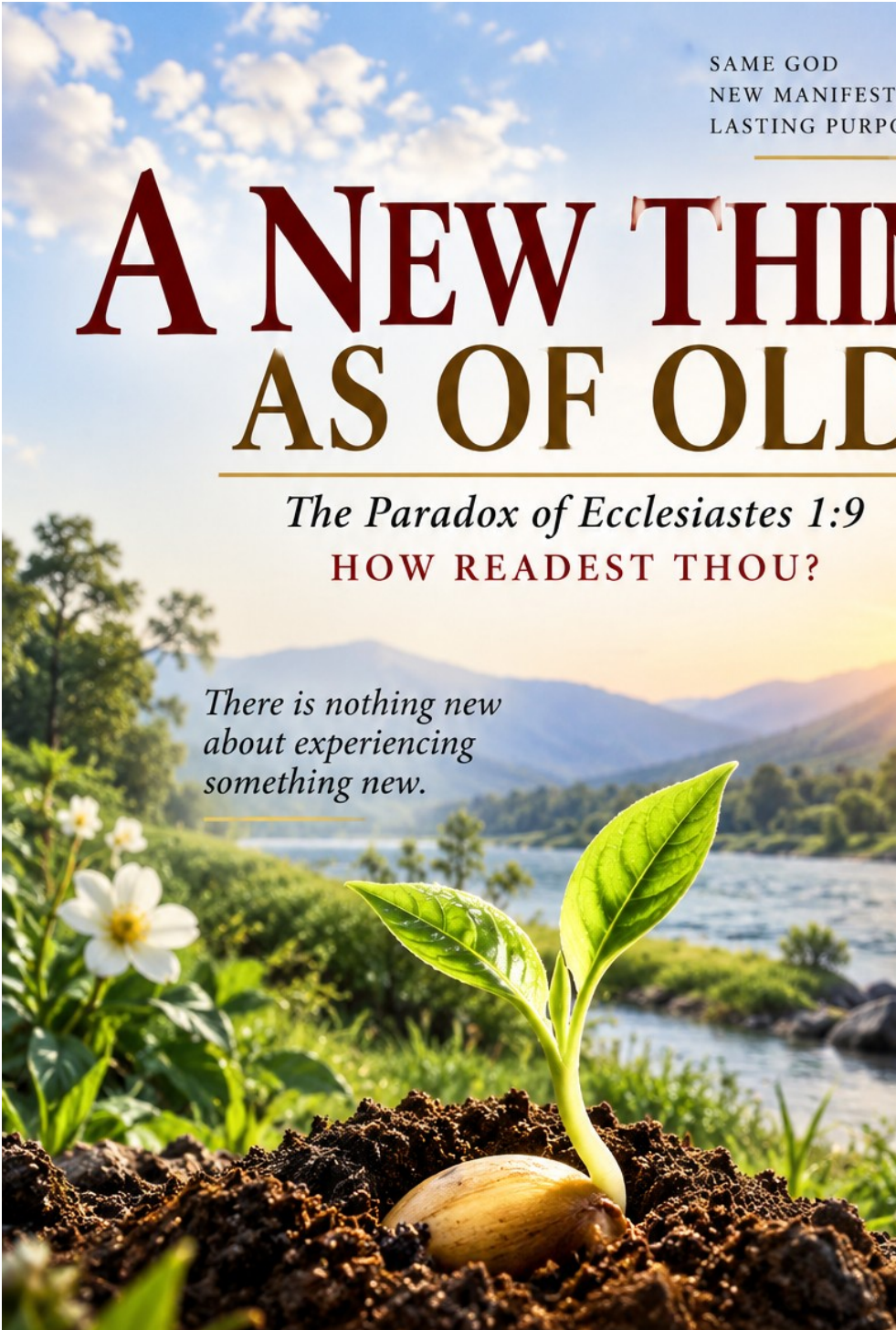


SAME GOD
NEW MANIFEST
LASTING PURPOSE

A NEW THING AS OF OLD

The Paradox of Ecclesiastes 1:9
HOW READEST THOU?

*There is nothing new
about experiencing
something new.*



A NEW THING AS OF OLD

The Paradox of Ecclesiastes 1:9

How Readest Thou?

**A NEW THING
AS OF OLD**

The Paradox of Ecclesiastes 1:9
How Readest Thou?

OLUSEGUN FAMAKIN

SECOND EDITION



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A NEW THING AS OF OLD

The Paradox of Ecclesiastes 1:9

How Readest Thou?

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First Edition, 2026

DEDICATION

To the Lord Jesus Christ,
the Author and Finisher of our faith,
whose grace saves, whose truth sanctifies,
and whose Word remains forever.

To every sincere believer who desires not merely to begin the journey of faith, but to walk faithfully with God, endure to the end, and enter into His eternal kingdom.

And to those still seeking the way:
may these pages point you beyond the words of men to **Jesus Christ—the Way, the Truth, and the Life.**

“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

— Romans 11:36

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge with gratitude the servants of God whose ministries have strengthened my faith and sharpened my attention to the Word of God.

I especially honour the memory of the late Pastor Evangelist Timothy Obadare, a father of faith whose ministry remains a testimony to the power of God and the necessity of believing prayer.

I also honour Pastor (Dr.) W. F. Kumuyi, General Superintendent of Deeper Life Bible Church, whose continuing ministry as teacher, spiritual guardian and shepherd has consistently called believers back to Scripture, holiness, faith and the whole counsel of God.

Above all, all glory belongs to God, whose Word remains true, whose knowledge is without limit, and whose works are not exhausted by the experiences of any generation.

PREFACE

This book began with a simple question: What happens when a true verse of Scripture is made to say more than it actually says? Ecclesiastes 1:9—‘there is no new thing under the sun’—is familiar enough to become a proverb, yet familiarity can sometimes hide the boundaries of a text.

Read carelessly, the verse can become a philosophy of resignation: nothing can change; nothing different should be expected; yesterday defines tomorrow. For the believer, that reading can quietly weaken expectation, prayer and the courage to act in faith.

The chapters that follow examine Ecclesiastes by comparing Scripture with Scripture. They distinguish what is recurring in human experience from what may be newly discovered, newly revealed or newly manifested to a person or generation. They also ask a practical question: when we reach the boundary of what we know, do we call it the boundary of what God knows?

From Hagar's opened eyes to Joshua's unprecedented day, from Jeremiah's invitation to call unto God to Hezekiah's many-sided answer, Scripture repeatedly brings men and women into experiences they did not possess before. The God involved is not new. His power has not newly developed. But the experience may be new to the person receiving it.

The purpose of this book is therefore not novelty for novelty's sake. It is to remove a needless obstacle to believing prayer, to recover attentiveness to God's answers, and to encourage believers to know their God, become strong and do the work appointed to their generation.

The troubles of mankind are ancient. God's record of deliverance is greater still. May yesterday's testimony become a foundation for faith rather than a ceiling over what God may yet manifest in your life and service.

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CHAPTER ONE

HOW READEST THOU?

When a True Scripture Is Made to Say What It Never Said

“The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.”

— Ecclesiastes 1:9

“What is written in the law? how readeest thou?”

— Luke 10:26

There is nothing wrong with Ecclesiastes 1:9. The danger begins with what a reader may make it say.

“There is no new thing under the sun” is one of those memorable statements of Scripture that can easily travel farther than its context permits. Read carelessly, it can become: Nothing can really change. Do not expect anything different. Your condition is your condition. People do not change. That is no longer Ecclesiastes 1:9; it is an interpretation imposed upon it.

For the believer, such an interpretation can quietly attack one of the foundations of prayer: expectation. Where expectation dies, prayer can become a religious routine rather than an exercise of living faith.

HOW READEST THOU?

Jesus’ question distinguishes what is written from how it is read. A person may quote the correct Scripture and nevertheless arrive at a conclusion the Scripture does not teach. Scripture must therefore interpret Scripture.

“Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it?”

— Isaiah 43:19

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you...”

— Ezekiel 36:26

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”

— Psalm 51:10

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

— 2 Corinthians 5:17

Something is clearly wrong with an interpretation of Ecclesiastes that makes transformation impossible.

THE “BEER-PARLOUR” INTERPRETATION

There is a popular philosophy of resignation which sometimes borrows biblical words without carrying biblical meaning: “My friend, forget it. There is nothing new under the sun.” It may be used after disappointment, to justify continuing failure, or even to normalize sin.

Imagine telling the sinner: “You have always lived this way; people like you do not change.” The gospel answers that if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. David prayed for a clean heart, and God promises a new heart. The gospel announces that a person’s past need not become the permanent definition of his future.

WHAT ECCLESIASTES ACTUALLY OBSERVES

The writer repeatedly identifies his field of observation: “under the sun.” Generations come and go. The sun rises and sets. The wind travels its circuits. Rivers flow. Men labour, acquire, lose, love, hate, succeed, fail, discover, forget and later rediscover. The manifestations differ, but the fundamental experiences of earthly existence recur.

