

Trumpets: Glorious Appearings

Exodus 19-20 and Trumpets

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Leviticus 23 is one of those scriptures where we normally start a holy day sermon. We will read the command to keep the Day of Trumpets.

Leviticus 23:24 Speak to the children of Israel, saying: "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation."

The Jews call this day *Yom Teruah*. This is basically the text from the Hebrew Bible—a memorial or feast of the blowing of trumpets. The word *teruah* has the connotation of "shouting." It is a very loud and forceful blaring or blast of an alarm, or as we have explained this in the past, it is the shout of a shofar—the blast of a trumpet. It can mean all of these things, and more. It does not have to mean the blowing of a trumpet; it could also mean many people shouting as they did around the wall of Jericho. In fact, in Judges 6, it is specifically called *teruah*.

There are also several places in the Psalms, "*teruahs* (shouts) of joy." In fact, God's presence is one of those things which caused these shouts of joy. In I Samuel 4, when the ark was brought into the camp of Israel, there was a *teruah* of joy because the Israelites were so thrilled that the ark of the covenant was there and was going to lead them into battle; it says there that the ground shook from their shouts. This word has quite a range of meanings, more than just the blowing or blast of a trumpet.

Today is that day on the calendar, the first day of the seventh month of Tishri. It is the beginning of what the Hebrews called the civil year, the day that they thought of as their New Year, and they still do today. Now, we know that the sacred year begins in the spring on the first of Abib. And this, six months later on the first day of the seventh month, a new moon, is the first day of the civil year.

What this means is that in ancient Israel and Judah, the reigns of kings began on this day. This was their coronation day, or the first day of their reign. It was also the day that most Israelites counted their birthdays. They figured that they were one year older because this was when the new year began, so they just automatically counted their birthdays from this day, rather than the actual day. I can understand that knowing the Hebrew calendar a little bit, that the days jump around here and there. So they just used the Day of Trumpets as their birthday.

Obviously, the most significant or distinctive point in the command to keep this feast in Leviticus 23: 24 is the fact that it is a memorial of blowing of trumpets. A memorial is a day of remembrance. And as I have mentioned, it is also a day of beginnings. They are all combined in this one feast.

The other feast days or holy days are Sabbaths. They are holy convocations. Work is not to be done on them. Offerings are to be made. But, included in this day is a memorial of blowing of trumpets. That is the big thing that sets it apart from the other holy days. This blowing of trumpets takes center stage on this day. In fact, the whole day revolves around "remembering" the blowing of a trumpet, or the shout of the shofar, or many voices, or of joy, or of alarm.

This distinction, because *teruah* can have such a range of meanings, makes the symbolism of this day somewhat enigmatic. We may not think so at first because we think we have a pretty good view of what this day represents in God's plan; however, if you were an Israelite at that time of the giving of the law (Leviticus 23), and God said you were to keep a day in which you remember the blowing of trumpets, what memory would that have sparked in your mind?

Being an Israelite at that time under the Old Covenant, you probably only had a very limited idea of the coming of a Messiah. Remember, most of the Bible had not been written down yet because it had not happened yet to be written down. So they were only working with maybe a very skinny part of the book, and in fact, not even that. Moses may not have even written all those things yet. Maybe he did that in the forty years in the wilderness. Maybe it was just a collection of memories of the elders, things that had been handed down orally. So, maybe they knew some of these things, and maybe they did not. They were working with a very narrow slice of knowledge of events from which to draw upon, compared to what we have today about this history.

When God says that you are to have a memorial of blowing of trumpets, what would they have thought of? I think that this is an interesting question.

If we were to go through the Bible from Genesis 1:1 to Leviticus 23:23, what would we find about the blowing of trumpets? What occasion are we to remember in which the blowing of trumpets played such a major part before Leviticus 23:24, and the giving of the command to keep the Feast of Trumpets?

The Exodus? That had happened only the year before. You may remember the movie, *The Ten Commandments*, where Joshua is getting everybody going, and he signals the trumpeters, and they all are shouting, and they leave Egypt. Perhaps.

What about Joseph's elevation to vizier of Egypt? He shaves his head, he goes in to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh says, "You are the man! You are the wisest that has come before me in a long time. You figure out what we need to do to make it through the coming drought. So, here is my ring, here is a wife, and go on my second best chariot, and be presented to the people of Egypt." There is probably the blowing of trumpets to draw the people's attention to the second man of Egypt. Perhaps.

