**Rosh Hashanah (Feast of Trumpets) and Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement)**

 **23The Lord said to Moses, 24‘Say to the Israelites: “On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of Sabbath rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. 25Do not do any of your ordinary work, but present a food offering to the Lord.”’**

**26The Lord said to Moses, 27‘The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves and present a food offering to the Lord. 28Do not do any work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the Lord your God. 29Those who do not deny themselves on that day must be cut off from their people. 30I will destroy from among their people anyone who does any work on that day. 31You shall do no work at all. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. 32It is a day of sabbath rest for you, and you must deny yourselves. From the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening you are to observe your sabbath.’**

This year the first day of the seventh month fell in the Jewish calendar fell during last week, so Jewish people around the world held the Feast of Trumpets (also known as Rosh Hashanah).

Tomorrow is Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, the Holiest day in the Jewish calendar – the 10th day of Tishri as in today’s Scripture. It is a day to fast, rather than feast – the day is traditionally used as a time for confession and prayer.

The Feast of Trumpets is traditionally regarded as the celebration of God’s creation of the everything as described in Genesis. This time marks the ten days of self-examination before God, leading up to the Day of Atonement, so that each person can be individually right before God when that ceremony takes place.

These days are seen by many as a time for spiritual growth and study.

The Feast of Trumpets is the Jewish New Year and in the same way we greet people with Happy New Year, the Jewish people do the same, but with an expression that gives them hope that their own name is written in the God’s Book of Life.

This is important to the Jews, as according to their tradition, it is during the Feast of Trumpets that the Book of Life is opened, with the righteous being separated from the unrighteous. It is a time of soul searching, driven by the belief that the Messiah will arrive during this time.

The Feast of Trumpets celebrates creation, but also it celebrates God’s Sovereignty – with the blowing of the shofar (trumpet) used to announce God’s Kingship and His right to rule.

This Feast is seen as the culmination of God’s covenant with His people.

Passover is seen as God’s promise to marry Israel, The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), is the marriage covenant and the Feast of Trumpets is seen as the actual wedding.

For many Christians, there is a belief that it is this time of year when Jesus will return, but there is nothing Scriptural to base that belief upon and holding such a belief tightly creates a danger of moving away from being perpetually ready for the Lord’s return, as commanded by Jesus in **Matthew 24 and 25**.

Incidentally, this time of year can be shown to be the time of Jesus birth – Christmas is now, rather than the date that was eventually chosen (imposed), largely in an attempt to remove a pagan festival from the calendar.

The Feast of Trumpets is a time for celebration, but also one of reflection and repentance as the days approach Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, the Holiest day of the Jewish year.

This was the day that when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies (the inner part of the Temple) to make atonement for the nation through the sacrifice of an animal.

It is recorded that a bell was tied to the hem of the High Priest’s garment, so if God did not accept his sacrifice and struck him dead, he could be pulled out of the Holy of Holies. No priest could enter that place unless he came carrying the blood of a sacrifice, nor could he enter on any other day.

Yom Kippur is often called the Day of Redemption, because through the blood that was shed in the sacrifice, forgiveness was obtained.

The ceremony of the two goats took place as follows: *one goat was to be killed to symbolically cover (atone for) the sins of Israel. The other goat, called the Scapegoat, would be brought between the priest, who would lay his hands on the head of the goat as he confessed the sins of the people. Then, this goat would be set free in the wilderness, symbolically taking the sins of the nation out from the people’s midst.*

These events were prophetical as to what would take place in the New Covenant – when Jesus shed His blood as a sacrifice for the sins of any of mankind who wanted forgiveness. In the same way as the goat was sent away from the people and out of their sight, Jesus was buried outside the city, away from the people He died for.

As with most Scripture, God does not just speak to one time and one set of people. These passages have relevance for us as believers.

In the same way that one goat was sacrificed to atone for the sins of an entire nation, God willingly sent His only Son, Jesus, to die to atone for the sins of all humanity, across all ages.

Many years before Jesus was born, just before the Scapegoat was taken into the wilderness to be released, it had a red sash tied to its horns. The priest accompanying it would then wait for a sign from God – to indicate that God had accepted the sacrifice offered by the High Priest on behalf of the nation.

That sign was the sash turning from red to white.

It is recorded that in the year Jesus died as an atonement for the sins of everyone, for the very first time, the sash remained red.

Clearly believers in Jesus would equate the two events and no doubt this change from the normal led many of the people and priests to think back and re-evaluate their response to Jesus’ claims that He was the Son of God.

It is further recorded that on each subsequent year, until the Temple was destroyed in AD70, when the Scapegoat was taken to the wilderness along with its red sash, the sash did not change colour. For those forty years there was a visual indication that the offering made was not acceptable to God.

As believers in Jesus knew and know, His death on the cross, the Sacrifice of His blood meant there is now no longer a need for national atonement, but there is a requirement that we both admit our personal guilt and accept His sacrifice as our personal atonement.

**Hebrews 9:12** states that **He (Jesus) did not enter (the Holy of Holies) by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, so obtainingeternal redemption.**

Prophetically, Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement, with its sacrifice and use of the blood of bulls and goats, points towards Jesus as Messiah and his once-for-all sacrifice for the whole of mankind and as people who have put our faith in Jesus, we should understand that as the writer of Hebrews says, **without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness Hebrews 9:22**.

As the perfect High Priest, Jesus does not need to continually offer a sacrifice of atonement – His death on the cross was more than sufficient.

By looking deeper, there is further prophetic meaning in the periods of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur - with their themes of repentance and that sacrifice they combine with the Messiah.

The prophet Zechariah spoke of a day in the future when Israel would look in repentance on the Messiah (described as the One) and mourn for the fact that their ancestors had been part of His death.

**Zechariah 12:10** says **I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spiritof grace and supplication. They will look onme, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.**

Just as Yom Kippur with its opportunity for forgiveness and new life follows Rosh Hashanah with its repentance, so we too can benefit from what the Lord God put in place millennia ago.

Paul speaks of this promise to the Jewish people in **Romans 11:25-27, I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved. As it is written: ‘The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. 27And this ismy covenant with them when I take away their sins.’**

This is the ultimate fulfilment of Yom Kippur, when the Jewish people recognise Jesus for who He truly is. That will be a time of great blessing for Gentile believers too, a time when God’s people will be truly united as one to worship our Lord God, through His Son, Jesus.