Technology may change while the underlying human activity remains ancient. Transportation changes, but movement is ancient. Communication changes, but communication is ancient. Medical instruments develop, but sickness, investigation, diagnosis and the search for healing are ancient human experiences.

EVEN “NEW DISCOVERY” IS AN OLD EXPERIENCE

Humanity has been discovering things throughout recorded history. Experiencing something as new is itself one of mankind’s oldest experiences. A generation encounters something it did not previously know and calls it a new discovery; another generation does the same.

“no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.”

— Ecclesiastes 3:11

“a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun...”

— Ecclesiastes 8:17

Therefore, “There is no new thing under the sun” cannot mean “there is nothing under the sun which you have not yet discovered.”

YOUR PRESENT KNOWLEDGE IS NOT THE LIMIT OF REALITY

One of man’s recurring mistakes is to confuse “I do not know” with “There is nothing to know.” “I cannot see a way” does not necessarily mean there is no way. “I do not know the cause” does not mean there is no identifiable cause. Human ignorance cannot become the measurement of divine knowledge.

A DOCTOR’S REPORT IS INFORMATION, NOT ECCLESIASTES 1:9

An adverse medical report deserves appropriate attention. Faith is not pretending that medical evidence does not exist. But neither should anyone use Ecclesiastes 1:9 to conclude that a present report must permanently describe the future.

Conditions can change; treatment may work; further investigation may reveal new information; a diagnosis may be refined; a causative factor may be discovered. The believer may pray for mercy, wisdom, healing and direction while responsibly using appropriate medical care. Ecclesiastes 1:9 gives nobody authority to declare change impossible.

HUMAN TROUBLES ARE ANCIENT — GOD’S DELIVERANCES ARE GREATER

Sickness, bereavement, poverty, war, fear, betrayal, oppression, failure, confusion and sin are ancient. But before our generation encountered trouble, God had already delivered generations before us: Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Israel, Joshua, Hannah, David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Daniel and many others.

Human challenges are legendary. God’s record of deliverance is greater still. If someone says, “Your trouble is nothing new,” faith may answer, “Neither is God’s deliverance.”

CHAPTER THOUGHT

Properly understood, Ecclesiastes 1:9 need not produce lethargy. It can remind the believer that his problem has not introduced God to a category of human need with which He has never dealt.

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

— *Jeremiah 33:3*

CHAPTER TWO

NOTHING NEW, YET THINGS WE HAVE NEVER KNOWN

The Recurring Experience of Discovery

“The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be... and there is no new thing under the sun.”

— Ecclesiastes 1:9

“He hath made every thing beautiful in his time... so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.”

— Ecclesiastes 3:11

There is an important question hidden inside Ecclesiastes 1:9: New to whom?

Something can be new in human knowledge, perception or experience without being new in existence. That distinction is essential to understanding Ecclesiastes.

ECCLESIASTES DESCRIBES RECURRENCE

The opening chapter begins with cycles: generations, sun, wind and waters. Things move and conditions change, yet recognizable patterns return. Human beings enter these cycles, live their brief portion of earthly history and depart; another generation arrives and encounters many of the same fundamental realities.

THE EXPERIENCES CHANGE FORM, BUT NOT THEIR ESSENTIAL CHARACTER

The means of transportation, communication, commerce, warfare, agriculture, medicine and education may change enormously. Yet the underlying human needs and activities

remain ancient. Novel means do not make the fundamental human experience absolutely new.

EVEN DISCOVERY REPEATS ITSELF

People sometimes treat discovery as evidence against the statement that there is nothing new under the sun. But discovery itself is recurrent. One generation discovers; another generation discovers something else. The object changes; the experience called discovery continues.

The regular experience of new things is itself an ancient human experience.

“IS THERE ANY THING WHEREOF IT MAY BE SAID, SEE, THIS IS NEW?”

“Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.”

— Ecclesiastes 1:10

“There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.”

— Ecclesiastes 1:11

Forgetfulness enters the discussion. Records disappear, civilizations decline, knowledge becomes fragmented and later generations rediscover. Our declarations about what has never happened before must therefore recognize the limitations of human historical knowledge.

ECCLESIASTES DOES NOT TEACH HUMAN OMNISCIENCE

“no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.”

— Ecclesiastes 3:11

“a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun...”

— Ecclesiastes 8:17

The book interprets itself. Ecclesiastes 1:9 speaks about recurring patterns; Ecclesiastes 3:11 and 8:17 speak about the limitations of human knowledge. Life contains recurring realities, but man's knowledge of those realities and of God's works remains incomplete.

THE UNIVERSE MAKES THE POINT VISIBLE

Humanity has not comprehensively discovered, measured or understood the universe. Increasing scientific capability continues to expand what can be detected and studied. A discovery made tomorrow may concern a reality that existed long before the instrument that detected it. Scientific discovery therefore illustrates the distinction between what is newly known and what is newly existent.

HAGAR: WHEN THE ANSWER WAS THERE BUT UNSEEN

Hagar was in the wilderness. Her water was spent, and she expected her son to die.

“And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water...”

— *Genesis 21:19*

The text does not say that God created the well at that moment. It says He opened her eyes and she saw it. The provision entered Hagar's perception, and her situation changed.

This exposes an important weakness in human reasoning: “I cannot see a way” is not the same statement as “there is no way.” The first describes present knowledge; the second makes a declaration about reality itself.

The experience of Elisha's servant strengthens the same point. Surrounded by the Syrian army, he saw only the visible danger until Elisha prayed, “LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see” (2 Kings 6:17). When his eyes were opened, he saw the heavenly host that had been outside his perception. The biblical point is not that every problem has a hidden object nearby, but that human perception is limited while God's knowledge is not.

“THINGS WHICH THOU KNOWEST NOT”

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

— *Jeremiah 33:3*

God does not deny the worshipper’s ignorance; He addresses it. There may be something to learn, understand, recognize, correct, avoid or do—something the person praying could not supply from present knowledge.

Prayer therefore need not always begin with, “Lord, change everything around me.” Sometimes the necessary prayer is, “Lord, show me what I do not know.”

YOUR UNKNOWN IS NOT GOD’S UNKNOWN

Faith does not require us to pretend that we possess knowledge we do not have. It permits us to say, “I do not know,” but refuses to turn that confession into, “Therefore there is nothing more to know.” That is the difference between humility and resignation.

THE PARADOX RESOLVED

Human beings continually enter experiences, discoveries, knowledge and manifestations that are new to them. That process has occurred throughout human history. Therefore the experience of encountering something new is itself not new.

There is nothing new about experiencing something new.

Ecclesiastes describes the recurrence. It does not abolish the discovery.

CHAPTER THOUGHT

When you arrive at the boundary of your knowledge, do not call it the boundary of reality. When you arrive at the boundary of your experience, do not call it the boundary of God’s works.

Hagar is our principal illustration: what she could see before God opened her eyes was not everything that was there. Elisha's servant confirms the same truth.

That prepares the next question: if something can be new to man without being new in existence, what does God Himself mean when He says, "I will do a new thing"?

CHAPTER THREE

NEW TO WHOM?

When Hidden Things Enter Human History

“Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.”

— Isaiah 42:9

“I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them.”

— Isaiah 48:6

Chapter Two established an important distinction: something may become newly known without becoming newly existent. We must now go farther. What happens when God Himself calls something new?

The answer is one of the keys to understanding the language of Scripture. The Bible can speak of a thing as new because it has newly entered human knowledge, human experience or human history, while at the same time showing that it was already within the knowledge and purpose of God.

BEFORE THEY SPRING FORTH

Isaiah gives us a remarkable expression:

“before they spring forth I tell you of them.”
— *Isaiah 42:9*

The thing has not yet sprung forth, yet God can speak of it beforehand. Its manifestation has a time, but God's knowledge of it precedes that manifestation.

This immediately separates two moments that human beings often confuse: the moment God knows and the moment man sees.

What is future to us is not therefore unknown to God. What has not yet appeared in our experience is not therefore absent from His knowledge.

“THOU DIDST NOT KNOW THEM”

Isaiah 48 makes the point even more plainly:

“I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them.”
— *Isaiah 48:6*

Notice the language. They were hidden. Israel did not know them. Then God showed them.

hidden → shown

unknown → known

declared → manifested

promised → experienced

The newness therefore includes the experience of receiving what had previously been outside human knowledge.

This is why the question matters: New to whom?

A thing may be new to the recipient without being a surprise to the Revealer.

“THEY ARE CREATED NOW”

“They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not...”

— Isaiah 48:7

This verse prevents us from reducing every biblical use of 'new' to mere human discovery. God also brings things into historical manifestation at appointed times. Something genuinely happens now that had not previously appeared in that form within human history.

