

## ***Pieces of a New Year***

A Bible Study on Isaiah 43

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A New-Year is like a puzzle, containing 365 pieces. Although we might have a picture of what we think this new year will look like, we don't know how all the pieces will fit together.

When doing a puzzle, you use the picture on the box as a reference. Our picture for the new year is all the plans we make, the hopes and expectations for what we have for the coming year. Some years turn out as you pictured, but a lot of times what you pictured at the beginning of the year, ends up being completely different than what you envisioned.

Some pieces of the new year are like the edge piece of puzzle. They serve as the anchor for the year. A lot of pieces are like those non-straight edged pieces – there are a whole lot more of them and you aren't quite sure where they fit. When doing a puzzle sometimes the perfect piece is easily found, and other times it is a lot of searching and frustration to finding the piece.

Our 365 days of the year are like that as well. Some days fit quite nicely into the big picture and others are an exhausting search for the perfect fit. It isn't until the puzzle is finished that the picture is complete.

- If life is like a puzzle, what kind of picture was last year's puzzle? What picture do you think is on the box of this year's puzzle?

**Context:** Isaiah 43 is written to the Israelites who currently find themselves in captivity in Babylon, but the author writes to encourage them and to let them know God has not forgotten about them.

**Read Isaiah 43:1-13.** The Israelites are obviously facing fearful times, because God tells them several time throughout these verses mention not to be afraid.

- What fearful things are you dealing with during this coming year?

- What reasons did God give the Israelites to not be afraid in these verses? What verses clearly command us to not be afraid in this passage?

The first thing you do when making a puzzle is sort the straight edge pieces from the rest. It is important to get your border or frame of the puzzle built first. Finding the four corner pieces is where you begin. The corner pieces of our puzzle for this new year are four characteristics of who God is. They are the foundation of Who we build our life upon. In this passage we see several descriptions or names of God. We need not fear whatever the pieces of this year's puzzle look like, because of who God is.



From Isaiah 43, let's look at some of the "straight-edge" pieces of the puzzle we can anchor our lives on as we build this year's puzzle.

### 1. God is our Creator (v. 1, 7)

- What does God being our creator mean?
- What are your favorite things that God created?

### 2. God is our Redeemer and the only savior (v. 1, 3, 11-12)

- What does the word redeem mean? What does ransom mean?
- How had God redeemed Israel in the past? How has God redeemed us?

### 3. God is present with us (v. 2, 5)

- What situations are described here that God says He will be right there with you?
- What experiences did you have last year that felt like a flood that was going to overtake you or a fire that was going to burn you? How was God with you in those times?

### 4. God loves us (v. 1, 4)

- How does God demonstrate His love for His people in these verses?
- What comfort do you receive in the fact God loves you enough to call you by name?



Once the border is completed on a puzzle, the next step is to start filling in the middle. Verses 14-21 are the middle pieces. These are the bulk of the puzzle, and they take time to find just the right place where they fit. Although we have a picture to help us with the puzzle, they don't fall into place easily. Some of them will connect to the edge pieces, so you will see references to who God is, like He already mentioned in the first 13 verses.

In these verses as the picture begins to take place, it reminds the people of what God had done in the exodus of Israel from Egypt.

- Compare Isaiah 43:16-17 with Exodus 14:5-31.
- Compare Isaiah 43:19 with Exodus 13:20-22.
- Compare Isaiah 43:20 with Exodus 15:22-27 and Exodus 17:1-7.

God didn't want His people to stay fixated on what God had done before. God had new miracles in store for this generation. It is good to be reminded of God's past faithfulness, but it is important to remember that He has new mercies for us each morning (Lamentations 3:22-23).

- What mighty things did God do in your life last year? How did He provide, answer prayer, or encourage you during a difficult time?

When doing a puzzle, although the process is the same no matter what the picture, how the pieces fall in place and how a puzzle comes together is never the same. That is like the way He works in our lives. He does similar things in our lives, but He also does different things. We often miss His working in our lives because we are focused on how He has responded in the past, and we aren't expecting something new.

Although God is calling them to remember the past, He is also calling them to forget the former things and see what new things He is doing now (v. 18-19).

- The word "See" what does that say to you?
- What is God asking them to "see"?

**"See"** – it's an invitation from the Lord Himself. He is inviting His children to look intently at what He is doing. What He is doing is springing up. It comes suddenly, like when a seed finally burst through the ground with a little sprout of life. It is growing. God wanted them to see the growth that was still ahead for them. If God's people had stayed focused on their captivity, they would have never experienced their release.

In order to see, we need to have eyes fixed on God and what He is doing. We often miss what He is doing because we aren't looking or we are looking for God to do things in your life as He has always done. John Piper writes, "God is always doing 10,000 things in your life, but you may be aware of two or three of them."

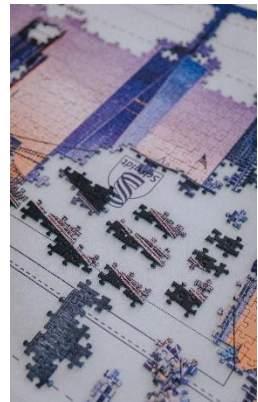
- What mighty things did God do in your life last year? How did He provide, answer prayer, or encourage you during a difficult time?

We are to remember the faithfulness of God but forget where we have not been faithful to Him. They were in captivity for their sin and failure, but God doesn't want to keep them there!

- In verses 22-24, God reminds His people of how they had failed Him. What does God point out about their sinfulness?
- What is the promise in verse 25?
- What regrets do you have about last year? How did you fail to live up to God's expectations in His Word?
- What sin do you need to confess?

Let's not begin this new year with regrets, remorse and unconfessed sin. Let's deal with it and allow Him to do a new thing in your heart and life. This new thing is the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ. We are able to die to the past and live the life that lies ahead of us through the power of Christ's death and resurrection.

The puzzle of this year is just beginning. We don't know how all the pieces will fall into place. He might do things like He did last year, but don't limit Him to the way He worked before. He always has something new in store. Let's not forget that He still does marvelous things, and may we have eyes to see those amazing things He has planned for us now.



May this prayer be our prayer for the New Year:

*"Lord, forgive me for thinking Your mighty works are in the past or imagining Your best plans for my life have already come and gone. Help me not to miss the stunning miracles taking place at work, at home, in my neighborhood, and in my city."*

Joni Eareckson Tada & Larr Libby, [A Spectacle of Glory](#)