

The Day of Atonement Is a Day of Reconciliations

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The Spring Holy Days are a memorial of what has already happened and the fall Holy Days, we look forward to what is going to happen. I think all of us hope sooner rather than later. So, as we often ask on each Holy Day, why are we here? Why is this day special? Because this day was indeed special. We will begin in Leviticus 23:26, and I will be reading out of the King James unless otherwise noted.

Leviticus 23:26 *And the Lord spake unto Moses [this is the Yehovah, God Almighty, speaking to Moses His servant], saying, 27) Also, on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord. (KJV)*

The Hebrew word for *afflict* means “to abase the self” or “humble the self” or “chasten the self”. Nothing does it quite so well as fasting. It gets to the core of our humanity very, very quickly. Of course, we are all feeling that today and it makes our approach to God a more correct approach, being humble and realizing our humanity and realizing our physical weaknesses. Going on in verse 28.

28) And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God. (KJV)

The Hebrew word for *atonement* is Strong's #3725 and you might keep that in mind because there are two other words that are close numerically to that (meaning they are related). Here the Hebrew word for *atonement* is Strong's #3725, it's *kippur*, pronounced ka-poor and it's from #3722—the root. It means “expiation”; expiation in English can mean atonement obviously, but it means “an act of making amends for guilt or for wrong doing”. In this case it is a plural noun—*kippur*. Therefore, this day could be correctly translated, Day of Atonements. I think we are going to see that that is probably an accurate translation. Going on in verse 29.

29) For whatsoever soul [or person or life, we would say] it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. 30) And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. (KJV)

These are strong words, very strong words.

31) Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

32) *It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath. (KJV)*

It would be instructive, since we are keeping this Day of Atonement, to find out what actually happened on this day. To do that let's go to Leviticus 16 and you'll probably want to place a marker there because we will be going back and forth. The point here is, Leviticus 16 is not in chronological order. What we are going to do is take it in chronological order, so we are going to be moving around in Leviticus 16 to make it make sense chronologically.

Let's start in verse 4—it basically tells us the High Priest (Aaron in this case) washed himself and he put on special garments. These were special garments he put on to walk into the Holy of Holies. Then what Aaron did was made an atonement for himself and for his house. Look at the beginning of verse 3.

Leviticus 16:3 *Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. (KJV)* Then in verse 6.

6) *And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house. (KJV)* Going on in verse 11

11) *And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself:*

12) *And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail:*

13) *And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not: (KJV)*

Very serious times, very serious ceremony—verse 14.

14) *And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times. (KJV)*

It is interesting that the Hebrew word “mercy seat” is just one word. Remember in Leviticus 23, it was Strong's #3725, here it is #3727. The Hebrew word here is *kipporeth*—in English, close to *kippur* but a little bit different. It means “a lid”, used only “of the cover of the sacred Ark” and its root is #3722, the same root *kippur* has. It is only two digits away from *atonement* in Leviticus 23 and like I said, both have the same root. That will come into play in just a minute. Aaron then came out and he cast lots over the two goats. One was to be sacrificed and one was to wander in the wilderness—verse 5.

5) *And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. (KJV)*

We will pick up the ram in just a bit. Verse 7.

7) *And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.*

8) *And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat [as the King James reads]. (KJV)*

That Hebrew word for *scapegoat* is *azazel* and it means “a goat of departure”. Let’s look at that goat, the goat on which the Lord’s lot fell. He was killed as a sin offering for the entire nation—for all of Israel. Aaron would then enter the Holy of Holies a second time to sprinkle this goat’s blood on the mercy seat. We pick that up in verse 9.

9) *And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. (KJV)*

Going on in Verse 15.

15) *Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, [coming in now the second time] and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat:*

16) *And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, [why?] because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness. (KJV)*

With that in mind, keep your marker here and go to Hebrews 9:11, to see what this is really all about. We see here that one of Christ’s titles is our High Priest.

Hebrews 9:11 *But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; (KJV)*

Or not of the Tabernacle then or of the Temple in Solomon’s day.

12) *Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. (KJV)*

We can see here that Aaron represents the risen Jesus Christ and through this ceremony, symbolizes Christ’s return to be with His Father. Let’s go to Hebrews 6:19.