But the same passage has already told us that God can declare and reveal what man did not know. The 'now' of manifestation does not mean that God has only just acquired the idea.

A thing can therefore be new in manifestation without being new in divine knowledge.

This distinction protects both truths: God truly acts in history, and God is never taken by surprise by His own works.

GOD'S “NOW” ENTERS MAN'S EXPERIENCE

There is a moment when what God knows enters the believer's experience.

Yesterday it was hidden.

Yesterday it was promised.

Yesterday it had not sprung forth.

Then comes God's appointed 'now'.

The promise becomes event. The hidden thing becomes visible.
The unknown becomes known. What had been beyond
experience enters experience.

That is biblical newness without suggesting that God has only
just discovered what to do.

THE MYSTERY NOW MADE MANIFEST

The New Testament uses similar language when speaking about
the gospel.

*“according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept
secret since the world began, But now is made manifest...”*

— Romans 16:25–26

Paul speaks again of:

*“the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from
generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.”*

— Colossians 1:26

And elsewhere he speaks of:

*“the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom,
which God ordained before the world unto our glory.”*

— 1 Corinthians 2:7

The pattern is unmistakable. Hidden does not mean nonexistent
to God. Unknown to man does not mean unknown to God. A
mystery may be concealed for ages and then enter human
understanding at the appointed time.

The revelation is new to those receiving it. The manifestation
occurs in history. But the wisdom behind it was already with
God.

KNOWN UNTO GOD

“Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.”

— Acts 15:18

This short statement supplies an important governing principle.

Man discovers. God reveals.

Human knowledge grows because we encounter what we did not previously know. Divine knowledge does not grow by discovery in the same manner.

We may arrive tomorrow at something that astonishes us. God does not arrive there tomorrow.

We may uncover a principle, recognise a resource, understand a Scripture, perceive a danger or discover a solution that was previously hidden from us. The discovery changes our knowledge. It does not imply that God's knowledge has changed.

GOD RESTED—YET GOD WORKS

Scripture says that God finished His works and rested:

“And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day...”

— Genesis 2:2

“the works were finished from the foundation of the world.”

— Hebrews 4:3

Yet Jesus also said:

“My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”

— John 5:17

There is no contradiction.

God's completed creative work does not mean divine inactivity. The God who finished His works remains active in providence, judgment, salvation, healing, guidance, revelation and the unfolding of His purposes.

He does not need to become Creator again every morning before He can act in His creation.

Neither must an answer to prayer mean that God has suddenly begun thinking of a solution that never entered His knowledge before.

THE SEED AND THE SPRINGING FORTH

Isaiah's expression 'before they spring forth' gives us a useful picture.

A seed may be hidden beneath the soil. For a time the field appears unchanged. Then something breaks the surface.

To the observer, the visible event has just begun. Yet what has appeared did not begin with the observer's first sight of it.

So it is with many of God's dealings. There is a difference between what is visible and what is real, between what has entered our awareness and what is already within God's knowledge and purpose.

When the manifestation comes, it is right to call it new in our experience. But we should never mistake our first sight for God's first knowledge.

THIS CHANGES HOW WE APPROACH THE UNKNOWN

The unknown often frightens us because we unconsciously treat the boundary of our knowledge as though it were the boundary of reality.

We say:

I have never seen this before.

I do not know how this can happen.

I cannot see a solution.

No one around me has experienced this.

Those statements may accurately describe us. They do not describe God.

Our first is not God's first.

The believer can therefore face an unfamiliar situation without assuming that God is equally unfamiliar with it.

THE SINNER ALSO NEEDS THIS TRUTH

This truth is not only for unusual miracles or difficult circumstances. It stands at the heart of salvation.

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you...”

— Ezekiel 36:26

“if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

— 2 Corinthians 5:17

The sinner must not read Ecclesiastes 1:9 as a sentence of permanent captivity to the past.

The gospel announces that a person whose history is old can receive a new heart, walk in a new life and become a new creature in Christ.

The fact that conversion has happened to millions before does not make it less new to the person who experiences it today.

Again, the experience of newness is itself recurring.

PRAYER DOES NOT ASK GOD TO BECOME GOD

When we pray, we are not supplying God with information He lacked.

We are not asking Him to discover a solution.

We are not waiting for Him to become powerful enough to act.

Prayer brings the creature before the Creator, the ignorant before the All-knowing, the needy before the One whose knowledge is not bounded by the need.

This is why prayer can reach beyond what we presently understand.

God may answer by changing circumstances. He may also answer by revealing what was hidden from us: a cause, a direction, a correction, a person, a resource, a warning, an opportunity, a timing or a method.

NEW MANIFESTATION, SAME GOD

“For I am the LORD, I change not...”

— Malachi 3:6

The unchanging God is not a God of exhausted manifestations. His constancy does not mean monotony. His faithfulness does not require Him to repeat every method.

A new manifestation does not require a new God.

Joshua had seen God give victory through Moses. Then Moses died. Joshua faced another battle. The God was the same. The manifestation would not be.

CHAPTER THOUGHT

Three things must be kept distinct:

What God knows.

What God has manifested.

What man presently knows or has experienced.

Confusing these produces unnecessary limits.

What is unknown to you is fully known to God. What has not yet appeared may still spring forth. What has never entered your experience may yet enter it without becoming a surprise to the One who reveals it.

“Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it?”

— Isaiah 43:19

The next question is practical: when yesterday's servant and yesterday's method are gone, can the same God still give victory in a different way? Joshua's life gives the answer.

CHAPTER FOUR

JOSHUA DID NOT WAIT FOR MOSES

Same God, Different Manifestation

“Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.”

— Joshua 10:12

“And there was no day like that before it or after it...”

— Joshua 10:14

Joshua had seen God give victory before.

He had not merely heard testimony about it.

He had been there.

Long before Gibeon, Joshua had stood on another battlefield while Israel fought Amalek.

Moses told him:

“Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek...”

— Exodus 17:9

Joshua went into the valley.

Moses went up the hill.

Joshua fought with the sword.

Moses stood with the rod of God.

And something extraordinary happened.

WHEN MOSES' HANDS WERE UP

Scripture records:

“when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.”

— Exodus 17:11

The battle could be seen below.

But its outcome was being influenced by something happening above the battlefield.

Moses' hands became heavy.

Aaron and Hur intervened:

“they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands...”

— Exodus 17:12

And:

“Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”

— Exodus 17:13

Joshua learned something that day which military training alone could never have taught him.

Israel could fight.

Joshua could command.

The sword could be used.

But victory ultimately depended upon God.

YEARS PASSED

Moses eventually died.

Joshua became leader.

The responsibilities Moses had carried now rested upon him.

Then came Gibeon.

Five Amorite kings joined forces against the Gibeonites, who appealed to Joshua for help.

Joshua marched.

And before the battle reached its extraordinary climax, God spoke:

“Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand...”

—Joshua 10:8

Joshua therefore entered battle with a promise.

But the method of Rephidim was not repeated.

There was no Moses on a hill.

No Aaron supporting one hand.

No Hur supporting the other.

No stone beneath Moses.

And Joshua did not attempt to reconstruct the scene.

JOSHUA DID NOT NEED MOSES BACK

This is crucial.

Joshua could have confused the method God once used with the God who used the method.

He could have said:

The last time we defeated a powerful enemy, Moses raised his hands.

But Moses is dead.

Therefore we cannot obtain that kind of victory again.

That would have been faith in a method rather than faith in God.

Joshua had learned something better.

Moses could die.

God remained.

Methods could change.

God remained.

Leadership could change.

God remained.

Circumstances could change.

God remained.

The believer must know the difference between God's servant and the servant's God.

GOD WAS ALREADY DOING SOMETHING DIFFERENT

At Gibeon, the battle took an extraordinary turn:

“the LORD cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died...”

— *Joshua 10:11*

Rephidim had not happened this way.

The same God of supernatural victory was manifesting His intervention differently.

And then Joshua himself did something astonishing.

He spoke:

“Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.”

— *Joshua 10:12*

Joshua was not repeating Moses.

He was exercising faith in Moses' God.

“THERE WAS NO DAY LIKE THAT”

Scripture deliberately marks the event:

“And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man...”

— *Joshua 10:14*

Now place that beside Ecclesiastes:

“there is no new thing under the sun.”

— *Ecclesiastes 1:9*

And Joshua:

“there was no day like that before it or after it.”

—Joshua 10:14

If Ecclesiastes meant that mankind can never experience an unprecedented manifestation, these statements would collide.

They do not.

The principle was ancient.

God gives victory.

God hears.

God intervenes.

God rules creation.

God acts beyond human strength.

None of that began with Joshua.

But Joshua entered an experience unlike any recorded day before it.

The principle was not new.

The manifestation was.

YESTERDAY'S TESTIMONY IS NOT TOMORROW'S FORMULA

There is a danger in testimony if testimony is wrongly understood.

