

## ***A FRESH START, LEV.25***

Ancient Access Codes #7

◆**Intro:** I'm going to give you a set of terms and I wonder how they feel to you. Renovated. Clean slate. Second chance. Fresh start. Do over. Forgiveness. These are all welcome terms aren't they? Reviving terms. Hopeful. Probably because everyone knows how it feels to *need* one of these; a fresh start, some hope.

Young Americans are restless and on the move. Fifty-nine percent of Americans aged 18 to 35 currently live somewhere besides their hometown. Almost 80 percent have moved once or more (not counting a college move). Forty-one percent of millennials who have moved say their stay is temporary, and 26 percent of them say their primary motive is a fresh start or a change in lifestyle, not marriage, a job, or a home. Something fresh! Well I've got good news!

◆Most everyone knows either how it feels to be scraping the bottom of the barrel, or to be at our wits end (wherever that is), or to want to abandon ship, or just disappear. If only we could. Well I've got good news.

◆Maybe you would like a fresh start!

◆You live in the same house but you don't like each other very much. You're family but lets face it, you're strangers, worse, enemies.

◆You've been at the job so long you could walk the plant blind-folded. You know the routine, and it's killing you inside. You don't know why you do it. Some days you wonder why you're alive at all.

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- ◆ You've made a list of bad choices too long to ignore: shouldn't have smoked that, shouldn't have gotten in that car, shouldn't have said that, shouldn't have gone over there. Shouldn't have... (you fill it in.)
- ◆ Dad and Mom are always working. You feel like nobody "gets" you. It's lonely. Words like "I gotta get away from here." keep going through your head.
- ◆ The price of your stock just fell out the bottom. Yesterday you were rich, but today...
- ◆ Well I've got good news! Easter news.
- ◆ **1. Easter is the ultimate fresh start.** It's the day Jesus came back to life by the power of God. It holds the combination to hope. It is the key to the door of heaven. Easter is the ultimate access code for touching the power of God. Christmas is great, but without Easter, it's really no good for us.
- ◆ Easter is about God. And Life and Redemption. People forget about God a lot of the time. In ancient Israel, God gave them celebrations, feasts, holy days meant to keep reminding them of who He is. And yes, God is the God of the fresh start. That's what our text is about today.
- ◆ Here in Sunrise we've been working our way through the Book of Leviticus leading up to Easter. It's full of rich symbolism housed in the rituals and regulations of ancient Israel: sacrifices for sin because sin always means death; priestly vestments and duties because dirty people and a holy God require mediation;

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God's tent in the middle of all their tents because he came to live with them and not the other way around; laying hands on a goats head and chasing it off into the desert -a symbol of how God puts your crimes on something else so you can stay at home with him; moral laws about our sexual practices because everything falls apart when we don't practice holiness -all the things we've looked at in Leviticus pointed to that one theme: holiness. God's plan is to make men and women holy, so that they are fit to live close to him, to share the good life. Today's levitical practice is called the Year of Jubilee.

◆ Every 50th Year was to be Jubilee: slaves were set free, land went back to the original family, debts were cancelled. In Israel, land was never to be sold permanently (v23). You were really only selling the number of years up to the next Jubilee. God had meaning in all this, and I'd like to suggest today that it is a prefiguring of the Easter message. Lets think it over.

◆ 2. The first thing I'd like us to see is that **Jubilee means God is for me! God has provided for my redemption.** We call that love. Let me show you why. Many folks think that we need to pay God off. We have debts to him, created by the evil and sin we do. We do need to pay for it. Like they say in the movie *National Treasure*, "somebody always has to go to jail." So, here's how we tend to look at it:

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◆“Oh I loused up and cheated on the taxes. I’d better go to church a few times this month. That should settle the score with the Almighty Ruler of all things visible and invisible.”

◆“Oh, I gave my bff the cold shoulder at school today. I think maybe I should say a prayer or something. That’ll get the Creator of the entire Universe smiling again, right?”

◆“I’ve been cheating on my husband/wife. If we care at all we might think, “Maybe I’ll feel better if I tell my kids to to to Sunday School to make up for it.”

◆**A.** Those things don’t make up for our evils. You cannot pay it off. The Bible says our most righteous acts are like filthy rags in comparison to the brilliant goodness of God (Isa.64). No filth gets close to God. No unholy persons get into his perfect heaven or get God in their life now, or their prayers heard. I cannot ever balance the scales with a God whose single requirement is total and absolute holiness.

◆“Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy. (Leviticus 19:2, NIV).

◆*As it is written: “There is no-one righteous, not even one; ....All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no-one who does good, not even one.” ...Therefore no-one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; (Romans 3:10,12,20, NIV).*

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◆ This is the first thing about Jubilee. Jubilee was *because* God knew you couldn't count on yourself! You were going to get in a hole. You see, doing the dishes for mom doesn't really make you a "non-curfew-breaker. Even paying your fine doesn't make you a non-traffic violator. You can't take back history. 1) If mom is to go on loving you, it will be the grace in mom that loves a rule-breaking (sinful?) child in spite of the wrong. 2) If the government accepts your money, and lets you drive again, they are letting a person-who-has-broken-law on the road. But you are forever a person who has broken the law. You can't change that. 3) If God continues to bless and protect us, and to let us into heaven, it is not because we are unstained and deserving. It is grace that decides to go on with the undeserving one. That was the year of Jubilee in a word: grace. Listen to how the Apostle Paul put it...

◆ "we were by nature objects of wrath (undeserving). But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no-one can boast." Ephesians 2:3-9, NIV.