Hebrews 6:19 *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, [or an anchor of our very life] both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; (KJV)*

This hope which we have comes into the veil. Verse 20.

20) Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. (KJV)

So, Aaron represents Jesus Christ coming to God through the veil, into the Holy of Holies with His own blood. If Aaron represents Christ going before the Throne of God with his own blood and if Christ is the God of the Old Testament and if Christ resides in the Holy of Holies as some erroneously believe, then Christ would be coming before Himself. How does that work? It doesn't. In the past we didn't think this through and we didn't think the logic of it through, when the statement was made that Christ was the God of the Old Testament. We didn't think through our own teachings. Back to Leviticus 16:18. The High Priest has offered the blood on the mercy seat, after going into the Holy of Holies a second time, verse 18.

Leviticus 16:18 *And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the Lord, and make an atonement for it; [a lot of atonements being made this day] and shall take of the blood of the bullock, [that was for himself and his house in verse 3] and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. 19) And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it [why?] from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. (KJV)*

Now we've looked at the goat that was sacrificed, let's look now at the goat that remained alive, verse 10.

10) But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the [azazel] scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord [before God Almighty], to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness. (KJV)

Going to verse 20 now.

*20) And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat:
21) And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness:
22) And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness. (KJV)*

Then Aaron went back into the Holy place, verse 23.

23) *And Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall put off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there:*

24) *And he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments, and come forth ... (KJV)*

We see that he removed the very special garments and washed himself again and then put on his normal garments and went back out and then what he did was offer burnt offerings, the latter part of verse 24.

24 continued) *... and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people, and make an atonement for himself, and for the people. (KJV)*

For himself, the ram in verse 3, for the people the ram in verse 5. Now when we stop here and you think, this all went on. Aaron had a lot to do that day—the Priests had a lot to do that day while they were fasting—so we are all a bunch of wimps because they were out enduring some physical activity on this day. When you look at all the activity that occurred this day, you can't help but conclude—when you just put it all together—that the Day of Atonement or the Day of Atonements is a day of reconciliations. Because atonement and reconciliation are almost synonymous. So that's the title of the sermon today:

The Day of Atonement Is a Day of Reconciliations

1. The first thing we should do is examine the meaning of the word atonement.

That's point number 1. Here in Leviticus 16, it is slightly different, as I said, a slightly different Hebrew word for *atonement* to the one we found in Leviticus 23. Here it is Strong's #3722—this is the root word of the two previous Hebrew words for *atonement* and for *mercy seat* that we read earlier. Strong's #3722—it's kaphar. Strong's says it's a primitive root and this is the root word for *atonement* in Leviticus 23, it is the root word for *mercy seat* in Leviticus 16. *Kaphar* has many meanings in addition to the word *atonement*. I've examined several sources from that and I'm just going to summarize them and Strong's says this also; it means *to cover*, it means *to cleanse*, it means *to disannul*, it means *to pacify*, it means *to purge away*, it means *to forgive*, it means *to be merciful* and it also means *to make reconciliation*. Reconciliation is when there is a divide and two people come together and they reconcile—in other words they are made one, they are in harmony again, they are in unity again. Let's go back to Leviticus 16:33, referring to Aaron.

Leviticus 16:33 *And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. (KJV)*

We see here today, that there is a number of atonements or reconciliations made this day. There's a reason for that. I asked myself, why was God doing this? What was the reason for all this? The High Priest made atonements for himself, for his family, for the other priests, for the Tabernacle, for the Altar and for the entire nation. You see can where the word *atonement* can be plural because a lot of atonements or reconciliations were taking place this very day. So, it could be called a Day of Reconciliations—a lot of reconciling going on.

2. This day symbolizes an innocent Jesus Christ, reconciling all mankind to God His Father.

Christ was innocent and He sacrificed Himself willingly. Yehovah, His Father willingly sacrificed His own Son to reconcile all mankind to God our Father. Some accuse us—those in Pacific Church of God—of somehow diminishing Christ. This is simply not true; we have never done that intentionally—we don't do that. Christ has many roles and many titles which we eagerly acknowledge. Some of these titles and roles He shares with His Father and some are exclusive to Himself.

