

Christian Holidays #11

by: Ronald L. Dart

You would think that most Christian people would really like to know more about God, and yet there's a treasure trove in the Bible of which most Christian folks seem blissfully unaware. In the first place, we don't read our Bibles enough and in the second place, we dismiss parts of the Bible, for one reason or another.

Now I submit that on the face of it, dismissing any part of the Bible is not a smart thing to do, for the Bible is the true record of the revelation of God to man, and if you want to know and understand God, the Bible is where you would expect to begin. Right?

A Thread

In the Bible there is a thread that has all been dismissed by most Christian people, and it's been that way for a very long time. That thread is a set of days that the Bible calls 'the appointed times of Jehovah'. Now you will not find that in your King James Version of the Bible, but what you will find is that these are the 'festivals of the Lord'. But actually, the Hebrew is the 'appointed times of Jehovah'. They are appointments, they are times that God has set. Now you may know these as the Jewish holidays, but the premise of this series of articles is that they are much more than that. They are the holidays of God and therefore they are Christian holidays, because they speak of Christ and His work, and they have just as much meaning to Christians as they ever had for Jews.

Feast of Trumpets

Of all these days, the one with the least obvious connection, is the day the Jews called Rosh Hashanah and the public calls the Jewish new year.

There's a complete list of all these days, these Jewish holidays, Christian holidays or the appointed times of Jehovah, whichever you prefer. You will find a complete list of them in the 23rd chapter of Leviticus.

And this holiday, the Feast of Trumpets, is summarized, beginning in verse 23 of Leviticus 23, "The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall do no servile work therein, but you shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord."

Now, like any religious holiday, you take the day off from work and you go to church, that is, you assemble before God, that is what a holy convocation is. That part of it is simple enough, but after that it becomes a little more difficult. Of all the holidays, this one is least attested to as to its meaning either for Christians or for Jews. For example, the day is said to be a memorial. "You shall have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets," but a memorial of what? Well, the Scriptures simply doesn't say.

New Year

You may have noticed that this is the first day of the seventh month, not the first day of the first month. Now how on earth can it be the New Year? We all know on our calendars that we would write 1-1-00 for the New Year beginning the year 2000, but for the Jews, the first day of the seventh month is the New Year.

Now this is especially curious when you realize that the Passover falls in the month of what God calls in the Bible, the beginning of months and that is six months earlier.

I went to the virtual Jerusalem web site and this is what I found, quote, "Five thousand seven hundred and sixty years ago", that's 5760, the year 2000 is the year 2761 on the Jewish calendar. "The world experienced the very first Rosh Hashanah, according to Rabbi Eleazar, it was on this day that Adam was created, God's creation was complete." So for the Jews, this first day, this Jewish New Year is the memorial of the completion of creation and the beginning of this whole era of man on the earth. This is an important day. They continued to quote, "Our sages tell us that on this very day, Adam violated the commandment that God gave him, the prohibition to eat from the tree of life. On this day, God said to Adam, "As you were judged before me this day, and emerged forgiven, so will your children be judged before me on this day and emerge forgiven." Thus, from the beginning of our history, Rosh Hashanah, has been marked with judgment and forgiveness. On Rosh Hashanah, we celebrate the creation of the world. We mark the kingship of God, and we stand in judgment as his humble servants," End of quotation.

A Day of Judgment

So in Jewish tradition, this day is a memorial of creation, but because it is a day of remembering the day that Adam sinned, it is also a day of judgment.

Now Christian tradition also expects a day of judgment. It's odd in a way that people are surprised between the connection of Christianity and Judaism, but after all the Christian approach to the Bible is supposed to be that the Bible is one book, Old Testament and New Testament go together, forming a whole and that the Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament, are a consistent and true revelation of God at all stages of history.

So consequently, when you come to Christianity, just like the Jews have a judgment day, so also do Christians. For Jews, the Judgment Day seems to be Rosh Hashanah, the Feast of Trumpets, the Jewish New Year.

Jesus on one occasion was talking to His disciples and He sent them out all over Judea to preach in all the towns. This is found in Matthew 10, verse 14, and He says this, "Whoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you leave that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city." Now that is very interesting because Jesus speaks of the Judgment Day, off in the future somewhere, and it's a little chilling to contemplate that day of judgment that's out there.

But Jesus doesn't just tell us that, He introduces another idea, and that is that it may be more tolerable for one than it would be for another when that Judgment Day comes.

On another occasion Jesus had this to say, it's in Matthew 11 verse 20, "He began to upbraid the cities where most of His mighty works were done because they didn't repent, He said "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!" These were little towns up in Galilee, "If the mighty works, which were done in you were done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented a long time ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I'm telling you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you."

So there is a day of judgment out there. It is a day of judgment, in which there are degrees of toleration. He goes on to say, "And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, you shall be brought down to the grave, for if the mighty works, which had been done in you, had been done in Sodom, it would've remained to this day, but I tell you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you."

Now Tyre and Sidon were Gentile cities, and you know who Sodom and Gomorrah were, they were two of the most infamous cities that ever existed on the face of the earth, and in fact these two cities were singled out by God for destruction (Genesis 19:24).