But, if we are going to go strictly by what the Bible says in terms of when the word "trumpet," or something like it, is mentioned in scripture, then those two are out because our memory of the horns blowing when they left Egypt is from the movie, not from the Bible. And, we have to imagine the scenario at Joseph's incident. And it probably did happen. But, it does not say so in the Bible.

Where in the Bible does it talk about the blowing of trumpets—something that the Israelites

would remember? That is the question. The word "trumpet" appears only four times in the biblical text before Leviticus 23. And, they are all found in one event. This tells me that this is what God had in mind when he gave this command in Leviticus 23: 24. I want to use this sermon to speculate on what event that Israel was to remember, and how that remembrance applies to us. Of course, we are way ahead of them in terms of time, and knowledge, and understanding of God's plan. We have God's Spirit.

But, looking at it from this perspective, from the original command and what God was trying to get Israel to understand, what are we to learn? And then, how are we to apply it in our own lives? We will see some of the spiritual lessons as we go through this today. Mostly, I am going to draw out one particular spiritual lesson.

We are going to go to Exodus 19 where all four trumpets mentioned before Leviticus 23 are found. To set the scene, Israel had fled from Egypt just a short time before. They had crossed the Red Sea, and God saved them from the Egyptians, destroying the Egyptian army. They continued their trek through the Sinai Peninsula, making their way to Mt. Sinai. They made it there in about a month. We are getting close to the Day of Pentecost, and they were camped in the shadow of Mt. Sinai at this point.

Now, Moses had climbed the mountain where God proposed to him, as he was to ask the Israelites, that He would make a covenant between Himself and Israel. And so, Moses goes down the mountain, and tells the people what God had said up there, and they said, "All that the Lord had spoken, we will do." So, Moses goes back up the mountain, and tells God what the people had said, that they would make a covenant with Him. God then gave him instructions, and Moses returned to the camp of Israel. He then told Israel to make them themselves ready for the third day.

By this time, about two weeks had passed. Therefore, the tradition is that the third day was the Day of Pentecost, and not the Day of Trumpets, that all this happened.

If you go through, and check the itinerary and timing of everything, it works out pretty well. Remember that there about seven weeks between the Days of Unleavened Bread and the Day of Pentecost. Thirty days (about four weeks and a couple of days) is how long it took them to get to Mt. Sinai. Then Moses traveled up and down the mountain several times. I am sure there was a day or two in between climbs so that he could rest. You have to remember that he was 80 years old. By this time we are getting close to the Day of Pentecost. Jewish tradition says that the third day was the Day of Pentecost.

Exodus 19:16-25 Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke,

and God answered him by voice. Then the LORD came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up. And the LORD said to Moses, "Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the LORD, and many of them perish. Also let the priests who come near the LORD consecrate themselves, lest the LORD break out against them." But Moses said to the LORD, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for You warned us, saying, 'Set bounds around the mountain and consecrate it.'" Then the LORD said to him, "Away! Get down and then come up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, lest He break out against them." So Moses went down to the people and spoke to them.

Exodus 20:18 Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

In these passages are three of the four appearances of the word "trumpet." The fourth was found in Exodus 19:13 where God gave the instructions to Moses, and He said at the end of the verse, "When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain." So, all these four instances of the word "trumpet" occur in Exodus 19:13, 16, and 19, as well as 20:18.

Now, this trumpet blast is described as very loud. I would say that because of the reaction that it produced, loud is an understatement. It was also described as sounding long, becoming louder, and louder. Not only was it loud to being with, it increased in decibel level as time went on.

How loud it was can be determined by the ability to distinguish the trumpet from the sound of the thunder. There were thunder and trumpet blasts going on at the same time, and the sounds of each could be distinguished from each other. So, loud and very loud probably does not do it justice. We might say in today's words, "deafening," "ear-splitting," or "ear-clapping." The people probably did clap their hands over their ears for the noise.

If you have been to a NASCAR race, or have been to some "fly-over" by military jets, or perhaps you stood near a construction site with jack-hammers being used, or hopefully not a rock concert, you would understand better some of the loud cacophony as never experienced before or since. It was very loud, maybe unimaginably loud.

It produced an effect, all this loud noise, specifically the trumpet—all the people in the camp of Israel trembled because it was so loud, and they stood afar off. I get the impression that there is a verb missing—they trembled, they ran, and they stood afar off! They got away from there. They tried to do what they could to get out of that sound. But, they could not.

