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Presentation Transcript
Helplessness 02
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Good afternoon everyone. Today is the Feast of Trumpets. It is an ancient festival. It has been observed by the people of God for the last 4,500 years. Why are we observing it today? In Colossians the Apostle Paul says that the holy days are a *shadow* of things to come. Just like a shadow casts an image of something, so these days are an image of something to come. And that image is God's great salvation plan. Many people today believe these days were just for the Old Testament – for the Jews. So why do we find the Apostle Paul in 60 AD – over a quarter of a century after Christ died – telling a Gentile church not to let others judge them in their observance of these days, which reveal a deeper knowledge of Jesus Christ – which cast a shadow of the plan of God? No, the New Testament church understood the meaning of these days – that they pointed toward the future of human kind with Christ. So we've gathered together today to celebrate the Feast of Trumpets and to rehearse its meaning, so we can know more about what Jesus Christ is doing in our lives.

We know that the Feast of Trumpets in the Old Testament was the first day of the seventh month. And we know that every first day of the month was a new moon in the sacred calendar that God gave to the Jews to maintain for us. So the trumpet blown on the Feast of Trumpets would be the seventh trumpet of the year. Let's turn to the New Testament to see the image to come that's cast by this shadow. Let's go to Revelation 11 and verse 15.

Rev. 11:15 – In this book John saw a vision of the future given to him by Jesus Christ Himself. He showed John seven angels with seven trumpets. And as each angel sounded, something terrible happened on the earth in this vision. These events were all a build up to the last, or seventh, trumpet. It says in verse 15 of Revelation 11, *Then the seventh angel sounded, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.* So the seventh trumpet symbolizes the return of Jesus Christ to this earth and the establishment of His kingdom on this earth.

I've talked to so many people who feel uncomfortable explaining their beliefs to other people. Couldn't you just explain what I explained? It's so simple! Just apply your mind to it and take it and remember it. Then you won't have to worry about that one thing any longer.

So the New Testament meaning for the Feast of Trumpets is the return of Jesus Christ. That's the image that casts the shadow, which is the holy day. So, we can think about what the return of Jesus Christ would be like today, and that would be completely fitting with this season, wouldn't it?

Let's think about the psalm that we read earlier for our scripture reading – Psalm 17. How does that fit in? David wrote this psalm while he was being persecuted by Saul. He was on the run. Life was difficult. You can read the story. It would probably be a good thing to go back and read that story some time. It's not very long. But life for us is kind of like being on the run, isn't it? We were all complaining before church about how the holy days kind of sneaked up on us, because we've been running around doing so many things. David talks here about how humans without God act so terribly. That certainly does happen in this world today. Some people think, by the way, that when he said, "You find no fault in me," that he was saying that he was perfect. But the real point of what he's saying is, that he tries to stay close to God and repent of his sins, knowing that in staying close he'll be saved from his weaknesses. Then he says in verse 15:

Psa. 17:15 – *As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.* Wow! David knew that he was going to be resurrected from the dead. He was going to awaken and, when he did, he would be in the likeness of God. When is that going to happen? Let's look in I Thessalonians 4, verse 16.

I Thess. 4:16 – *For the Lord Himself will be sent from heaven with a shout – when will that happen? – with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.* Which one would that be? Well, that would be the seventh one, wouldn't it? *And the dead in Christ* – that would be David, wouldn't it? – *will rise first.* So we're being told here that when Christ returns there's going to be a resurrection from the dead. And it appears that David will be one of them. And when he comes up, he will be satisfied because he will be in the likeness of God.

V-17 – *Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and thus we shall always be with the Lord.* Of course, He's going to be here ruling on the earth, isn't He? So that's where David will be. So will the rest of us.

So we can see that we're going to be with God at that time. What will *that* be like? What will it be like to be in God's likeness? I John 3:2. Let's look at that scripture.

