

You Are His – Deny Yourself!

NUMBERS 29:7-11

*(Reading: Leviticus 16:1-34)*

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ...

We have seen how extensive the Old Testament public worship laid down by the Lord is.

Every day there were two offerings – morning and night.

Every Sabbath day there was a mid-day offering, which was double the offering that either of the morning and evening offerings were.

Then there was the monthly offering which was a lot more again than the Sabbath day offering.

And added to that there are the annual feasts, each again offering up more offerings on top of all these.

All in all you couldn't get away from those many offerings to the LORD God.

There were burnt offerings, sin offerings, and fellowship offerings for public worship.

Then there were the types of offerings prescribed for personal sins.

Every possible type of sin had an offering to be made to the Lord for it.

So what do you think Israel could yet have another religious feast for?

Which possible situation would they yet need more offerings for?

Well, how about a feast which specifically remembered the imperfection of all those other sacrifices?

That's what the Day of Atonement was.

While you may have thought that all those offerings already being offered up was more than enough, they are nothing like enough!

No wonder that this feast which highlighted that was the feast of sin and confession.

This was the feast that really made you take a long hard look at yourself.

This theme has come down to the present day.

In the Jewish calendar this is 'Yom Kippur' – the most important holiday.

If you are visiting Israel on this day forget doing anything on the day.

The country comes to a complete halt for twenty-five hours on this day.

Places of entertainment are closed.

There is no television and radio.

Public transport is ceased.

Even the roads are completely closed.

You might remember that it was on this day that Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel in 1973.

They thought this would have to be the best day for it.

Not that it caught the Jews napping though – in the end they severely defeated those armies and gained much territory!

Congregation, the Day of Atonement sets aside a major holiday to acknowledge the sins of mankind to God.

So we note, first of all, that **THIS FEAST WAS VERY SERIOUS.**

We can see this with the exhortation in verse 7 that the people were to “deny” themselves upon the occasion of this sacred assembly.

That’s a command not mentioned in connection with any of the other religious feasts.

It’s a word also translated as “humble your souls,” or, “afflict your souls.”

This denying oneself had earlier appeared in Leviticus 16 and 23.

There it is seen as an essential part of properly coming before the Lord on this day.

### **So, what was this added aspect to worship?**

Ah, but you’ve read the footnote!

You’ve seen that it could also be translated as “fast”.

So it’s obviously to do with not eating food on this day.

That’s certainly how it’s seen today by the Jews.

And by the time of Isaiah that’s how it was practiced.

But let’s see how the prophet refers to it.

Isaiah 58 verse 5 challenges the Israelites.

It asks about their public worship this day, “Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself?

“Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes?

“Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?”

This is why we must see that **THIS FEAST IS VERY SERIOUS.**

It wasn’t to be an outward conformity.

This was no following the traditions because it had always been done that way.

Instead, this demanded the deepest possible personal evaluation.

They had to take a really good hard look at themselves.

That’s why they were to fast – so that there would be no distractions to this self-evaluation.

Because that’s what drinking and eating do to us.

They put us in a particular pattern.

Our lives are fixed around these physical things.

That’s why this day breaks the mould as it unsettles their routine and puts them completely in a spiritual dimension.

Jesus showed how fasting can continue to serve a valuable spiritual purpose for us too, in the New Testament Church.

In Matthew 5 He points to its inward spiritual worth as He tells those doing it not to make a show of it.

Rather, no one should know that they were fasting because, like prayer, it wasn't proving you were better than anyone else.

In fact, if anything, it shows how inadequate you are before the Lord.

That's exactly the meaning of verse 7 in our text.

This is further confirmed by this day being treated as a Sabbath day.

The text alludes to this with the command to hold a sacred assembly.

But the text is even stronger about this as it says that there was to be no work done on this day.

This is the same as what we read in Leviticus 16 verse 31 about how this was to be a Sabbath of rest.

So all the practical details had been taken care of before this day.

In fact, there was even more spiritual preparation for this day because there would be none of that preparation for their meals this day.

This feast day would be different than all the other feast days because of that!

Especially it was different because it recognised that we simply could never ever satisfy God's justice.

I mean, we don't even know all the wrong we do!

There are all those sins of omission!

You might be wondering what these sins are.

Well, the sins of commission are the sins you know you have done.

When God's Word and Spirit convicts us we repent those sins to the Lord.

But the sins of omission are those commands we avoid obeying, whether through ignorance, weakness, or error.

Sins we are just as guilty of.

You see, our hearts and lives are so infected by sin that we do wrong without realising it.

We can have sinful habits that we don't consciously know about.

Now, the more we come under God's Word the more these are dealt with.

Then we notice we're changing – or at least those around us do!

But you're never completely free of these sins this side of heaven.

It's very interesting to note that these sins which we didn't know we were doing are brought right out into public view.

In the words of the second aspect to the text, **THIS FEAST WAS QUITE DIFFERENT.**

Reading through Leviticus 16 made that crystal clear.  
The High Priest went into the holy of holies on his own.

But it was on behalf of them all.

The similarity to the other special occasions of worship ended there, though.

Because just as everyone was acting differently by denying themselves the High Priest on behalf of them all would be doing something quite different than what he ordinarily did.

