

Place: Lurgan Baptist: 19:2:2008

Reading: Leviticus 23:26-32 16:1-28

FOCUS ON THE FEASTS

7. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

The last three feasts in God's prophetic calendar, that is, the feast of Trumpets, the day of Atonement and the feast of Tabernacles all look into the future from our present position in the church age. *These three feasts have a definite application for the nation of Israel.* You see, Israel has a 3 fold problem. Israel is a scattered people, a sinful people and a suffering people. The feast of trumpets speaks of the time of gathering, when God shall gather his scattered people together. The Day of Atonement speaks of cleansing when the sinful nation shall be cleansed. The feast of Tabernacles speaks of that time when God shall give his people the kingdom that He promised in the Old Testament prophecies. ***So the scattered people shall be called, the feast of trumpets, the sinful people shall be cleansed, the day of atonement and the suffering people shall be comforted, the feast of tabernacles.***

Now the day of atonement was the most important day in Israel's calendar. Will Varner states " *it is the most awesome day of the Jewish year. Yom Kippur is the Hebrew phrase for the ' Day of Atonement.'* For more than 3,000 years, Jewish people have observed this annual day of solemn reflection and repentance." When referring to

the Day of Atonement, the rabbis used the one simple word Yama meaning " **The Day.**" On that one day sin was dealt with more fully and adequately than on any other occasion or in any other ceremony. For the Children of Israel the Day of Atonement was the greatest event of the year. On that the High Priest made " *an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord.*" (16:30, 34) Now this feast like all the other feasts is both commemorative and prophetic. The words " *iniquities, transgressions, and sins,*" are first found in (Ex 34:7) There the Lord is revealing Himself to Moses, indeed we read, " *And the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with Moses there and proclaimed the name of the Lord.*" The Day of Atonement commemorated this wonderful experience and God met with Moses on the mount and wrote on the tables, " *the words that were in the first tables.*" (Ex 34:1) Of course this Day of Atonement also foreshadows the day when the Lord will again descend in a cloud.

John says, " *Behold He cometh with clouds and every eye shall see Him.*" (Rev 1:7) His descent on that occasion will be followed by Israel's regathering, Israel's restoration, and Israel's recognition. So let's keep in mind that this feast like Trumpets and Tabernacles has a primary application for the nation. Now what can we say about this feast ? Well, my mind has been in running in three different directions. I want to say something about the Saviour, then something about the nation, and then something about ourselves. Now let me dress that up a little. When I think of this feast I think of,

(1) AN HISTORIC APPOINTMENT

This feast like all the others was appointed by the Lord, but if you look closely at (Lev Ch 16) you'll notice a 7 fold appointment. There was,

(a) AN APPOINTED PURPOSE:

What was the reason behind all of the ritual and sacrifice that took place on the Day of Atonement ? (Lev 16:30) Our Jewish friends call this Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Now the word “ *atonement*,” is an Old Testament term appearing no less than 48 times in the Book of Leviticus. In this one chapter alone the word appears 15 times. Among other things the Hebrew word means “ *to cover*.” In the Old Testament the Hebrew word “ *kapar*,” means to “ *cover or conceal*.” Atonement would denote coverings a person's sin, thereby making it possible for him to approach God.

Since sin alienates man from God, the atoning sacrifice on the Day of Atonement was God's solution to this basic problem. The sacrificial animal was “ *a sin offering for the people*.” On the Day of Atonement everyone sought forgiveness for all sins, intentional or unintentional, and the blood sacrifice gave assurance that their sins were covered. Under the Old Testament economy the blood of the sacrifice could not put away sin, it could only cover sin. Only Christ's blood can take away sin.

*Not all the blood of beasts
On Jewish altars slain
Could give the guilty conscience peace
Or take away the stain*

*But Christ the heavenly Lamb
Takes all my guilt away
A sacrifice of nobler worth
And richer blood than they*

Do you know what the great lesson on the Day of Atonement was ? The great lesson of this day was that of the heinousness of sin and the holiness of God. God is holy, man is sinful. Everything in the camp of Israel had been defiled by sin. Look at (16:33) Even the tabernacle of God and the priesthood had been defiled by sin. Of course the people were also defiled by their sins. They had committed “ *iniquities, transgressions, and sins*.” (16:21) “ *Iniquity*,” means crookedness, we are twisted out of shape and do not measure up to God's standard. “ *Transgression*,” means “ *rebellion*,” to cross over the line and go too far. The word “ *sin*,” means to miss the mark. You see, the purpose of the day of atonement was to deal with the problem of sin. The heart of every problem, is the problem of the heart, and the problem of the heart is sin. (a)

(b) AN APPOINTED PERIOD:

For the high priest did not do this every day of the week rather he did it once a year. Look at (16:2) The writer to the Hebrews reminds us that “ *the priests went always*

into the first tabernacle accomplishing the service of God but into the second went the high priest alone once every year not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people.” (Heb 9:7) Think of this.