Christ is our Creator. Creator in the sense that He was under the direction of His Father and He shares this title with His Father as the Father is the ultimate Creator. God Yehovah is the ultimate Creator, but Christ was involved in the creation and therefore is a Creator and in that sense, He shares that title with His Father. He creates at the direction of His Father. Christ is also, as we know, the Word. Christ is the Priest of the Most-High God, as we read earlier, He is High Priest—our High Priest. He is the mediator, He is our intercessor, He is a Rock and He shares that title with His Father also. He is our Savior and He shares that title with His Father. God Almighty offered His Son, Christ offered His life and both of those events, both of those actions, tell us that Savior can be applied to the Father and to His Son and scripture backs that up amply. Christ is also the Scepter; He is also the Good Shepherd. He is also the Redemption; God the Father is our Redeemer; Christ is the Redemption as scripture makes clear. Christ is also the firstborn of the dead and He is, as we know, our elder Brother.

Christ has a lot of roles and a lot of titles. He has been involved with mankind since the beginning with His Father, doing the will of His Father, as His Father's servant but also as our servant. Remember Christ said, He came to serve. He washed feet as a servant, He set us the example. Christ is indeed a servant.

On this very day, this holy day, look at another role Christ has. Go back to Leviticus 16:33, where we were earlier.

Leviticus 16:33 *And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. (KJV)*

The people were made clean by this atonement—it sounds a little like Passover. The people were made clean, they were one with God now, for that period of time. We know the next minute some were going to sin, sacrifices had to be offered and the process started all over again. Christ entered the spiritual Holy of Holies to reconcile all of mankind to God His Father. We see that in Hebrews 9:24. After His death and resurrection, He took His blood to the spiritual—not the physical Holy of Holies—but the spiritual Holy of Holies to reconcile all of mankind to God. Hebrews 9:24, Paul is talking to the Jews so we are very familiar with what we have talked about up to this point.

Hebrews 9:24 *For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; [they are representatives—types—of the true] but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: [on our behalf]
25) Nor yet that he should offer himself often ... (KJV)*

The Moffatt translation says, offer Himself repeatedly, as this was done on an annual basis.

25 continued) ... *as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;
26) For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: [Which harkens back to Terry's sermon last week] but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. (KJV)*

With that in mind go back to Hebrews 2:17 out of the NIV.

Hebrews 2:17 *For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement [the King James says reconciliation] for the sins of the people. (NIV)*

One of Christ's roles and titles is High Priest—He is our High Priest. In Colossians 1:19, this day symbolizes Christ reconciling all mankind to God.

Colossians 1:19 *For it pleased the Father that in him [Christ His Son] should all fulness dwell; [So it pleased God that all fullness should dwell in His Son]
20) And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.
21) And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled. (KJV)*

What a blessing. The Greek word for *reconciled* is Strong's #0604. It is only used three times in the New Testament and Thayer says it means "to reconcile completely". I am again quoting from Thayer: "Bring back a former state of harmony". It was disrupted in the garden, disrupted by Satan. So, could this be, in the sense, a beginning of the

restoration of all things, bringing back into the harmony that existed before? With that in mind, go to Romans 5:11, where it is talking about atonement and reconciliation between God and mankind and Christ was the instrument through which that happened.

Romans 5:11 *And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.* (KJV)

The Greek word for *atonement* can mean “reconciliation”. The King James margin says reconciliation. Through Jesus Christ we now have reconciliation with God the Father.

When we were driving down here today, they were harvesting the wine grapes from the fields which you can see off the freeway. It is a wonderful time of the year—the leaves are turning, the apple harvest is under way, the grape harvest has just started, the hop harvest is mostly complete—wonderful time of the year. In John 15 Christ draws an analogy about Himself. Here He is drawing an analogy to the vines and the grapes.

John 15:1 *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.* (KJV)

We see again, Christ is submissive to His Father because He is the vine that the husbandman looks after and is responsible for.

2) *Every branch in me [every branch of the vine—He’s the vine] that beareth not fruit he taketh away [the Father does]: and every branch that beareth fruit, he [the Father] purgeth it ...* (KJV)

The Greek means “to prune”. We’re all familiar with that—we prune a branch off to make something else grow better or to shape it the way we want it to be shaped.

