

New Beginnings

by Anton Bosch

As we stand at the beginning of a new year, we have the opportunity to make a fresh start and prioritize our relationship with God.

Scripture: Genesis 8:13, Exodus 12:2, 2 Chronicles 29:3, Ezra 7:9, Mark 16:2, Hebrews 4:7

Topics: "New Beginnings", "Spiritual Renewal"

Description

Anton Bosch emphasizes the significance of fresh starts and new beginnings as seen in the changing of seasons and various Biblical accounts where God initiated new beginnings. From Noah's fresh start after the flood to Jesus' resurrection signifying a new dispensation, the Bible is filled with examples of God giving mankind a chance to start anew. Hezekiah's immediate action in restoring worship and holiness on the first day of his reign serves as a powerful reminder for us to prioritize our relationship with God and make necessary changes without delay. Just like Hezekiah, we are encouraged to open our hearts to God's Spirit and Word, allowing Him to cleanse and restore us for a fresh start.

Transcript

One of the blessings of the four seasons is that they usher in fresh beginnings. Winter does a good job of killing off much of the previous season's growth. Spring is a new start with new leaves, new plants and in the animal kingdom, new births. The marking of the seasons are helpful in marking times, the passing of the old and arrival of the new.

Our (Gregorian) calendar does not follow the Jewish year and the Bible says nothing about the first of January as being special. However, the principle of the counting off of the days and years and the marking of a new year has sound Biblical foundations.

When Noah was 600 years old, God destroyed the earth with a universal flood. But "it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, that the waters were dried up from the earth" (Genesis 8:13). This was on the first day of a new year and God had given man a fresh start. The old had been killed, destroyed and washed and a renewed earth had taken the place of the old. Also all the wicked people had been destroyed and God gave mankind a new beginning through righteous Noah and his descendants.

When the Lord began to prepare the people of Israel for the Exodus from Egypt He said: "This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you" (Exodus 12:2). Israel would also

begin to count the years from that point on (This was the first month of the first year for Israel). Once again, God gives Israel a fresh start as they leave Egypt behind and begin to head for the Promised Land.

God gave Moses the plans for the building of the Tabernacle which would introduce a new phase in their relationship with God. "And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was raised up" (Exodus 40:17).

King Hezekiah "in the first year of his reign, in the first month, ...opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them" (2Chronicles 29:3). This great king began his new reign with a restoration of the worship of the Lord and a cleansing of the temple in the first month of his reign. The restoration began on the first day of the first month: "Now they began to sanctify on the first day of the first month" (2Chronicles 29:17).

Ezra led a group of Jews from captivity back to Jerusalem on the first of the year: "On the first day of the first month he began his journey from Babylon" (Ezra 7:9). But then he discovered that, contrary to the Law, there were priests who had taken pagan wives. So Ezra begins a purging of the priesthood by doing a survey of these men "By the first day of the first month they finished questioning all the men who had taken pagan wives" (Ezra 10:17).

Jesus rose on the first day of the week, signifying a new beginning of a whole new dispensation in God's dealings with man (Mark 16:2,9).

As we stand at the end of an old year and the beginning a new one, we once again have the opportunity of making a fresh start. Of course, the Lord gives us this opportunity at any time of the year. But it seems we are a little more open to the possibility of a fresh start at this time of the year. God's wonderful grace once again calls us to put the past with it's failures, disappointments and disobedience behind us and to begin afresh with the Lord.

Hezekiah, one of the few good kings of Judah, began the process of spiritual reform on the first day of his reign. He did not put it off until he had settled other matters of state. He began immediately. As Hezekiah did, it may be time for you to begin to clear out your temple and to restore worship, sacrifice, God's Word and holiness in your life. But, you need to begin today. You may never start if you put it off.

Sometimes we want to make a fresh beginning but we don't even know where to start. Begin where Hezekiah did - by opening the doors to the temple and to restoring them. This speaks of opening your heart to the light of God's Spirit and His Word. Nothing can happen as long as your heart and mind remain shut. But as we open ourselves to the Lord, He will begin the work of cleansing and restoration. There was a terrible mess and much work was needed on the inside of the Temple. But that did not deter Hezekiah from opening the doors and tackling the job of cleaning out.

I don't believe that the Lord is asking you to reform your whole spiritual walk in one day. Even Hezekiah took a long time to get things sorted out. But it must begin with opening the doors and it has to begin today: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 4:7). Hezekiah must have had many other important things to do but he recognized that nothing was more important than restoring the nation's relationship with their God. We may have many things we need to do in this new year, but nothing is more important than restoring our relationship with the Lord. If we can get that right, then everything else will fall into place. If we fail in that, then the rest of this new year will also fail.

Oh, the wonderful grace of God that offers us fresh starts again and again. It does not matter how many times we have failed in the past and how much we have sinned, His blood is able to cleanse us and restore us afresh to His presence. He is able to cast the failures of the previous years in the sea of His forgetfulness and He is able, and willing, to give us a brand new page without any reservations, blame, or guilt.

But if we launch into the new year without doing anything about our relationship with Him, thinking we will catch up later - we never will. Before you know it 2008 will be gone and another year will have been wasted. Also Jesus may come in this year - all the signs indicate that He may very well return this year. So maybe there will not be another beginning of the year for us to make yet another fresh start.

Let's determine to make this coming year the best year of our lives. A year filled with the excitement, joy and fulfillment that only comes with being in His perfect will. But you have to begin by opening the doors of your heart so the light can shine in. Please make that fresh start right now.

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