

## **The God of New Beginnings**

### **A New Thing**

**Have you ever noticed how people tend to flock to the newest, most exciting thing? Something about new things seems to catch our attention and draw our eye.**

**People into **cars** love to see the newest car models when they hit the lots.**

**When the latest **iPhone** releases, people line up for hours to get the newest features.**

**New **hairstyles and clothing** lines sweep through the fashion world and gather the attention of millions.**

**It is in our nature to get excited about new things.**

**One of the reasons we are drawn to new things is because it is **God's nature to do new things...** and He is our Creator.**

**If you have your Bible this morning, and I hope you do, **open with me to Isaiah 43.****

#### **Isaiah 43:18-19**

**18      “Remember not the former things,  
nor consider the things of old.**

**19      Behold, I am doing a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?**

**I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.**

**Our God is the God of new beginnings. He is the God who does new things.**

**For the past two weeks, we have focused on the new beginnings God works **IN us**. Specifically, Pastor Jerry lifted up the Word of God in the past two messages to help us see these two new beginnings that God works in our lives when we come to know Him by grace through faith in Jesus...**

**1. God gives us a new nature**

**2. God makes us a new creation**

**Aren't you grateful that our God is the God of new beginnings? If He wasn't the God of new beginnings, we would all still be separated from the life of God. It is only because He is the God of new beginnings that any of us are reborn of the Spirit of God into a new nature. Aren't you glad He is the God of new beginnings!**

**These are the new beginnings God works **IN us**. This morning, we are going to shift our focus. Today, we will consider **the new beginnings God works **AROUND us****. Specifically, we will consider that He is the God of new beginnings, and He is the God who does **NEW THINGS**.**

**Read Isaiah 43:18-19 again. Let these words sink in. Notice that He is the God who does new things...**

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nor consider the things of old.**

**19      Behold, I am doing a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.**

**These words from the prophet Isaiah are powerful on their own. They are powerful because they resonate with the human condition. When we feel the weight of sin and the brokenness of this world, it is comforting to know that this is not the end. Our God is the God of new beginnings. He is the God who does new things.**

**These words are powerful on their own, but they are even more powerful when we understand why God gave these specific words **to the nation of Israel**. These words were given in a particular situation, around specific circumstances, and with a distinct purpose. Let's consider what was happening in the nation of Israel in which God gave them these words through the prophet, Isaiah.**

**It was the eighth century BC. The condition of Israel was disastrous.**

**For those who may not be familiar, the nation of Israel was selected by God to be God's chosen people. God set them apart to be a light to the nations and to make Himself and His salvation known to the world.**

**Genesis 26:4**

***God said to Abraham, the father of Israel... "I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed."***

## **Isaiah 43:6**

**6 “I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness;  
I will take you by the hand and keep you;  
I will give you as a covenant for the people,  
a light for the nations,**

**God is a covenant keeping God. He had always been faithful to Israel. But by the eighth century, Israel had rejected their God for decades and decades. The first commandment in the law of God for the nation of Israel was to have not have any other gods but Him. As the people of God, they were to keep themselves from going the way of other nations, worshipping false gods, and practicing the wicked ways of the nations around them. It was only by walking in the law of God and keeping His commandments that they would fulfill their purpose to be God’s witnesses to a world that desperately needed Him.**

**But now, Israel had rejected God completely. They turned away from God and His law to worship false gods and to bow down to idols made by man. They left the righteous ways of God to go their own way and to engage in the wicked practices of the nations around them. Their hearts were far from God. They had become corrupt and evil. Their actions were so unloving towards God and towards one another. They were a people in rebellion towards God and towards His covenant that He had made with them.**

## **Jeremiah 15:6**

**“You who have forsaken Me,” declares the Lord,  
“You keep going backward.**

**So I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you; I am tired of relenting!”**

**In His law and through the prophets, God had warned Israel over and over that their rejection of Him would lead to their destruction and to the destruction of their capital city, Jerusalem.**