Combined with all the other noise, and the lightning, and the earthquake, and the fire, and the

smoke, and the cloud, and God's presence, not to mention the voice of God speaking above the din—it scared the living daylight out of them! Trembling is probably an understatement too. Quaking may be closer. I am sure that many of them were on the ground. Their heads were cradled in their hands or covered with their garments, thinking that the sky and mountain would fall on them. They thought that they were going to die right then and there.

And if the mayhem going on around them did not kill them, then surely God would break out against them in a plague. That is what it says there. They thought they were goners. God has appeared; this is the end; we are done.

Of course, God appeared to them like this for a reason. He did it on purpose. This was not like things always are. He can turn it on, and turn it off. We know this for a fact because He had appeared to others more benignly already. And He would again in the future. Evidently, He sang in the Garden of Eden when he was walking in the cool of the day because the text said that they heard the voice of Him walking in the garden. Was He talking to them, or calling to them? Or humming? Or singing? I do not know. It was pretty benign. They were able to run and hide.

God appeared as a traveler to Abraham with two of His angels. He wrestled with Jacob. Obviously Jacob felt secure enough to grapple with God all that night. Obviously He did not come with lightnings and thunders and sounds of a trumpet to scare Jacob out of his wits. And he was bold enough to ask Him for a blessing after this was all over.

He appeared in the burning bush to Moses. I am sure that was shocking, but it was not like this. To others, He appeared as an angel (as mentioned in my last sermon) to Gideon; and to Joshua, He appeared as the captain of the Lord's army as a warrior. I am sure that was menacing, but it certainly was not on this scale. He appeared to Mary Magdalene after the resurrection as a gardener. That was not frightening. And even to Elijah, after the fire He was the still small voice.

But here, at Mt. Sinai, with all Israel gathered together to hear the Ten Commandments, He presents Himself to Israel in terrible, overwhelming majesty and power. It was enough to scare them out of their wits, enough to think they were going to go mad. They suddenly realized just Whom they were dealing with.

Yes, they saw God do ten plagues in Egypt; they had seen God defeat Pharaoh coming across the Red Sea. But when He appeared Himself on the top of that mountain, with all that noise—the earthquake, cloud, smoke, and all the rest—they were terrified. God may have been in those other miracles, but now, God was here! And this is Whom we have to make a covenant with.

I did not finish that section in Exodus 20.

Exodus 20:19 Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

This was after all this display. It is probably at this point dying down, or had already died down, and the commandments had been given:

Exodus 20:20-21 And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.

This was the reason. Moses explains why God put on this awe inspiring spectacle. It comes in three parts. First, it was a test of their faithfulness and obedience. Second, He wanted to impress upon them the fear of the Lord. I think He succeeded. Three, He wanted to dissuade them from sin. So He had to test them, to impress upon them the fear of the Lord, and to keep them from sinning. These are all wrapped up in one another.

This exhibition of His glory was to expose the state of their hearts. That is what a test does. It exposes deficiencies. Or it can expose proficiencies, if one passes the test. But it was to expose the state of their hearts in relation to Him. He was the One producing all this fear. He was the One who had the trumpets blaring. He was the One who was causing the lightning to strike, which caused the thunder to rumble. He was the One who caused the earthquake. He was the One who came down in the smoke, and great clouds. Their fear was not just their reactions only to these things, but also to the power behind them—the Person who was the Power who caused these things.

In the carnal Israelites God knew what he was getting. He knew what they were. He knew the state of their heart already, but He wanted to test them under these extreme conditions.

At the very least He expected to see the realization or the recognition of His power, just so they can get a bit of a gauge of where they stood in terms relative of power. Maybe that is all that He wanted. He wanted to impress upon them that He was no ordinary god. The gods of Egypt had proved themselves weak. He had proved Himself stronger than they. But, when He got them alone in the wilderness to give them His law, He showed them as much as they could handle what they were really dealing with.

This was not just a more powerful God, but this was the God of the entire universe who could do anything He pleased. And He was the One they were making the covenant with. He was the One setting down these commandments. Do you think that gave them any inspiration to do them? It should have. Their proper reaction should have been obedience to the covenant. They would have kept His laws. They would refrain from sin.

