

NEW THINGS

The beginning of a new year is a good opportunity to have a look at what God says about new things, especially as we live in New Zealand!

It's amazing how often the word "new" is used in God's Word, and as we study this concept, there is a lot to be learnt.

Firstly, I thought you might enjoy the beginning of a sermon by Charles Haddon Spurgeon on January 1st, 1885.

"We are at this moment specially ready for a *new year*. The most of men have grown weary with the old cry of depression of trade and hard times; we are glad to escape from what has been to many a twelve-months of great trial. The last year had become wheezy, croaking, and decrepit, in its old age; and we lay it asleep with a psalm of judgment and mercy. We hope that this newborn year will not be worse than its predecessor, and we pray that it may be a great deal better.

"How pleased we are with that which is new! Our children's eyes sparkle when we talk of giving them a toy or a book which is new... and really we are all children, for we eagerly demand the news of the day, and are all too apt to rush after the "many inventions" of the hour. [*If only he knew about the new technology these days!*] The Athenians, who spent their time in telling and hearing some new thing, were by no means singular persons: novelty still fascinates the crowd..."

The rest of the sermon is heavy going, so we'll leave it there. But let's look at the word "new" in the Bible. The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia says "the word commonly translated "new" in the Old Testament is "haddash": "bright, fresh, new" (special interest was shown in, and importance attached to, fresh and new things and events.)"

The first time it is used in the Bible is Genesis 27:28

"May God give you heaven's dew and earth's richness—an abundance of grain and new wine." I'm not sure if "new wine" is better than old, but it is mentioned as valuable in this instance.

Leviticus 2:14 "If you bring a grain offering of firstfruits to the Lord, offer crushed heads of new grain roasted in the fire."

New grain for sacrifices. The firstfruits were special to God. Firstfruits are "new" things.

Numbers 10:10 "Also at your times of rejoicing—your appointed festivals and New Moon feasts—you are to sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, and they will be a memorial for you before your God. I am the Lord your God."

The new moons were important to God – Israel celebrated them.

Numbers 16:29-30 ²⁹ "If these men die a natural death and suffer the fate of all mankind, then the Lord has not sent me. ³⁰ But if the Lord brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the realm of the dead, then you will know that these men have treated the Lord with contempt."

An interesting example, which shows that God is able to do really new things that have never been done before. In fact, the whole of creation is a new thing! When God created the heavens and the

earth, that was all new. Lots of new things appeared at that time! So you could say that the first use of “new” is in Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Psalms 40:3 “He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in Him.”

We often hear of “new” songs. We can praise God in new ways as He keeps on coming up with new blessings for us.

Isaiah 42:9 “See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.”

Compare with Isa 43:18-19 ¹⁸ “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. ¹⁹ See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”

All prophecy is to do with new things. God knows everything that is going to happen, so in a way nothing is new to Him.

Jeremiah 31:31 “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.”

A very important new thing. The Bible is divided into 2 sections, Old Testament and New Testament. We are in the new era. In this case, “new” = “better.” Usually God speaks positively of new things as being something to be desired. Let’s hope this New Year is like that!

Lamentations 3:22-23 ²² “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. ²³ They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

Every day is an opportunity to forget about the problems and troubles of yesterday and have a fresh new start, a new beginning, with new blessings and mercies from God.

He gives us a chance for a new start spiritually over and over again, by forgiving us. When we do wrong, all we need to do is go to our knees in confession and repentance, and God forgives us and gives us the opportunity to start again anew. (E.g. the prodigal son’s father gave him a new start.) That’s what we do when we forgive someone. We clear the books and give them the opportunity for a new start.

Ezekiel 36:26 “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

This is a wonderful new thing! We are all sinners, but when we repent God gives us a new spirit and a new heart. It is a wonderful blessing to be renewed, refreshed, like this!

Moving into the New Testament now, Jesus said something interesting about new things in –

Matthew 13:52 “He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

The teachers of the law could only bring forth old things, but once they learnt the gospel Christ brought, they could bring out new things as well as old. The Kingdom of God involves studying new things and old things. It is divided into New Covenant and Old Covenant, and there are treasures in each.

There are plenty of “new” things spoken of in the New Testament. We won’t turn to these as we know them well, but there is the taking by Jesus and the disciples of the cup of the New Covenant “in my blood poured out for you.” (Luke 22:20).

There is the “new covenant I give to you, that you love one another.” (John 13:34)

Acts 5:20 “Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people all about this new life.” is one we don’t often read. It is a totally new way of life we live once we are converted. We are living in a new and different world to those around us!

Romans 6:4 also mentions this. “We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” This is almost a definition of a Christian – someone who is living a new life.

Romans 7:6 is one way of describing the change from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. “But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.”

2 Corinthians 5:17 sums it up. The old year has gone, the new has come. (KJV) “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

But this is really significant for Christians – our old way of life is gone; the new has come. Our whole life has been transformed. The old life died – that’s how much it is left behind and overthrown. Now we look on the whole of life in a different way than we used to, a different way than others in the world around us see. Everything we do now has a spiritual perspective, a spiritual dimension. Everything is done with a knowledge God is there, and is done from the viewpoint of His presence and His way of life. Notice the way Galatians 6:15 puts it.” Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation.”

The Living Bible says “whether we have changed into new and different people.”

Ephesians 4:22-24 shows in more detail what we have to do, the way this works in our lives.

²² “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

The Expositors Commentary: “Christian converts are to undergo a radical reorientation of their mental outlook.”

Let’s conclude in Revelation, where we find that even at the end, there will be many new things to come. In fact, this is when new things will really come along, on a previously unheard of scale!

God loves new things. He is excited by them. And He has lots more of them in store for us.

Revelation 2:17 “Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.”

New rewards! The “hidden manna” must be new understanding, new spiritual truth, new spiritual food? Do you know what the new name is? Well, there is a verse in the next chapter which gives us the answer!

Revelation 3:12 “The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them my new name.”

It is the name of God and of the new Jerusalem, and Jesus Christ’s new name, in some way we don’t really understand yet.

Revelation 21:1-2 ¹ “Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.” A new beginning for the entire Universe! And verse 2, the New Jerusalem.

And now, the last time the word “new” is used in the Bible, and this is probably the most amazing comment of all about new things!

Revelation 21:5 “He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” Everything will be made new!!

That is an astounding remark! It means that everything we have now in the Universe is only temporary, and is moving towards the time where there will be an entirely new and different world.

So there are lots of New Years to look forward to – on into eternal life! But it won’t be divided into years then, if there’s no more sun or night? Everything will be New!

For us though, to some extent this has already happened in our lives spiritually. Compare Revelation 21:5 with 2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV) “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

This is what should have happened, because we have already been raised into heavenly places.

And 2 Corinthians 4:16 shows what needs to happen every day of this New Year! “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”

The most important thing we can do this New Year is to keep up our relationship with God and grow in it – being renewed inwardly every day.

God is a God of NEW things. He loves new things, and wants us all to be new creations.