And He says of these places, that in the Judgment Day they will find a measure of tolerance, greater than some towns where Jesus Himself went and preached. Why? Well, because they would've repented and Capernaum didn't. It's that simple. And of course, repentance and forgiveness and judgment is what this day of a memorial of blowing of trumpets is all about.

Now we are accustomed to thinking of Jesus as being meek and mild, but the truth is, on occasion Jesus could be very tough.

In Matthew 12 beginning in verse 34, Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees and a group of people who were gathered around Him and He's giving them a pretty rough time. He calls them a generation of vipers, "Oh, generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good

things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." You can tell what's going on inside of you by what is coming out of your mouth.

He then goes on to say in verse 35, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things, but I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by your words, you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned."

The day of judgment is a day when we render account for the things we have done and all the things that we have said. Kind of spooky isn't it? I think we as Christians lose sight of this, we forget that we are held responsible for the things we do. The Jews are reminded of it every year on the day of the memorial of the blowing of trumpets and we Christians would do well to remind ourselves of it as well. In fact, some do, on the day they call the Feast of Trumpets.

A Resurrection to Judgment

Jesus seemed to be constantly in conflict with the scribes and the Pharisees, and they came to Him on one occasion, this is in Matthew 12 and verse 38, "Certain of the scribes and the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would like to see a sign from you. And He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and there shall be no sign given him, but the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in a whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Then Jesus said this, "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, a greater than Jonah is here." Think about that. He said there's coming a time when all of you are going to rise in a time of judgment, and the men of Nineveh are going to be standing there right along with you people, and they're going to condemn you, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah and here I am, greater than Jonah, preaching to you and you won't listen.

"The Queen of the South shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it. She came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, a greater than Solomon is here." It's incredible, I suppose, to a Jew at the time to think that Jesus was claiming to be greater than Solomon, but we understand that He was.

But look, Jesus is talking about all these people rising in judgment and being evaluated, and being compared to one another, comparing themselves, saying, "We repented at the preaching of Jonah " or the Queen of Sheba saying, " I came all the way from countries of the south, just to hear the word of God from Solomon."

Now there is a lot that we don't know about the Judgment Day, but as we read the Bible, we keep getting little snippets of information that should really give us pause and in some cases should break us out in a cold sweat.

One notable item is the implication that there is a resurrection connected with this Judgment Day. We just saw in the previous verse, and probably some theologians think that Jesus is speaking metaphorically about some of these things, but that's a little too convenient for me, even a metaphor stands for something and what if He is not speaking metaphorically. What if there is a real Judgment Day? The way Jesus speaks of it, it does not sound like a metaphor. It sounds very real.

In John five and in verse 19 for example, "Jesus answered and said to the people around him, "Look, I'm going to tell you the truth, the Son of man can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do, for whatever things he does, these also the Son does likewise, for the Father loves the Son, and shows him all things that He Himself does, and He will show him greater works than you have seen that you may marvel. For as the Father raises up the dead, and energizes them, even so the Son of man energizes whom He will. For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son."

Jesus is the Judge of Judgment

"The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son." Once again, the resurrection from the dead and judgment are connected and the one who's going to be doing the judging is guess who? Jesus.

In John 5 and verse 23 Jesus said, "All men shall honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. I'm going to tell you the truth, he that hears my word, and believes on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. I'll tell you the truth, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."

What are we talking about? We're talking about the call of Jesus Christ to those who will be raised from the dead. Continuing in verse 26, "For as the Father has life in Himself, He is given to the Son to have life in Himself, and He has given him authority to execute judgment also."

Notice that every time we turn around, we keep running into the Judgment Day, executing judgment and who's the judge? Jesus, because He is the Son of Man. "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and they shall come forth" (John 5:28-29).

Now get this, we are talking about judgment. We are talking about what it is and where it is and when it is. The time is coming when everyone that is in their graves shall hear His voice

and shall come forth, "They that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation." Now I don't know why the translators switched words here, but the word translated 'damnation' in the King James version is everywhere else translated 'judgment.' It is the Greek word "krisis" from which we derive our word 'crisis', and I suspect that it will represent a very real crisis for the people who find themselves there.

So Jesus said in John 5 and verse 28, "Don't marvel, the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves will hear his voice, and they shall come forth, they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. I can of my own self do nothing, as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just. Because I do not seek my own will, but the will of the Father who has sent me."

We know His judgment will be fair, but it still sends a little shiver down our spine, doesn't it?

Don't Judge Your Brother

This theme works its way, weaves its way, throughout the New Testament. For example, when Paul wrote to the Romans in chapter 14 and in verse nine, he says, "For to this end, Jesus Christ, both died and rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living. Now, why do you judge your brother?" First of all, what Paul is talking about in Romans 14, is the nasty Christian habit of judging one another. If everybody doesn't live his life like we do, we have an opinion about it. We have a judgment about it. We have condemnation for people who don't do what we think they ought to do. Paul is really calling them down on this.