We are talking about the Israelites, remember? We know how long that determination usually lasted. That these people who are consistently called hard-hearted and stiff-necked, even with displays like this they would only last maybe a day? Actually, the golden calf incident happened about seven weeks after this. Moses soon after went back up the mountain to God and stayed about 40 days. While he was gone, they convinced Aaron to make a golden calf at the foot of the mountain, and they were worshipping it and playing, as the King James Version says.

How long did it take to go from His awesome display of power to the golden calf incident? It took just a few weeks. It was very impressive. They heard it. They saw it. They experienced it. And they forgot it, all in about forty days or so. But, it was written down.

Leviticus 23:24 Speak to the children of Israel, saying: "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation."

Leviticus was written in the first month of the second year after leaving Egypt. So, if this took place on the Day of Pentecost in the first year, let us say it was June, then from June until the next March or April would be about only nine or ten months, and God already had to remind them—to remember this. This command in Leviticus was penned less than a year later. And the blowing of trumpets was still a fresh memory, not that they had done much with it. It was still there. They could immediately go back and say, "Yes. Do you remember that? Was I scared! I thought God was going to come down and crush us all. Do you remember how loud that was? I thought my ears were going to pop!"

The trumpets that God wanted them to remember would have been those that blasted when their God had appeared to them in glory and awesome power on Mt. Sinai. That was the only thing in living memory that was so awesome that could really be called *teruah*. Not that they had done it, but that God had done it. It was the shout of God—the trumpet of God—that they were to remember. And the fear that it inspired in them!

God wanted them to recall His test of them, their trembling, and with that He gave them His covenant and commandments, which define sin, so that they would not disobey. He wanted them to do this at the beginning of every civil year on the Day of Trumpets, this holy day today.

We do something similar, and not quite as dramatic. Every New Year, our culture makes resolutions. "This New Year we are going to do this better. We are going to lose weight, or we are going to stop drinking coffee, or alcohol, or smoking, or whatever." Well, this is not totally foreign to this idea that we are going to remember on this day something that happened that God said we should remember, and it should spur us to better actions. God wants us to be spurred—to be inspired—to obey Him, and to remember His power, and to remember our place before Him, and to recommit ourselves to the covenant, because we have made it, and we are bound to it, so we need to keep it, and do our part in it.

This idea of remembering God and His incomprehensible power and majesty runs throughout the Bible. I would like to pick up one example of this in the Psalms. It is a Psalm of Asaph, who had been going through a time of trouble, which to him was a real burden, trial, and test. I want you to see what he does:

Psalm 77:7 Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more?

He is saying, "Where is God? Has He left us? Has He left me? Will He not show me favor ever again?"

Psalm 77:11-12 I will remember the works of the LORD. Surely I will remember Your wonders of old. I will also meditate on all Your work, and talk of Your deeds.

This is what, in a similar way, is commanded on the Day of Trumpets. We are supposed to remember God's wonderful works. We are supposed to remember the trumpets, and the fear that they generated. We are supposed to remember God's awesome power and majesty, and the fact that He is the King of the Universe. He is sovereign over all. He has, as the song goes, "the whole world in His hands." And, He can crush it, or He could save it.

Psalm 77:13 Your way, O God, is in [holiness] the sanctuary; who is so great a God as our God?

Remember who we are dealing with! This God has defeated every god of man.

Psalm 77:14-15 You are the God who does wonders. You have declared Your strength among the peoples. You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah

Think on these things. What has God done? What is He able to do? What has He planned to do? He can do whatever He wants. He is our God.

And then, he goes into a recitation of what happened when coming out of Egypt. He uses the crossing the Red Sea as an example of God's power. He could have just as easily used the example of what God did at Mt. Sinai that day. I will go ahead and read it.

Psalm 77:16-20 The waters saw You, O God; the waters saw You, they were afraid; the depths also trembled. The clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound; your arrows also flashed about. The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind; the lightnings lit up the world; the earth trembled and shook. Your way was in the sea, your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps were not known. You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

He takes his thought back to this wonderful work of God—this awesome display of His might and His majesty, and His willingness to do for His people what needs to be done to bring them to where they need to be. And do you know what that did? That solved Asaph's problem.

The first step he took in seeking God was to remember His wonderful works of power and faithfulness to His people. In other words, the first step is that he remembered God, and who He was, and what He could do. This reestablished in Asaph the fear of the Lord.

