

Let the Holy Spirit Use COVID Lockdowns to Create Your New Wineskin

Discussions about reemergence from our social isolation are in the air. They generate optimism and anxiety, hope and perplexity. Yes, also fear of the unknown and the uncontrollable.

“Are we ready? Am I prepared for what may be a whole new world taking shape—out there?” This is civilization reset such as none of us has ever experienced.

The talk is about the changes we will encounter. Because of the global nature and unprecedented, unknown danger of the COVID-19 pandemic, apparently everything is shaking that can be shaken: changes and regulations in government, education, religious gatherings, society, commerce, health care, the way we earn our livelihood and family structures—just for a start.

Among Christians who have a prophetic ear and a diligent mind to study the Scriptures, the talk is that God is on the verge of doing “a new thing” for and with and through His people to rev up preparation for His promised return.

When Jesus referred to “old and new wineskins,” He may not have meant only institutions and traditions that had been misinterpreted and misapplied by the Pharisees. There are various interpretations of His parable.

Basically, He declared that His new wine teaching couldn’t be simply patched on to the old traditions, the old wineskins. The new could not be an add-on to the old. “You have heard ... but I say” (see Matt. 5).

A New Paradigm

Another layer of understanding is people. The Holy Spirit's power is prophesied to come upon the old people simultaneously with the young, irrespective of gender, status or position in life (Joel 2:28-31).

New wineskins were needed on the day of Pentecost outpouring of the Holy Spirit, quoted by Peter in his historic message as being fulfilled. The 3,000 who responded to Peter's invitation had to have new wineskin ears and hearts.

To include the Gentiles in the gospel required a new wineskin mindset—a "new thing" that shook the world.

The Great Commission was a "new thing." The effect of the gospel on society and world empires was a "new thing." Throughout the history of the church, many "new things" have required God's people to be new wineskin people.

Here we are at another level of "last days" and "end times"—a 21st-century refulfillment of the prophecy of Joel. Are we ready for the unknown "new thing" to be poured out in the days to come? We must keep pace with God's master plan for the church, the bride of Christ.

The prophecy of Joel makes it clear that God does not limit Himself to doing new things by His Spirit in the young. In these last days spoken of by the prophets, God may be about to move in tremendous power of renewal also upon those "gray hairs" who are more advanced in age—who are called the "vulnerables" by the COVID people.

Whatever our calendar age, it is never too late to open ourselves to more of God's fullness! God pours His holy oil on the old wineskins people to restore them to youthful elasticity and usefulness to hold more of Him.

"So that your youth is renewed like the eagle" (Ps. 103:5b). They have wisdom to impart transgenerationally.

People of retirement age who are refired with zeal and first love for Jesus can draw into God's kingdom friends who are closer to the finish line as well as ignite the flame in generations that follow. The young, in turn, spiritually energize the calendar-challenged.

In whatever generation we find ourselves, let us lay aside the dry, brittle, old wineskins for flexible, malleable, new wineskins so we can contain the explosive burst of the Holy Spirit's outpouring.

New wineskin people need anointing "with fresh oil" (Ps. 92:10) as our "essential oil." The Holy Spirit is both the dispenser of that oil and the oil itself.

Psalms 45:7 (NIV) promotes the "oil of joy" to strengthen us under all circumstances. The outpouring to come may carry with it times of hardship and trials, times when we will need to "count it all joy."

Why did God allow our sudden mandated global isolation to kick off the paradigm of change concerning His people and His church? Perhaps because old patterns change slowly? And you can't patch the new onto the old?

Pulling the Plug on the Old to Clear a Path for the 'New Thing'

We were forced to detach ourselves from the nonessentials and daily distractions to sort out life's real priorities. We needed to become new-wineskin people of God, eager for the revelation of His "new thing."

Let's not focus on simply getting through the pandemic and back to our former comfort zones and competitive lifestyles. We'll never resume the familiar same-old, same-old. Times and seasons are moving along in the master plan of God so a "new thing" can burst forth.

We don't know yet what that "new thing" will be, but Jesus promised it. "Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert" (Isa. 43:19, KJV).

"And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" (Rev. 21:5). {eo}

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