

The Bigger Picture

(Isa. 26:3)

There is a bigger picture for every event and life-experience than most of us see. While individually and collectively we tend to see the whole world through the prism of our limited “telescope,” there is always a bigger picture to consider. Our text (Isa. 26:3) teaches us that the person who will enjoy perfect peace must focus his or her mind on God. In fact, how effective our mind stay on God is a reflection of the extent to which we trust in Him. Truly knowing and acknowledging that there is a bigger picture help us not to easily loose our head when things are great! It also ensures that we do not loose our hope when challenges arise!

Recently, NASA published a picture of the earth and moon as seen from planet Mars. Sort of the identifying arrows added, all one sees from the picture are two tiny, grayish red dots. The beauty of our oceans and seas, as seen from the usual satellite pictures we are used to, is all gone! Looking at it, it suddenly dawned on me how limited we are in our knowledge, perception, and sight. But there is One who not only knows the end from the beginning, but also set in order the delicate movements heavenly bodies, the planets relative to their stars. God is Omniscience, Omnipresent, and Omnipotent. He has the master plan for the whole universe and yet, does care for us individually that He visits us (Psalm 8:4) as if we are each a world by ourselves.

In Gen 15:13-14, God gave Abram the big picture of the Israelites sojourn in Egypt. “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.” Same Abraham dwelled in Egypt due to famine, yet God instructed Isaac not to go to Egypt and blessed him tremendously in a land that was under famine! Jacob in turn dwelled in Canaan. It would be through the life-experience of the 17-year old Joseph many years later that the picture God painted to Abram would start to become a reality. Not knowing the big picture, Joseph could have taken his travails very badly and reacted grievously but instead he remained steadfast to God. He kept his integrity and his love of righteousness (Gen 39:7-9), trusting God to give him victory. He demonstrated the awareness of a bigger picture when he told Pharaoh’s Chief Butler “but remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house,” Gen 40:14. Later on, one can wonder how triumphant he must have felt when he revealed himself to his brothers in Gen 45:3-8. “I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt...!” However, even in those moments of great triumph, honor and fame, he recognized that there was a bigger picture! In Gen 50:24-25, he made the children of Israel take an oath that they would take his bones with them when they go out of Egypt into the Promised Land. He correctly recognized that Egypt was not the ultimate destination!

What about you and me? How do we take our life-journey experiences - the triumphs and the challenges? Do we recognize that there is a bigger picture than what we currently see? Even in our modern world, there are many that have suffered great injustices. Slave labor was part and parcel of how America was built; but today many of us enjoy the benefits without little or no reflection. How could you have convinced Americans two hundred years; no, one hundred; even fifty years ago that today a black man will be sitting in the White House as the president of the most powerful nation on earth! Can we really imagine that the father of Barack Obama, possibly with a goat-herding Kenyan heritage, could have imagined forty years ago that his son would today be the president of the United States? This teaches us that there is a bigger world out there than our immediate “vicinity” - vicinity in terms of space, time, and current status.

When we fail to recognize that there is a bigger picture, it becomes difficult to stand on faith in God (Heb 11:5), and without strong faith it is easy to fall into distractions and scare tactics of the enemy. Rather than being led by God, we would become mostly guided by our emotions and external influences (some helpful, some unhelpful). The law of “the majority must be right” suddenly looks attractive; “well, everybody is doing it!” But we are not everybody – we are special people (1 Peter 2:9), sanctified by the blood of Jesus, if we are indeed believers in Christ. Without the big picture, we may find it easy to compromise and live by the standard of the world rather than everyday honoring Christ in our conduct and in our speech. Honesty and integrity may get pushed to the background and replaced with pride, deception, impatience, schemes, and envy. Also, it may become difficult for us to give glory to God for our victorious moments (Deut. 8:11-18). This is when a long-prayed-for job arrives and we can no longer find the time to worship and serve God as we used to do. We receive that awesome promotion and suddenly, we become less considerate of others and treat people the way we would not pray to be treated ourselves.

What can we conclude today? There is always a bigger picture and this gives us great hope. People lose hope when they buy into the deception of the enemy that things cannot get better (1 Cor. 10:13). Suddenly, all the past testimonies become distant; God seems to be far away even though He is always near (Mat. 28:20). The accuser of the brethren, that eternal enemy of God and all that belong to Christ, will always want us to think that all is lost. Are you sick? The enemy may try to tell you that you are finished even though God says this sickness is not unto death (John 11:4)! The enemy sows fear but God says, “Fear not, for I am with you,” (Isa. 41:10). Has God put His words in your mouth for the world? You must continue to deliver those words wherever you go. Remember God says, “Do not be dismayed before their faces; lest I dismay you before them” (Jer. 1:17). When you are on the right path walking with God; flesh and temptations may sometimes get you thinking that you are failing because you are not supposed to be where you are. You must prayerfully resist that temptation and hold on steadfastly to God who only can and will perfect your ways. Every believer must recognize that there is a bigger picture for our Christian race. Only by so doing can we overcome distractions, delays, and setbacks, and stay on course with God to reach our goals.

Even with Father Abraham, God still kept a bit of the big picture hidden. The ultimate was the redemption of humankind that God was going to achieve through the death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. God told Abraham that in him, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. He gave Abraham a pictorial representation saying that, only if one can count the stars of heaven will anyone be able to count the descendants of Abraham (Gen. 15:5). Probably Abram did not understand how the fulfillment of that promise would come at that time but he believed God and the Bible tells us it was accounted to him for righteousness. Are you a believer who has been cleansed by the atoning blood of Jesus? Do you know that God has a bigger picture than you currently see? A picture that is bigger than your wealth, your position, and your influence? A picture that is bigger than your struggles, your challenges, and your needs? Have you dedicated your life to follow Jesus at all costs; to love righteousness and hate iniquities as He Himself does; and to seek Him in all your ways and follow a path that is pleasing unto Him? If not, why not start today? You can invite Jesus into your heart right now and let Him begin to show you the bigger picture than you ever imagined. Remember He is always waiting for you to respond (Rev 3:20).