What is the fear of the Lord? It occurs frequently in scripture. It is there a lot, especially in the Old Testament. How do we define the fear of the Lord? It has been defined in various ways as proper respect for God, and as reverential awe for God; some go so far as to say that it is the religion of Israel—it is what we would call, "piety." It all has its basis in the fear of the Lord.

If you have a proper fear of the Lord, then you are properly worshipping Him. But, within this

fear of the Lord are elements of fear. That is why it is called the fear of the Lord.

These elements of fear run the gamut from healthy respect through reverence and awe, to absolute mind-blowing, catatonic terror. Trying to say that the fear of the Lord is just this part of fear or just that part of fear is not enough. It is going to be different depending on the situation.

We should always have a deep and reverential respect for God, but it does not always have to be this mind-blowing terror. But sometimes it does need to be, especially when we are thinking of sin. We can think and be terrified of what God's reaction might be.

Think of the various examples of people who have been confronted by God, people we would spiritually respect—prophets and apostles—and there are occasions when they reach this mind-blowing, absolute, catatonic terror. But at other times, especially during the lives of the apostles, they were buddies with Jesus Christ. They slept by Him, walked with Him, joked with Him, ate with Him, and went to parties with Him with wine-bibbers and sinners. Of course, they were not doing any of those things, but that is what they were accused of. They were friends.

There was one time when Peter said to Jesus, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." This was because at that point, Jesus stilled the storm with a word. And Peter suddenly realized who he was dealing with. Isaiah's knees knocked together. Ezekiel and Daniel were ill. They could not get a word out of Ezekiel for a while, as well as Paul, on the road to Damascus, and John in the book of Revelation. Obviously, these are extremes, but they all had a deep fear of the Lord.

The idea of fear, that we are faced with something frightening, possibly terrifying, is the central concept of the fear of the Lord. And the reaction, or result, of what comes from this is the desire, to put it negatively, not to provoke through disobedience, or to put it positively, to please Him by obedience.

You have this fear. Where on the gamut it is, is up to you in how you respond. But the response that He ultimately wants is obedience and submission—conformity with Him and His plan, and what He is doing with us.

We are going to take a survey by quickly going through several scriptures on the fear of the Lord. And what we are going to do is concentrate on the Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. We will go through these very quickly and see all the various ways the fear of the Lord is used.

Psalm 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments.

What we have here is the fear of the Lord leading to good understanding, and a good understanding, then, leads us to knowing that our best is in doing His commandments. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments." Fear, understanding, wisdom, and keeping God's commandments, are all wrapped up into a nutshell.

Psalm 128:1 Blessed is every one who fears the LORD, who walks in His ways.

This is in a parallel construction. Blessed is every one who fears the Lord. Or, blessed is every one who walks in all His ways. Fearing the Lord is equated with walking in His ways. What is that?—keeping His commandments.

Psalm 147:11 The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy.

Here we have someone who fears the Lord, does please Him, because his fear of the Lord results in his obedience. And, of course, those who fear the Lord also have hope that He is going to be merciful towards them because they are doing what He has asked them to do. So, they have great hope that He is going to be gracious toward them.

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

We saw this back in Psalm 111:10. There it was the beginning of wisdom, and here it is the beginning of knowledge. But, the negative is that fools despise wisdom and instruction.

So, if you want to be a fool, ditch the fear of the Lord. Think of yourself as equal to God. Be blasé. Be apathetic. Go ahead, and make yourself to be a fool.

Proverbs 2:1-5 My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

I wanted to come here because it shows that the fear of the Lord is something to be learned, and to be grown in. It is not something that just comes. We saw that with the Israelites. They had a visible, audible, demonstration of God's power, and they experienced it, but it did not teach them very much because they were fresh into idolatry within the month.

It is something that is not instantaneous. There may be something that sparks it, some experience that gets us started, but we have to grow in it through the gaining of knowledge, and understanding, and through wisdom which, is done by experience. We gather and gain wisdom through experience. We grow in the fear of the Lord. We can grow.

Proverbs 3:7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil.

Here we have the negative reaction to depart from evil. That is what the fear of the Lord should cause us to do.

Proverbs 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.

This turns it up a notch does it not? We are not to just depart from evil, but we are to hate it! It gives us some examples of things we should begin to hate also.

Proverbs 9:10-11 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you.

Here is a promise that comes from having the fear of the Lord. The promise is to extend our days because we will be living in wisdom. We will be avoiding those things that are destructive. That is real understanding. And it all begins with the fear of the Lord.

