I. Call to Worship: II Chronicles 7:14:

II. Message

Last week, following Joe’s Series and our Series, we were led by the Lord to a Season of Preparation for what lies ahead.

The next step in that Season of Preparation is to understand that we are called to a Solemn Assembly, but many of you probably need a refresher course in solemn assemblies, and so, today, the Holy Spirit has instructed that we teach that refresher course. Today’s message will be more instructional than normal sermons.

I do not find that Solemn Assemblies are noted in the New Testament, but only in the Old Testament. (II Timothy 3:16): “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” We find such edification in the Old Testament, and as the Holy Spirit has led us there in these days, in the Old Testament teachings about Solemn Assemblies.

Several things are obvious from a study of Solemn Assemblies in
1. God ordained Solemn Assemblies as part of the Feast of
the Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:36) and as part of the
Feast of the Passover (Deuteronomy 16:8). What is
mostly said here is that they were holy convocations and
there were to be sacrifices by fire to the Lord, and that no
customary work will be done on the day of Solemn
Assembly.

2. (See II Kings 9, 10): The Great Deceiver copied the
Solemn Assembly in the Worship of Baal and Jehu was
sent by the Lord, and anointed by Elisha the prophet, as
king of Israel, and specifically instructed King Jehu to
strike down the house of Ahab, to avenge the blood of
the servant-prophets, and other servants, of the Lord.
Among the things that King Jehu did was to kill by
surprise, and behead, seventy of the sons of King Ahab,
and all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel,
and all his great men and his close acquaintances and his
priests, and left him none remaining. Then he went to
Samaria and implemented a deceptive plan himself: (ch.
10: 17-27): in which he gathered the prophets and priests
of Baal together and called a solemn assembly for Baal,
as King Jehu had a great sacrifice to make to Baal, and so
the call went out, and the worshippers of Baal assembled
at the Temple of Baal, and Jehu offered sacrifices to
Baal, and at that high point of the ceremony, King Jehu’s
soldiers came into the temple of Baal and killed all of he worshippers. Then they destroyed the sacred pillars of the temple of Baal and the temple of Baal itself and then they made that site a garbage dump! There is a dark lining to that silver cloud though: Jehu then obeyed the Lord’s command, but (10:31), Jehu “took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart, for he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin”, and (10:29), King Jehu continued to worship the golden calves at Bethel and Dan – idolatry!. What happened? (10:32): “In those days, the Lord began to cut off parts of Israel, and Hazael (of Syria?) conquered them in all the territory of Israel.”

God took affirmative action. That’s all – pretty serious, when the leadership of the nation is in sin, and leads the people into sin, the land of the nation and the government of the nation pass into enemy hands. Compare this to the days in which we live and remember the call of II Chronicles 7:14 to worship the Lord and obey him.

3. II Chronicles 7: 9: There was a Solemn Assembly at the Dedication of the Temple built by King Solomon. God is pretty serious about them.

Now, let’s get an overview of these Sacred Assemblies: To “do no customary work” means that we set aside time, and are not distracted from seeking God and attending to him, in praise and worship and repentance and celebration. It’s kind of like a special date or
appointment, or conference, with God. We would set aside time to focus on God and our relationship to and with Him. In the Old Testament, God makes it clear what we are to accomplish in a Sacred Assembly, and He also makes it clear how a Sacred Assembly can be corrupted and polluted. This gets us to the focal point for today – three things, which require some serious Scripture readings:

