

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

INTRODUCTION

NY Resolutions – did you make any? Did you keep them?
75% broken within 2 weeks!

Top 5 NY resolutions :

1. lose weight
2. get fit
3. quit smoking
4. spend more quality time with the children
5. sleep more/sleep less

Near end of January, good time to review resolutions

Who is Janus?

Roman god of doorways and gates : two faces
January named after him

Time for review - looking back and forward

- Some of us look back with regrets, disappointment, shame
- Many look forward with apprehension, fear, uncertainty

Need to review personally ...

What kind of year did I have?

What went well/badly?

What would I do differently?

Where am I going next?

Also time to take stock on wider scene (historical/prophetic perspective) :

- War on terror vs civil liberties (ID cards, CCTV, email/phone surveillance etc)
- Role of UN/US – globalisation
- Middle East (role of UN/US/EU/Russia)
- Development of EU (euro, constitutional commission, foreign/defence policy etc)
- Genetic science
- Human rights legislation
- Changes in society : racism, youth culture ...

Does God make NY Resolutions? Does he look back and forwards at January?

What does God think?

GOD LOOKS BACK

Review = asking questions.

God asks us questions. Two key questions from the Bible L:

Genesis 3:9 "Where are you?" – to Adam and Eve
I Kings 19:13 "Why are you here?" – to Elijah

He knew the answers, but wanted them to realise, acknowledge, verbalise, confess

Adam & Eve : the result of sin, where they shouldn't have been, hiding from God

Elijah : running away from his responsibilities, depressed...

God is asking you these questions today : "Where are you? Why are you here?"
He knows the answers – do you?

GOD LOOKS FORWARD

Forward planning = making promises

God makes many promises in Bible, including these three :

1. NEW CIRCUMSTANCES

Isaiah 43:15-19 "Behold I am doing a new thing, now it springs forth - do you not perceive it?"

The new thing God is referring to is in verse 19 - "a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert."

How many of us feel we are in the wilderness or desert?

Dry, barren, thirsty, lost, hopeless, helpless...
Dusty, formless, boring...

God has a promise for us if we feel like this - he will do **a new thing**

He can change our **circumstances** to bring hope - a way for the lost, rivers for the thirsty

As we stand at the start of a new year (millennium?) we may face difficult circumstances - hard times, not looking forward to next year?
Would you describe your circumstances as a desert?

God has a promise for you - "Behold I am doing a new thing, now it springs forth - do you not perceive it?"

He can change even your circumstances, or mine :
From dry to overflowing
From barren to fruitful
From boring to colourful

What a future!!

2. NEW CHARACTER

II Corinthians 5:16-17 "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation, the old has passed away - behold the new has come."

God is promising something very personal - a **new character**.

How many of us feel unhappy with ourselves? Are we satisfied with the person we know ourselves to be inside, the person God sees?

Can God change people? Change you?? He is in the business of transformation - "from one degree of glory to another, into the likeness of Christ" (II Cor 3:18)

Even me - even you

"Please be patient - God hasn't finished with me yet!"

As we face the new year, perhaps disappointed with the way we've turned out so far, no need to despair or give up on ourselves. God has faith in us, he sees good in us, he sees the likeness of Jesus in us - he won't give up on you

God promises to make you a new person - not just any new person, but someone like Jesus!! What a destiny!

3. NEW CREATION

Revelation 21:1 "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth..."

Revelation 21:5 "Behold I make all things new"

God promises to make everything completely different. His original creation was good, very good - but it was spoiled by sin and disobedience. He is a redeemer and has decided to make a new heaven and earth to replace the old spoiled one - a completely **new creation**.

As we stand at the start of the new year, do we have hope for the world? Do we think it has a future, with global warming, wars, floods, famine ... ??

God promises to right all wrongs - "he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more"

God can change circumstances and character - but he is much bigger than that! He can change the whole universe!!

CONCLUSION

Lots of things are not so good in our lives or our world. But God is in the business of changing things, redeeming, restoring, renewing. It is his nature - he is creative and infinite, never does the same thing twice (doesn't need to!), always new.

Note three common themes in the three passages we looked at :

1. **God** is doing it. He's the only one who can!

2. All three verses above are in **present tense** :

"I am doing a new thing..." - constantly renewing our circumstances

"He is a new creation..." - constantly redeeming our character

"I make all things new..." - constantly restoring creation

He is doing it now - these are part of who he is.

3. But one other common theme in these passages :

"**Behold** I am doing a new thing..."

"**Behold** the new has come..."

"**Behold** I make all things new"

We need to see what God is promising, even before it happens. We need to open our eyes - see the truth.

Hebrew *hine* = pay attention, concentrate

Often used for an unexpected surprise (e.g. magician!)

Greek *idou* = be aware, consider, perceive

Active looking, thinking about

Standing here at the start of the new year, we need revelation from God to be able to see the reality of what he offers us.

Revelation produces faith - the assurance of things not seen.

If we want to see the new things God promises us, we need to ask him for revelation then exercise faith. Then we'll discover God at work in our circumstances, in our character, and even in all of creation.

This January let's allow God to make his NY **Resolutions** in us and through us.

That will in fact bring a NY **Revolution** in our lives.

But to receive it, we need a NY **Revelation** – are you ready?!