



ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

February 2023

New Things and New Ways

“Our Season of Transition.”

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Main Text: Isaiah: 43: 18 - 19

Devotional Readings Is. 42:9, Mal. 3:6, 2 Cor. 5:17, Heb. 6: 17 - 19, 8: 5 - 7, 11:16, Rev. 21:5

Isa 43:18-19

18 Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.

19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. KJV

The Story

It was a chilly Sunday morning and people were just beginning to gather in the very back of the church's sanctuary to join Minister Greg's adult Sunday School class. Just a few weeks earlier, Minister Greg had challenged his students to invite their friends and family to his class. He had even started a friendly competition, promising a Starbucks' gift card to the person that brought the most guests in the month of February. This morning, it looked like his idea was working. There were at least seven new people in his adult Sunday School! There was a spirit of excitement in the room! As Minister Greg was handing out the literature for the lesson, one of the older members whispered to Minister Greg that several of the visitors had come into the class carrying cups of coffee. The member insisted that Minister Greg tell them to take that coffee out of here! Another regular attendee overheard the discussion and said "you all just need to leave people alone. That's why we can't keep new people in this church!"

QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the older member was insisting that no one be allowed to have coffee in the back of the sanctuary?

2. Why do you think about what the other member said?
3. Is it okay for the pastor and others to drink water in the sanctuary? - Why or why not?
4. What do you think Minister Greg should do?
5. Does the church's rules ever need to change?

The Discussion

The "take-away" from the story isn't so much about what side of the debate you support, but the main point is more about your willingness to engage in a conversation about "change" in the church. Those of us that live in the Midwest United States experience several seasons. No matter how much we love one particular season, at some point it ends and we have to welcome a new season.

This is the message that Isaiah is presenting in our Main Text: (Read: Isaiah 43: 18 - 19) When the prophet writes: "remember not the former things" he is not instructing God's people to forget the past, but simply not to allow the past to hinder what God is doing in the present.

In the wake of COVID19, practically nothing remains as it was, this is true especially concerning the church. The church's "message" remains the same, but few can deny that church is being challenged to reevaluate our methods of ministry. We must re-evaluate how we fulfill the Great Commission (**Read Matt 28: 16 - 20**).

QUESTIONS:

1. Why do some people have difficulty with change?
2. How might one season in life prepare us for the next season in our life?
3. How might holding to some traditions hinder us from joining God in His present day work?
4. Has God ever changed his "methods" of reaching His people?
5. Has God ever called you into a season of change? How did it feel? How did you deal with it?

The Study

Mal 3:6

For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. KJV

We can all agree that physical growth requires some amount of change. Is the same true for spiritual growth? **Read:** 2 Cor. 5:17. Now, we know that the world is ever changing its morals, ethics and beliefs. In addition, the world is constantly putting pressure on the church to change its views and convictions in order to accommodate the world's opinions. Should the church ever respond to changes in the world?

God Is Immutable

Typically when things change, they either become better or worse. If everything remains the same then there is no real change. Since our God is infinitely perfect there is no way He could change for the better. And since God is infinitely holy and righteous, there is no way He could change for the worse. We call this "un-changeable" quality "immutability."

QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways does the world put pressure on the church and Christians to conform to the world's culture and norms?
2. If God doesn't change, why does Isaiah tell us that God "...will do a new thing?" (Is. 43:19)
3. Has God ever required his people to change? When and why?

A Little Deeper

Isa 43:18-19 KJV

18 Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. 19 Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.

The past reveals much of what God has done, but the past cannot reveal all that God will do. It is amazing when we consider that a God that is older than time is capable of doing new things

During the time Isaiah wrote this verse, due to their unwillingness to follow fully after God, Israel had experienced the hard rod of God's correction and redirection and had been put out of their native land and cast into the hand of their enemies. Now, by His grace and mercy God tells them to let go of the thoughts and memories of their punishment and even put away the memories of their former glory and look towards the future blessings that God was now putting before them.

Immutability is divine attribute that people do not share with God. God never changes but people are ever changing. If God hadn't given man the ability to change, then man would not have the capacity to repent of his sin. God's nature of love, mercy and forgiveness towards man has never changed, but God's methods and ways of expressing these divine traits have changed. For example God's methods of addressing the sin of man changed. **READ:** (Lev. 4: 23 - 26, and Heb. 9: 11 - 15, 9: 23 - 24) Under the terms of the New Covenant, the Son of God himself became the sacrifice and the old system having served its purpose became obsolete and was discontinued.

QUESTIONS:

1. How might Israel holding on to certain things in their past hinder them from receiving what God had for them in their future? Is this true for the church today?
2. Why was it necessary for God to change his methods for addressing the sinful condition of people from the ways in the Old Testament to the New Testament practice? (Read Heb. 10:11)
3. In what ways might God be calling his church to change today? - And why?

Final Thoughts

It is high time for God's people to fully accept and acknowledge that when it comes to ministry methods, God is most certainly "doing a new thing!" Just like the conditions that Isaiah described, we are trying to do ministry in a desolate world full of desperate people. However, God has promised that He has made a way for us to successfully navigate this barren wilderness and He has even provided rivers of spiritual water for our refreshing in this desert place. Come now, let us pray together for divine revelation and illumination so we may both clearly see and understand the work God is calling us to accomplish in this season of "new things." - Chief Bishop Rex Waddell. Ph.D.



The author, Dr. Bishop Rex M. Waddell holds a doctorate in Leadership and Policy from the University of Missouri - St. Louis and is the Chief Bishop of the Church of the Living God (C.W.F.F.) and senior pastor of the Church of the Living God of Fairview Heights, Illinois.