

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Sermon: “New Covenant: God Writes It On Our Hearts”

Text: Jeremiah 31 April 16, 2023 Dave Sattler NSAC

Sub-Texts: Luke 22:19-20; John 20:21-22; Hebrews 10:19-23; Revelation 21:3.

I. Introduction:

- Background: Israel committed idolatry: Replaced its God with images of foreign gods made of wood and stone. And, by messing around with other gods, they’ve cheated on their God, Who ‘married Himself’ to Israel, after the exodus, in the **covenant** at Mt Sinai.
- Conduct the “Straw Poll” with your group.
 - Question #1: When things go wrong, are you quick to:
A) *Take personal responsibility?* Or, B) *Blame others?*
 - Question #2: When looking for direction, do you prefer:
A) *Old familiar methods?* Or, B) *New untried methods?*
 - Question #3: Do you typically look to the future:
A) *With hope?* Or, B) *With gloom?*
- More Background: Much of the population of the *northern* tribes (generally referred to in the text as “Israel” or “Jacob” or “Ephraim”) have been *already* hauled off to captivity in Babylon. Now, only the *southern* tribes remain: Judah and Benjamin (collectively called “Judah”)—and closest in vicinity to Jerusalem.

II. Scripture: Read Jeremiah 31 (might take awhile but it’s worth it!)

III. Biblical Teaching Questions:

- What stood out to you in this chapter?
- Compared to the rest of the book, how does Jeremiah 31 read?
Indeed the flavour of the language switches here in Ch31 from the cold rhetoric of a courtroom to the deep personal emotion of a parent.
- Read v3 again. What draws people to God? What draws God to people?
- What are God’s covenant words (v1/33/Revelation 21:3)? What do they tell us about Him? How is God a “family God?”
- How is God’s church, in all its beauty and mess, meant to be a family—or the “family of God?”
- Read v.20 again. Describe the Father-heart of God for His children—even when they turn away? How does this sit with you? If you are a parent, can you relate?

- Review some of the features of the new covenant: 1) Personal responsibility before God (v30), 2) Direct access to God for all (v34a), and 3) Forgiveness of sins without animal sacrifice (v34b).

IV. Life Application Questions:

• *What does the new covenant mean for us today?*

A. *Encountering the God of Grace. Read Hebrews 10:19-23.*

- Have you witnessed any long-time Christians “*deconstruct*” the faith of their upbringing?
- How might encountering the God of Grace help build a faith that lasts?

B. *Receiving the indwelling Holy Spirit. Read John 20:19-22*

- God goes from writing the law on stone tablets to “*writing His law on our hearts.*” (v33) What do you think this means?
- Besides saving us, what ongoing work does God wish to do in our lives should we choose to surrender and cooperate?
- How can you be more open to the life and ministry of the ***indwelling Holy Spirit*** in your life?

C. *Finding hope in Jesus in the face of hardship.*

- What is it you’re ***hoping*** for these days?
- Why is hope difficult? Truthfully ***hope*** takes a lot of courage; it’s far less risky to simply languish and allow despair and cynicism to run our lives.
- How can we find hope in Jesus?

D. *Celebrating the new covenant inaugurated by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Read Luke 20:19-20*

- How does Jesus’ work fix our sin problem? We can never, by our *own* efforts, be “good enough” to win God’s favour or, deal with sin on our own.
- Name some ways we might try to be “good enough”? What does it mean that God the Son Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves?

FOR NEXT WEEK: Read Jeremiah 28