This ceremony had to be repeated every year because the sacrifices could not take away sin. But our Lord Jesus Christ finished the work once and for all. Is that not the theme of the Book of Hebrews ? The fact that Jesus Christ has accomplished a finished salvation. “ *But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*” (Heb 9:26) The Lord Jesus came at one period for one purpose with one payment.

(c) AN APPOINTED PLACE:

You see, the Lord had appointed only place of sacrifice. Indeed (Lev Ch 17) identifies that place. The tabernacle and later on the temple was God’s appointed place. Of course there is only appointed place as far as salvation is concerned, the cross where the Saviour died. Peter reminds us, “ *Who His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.*” (1 Pet 2:24) Our Lord did not bear our sins in the river Jordan when he was baptised. Baptism is not the way of salvation. The Lord Jesus did not bear our sin in the Temple as He was teaching, education is not God’s way of salvation. Christ bore our sins at the appointed place, the cross. So there was (a) (b) (c)

(d) AN APPOINTED PERSON:

For not everyone was to offer this sacrifice, only the High Priest. Look if you will (16:17) In other words, the High

Priest had to fulfil this responsibility alone. Did you notice how he did it ? *Do you see the careful preparation that he made ere he entered into the presence of God ?* Believers today would do well to emulate him. How many there are who stay out late on Saturday evening, lie in late Sunday morning, rush into the presence of God, spend the morning yawning through the meeting and wonder why they miss the blessing. Do you see him as he put off his beautiful garments, then washed his flesh in water, and put on the plain linen garments of a lowly servant ? What a beautiful picture of Christ as he laid aside the garments of glory, attiring himself in the garments of a servant, setting himself apart to do the will of God. Paul says, “ *He humbled himself and became obedient unto death even the death of a cross.*” (Phil 2:8) My the humility of the Lord Jesus should make us all bluish with shame. It is reported that the saintly Augustine said, “ *there are three important lessons every Christ must learn, the first is humility, the second is humility, and the third is humility.*”

This means that for the believer there is no such thing as a menial task when that work is done for the Saviour. Jesus Christ was fully aware of who He was yet he stooped to serve men. Did you notice that the Old Testament High Priest had to offer sacrifices for himself before he could offer sacrifices for the people ? (16:14) But our wonderful Saviour needed no sacrifices for himself. What the high priest was typically the Lord Jesus was actually. The holy garments of white linen speak of the intrinsic righteousness of Jesus Christ, righteousness outwardly revealed before God and the world. My God, Satan, friend, and foe alike, testified to the holiness of Christ, for

he was “ *holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.* ” (Heb 7:26)

(e) AN APPOINTED PRICE:

And that price was blood. (16:14-15) Eighty six times in the Book of Leviticus the blood is mentioned, and no less than nine times in this very chapter. It was not living animals that paid the price, it was dead animals offered as sacrifices. The blood had to be shed. Now some folk don't like this teaching about the blood. They say it is old fashioned, they call it “ *a slaughter house religion,* ” but I say this *we rejoice in the pardon of the blood, the preciousness of the blood, the power of the blood, the preaching of the blood, the permanence of the blood,* for still in heaven our theme shall be “ *the precious, precious blood.* ” (Rev 5:6) Do you know that one of the most fundamental principles of the Scriptures is found in the Book of Leviticus ? Here it is, “ *the life of the flesh is in the blood and it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul.* ” (17:11) I want you to notice also on this Day of Atonement, there was,

(f) AN APPOINTED PROCEDURE:

It would appear that the High Priest entered the holiest of all three times on that memorable day.

