

Not So Fast...

Today we celebrate the Day of Atonement. This is the second of the Fall Holy Days and in reading numerous scriptures and articles on this most solemn of the Holy Days, a deeper meaning became clear.

Beginning in **Leviticus 23:1-2** “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘*Concerning* the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, even these are My appointed feasts.” Nowhere does it say these are the feasts of the Jews!

The word “appointed” sticks out to me in this scripture. God makes it quite clear that these are His Feasts and declares to all of mankind the days and times that are Holy to Him. These are ***God’s appointed feasts***. If we want to feast and celebrate with God, we must do so when He *says* to do so. He is not on our calendar. God’s Holy Days have never been taken off any calendar but have been despicably replaced with man-made traditions. Jesus and His disciples kept the Holy Days and if they were done away with, it would be most certain He and His disciples would have said so. Our responsibility is to worship and honor God on His designated days.

Our instructions for keeping this most solemn of the Holy Days are found in Leviticus 23:26-32. As we have read, we are to “afflict” our souls in observing this Holy Day. Specifically, **Leviticus 23:27**- “Also, on the tenth day of the seventh month, is the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation to you. And you shall afflict your souls and offer an offering made by fire to the Lord.” God tells us we are to “afflict” or be “afflicted” three times within verses 23-32. We are also told to “do no work.” God makes clear the consequences for non-compliance in Lev.23:29-30 “For whoever is not afflicted in the same day shall be cut off from his people. And whoever does any work in that same day, the same one I will destroy from among his people.” Can’t make it any plainer than that. This is a day when we are commanded to do literally nothing, which also foreshadows the truth that our salvation is a gift we cannot earn. We are saved by the grace of God and His Son alone so we do nothing to realize that we can do nothing to earn salvation. To “afflict” means to cause pain or suffering. Our “soul” is our spiritual or the immaterial part of our being. The lack of food and the hunger pangs we experience seem to be more physical than spiritual. So how does fasting equate to afflicting our souls? Does fasting affect our spirit? Do we focus more on watching the clock and are hoping for sundown or do we really understand what’s going on here? We all probably get a little crabby when we get hungry. We’ve all been there when your stomach growls in a quiet room. We’ve all gotten “hangry”, the emotion

when we get so hungry, anger and hunger become one. But how does being hungry afflict my soul?

The concept of fasting is to put or try to put us into a state of submission. We disregard the physical food we need to survive and focus intently on God's provision and sustainment. It puts us in a *humble* position. "And He humbled you and allowed you to hunger, and then He fed you with manna which you did not know, neither did your fathers know it, so that He might make you know that *man does not live by bread alone*; but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live."- **Deut. 8:3**. God wants us to be humble. "But when he was in affliction, he sought the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers."- **2 Chronicles 33:12**. (**Psa. 9:12, 10:10, 17, Psa. 35:13, Isa. 57:15, Matt. 18:4, 23:12, Luke 14:11, 18:14, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:6**).

Keeping the right attitude while fasting and correct perspective is critical in our observance of the Day of Atonement.

This is what God's intent is for us on this day. To be humble puts us in a closer relationship with Him. He wants broken hearts before Him, recognizing our own sins and His compassion in the forgiveness of our sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Savior. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."-**Romans 6:23**.

Afflicting our souls is much more difficult because it involves humility. We must admit and seek dependence on God. We become one with Him that He may change our lives to be like His Son. Afflicting one's soul is a realization that it is not about us or earthly material things or even physical food and necessities. It is following through with the words of Paul when he wrote: "I exhort you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and well pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service. Do not conform yourselves to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind in order that you may prove what is well pleasing and good, and the perfect will of God. "- **Romans 12:1-2.**

None of us can imagine the forty days fast our Lord went through. Today was never about skipping meals. It is a day of rest and reflection on God and His love and mercy on us. Let it be a day we grasp our *total* dependence on God, His will, His commandments and His way of life, believing in His Son and His sacrifice for all mankind. May God fill us with His Spirit and His purpose as we lay all we are on His altar and proclaim with Him, "we are at one with You."

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