

## ISAIAH 43:14-21

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### PRELIMINARY REMARKS

- We're in a season of new.
  - First: How the gospel brings us into a new relationship with God.
  - Last week: How the gospel brings us into a new relationship with each other.
  - This week: How the gospel gives us a new mission in our world.
- Let's give our attention to **Isa 43:14-21**.

### INTRODUCTION

- Scholars at the University of Chicago found that people have "*consistent, confident, and widespread false memories of famous icons.*"<sup>1</sup>
- Sometimes called the Mandela Effect, this phenomenon occurs when we've seen an image thousands of times but for variety of reasons can't seem to see it as it really is.
- Some examples:
  - Monopoly Man:
    - Incorrect: Monocle
    - Correct: No monocle
  - KitKat:
    - Incorrect: Hyphen
    - Correct: No hyphen
  - Curious George:
    - Incorrect: Tail
    - Correct: No tail
  - Cheez It:
    - Incorrect: Cheez Itz
    - Correct: No second Z
  - Darth Vader:
    - Incorrect: "Luke, I am your father.
    - Correct: "No, I am your father."
- Apparently, we're good at missing the thing that's right in front of us.

### Transition:

- **Isa 43:19: Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?**
- Let's get into this text and see what the Lord would have us see this morning.
- We'll walk through the text and then try to see some applications at the end.

### CONTEXT

- The passage we're in addresses the Babylonian Exile – a chapter in Israel's history marked by darkness and suffering.
  - God's people have been conquered by a foreign power and deported to Babylon.
  - Their homes have been destroyed, the temple has been razed, and they have been carried off to a foreign land.
  - They are far from home with no hope of return; they are languishing in despair.
- God's people have always had to wrestle with:

- Their own **weakness** → Had failure after failure and now they find themselves in a position where they are completely incapable of saving themselves.
- And the **strength** of their enemies → Powerful foes who abuse them and oppress them with ease.

**Transition:** Into this darkness, God speaks word of hope → A promise that changes everything.

## CONTENT

**VV16-17:** Thus says the Lord, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, <sup>17</sup> who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick.

- What are these verses referring to?
  - One commentator calls them, “*The whole drama of the Red Sea in a nutshell.*”<sup>2</sup>
  - God is reminding his exiled people of the Exodus: That defining moment when he saved them from their slavery in Egypt.
    - He made **a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters** → The Red Sea parted before Moses and all Israel to give them a path of escape.
    - Then the waters closed again → Condemning the Egyptian army to their watery grave.<sup>3</sup>
  - The people’s **weakness** and the **strength** of their enemies were not determinative → What mattered most was the strength of our saving God.
- Even in this verse, hope begins to kindle for the Israelite’s in their current situation.
  - First, because it reminds them of God’s character → He is the God who once rescued them, fought for them, and triumphed over their enemies.
  - But second, because of the verbs that are used → Look at them:<sup>4</sup>
    - It doesn’t say: The Lord *made* a way → That he *brought forth* their enemies to destruction.
    - It says: The Lord *makes* a way → That he *brings forth*...
    - God’s power is not past tense:
      - He possesses the same power today as he did back then.
      - He is still the God who can do this kind of thing.

**Transition:** Because of this – because his power remains – God adds:

**V18:** Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old.

- What are **the former things, the things of old**?
  - Everything that God’s just described.
  - The events of the Exodus.
- But now he tells the people not to focus on them.
  - They can certainly take heart from what God did in the past...
  - But they’re not to make mistake of thinking that was the end of his saving work.
- God is not confined to past deeds – he is about to do something new.

**Transition:** Which takes us to the next verse...

**V19a:** Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

- **Behold:**
  - Don't focus on things in the past, focus on what I'm doing in the present...
  - He's saying: Look at this → **I am doing a new thing!**
- What is the **new thing**?
  - Nothing less than deliverance from Babylon...
  - What one commentator calls, "*a national liberation patterned on the exodus.*"<sup>5</sup>

**Transition:** Next few verses give us poetic description of what this deliverance will look like...

**V19b: I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.**

- What I did before, I will do again...
  - God will give them a path home...
  - And sustenance for the journey...
    - He will restore them to their homeland.
    - They will prosper them once more.
    - All their mourning will turn to joy.

**Transition:** And in response to this saving work, God will be praised!

- By **creation** itself → That's what all the talk about wild beasts/jackals/ostriches is about: They will honor God.
- And of course by the **people**:
  - See his love for them?
    - He calls them his **chosen people**, the ones he **formed**...
    - He has not forgotten them → To him they are dear.
  - He will save them, and they will **declare** his **praise**.

**Transition:** What does God want us to see in all this?

- At least three things...
- He wants us to see in 3D → Three different dimensions...

## CONSEQUENCE

### 1. God wants us to see a new thing in our PAST.

- I love this:
  - We can remember how God saved Israel from **Egypt**...
  - And we can remember how God saved Israel from **Babylon**...
  - But we must also remember how God saved us all at the **cross**.
- **Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old.**
  - The God who saved again and again has indeed saved yet again.
  - One commentator puts it this way: "*Three deliverances are in view here: from Egypt, from Babylon and, ultimately, from the dominion of sin.*"<sup>6</sup>
- In the Bible, slavery in Egypt and captivity in Babylon are used as pictures or illustrations of our spiritual condition.
  - We were weak in our sin, completely incapable of saving ourselves...
  - And we were under the rule of our great enemy, the devil himself.
  - But God has saved us → Now we are free.