3) *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

4) *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

5) *I am the vine, ye are the branches [we read this during the Passover time]: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: [here’s the key] for without me [as the vine and we’re the branches] ye can do nothing.* (KJV)

Christ, you see, makes reconciliation possible between us and His Father, God designed it that way. He is essential in that process. Christ had said, “I’m the vine, you are the branches, without Me you can’t do anything”. Well He adds to that, or God and Christ add to that, through inspiring Paul in his letter to the Philippians. Paul makes a statement in Philippians 4:13,

Philippians 4:13 *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.* (KJV)

You remember in the garden at Gethsemane when Christ was sweating the great drops of blood and crying out to God His Father—remember what God did? He sent an angel

and we are told that angel strengthened Christ. Obviously that angel was transposing God's strength or bringing God's strength, somehow, some way—we will know some day—to Jesus Christ. What we are being told here is that when we go through trials and tribulations, Christ will strengthen us in our time of need. We cannot do anything without Him, we can do nothing. We are told here—Christ is a way that we are strengthened. Now, as a result of this day and closing out this second point, all of God's people are at one with Yehovah—God the Father—through His Son, Jesus Christ; Christ being our reconciler, Christ being our atonement.

Now let's go to the third point and we're going to shift gears just a little bit.

3. This day also pictures another reconciliation.

We've seen a lot of them so far in the ceremony and reconciling human kind to God the Father, but this day pictures another reconciliation. Remember reconciliation is about mending relationships. In West Texas we called it mending fences. You go out and mend fences, that's a necessary part of being a rancher, but it's applied to human relationships. You mend fences between human beings. Our part is mending the relationship between ourselves and God the Father. We have a part to play in that. We have learned a lot about God and Christ and Their relationship and Their roles and responsibilities and titles, over the last several years. We know that key to mending our relationship with God the Father is putting God first. It's very simple. We get—as human beings—distracted and Satan wants us to get distracted about all kinds of things and doing all kinds of stuff. I mean within the church—building buildings or sending out booklets or doing this or doing that, camps—you name it. The point is that our part, first and foremost, is mending our relationship with God Almighty. Reconciling with God Almighty and we have learned we do that, by putting Him first. Nothing in front of God, everything we do is motivated—should be motivated—by God.

Remember Christ said, when asked, what's the greatest commandment of all? He answered by saying there are two. God comes first, He said—the first commandment. God comes first and there are four commandments that guide us, lead us, on how to put God first—loving Yehovah with all our being, putting nothing before Him—absolutely nothing. Not worshipping or bowing down in front of anything other than God Almighty and His Son. Never defaming or denying Jehovah's name—Yehovah has a name, it is Yehovah. All that we do, all that we think, all that we say, our example in the community, our example among one another, should never defame or deny Jehovah's name. Then on top of that, we keep one day a week, don't we, to remind us of our commitment to God. Then we keep seven annual Holy Days that do the same. These days that we keep, every week and then periodically through the year, are to keep us in the true worship of the true God. God designed it this way so that we are reminded of the true worship of the true God. What a blessing these Holy Days are, what a blessing it is to be here today to be part of that.

Then remember Christ said, there were two commandments—He didn't stop at the first, love God with all your being. He said, love your fellow man, love your neighbor at least

as much as you love yourself. We know we have six commandments that guide us and lead us into how we should do that. We have an adversary, don't we? We have one who wants to steal and kill and destroy, as we know in the parable of the sheepfold in John 10. What this adversary wants to do is destroy our relationship with God, thereby putting distance between us and God and he provokes us by getting us to put something in place of God—before God, thereby dividing us from God. The last thing Satan wants is for us to be at one with God, for us to be in perfect harmony with God—that is the last thing he wants.

In addition to that, what Satan wants is to provoke us to destroy our relationships with one another, as God's people, all having God's Holy Spirit. He provokes us and encourages us to allow little roots of bitterness to come up between us and one of our brothers or sisters. Or grudges to develop between us and one of our brothers or sisters; destroying the love between brethren, destroying the bond between brethren and thus preventing any kind of reconciliation between brethren. Satan wants to wipe that out completely. He wants to destroy our relationship with God and destroy our relationship with one another because we are the temple of God. We are the brothers and sisters in the temple of God.