Proverbs 10:27 The fear of the LORD prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened.

Proverbs 14:2 He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD, but he who is perverse in his ways despises Him.

Hmmm . . . that last part is not good. If we want to turn this interpretation on its head, those who fear the Lord do not despise God; they love Him. They care for Him. They enjoy Him. That says something about the relationship, does it not?

Proverbs 14:26-27 In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.

Wow! The fear of the Lord is quite encompassing, is it not? For one thing, it builds our faith. We have strong confidence. And another thing, we have the promise of refuge and safety. And a third thing, if we continue in the fear of the Lord, we can expect God to reward us with eternal life, because the fear of the Lord will help us to avoid the snares of death.

Proverbs 15:33 The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility.

Aha! We just added another huge part to the fear of the Lord—humility! The fear of the Lord contains a heavy dose of humility. But, there is a promise implied here that we will be honored ultimately for the fear of the Lord. So, not only is eternal life in the equation, but also the

reward of His saints.

Proverbs 16:6 In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.

Here, the fear of the Lord is linked with atonement. Keep this in the back of your mind.

Proverbs 19:23 The fear of the LORD leads to life, and he who has it will abide in satisfaction; he will not be visited with evil.

These are such wonderful promises, all for the fear of the Lord.

Proverbs 22:4 By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches and honor and life.

This keeps being repeated, and repeated. The fear of the Lord is central to these things.

Proverbs 23:17-18 Do not let your heart envy sinners, but be zealous for the fear of the LORD all the day; for surely there is a hereafter, and your hope will not be cut off.

We are to continue in this fear of the Lord all day long. It is not something that we can put with our keys on the table when we come in the door. It is something we have to carry with us all the time. What it means is that we have an understanding and a realization that God is with us, and in us, and that we are constantly in His presence. And so, this fear of Him has to be constant in us to guide us and guard us in our every action, in everything that we do.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

What do you start with?—the fear of the Lord. And what does it result in?—keeping the commandments, if it is the proper fear of the Lord.

Like I said, these are only a few of the verses on the fear of the Lord. There are others that come up. But, these combined passages show that the fear of the Lord is relevant and necessary to every facet of life. And not just life now, but in the life to come!

If want to put it into a nutshell, the fear of the Lord is the basic attitudinal setting for a Christian. In other words, the fear of the Lord establishes the proper temperature, or the suitable environment, for a successful relationship with God. Essentially, it is the correct, proper, righteous, humble realization of our relative importance, worth, and understanding in comparison with God. It is where we stand in comparison to Him in everything.

When we are truly honest about our position before God, what does it create? It creates fear, respect, reverence, awe, terror, and the whole gamut, because we know what He is, and we know how puny we are. With that understanding, we have the actual right attitude to live our lives before Him.

In the New Testament, there is a concept called "poor in spirit." The fear of the Lord is a very similar Old Testament concept, because the poor in spirit understand their lack of spirituality before God. And what does that do? It causes them to be humble. It causes them to take God's word, not for granted, but for truth and obey it, because God knows better. God is better. God is powerful. God is holy. And this attitudinal setting wants us to reach for those same heights with God's help. So we submit to Him. We do what He says.

Now with that in mind, think back to Leviticus 23: 24. This day is a memorial of the blowing of trumpets. We are to have a Sabbath rest. It is a holy convocation. We keep this year by year on this day. Looking at it from our perspective, in terms of God coming down on Mt. Sinai, the best we can do is to imagine how it might have been for those Israelites based on what has been recorded in God's word.

We just have this one account, basically, although there are mentions of it in other places. But, we just have Moses' record of what happened: how very loud it was, how it was loud and got louder, how there was cloud and smoke, fire and earthquake, and God's voice, and God's presence.

We have to imagine all of that. Even if we are good readers, and we are good at imagining what we read, it is not the same as having been there experiencing it. We remember, but they really are somebody else's memories that have been recorded for us. We do not have the personal memory to fall back on. We may, as Christians, associate better with another appearance of God on earth.

In Luke 2, there is a story we hear every year from Halloween until Christmas in this world, mutated and materialistic, and changed by traditions being put in and all that which is not true. It did happen. But, not when they say it happened.

Luke 2:6-14 So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill

toward men!"