**Deuteronomy 28 (excepts from God’s law)...**

**15 “But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you...**

**33 “A nation that you have not known shall eat up the fruit of your ground and of all your labors, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually, 34 so that you are driven mad by the sights that your eyes see...**

**36 “The Lord will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known. And there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone. 37 And you shall become a horror, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples where the Lord will lead you away.”**

**Though God had been clear in His warnings, His people refused to listen. They hardened their hearts and continued to practice godlessness.**

**So, God removed His hand of protection from Israel. He stuck out His hand against her. He allowed them to be overtaken by another nation. The nation of Assyria first conquered the northern kingdom of Israel because of her idolatry. Then, the kingdom of Babylon rose to power in the east, and soon they were at the doorstep of Jerusalem, the capital city of the southern kingdom, placing the city under siege because of their idolatry.**

**It wasn't long before Jerusalem fell into the hands of the Babylonians. In 587 BC, Babylon breached the gates of Jerusalem and overtook it. It was a devastating day in Jerusalem.**

**When Babylon took the city, the Israelites were ripped from their homes. Many were killed. Everyone lost their possessions and property. Their livelihoods were completely destroyed. Families were torn apart. For many fathers, mothers, children, and siblings, the day Jerusalem fell was the last day they ever saw their loved ones.**

**Completely demoralized, the people of God were led out of the city and exiled into Babylon. They were forced to leave their homeland and become captives and prisoners in a foreign land. It was a desperate time in Israel. It was the end of everything they cared deeply about. They faced the pains of severe grief and despair. They were a people in darkness and without hope.**

**God was doing a new thing in Israel. It is safe to say that, at this point, Israel didn't like the new thing God was doing. All they had known was gone, and they could never go back to**

**the way it was. The great loss of the former things they loved was outside of their control. This was now their life, whether they wanted it or not.**

**Can you relate to Israel? Life is a series of one necessary ending after another. When God does a new thing in our life, it often necessitates the end of former things. Sometimes, those former things are things that we love and care about dearly. The pain we feel can stifle our joy when God does something new. When we are experiencing extreme pain and severe grief because of what we have lost, it can feel like it would be impossible for us to ever love something new again.**

**This was certainly the case for the nation of Israel. What they had lost was devastating. They were experiencing extreme pain and severe grief as they mourned the loss of what they loved.**

**For Israel, this was not just about losing their homeland. On top of that, it caused them to question all they knew about God. For centuries, God had spoken promises to His people about their future and about the arrival of a coming Messiah. Those promises were tied to the land of Israel! Now, their nation laid waste and they were exiled into a foreign land. How could the promises of God come about under these conditions? It felt impossible.**

**Can you relate to Israel? Sometimes, when our circumstances feel impossible and we are experiencing pain and grief, it is easy for us to begin to question God and**

**question His promises. We feel God is distant. We feel God has forgotten us. We may even feel that God has failed us.**

**In Babylon, a massive wilderness, an impassible desert, separated God's people from their homeland.**

**Jerusalem was on the west side of the Arabian Desert, and Babylon was on the east. This wilderness was too great a land mass for them to cross on their own. Their salvation was not in their hands. They could not redeem themselves. Unless God worked on their behalf, they were without hope.**

**They could not see a way to their redemption and restoration. It appeared that God had failed. It appeared to them that His Word had failed.**

**But God never fails! His Word never fails! He is the God who does new things. When everything seems dark, the saving power of God shines brightest.**

**Through the prophet Isaiah, God had given these words to Israel for this exact moment. While they were in exile, while they were mourning the loss of what they loved, while they felt that they were without hope, God spoke these words to remind them who He is and to call them to put their trust in Him... This story about Israel's exile is the powerful setting of the words of the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 43:18-19...**

## **Isaiah 43:18-19**

**18 “Remember not the former things,  
nor consider the things of old.**

**19 Behold, I am doing a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.**

**While Israel was still in captivity and in exile, God told them He was doing a new thing! In fact, He said it was already springing forth right in front of them. He asked, “Do you perceive it?” Do you perceive the new thing I am doing? I will make roadways in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. He is the God of the impossible. He is the God who does new things.**