If we are honest with ourselves, there are those within the church who have hurt us very badly. We all know that, we've all experienced that especially in the last few years. There are those that have hurt us very badly. If we are truthful with ourselves, there are those that we have hurt very badly. I am chief among them. There are those—I look back in my years in the ministry—I have hurt people badly by being off track, misguided, following rules instead of God's Word and the list goes on and on and on. So, the fact is, we have been hurt by people, but we have hurt others. It's a good thing God doesn't hold a grudge. When I think about all the mistakes and sins I have committed and I think - if anybody could have a grudge against them it would be me and it would be by God, but when I look back, I see just the opposite. I see God as patient, He is kind, He is gentle, He is forbearing, He is long suffering. With human beings, it's all too easy to hold a grudge. It's all too easy to have resentment towards another brother or sister in the church. When we do that, if we have a grudge or resentment against another brother or sister, that moves us farther away from God. Go to Luke 6 and we're just going to read verse 36 and 37. Christ is teaching us basic principles of how we should relate to one another.

Luke 6:36 *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.* (KJV)

I mentioned how God has been so merciful with me. So, the onus is on me and all of us, that we had better be merciful.

37) Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: [and He takes it step further] *condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:* (KJV)

What He's telling us is, if we judge and we condemn others, then we are going to be judged by God accordingly in a similar manner. But He is saying if you forgive others

readily—easily forgive—then you will be forgiven in the same manner also. There's an Irish American writer named Malachy McCourt and he said something worth remembering:

Resentment is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die.

Because when we have resentment toward another human being, it's inside us. The other human being might not even know about it, may not even be aware of it. So, when we have a grudge or bitterness and resentment build up inside us, it poisons us and all the time we're waiting for the other person to die from the poison and yet we're the one dying from the poison. A very astute man.

Today, as I mentioned earlier, fasting helps us in our approach to God and helps us in our approach to our fellow man. When the stomach is pasted up against the spine, like it is today and the mouth is cottony and dry and we don't have a lot of energy and we're maybe a little colder than we should be or shake a little bit, it helps us realize that apart from a few breaths of air and regular food and water, we're not going to last very long. When we look at God—no beginning, no end, always alive, all power, all might, all wisdom, all intelligence, all authority—it puts us in our place. At least it does me. When I was a freshman at Texas A&M, they called us “fish” because we were lower than the scum on the bottom of the ocean and that's kind of the way we feel. Compared to God, that's where we are. We see that fasting helps us approach our fellow human being with a spirit of reconciliation and it also, more importantly, helps us approach our Father realizing who we are, who He is and—God, just have mercy on me, a sinner.

With that in mind, go 2 Corinthians 5 where we see Paul is talking about a ministry of reconciliation. The Corinthian church had all kinds of problems and there were all kinds of sins going on, there were people dividing themselves. One favored Paul, the other favored Barnabas and this, that and the other thing and it was just a mess—the church was a mess.

2 Corinthians 5:15 *And that he [referring to Christ obviously] died for all, [Why? What is one of the reasons Christ died for all?] that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, [that means be selfish] but unto him which died for them, and rose again. (KJV)*

Verse 16, out of the NIV.

16) So, from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. (NIV)

We don't just look after ourselves in a worldly way, he said. Verse 17, back to the King James.

17) Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

18) *And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ ... (KJV)*

Christ has reconciled us, fish on the bottom of the sea to God Himself, Almighty God through His Son Jesus Christ.

18 continued) *... and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (KJV)*

The Greek word for *ministry* is *diakonia* and we get the word “deacon” from that and it means “service”—one of the meanings is service. So, God has given us the ministry or the service of reconciliation. Verse 19, back to the NIV.

19) *that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (NIV)*

One of the great meanings of this day is a reconciliation of human beings—sweaty, smelly, temporal human beings—to God Almighty. If we are reconciled to God as a result of what Christ did, as a result shouldn't we be loving and reconciling toward one another, as human beings—fellow human beings, particularly in the church of God but to all mankind? Hebrews 10 talks about drawing nearer to God and nearer to each other as God's children. Hebrews 10:19, remember Paul is talking to the Hebrews here, and we are learning from that.

