

SOMETHING “NEW” FOR GOD

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Men were taught, from earliest times, only to use in worship what was “new”, not what had previously been used for some other purpose. Thus, in preparing for the erection and furnishing of the Tabernacle, God told Moses that He had given skills to men “in all manner of workmanship” that “they may make all that I have commanded thee” (Exod. 31:6). Later, the same principle was applied to the Temple, and therefore Solomon “made (i.e. ordered to be made), all the vessels that pertained unto the house of the Lord.” (1 Kings 7:48).

It was considered right and fitting for God to have “new things.” This throws light upon other biblical passages. It explains why, for example, an unworked heifer or bullock was to be used for sacrifice — “a heifer which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke.” (Num. 19:2). And it also explains why, when the Ark was moved, it was thought right (mistakenly, in the event, because contrary to Levitical law, Num. 3:29-31; 7:9) to set that Ark upon “a new cart” (2 Sam 6:3 cf. 1 Sam. 6:7).

Now when the Lord Jesus was on earth, He was honoured on several occasions with “new things”:—

1. In His birth. He was born of one who could say, “I know not a man” (Luke 1:34 — “a typical Jewish way of stating her virginity.” Dr. Lenski). This was important, indeed, it was essential, for if Christ had been a man, and nothing more, He would have been born like the rest of us; but His virgin birth was a striking witness to the fact that He was different from us in that He was “God...manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16). But there is more to be said on this: not being conceived in the natural way, He did not come under the law of ordinary generation, and so was never subject to original sin. Only thus could salvation be secured. “Sin shut the gates of heaven; nothing but holiness could set them open again.’ (Herman Witsius); and again, “Whosoever is sinful wanteth a Redeemer; and He could have redeemed none, who stood in need of His own redemption. We are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ; therefore precious, because of a

Lamb without blemish, and without spot.”
(John Pearson).

2. In His life. Christ entered Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of an ass, “whereon never man sat.” (Luke 19:30). It was determined that He should not sit where others had sat before Him. As already observed, He was no ordinary man, and no ordinary king. Furthermore, by riding upon this colt, He was shown to be no man’s successor, but absolutely unique. “There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

This action was both significant and a symbolical. It intimated that Christ was to reign over those whose nature, like this animal’s was unconquered and seemingly ungovernable. By the power of efficacious grace, Christ would bring man, “born like a wild ass’s colt” (Job 11:12), under His control and into perfect submission. Isn’t this what conversion is all about? “Thy people”, says David, “shall be willing in the day of Thy power” (Ps 110:5).

3. In His death. After He died, He was laid in a sepulchre “wherein never man before was laid” (Luke 25:53). A new grave, where the decay and smell of death had not entered, was considered the only proper resting place for our Lord’s body, since prophecy had said “neither wilt thou suffer thine holy One to see corruption” (Ps 16:10; Acts 2:27).

Moreover, unlike the rest of the dead, He was buried to rise again, and then never more to die, so He ought not to be buried where others had been, as if His body was to share the same fate. A sepulchre had to be found which marked the difference: a new one, for Him who was “the first begotten from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth” (Rev. 1:5).

Here lies another truth. He rose as “the first begotten from the dead” (cf. Col. 1:18), suggesting that He was to be the first of many who would rise from death and the grave. Through Christ’s merits and power, all His people shall one day rise as victors and in triumph: “Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man also the resurrection from the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first—fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming.” (1 Cor. 15:20-25). This is our sure and our certain hope.

The three verses taken together preach the Gospel to us:

The first verse teaches that Jesus Christ was GOD, coming into this world to save men and women from the dreadful consequences of sin.

The second teaches that, through His omnipotent GRACE, He makes men willing to be saved and ruled by Him.

The third teaches that everlasting GLORY belongs to all those who have entrusted themselves to Him and His safe-keeping.