1. With the incense (16:13)
2. With the blood of the bullock for his own sins (16:14)
3. With the blood of the first goat the sin offering of the people. ***That blood he sprinkled on and before the mercy***

seat. Now the mercy seat was the lid of the ark of the covenant and the two tables of the law were in ark and Israel had broken that law and the one thing that stood between the broken law that man could not keep and the righteous wrath of God was the blood of the lamb. My it was the blood that made atonement. Then the high priest returned to the second goat and did an interesting thing. He put his hands on the head of the living goat and confessed the sins of the children of Israel. Than that goat was taken out and turned loose in the wilderness never to be seen again. Do you recall the words of the Psalmist ? “ *As far as the east is from the west so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.* ” (Ps 103:12) These two goats together were called “ *a sin offering.* ” (16:5) One died, the Slain goat, one was turned loose, the Scapegoat. In the Slain goat we see the atoning power of the blood, in the scapegoat we see our sins put away for ever.

Then the High Priest would wash and clothe himself again in his garments, a picture of the fact that when the Saviour finished His sacrificial work he returned to heaven and sat down on the right hand of God. And surely we have to say “ *Hallelujah what a Saviour,* ” but there was something else here,

(g) AN APPOINTED PENITENCE:

Look if you will at (Lev 23:27-28) You see, salvation is not by our works. The people did nothing. The priest did it all. They were not allowed to work, instead they were to show sorrow for their sin, and by faith to accept what God

had provided for them. You see, this annual Day of Atonement speaks to us of God's grace. There is nothing we can do (Titus 3:5)

**Jesus paid it all
All to Him I owe
Sin had left a crimson stain
He washed it white as snow**

(2) A PROPHETIC FULFILMENT

For does this feast not anticipate a time when Israel will be smitten with remorse for the crucifixion of Christ and will nationally repent and turn to their Messiah. Think for a moment about,

(a) THE ISRAEL OF TODAY:

For amid the moving currents of change within the nation of Israel the greatest tragedy is the continuing attempt to have a Day of Atonement without the blood sacrifice of a sin offering. Our Jewish friends appear to be unmindful of God's clear statement, "*for it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul.*" (17:11) Dr. Lehman Strauss states, "*Every Sabbath, Old Testament Scriptures are still read to Jews when they gather in their synagogues. Still, they go through the formalities without the blood sacrifice, the vital focus point of the Day of Atonement, the very heart of the sacrificial system.*" My Modernism in Judaism like modernism in Protestantism questions whether blood is necessary for salvation and pardon of sin. Let the sincere Jew take God at His Word as

it is in (Lev 17:11) and let the sincere Gentile take God at His Word as it is in (Heb 9:22) and the case is settled and closed. In the levitical system a blood sacrifice was God's appointed method of atoning for sin, and that sacrifice was a type of Christ's sacrifice through whom we have been reconciled to God. (Rom 5:10) (a)

(b) THE ISRAEL OF TO-MORROW:

What hope is there for the Jewish nation ? The Day of Atonement answers that question, for there is yet a future Day of Atonement when the nation will know confession, cleansing and forgiveness. Now remember this Day of Atonement commemorates that day when the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with Moses, and it foreshadows that future day when the Lord will again descend in a cloud. You see, there is

1. A COMING REVELATION:

Now we need to be careful to distinguish between this and the Rapture. The next great event in Bible prophecy is the Rapture of the Church. Now there are those who say, "*I don't believe in the Rapture of the Church because the word cannot be found in the Bible.*" Now it is true that the word Rapture is nowhere to be found among the 774,747 words in the King James Version of the Bible. But then the word Trinity, Bible, Grandfather, these words are not found there either. But we do believe in the Trinity, we do see grandfathers all around us and we hold in our hands the Bible. Actually the word "*rapture,*" is derived from the Latin verb (rapere) found in the expression "*caught*

up,” in the Latin translation of (1 Thes 4:17) The Greek word for “ *caught up*,” is *harpazo*. The same phrase is found in (Acts 8:39) where Philip was caught away by the Holy Spirit and in (2 Cor 12:2) when Paul was caught up to the third heaven. The Rapture is Christ’s coming for His saints, the Revelation is Christ’s coming with His saints. Not two comings, but two phases of the one coming. Now we are thinking about the Revelation of Jesus Christ, His Second Advent, and that concerns Israel primarily. Certain questions are involved when we think of the Coming of Christ in power and great glory.

