

## GOD'S GIFTS FOR THE NEW YEAR 2006

Ezekiel 36:22-28  
Jeremiah 31:31-34

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

### Ezekiel 36:22-28 (KJV)

<sup>22</sup> Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.

<sup>23</sup> And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I *am* the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.

<sup>24</sup> For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

<sup>25</sup> Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

<sup>26</sup> A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

<sup>27</sup> And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.

<sup>28</sup> And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

### Jeremiah 31:31-34 (KJV)

<sup>31</sup> Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the

house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: <sup>32</sup> Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

<sup>33</sup> But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

<sup>34</sup> And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you. [Ezekiel 36.26](#)

I will make a new covenant...I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. [Jeremiah 31:31, 33](#)

It is a new year again! 2005 is gone, 2006 is here, a brand New Year.

Christians are familiar with the language of newness. At the end of our story, the One seated on the throne says, I make all things new.

In his writing to the early church, Paul said, "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation, the old has passed away, the new has come." [2 Cor. 5:17 \(KJV\)](#)



**“Jesus said to Nicodemus, you must be born from above, in other words, you must be born again.” John 3:5**

Ezekial and Jeremiah, faithful hearers and accurate speakers of the word of God, they proclaim a newness in the midst of the destruction of Jerusalem. Through them, God says, I will give you... **a new heart... a new spirit... a new covenant.**

I want to briefly reflect on what these **three gifts of newness mean.**

### **I. A NEW HEART**

In the Old Testament, **the heart** is not the place of **love and sorrow, romance and tenderness, joy and compassion.** These are old Western meanings of the word heart. In the Old Testament, **the heart** is the **seat of wisdom, the place of memory.** A person thinks with the heart, makes plans with the heart, comes to a decision with the heart. Those who are righteous love the Lord with all their hearts, they are upright in heart, pure in heart.

But **the heart** is also the place of our downfall.

**Jeremiah** makes a comment: **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt. Who can understand it?" Jeremiah 17:9 (KJV)**

**The things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least. ----- Philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)**

Why do we do the things we do? As one book has it, why do men do the 10 stupid things to mess up their lives, and these are often smart, intelligent, rational men, right?

In our hearts we are deceitful and corrupt. Sin was classically defined as the heart curved in on itself (cor incurvatum).

Something is wrong. Something needs to change.  
God says, I will give you a new heart.

### **II. A NEW SPIRIT**

And God says, I will give you a new spirit.

The **Spirit** gives us **power.**

The **Spirit** gives us **energy.**

The **Spirit** is the wind beneath our wings.

The **Spirit** is the breath of God within us.

In the Old Testament the word for spirit can also mean breath or wind.

Ever tried to do something when you could not breathe?

Ever tried to fly a kite when there was no wind?

God gives us a **new spirit.**

**And when we have a new heart and a new spirit, we are ready for God's third gift.** God says, I will make a new covenant with you. A **covenant** is a relationship. God says, I want a new relationship with you. God says, I want to live within you. God says, I do not want to impose My will on you from the outside. God says, I will write My law upon your heart.

### **III. A NEW COVENANT**

At the beginning of the year we renew the **covenant.** We offer ourselves to God. We enter once again into this relationship.

God wanted to start all over with Israel, in 587 B.C. Israel had broken the commandments. The breaking of the commandments had led to the brokenness of the whole people, the destruction of the temple, the descent into slavery.

God wants to start all over with us.

**“God's gifts put our best dreams to shame.”**

**-Poet, Essayist- Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861)**

**“How many observe Christ's birthday! How few, his precepts! O! 'tis easier to keep holidays than commandments.”**

**-Inventor, Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)**

We have broken the commandments.  
The breaking of the commandments

leads to the destruction of our institutions. Our lives, our cities, our nation, our world, are in fragments.

### **IV. And today is, A NEW BEGINNING**

I will give you a **new heart**, God says. **A new heart is a new way of thinking.**

I will give you a **new spirit**, God says. **A new spirit is a new motivation.**

I will make a new covenant with you, God says. **A new covenant is a new relationship.**

In Christ, all things are made new. We can become new creatures. There is a wonderful old saying: **"Every saint has a past. Every sinner has a future."**

**We can change!**

**“A man is not old until his regrets take the place of his dreams.”**

**Shakespearean actor, - John Barrymore (1882-1942)**

But we cannot change on our own. Change comes from within. The beauty of the **new covenant** is that the change comes from within. There is not someone on the outside, forcing us to change; the word is written on our hearts, the spirit is placed within us, and God says, I will take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

**Today, in this New Year, God offers you a gift. A new heart, a new spirit, a new covenant. A new way of thinking, a new motivation, and a new relationship.** We accept this gift in a very tangible way. We take it, and we eat it. We take it, and we drink it.

Sometimes, when we come to worship we think we are giving something to God.

Why not begin the New Year with a clear realization that God wants to give something to us?



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My prayer for you, at the beginning of this New Year is that you will receive the gifts of God:

**A new heart,  
 A new spirit,  
 A new covenant,  
 For A New Beginning!**



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**UP-COMING MINISTRY OUTREACH**

Los Angeles Mission - Phil Burno                      January 27

**2006 MISSION TRIPS**

**Please pray for God's guidance, provisions and protection for these trips.**

*PTS	Pastor Eddie	Feb. 20-Mar. 3	Pakistan
*PTS	Pastor Eddie	Apr. 17-21	Honduras
*PTS	Pastor Eddie	May 1-11	Romania
*PTS	Pastor Eddie	Aug. 10-21	Ghana, Africa
*PTS	Pastor Eddie	Sep. 9-18	Zimbabwe, Africa
*PTS	Pastor Eddie	Nov 27-Dec 1	Honduras

**\*PTS = Pastor's Training School with Covington Seminary Extension**