1. What does God want to accomplish in us by a Solemn Assembly? Answer: He wants a commitment in our hearts that is real and sustained in the conduct of our lives. See Nehemiah chapters 8, 9 and 10. Remember that Nehemiah was appointed by God to organize and lead the rebuilding of Jerusalem, while most of the Jews were in captivity, then under King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah received this charge on his heart and in Nehemiah chapter 2, he obtained permission from King Artaxerxes to lead an expedition back to Judah, to Jerusalem and to organize the remnant of the Jews there, and to assemble resources and to rebuild the City of Jerusalem. Nearby warring nations wanted to stop and destroy the work. Is there a value in a strong defense when you are about God’s work? You bet! Neh. 4:15-16, “And it happened, when our enemies heard that it was known to us, and that God had brought their plot to nothing, that all of us returned to the wall, everyone to his work. So it was, from that time on, that half of my servants worked at construction, while the other half held the spears, the shields, the bows, and wore armor; and the leaders were behind all the house of Judah.”
And when they got the walls up for the City of Jerusalem, they read the Books of God’s Law and they celebrated with praise, worship and feasting, and indeed, (8:18) with a Sacred Assembly. **Chapter 9** explains what they did in the Sacred Assembly: they remembered, and recounted, the Great Things the Lord had done for His people, from creation, to Abraham, from the Exodus from Pharaoh and Egyptian slavery, from the Red Sea, and the leadings in the desert, and Mt. Sinai and God’s commandments through Moses, to food and water in the desert, and the Promised Land, and His grace and mercy when the people aced proudly (:16), hardened their hearts, and did not obey, and made a golden calf to worship, and did not have faith and so wanted to go back to Egypt, and they rebelled, wherein He did not forsake them, and they oscillated between rebellion and repentance, and God delivered them into the hands of their enemies and then patiently rescued them. And at this time, the greater number of the Jews were in the Babylonian captivity, and in this context, in this recitation in the Book of Nehemiah of this Sacred Assembly, we find 9:38: “And because of all this, we make a sure covenant and write it; our leaders, our Levites and our priests seal it”. And then that sure covenant appears in **10: 28-29**, where it is reported that “everyone who had knowledge and understanding . . . entered into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s Law . . . and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord . . . .”
That is what He wanted in the Old Testament: a commitment under penalty of curse, to obey all of His commandments, walking in His Law.

2. God does not like pretend commitment. He does not like Form over Substance. Thus, in Amos and in Isaiah, He admonishes His people against going through the motions of Sacred Assembly, and other forms of worship, when they remain idolaters:

   See Amos 5:21-27: “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I do not savor your sacred assemblies. Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs, for I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments. But let justice run down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream. Did you offer Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? (And) you also carried Sikkuth your king, and Chiun, your idols, the star of your gods, which you made for yourselves. Therefore, I will send you into captivity beyond Damascus, says the Lord, whose Name is the God of hosts.” This speaks for itself: idolatry destroys any value in a sacred assembly.

   And see Isaiah 1: 10-15: “Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah: ‘To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?’, says the Lord. I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this from your hand, to
trample my courts? Bring no more futile sacrifices; Incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moon, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies -- I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Granted, Isaiah was speaking to Sodom and Gomorrah and not to Jerusalem. However, as you count the national sins described in Leviticus 20, as applied to America, what is the difference in substance of America and those two cities of iniquity?

3. Here is the resolution: Because of the Blood of Jesus, the supernatural gift, by Grace, of faith and forgiveness, and repentance, we are temples of the living God (II Corinthians 6:16). We are to present our bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1), rather than cows are lambs or goats or birds as dead sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God! We have learned (Matthew 15:19) that out of the heart proceeds evil, without Jesus, but with Jesus, (Matthew 22:37) we can love the Lord our God with all of our heart, and (Mark 11:23) without doubt, that we can do good works in love out of a pure heart (I Timothy 1:5)! Now, that is substance over form, and that is what God is looking for in us, because when our hearts are right, II Timothy 2:22, we can call upon the Lord from a pure heart, and Hebrews 10:22, in full assurance of faith.
Conclusion: As you prepare for a Solemn Assembly in early December this year, review the scriptures we have discussed today, and repent and be washed in the Word and the Blood of Christ, receiving anew the forgiveness of God, in all sincerity of Heart. Then we will be prepared and our Lord will hear our prayers as we ask His help in turning the tide against Him within and without this nation of America.

We don’t want parts of our land cut off, nor do we want to suffer under foreign controls.

Because of the Blood of Jesus, we do not need to enter an oath with a curse, as a sure covenant, because we have the privilege of an oath with a promise that will not disappoint. But we still need to enter, to re-enter, on a personal level, that covenant relationship with Jesus. With our hearts right, we will elevate substance over form, and God, who is patient and faithful, will forgive us, as He forgave King David, and He will bless us and heal our land.

AMEN!