**After seventy years of exile, God raised up a foreign king and moved in his heart on behalf of Israel. God used this king to restore Israel back to her homeland! This was a miracle! When ancient civilizations were conquered, they were not restored – they were consumed. But just as God had promised, His people were not consumed – they were restored... God saved them... they were redeemed...**

**Isaiah 43 is a beautiful passage. Consider a few more verses from Isaiah 43. Verses given to Israel for her time in captivity before she was ever rescued from exile and restored...**

## **Isaiah 43 (excerpts)**

**1 But now thus says the LORD,  
he who created you, O Jacob,**

he who formed you, O Israel:

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name, you are mine.

2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;  
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,

and the flame shall not consume you.

3 For I am the LORD your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior...

5 Fear not, for I am with you;  
I will bring your offspring from the east,  
and from the west I will gather you.

6 I will say to the north, Give up,  
and to the south, Do not withhold;  
bring my sons from afar

and my daughters from the end of the earth,

7 everyone who is called by my name,  
whom I created for my glory,  
whom I formed and made.”

10 “You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD,  
“and my servant whom I have chosen,  
that you may know and believe me  
and understand that I am he.

Before me no god was formed,  
nor shall there be any after me.

11 I, I am the LORD,  
and besides me there is no savior.

12 I declared and saved and proclaimed,

when there was no strange god among you;  
and you are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and  
I am God.

13 Also henceforth I am he;  
there is none who can deliver from my hand;  
I work, and who can turn it back?”

16 Thus says the LORD,  
who makes a way in the sea,  
a path in the mighty waters,

17 who brings forth chariot and horse,  
army and warrior;

they lie down, they cannot rise,  
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:

18 “Remember not the former things,  
nor consider the things of old.

19 Behold, I am doing a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.

When they returned to their homeland, Israel experienced a season of **new beginnings...** a season that brought joy and renewal to God’s people...

- **God gave Israel a new vision** (they had rejected God’s law and God’s ways, but those returning desired to restore proper worship in Israel)
- **God gave Israel new leaders** (Ezra and Nehemiah were two of God’s men who led Israel into the new things and the new beginnings God was doing after the exile)

- **God gave Israel a new building** (with the help of these new leaders, and by the power of God, the people rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple of the Lord that the Babylonians had destroyed)
- **God gave Israel a new name** (the reputation of Israel was terrible among the nations! In **Isaiah 62**, God promises to give Israel a new name that would come out of His own mouth... God promised to restore their name and their reputation among outsiders.)

**This is who our God is! He is the God of new beginnings! He is the God who does new things.**

**The scripture says that our God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Today, HE is still the God of new beginnings. He is still the God of the impossible. He is still the God of new things.**

**Wherever you are, whatever your season of life, God is the God of new beginnings. He is the God of new things.**

**Conclusion**

**How is God the God of new things to us?**

- 1. In our personal lives**
- 2. In our church**

**He is the God of new things in our personal lives...**

**Think about your life. Our lives are made up of series after series of necessary endings and new things.**

**Sometimes, the new things God does in our lives simply bring us joy. Sometimes, new beginnings don't cause us to experience heavy grief over the loss of former things. We easily celebrate new beginnings. We don't grieve over new beginnings when...**

- **A loved one is raised up off their sick bed**
- **Exciting milestones happen in our lives (graduating, getting married, having children, retiring, etc.)**
- **A relationship that became estranged because of the effects of sin or the obstacle of distance is restored**
- **Our financial situation improves**
- **A promise of God is fulfilled or when a calling of God on our life is realized**

**In these new things, we find it easy to celebrate and to be grateful unto God.**

**Sometimes, the new things God does in our lives cause us to experience pain and even severe grief because of the loss of former things. **New beginnings can be very painful when...****

