

“A New Beginning”

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Scripture

Isaiah 40:21-31

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.

He it is who reduces rulers to nothing, Who makes the judges of the earth meaningless.

Scarcely have they been planted, scarcely have they been sown, scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, but He merely blows on them, and they wither, and the storm carries them away like stubble.

"To whom then will you liken Me that I would be His equal?" says the Holy One.

Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing.

Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and the justice due me escapes the notice of my God"?

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.

He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might, He increases power.

Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, **yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.**”

New Year's Eve -> The Last Day of the Year

Recap of the Year

How was your year?

Was it a good year?

Was it a difficult year?

How many of you said, “I’m going to do <x> or <y> this past year?”

How many of you did what you said you would do?

Any New Year's resolutions for the coming year?

What events could happen in 2024?

How about a biblical view of New Year's resolutions?

I've heard James quotes before:

James 4:13-15

"Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, "**If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.**"

So, should we not plan ahead for the coming year?

Should we leave it all to unfold day by day?

That's not what James is talking about

We have to keep this verse in context

Old Testament wisdom in this area:

Proverbs 16:9

"The mind of man plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps."

The idea is that planning with the Lord being involved is foolish

His will will dictate what you do and do not do if you are a believer in Jesus

Jesus taught that we should not worry or be anxious

Matthew 6:34

"So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Instead of worrying, what does Jesus ask us to do?

We have to look at the verses prior to Matthew 6:34

Matthew 6:25-34

"For this reason, I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And **who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life?** "And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, **will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!**

"Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'

"For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for **your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.**

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Paul wrote to the Philippians, "To live is Christ and to die is gain"

Instead of worrying every day, we need to seek the personal relationship with Jesus daily -> to be righteous

Righteous means -> We should focus on being "right with God"

When we do that, all things that we need will be added to us

34 "So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

So, Jesus can conclude that "tomorrow will take care of itself" because he provides on a daily basis

What did Israel receive on a daily basis, 40 years while walking in the Wilderness?

Manna came from where?

Heaven -> just like we receive today that we need from Heaven

Isaiah's Look to the Future

Isaiah has 66 chapters -> We call it "The Little Bible"

The Bible has 66 books -> 39 books in the Old Testament, 27 in the New Testament

Judah is going to be taken away into captivity

Israel prophesies in Isaiah 39 that it will happen

Isaiah 40 marks change in Isaiah's view -> he looks forward to the years of joy in Jerusalem

In essence, Isaiah's "New Testament" begins in Isaiah 40

He wrote of the time when Israel's sin would be removed

He wrote of the forerunner of the Messiah

He wrote about the glory of the Lord being revealed

Isaiah 40:6-8

"A voice says, "Call out." Then he answered, "What shall I call out?" All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, When the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. **The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.**"

It sounds a lot like what Jesus said in Matthew 6, eh?

Isaiah wrote that God will care for His people:

Isaiah 40:11

"Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes."

Everything that will occur is in God's hands and under His control

Then, into our passage for today, Isaiah wrote about God's position in the world:

Isaiah 40:21-25

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? Has it not been declared to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and **its inhabitants are like grasshoppers**, Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.

He it is who reduces rulers to nothing, Who makes the judges of the earth meaningless. Scarcely have they been planted, scarcely have they been sown, scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, but He merely blows on them, and they wither, and the storm carries them away like stubble.

"**To whom then will you liken Me that I would be His equal?**" says the Holy One."

Seriously, God asks -> you think anyone is greater than I AM? -> He can take out any ruler He wants to remove

Then Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 40:26-29

“**Lift up your eyes on high** and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, **not one of them is missing**.

Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, "**My way is hidden from the LORD, and the justice due me escapes the notice of my God**"?

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.

He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power."

Instead of looking at your own circumstances, God says to "Lift up your eyes"

"I control the stars!"

God says, "My way is not hidden" -> you don't think I know what's going on down there on Earth?

God gives strength to the weary! -> God gives power to those who need it!

When you realize that you are loved by someone else, doesn't that energize you?

Do you really realize how much God loves you?

That should energize you!

Then Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 40:30-31

“Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, **yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength**; They will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary”

Do any of us have weariness in life?

Do we easily grow tired?

How many of us wish we had the physical strength we did when we were younger?

Hopefully, you've seen spiritual strength grow as physical strength has declined

“Those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength”

You should be more confident in the Lord's provision, protection, and projection for your life

Personal Perspectives -> Bible Verses for the coming year:

If the year has been difficult:

Lamentations 3:19-25

“Remember my affliction and my wandering, the wormwood and bitterness. Surely my soul remembers and is bowed down within me. This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. **"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him." The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him.**”

Jeremiah is watching the Babylonians sack Jerusalem as he writes Lamentations

In the deepest and darkest time of the Great City, Jeremiah finds reason for hope

If you need encouragement as we turn to 2024, go find it -> seek out God and others who can guide you

Next:

If you feel like you've regressed in your walk with Jesus:

Ephesians 4:21-24

“If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, **you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and **put on the new self**, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”**

If you are a believer, Paul wrote that you need to cooperate with the Holy Spirit on renewal

Dedicate yourself to “lay aside” those old practices

Instead, purpose to “put on the new” practices

Next:

If you haven't sought the Lord in your life:

Jeremiah 29:11-13

“For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. **You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.”**

I know many who have had a difficult year and blame God for their struggles

It could be that God is allowing those to happen SO THAT those individuals will come to Him in faith

You only find God when you diligently search for Him -> The Holy Spirit moves you to want something better

Ezekiel 11:19-20

"I will give them one heart and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. **Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God."**

If you feel like you've been trying to do it all on your own:

James 4:6-8 (as I mentioned a bit earlier with "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city")

"He gives a greater grace. Therefore, it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. **Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.** Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

God's grace is available to you if you put away your pride

Be humble enough to "submit therefore to God," James wrote

The Devil is the architect of pride -> Read **Isaiah 14:1-23**

Resist him and he will flee

Dedicate yourself to draw near to God and He will draw near to you

If you've had a great 2023 and are looking forward to another in 2024:

1 Peter 1:3-5

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

We rejoice that we KNOW Him and have a future with Him

Paul told the Thessalonians to "excel still more" (**1 Thessalonians 4:1**)

Revelation 21:3-7

"I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." And He who sits on the throne said, "**Behold, I am making all things new.**" And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. **"He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son."**

May we all be looking forward to 2024 and beyond -> being in service to our Great Lord and King!

Prayer

Benediction