

Untitled (31)

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Date: 21 March 2021

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[0:00] There was an ad on TV some years ago regarding the first airline flight.

! It was a biplane, two-person flight, and the pilot turns around to the passenger! Now let me get this straight. You want me to fly you to Wichita and give you coffee on the way? Do you remember that? Well, that translates to today's sermon title. Let me get this straight. We've got an Old Testament, an Old Covenant, and a New. What does all this mean and how does it fit together? Well, today we're going to look at it from the aspect of Jeremiah chapter 31, verses 31 through 34.

What's the page on that? 784. So, if you want to follow in your pew Bibles, page 784, or bring it up on your phone, that's what we're going to be talking about today.

Now, the book of Jeremiah, when you look at it, is a book of doom and gloom. Jeremiah, what is he called? The weeping prophet.

[1:20] He lived at a time when the people of Judah had given up the ghost on following God.

They had gone about their own. They were chasing after other gods, using cult prostitutes. It was all degradation. And God did what God does sometimes.

He withheld his hand of blessing from that nation. Americans today take note. He withheld his hand of blessing, and the nation ceased to have victory.

And so, this whole book of Jeremiah is about how the people have forsaken God, and what happens to them. But in this book, in this area, we see sunshine breaking through on a cloudy day. For some of you that go outside during the week, I go outside almost every day and jog. This past week was kind of chilly. And when it was cloudy, I was jogging along, freezing to death.

[2:38] But every so often, the sun would appear when the clouds parted, and it would warm my body. That's what this portion of Jeremiah does for us.

The sun breaks forth, and there's hope. There's hope for us. As we look at Jeremiah 31, one of the first things we notice is the word covenant.

So, we probably need to do a little bit of a word study on the word covenant. Now, I know we have two attorneys in this room who, they know the legal definition of covenant.

I'm going to give you the biblical definition of covenant. Now, when you use the word covenant, often another word is used for it.

What is that word? Testament. The two have a little different meaning, but in the Bible, they tend to run together. In fact, in our Bible, we have two testaments.

[3:42] The Old Testament and the New Testament. You could call our Bible having an old covenant and a new covenant. Covenant means a solemn agreement.

And this solemn agreement in the Bible usually has conditions attached. We see several Old Testament covenants with Abraham, with Noah, with Moses.

But what we want to do is talk about Moses and the covenant God made with him. Now, covenants usually have these conditions attached.

I will do this and you will do that. So, God says to Moses, I'll get you to the promised land. You honor me as God and follow my commandments.

Pretty simple, huh? Didn't work. God kept his part of the covenant and the people did not keep theirs.

[4:51] Now, I don't know if you've noticed this Lent, but there's been a theme going through, hasn't there? The theme is, we can't cut it. As much as we try, we're not able to follow those commandments the way they should be followed.

We follow them the way it's easy for us. So, Lent shows us how hard it is to follow. It's sort of like, for some of us, losing weight.

You know, a young Marine, 24 years old, in the war in Vietnam. And a fellow Marine came along beside me. And he showed me what it means to follow Jesus. I never got that. And in the process, the love of God just flowed into me. And the Bible came alive for the first time.

As some of you know, I didn't even own a Bible until I was 20. And then I just bought it because I had to take a course in college. And after I finished it, I lost that Bible.

Well, I heard the Bible read in church sometimes, but I didn't. It made no sense to me until God penetrated my life through a friend.

[11 : 58] While I was studying the Bible, I read a book that was a new book written by an Episcopal layperson named Keith Miller. The name of the book was A Taste of New Wine.

In that book, Keith talks about, well, he was in Texas. He was in oil exploration. He pulled off the side of the road in the wilderness of Texas and said, God, I can't fight it anymore.

You take the stinking body and do what you want with it. And I made that same claim in Vietnam.

And God said to me, now that you mention it, I do have something I want you to do.

And it's been a lifetime of loving God as he draws close to me. Which brings us to the last point.

The new covenant is personal.

It's not just to a nation. It's to you. And to me. And whereas that old covenant was limited, the new covenant is unlimited.

[13 : 11] It's unlimited, limited love, giving you access to heaven, sealed in the blood of Jesus. And what's your part? Fall into the arms of Jesus.

Now, you may not have a dramatic story as I have. You may say, you know, I've led a boring life. I've been a Christian since I was a baby.

I never turned left or right. What good am I? In fact, that's a wonderful story. That means God's been working with you all these years.

And you just fall into his arms again. You can renew the faith by just falling again into his arms. So what I would say in conclusion is, we just need to give up the rebellion, the subtle rebellion, the flagrant rebellion.

Just trust and obey. And let God run your business from now on. So the pilot says to the passenger, let me get this straight.

[14 : 19] Well, let's get it straight. God offers us an old covenant and a new covenant to bring us into heaven with us, with him. Let us pray.

Lord God, we are thankful that you would call such as us to eternal life. We ask that you bless us here on earth, that we may be a blessing to others.

We pray this, Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.