I Jn. 3:2 – *Beloved, now we are the children of God. Now we are. And it has not yet been revealed what we shall be.* We have an idea. We know that we're going to be in God's likeness, but what does that really mean? *But we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.* So we're God's children. We don't know all the details of it. We know we shall be more like Him than we are now. Paul said, "We see

through a glass darkly.” Our physical composition limits our understanding of the spirit realm. It’s kind of like trying to contemplate a large figure.

I heard this story the other day about a guy sitting in a coffee shop. There was a redhead sitting across from him reading a newspaper. She had this paper up in front of her face and on the paper it said, “Twelve Brazilians killed in terrorist attack.” And she was reading away and he was reading the headline on the paper. Then she put her paper down and said, “How many is a Brazilian?” So when your mind contemplates a large number, like a Brazilian, you just can’t take it all in, can you? You can’t hold that in your mind, because there’s a limiter on it. Of course, we know redheads are limited in that way, but we all are, actually, when it comes to big things. It’s just hard for us, as physical human beings to take in. . . . We can’t take it in because it’s a physical thing and God is a spirit. So we have a hard time understanding what spirit life is like.

Paul said, “We see through a glass darkly.” Our physical composition limits our understanding of the spirit realm. But we do know, even though we can’t understand it completely, that it’s going to be good!

Let’s go to Philippians 3:21.

Philp. 3:21 – *...who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.* Do you get that? Our body is going to be conformed to His body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. God has a pretty powerful body. It’s not made of flesh. That’s why it’s so powerful. We’re getting the same thing! That’s what Paul is saying here. He’s going to transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to *His* glorious body. So that’s powerful. We’re going to get the same one He has – the kind that’s able to subdue all things – solve all problems, take care of all eventualities.

What kind of things will God, and will we, be able to subdue? I think maybe the best way for us to understand what life with God will be like is to think about what it *won’t* be like when we’re with Him. If we can’t understand what it’s like to *be* God, maybe we understand what’s it’s *not* like.

Last week we talked about aloneness – that part of human life that sets us apart from other people. We saw in death, and in sickness, and in loneliness, and in the consequences we bring on ourselves from the choices we make, we’re all alone.

I was watching a movie last week called *A River Runs Through It*. It’s an older movie. Maybe you’ve seen it. It’s about a family that lives in Montana. It looked to me like – by the clothing and the cars and all – that it was probably in the ‘20s. This couple had two sons. The father was a minister. Of the two boys, one went to Dartmouth in the East, came home and developed a relationship with a very nice young woman, was offered a job teaching at a big university in Chicago. Now the other son – the younger one – he had many excellent qualities. You just had to like him, but he drank too much. He accrued a large gambling debt. So he was in deep trouble. He worked for a local newspaper. It wasn’t a shabby job, but it wasn’t a “set

the world on fire” kind of thing, because he was too involved with his drinking and his gambling. His brother – the one who went off to college and came home – offered to help him with the debt, but his younger brother refused him. He asked his brother to move with him to Chicago to get him away from the debt and the drinking, but he refused that, too. Now the son who went to college had a girlfriend. She had a brother who was terribly insecure and made a fool of himself at every opportunity. She could see that he was headed for deep trouble. So the two of them – the man and the woman who liked each other – they have the same thing going on. They both have brothers that are in trouble. At one point in the movie she asks her boyfriend, “Why is it that the people who need the most help won’t take it?” And that was probably the major theme in that movie. Toward the end of the movie we learn that the son with the debt and the drinking problem was beaten to death and his body dumped in an alley. So that’s a very sad thing. At the very end of the movie the father gives a sermon in his old age – not long before his own death, we’re told. And here’s what he said. He said, “We are willing to help, Lord, but what if anything is needed? For it is true that we can seldom help those closest to us. Either we don’t know what part of ourselves to give, or more often than not, the part that we have to give is not wanted. And so it’s those we live with and should know who allude us. But we can still love them. We can love them completely without complete understanding.” It loses something in the translation, but if you watch the movie, we can feel the hurt that comes from the powerlessness to help those that we love. That’s all going to go away. That’s all going to go away in the Kingdom of God. We will be able to help people that we love – when we’re in God’s likeness. We’re going to be like Him. And as we read earlier, He can subdue all problems. We won’t be helpless to help those that we love anymore in the Kingdom of God.

