

You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet!
A Message for the New Year, By Phil Brainerd
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Introduction

Sometimes, I hear a phrase that I find interesting. Usually, it's something we've all heard. When I hear it, I think, "I wonder where that came from". The phrase for today is, "You ain't seen nothin' yet!" We've all heard it. So, where did it come from? Whenever you see something like this, lots of people try to take credit. The earliest occurrence I was able to find happened way back in 1927. It was stated in a movie called, "The Jazz Singer." The star of the film, Al Jolson, played a young man who wanted to be (guess what?) a jazz singer. At one point, he was performing on stage and the audience burst into thunderous applause. Someone said to him, "Wow, you're great!" He replied, "You ain't seen nothin' yet!"

Why does that phrase hang around? Moments like that speak to our hearts. Wouldn't we all like to do something impressive? And then be able to say, "That's just the start - It's going to get even better from here."

Well, it's the New Year. People do all kinds of things in the new year, but one activity stands out: New year's resolutions. There's a web site called, "finder.com". I ran into an article there about new year's resolutions. Here's what it said:

"An estimated 188.9 million adult Americans (74.02% of the population) say they're determined to learn something new, make a lifestyle change or set a personal goal in an effort to better themselves in 2021..." (1)

Well, that's a lot of people. What do they want to make better? "The top six categories that keep us to this holiday tradition relate to money, health, career, self-improvement, family, and love." Look at those categories. I guess a lot of people would agree - Those all sound like important topics. Wouldn't we all like to improve in those things? And maybe we'd like to get better as time goes by? If people notice that we're improving, wouldn't we like to say: "You ain't seen nothin' yet!"

Sometimes, people are good at keeping their resolutions. Sadly, sometimes not. A writer at the "Harvard Health" web site has some ideas on how to be successful with your resolutions. There's an article on that site with the title, "Seven steps for making your New Year's resolutions stick" (2). Hey, it's Harvard, right? This has to be good. Let's read what the folks at Harvard have to say: Step one: "Dream Big". That sounds like a good start. If **you** aren't impressed with your goals, why should other people be?

Step two: Break big dreams into small-enough steps. That sounds practical, but, understand what it's saying: Dream big, **but not too big**. Don't dream about things that are so big that you can't possibly pull them off. Forget about being the richest person on the planet and things like that.

We won't worry about the rest of the steps for today. For now, let's just say there's advice like this all over. Sadly, even with all this help, most folks still fall short on their resolutions. In the New year, they fail at new things.

Fortunately, there is someone who is an expert at new things. This individual has big goals. He dreams big. And, unlike us, he has the ability to accomplish his goals. Best of all, do you know who the dreams are for? They're for you! This individual is God. He has big dreams for you.

His dreams involve new things. Today, let's learn some things about the God who specializes in new things.

I. A new name.

God wants to start by giving you a new name. How does that work? Let's find out.

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it. (Revelation 2:17)

What's going on here? Towards the end of his life, the apostle John was given visions of heavenly realities and the end times. These are all recorded in the book of Revelation. Among those visions were seven churches. Back when John was alive, the churches were real. In the visions they became something more: Each of those churches represents different ways that people can do well, and ways that people can go bad. Each of the churches had a particular set of challenges.

Those who overcame the challenges received rewards. Among those rewards was a very special stone: A white stone with a new name written on it - A name known only to God and to the person who received it.

Names

If you look at names in different cultures and at different times in history, names can mean different things. In our culture, we tend to name people after a relative. If not a relative, then someone we respect. Families in many cultures though, name people after an idea - Something the family thinks will relate to the person's life.

In some cultures, a person's name can change. If they accomplish something, then their new name relates to that accomplishment. That's how it will be for followers of Jesus. Each of us has a particular set of challenges. We've been calling that your unique path in life. There are only two individuals who know your unique path: That's you and God. Only God can know everything that you face in your life. In fact, he knows better than you.

So, someday, God will give those who follow him a new name - A name that reflects the achievements of the individual. That name will only be known to each person and to God.

There are two things about that name that we need to know: First, special names denote intimacy. Many times, people who love each other call each other special names. Well, God loves you, and he knows you as an individual. So, he wants you to have a name that signifies the intimate, loving relationship that only you have with him.

Next, the name is written on a stone. It's permanent. You will always have that special, intimate relationship with God. A relationship unlike any other. We don't know how many people will be in heaven. It may be millions. It may be hundreds of millions. It may be billions. No matter how many there are, if you choose to follow God, you will always be special and unique to him. That's why God will give all his followers a new name someday in heaven - A name written on a white stone.

Right now, maybe you're thinking, "Wow, God thinks I'm special. I'm so special to God that I'm going to get a new name." Do you know how God answers that? He says, "You ain't seen nothin' yet!" There's more.

II. A new song

God wants to give you a new song. When John saw visions of heaven, he saw one where a special scroll handed to Jesus. Then he saw heavenly beings singing:

And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. (Revelation 5:9)

So, there's going to be a new song. Part of the song is about the followers of God. To understand why the song is so important, you need to understand the biggest problem humanity faces. You and I have a problem: Sin. Sin creates all kinds of other problems. One of those problems is this: Our sin causes bondage. In order to be free, we need someone to purchase us from our bondage. That's called "redemption". We need to be redeemed. Jesus did that with his blood. So, when people follow Jesus, he pays the price of their sin. Now, they can be truly free.

And it doesn't stop there: The new song continues:

You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:10)

One day, those whom Jesus has purchased will join a new kingdom - His kingdom. It's not a kingdom of peasants and paupers. It's a kingdom of priests and rulers.

