

Is 2025 A ‘New Year’ For God?

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We have just celebrated the beginning of a ‘New Year’ for us. But is it a ‘New Year’ for God?

Many believers say ‘No. God is *omnipresent* or *all-present* or *always-present*. Which means that God is capable of being in the past, the present and the future all at the same time. After all in Rev. 22:13 God says, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End*”.’ And this is the basis for God’s *omniscience*, God’s *knowing all things* from *First to Last*, because God is present at all times from Beginning to the End and so knows everything that is happening from Beginning to the End and can make known everything that is happening from Beginning to the End.’ Hence in Isa. 46:10 God says, “*I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come*”.’ So, you might say from this perspective **there is never anything new for God, there is never a ‘New Year’ for God!**

But while in Rev. 22:13 God says, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega*”, in Rev. 1:8 God says, I am the One “*who is*” (in the present), “*who was*” (in the past), and “*who is to come*” (in the future). So, God is *all-present* or *always-present*, but only in the present; *God is not present in the past nor present in the future as neither exist in the present tense*. Indeed, God the creator goes through time with God’s creation. God was with us in the past, is with us in the present and will be with us in the future. However, the future does not exist yet, as it will only come into existence through the collaboration of the Creator with the creation. God can create new things with us - things that are not only new for us, but new for God.

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Many claim God predestined all things from eternity. Sure, some things have been predestined or pre-decided (like many of God’s initiatives -the first coming of Christ and second coming of Christ.) But not all things have been predestined or pre-decided (like people’s responses to the comings of Christ and God’s responses to peoples’ responses to Christ.) So much of the future is open, not predestined. **Our responses to God, and God’s responses to us, can create new options, new possibilities, and new opportunities.**

‘In the sacred texts of Christianity and Judaism, writers describe God *responding* to creation or *deciding* to do something **new**. Over forty times, biblical writers say **God “repents.”** This doesn’t mean God (has a change of heart); it means *God has a change of mind. (God) planned to do one thing but alters course to do something else in response to creation.* God chooses mercy, responds to needs, liberates the oppressed’¹

There are three great stories of God having a change of mind involved Moses and Jonah and Peter.

¹ P30-1 Thomas Jay Oord 2021 *Open and Relational Theology: An Introduction to Life-Changing Ideas*, SacraSage Press

Story 1 Moses was told God would punish the Israelites for setting up, bowing down and worshipping before a Golden Calf as a symbol of their devotion to wealth above everyone and everything else. But Moses persuaded God to ‘repent’ and give the people another chance. “Then” it says “the LORD repented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.” (See Exodus 32.14)

Story 2 Jonah told the people of Nineveh that in forty days God would destroy the city for its culture of cruelty, beating, blinding and beheading anyone who stood against the status quo. But much to Jonah’s disgust (because he wanted the city to be destroyed) the people ‘repented’ and in turn God ‘repented’ saying “should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?” (Jonah 4:11)

Story 3 For hundreds of years God encouraged Jews to separate themselves from Gentiles to ‘sanctify’ their faith. But one day, Cornelius, who was a righteous Gentile, cried out to God for help. And God sent Peter, a strict observant Jew. who not surprisingly was prejudiced against Gentiles, to respond to Cornelius’s prayer. He was told to go against all his indoctrination to enter the Gentile’s house, to eat the Gentile’s food and to embrace the Gentile himself. Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right (Acts 10:34-35)

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In Isa. 65:17 God says “See, **I will create new heavens and a new earth.** The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.” In Rev. 21:5 God says, “**I am making everything new!**” Jeremiah (31:31) says “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when **I will make a new covenant** with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah”. And subsequently Jesus (Lk. 22.20), ‘after the supper, took the cup, saying, “This cup is the **new covenant** in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

Jesus instituted his **new covenant** with a **new commandment**. The **old** commandment had been: that you 'love your neighbour as you love yourself.'² But Jesus said, 'A **new** commandment I give to you: that you love one another as I have loved you!³ Now the big difference that there is between the **old commandment** and the **new commandment** is simply the way in which we are called to love one another. In the **old covenant** the **old commandment** is to *'love our neighbour as we have loved ourselves'*. But in the **new covenant** the **new commandment** is to *'love our neighbour as Christ has loved us'*.

This commandment does not involve obeying a list of rules and regulations from a book on behaviour modification but embarking on an open-ended adventure of learning to love others as we have been loved.

In musical terms this commandment does not operate like a sheet of classical music with pre-set notes already written, and God as the conductor of an orchestra, directing each person to play their predestined parts. Instead, this commandment operates like an invitation to an experimental music event, with God as the leader of a jazz band, introducing a melody to a group and, bit by bit, encouraging everybody in the group to improvise with the melody in their own way, so it is uncertain how the music will play out. Hopefully it could be a spontaneous collaborative improvisation on the theme of compassion that no one - not even God - has ever witnessed before.

If we play out our creative expression of the experimental music of our experience of Christ’s love for others in our lives, then this year may not only be a new year for us, but also a new year for God.

This year is God’s gift to us. What we make of this year is our gift to God.

² Lev.19:18

³ John 13:34