- **HOW WILL CHRIST COME ?**

“ *With all his saints*,” (1 Thes 3:13) “ *With ten thousands of His saints*.” (Jude 14 Zech 14:5) John says, “ *Behold He cometh with clouds and every eye shall see Him*.” (Rev 1:7) Six hundred million are reported to have watched Neill Armstrong alight on the moon, but not every eye. Christ will come forth riding upon a white horse, followed by the armies of heaven, also riding on white horses, judging in righteousness and making war. (Rev 19:11-15 Matt 24:30)

- **WHERE WILL CHRIST COME TO ?**

The Mount of Olives from which He ascended to heaven. Zechariah says, “ *His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem*.” (Zech 14:4 Acts 1:11-12) Regarding Christ’s first coming Micah had prophetically pinpointed the place with the utmost precision, “ *Thou Bethlehem Ephratah*,” (5:2) With no

less precision Zechariah says, “ *the Mount of Olives*.”

- **WHAT DOES CHRIST FIND WHEN HE COMES ?**

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A confederacy of nations against Jerusalem. Look if you will at (Zech 14:1-4) (Ps 83:3-5) No city in the world has been besieged so often as Jerusalem. Israel has always been the melting pot of the world. Even today, this land is often the scene of strife and bloodshed, and there seems to be no solution to the Palestinian problem, and the state of this land in a future day will not be any happier. Napoleon once said with regard to Israel, “ *Whoever holds this land will rule the world*.” It may be that those invading nations will share his view and try to possess the land for themselves. But whatever may be the political or economic reasons for the invasion of Israel and the siege of Jerusalem by these world powers, the great underlying reason is that Satan is luring those nations to their doom, and God allows him to do so because it is in fulfilment of His divine will. Look if you will at (Rev 16:12-16) Now there are two things here worth noting.

1. THE SPIRIT POWERS:

(16:13-14) Do you know something ? Leaders of nations think they control events, when it is actually they who are controlled by events and by unseen spiritual forces. Look at these demons as they go forth working miracles, (13:12-15) deluding men, inflaming passions, stirring up the world, summoning together the countless armies of the world east against west, west against east, all against God.

2. THE SOVEREIGN PLAN:

“ *And He (God) called them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.* ” (16:16) You see, its not merely that God permits this array of nations, God plans it. Do you recall that great prayer meeting that the Early Church had in (Acts Ch 4) ? They came before the Lord and they recognised God as the Creator and Controller of all things, they prayed, “ *the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done.* ” My God was in control, is in control, will be in control. “ *God is still on the throne.* ” You see, when Jerusalem, is taken and destruction seems inevitable, and everything is hopeless, like a flash of lightening the Lord will appear. 1. A Coming Revelation, and then,

2. A COMING RETRIBUTION:

For what does Christ do when He comes ? He will fight against those nations. (Zech 14:3) He “ *breaks them with a rod of iron, He dashes them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.* ” (Ps 2:9 Rev 19:15) Satan’s forces will be destroyed at Armageddon. The great military powers of the world will be broken once and for all. And along with the coming revelation and the coming retribution, there will be,

3. A COMING RECOGNITION:

One of the most mystifying tragedies of human history is the failure of the Jews to recognise in the Lord Jesus their

true Messiah. John says, “ *He came unto His own and His own received Him not.* ” (Jn 1:12) But there is day coming when they will both recognise Him and receive Him. John puts it like this, “ *Every eye shall see Him and they also which pierced Him.* ” (Rev 1:7) Do you recall that touching scene in the Old Testament in which Joseph now Prime Minister of Egypt reveals himself to the brothers who have so grievously wronged him ? I was reading it the other morning. “ *Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him, and he cried ‘ Cause every man to go out from me.’ And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.* ” (Gen 45:1) My that scene will be re-enacted on a grand scale at the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. Look at (Zech 12:9 – 13:6) Affliction of soul was a leading feature of the Day of Atonement and is referred to no fewer than three times in (Lev Ch 23:27,29,32) This will mark Israel in that day when they see Christ and recognise in Him their Messiah. We sometimes sing,

**I shall know Him, I shall know Him
As redeemed by His side I shall stand
I shall know Him, I shall know Him
By the print of the nails in His hands**

That is how Israel will know Him in a coming day. (Zech 13:6) She will feel herself the guiltiest nation on earth “ *but in that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.* ” (Zech 13:1) God will save them not on the ground of a new sacrifice but on the ground of the death of Christ at Calvary. Then they will

realise that “ *He was wounded for their transgressions, He was bruised for their iniquities.* ” (Is 53:5) Like Thomas they will cry out, “ *My Lord and my God.* ” (Jn 20:28) (1) (2)