A believer hears how God answered somebody else's prayer.

He then assumes God must reproduce every detail.

The same words.

The same sequence.

The same person.

The same timing.

The same method.

But testimony is primarily evidence of God's faithfulness, not a formula imprisoning God within one method.

Joshua could learn from Moses without becoming a photocopy of Moses.

That is mature faith.

Yesterday's testimony should tell us:

God is able.

It should not dictate:

God must do it exactly this way again.

DO NOT BUILD A MONUMENT AROUND THE METHOD

Human beings naturally preserve successful methods.

There is practical wisdom in learning from what has worked.

But spiritually, a method can gradually occupy the place belonging to God.

We may begin to believe:

Unless this person prays, nothing will happen.

Unless this particular preacher is present, there can be no breakthrough.

Unless we reproduce this particular meeting, method or atmosphere, God cannot move.

Joshua's story dismantles that dependence.

Moses was gone.

God was not.

SAUL MADE THE OPPOSITE CHOICE

Another king later faced a frightening enemy.

Saul saw the Philistine host and was afraid.

Samuel had died.

Saul desperately wanted direction.

Eventually he said:

“Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit...”

— 1 Samuel 28:7

His demand became:

“Bring me up Samuel.”

— 1 Samuel 28:11

The contrast is sobering.

Joshua lost Moses and continued seeking the God of Moses.

Saul lost Samuel and attempted to recover Samuel through a forbidden means.

Joshua moved forward.

Saul tried to pull yesterday's prophet back.

One understood that God's servant could depart while God remained.

The other became consumed with recovering the departed instrument.

The lesson is not that Saul's entire failure can be reduced to this single incident—his disobedience preceded it. But the episode vividly demonstrates the danger of becoming dependent upon yesterday's human instrument after one's relationship with God has deteriorated.

THE GOD OF MOSES BECAME JOSHUA'S GOD

There comes a point when inherited testimony must become personal experience.

It is good to say:

The God of Abraham.

The God of Isaac.

The God of Jacob.

It is good for Joshua to remember Moses.

But Joshua must eventually stand before his own Gibeon.

He must hear God for himself.

He must obey.

He must fight.

He must believe.

He must speak.

The God whose works he witnessed through Moses must become the God he personally trusts.

This is where spiritual inheritance becomes living faith.

DO NOT ASK YESTERDAY TO RETURN

Sometimes the greatest obstacle to a new experience is our insistence upon recovering an old one.

We pray for yesterday's circumstances.

Yesterday's person.

Yesterday's opportunity.

Yesterday's method.

Yesterday's arrangement.

But God may not be calling yesterday back.

He may be calling you forward.

Joshua's victory did not require Moses to return.

It required Joshua to believe the God who remained.

THE SUN WAS NOT GOD

There is another important feature of Joshua's prayer.

The sun was part of creation.

The moon was part of creation.

Joshua's God was Creator.

Joshua therefore did not approach the created order as though God were imprisoned within it.

The God who established the ordinary course of the heavens remained Lord over His creation.

Joshua's faith reached beyond what he normally observed to the One who made what he observed.

This is why “under the sun” must never become a prison around the God who made the sun.

WHAT HAD NEVER HAPPENED TO JOSHUA COULD STILL HAPPEN

Joshua did not possess a previous case study for stopping the sun.

He had no testimony saying:

Brother Joshua, this happened to me last year.

He had no manual containing seven steps for prolonging daylight.

He entered a circumstance in which the required manifestation exceeded his previous experience.

Yet he spoke.

This is where our earlier chapters become practical.

Your first is not God's first.

What you have never experienced is not therefore outside God's dominion.

What you have never seen is not therefore outside God's ability.

Joshua's previous experience gave him confidence in God's character without prescribing the precise form of God's next intervention.

FROM MOSES' HANDS TO JOSHUA'S VOICE

At Rephidim:

Moses raised his hands.

At Gibeon:

Joshua raised his voice.

Different manifestation.

Same dependence upon God.

Different generation.

Same God.

Different battlefield.

Same divine supremacy.

Different method.

Same source of victory.

That is the lesson.

WHEN NOTHING NEW BECOMES AN ARGUMENT FOR FAITH

Now Ecclesiastes 1:9 can be turned away from lethargy.

Has God defeated enemies before?

Then divine victory is nothing new.

Has God intervened beyond natural human strength before?

Then supernatural intervention is nothing new.

Has God heard His people before?

Then answered prayer is nothing new.

Has God used unexpected means before?

Then unexpected means are nothing new.

What may be new is the manifestation of God's help in today's battle.

Therefore the believer need not say:

Because I have never seen this before, I cannot expect God.

He can say:

Because I know who God is, I need not restrict Him to what I have seen before.

CHAPTER THOUGHT

Moses' testimony was valuable to Joshua.

But Moses' method was not Joshua's prison.

Yesterday's works of God should build today's faith without dictating tomorrow's manifestation.

The believer must therefore learn:

Remember what God has done.

Learn from what God has done.

Give thanks for what God has done.

But do not conclude that God must repeat every detail before He can act again.

Joshua did not need Moses back.

He needed the God who had been with Moses and had promised to be with him.

And on that battlefield a man who already knew that God gives victory experienced something he had never experienced before:

“And there was no day like that before it or after it...”
— *Joshua 10:14*

There is nothing new about God's ability to deliver.

But there may yet be much that is new in how you experience His deliverance.

CHAPTER FIVE

CALL, AND I WILL SHOW THEE

Prayer at the Boundary of What You Know

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

—Jeremiah 33:3

There are three movements in this remarkable promise: Call. I will answer. I will show.

We often emphasize the first two. We call. We expect God to answer. But the third deserves equal attention: “I will... shew thee.” God's answer may contain revelation. It may bring something into our understanding that was not there when we began to pray.

This is particularly important because God finishes the verse with: “which thou knowest not.” The person praying does not possess all the information. He comes to God partly because he does not know. And God does not rebuke him merely for having reached the boundary of his knowledge. He invites him: Call.

PRAYER BEGINS WHERE HUMAN KNOWLEDGE ADMITS ITS LIMIT

There are circumstances in which we know exactly what ought to be done. Then there are circumstances in which we do not. We have examined the facts. We have considered the alternatives. We have sought counsel. We have applied what we know. Yet something remains beyond us.

The temptation at such a moment is despair. But Jeremiah presents another possibility: prayer.

There is a vast territory between what God knows and what I presently know. That territory should not produce despair. It should produce prayer.

The believer can say: Lord, I do not understand this. Lord, I do not know what to do next. Lord, I cannot identify the cause. Lord, I cannot see the way through. Lord, show me what I do not know.

That is not faithlessness. It may be one of the purest expressions of dependence upon God.

“CALL UNTO ME”

The invitation is personal. God does not merely say: Search harder. He says: “Call unto me.”

This does not make investigation unnecessary. It does not abolish learning. It does not condemn counsel. It does not make expertise useless. Daniel studied books. Nehemiah inspected Jerusalem's walls. Paul reasoned. Luke investigated and wrote an orderly account. Scripture never presents ignorance as a spiritual virtue.

But human investigation has limits. There comes a point at which the believer must remember that beyond every legitimate human resource stands God. Prayer is not an alternative to responsible thought. Prayer brings responsible thought under the direction of God.

“I WILL ANSWER THEE”

An answer means there is communication between the One called upon and the one calling. The believer does not pray merely to discharge emotion. He does not speak into emptiness. He comes to the living God.

“he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

— *Hebrews 11:6*

Not merely that He was. That He is. Prayer lethargy often begins when biblical testimony is unconsciously moved entirely into the past. We believe God acted, answered and guided, but all our

verbs become past tense. Hebrews brings faith into the present: He is.

THE ANSWER MAY BE SOMETHING GOD SHOWS

When many people think of answered prayer, they imagine primarily a changed external circumstance: the sickness disappears, the money arrives, the opposition ends, the door opens, the danger passes. These may indeed be answers. But Jeremiah expands our expectation: “I will... shew thee.”

An answer may involve understanding, recognition, conviction, direction, wisdom, discovery, an instruction, a connection previously overlooked, a warning, a cause, a resource or a course of action previously unconsidered. Sometimes the situation changes because God changes what we know about the situation.

WHAT IF THE ANSWER IS AN INSTRUCTION?

Naaman wanted healing from leprosy. His expectation apparently involved a particular kind of prophetic performance. Instead, Elisha sent a messenger.

“Go and wash in Jordan seven times...”

— 2 Kings 5:10

Naaman became angry. He said, “Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me...” Those words are revealing: “I thought.” Naaman had already written the script for his answer. God did not follow it.

“his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”

— 2 Kings 5:14

Do not prescribe the form of God's answer so rigidly that you reject the answer when it arrives differently.

