

God Is Doing a New Thing: Isaiah 36-39; 43:1-19

I was watching an online church service and the pastor said the most frequent comment he heard from his church members was “I just want to get back to normal.” Maybe God doesn’t want us to go back to normal. God has a new normal. God is doing a new thing. Then I remembered a Bible verse: “Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” Isaiah 43:18-19: *“Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”*

Don’t just think about how to get back to normal. Anticipate something new. God is doing a new thing. God is creating a new reality through the effects of this Coronavirus. God is changing the world. What God said in Isaiah is restated and fulfilled in Revelation 21:1, 5: *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away... And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”*

Before I get to Isaiah 43 I want to set the stage by summarizing chapters 36-39.

Summarize Isaiah 36: Assyrian king “Snack-on-a-Rib” attacked Judah in the 14th year of King Hezekiah. (I want to open a BBQ place and call in *King Snack-on-a-Rib*.) He conquered all the Judean cities except Jerusalem. An Assyrian general stood outside Jerusalem and the Judean Secretary of State, Eliakim, went out to meet him. The Assyrian general rightly told the Judeans not to trust in Egypt as an ally (36:6-9). He wrongly told them not to trust in God, but he misunderstood God. Hezekiah stopped idolatry in Judea. He tore down all the pagan altars and told the Judeans to worship at only one altar at the temple in Jerusalem (36:7). (The Assyrians misunderstood this and claimed Hezekiah offended all the gods. They didn’t know the one, true God.) Assyria claimed to be doing the LORD’s will (36:10). The Judean leaders said, “Speak in Aramaic. We don’t want the people on the wall to hear your threats and be afraid.” The Assyrian general rejected their request and shouted in Judean language, “Do not listen to Hezekiah! Do not trust in the LORD to save you!” Then “Snack-on-a-Rib,” speaking through the general, spoke the boast that determined his fate; the boast that the LORD would not tolerate. He compared the

LORD to other false gods and claimed the LORD had no more power to stop him than those false gods (36:18-20). The Judean leaders did the smart thing and were silent and didn't answer him a word (36:21). Shut up and let God answer! Proverbs 26:4-5.

Summarize Isaiah 37: Eliakim, the Secretary of State, and other Judean officials visited Isaiah wearing sackcloth. They brought a message from Hezekiah. Hezekiah got it right, "The king of Assyria mocks the living God. God heard his words. What will He do?" Isaiah said, "No worries. Do not fear. The king of Assyria will hear a rumor, return to his city, and be assassinated." (37:9: The rumor is fake news that the king of Cush is coming to help Judah.) Snack-on-a-Rib sent another boastful letter to Hezekiah claiming he defeated all the gods of other nations and the LORD God is no different. Hezekiah took the letter to the temple and prayed, "LORD God you made heaven and earth and rule over all the nations of the earth. Do you see this letter? Do you hear the arrogant words of Snack-on-a-Rib? He mocks you. Save us from Assyria and do it for Your glory." Isaiah spoke a judgmental prophecy against Assyria, 37:21-35. God will defend Jerusalem for HIS OWN SAKE and also because He made a promise to David. The "angel of the LORD" (Jesus Christ in the OT) wiped out the Assyrian army killing 185,000. Snack-on-a-Rib returned to Nineveh and was assassinated by his sons, 37:36-38.

Note: Someone may have a problem with God killing 185,000 people. They were Assyrian soldiers, men with wives and children. King Snack-on-a-Rib made the arrogant boast. "That's not fair! God is evil. I cannot believe in a God who would kill innocent people." God killed them because of their arrogance. God killed them to accomplish His purpose - deliver Jerusalem. The Coronavirus has killed over 187,500 as of 4/24. Would God kill that many people to accomplish His purpose? Yes. Revelation says $\frac{1}{4}$ and will die of war, famine and plague (6:8) and also $\frac{1}{3}$ (8:15). God killed His own Son through evil human agency!

Isaiah 38: At the same time Hezekiah was worried about the Assyrian invasion he got a terminal illness. Hez asked God for healing. The word of the LORD came to Hez through Isaiah, "I will give you 15 more years and deliver you from Assyria." Then the LORD gave an amazing sign of His promise to heal and deliver. The sun went backwards ten steps on the staircase of Ahaz. (This is also recorded in 2 Kings 20:5-11. God gave Hez a choice to have the shadow go forward or backward. Hez

chose backward because that's more impossible. This seems similar to the sun standing still for Joshua, 10:12-14, which was an annular eclipse 1207 BC.) This was not just an optical illusion because the Babylonians saw it and came to ask about it (2 Chronicles 32:31). The text suggests God did something with the sun. Or He applied the brakes of the earth and put it in reverse. God healed Hez with natural medicine - a cake of figs applied to his cancerous boil.

