

**ALL THINGS NEW****REVELATION 21:1 – 5**

*by Rob Sellitto, CBM Regional Representative, Central Canada*

Today is New Years Day. New Years is a day where we can stop, we can reflect, we can remember what was, but also look with hope and anticipation for what's coming up. New Years is this moment in our calendar that we've set aside to say, "What comes next?" Many of us are filled with hope and anticipation for what this year might bring. Maybe you're thinking about a new change in your life that's positive – a change, maybe, in the job market, maybe a change in where you live, or in a relationship, maybe you're hoping for something great to happen. Many of us see New Years as a time when we're going to improve ourselves. We might set some resolutions for ourselves – take time and say, "this is what's going to happen this year." Some of us think we're going to join a gym and go four times a week. Maybe you're going to try to eat a whole lot healthier, or maybe cut back on coffee a little bit, or maybe you've decided you should start going to church every week.

Whatever your resolutions might be, or whatever your hopes and dreams for this coming year of 2023... That excitement, that hope, that desire for something to be different, for something to be good and enjoyable, will probably carry you for a while. You will enjoy the idea of getting healthier, or of trying to learn something new, or of participating in a different environment and getting to learn things. But inevitably, for most of us (maybe not all), that excitement, that renewal, that joy that comes from anticipating what could be new, wears off a little bit – loses a little bit of its flavour. Inevitably, we may stop going to the gym in February, even though it's only been a month or so; or we may find ourselves in the candy or chip aisle at the grocery store and buy a lot of it, and then go home and eat it all while we scroll through tiktok and then drink some coffee and stay up all night, and then oversleep and miss church... We can feel discouraged, or dismayed, or disheartened because we feel like we failed when we weren't able to do what we thought we could. While all that excitement, all that joy, all that anticipation was carrying us for a while, we can get so discouraged that we just give up and wonder why we tried in the first place.

The hard truth is that in this world things don't always go the way we want them to. In fact, this world isn't the way it's supposed to be. We know from the story of scripture, that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and everything was in order and perfect – the way it was supposed to be. But inevitably people went their own way – took their own path – disobeyed God. As sin entered the world, nothing was right anymore – relationships were broken, the earth was cursed. Nothing was the way it was supposed to be. We find ourselves, in the story of scripture and in our own stories, living in a time when nothing is the way it's supposed to be. We can feel sorrow because of the suffering, because of the sadness we experience. We can lose hope and forget all the joy and anticipation we had as we started the year. But this is not the end of the story; the end of the story is hope-full.

In Revelation 21, we're given a picture of what is to come. It is so much better than any of our New Years resolutions, or any of our gym programs, or any of the courses we take to try to better ourselves, or the self-help books we read. It is so much better than all of those things that we can imagine. I know there are a lot of different ideas regarding what the book of Revelation is about. Some of us say it's all about the future, and there are wars, and dragons, and the like. Some of us

say some of it's already happened and some of it is the future. There are a lot of different ideas, but no matter where we find ourselves in these ideas, what's clear is that there's a hopeful end to the story of God and his people.

In Revelation 21, we come to this place where John is given a vision – a vision of what God's people have gone through and will go through. And it all comes to this moment in Revelation 21, which says this:

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. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 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. 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." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

The picture John gives us – the vision he had – was that what we just celebrated at Christmas, that we had this hope and anticipation of Jesus coming, and God-with-us – Emmanuel – came, died for our sins, rose again so we could be forgiven and experience life in all its fullness... There's a future hope, that God will continually be with us. There's a future hope that we will be with God and there will be no more pain or sorrow or suffering.

There are two words in there that really stick out for me, that I think are what we need to hold onto in times when we feel discouraged or dismayed or disheartened. These are two words we can hold onto to remind ourselves that God is not done. Those two words are *all things* and *new*. I know you're pretty smart and you're probably saying, "Rob, *all things* is actually two words." And you're right. In English we have two words: *all* and *things*. But in the original document – in the original language – it was one word. And this one word, *pánta*, means *all things* – everything. If anything falls under the category of *thing* or *all*, it is included in *all things*. It could be the grass that is covered with snow right now, or the snow that has fallen, or even you or me or our relationships or our experiences. It's *all things* – everything.

The second word is *new*. Those *all things* – everything – is being made *new*. There are two words that get used in the New Testament for *new*. One is *neos*, which is a new thing, like if you have a car out of nothing, it's a new car. The second word is *kainos*, which means new in nature. The idea is that it looks back to what was, and makes it what it was always supposed to be. You are a new creation in Christ.

All things are being made new. What was, wasn't perfect, but it will be. It'll be new. God's word to our future is that he is going to take what was, the imperfect realities of our experiences and our lives – of our everyday – and he will make all things new. You've probably heard this saying before: Nothing is wasted in God's economy. That's what *all things new* really means.

The hard part is that we're not living in the future, we're living right now. We're living in a world that's imperfect; we're experiencing things that bring us sorrow, that bring us pain. We're facing the temptation of going down that candy aisle and buying all that candy or missing church because we're tired. Nothing is perfect. We're not perfect. But God is making all things new.