“I THOUGHT” CAN BECOME AN OBSTACLE

We all carry expectations into prayer. We think: This is the person God must use. This is the job that must work. This is the route the money must come through. This is how the healing must occur. Then we pray, but instead of seeking God's answer, we may actually be asking God to endorse our script.

Prayer is not merely presenting our preferred solution to God. It is opening ourselves to His wisdom.

AN ANSWER MAY REVEAL THE CAUSE

Sometimes we repeatedly pray about an effect while the real need is to discover its cause. A recurring business loss may require more than money. A recurring conflict may expose something requiring correction. A physical complaint may require proper investigation. A spiritual struggle may require truth about something tolerated, misunderstood or neglected.

A revelation of cause may itself be a major part of the answer. Once the cause is known, the next action may become clearer.

AN ANSWER MAY BE WISDOM

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God...”

— James 1:5

Prayer legitimately addresses deficiencies in knowledge and judgment. Solomon asked for “an understanding heart... that I may discern between good and bad” (1 Kings 3:9). God answered him with wisdom. Sometimes we are asking God to reduce the assignment when we should be asking Him to increase our wisdom.

AN ANSWER MAY REQUIRE ACTION

“Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.”

— Exodus 14:15

There was a time to cry. Then there was a time to move. The sea would be divided by God's power, but Israel would have to walk through it. Answered prayer and obedient action are not enemies.

AN ANSWER MAY COME THROUGH ORDINARY MEANS

God may use a person, a conversation, a physician, a document, a skill, a piece of information, a lawful opportunity, a correction, a medicine, a business idea, a previously learned ability or a wise counsellor. Recognizing means does not require us to deny the God who providentially uses means.

SOME ANSWERS MAY BE MISSED THROUGH INATTENTION

If we decide in advance that an answer must be spectacular, we may overlook the ordinary-looking instruction through which God intends to lead us. Naaman nearly returned home with his leprosy, not because no answer had come, but because he disliked its form.

There is a difference between “God has not answered” and “I have not recognized, accepted or acted upon the answer.” We should be slow to declare the first without examining the second.

PRAYER NEEDS MORE THAN A SPEAKING MOUTH

If God says, “I will show thee,” then I must be willing to see. If He gives wisdom, I must receive it. If He convicts, I must correct. If He directs, I must move. If He warns, I must stop. Prayer therefore needs a speaking mouth, a hearing ear, a perceiving heart and an obedient will.

DO NOT CONFUSE DELAY WITH SILENCE

Sometimes an answer unfolds. Information arrives. Events follow. A person appears. A door closes; another opens. Understanding develops. What initially looked disconnected may eventually form recognizable direction.

We should not manufacture divine meanings for every coincidence. Neither should we assume that God can only answer instantaneously. Faith is neither gullibility nor lethargy. It is attentive dependence upon God.

“THOU KNOWEST NOT” IS NOT AN INSULT

There is liberation in admitting that we do not know everything. Pride hates those words. Faith can live with them: Thou knowest not. Very well. Then teach me. Show me. Lead me. Give me wisdom. Correct me. Open my understanding.

THE UNKNOWN BECOMES AN INVITATION

We have spent too long treating the unknown only as a threat. What if it is also an invitation—to seek, learn, grow and pray?

“I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.”

— Isaiah 43:19

The unknown says: You do not know. God says: “Call unto me.”

PRAYER IMPLICATION

When you do not know, do not pretend. When you cannot see, do not manufacture certainty. When your present methods fail, do not conclude that God's resources have failed. Call. Then remain attentive.

There is a vast territory between what God knows and what you presently know. Prayer enters that territory.

“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee... which thou knowest not.”

— Jeremiah 33:3

CHAPTER SIX

HEZEKIAH: ONE PRAYER, MANY ANSWERS

Recognising the Dimensions of God's Response

"I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee..."

— 2 Kings 20:5

Hezekiah received one of the most sobering messages a man could receive.

"Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live."

— 2 Kings 20:1

There was no ambiguity in the message. Set your house in order. You shall die. Hezekiah was sick. The prophetic word confirmed the seriousness of his condition. Everything pointed toward an ending.

"Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD..."

— 2 Kings 20:2

The wall is important. Hezekiah did not begin negotiating with the prophet. He turned toward God.

HE TOOK THE REPORT TO GOD

Hezekiah had received a grave report, but the report did not stop him from praying. He did not deny that he was sick. He received the seriousness of the situation and prayed.

There is a difference between denying a report and refusing to make the report greater than God. Faith does not require falsehood. It brings truth as presently known into the presence of the God who knows more.

THE PROPHET HAD NOT YET LEFT

“it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him...”

— 2 Kings 20:4

The prophet had not completed his departure from the palace complex. Hezekiah prayed. God heard. And the messenger carrying the former word was intercepted with another word.

“I HAVE HEARD” — “I HAVE SEEN”

God's first declarations were deeply personal: “I have heard thy prayer” and “I have seen thy tears.” Before He told Hezekiah what He would do, He assured him that his prayer and grief had come before Him.

“I WILL HEAL THEE”

“behold, I will heal thee...”

— 2 Kings 20:5

Death had been announced. Now healing was announced. This gives an important safeguard against a fatalistic reading of Ecclesiastes 1:9. A condition can change. A report can be followed by another report. This does not authorize us to promise every sick person Hezekiah's outcome; it establishes that change itself is not forbidden by Scripture.

THE THIRD DAY — AND FIFTEEN YEARS

“on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD.”

— 2 Kings 20:5

The answer contained timing. The man told to arrange his affairs for death was now being told what he would do after recovery.

“And I will add unto thy days fifteen years...”

— 2 Kings 20:6

The answer became measurable. God did not merely remove immediate death; He gave a defined extension of life.

MORE THAN PERSONAL HEALING

“and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria...”

— 2 Kings 20:6

Hezekiah's prayer concerned his personal crisis, but God's response extended into a national crisis. The king would be healed; Jerusalem would be defended. God addressed both the sick king and the threatened city.

ONE PRAYER—MANY DIMENSIONS

God heard his prayer. God saw his tears. God promised healing. God gave a recovery timetable. God added fifteen years. God promised deliverance from Assyria. God promised defence of Jerusalem. And then something else happened.

“TAKE A LUMP OF FIGS”

“Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered.”

— 2 Kings 20:7

The same account containing divine revelation and an extraordinary answer to prayer also contains a physical application. The supernatural promise did not exclude a physical treatment. The physical treatment did not make the divine answer unnecessary. Scripture simply records both.

FAITH DID NOT REJECT THE MEANS

God promised healing. Isaiah prescribed the application. They laid it upon the boil. Hezekiah recovered. The Bible is comfortable placing all those facts in the same account.

DO NOT TURN THE FIGS INTO ANOTHER FORMULA

The lesson is not: Use figs for every illness. That would merely create another method to worship. The figs belonged to Hezekiah's particular situation. The larger principle is that an answer from God may include practical means.

Especially in matters of health, Scripture does not authorize replacing proper diagnosis and appropriate medical care with an attempt to reproduce Hezekiah's fig application. Faith and appropriate means need not be enemies.

THE SIGN OF THE SHADOW

“What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me...?”

— 2 Kings 20:8

Hezekiah asked for a sign. Isaiah offered one involving the shadow. Hezekiah chose the harder alternative: “let the shadow return backward ten degrees.” Isaiah cried unto the LORD, and the shadow returned.

Within one chapter stand a sick body, a prophet, prayer, tears, promise, timing, additional years, national deliverance, a lump of figs and an extraordinary sign. The practical and extraordinary stand beside each other without embarrassment.

THE ANSWER WAS LARGER THAN “YES”

If we reduce Hezekiah's answer merely to “He prayed and God said yes,” we lose much of the passage. The answer contained information, assurance, time, promise, means, national implications and confirmation.

PERHAPS WE SOMETIMES ASK TOO NARROWLY

We may ask God to remove something when He also wants to show us something. We ask Him to open a door when He may first prepare us to enter it. We ask for healing, and the answer may include treatment, discipline, changed habits, further investigation, rest, medical intervention—or an extraordinary work of God.

We should not dictate beforehand which form an answer must take.

A MEDICAL REPORT NEED NOT BECOME A PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

A medical report should be treated responsibly. It tells us what an examination, test or professional assessment presently indicates. It may require urgent treatment, further investigation or long-term management.

But a report should not be converted into a careless theological declaration: “Nothing can ever change because there is nothing new under the sun.” That conclusion does not come from Ecclesiastes.

Medicine itself recognizes changing conditions. Treatment responses differ. Further information may refine an earlier assessment. Recovery may occur. Believers are free to pray while receiving competent care. Hezekiah teaches neither medical denial nor fatalism. He teaches us to take the situation seriously and take the situation to God.

WHEN THE ANSWER LOOKS DIFFERENT FROM THE REQUEST

Hezekiah prayed. The answer returned through Isaiah. The healing involved figs. The confirmation involved the shadow. God used several elements within one response. The person praying should not become so fixed upon one imagined form of answer that every other form becomes invisible.

