

This is My Body Given For You

Jeremiah 31:31

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Bible Text: Jeremiah 31 :31 "***The time is coming,***" declares the LORD, "***when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.***"

Dear friends in Christ,

About 600 years before the birth of Christ the prophet Jeremiah travelled throughout the north and south kingdoms of Israel proclaiming that, "***The time is coming ... when the Lord will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.***" But those whom God had chosen as His own people scorned Jeremiah and his message. They felt they had better things to do than listen to a nay-sayer who had nothing better to say than, 'repent and return to the Lord.'

Not only do present-day Christians look for new and exciting preachers to listen to. Over 2,500 years ago many Israelites preferred to listen to those prophets who proclaimed messages more to their liking. Now, the problem wasn't that they broke a few rules here and there. No, despite God being like a '**faithful husband**' to them - looking after them, protecting them from their enemies - they were instead adulterous and unfaithful to Him, worshipping other gods.

However, instead of compelling them to worship Him, their loving God decided to hand His idolatrous bride over to the false gods with which they had prostituted themselves. In other words, God withdrew His "**husbandly protection**" from His people and allowed other nations to conquer them and take them into exile.

Don't get me wrong, Israel's loving God wasn't going to forsake her but, instead planned to bring back His bride; for He could never abandon His beloved people or withdraw His love from them. So, God sent Jeremiah to proclaim this ancient gospel message: ³³"***This is the [new] covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,***" declares the LORD. "***I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.*** [And] ³⁴"***1 will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.***" (Jer. 31 :33,34)

Although Israel continued to turn a deaf ear to God's prophet, Jeremiah, this gospel message of love and forgiveness became precious words of hope once the people found themselves exiled in far-away Babylon – i.e., modern-day Iraq.

And 2,500 years later Jeremiah is still proclaiming this same message of love and forgiveness in your hearing! Just like the ancient Israelites we also get caught up in the busyness of life and have little time left for God and His Word. So, I say to everyone here who has sinned by thought, word, and deed – to everyone who has sought meaning in work, and fulfillment in pleasure and in all the good things of life: 'repent and turn back to God!'

Now, this call to repentance is linked to our heavenly Father's other decree to Israel: "***I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.***"(v 34) For tonight is the night of that special Passover that Jesus wanted to celebrate with His disciples.

Tonight, is the night when Jesus – your loving Bridegroom – will be arrested and on the following day lay down His life for you His precious bride – so death will pass-over you and grasp Him. When He will be broken, so you may be made whole, when He will be condemned, so you will be forgiven.

Tonight, is the night when your loving heavenly Father declares: "***I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.***"

Indeed, tonight is the night when Jesus not only gives you His Word but puts it in you. Before He laid down His scourged and bloodied body on the cross, Jesus lays it on the table – for His disciples to eat and drink: "***Take and eat, this is My Body; Take and drink, this is My Blood.***" The Word made flesh is put in our mouths so we may live in Him – so your sins and mine are forgiven and forgotten!

Now, while our loving Lord Jesus promises to forgive and to forget, He calls us to remember – not our sins, but all that He has done for us. Yes, to remember Jesus' faithfulness, for "***He humbled himself and became obedient unto death-even death on a cross!***" (Philip. 2:8) To remember that, without our asking, the Son of God took on our sin to rescue us from eternal death. To remember God's grace, for the Lord Jesus searches for the lost sinner; for it is He who welcomes the outcast, and raises the dead.

To remember God's promise made so long, long ago to be faithful and not abandon you – for didn't He say, "***I will be their God, and they will be my people***"? And don't forget, this promise wasn't only for the OT people of Israel, but it's our loving Father's new covenant with you and me too - and it's for all time.

Yes, my friends, we need this new covenant because Satan's lure, and sin's temptations, are stronger than our flesh. Yet, no matter how strong they are, the love of Jesus our Lord and Saviour is even stronger! For the love of Christ calls us back from the darkness of sin into the light of a loving relationship with our loving Father, by forgiving our un-faithfulness.

So, tonight – the night in which He was betrayed – the Lord Jesus was handed over to men who had evil intent. No, He wasn't in the wrong place at the wrong time; but as the 'Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world', Jesus suffered and died for all humanity. Indeed, Jesus sacrificed His life in order to fulfil the promise made through Jeremiah, to 'forgive our wickedness and remember our sins no more.'

Tonight, my friends, as Jesus ate the Passover meal with His disciples in that upper room, our heavenly Father's long-standing promise of love, faithfulness, and forgiveness becomes His new covenant with you and me for all time. So, brothers and sisters in Christ, take and eat; take and drink – for by Jesus' suffering and death you have been reconciled and set free. My friends, your search for inner peace and healing is over. **Amen.**

Now may the peace of God, which passes all human understanding, guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Sermon by Pastor Ernie Kiss 14 April 2022