

[Slide 1] Behold I do a New Thing...

Readings:

Isaiah 43:14-21

[Slide 2] Key verses: vv.18-19 (Context of return from exile)

- ¹⁸“Forget (do not remember) the former things; do not dwell on the things of the past.”
- ¹⁹“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?”

[Slide 3] Is there a tension between these two verses (past and present focus)?

[Slide 4] Tension compounded by NIV **mistranslation** of v.18: “forget” (positive command) instead of “do not remember” (i.e. negative command): occurs the point that the Hebrew text is making

[Slide 5] Two ways of expressing a negative command in Hebrew:

- *Lo* + verb (permanent injunction): Do not **ever**... (remember)

Used in Ten Commandments (Ex.20):

- Do not ever steal
- Do not ever kill
- Do not ever commit adultery etc.

No circumstances in which these actions are permissible...

- **[Slide 6]** *'Al* + verb (immediate injunction): Do not **now** ... (remember)

✓ Immediate injunction (*'al-zakar*: do not now remember) in Isa.43:18

- ✓ You remember God’s acts from the past (example = the Exodus in vv.16-17), but do not now remember (put it aside for the moment in the light of the “new thing” God is doing)

Why does God tell them to “do not (for now) remember the former things”?

[Slide 7] 1. The Bondage of past memories = double bondage (“just like it was before”):

- **[Slide 8]** Ezra 3:12 “Many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid...”
- Haggai 2:3 “Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?”

Not like they remembered!

- = Dangerous memories (memory of the good, not memory of the bad) – e.g. 1960s/1970s move of the Spirit
- Locked into the past

[Slide 9] 2. Because God is not simply repeating his past acts now; not doing things in exactly the same way as he did in the past (perception is needed):

- **[Slide 10]** v.16-17 ¹⁶Thus says the Lord, who makes a **way in the sea,** a **path in the mighty waters,** ¹⁷who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick...
- v.19 I will make a **way in the wilderness** and **rivers in the desert.**

[Slide 11] Exodus = through the sea/waters

[Slide 12] Now = through the wilderness/desert

(Danger of not seeing what is happening now because it doesn't fit the patterns of the past – example VL: “not revival”)

[Slide 13] 3. Because a paradigm shift has taken place...

Paradigm shift: “A fundamental change in approach or underlying assumptions” (Chicken and egg cartoon)

Classic example = Copernican revolution – same phenomena, but seen differently...

Judaism changes during the Exile in Babylon (things are not the same as before...):

[Slide 14] Pre-Exilic	[Slide 15] Post-exilic
✓ Hebrews	✓ Jews
✓ Temple central (only legitimate place of sacrifice to Yahweh: geographically limited)	✓ Temple not abandoned, but also emergence of synagogues and written texts (not geographically limited)
✓ Yahweh's concern for Israel (covenant people)	✓ Yahweh at work among the Gentiles as well as in Israel (world redemption)

- Creative revelation of Deutero-Isaiah: **extent of God's power and activity**:
- God working **beyond** His people (i.e. among the Gentiles) as well as **among** them (i.e. in Israel)
- Different from anything He has done in the past...

[Slide 16] **Paradigm Shift: what is happening now and can we perceive it?**

- [Slide 17] **Personal**: what new thing is God doing in my life now that I need to recognise and respond to? (Personal example?)
- [Slide 18] **As a congregation**: what new thing is God doing in our midst that we need to recognise and respond to? (Won't be just like it was before)
- [Slide 19] **As the Church world-wide**: what is happening now?
 - ✓ Decline in Western Church since 1960s
 - ✓ [Slide 20] (Hugh MacLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* = “The greatest change in the Western Church since the Reformation”)
 - ✓ Is New Zealand still “God-Zone”? (less than 50% claim any Christian identity in Census since 2006)

[Slide 21] **New spiritualities emerging beyond our midst**

- ✓ Judith Forbes comment
- ✓ [Slide 22] Paul Morris quote re students' spiritual concerns

[Slide 23] ”See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?”

- **Church-based** (God is working **in** our midst) or
- **Incarnation-based** (God is working **beyond** our midst)?
- Jesus ministered in the Temple and the Synagogue, but the majority of His ministry was **incarnational**, out where the people were...

Can we dare to **perceive** God at work **beyond our midst** as well as **in our midst**?

“Holy Spirit, what are you doing today, and how can I be involved?”