“I HAVE HEARD... I HAVE SEEN”

Before the fifteen years, before the figs, before the sign and before Jerusalem's deliverance, God said: “I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears.”

Faith does not tell us that every prayer receives precisely the outcome requested. Paul sought the Lord concerning his thorn and received sufficient grace rather than its removal. Jesus in Gethsemane prayed in submission to the Father's will. Faith does not manipulate God. It trusts Him.

WHY SOME PEOPLE MAY THINK THEIR PRAYERS ARE UNANSWERED

Could it be that some answers are judged absent because the petitioner expected only one form? We expected an event; God supplied wisdom. We expected money; God supplied an opportunity. We expected removal; God supplied strength and direction. We expected a miracle without means; God supplied an appropriate means. We expected yesterday's method; God gave today's instruction.

This does not mean every unexplained delay should be renamed an answer. It means we should develop enough spiritual attentiveness to distinguish between no discernible answer yet and an answer arriving differently from our expectation.

HEZEKIAH SAW SOMETHING NEW

When Isaiah first entered Hezekiah's room, the future presented to the king was: Set your house in order. By the time the encounter had unfolded, Hezekiah had received healing, a return to worship, fifteen additional years, deliverance for Jerusalem, a practical treatment and an extraordinary sign.

His experience changed. Something new entered his future. Yet none of it caught God by surprise. New to Hezekiah. Not new to God.

FAITH CHARGE

Do not reduce prayer to asking God to perform the one solution you have already imagined. Bring Him the problem. Bring Him your tears. Bring Him the report. Bring Him what you know. And bring Him what you do not know.

If He gives an instruction, obey. If He reveals a cause, address it. If He supplies a legitimate means, use it wisely. If He changes the circumstances, give thanks. If He gives strength to endure what He has not removed, receive that grace.

Hezekiah turned his face to the wall carrying a sentence of death. He arose with a future he did not possess when he began to pray.

The God who heard him had not changed. But Hezekiah's experience did.

CHAPTER SEVEN

GETTING NEW THINGS IS AN OLD-TIME THING

Releasing Power as of Old for New Exploits

“The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children.”

— Psalm 115:14

“I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings...”

— Ezekiel 36:11

“He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do...”

— John 14:12

There is something wonderfully biblical about expecting tomorrow's experience of God to exceed yesterday's experience. Not because God improves, for God cannot become more God tomorrow than He is today; and not because His power increases, for omnipotence has no higher level to reach. The increase occurs in us, through us, and in what God brings us into.

Scripture speaks comfortably about increase, better, greater, more, new, and from glory to glory. These are the superlatives of faith. Yesterday's experience of God, however wonderful, need not become the ceiling of today's expectation.

THE OLD-TIME GOD HAS ALWAYS DONE NEW THINGS

Getting new things is an old-time thing. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Hannah, David, Elijah, Elisha, Hezekiah and the apostles entered experiences that were new to them, yet none needed a new God. The God was ancient; the manifestations entered their lives in time.

The believer therefore does not choose between the God of old and a new experience of God. The God of old is precisely the One from whom new manifestations may come.

THE WORKS OF OLD ARE WITNESSES, NOT BOUNDARIES

“Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old.”

— Isaiah 51:9

“O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years...”

— Habakkuk 3:2

There is a legitimate place for remembering the works of old. The Red Sea says God can make a way. Jericho says barriers can fall. Gideon says God is not intimidated by numerical disadvantage. David says giants can come down. Elijah says God answers prayer. Hezekiah says a grave situation can change.

Memory should feed faith. But a witness is not a boundary. Chapter Four already showed this in Joshua: Rephidim did not become the compulsory pattern for Gibeon. The God who acted as of old was not confined to the method of old.

So there is nothing wrong with praying, 'Lord, do it again.' But faith must not secretly mean, 'Only exactly as before.' Yesterday's testimony is evidence of God's faithfulness, not a formula that imprisons Him.

INCREASE, BETTER, GREATER

“The LORD shall increase you more and more...”

— Psalm 115:14

Not merely preserve what you already possess: increase. And not merely increase: more and more. Scripture therefore contains no doctrine requiring perpetual spiritual stagnation.

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

— 2 Peter 3:18

“I will... do better unto you than at your beginnings...”

— Ezekiel 36:11

The beginning is not necessarily the best a believer or a generation may experience. This does not mean every earthly circumstance must continuously improve; Scripture includes suffering, persecution and testing. It does mean that yesterday cannot be made a theological ceiling over what God may yet do.

“The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former...”

— Haggai 2:9

The faith of our fathers should become foundation, not ceiling. We honour their discipline, testimony and obedience, but we must not turn their experience into a museum which the present generation may visit but never move beyond in its own usefulness to God.

THE FATHERS DEPART; THE POWER OF GOD DOES NOT

When Elijah was about to be taken away, Elisha did not merely ask to preserve a memory. He asked for empowerment for the responsibility ahead. Whatever care is required in interpreting his request for a 'double portion,' his expectation was not that the departure of a great servant required the departure of God's power.

Moses departed; Joshua continued. Elijah departed; Elisha continued. Christ ascended; the apostles received power and continued the commission. Men depart. God remains.

Every generation is tempted to create a golden age behind itself: those were the days, those were the preachers, those were the miracles. There is value in remembering, but nostalgia can become unbelief wearing religious clothes when all our testimonies begin with 'God used to' and none of our expectations contains 'God is.'

THEN JESUS SAID, “GREATER”

“He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”

— John 14:12

Whatever questions may arise about the precise dimensions of 'greater works,' Christ did not present His earthly ministry as a reason for subsequent inactivity. He connected believing in Him with continuing works.

Then came Acts. The disciples had already witnessed extraordinary things, yet Christ still said, 'ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you' (Acts 1:8). The scope, reach and risks of the Great Commission enlarged, and Christ promised His ever-present Person and the power necessary for that assignment. New exploits require present power.

OLD EXPERIENCE SHOULD PRODUCE NEW COURAGE

David understood the proper ministry of testimony. When Saul questioned his ability to face Goliath, David remembered the lion and the bear, then said:

“The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.”

— 1 Samuel 17:37

He did not spend the rest of his life merely talking about the lion. Yesterday's deliverance became faith for today's battle. The enemy changed; the confidence remained.

So the next exploit need not look like the last one. The principles remain biblical, the God remains holy, the gospel remains Christ's gospel, but opportunities, fields of labour and manifestations may differ. Rooted in truth, alive in faith, ready for the present assignment.

THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW THEIR GOD

“the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.”

— Daniel 11:32

Exploits follow knowledge of God—not merely knowledge about former exploits, church history, testimonies or what another servant experienced. Knowing. Strength. Exploits.

The believer does not compete with biblical saints, nor seek spectacle for its own sake. But neither should we invent a ceiling God has not placed over obedience. If Scripture says more and more, better, greater and exploits, familiarity with old exploits must not become an excuse for doing none.

The superlatives of faith are invitations to greater dependence upon God.

FAITH MUST HAVE A FUTURE TENSE

A lethargic reading of Ecclesiastes says, 'Why expect anything? There is nothing new under the sun.' Faith answers: there is nothing new about God answering prayer, saving sinners, giving wisdom, strengthening weak people, delivering His people and revealing what men did not know.

Getting new things is an old-time thing.

Faith remembers, but faith also anticipates. David said, 'He will deliver me.' God said, 'I will do a new thing.' God said, 'I will do better unto you.' The Psalmist said, 'The LORD shall increase you more and more.' Jesus said, 'greater works than these shall he do.'

Do not despise the old. Learn from it, remember it, teach it, thank God for it and build upon it. But do not live beneath a ceiling constructed from yesterday's experience. Let old works release new faith; let old testimonies inspire present prayer; let former deliverances strengthen present battles.

The former works tell us who God has always been. Faith rises to meet Him in the present. Getting new things is an old-time thing.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MUST WE ALWAYS GO BACK TO EGYPT?

Recurring Change, Golden-Age Nostalgia and the Last-Day Responsibility of the Church

“The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be... and there is no new thing under the sun.”

— Ecclesiastes 1:9

“We remember the fish... the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick.”

— Numbers 11:5

Ecclesiastes 1:9 describes a recurring order across generations. Governments change. Rulers change. Empires rise and fall. Men complain about the present, forget portions of the past, and repeatedly imagine that yesterday was a golden age. The names change; the human pattern returns.

This is not peculiar to one nation or one generation. Another age, another government, another complaint, another longing for what came before. Is that new? Certainly not.

EGYPT: WHEN PRESENT DISCOMFORT REWRITES THE PAST

Israel had cried because of Egyptian oppression. Their labour was bitter, their taskmasters were real, and God said He had heard their cry. Yet after deliverance came the wilderness, and the people began remembering the menu of Egypt: fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic.