Hebrews 10:19 *Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest [the Holy of Holies] by the blood of Jesus,*

20) *By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; [by His death]*

21) *And having a high priest over the house of God; (KJV)*

Jesus Christ is now High Priest over the house of God, the Temple of God, which we are all members of.

22) *Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. (KJV)*

In a way, it's tied into Aaron's washing that he historically did on this day.

23) *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)* (KJV)

Verse 24 as it applies to human relationships among God's people.

24) *And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: (KJV)*

Instead of Satan provoking us to sin, let's provoke one another to love and to good works.

25) Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but [rather than going off in a hole] exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (KJV)

We are admonished here to consider one another, provoke one another to love, to exhort one another and the fact is, this isn't just a one-time thing. This is an ongoing process. It takes ongoing attention and work to exercise God's Holy Spirit so we can get close to God. It takes ongoing attention and work to exercise God's Holy Spirit to bring us closer together one to another—exercising God's Spirit in us.

That leads to the fourth and last point.

4. How then do we reconcile with our brethren?

How does God want us to reconcile with our brethren? Point A, if you like to outline:

A. You can't reconcile if you don't have love and concern toward other people.

It won't happen, we must have love and concern for other people. Mr. Armstrong used to call it outgoing concern, years ago. Go to 1 Corinthians 13 and we will just read one verse in the love chapter, verse 5. Paul is giving us the characteristic of love or those who have love, this is what they should be doing.

1 Corinthians 13:5 [Love] *Doth not behave itself unseemly* [in a vulgar manner], [love] *seeketh not her own* [in other words, love is not selfish, love is interested in the welfare of people], *is not easily provoked ... (KJV)*

People with Godly love do not have a short fuse. Some of us grew up in households where short fuses were the rule of the day and it is something we have to overcome. Notice these last three words.

5 continued) ... thinketh no evil; (KJV)

Yet today, in the culture of the greater church of God, people find it so easy to believe the worst about their brothers and sisters; it just comes naturally. Hear something bad about somebody—never check it out, just believe it and repeat—it's so easy. We knew they were bad in the beginning. It's just part of human nature. For example, one of the big criticisms against the Pacific Church of God is that we believe and teach that Christ is a created Being. We have never done that. None of the ministers, none of the brethren believe that, it's not on our website, it's not in any kind of thing we've ever published and sent out and yet—oh yes, they believe it—and the list goes on and on; to believe the worst about people and what people believe. Go to 1 John 3:14. This was a landmark scripture for me. I had mentioned Acts 3 when Mark Mickelson brought it to

my attention in 2016 and that began a process of understanding and knowing God and Christ better. Well this was one that happened in the mid-1990's and I read it one day in a morning Bible study. I remember what chair I was in and I remember what Bible I had on my lap, it's just one of those things. I read 1 John 3:14.

1 John 3:14 *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.* (KJV)

And yet in the church, I have seen so many acts, so many words that portray that the brethren aren't loved, the brethren aren't cared for. Other things come before loving the brethren. Then John goes on to say, this is the scary part.

14 continued) ... *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.* (KJV)

I read it that morning and it hit me like a ton of bricks like I had never read it before in my life. I thought "Wow, if I look back in my life and see how I've treated brethren on occasion and how my attitude was toward brethren on occasion, I've got death abiding in me". I want to change that—have to change it—because I want to know that I've passed from death to life and I know all of us want to also. How do we know we've passed from death to life—love the brethren. That's the second of the two great commandments. In Romans 12:10. There is another attitude and approach we should have in having love and concern for others. Out of the NIV.

Romans 12:10 *Be devoted to one another in love.* [Devoted to one another in brotherly love—devoted to one another] *Honor one another above yourselves.* (NIV)

What a concept, to listen to what somebody—a brother or sister—has to say and seriously consider it and maybe even consider it above what we believe for a second while we consider what they say and give them the honor of at least listening to them and considering what they have to say. Honor one another in love, putting someone else's interests ahead of our own. I want to do this, but you want to do that—why don't we do what we want to do and then we'll be happy. I've learned when you make another person happy, it makes you happy. The old saying, a happy wife is a happy life—if we are devoted to making our mates happy, our lives will be happy. If we are devoted to making God happy above all, our life will be happy. If we are devoted to making one another happy and the Feast is a good time to practice that, we will all be happy. Go to one final scripture under point A, Philippians 2:4 out of the NIV. The admonishment is—Paul is saying—folks, get your mind off yourself and get your mind on other people; it's better for you and it's better for them.

