were quick to comply to His wishes but left on their own they were a bit less righteous and even nefarious. Has the current generation evolved away from that character? I think not!! Perhaps our techniques and approaches are different but otherwise “We are no better than our ancestors”.

When Joseph revealed to his brothers that even though their plan was for evil God accomplished “Good”, that he forgave them for their shameful act and welcomed them into a time of peace and prosperity that gave them temporary respite from their shame. Time is relative in God’s eyes and 400 years later; things aren’t so good any more. Moses to the rescue!! Once things culminated and they are heading to the “Promise Land” they have already forgotten the “Miracles of God” that got them to where they are and with each passing “Miracle” they quickly forget, complain to Moses of one thing or another and even devise an alternate deity in hopes of improving their circumstances. Even with all that whining, dishonoring God and deviation, God was still able to bring them to that piece of real-estate that He had promised Abraham, but much was still ahead.

Jericho was pretty easy but then they forgot again who was really fighting their battles, Ai was a catastrophe they didn’t expect and while Joshua did resolve the situation, the Israelites always had trouble when they forgot who their benefactor was and what He expected from them. I believe that is still true, that He expects the same from us as He did from the Israelites, that we aren’t any less forgetful than they were and that we reap similar outcomes as a result.

In an attempt to keep the Israelites mindful of His expectations of them He sent prophets to remind them. Jesus addressed that in (Mark 12:1-12) & (Matthew 21:33-46) characterizing the vineyard as Israel, the tenants as it’s citizenry and the servants as His prophets. The Bible records that the prophets were persecuted and even executed so Jesus’s parable applies here. Let’s modernize the parable a bit, picture the vineyard as (Your Life), God provides you with protection aka The Wall, resources to produce “Fruit” and “Process It” and real-estate to live in aka The Tower but each time He returns with requests for anything you treat Him badly or make excuses for why you can’t do it. Jesus said that wouldn’t go on forever, what do you think? In Psalm 106, David outlines the Israelites forgetfulness, sinfulness, wickedness, idol worship, complaining and disobedience as a more comprehensive reinforcement of what has already been said.

Approximately 530 years after David’s reign and the Psalm that he wrote, the Israelites were returning from their captivity in Babylon and it was time for a reminder. In Nehemiah 8:1-12, Ezra the priest brings “The Law” and reads it to the assembly both men and women for somewhere near 6 hours while the other priests mingled among the crowd explaining the meaning of what was being read. Two “Miraculous Events” occurred here, first that he was able to get the assembly to spend 6 hours listening to him read from “The Bible” and second that they were described as a “Unified Group”. This was the first “Reminder” recorded in the Bible since the Babylon captivity.

During the Persian, Greek and Hasmonean eras much happened both good and bad to test the resolve of the Israelites but none of it prepared them for Roman occupation. While the message of Daniel

raised their expectations for a Messiah, many messiahs came and went during that period but none of them filled the bill for the Jewish population. After 350 years of domination and being tossed about made them ready for independence and autonomy.

Jesus said and did "The Right Things"!! The population followed Him about wherever He went, listened to His every word and begged Him for medical restoration even to the extent of resuscitation. So why did they ultimately turn on Him and have Him executed? It turns out that the plans of the population didn't match up with His and His Father's plans. Sounds Familiar!! Do you try to make Jesus fit your plans rather than seek His plans for your life? It's not an uncommon phenomenon!!

Being in submission to Gods' plan may involve submission to other authorities, (Romans 13:1-14) outlines this: *Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.*

This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: if you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

In the wake of Romans, John offers some absolution in advance of his recommendations in (1 John 1:1-6): *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

What Greater Reminder Is There Than These?