- **We experience the loss of a loved one**
- **We lose our health or when someone we care about loses their health**
- **We lose our wealth or financial security**
- **We are called to leave a place we love, or when someone we care about is called to leave us**
- **The destructiveness of sin causes us to become estranged from someone we care about deeply**

- **We experience the death of a dream or a vision**
- **We lose something or someone we care deeply about**

**When these things happen, we mourn the loss of former things. Our pain and our grief are continually before us. We can even feel at times that God has forgotten us or that God has failed us. It's hard to imagine getting excited about anything new if the loss of what we loved was necessary for the new thing to unfold.**

**In these moments, it is more important than ever that we hold fast to this truth about God... He is the God of new beginnings. He is the God who does new things...**

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nor consider the things of old.**

**19 Behold, I am doing a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?**

**I will make a way in the wilderness  
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**God does not promise us restoration of former things on our terms. God didn't give Israel restoration of the former things they lost on their terms when they were being exiled from their homeland. They endured 70 years of captivity! But this is what God was faithful to do for them, and this is what God will be faithful to do for you if you put your trust and faith in Him for new things...**

- 1. God will reveal His glory to you**
- 2. God will make Himself know to you**

- 3. God will draw you closer to Him as you learn to trust and depend on Him more**
- 4. God will accomplish His purposes in this world and in your life through the new things He is doing**
- 5. God will use what you are facing to make you more like Him**

**God did this for Israel, and **God will do this for you.** The new thing God is doing is not necessarily the exact new thing you want, but God will use this new thing in ways you cannot even imagine right now if you will trust Him with your life and your future.**

**Before you can embrace the new thing God is doing in your personal life, you must be one of God's people. You must become a child of God. His promises for your future begin with you putting your faith and trust in Him. For you to do that, you must acknowledge that your sin has separated you from God. Just as Israel's sin separated them from the life of God, you have sinned and are separated from the life of God. The only way for you to be made right with God is by repenting of your sin and putting your faith in Jesus to forgive you of your sin and wash you clean of it. You cannot make yourself right with God in your own power. That wilderness is too extreme, that desert is impossible on your own. The only way to be made right with God is to believe that what Jesus did on the cross is enough to satisfy the justice of God and to make you acceptable in God's sight. You must give up hope of redeeming yourself and ask God to save you through the power of Jesus. Is that you this morning? Are you separated from the life of God because**

**you have never put your faith in Jesus and given your life to Him? You can give your life to Him right now. Just tell Him...**

**Amen. This is how God is the God of new things in our lives. We see and experience His new beginnings when we surrender our will to His will and put our trust in Him, regardless of our circumstances. Will you do it this morning? Will you look for the new things He is doing **in your life**? They are already springing up right in front of you! Do you perceive it? He is the God of new things in your personal life.**

### **The God of new things in our church...**

**Before we close this morning, I want to share with you a new thing I believe God is doing in our church. Sometimes God is the God of new things in our personal lives. Sometimes He is the God of new things in a group of people, like our story in the nation of Israel. Just as God did a new thing in the nation of Israel, **I believe He is doing a new thing in our church**. In fact, I believe that the new thing God did in Israel serves as an example of the new things God is doing in our church. **What are the new things God did in Israel?****

- 1. God gave Israel a new vision**
- 2. God gave Israel new leadership**
- 3. God gave Israel a new building**
- 4. God gave Israel a new name**

**I believe that God is doing the same thing in our church right now. Even as the prophet Isaiah said to Israel, I believe God is saying to us this morning that the new thing He is doing is**

**already unfolding right in front of us! It isn't fully established yet, but it is already arriving. Lift up your eyes! Do you perceive it? Do you perceive the new thing God is doing here?**