Isaiah 39: The king of Babylon sent ambassadors to Hez with a gift because of his sickness and recovery. 2 Chronicles says they came because of the astronomical sign: 32:31: *And so in the matter of the envoys of the princes of Babylon, who had been sent to him to inquire about the sign that had been done in the land, God left him to himself, in order to test him and to know all that was in his heart.* Hez showed off all his wealth to the envoys. God revealed the pride in his heart. Isaiah wanted to know who they were and what Hez showed them. Hez dismissed any threat. It's like he said, "Nothing to worry about. They came from a country far away. They'll never be a threat to us." Isaiah prophesied, "They will return in the future and take all this wealth and some of your sons will serve the king of Babylon." Hez selfishly thought, "At least it will not happen in my time."

Hezekiah received blessings from God but he sinned with pride.

God was orchestrating a transition. The empire of Assyria was falling and the empire of Babylon was rising. Assyria's old world order was ending because of its pride (Isaiah 36-37). God was allowing a new world order to arise - Babylon (Isaiah 38-39).

Due to the Coronavirus an old world order is coming to an end and a new world order is beginning.

What's happening is God's new world order not mankind's. Rebellious mankind in league with Satan desires to create his own new world order. A new world order under a totalitarian dictator called Antichrist. Satan is the "god of this world." Mankind's new world order is ordained by God to fail and be replaced by Christ's new world order (Revelation). One of the prophetic messages God spoke between the fall and rise of these world powers is **Isaiah 43:1-19**, "Do not fear... I am doing a new thing."

God spoke **Isaiah 43** to ancient Israel, but God also speaks it to all of His chosen people. The church is Christ's chosen and "called out" people of God. Jesus Christ is renovating and reviving the church.

The sovereign LORD will create His good will out of this Coronavirus. I have confidence for this because I see Him bring good out of small incidents.

Sandie had a car accident April 13. She was afraid. I was concerned because I don't carry collision insurance, but I studied my Geico policy. I read the fine print and discovered I had coverage for hit-and-run under "Uninsured Motorist Property Damage." We decided to try it. Geico said the accident qualified as a hit-n-run, but a police report was required in TN. Sandie didn't get a police report. I called Memphis PD and filed a report and got a file number. (It seemed too easy to do it.) Then we drove the car to the body shop Geico recommended and picked up the rental car (covered by insurance)... a cool 2019 Ford Fusion. Because the damage repair was greater than 75% the value of the car, Geico wouldn't pay for the repairs and offered us a payment. So we got \$6000 for our Mazda CX-7. Now we are looking for another car. IF the accident had to happen (predestined), then this was the perfect time.

Three factors show me God's merciful providence in small matters:

- Sandie was not hurt.
- Damage was covered as a hit-n-run (even though it was her fault).
- Sandie is not working due to Coronavirus, so no second car needed yet.
- The 2007 Mazda CX-7 needed some repairs (oil leak and check engine light indicated malfunctioning spark plug).

God's got the small and big, the personal and geopolitical, under His merciful providence.

I believe God is using this Coronavirus to do a new thing. It springs forth. But do we perceive it? Are we aware of it? It may be too early to perceive it yet. God will enable us to perceive it in His time.

I believe God is using this CCP virus to create a new world order. You say, "But this CCP virus is causing so much death, destruction, and loss." Yes because you cannot have new life until the old life dies. You cannot have a new thing until you let go of the old thing. You cannot construct a new building until you demolish the old building. You cannot be resurrected until you die (unless you're alive when Jesus

returns). You cannot receive the benefits of the New Covenant until you leave the Old Covenant (read Hebrews). You cannot have a new heaven and earth until the first heaven and earth pass away.

What about your life? What about FCBC?

Here are some personal new things for me. These are benefits of and lessons learned during this time:

- I learned how to balance compassion and empathy with fighting the demon of fear. When the Coronavirus first came to the USA, I had to deal with a person who was terrified by it. This person wanted me to practice more than the recommended safety measures (i.e. face mask, wash hands) like snorting vinegar and gargling with salt water before going outside. My greatest enemy has always been FEAR. I want to look Fear in the eyes and say, “You have no place in my heart and mind. Be gone!” 2 Timothy 1:7: *God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control*. I struggle to let go and trust God. The demonic Fear gripping this person tried to grip me and steal my peace. I resisted it. I hated it. My anger at Fear made me reject the person who was terrified. I had no compassion and couldn’t feel any empathy. But the Spirit, prayer, and something this person said changed my heart and I felt empathy. Submission to the Holy Spirit enabled me to balance resisting Fear with compassion for the weaker person.
- How to do online preaching and prayer meetings is all new to me, but I needed to learn it. We can continue to video livestream even when we are all in church again. We will need it in the future.
- Jesus is expanding the outreach of his churches. (I watched Elevation Church with chat comments coming in from all over the world!)
- I memorized Psalm 91.
- Negative: I cannot pass out *TrueLife* cards.

Anticipate something new. God is doing a new thing through the effects of this Coronavirus. God is shaking nations to reveal a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Read **Hebrews 12:18-29**. We work in the world, but we are citizens of a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Here God speak to you from Isaiah 43:1-7 & 16-19. “When you walk through the pestilence, the virus, it will not infect you.”