Philippians 2:4 *not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

Making sure other people are taken care of, making sure other people are included and particularly at the Feast. If you see somebody sitting off by themselves, somebody

looking kind of sad, this is the time to put their interests ahead of ours and go sit down beside them—could be a child, five or six year old, could be a teenager, could be somebody (I would say elderly but I don't want to paint a picture of myself) up there in years. So, the point is, the Feast is a good time to practice this.

Point B—first we have to have love and concern for others—the second point is:

B. We are human, we must actively seek reconciliation with our brothers and sisters.

We are human, we make mistakes, we hurt other people's feelings, we step on other people's toes—we don't mean to, most of us don't mean to, but we just do—we are just human. Maybe we are having a bad day and maybe we have a headache or something and we say something we shouldn't say or we aren't as considerate as we should be. So, what do we do when that happens? It's a two-fold process, both found in Matthew, Go to Matthew 5:23. This is a case when we realize we have sinned against our brother or sister and it's not hard to tell because you have a friendly relationship with a brother or sister and you come in on the Sabbath day and all of a sudden you get no eye contact, one word answers and the person goes to the other end of the room. Maybe something's up.

Matthew 5:23 *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother [or sister] hath ought against thee; (KJV)*

And you can see it through tone of voice, body language, facial expression, lack of presence, whatever it might be, your brother has something against you:

24) Leave there thy gift before the altar [stop what you're doing], and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. (KJV)

This tells us that even if you are at the Temple, giving an offering and you realize someone has a problem with you, you stop what you're doing and go reconcile—you take care of it right then. Matthew 5:23 gives us a sense of urgency. That's when we have sinned against somebody else and we realize it. The flip side of that coin is, what happens if somebody sins against us? Very familiar, Matthew 18:15—you know where we're going.

Matthew 18:15 *Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee ... (KJV)*

What do you do? Go gossip about it? Stick your tail between your legs and walk off? Tell other people what a horrible person this is?

15 continued) ... go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. (KJV)

It's my experience that if we immediately (when this happens) stop the conversation or go to the brother and say, look, I just heard you say—repeat what you heard—and say that really hurts my feelings, that really offends me, I thought we were friends, I thought you were my brother or my sister. Can we talk about it? Let's sit down and talk about it. You would think that asking somebody to do that would be like chopping a toe off because it's rarely ever done. But if we immediately went to our brother or our sister, it's my experience that ninety percent of the trouble between brethren would be stopped right then, right there, at that time—it just would. But these two scriptures—Matthew 5 and Matthew 18—are the most frequently ignored scriptures in the Bible, in my opinion. We just don't do it and shame on us. As a result of that, grudges develop, resentment develops, hard feelings develop. In both cases you have one person going to another person in the attempt to reconcile. Remember, in order to reconcile it takes two people. One can forgive, but for reconciliation to occur, it takes two. With that in mind, go to verse 21 of Matthew 18. Peter came to him and said (I can just imagine Peter saying this):

Matthew 18:21 *Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? (KJV)*

The Jews didn't require seven times in their Talmud, so Peter more than doubled it. Peter was saying, I'm doubling what I've been told what we should be doing and Christ said to him:

22) Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. (KJV)

We have to be ready to forgive and to be ready to reconcile. We have to be willing—it makes ourselves vulnerable—to go to somebody and say look, I've got a problem or I perceive you have a problem with me, can we talk about it? If we have a humble, submissive attitude—an attitude of fasting like we do today—it will work. It's interesting in verse 23, Christ gives a parable on the very subject. He likens it to the Kingdom of God, so we see here, forgiveness in verse 15 and coming to one another and trying to work things out and trying to reconcile, Christ leads directly into a parable about the Kingdom of God that involves this very subject.

23) Therefore, is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.

24) And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. (KJV)

Verse 25, he wasn't able to pay and was commanded to pay and to sell his wife and children and all that he had, so payment might be made and in verse 26:

26) The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.

27) *Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.*

28) *But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him a hundred pence [tiny amount of money]: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.*

29) *And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. (KJV)*

Verse 30, he wouldn't do that, he put him in prison.