- 1. God is giving us a new vision** (The vision to follow the command of Jesus and be a disciple-making first church. This is not the discovery of something new, it is the rediscovery of something old. But God has been leading us in this shift for more than ten years. The new vision God has for us is unfolding right in front of us. Do you perceive it?)
- 2. God is giving us new leadership** (At a recent business meeting, Pastor Jerry called his retirement "inevitable." I talked to him again this week, and he affirmed that truth. In a very significant way, Pastor Jerry will always be my pastor. He also told me that he sees God raising up new leaders and adding people to our church who will be the future leaders of the new things God is doing here. God is already raising up new leaders to lead in our church. Do you perceive it?)
- 3. God is giving us a new building** (This probably caught your attention! You may be asking, "What?! A new building? How is this the first I've heard about this? I am not necessarily talking about a new campus location, although I do believe God desires to plant new churches through this church, which would result in new buildings in new places! But when I say God is already giving us a new building, what I mean is the provision God has made for the changes on this campus that have happen in recent years...
  - a. A new parking lot**

- b. A new roof**
  - c. New playground drainage**
  - d. A new foyer**
  - e. A new AC**
  - f. A new children's area**
  - g. New architectural plans for a vision of what God may want to do at this location (please wait for me to ask for the picture before you put it up!)**
- 4. God is giving us a new name** (The new name God gave Israel was a change in how outsiders knew them. In Isaiah 62, God tells Israel He will give them a new name out of His mouth. This new name would be the name the other nations would know them by. It would be a change in how they were known by outsiders. Today is our **Together Vote**. Right after this service, our members will stay for a business meeting and vote on the future name of our church. I believe God has given us the name **Together Church**. I believe He wants to do new things through our church under this new banner. God is already doing a new thing in our name. It is unfolding right in front of us. Do you perceive it?)

**I spoke with our elders this Thursday night. I shared these new things with them. We all perceive these new things God is doing in our church. Do you perceive them, too?**

**When God is doing a new thing, you have two choices...**

- 1. Embrace the new thing! Set aside your preferences and join God in what He is doing.**
- 2. Resist the new thing God is doing. Be careful, or you may find yourself resisting God.**

**This is the choice, how will you respond to the new things God is doing around you, in your personal life and in our church?**

**If you are ready to **embrace the new thing** God is doing, here is what you can do...**

- 1. **Celebrate the former things God has done!** Embracing the new thing does not mean that we cannot be grateful for what God has done in the past. Israel was constantly told to build memorials unto God and to be His witnesses of His mighty works. Releasing the past does not mean releasing our gratitude to God for the great things He has done. (Letter for Jerry & Sandra)**
  
- 2. **Release the past.** Releasing the past does not mean releasing our gratitude for what God has done, but it does mean letting go of former things so we can lay hold of the new thing God is doing in our lives (monkey bars).**
  
- 3. **Contribute to the new thing God is doing.** When God does a new thing, He wants to accomplish His purposes in you and through you. Will you commit yourself to be a contributor towards the new thing God is doing?
  - a. Invest relationally**
  - b. Give faithfully**
  - c. Serve sacrificially**
  - d. Pray fervently**
  - e. Yield your preferences to God****

**Our God is the God of new beginnings, He is the God who does new things. Will you embrace the new things God wants to do in your life and in our church? If you will trust God with your future and put your hope and faith in Him regardless of the outcome, I believe you will experience His power as He works new things in your life and in our church. The question is, will you do it? Will you trust God with your future and with your life? Will you join Him in the new things He is doing in your personal life and in our church?**

**Let's pray.**

**This is not the first time God has done a new thing in the history of our church. I pray it will not be the last! God has continued to use our church because of godly, courageous people who have been willing to embrace the new thing He was doing here. Many of you are sitting in this room right now. Thank you! Thank you for embracing the new thing God has done in the past. If you hadn't, I would not be here today. We would not be here today.**

**Just as He has done before, God is doing a new thing. He is the God of new beginnings.**

**Ultimately, all God is doing is to reveal His glory and make Himself known to us! That is the greatest gift we could receive. If we know the greatness of God, we should desire that He would receive glory through us! That our lives would be lived to the praise of His glory! That our church would bring Him glory! Will you turn your heart to God as we stand and sing one final song this morning? Will you renew your resolve to live your life to glorify King Jesus, because He is worthy of all glory and honor and praise? Come praise and glorify the Lord with us. He is worthy!**