Now this appearance was not of the same nature. It was probably not as loud, maybe not even as terrifying, although the shepherds in fields were greatly afraid, as Luke said. We might even go so far as to say that this was not as impressive as what happened on Mt. Sinai. But, it was certainly as, or more, important than what happened that day on Mt. Sinai. God Himself—YHVH—the One who was the Lord who came down upon Mt. Sinai at that time—was born as a human being to preach God's glorious message, to start His church, and to die for the forgiveness of our sins, making access to God possible through His blood.

From the gospels—four of them!—we get a full picture of Jesus Christ—God in the flesh—living life as a man, avoiding temptations, and doing great works—all without sin.

And then, after His self-sacrifice, we see Him rising to the right hand of His Father in heaven who gives Him all power. I would say that is pretty impressive. It is something that maybe we can understand a little better: God coming down on the mount in fire, and thunder, and smoke, and cloud. That is way beyond us. We cower at that.

But God coming down as a baby, and then growing up, and living among human beings, and doing all those wonderful things, and saying all those wonderful words, teaching us the way to eternal life; and then, voluntarily giving Himself for our sins so that we can have the kind of relationship He has with the Father.

That is terrifying—because He did it all without sin. He is the One we compare ourselves to. Honestly, comparing ourselves to Him in His appearing as a man should instill within us the proper fear of the Lord.

These appearances are very different in their details, but these two appearances among us should have the same effect. They produce awe, reverence, humility, and the desire to obey and please Him because He did what we could not do.

Okay, that was still two thousand years ago. None of us remember that. None of us saw Him. None of us were there in Jerusalem when He died. None of us were there in Jerusalem when He rose. None of us were there when He ascended up into heaven. None of us were even there to talk to those people who had seen some of these things. So, it is still something we have to imagine in our mind's eye as we read, as we listen to sermons, read articles, and so on. It is still a bit remote to me.

Acts 9:1-7 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goad."

So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.

Ephesians 2:4-7 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Now probably none of us has had quite the dramatic calling as Saul's on the Damascus road.

What happened to him, though, is representative of what happened to all of us. That is why it is in the book. We were all walking along the path to destruction, headed away from Jerusalem, as it were. We were on a road that ran counter to everything good and right. Somewhere along that road, alone, out of all our companions, He shined the light of truth in our faces, gave us a good dressing down, and shook our world to its foundations. He healed our spiritual blindness, and set us on the right path toward His Kingdom.

In our own way, we each had our personal glorious appearing of God in our lives. It might not have been quite so glorious. It might have been a *Plain Truth* magazine hitting you in the face as you walked down Chicago's windy sidewalks. It might have been stumbling across the radio dial and hearing a voice that spoke the truth. It may have been surfing the Internet and finding something that rang true.

And suddenly, the world was upside down. Things were different. And, God began working with us.

We have all seen Him at work in our lives. For some, He has wrought stupendous miracles, and healings, and deliverances of every kind from many difficulties. He has faithfully provided our needs, and He led us confidently toward the goals that He has for us.

Although lightning may not have flashed, no trumpets may have blared, the earth may not have quaked, but He truly revealed Himself to us, conveying us from spiritual death to eternal life. Is that not glorious? I would say so.

II Timothy 1:8-10 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

He did all that for us. What should this realization produce? It should produce genuine awe, gratitude, reverence, and a desire to obey and please Him.

We have one more glorious appearing to think about. This next psalm is about Christ's return to set up His millennial Kingdom on earth.

Psalm 47:1-9 Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph! For the LORD Most High is awesome; He is a great King over all the earth. He will subdue the peoples under us, and the nations under our feet. He will choose our inheritance for us, the excellence of Jacob whom He loves. Selah

God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet [*teruah*]. Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with understanding. God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne. The princes of the people have gathered together, the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; He is greatly exalted.

The Day of Trumpets is not just a memorial of trumpet blasts, but it looks ahead—forward—to the ultimate, glorious appearing of our God and King, Jesus Christ, who it says here will reign over all the earth in majesty and power.

Not only do we look back at God's terrifying and inspiring manifestations and learn the fear of the Lord, we also look forward in the same fear to His return as Judge and Ruler over all the nations. And then we learn by that more of that same fear. He comes with the power of the God of heaven to vanquish His adversaries, and reward His faithful brethren. We need to remember this fact on this Holy Day, and cheer, and fear.

I Timothy 6:11-16 But you, O man of God, flee these things [sins] and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

Have a wonderful Feast of Trumpets everyone!