A number of years ago there was a very fine family in one of the congregations I pastored. They had a fairly large family. Their oldest child was a girl who was sixteen at that time. She was really an outstanding young person. Everybody in our congregation liked her. She was friendly. All the guys liked her because she was coordinated. She could play basketball with the boys. And, if you left her alone for a minute, she was going to drop it. She could knock the bottom out of it.... They didn’t have the 3-point line way back then, but she was outside of it, I can tell you that. If you gave her any time at all to set up, it was going down! So, we all had a lot of respect for her. She was involved in all the programs at church. She helped with services – set-up and all of that. All the old people loved her. She had a way with them – very much a part of things in our group. But we had this boy in our congregation who never was really able to overcome his background. He always thought that other people were out to get him. He was extremely emotional, very intelligent, very sharp-tongued, very critical – kind of dark and kind of dangerous. You can’t really blame him much for being that way, but that’s how he was. And this girl decided to take him on as a reclamation project. He’d get upset because he was always thinking that everybody was trying to do him dirty. He would threaten to quit coming to church, and she would said, “You really shouldn’t quit because you’re so talented.” Well some months later her mother told me that she had a really bad feeling about that relationship. It wasn’t long until we learned that she was pregnant. It’s really hard to fool an attached mother. They just know. Our whole congregation wanted to come to her rescue. We all felt *so* bad for her. I know how bad I felt and I just wondered how her parents could even take it. And I wondered how *she* could take it. We all rushed to her rescue and wanted to help. But she just couldn’t get past the shame and the guilt. She drew deep within herself. I

remember going to her house to talk with her not long after we learned what had happened. She couldn't look me in the eye anymore. She has never been able to, to this very day. She just couldn't talk about the problem. She built this huge wall around her heart in an attempt to keep the pain out. But it also kept all the rest of us out, too. So she was not able to talk to the ones who loved her, and not able to open her heart up so it could feel the warmth of love and be healed. She wasn't able to unburden herself of all of that that she felt. In spite of that, her family rallied around her. They moved away to a place where nobody knew what had happened. Another boy from another area began to write to her. Eventually they got married. He took her back to where he lived. So I doubt today if anyone else knows that their oldest child is not his. It's kind of a problem that appears to have just gone away. Things are good. But I'm told that she has an eating disorder. She didn't have that before all this happened. I've wondered how much of the sweet, loving girl we used to know is seen by her daughter and her husband. I wonder if she's ever been able to share herself with them – to allow herself to be loved by them and to allow herself to love them. Because, when we build a wall to keep the pain out, it also keeps others out as well. Even now, after all those years – and it's been a few – I still feel sad for her, because she went, I think, to a very dark place. And there was absolutely *nothing* I could do to help her, though I wanted to deeply.

So I can relate to the father in the movie, *A River Runs Through It*. It's a terrible thing to know that you can help someone and they can't receive it. You feel so powerless. And it all seems so futile. It seems like such a waste of life.