◆ **3.** Nevertheless, our fine must be paid or God is not just. That's why the Year of Jubilee always began on Yom Kippur, The Day of

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Atonement. The day when all of Israel gathered and a sacrifice was made for all the sins *they might have forgotten* to ask forgiveness for! It was sort of their Good Friday. An over-all payment was being made! This is a second thing: A fresh start/ Jubilee can only begin with forgiveness of sin. Forgiveness of sin is a beautiful thing!

◆ Sin is why we have misery. Sin is why we are unhappy. Sin is why we get depressed. Sin is why homes are cold. Sin is why we don't get along with each other. Sin is why we rebel and hate, and become bitter.

◆ As I was buying shaver blades a while back, (no less than 5 steel blades, AND a lube strip that however, still require numerous strokes for a clean shave), the box got stuck in the contraption that houses them on the store shelf. It's something like a vending machine for razor blades. After the manager assisted me, I asked, "Why such an elaborate gismo?"

◆ "Theft," she replied. "People steal them and sell them at flea markets!"

◆ "No kidding. I'd never have thought it! Is it that a big problem?"

◆ "Yes," she said, "I've been in retail for 35 years and I can tell you people will steal everything. And all ages of people. Old people steal Efferdent (denture cleaner). Kid's will steal

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gum. Adults will walk in, eat part of a package of something and walk out."

◆ Sin is why razor blades cannot sit openly on the shelf. Sin is why we have locks, and laws, and police, and fines and unhappiness at all! Only forgiveness can reverse sin. Listen friends, on Good Friday Jesus died so the Father could forgive our sins. On Easter morning Jesus killed death to set us free from death too.

◆ *"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." Hebrews 2:14, 15, NIV.*

◆ And we are free to have a relationship with our Creator, now!

◆ "In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence." Ephesians 3:12, NIV.

◆ In ancient Israel, land, originally divided up fairly among all the clans of Israel, could over time be sold off to pay other debts. But according to Jubilee, every 50th year the land was returned to the original family, so that society could never become an unequal distribution of wealth between the "haves" and the have not's". Jubilee was so that you could not ruin yourself. Well, Jesus died and rose back to the living for the same reason; to make a way for you to not-have-ruined yourself.

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◆4. Here's a third thing about the Year of Jubilee: Jubilee and Resurrection are a reminder that God/Jesus is my one and only hope. Like the song says, "in Christ alone, my hope is found. He is my light, my strength, my song."

◆v23 the stuff, the property, the land –it's not ours! We are only tenants.

◆v42, 55 WE do not belong to ourselves either! We are servants of someone else, someone greater!

◆Jubilee says "Do not hope in your possessions. They are not really yours anyway. You are only borrowing them until your years are up." God is reminding us that it's HIS world. We just walk on it for a little while and we need to remember that. As long as you pretend you are the master of your own life, you will not find it. But whenever and wherever you concede that Jesus be your master -your life will change.

◆**Conclusion:** Why decide today to bow to Jesus? There was once a Muslim college student who came to believe in Jesus Christ. One of his friends was shocked and asked him, "Why did you become a follower of Jesus?" Here was his response: "It's simple really. Imagine that you're walking down a road and you come to a fork in the road and there are two people there to follow as your guide along the way. One of them is dead, and one of them is alive. [Which one would you follow?](#)"

◆One of the great appeals of Christianity is that Jesus, its Founder, is not dead but alive, and so even after the hype

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from Easter Sunday fades into the grind of Monday, Jesus is still alive. And because he lives, you should seek him, worship him, and obey him.

◆A song is going to start now, an invitation from the Living Lord, come forward to him. Doesn't matter who you are. Easter is Jubilee. Anyone who can't beat death can solve your need too.

◆Is there is a place in your life that needs a fresh start, turn it over to JC right now, here today.

◆Maybe you need to ask him into your life, and to forgive your sins for the first time. Do it today, right here.

◆Maybe you are a follower of Jesus, but your haven't given your marriage to his rulership. Give it to him today.

◆Maybe you know Jesus is the Living God, but you're just hoping he's not aware that your don't want him to manage your financial dealings, or you don't want him to rule your sexual desires. Give them over to him today!

◆Maybe you think that accomplishments will fill your soul so your life is really nothing more than the job. It's your God. Throw that idol away today, and bow to the God who already loves you.

◆Maybe you've been following Jesus your whole life, years, but you're seeing things about yourself that you never noticed before, personality traits that need altering, habits that are eating away at joy. Turn them over to him again today.

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- ◆ While the music is sung, Come to the altar. Come on Resurrection Sunday and ask for resurrection. Come stand as though at the feet Jesus here down front as a way of saying, "You know what, I want you to take over more of me Jesus."
- ◆ Come kneel on the steps and breathe a prayer of repentance. Whisper a prayer of rededication. Why? Because this Jesus we proclaim to you today is alive. He did not stay dead and no part of you needs to either.
- ◆ John Ortberg put it: People have not gathered for the past 2,000 years to say, "The stock market has risen. It has risen indeed." They have not gathered to say, "The dollar has risen. It has risen indeed." Or, "the employment rate has risen." Or, "the gross domestic product has risen." Or, "General Motors has risen." Or, "The value of your 401(k) has risen." Here's the one hope that has held up human beings across every continent and culture for two millennia of difficult times of poverty, disease, pain, hardship, [and] death itself: "Christ is risen. He is risen indeed." So come. When the music is done we'll pray together.