Paul asks the question in verse 10, "Why do you judge your brother? Why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Now when you think about it, all of our judgments of one another, become rather pitiful when we get out there on the sea of glass, standing before the judgment seat of Christ.

Continuing in verse 11, Paul says, "For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So that every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Now when you read this in context in chapter 14, what you realize he's saying here is that when you get before God and the time of judgment has come, you're not going to be giving an account for your brother. You don't have to explain to God why your brother didn't do things right. You don't have to explain to God why your brother divorced his wife. The one you're going to have to explain to God is guess who? It's you! We really do have to give an account of ourselves to God.

Now I know I have been forgiven. I know I have God's mercy. But this last verse still has to be dealt with, "Everyone of us shall give account of himself to God."

You know, it's really disappointing how carelessly a lot of Christian people live their lives. They trust in the blood of Christ to cover their sins and that's good, but does that mean that we will not in any means be held responsible for what we do and what we don't do? Well, frankly, when we read the Bible, it certainly seems that we will be.

The Unpardonable Sin

This theme gets a little more serious when you get to the book of Hebrews, chapter 10 and verse 23, the writer of Hebrews says, "Let's hold on to the profession of our faith without wavering, for He is faithful that promised, and let's consider one another and let's provoke one another unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, like some do, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the day approaching." What do you mean the day approaching? Well we're starting to get an idea, aren't we, of what this day is, that somewhere out there ahead of us, there is a judgment day coming.

And then he says this in verse 26, "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Wow, that's pretty tough stuff. He is talking about what some people call the unpardonable sin. This is a frightening concept to realize that a person could commit a sin of which there would be no chance of him being pardoned, but this seems to say that there is a possibility of a Christian person who has received the knowledge of the truth, to sin willfully and when that happens, it's over. There's a fearful looking for of judgment that there is out there ahead of us, somewhere, judgment and fiery indignation, which will devour the adversaries of God.

Continuing in verse 28, "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Now how much more sorer punishment, suppose we will be thought worthy, who has trodden underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite the Spirit of grace?" It doesn't seem possible, does it? If it was not possible, why is it here?

"For we know him that said, vengeance belongs to me, I will recompense, saith the Lord" (Hebrews 10:30-31) Then he says, "The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

When is the Judgment Day?

Okay, so there is a judgment day. When does it come? Where does it all fit into this pattern of things? If this is yet a future thing, you sort of expect to find it in the book of Revelation and, in fact, you do.

There's this interesting little passage and it is found in Revelation chapter 11, beginning in verse 15. It says, "The seventh angel sounded." Sounded what? When you look at the whole context, the angel sounded his trumpet. "And there were great voices in heaven, saying, the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

We're talking about the beginning of the kingdom of God, the return of Christ, the establishment of His government over all the earth.

Verse 16, "And the four and 20 elders, that sat before God on their seats, fell on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, we give thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which are, and were, and are to come, because you have taken to you, your great power, and have reigned." At long last, God has decided the time has come to reign.

Verse 18, "The nations were angry, and your wrath is come." Now this is a terrifying time. Nations were angry, nations were ready to go to war, but now God is angry and His wrath has come, and then He says this, "The time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that you should give reward to your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear your name, small and great, and that you should destroy them, which destroy the earth. And the Temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his Temple the ark of his testament, and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and earthquake and great hail."

Wow, the time of the dead, that they should be judged. So we see basically judgment day is out there at the return of Christ, and the establishment of the kingdom, the time when God takes his great power to Him and reigns and the time when the dead are raised for judgment.

Environmental Manifesto

And interestingly, he says that He's going to give reward to his servants the prophets, to the saints, and to them that fear his name, small and great and he's going to destroy them who are destroying the earth.

Now this sounds like some kind of an environmentalist manifesto, doesn't it?. After all, this earth belongs to God. It's His place and He says the time is going to come when He's going to destroy the people who destroy the earth. Now that makes a certain amount of sense, doesn't it? If somebody comes into your place and fouls up your living room and messes up your dining room and throws junk all over your kitchen. There comes a time when you'd want to put a stop to that sort of thing. Men have defiled the earth for long enough, and God is going to get even.

It's interesting isn't it, how this has gotten connected historically through Jewish history that this judgment day has been connected to the day that is a memorial of the blowing of trumpets and there's not a whole lot to say about this day in the Old Testament as to what

that might mean or what the implications of that might be, but it's very clear to the Jews, that it is a judgment day that is out there somewhere.

Now as you notice as we're reading this, that it mentioned that the seventh angel sounded, and that suggests that there were six angels blowing trumpets before the seventh angel. This festival is called the Feast of Trumpets in the plural, but what was all this about?

Lets go back to Revelation eight and verse one, "And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels that stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden sensor, and there was given to him a lot of incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, that came up with the prayers of the saints, ascended to God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the sensor, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth, and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. The seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound."

The story of these seven Angels and the judgments of God that they represent is terrible, but that will have to wait until the next time. Until then, I'm Ronald Dart and you were born to win.

This article was transcribed with minor editing from a message given by
Ronald L. Dart titled: Christian Holidays #11 (CHD11) 11/30/00
Transcribed by: bb 8/8/11

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