But what happened to the bricks? What happened to Pharaoh? What happened to the taskmasters? What happened to the cry that brought divine intervention? Present discomfort was rewriting the memory of yesterday.

“it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians...”

— Exodus 14:12

“Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.”

— Numbers 14:4

The people who had cried to come out were now proposing a leader who would take them back. That is the danger of golden-age nostalgia. It enlarges yesterday's benefits and diminishes yesterday's bondage.

The past is valuable when we learn from it. It becomes dangerous when we romanticise it. The things of old are written for our learning, not for our imprisonment. Former works should release faith for present exploits; former conditions must not become a golden-age mentality that sends us backwards when history is moving forward.

DANIEL'S IMAGE: THE CHANGING ORDER OF WORLD POWER

Nebuchadnezzar saw one great image. Its head was gold. Its breast and arms were silver. Its belly and thighs were brass. Its legs were iron. Its feet and toes were iron mingled with clay. Then came the Stone.

Daniel was looking beyond one man's lifetime. God was showing him “what shall come to pass hereafter.” The dream moved through changing kingdoms and changing forms of power until it reached “the days of these kings,” when the God of heaven would set up a Kingdom that shall never be destroyed.

The image is a history of changing world order. The materials change because the manifestations of power change. Yet through all the changes one ancient pursuit remains: man continues trying to organise, extend, preserve and secure human power.

GOLD: POWER, STRENGTH AND GLORY

“the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.”

— Daniel 2:37

“Thou art this head of gold.”

— *Daniel 2:38*

Gold stands at the head in splendour. Daniel himself joins the golden head with kingdom, power, strength and glory. There was a time when the magnificence surrounding a ruler was itself an announcement of power: palaces, treasures, royal courts, monuments, garments, thrones and the visible glory of kingship.

Solomon gives another biblical picture of such splendour. The queen of Sheba saw his wisdom, his house, his table, his servants and the order of his kingdom, and there was no more spirit in her. Glory communicated power.

But the golden age did not remain.

SILVER: AN INFERIOR GLORY

“after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee”

— *Daniel 2:39*

The next material was still valuable, but it was not gold. Power continued while the splendour diminished. What comes later is not necessarily more glorious merely because it is later. History moves. Government changes. New arrangements replace old arrangements. But change and improvement are not always the same thing.

Silver followed gold. Then came brass.

BRASS: THE EXPANSION OF DOMINION

“another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.”

— *Daniel 2:39*

The picture now moves towards expanding dominion. Kingdom reaches outward. Territory matters. Conquest matters. The capacity to extend political rule over distant peoples matters.

Men cross borders, seize territory, enlarge kingdoms and establish dominion over conquered peoples.

Yet Daniel had not reached the strongest material. Brass gave way to iron.

IRON: THE AGE OF CRUSHING POWER

“the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron... forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things”

— Daniel 2:40

This is crushing power. The political vocabulary of our generation calls it hard power.

Military science developed. Industrial warfare developed. Air power, missiles and nuclear weapons followed. Satellites, intelligence systems, cyber capability, drones, precision weapons and artificial intelligence have carried the capacity to break, subdue and destroy into dimensions ancient rulers could scarcely have imagined.

The ability to crush eventually became so great that the ultimate weapon did not always have to be used to exercise power. The knowledge that it existed could itself restrain an adversary. Crushing power became deterrent power.

Iron had acquired global reach. And the image had two iron legs.

THE TWO LEGS: THE AGE OF POLARITY

Modern history eventually knew a striking two-centre configuration. Great blocs of military, ideological and technological power faced one another, surrounded by alliances and competing spheres of influence. Iron faced iron. The possibility of catastrophic retaliation imposed its own terrible restraint.

But the world did not remain permanently divided between two great centres. Daniel's image continued downward. The legs

reached the feet. The feet terminated in toes. And there something appeared which had not appeared in the earlier materials: clay.

THEN CAME THE CLAY

The clay appeared last. Gold had stood without clay. Silver had stood without clay. Brass had stood without clay. The legs were iron. But at the feet and toes, iron and clay were mingled.

“the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron”

— Daniel 2:41

“the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.”

— Daniel 2:42

“they shall mingle themselves... but they shall not cleave one to another”

— Daniel 2:43

Iron did not disappear when clay appeared. Crushing military power remained. Economic pressure remained. Strategic competition remained. The capacity to break and subdue remained. But iron was no longer alone.

Alongside the crushing instruments came the softer instruments of power: negotiation, diplomacy, persuasion, treaties, alliances, coalitions, institutions, resolutions, economic relationships, information and cultural influence. What iron seeks by force, softer power seeks by consent, persuasion, negotiation and influence.

Our generation speaks naturally of hard power and soft power. Daniel saw iron and clay occupying the same terminal order: strength mingled with something softer, association without complete cohesion.

FROM TWO CENTRES TO MANY

The movement of the image is striking. Two legs descend into feet, and the feet terminate in toes. The terminal picture is no longer simply the polarity of two great centres. Power becomes distributed among many kings and many centres.

The modern world increasingly conducts its affairs through sovereign states, alliances, regional blocs, economic groupings, councils and international institutions. Nations cooperate in one sphere and compete in another. They negotiate while strengthening their defences. They trade while protecting strategic interests. They form associations without ceasing to be distinct powers.

They mingle, but they do not fully cleave.

THE PROBLEM OF COHESION

Mankind has built extraordinary machinery for bringing nations into conversation. There are treaties, summits, councils, conventions, alliances, economic arrangements and systems of international cooperation. Yet the machinery for coming together has not produced complete cohesion.

Wars remain. Rivalries remain. Competing interests remain. Sanctions remain. Territorial disputes remain. The world has become extraordinarily connected without becoming one.

The instruments have become stronger while cohesion remains fragile. That is the paradox of the feet: partly strong, partly broken; mingled, yet unable to cleave.

SILICON IN THE AGE OF IRON AND CLAY

Then another development transformed both sides of power: the digital revolution.

Modern hard power increasingly depends upon semiconductors, computing, satellites, communications, intelligence systems, drones, cyber capability, surveillance and artificial intelligence.

The softer instruments of power also travel digitally through finance, communication, information networks, administration, negotiation and the shaping of public opinion.

The same digital infrastructure can therefore strengthen both iron and clay. It can increase the reach of crushing power and the reach of persuasive power. It can coordinate armies, markets, identities, information and institutions on a scale earlier generations did not possess.

Yet technology has not cured the ancient problem. Greater connection has not produced perfect cohesion. New machinery carries very old ambitions.

IN THE DAYS OF THESE KINGS

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed...”

— *Daniel 2:44*

These kings. Plural.

At the terminal stage there are kings, kingdoms and centres of power. There is strength. There is brittleness. There is mingling. There is incomplete cohesion. And in the days of these kings, the Stone comes.

The great God had shown Nebuchadnezzar what shall come to pass hereafter. The dream was certain. The interpretation was sure.

WHEN THE WORLD BECOMES TIRED OF DIVISION

But what happens when men become tired of a world that cannot cleave? What happens when governments become frustrated with endless disagreement, when ordinary people become weary of uncertainty, conflict and economic distress, and when whole societies begin longing for stability?

The old cry returns in a new form: Give us peace. Give us security. Give us prosperity. Give us stability. Give us back the

good days. Give us somebody who can make the system work again.

This is where the danger of nostalgia meets the danger of flattery. Israel once said, “Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.” The desire to recover yesterday was already preparing them to follow somebody backwards. Humanity has not outgrown that temptation.

WHEN FLATTERY SUCCEEDS WHERE IRON FAILS

Daniel later shows a ruler entering peaceably and obtaining the kingdom by flatteries. A league is made with him; deceit follows; power grows. The hand that does not first arrive with a sword may arrive with promises.

A man can sometimes receive willingly what an army would have had to seize violently. Iron compels. Flattery persuades. Iron threatens sovereignty from without. Flattery can persuade men to surrender what they would have defended against open force.

The danger becomes greatest when people desperately want the promise to be true. A weary world may welcome the voice that says, “I can put this together.” A frightened world may welcome the voice that says, “I can give you peace.” A nostalgic world may welcome the voice that says, “I can restore what you have lost.”

And a technologically dependent world possesses instruments through which authority, finance, identity, information and human behaviour can be coordinated on a scale previous generations never possessed.

The machinery may be new. The ambition is as of old.

THE SPIRIT OF ANTICHRIST IS NOT NEW

The believer does not need to know the birthplace of the final man of sin in order to recognise the spiritual character of the

age. John wrote of the coming Antichrist while warning that the spirit of antichrist was already in the world. Paul wrote:

“the mystery of iniquity doth already work.”

