

*From AGE  
to AGE  
the SAME*

Sermon  
for the  
NEW  
YEAR



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## Sermon for the NEW YEAR

### SERMON

▣ Grace, mercy and peace be with you. Blessings to you on this turning of the year! We praise Jesus today for this year now past and this year yet to come. But as we find ourselves at the threshold of the seemingly unknown, there is one thing we know for sure: Jesus will go with us.

How do we know this? We know this because of what Jesus and God the Father have done for us in the past. That is one of the roles of the New Testament and the Gospels in particular: to teach us how to trust the One who went before us, who suffered and died and rose again in our place to save us from death, sin and the devil.

And this same Jesus, who ascended into heaven ages ago, will one day return to earth to take us back to his home above, so that we can live with him forever in glory, forgiven, loved and freed for all time to dwell in peace and harmony.

That is the big picture. That is the sweeping story of salvation that we are a part of even now, in this modern era, in this age of history over 2000 years beyond the birth of Christ. That's over 2000 trips around the sun on this revolving planet of ours. That's 730,000 rotations of the Earth as it is in orbit. We are a moment, a speck, a flash in the grand scheme of things. Yet, we have a God who cares deeply for us and makes sure that we are taken care of to everlasting life. We have a place in the family of God, in the rich tapestry of his people, in the fabric of God's pattern and plan. And the thread that weaves through all the years, all the ages, all the stages is the faithfulness of God.

From age to age, God did not abandon his people. Going all the way back to the Garden of Eden, he did not leave Adam and Eve to completely fend for themselves after the Fall into sin. He wove garments of animal skins for them to wear. He allowed crops to grow and rivers to run to sustain them, even as Adam and Eve labored by the sweat of their brow, toiling over and nurturing the land that was entrusted to them by God. They were blessed to bear children to carry on the human race, whom God had put in charge of creation. God did not let humanity die out when it disobeyed. He let it continue out of love.

Then we think of the age of the Tower of Babel. People were building a structure to themselves for themselves and became far too powerful. Yet, God did not destroy his people then and there. He gave them different languages and scattered them throughout the earth. The people he loved were given another chance to begin again in new places with new ways of communicating. They grew and developed and thrived for a time.

Until they forgot about God again and were evil in the sight of the Lord. It was in this age that God truly wanted to destroy all people with a flood. But his heart went out to a God-fearing man named Noah and his family. He told Noah to build an ark to hold him and his family and two of every type of animal on earth. After Noah built the ark and put his family and the pairs of animals in it, God sent a flood for 40 days and 40 nights that swept nearly everything on earth away. But the ark withstood the flood and landed safely on dry ground. Noah and his family and all the animals inside emerged alive. God let them remain to return to living on earth to follow God. And God was there to guide them.

Like he guided Abraham and Sarah in their old age to move from the land where they were living to a new land that God showed to them. There, Sarah gave birth to Isaac while she was well beyond what were typically childbearing years. Through the birth of his miracle boy, God did expand the family of God again, as many as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. God helped them put down roots in the land. Isaac's son Jacob, who was later named Israel, would go on to have 12 sons, and the families of these sons became the 12 tribes of Israel. One of those sons, Joseph, moved all the families of Israel to Egypt for safety during a famine.

Until the Israelites became slaves to the Egyptians. So in the age of the Exodus, God called Moses to lead his people out of slavery to the Promised Land after 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. God persevered with his people through this period, when they often would disobey him or murmur against him or go their own way. He gave them manna and quail to eat; he miraculously gave water from a stone to drink, and he ultimately gave them success in battle to settle in the land of milk and honey.

Though the Israelites were in exile in Babylon for a time, the God of the Promised Land allowed the Children of Israel to return to their home. Their trust in and devotion to God waxed and waned until the holy Child Jesus was born of God through Mary within the land where the Israelites dwelt under occupation by the Romans.