I met a young woman in my private practice some time ago. She's a couple years younger than my daughters. She has three children. The oldest and middle child live with her ex-husband. The oldest one, who is ten, refuses to stay at her house overnight. The younger one cries when she has to go back to her father. So you have these two kids with the same parents, but opposite attractions. One of them is attached to father. One's attached to mother. She worries about the one that's attached to her ex-husband. She wants to have a relationship with that daughter. So she brought her daughter to me to help her develop a relationship. I suggested that I see her and her daughter first separately, then together later on. And, as I began working with this young woman, I noticed that she had all the right concerns and motives, but she was completely lacking in warmth and feeling. You know that old expression, "ice water in the veins?" She'd talk about all this horrific stuff and there was no expression on her face – no emotion. She told me that she only felt emotion when she was with a new boyfriend – romance – or irritation, or anger – never love, or happiness or relation. Some weeks after we began counseling we were talking. She was talking – without the slightest hint of emotion – she mentioned that she'd been sexually abused by her father for five years between the ages of five and ten. She explained that her mother ran away with her when she was ten, so the abuse stopped. In the course of the counseling I asked her about her relationship with her father. She told me, without even batting an eyelash, that he shot himself on Mothers' Day about a year after they left him. Not a hint of a feeling. She'd completely closed off her heart – repressed her feelings. It just hurt too much. It hurt too much to feel those things. And yet she was trying to open that door. She's beginning to talk about those things. If I'm skillful enough and if she's courageous enough and we continue down that path, it's quite likely that she's going to be able to feel all of that, process all of that, put all of that

in prospective and be able to *feel* fully and be fully alive again. She'll be able to let someone love the real her. She'll be able to take off that mask that she's hiding behind now.

So many bad things happen to us in this life that we cause to ourselves. We make a lot of bad choices sometimes. But there are also a lot of really bad things that happen to us that really are not of our doing at all – terrible accidents, war, family, strife, divorce, even the church wars that we've experienced in the COGs. You would be surprised how many young people I talk to about that and *traumatized* is the only word that fits. Many of them have walled themselves off from the church and even some from God.

Well, all that sort of thing is going to stop when we awake with God's likeness. That's all just going to go away. We're going to be able to help those we love. We're going to be able to help people deal with the traumas. Jesus said that He came to *heal the broken-hearted*. And that's exactly what He's going to do.

I've been preparing a seminar for the Feast at Destin about the emotional consequences of premarital sex. The idea came to me while I was listening to Ron Dart's presentation at Bel Arco titled, *The Love of Your Life*. He was talking about the Song of Solomon. In reading what the Bible has to say about sex, it struck me that the way humans and God deal with life is completely different. As a minister and a therapist, I'm always dealing with damage control. People always come *after* they have a problem, *after* they've suffered immense emotional damage. On the other hand, God shows us how to stay away from problems in the first place and what to do about the problems that others inflict upon us.

So what's it going to be like on the day foreshadowed by this day – the Feast of Trumpets? Well, we see a picture of life a thousand years after Christ returns. It's painted for us in His word. Let's look in Revelation 21, verse 2 through 5.

Rev. 21:2-5 – *Then I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men. And He will dwell with them. And they shall be His people. And God Himself shall be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There shall be no more death, nor sorrow nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.*

You think about the losses that people suffer in this life – the loss of relationships with parents, with children, with mates, the loss of status we experience sometimes when we lose our jobs, the loss of health. We can't do the things we did before. All the terrible things that happen to us in life – all those things – are going to pass away. They're just going to be a dim memory. And life will be so good that we won't have to think about those things much any more. They won't matter.

So that's what's *not* going to happen any longer on the Feast of Trumpets for the whole world when God's Kingdom begins. All the bad stuff is going to go away. I think it's helpful, to me, to think about it from that point of view. I can't completely understand how good it's going to be, but I know one of the really great things is the bad stuff is going to stop. This scripture we

just read talks about a time a thousand years after Christ's return, but for us – for us – that's going to begin when Christ returns, isn't it? Because we're going to be granted that new body that can conquer all problems. And we're going to be put to work solving the problems of the people who still live. That's going to be so rewarding. If I can help this young woman who's about the age of my own daughters... I look at her and I just think, it just would be so wonderful, so exciting, such a happy thing for me if I could help her open her heart back up again. Wouldn't you like to be able to do that for someone? When you're a mind reader, that's easy. And that's what we're going to be, aren't we? So we're going to be able to do those things.

So when we awake with God's likeness, our powerlessness to help those love will be ancient history and we will be renewed. And this day is a picture of that great event happening in our lives.