— 2 Thessalonians 2:7

The final manifestation has its appointed hour, but rebellion against Christ is not new. The machinery may be new. The technology may be new. The political arrangement may be new. The reach may be new. But the spiritual contest is as of old.

And he shall not prevail. The breath of the Lord is greater than the machinery of man, and the appearing of Christ ends the pretensions of the man of sin.

THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW THEIR GOD

“the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.”

— Daniel 11:32

Against the flatteries of the age stands a people who know their God. Flattery succeeds where knowledge is shallow. Deception prospers where men surrender discernment. But those who know their God possess an anchor deeper than changing governments, persuasive personalities or promises of restored greatness.

They know Him well enough not to exchange Christ for a human saviour. They know Him well enough not to surrender truth for promised peace. They know Him well enough not to panic when world orders change. They know Him well enough to remain faithful when the spirit of the age presses in another direction. And they know Him well enough to do exploits.

The Great Commission now reaches nations with a speed and breadth earlier generations could scarcely have imagined. With that enlarged reach have come enlarged risks, opposition and possibilities. Yet Christ joined the commission to His ever-present Person:

“lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”

— *Matthew 28:20*

And He joined it to promised power:

“ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you...”

— *Acts 1:8*

The field may enlarge. The dangers may enlarge. The means available to both the preacher and his opposition may enlarge. But the Christ who said “Go” also said “I am with you.” The Great Commission was never entrusted to human strength alone.

THE DANGER OF LOOKING FOR ANOTHER MESSIAH

When society becomes troubled, the temptation to search for a messianic human leader becomes stronger. This temptation is not confined to politics. It can enter nations, churches, organisations, businesses and families. People become so desperate for one extraordinary personality to solve everything that they surrender discernment, responsibility and sometimes conscience.

There is only one Messiah. Human leaders have their place. Kings have their place. Governments have their place. Pastors, teachers and institutions have their place. But salvation belongs to Christ. No man should be asked to occupy the throne reserved for the Lord.

MUST WE ALWAYS GO BACK TO GOLD?

And so the question returns: must we always go back to Egypt? Must every difficult present make yesterday look golden? Must we continually search backwards for an age to restore?

Daniel’s image does not move backwards towards gold. It moves forward towards the Stone.

Gold passed. Silver passed. Brass passed. Iron changed the character of power. Clay entered. The centres multiplied. Daniel

did not tell the believer to climb back up the image looking for gold. The prophecy points forward.

TODAY'S WORLD ORDER WILL NOT LAST FOREVER

There is an opposite error. Some idolise yesterday; others idolise today. They assume that because an institution is powerful now, it must remain powerful; because a particular order has existed throughout their lifetime, it is permanent; because today's technology appears extraordinary, mankind has entered an arrangement that cannot be overturned.

World orders have changed as of old. World order shall change again.

The generation that experiences the next great change may call it unprecedented because they have never experienced it. But there is nothing new about mankind entering a new order. Yesterday's new thing becomes today's familiar thing. Today's familiar thing becomes tomorrow's old thing. Another generation discovers what it had never known.

There is nothing new about experiencing something new.

THEN COMES THE STONE

Daniel does not end with another human arrangement. He sees a Stone.

Not another metal. Not another emperor. Not another alliance. Not another military power. Not another technological revolution. The Stone was "cut out... without hands."

It struck the image at the feet. Then gold, silver, brass, iron and clay came down together. The whole succession of human governmental power met something it could neither absorb nor permanently resist.

"in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed..."

— Daniel 2:44

Here is the Kingdom that does not need another golden age.
Here is the King who needs no successor. Here is the
government that does not decay into another metal. Here is the
dominion that does not depend upon human hands.

The Stone is the destination of the image.

WHEN THERE SHALL BE NO MORE “UNDER THE SUN”

“there is no new thing under the sun.”

— *Ecclesiastes 1:9*

Those final words matter: under the sun.

Under the sun, generations come and generations go. Under the
sun, kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall. Under the sun, gold gives
way to silver, silver to brass, brass to iron, and iron becomes
mingled with clay. Under the sun, yesterday’s innovation
becomes today’s ordinary thing. Under the sun, human
government rearranges itself again and again.

That continuity of change is itself as of old.

But Scripture does not end under the sun.

Daniel’s image does not continue forever. The Stone comes. The
kingdoms of men do not merely undergo another
rearrangement. The God of heaven establishes a Kingdom which
shall never be destroyed.

And Scripture carries us beyond the recurring order of the
present creation to the voice from the throne:

“Behold, I make all things new.”

— *Revelation 21:5*

Now we have reached something greater than another recurring
novelty within the present order. The former things pass away.
Death passes away. Sorrow passes away. Crying passes away.
Pain passes away.

Then comes one of the most beautiful answers to the paradox with which this book began:

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”

— *Revelation 21:23*

Ecclesiastes spoke truly about life under the sun. Revelation takes us to the city that has no need of the sun.

There is no Pharaoh to return to. No Babylon to restore. No golden empire to recover. No iron kingdom to fear. No clay struggling to cleave. No flattering ruler to enthrone. No succession of human kingdoms waiting for its next replacement.

The Stone has become a great mountain and filled the whole earth. The King reigns.

A NEW THING AS OF OLD

Now the paradox resolves itself.

Throughout human history, men repeatedly experience new things: new discoveries, new circumstances, new governments, new technologies, new opportunities, new battles and new manifestations of God’s help. There is nothing new about that recurring experience of newness. It is a new thing as of old.

But God’s purpose does not terminate in endless recurrence. The believer is travelling towards the day when the language changes from “there is no new thing under the sun” to “Behold, I make all things new.”

The first describes the recurring order of the present world. The second announces its divine consummation.

Therefore we need not idolise the past. We need not fear the future. We need not make saviours of men. We need not assume that today’s order is permanent. And we need not allow Ecclesiastes 1:9 to become a ceiling over faith.

While we remain under the sun, let the old works of God strengthen present faith. Let unfamiliar circumstances drive us towards the God who already knows them. Let changing times find us knowing our God. Let increasing challenges call forth greater dependence upon His ever-present Person and power.

Know your God. Be strong. Do exploits. Preach the gospel. Hold fast your salvation. Watch. Remain ready.

For beyond the changing kingdoms stands the Stone. Beyond the recurring order stands the everlasting Kingdom. Beyond everything we presently call new stands the promise of Him who sits upon the throne:

“Behold, I make all things new.”

— *Revelation 21:5*

And beyond the sun itself - the Lamb is the Light.

FINAL FAITH CHARGE

“God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.”

— Psalm 62:11

The repetition of truth is not imprisonment in the past. It is reinforcement for faith. What God has done becomes testimony to who God is.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

— Isaiah 55:8–9

God is not confined to our former understanding, our former experience or our former methods. We must retain the knowledge of Him, but we must never mistake our knowledge of what He has done for an exhaustive knowledge of how He must work. His ways are higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts.

“Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it?”

— Isaiah 43:18–19

This is not a command to erase the lessons of yesterday. Scripture repeatedly teaches us to remember the works of God. The past supplies testimony, instruction, warning and leverage for faith. The warning is against allowing former experiences—good or bad—or former methods and strategies to become the horizon of present faith.

Paul expresses the same forward movement: “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark...”

— Philippians 3:13–14

The past is leverage for faith, not a ceiling over faith. We move forward because we know God, not because we have forgotten Him.

Yesterday's deliverance is evidence that God delivers.

Yesterday's answer is evidence that God answers. Yesterday's manifestation is evidence of His power. We retain that knowledge because ‘the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits’ (Daniel 11:32). But knowledge of God's former acts must never become a rule dictating the form of His next manifestation.

Do not make what you know the boundary of what God knows.

Do not make what you have experienced the boundary of what God can manifest.

Do not make yesterday's method the condition for tomorrow's answer.

Call. Seek. Ask. Watch. Listen. Perceive.

The regular experience of new things is itself an old thing. God's people have always entered experiences that were new to them without requiring a new God. The God we know remains the same; the methods, strategies and manifestations through which His wisdom meets a present need may differ.

God is not imprisoned in the past; neither are we, His sons and daughters. We remember His works, retain the knowledge of Him, and press forward in faith—without imprisoning His present performance within yesterday's method.

For what is new to you need never be new to God.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Olusegun Famakin is a writer, engineer, statistician, Christian community worker and educator whose work spans faith, professional practice, education, business leadership and practical knowledge development.

He trained in statistics and economics through the Federal Office of Statistics training system and later qualified in chemical process engineering. His professional career has included engineering infrastructure development, project management and leadership of Abrahams Global Concepts Limited, an MEP&P engineering firm providing mechanical, electrical, plumbing, protection and related infrastructure services.

As an author, he writes with a strong interest in making serious ideas understandable and useful. In his faith-based works, his approach is expository: Scripture is allowed to interpret Scripture, with emphasis on practical obedience, believing prayer, Christian living and the believer's responsibility to know God personally.

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