It was on this one day in the year that he entered by himself into the holy of holies.

Only on this one day did the High Priest go into the closest place with the Lord to make amends for transgression and impurities that had not been covered by the normal sacrificial rituals.

This kept them all honest!

Because this reminded them of just how rotten they were – through and through!

Even the clothes he was wearing in this ceremony were completely different than what He wore as the High Priest otherwise.

We'll come back to these special clothes a little later.

But what we must note here is that it was a simple white outfit.

Coming before the Lord on this occasion he was wearing nothing fancy. He wore just white basic clothing made of white linen. And when he took off those clothes he had to bathe himself with water in a holy place before putting on his regular garments.

Then he continued on with the offerings enumerated in our text.

Congregation, this was all known to the people.

This is the setting for our text.

Also what the High Priest did with those two goats.

It was that sin offering for atonement which is referred to in verse 11 of the text.

We notice that it says, "Include one male goat as a sin offering, **in addition to the sin offering for atonement...**".

You see, with all the other feasts it is simply mentioned about the one male goat as a sin offering.

Here it makes specific reference to what we read in Leviticus 16 as to what the High Priest was to uniquely do.

It was there we read of the two goats.

Two goats on which he was to lay his hands and confess over them the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites.

Now, what he did with the first was no surprise.

Slaughtering that goat for a sin offering and sprinkling its blood over the holy of holies was not new.

But sending that other goat out into the desert was something else.

And that goat was as much sacrificed for them as the other one!  
That goat would in the end die for them.

But his form of death is to be sent out into the world.

One commentator points out that the Hebrew here speaks about the first goat being sacrificed for the Lord God while the second goat is sacrificed for another person.

In the Hebrew the name 'Azazel' is given for that other person.

He says that because that goat was sent out into the world of the evil spirits their sin was removed.

Their fellowship with God was restored.

So it tells the father of this world that his evil influence has no effect on those forgiven by the Lord.

And it also tells the congregation that those burdened with sin could not remain in the Kingdom of God.

Indeed, they would be banished to the place of evil spirits unless they were redeemed from it.

THIS FEAST WAS QUITE DIFFERENT alright.

But, then again, THIS FEAST WAS EXTREMELY PROPHETIC.

Our third aspect to this text.

Congregation, if we consider the New Testament references to this feast, this is beyond doubt.

There is the link Hebrews 9 verse 7 draws with the worship in the earthly tabernacle and the occasion when the High Priest would once a year enter the inner room.

The very next verse – Hebrews 9:8 - makes the application that “the Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was standing.”

It further added in verse 9 that “this was an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshipper.”

You see, it was all temporary.

That's why Hebrews 9 verse 12 says that Christ, because of who He was, could enter the Most Holy Place once and for all time by His own blood.

The apostle Paul is quite clear about this also in Romans 8.

In the verses 3 till 4 there, he says, “For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.

“And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.”

This is seen in two aspects of what we read in Leviticus 16.

The first is the special clothing worn by the High Priest on the day of Atonement.

We have noted that it was white linen.

White linen that was the purest white.

As white as it could be then.

Because that was the colour linen was.

Now, there is something said by the Lord when people are dressed in this way.

I mean, wouldn't black be a better colour to wear confessing your sins?  
You see, angels of the Lord are described this way by Ezekiel and Daniel  
(Ez.9:2,3,11; 10:2,6,7; and Dan.10:5, 12:6,7).

And it's related to the glory of the Lord in Daniel 10 (v6), Ezekiel 1, and in  
Revelation 1 (verses 13-15).

So, the white material which Aaron wore is pointing to Christ.

He perfectly fulfilled God's will and remained pure throughout.

And then there is the goat being sent out into the desert.

Who could forget Hebrews 13 when it said in verse 12, "And so Jesus suffered also  
suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood."

For then the application is drawn, "Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing  
the disgrace he bore."

## **THIS FEAST WAS EXTREMELY PROPHETIC.**

*There could be no doubt about that!*

It was pointing to the ultimate and perfect sacrifice Christ would make for his people.

### **Dear believer, are you denying yourself?**

Does your heart look for the Lord?

Because if you do then you will find yourself at odds with this world.

Living for Jesus doesn't give you much of a life out there!

But you will also find that Jesus meets your every need.

His sacrifice not only paid the price for all your sin, it also means His Spirit now wins  
the battle within.

In Romans 10 the apostle Paul describes it well.

In verse 4 there he says, "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be  
righteousness for everyone who believes."

The Jews today believe that in strictly following the law they can keep the Day of  
Atonement.

That's why they miss the very meaning of this day.

Because it cries out to them that there's no way they can do that!

That's why until the Gospel opens their eyes they won't see.

Only faith in Jesus Christ makes them right before the Lord.

Congregation, let's pray that their hearts – and many more – will be opened.

And let's show that with lives that are truly free – because we're worshipping and  
serving the Lord His way!

Amen.

**PRAYER:**

***Let's pray...***

LORD God, we humbly bow before You now.  
For we have been afflicted within.

Your Word has again exposed our total  
lack before you.

But Your Word has also declared the Living Word.

And so it is that in His Name, the Name above every names, the name of the only  
Saviour from sin, Jesus Christ, we pray, Amen.