(3) A SPECIFIC JUDGEMENT

Now remember the basic interpretation is for Israel but there is an application for us. You see, the trumpet is going to sound and we shall be “ *caught up,* ” to meet the Lord in the air and then we shall have our heavenly day of accountability. We shall stand before the Lord and give an account of our lives and ministries. All the wrinkles will be taken out, all the spots removed and all the blemishes taken care of and we will be “ *a glorious church.* ” When will this take place ? It will take place after the Judgement Seat of Christ. Now I am fully aware that there are different judgements in the Word of God, but I am thinking now of this specific judgement for believers, the judgement seat of Christ. Consider with me,

(a) THE PEOPLE AT THIS BEMA JUDGEMENT:

Paul says, “ *For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ.* ” (2 Cor 5:10) Judgement Seat is the Greek word “ *bema.* ” Who will appear at this bema ? Who will appear at this reward seat ? Christians, “ *so then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.* ” (Rom 14:12) Peter says, “ *judgement must begin at the house of God.* ” (1 Pet 4:17) As W. A. Thompson says, “ *It is a family affair and has nothing to do with anyone else.* ” At the Judgement Seat every believer will face God

and give an account of what he or she has done. For some Christians the Judgement Seat will be a time of great rejoicing, while for others it most certainly will be a time of great disappointment. (a) But what about,

(b) THE PURPOSE OF THIS BEMA JUDGMENT:

Well, this word “ *bema,* ” is very interesting. You see, this word was not borrowed from the Courts of Justice but from the Classical Greek Games. The “ *Bema,* ” was the seat of an Umpire. The Corinthians were familiar with the “ *Bema,* ” for just outside their city was a large arena where athletes from all over Greece often competed in the Greek Olympics. These arenas were similar to modern day sports stadiums where thousands of seats are provided for spectators. However, in the large stadium there was an elevated seat on which the Umpire sat. From this elevated seat the Umpire had a clear and unspoiled view of the participants in the arena. After the contests were completed the successful competitors assembled before the “ *Bema,* ” where they received their rewards. You see, the bema was not a judicial bench where someone was judged, it was a seat from which rewards were distributed for those who were victorious.

You see, the purpose of the bema judgment will not be to mete out retribution. It will not be to determine whether a person enters heaven or not. The purpose of this judgment is not to punish believers for sins they have committed after their conversion. (Jn 5:24) No, the purpose of this bema judgment is to conduct a review. You see, responsibility down here means accountability up there.

As Christians we are subject to a 3 fold judgment.

- We have been judged *as Sinners: That's Past:* It has to do with our Sinnership
- We are being judged *as Sons: That's Present:* It has to do with our Sonship
- We will be judged *as Servants: That's Future:* It has to do with our stewardship

At the bema believers are going to be reviewed.

- Our **Motives** will be **Reviewed:** (1 Cor 4:5) Not only what you have done, but why you have done it.
- Our **Service** will be **Reviewed:** “ *Every man's work shall be made manifest.* ” (1 Cor 3:13)

The permanent and the perishable will be separated at the Judgement Seat. “ *How dreadful it will be,* ” says W. Buxton *to pick up ashes of our worthless service and press them into the nail scarred hands of the Saviour.* ”
Indeed,

**By and by when I look on His hands
Beautiful hands nailed wounded hands
By and by when I look on His hands
I'll wish I had given Him more**

(c) THE PRIZES FROM THE BEMA JUDGEMENT:

Well, no fewer than five are to be conferred.

- *The Crown of Ascetism:* given to those who master the old nature. (1 Cor 9:25)
- *The Crown of Evangelism:* given to those who turn many to righteousness (1 Thes 2:19-20)
- *The Crown of Adventism:* give to those who love His appearing (2 Tim 4:8)
- *The Crown of Moralism:* given to those who endure temptation
- *The Crown of Pastoralism:* given to those faithful undershepherds of the flock (1 Pet 5:1)

What a day its going to be, when we stand at bema judgment and our motives and ministry is going to be reviewed.

**Will all our service bear
The light of His pure eyes
Will what we counted much on earth
Be nothing in the skies**

**Oh, may we keep in view
The day above all days
That at the Judgment Seat of Christ
We may receive His praise**