Our experiences today, as horrible or as inconvenient as they may be, will be made new – will be better. We're living in a time right now, hoping for what will be. People often call this the *Now & Not Yet* of God's kingdom. We know how the story ends, we know that God will make all things new – that he will be with us, that we will be victorious and experience life in all its fullness, but we also know that right now the world's not as it's supposed to be. We might get glimpses of how he's making things new, but not feel it or experience it the way we will in the future.

Following Jesus – believing he'll make all things new in time – doesn't cause us to run away, it causes us to enter into the moment of now, even more. As we wait for what is not yet – for all things to be made new – we step in deeper to live life with Jesus here and now. We look for the new he is doing around us, and hope and wait for all the things to one day be made new.

One of the privileges we have of being followers of Jesus is we are invited into a family of God. We are brothers and sisters, not just with the people we are sitting with in our homes or churches, but with people across the world. We are brothers and sisters with people we may have never met before, but we are all part of one family – the family of God. We all long for things to be made new. While our experiences may be different – while our suffering and our sorrow may look different – we all know things are not the way they are supposed to be. We also all know God will make all things new, and together we can experience that.

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Kallie and Tim Hutton  
CBM Field Staff, Bolivia

Reading Isaiah 43:18 – 19

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.  
See, I am doing a new thing!  
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?  
I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

Hi. We're Tim and Kallie, your partners in mission in Bolivia.

As we begin our tenth year of ministry in Bolivia, it's good to reflect back on the things God has done. In a world marked by sin, pain, and suffering, we are daily witnesses of God bringing healing, comfort, and joy to his people.

*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.* (Isa. 43:18)

The pandemic cause children to fall so far behind in school that we have seen several in our ministries who have become functionally illiterate. Discouraged, they believe that they can never catch up.

*See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? (Isa. 43:19)*

Through the persistence and attention of project staff and church volunteers, many of these kids are now excelling in their classes, gaining new confidence, and recognizing their ability.

*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. (Isa. 43:18)*

A single mother was diagnosed with cancer. She was unsure of what treatment to pursue, how to save for when she would be unable to work, or who would care for her children.

*See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? (Isa. 43:19)*

Through the relationships developed at [Eagles Wings](#) and the [Casa de la Amistad](#), she has church members accompanying her to doctors appointments and advocating for the best treatment. She has been able to use her skills to sew items to be sold, and make an income when she's unable to work. And she's confident that her children will be loved and cared for as she fights this disease.

*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. (Isa. 43:18)*

A church embarked on a journey to serve the vulnerable children in their community, not knowing where they would receive sustainable funding, how they would encourage volunteer participation, or how to go about communicating the love of the gospel to these kids and their families.

*See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? (Isa. 43:19)*

This church, having built up their capacity through several years of experience, spiritual formation, and professional development, were able to send their members across the country to train and mentor other churches who are just beginning this integral mission journey.

*Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. (Isa. 43:18)*

A rural community was isolated from society, with no road access, vulnerable to disease, and living in extreme poverty. They feel forgotten by God and the rest of the world.

*See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? (Isa. 43:19)*

Through the loving attention of the local church, in partnership with the [Chagas Prevention Ministry](#), a road was built to the community – something that they had longed for, for decades. This allowed their homes to be renovated, protecting them from disease, and empowering them to develop new, sustainable ways of earning an income.

Each day, we see the Lord bring new life out of people and communities who are suffering from the brokenness of this world. But take heart! The old has gone; the new has come. “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. He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’” (Rev. 21:4 – 5)

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One of my favourite passages in the Bible is Romans 5, in which Paul writes this:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

As you are waiting for all things to be made new; as your experiences are not what you hope they will be – there will be suffering and sorrow – remember that in the suffering and sorrow we walk through every day, God is with us, and it produces hope in the end. There is no shame in hoping, because God has poured his love out into us.

So what do you do in the now as you wait for the not yet? I think there are some things in Scripture that we can look at to see how we can continue to hold onto that hope, even when right now isn’t what we want it to be.

One is to remember. I think throughout the Old Testament you see people always needing to be reminded to remember the God who rescued you, the God who led you out of slavery. We need to remember what God has done already.

Maybe in your situation, you’re finding yourself in a place where you don’t know if anything good will come from it. Maybe your relationships are breaking down. Maybe your financial situation isn’t good. Can you remember a time when God was working in your life and he showed his faithfulness to you? Remember. Remember that the God who worked then still works today and will work in the future.

The second thing I think we need to do is to trust. Trust that God wants you to experience life in all its fullness. As you experience the now, trust that God is working for your good in the not yet. Trust that whatever you go through now does build your character, which produces hope. Trust that the now won’t be forever. Trust that God is who he says he is.

The third thing I think we have to do, which isn’t always easy, is wait. We have to wait in the now. After we’re remembering what God has already done, trusting how he will work in our present and future life, we wait to see the goodness that God has for us in time.

Wherever you find yourself this New Years day, whether you find yourself thinking about making resolutions or whatever you're looking for or hoping for, don't lose heart when things don't go the way you think they should. Don't lose heart when moments of discouragement happen. God is with you; God is for you. Trust that he knows what you need and is making all things new.