31) *So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.*

32) *Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: [This heartfelt appeal to me.]*

33) *Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?*

34) *And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors [those are torturers], till he should pay all that was due unto him.*

35) [Here is the message, going back to Matthew 18:15 and all the way down] *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses. (KJV)*

Yet today, some hold grudges and some are just absolutely unwilling to reconcile. One minister used the following verse to avoid reconciliation. I say that from personal experience—Luke 17:3. This one verse, he took it so that he did not have to reconcile with another person and preached this, I might add.

Luke 17:3 *Take heed to yourselves: [this is important, listen] If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. (KJV)*

This minister had preached this. There was a lady in this congregation, I got involved in a dust up between herself and another fellow and she didn't like what this other fellow had said. She said to me, regarding this other fellow, that he must crawl to her on his knees before she would forgive him. She was quoting this verse that the local pastor had pounded into people, "if he repents". So, what she was saying was, if he doesn't grovel before me, I'm not going to forgive him and I have no obligation to forgive him.

Here's the point: If we carry a grudge, and we let it build and build and stew and simmer over time and then the person comes out of the clear blue and says, I'm sorry for what I did three or four, five years ago, I'm sorry. If we have let that grudge take hold inside of us, we can't forgive them at that moment because we haven't already forgiven them in our hearts. We'll say, "I need to think about this" or "I'm not sure". If we carry a grudge and it develops into resentment and bitterness, if they come to repent, we won't be ready. But if we have already forgiven them in our heart, it's over, done with and forgiven and they come out of the clear blue and say, I'm so sorry, if we have already

forgiven them all we have to do is acknowledge it and say “Of course I forgive you, it’s not an issue, it’s not a problem”. Give each other a hug and go forward from that point on. It’s easy to reconcile when one already forgives.

This day, closing up this last point, there are some areas we need to focus on and questions we have to ask ourselves and I ask myself this more than any. I ask myself,

“Am I working on reconciling my relationship with God, my Father? Am I doing that? Do I do it every day? Do I make sure there is no division between Him and me? Do I make sure that I repent of all my sins so that my sins don’t separate between Him and me? Am I working on that? Am I working on getting to know Him better and know His Son better and know Their relationship and know what They are like and know Their words so I can better obey and please My Father?”

That’s a huge question that is brought up on this day—reconciliation to God the Father. But how about our reconciliation and our relationships with God’s children, amongst all of us?

“Am I working on relationships and working on reconciliation with folks I might have offended? Or folks that maybe I set a bad example around? Or folks that I have somehow alienated through my actions? Am I working on that? Am I praying about it? Am I reaching out as opportunity presents itself?”

Those are things we need to think about on the Day of Atonement because Jesus Christ gave His life so that we can be reconciled to His Father and His Father watched His Son give His life so that we might reconcile to God the Father and by extension to all of us.

We have seen during the Day of Atonement that many reconciliations occurred—many, many. The most important of course was, as I said, Christ giving His life to reconcile us to God the Father. Now, as we finish this day and we can have our food and coffee and water and then we look forward to heading to the Feast, how happy should we be that we are reconciled to God the Father, when you think about it? How happy should we be? What joy should we take from this day forward, that we are more at one with Him now than we were and it’s made possible by the sacrifice that His Son gave? How joyous should we be that we understand Him and know Him better and know His Son better and He’s given us this revelation? Not any of us can claim credit for that. This knowledge has been given to us out of His love and His mercy. Let’s use what God did on this Day of Atonement to inspire us at the Feast, to further reconcile with God, to become more at one with Him and more at one with His Son. Also, let’s use what we learned today, here on the Day of Atonement, to become more like our elder Brother because our elder Brother walked among human beings. Our elder Brother talked and walked among human beings. So, we want to become like Him. We will close with one final scripture, Ephesians 4:13. This is the goal, this is what we strive for, this is what we want to put into practice at the Feast.

Ephesians 4:13 *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, [and God the Father, His Father also obviously] unto a perfect man [or woman—mature], unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: (KJV)*

That we can walk accurately in His footsteps. So, let us take the lessons we have learned here today and use them at the Feast to be closer to God, closer to His Son and more like His Son in our interactions one with another.