

JESUS CAME TO INSTITUTE THE NEW COVENANT

RECAP

Start by asking your Home Group to share any further reflections on the sermon.

What stood out to you?

Did you learn anything new that you didn't know before? Do you have any questions?

IDEA 1

The reminder of the Advent season is that we live in the tension between Jesus' first arrival on Christmas and his second coming (TBA). This tension causes us to look forward with hope that Jesus will one day return and fulfill his promise, because he fulfilled his promise of coming on Christmas to fulfill the prophecies that the Messiah would come to institute a new covenant. Covenants are central to the way that God relates to mankind. A covenant is a formalized agreement between persons establishing the conditions of their relationship. It is through covenants that God expresses his love to humanity and sets the parameters for humanity's relationship with Him.

How does Jesus' first arrival fill us with hope in his second arrival?

Why do you think God expresses His love through Covenants?

IDEA 2

Years before the events in Genesis 15 God promised Abram that He would make Him a mighty nation through the blessing of children, but at this point, and facing threats from dangerous enemies, Abram began to doubt this promise. Do reassure Abram of His promise, God told Abram to look up at the stars and promised that his offspring will be just as numerous (Genesis 15:1-5). Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness (15:6). But when God promised him possession of the land he had just moved into, Abram doubted, so God ordered Abram to enter into a covenant with Him (15:7-9). Entering a covenant involves "cutting a covenant" where you take animals, of varying sizes depending on the severity of the covenant, cut them in half, and either share a covenant meal between them, or perform a covenant ceremony of walking between them. In the action of this ceremony, the parties involved in the covenant are making the commitment

that they will hold to their end of the deal or else may they be as dead as the animals that are visible in front of them (15:8-11).

What does this event in verses 1-5 show us about God's character and the way He relates to us?

Why do you think God chose to cut a covenant with Abram?

How does this section remind you of Jesus?

IDEA 3

When it came time to cut the covenant, God put Abram to sleep and was the only one to move through the bloody aisle (15:12-21). God did this to protect Abram from the repercussions of failing his end of the covenant, knowing that Abram and his descendants would fail. Abram's failure to keep his end did not stop God from entering into a covenant with him, nor did humanity's failure stop Jesus from dying on the cross and instituting the New Covenant. When Jesus invited the disciples into the New Covenant, he did so knowing they (and we) would fail at times, but he still offered to take the responsibility for our failure. In doing so, Jesus showed what true, self-sacrificing love looks like. And he made a way for us to be in relationship with God regardless of our failure.

Why do you think its significant that God went through with the covenant without Abram?

How does the reality of Jesus taking responsibility for our failures effect the way we respond to our own sin? The sin of others?

How is God calling you to love like Jesus?

APPLICATION

Reflect on the way Jesus loves us. How will this change the way you live this week?

Share your application with the group. Commit to checking in with one another during the week about this process.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Take some time to pray for each other.

Take some time to listen first. Ask Spirit to share his heart for these requests. You may want to use a timer and set it for five minutes of quiet listening.

Open up the time for people to pray the things out loud that Spirit has prompted.