So, all the beings in heaven will sing a new song. And we will be part of that song. But the new song isn't just for heavenly beings. God has been giving people new songs for ages. Way back when King David lived, a thousand years before Christ, he wrote this:

1 I waited patiently for the Lord;
he turned to me and heard my cry.
2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.
3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.

(Psalm 40:1-3)

For ages past, God has been helping people. He's been doing amazing things in their lives - He gives them a new song. Why do we need a new song? Because sometimes, our old songs aren't so good. There's an old saying, "You have to suffer to sing the blues." Our old songs are songs of pain and loss and grief.

The prophet Isaiah once shared words that God spoke to him. The words talk about the coming Messiah, the great eternal king who would come to the earth one day. Let's read those words:

1 The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,

2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,
the oil of joy

instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.

(Isaiah 61:1-3)

In those days, if a person was grieving, they showed that grief to everyone by sitting in ashes. The ashes made their skin dry and cracked. Their clothing became filthy and scratchy.

Well, instead of the ugliness of ashes, God will give a crown of beauty. Instead of the dryness of mourning, God will supply oil of joy. Instead of dirty, filthy, scratchy clothing, he will give a garment of praise. When people receive all those wonderful things, they can't help but sing.

That's what God wants to give you. Instead of singing the blues, he wants to give you a new song.

So now, you're saying, "God is going to give me a new name. Then, he's going to give me a new song. That's great!" And do you know how God will reply? "You ain't seen nothin' yet."

There's more.

III. New Everything

God is going to give us a new everything! John's vision continues:

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes.

There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"
(Revelation 21:1-5)

Look at that: "I am making everything new!" What's going to be new? Everything! There will be a new heaven. There will be a new earth.

What will life be like in that new place? We don't know all the details, but there will be no more death. There will be no more mourning. No crying, and no pain. The old order of things will pass away. The old order is here where we live. That's now. Here and now, we have pandemics, wars, earthquakes, storms, famines, and poverty. And we have a whole lot of other things we would rather not have.

What's going to happen to all those things? The apostle Peter tells us:

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. (2 Peter 3:10)

SLIDE

One day, the earth will see something called "The day of the Lord." It will come fast, like a thief. It will be like a hit and run. The heavens will disappear with a roar. The elements will be destroyed by fire. Everything on earth will be laid bare. Then, God will make everything new.

So, if you are a follower of God, you will be there. You will have a new name. You will sing a new song. You will see all things made new. What an incredible time! And do you know what God will say at that time? "You ain't seen nothin' yet!"

He can say that because even with all those incredible things, there's more. This is only the beginning of an age called the "eternal state".

At the close of his vision, here's what John saw:

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 22:1-5)

This will be an incredible place in an incredible time. And look at this: "And they will reign for ever and ever." On the day that the followers of God enter this age, it will only be the beginning.

Centuries ago, a man named John Newton felt led to write the well-known hymn, "Amazing Grace". Everyone knows the first verse:

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.

But very few people know the last verse.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise,
Than when we first begun.

Every day in the eternal state will be better than the one before it. Every single day people will think, "Surely we could not see anything more wonderful." And do you know what God will say? "You ain't seen nothin' yet." He will be able to say those words every day for the rest of eternity.

Our reaction

As always, we have two kinds of people reading. First, we have people who know this. You folks hang tight.

Then there are the folks who haven't heard. If all this is new to you, there is a warning. You may have noted all the times we said, "If". "If you are a follower of God..." So, maybe you're thinking, "How do I get in on this?" Well, there's one more new thing God wants to give you.

IV. A New You.

God wants to give you a new you. Jesus told some friends about that once. A famous teacher who lived in Israel during the days of Jesus came to him and wanted to know about the things of God. Here's what Jesus said to him:

"Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." (John 3:3)

Another way of stating that is to say that you must be born anew. You have to start fresh. You must start at the core of your being. You have to go so deep, that you can not possibly do it yourself. God's Holy Spirit has to do it for you.

The apostle Paul also wrote about it:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

You need to be born again, born anew. And you need to be placed into Christ. If you do not know with certainty that you have been born again - If you are not completely sure that you have been born anew, and that you are in Christ, it likely never happened.

Would you let us tell you how? Please contact us. There are some important links at the end of this article. When the earth sees the fire from heaven burning away the old, we don't want you to be stuck there. That would be a very bad thing.

For the people who have done this. For those who have chosen to follow Jesus Christ, here's what you need to do, and this is your first resolution for the New Year: Remember all the things we've talked about today!

Let's pull this all together.

CONCLUSION

We've learned today that God knows all about new things. If you're a follower of Christ, one day, God will give you a new name - A new name known only to God and to you.

God has already given his followers a new song. Maybe it's not a bad idea to remember the old song every now and then. Maybe it's time to remember where you were heading before you met Christ. In this new year, it's time to rededicate yourself to the path of righteousness. Remember the new song that God has given you.

And then, remember where you are going. You're going to a new heaven and a new earth, the place where God's throne is. And you're going there forever. Every day will be better than the last. Every day, when you think there is nothing more amazing to see, God will say: "You ain't seen nothin' yet!"

Thanks for reading! Here are some helpful links:

Trinity Church
www.TrinityTeaneck.org

Phil's Site
PhilBrainerd.com

To learn how to begin a new life with Jesus Christ, visit Billy Graham's site:
PeaceWithGod.net

End Notes

1 "New Year's resolution statistics - How many Americans are due to achieve their new year, new me goals in 2021?" Catherine Choi Updated Dec 4, 2020. <https://www.finder.com/new-years-resolution-statistics>, accessed December 29,

2 Seven steps for making your New Year's resolutions stick November 24, 2020
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/seven-steps-for-making-your-new-years-resolutions-stick>, accessed December 29, 2021