- Do you see how deals with us in our failure?
  - He calls us his **chosen people**, the ones he **formed**...
  - He has not forgotten us → To him we are dear.
- Jesus has done everything needed to bring us home.
  - He has defeated sin and death...
  - That we might **praise** his name.
    - Your weakness and your enemies don't get the last word.
    - We can all be saved by grace through faith in God's son.
- Have you received that redemption?

*Do you perceive it?*

**Transition:** Having seen this new thing in our PAST...

## 2. God wants us to see new things in our PRESENT

- God's power is not past tense:
  - The God of the past is the God of the present.
  - The God of the past is the same God we worship today.
- Follow the logic with me:
  - His arm did not atrophy between Egypt and Babylon.
  - His arm did not atrophy between Babylon and the cross.
  - And his arm has not atrophied from the cross until today.
    - He is the God who still works...
    - In our lives today.
- **Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?**
- Where do you need him to do a new thing in your life just now?
  - **Is it in your work?** Are you facing challenges that seem insurmountable, stresses and strains you feel you'll never overcome?
  - **Is it in a relationship?** Do you need God to bring new life to a friendship or a marriage that seems past the point of no return?
  - **Is it in a struggle with addiction or sin?** Do you feel trapped and unable to break free or carry on?
- Have you considered that God may already be at work? Do you perceive it?
- I can't tell you how encouraging this thought has been to me this week...
  - I'm dealing with something in my life that seems bleak...
    - The details don't matter...
    - We all have things in our lives that we can't fix.
  - But maybe I should be thinking about this differently...
    - Instead of thinking there is no hope...
    - Maybe I should be looking for how God is already at work.
- It's an invitation to exchange worry/hopelessness/anger for curiosity.
  - **At work:** Instead of stressing, manipulating, and seeking control → Maybe we could pause and ask, "What is God up to in this thing?"
  - **In our relationships:** Instead of attacking or getting defensive → Maybe we could pause and ask, "What is God up to in this thing?"
  - **In our struggles with addiction or sin:** Instead of giving up or berating ourselves → Maybe we could pause and ask, "What is God up to in this thing?"

- Just asking this question changes everything...
  - It **takes** our focus off the **problem**...
  - And **shifts** our focus to the **solution**...
- Be encouraged, dear friends:
  - When you feel hope is lost...
  - God may already be doing a new thing.
    - When we get curious, we start to see him at work in everything.
    - Look for it.
      - The God of the past is the God of the present.
      - And his arm is still strong to do a new thing.

*Do you perceive it?*

**Transition:** Having seen new things in our PAST and in our PRESENT...

### 3. God wants us to see new hope for the FUTURE

- We have seen God work in our past, we have heard his promise to be at work now, and so we remember that he has also promised that one day, someday he will make all things new.
  - Jesus himself: **Rev 21:5: Behold, I am making all things new.**
  - As he worked in the past, as he is at work even now, so he has promised to complete his work and make all things new.
- This summer, I visited one of our sister churches in the city...
  - Struck by how often their pastor drew attention to the fact that Jesus will return.
  - We know this, but we often forget this...
    - It's like a monocle, a hyphen, or a tail...
    - Somehow, we live our lives forgetting this detail.
- But Jesus is coming back → One day, someday, all will be well.
  - He will put all the broken pieces back together → Every wound will be healed, every wrong will be made right.
  - He will wipe away every tear from our eyes → There will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain.
  - And he will establish us as a community of praise → "Earth has no sorrows that heaven can't heal."<sup>7</sup>
- This new future is yours in the gospel.

*Do you perceive it?*

### CONCLUSION

- The invitation of this text is to see all things new – our past, our present, our future too.
  - Where do you need this hope?
  - And who in your life could use it too?
    - Do you know someone who's in the wilderness?
    - Do you see a desert in our city?
- It doesn't really matter if you remember whether Curious George has a tail...
- But let's be curious and join in God's work of making all things new.

## RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

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### Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity*.
- Chuck DeGroat, *Wholeheartedness*.
- Donald MacLeod, *Joy Changes Everything*.
- John L. MacKay, *Isaiah, Volume 2: Chapters 40-66*.
- Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*.
- Jackie Hill Perry, *Well-Intentioned Sin Is Still Sin and Deserves Judgment*.

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> See [this article](#), accessed 8/23/24.

<sup>2</sup> Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, 337.

<sup>3</sup> I remember hearing that phrase – “watery grave” – somewhere, but I don’t remember where!

<sup>4</sup> I owe this section to John L. MacKay, *Isaiah, Volume 2: Chapters 40-66*, 122.

<sup>5</sup> Motyer, 337.

<sup>6</sup> MacKay, 125.

<sup>7</sup> This is a line from the old hymn, *Come, Ye Disconsolate*. You can read the full lyrics [here](#), accessed 8/23/24.