

Christian Holidays #15

by: Ronald L. Dart

If you have read much of the Bible at all, or if you have gone to church for very long, you know that somewhere, out there, in the future, there's a day of judgment coming. There has been a lot of fanciful notions about the Judgment Day.

Somehow in my youth and listening to various preachers, I got the impression of God sitting behind a courtroom bench, as it were, with two little lights on both sides of the bench, like you might see in a cartoon about judges. I envisioned God sitting up there going over a set of open books judging my life for me. One preacher, I recall, envisioned God playing our sins back on a giant movie screen for everyone to see. I thought, O boy, I would be crawling on that one trying to find a place to hide. Another preacher envisioned God having a big lever by his side and as we come there for judgment, well some people, when He had gone through the books and considered their lives, they would go to heaven but some of them He reaches over and grabs the lever and pulls it and a trap door opens and sends them screaming down to hell.

Most of what you hear about the Judgment Day owes more to the imagination of man, than it does to the Bible. Then there are all the jokes about St. Peter and the pearly gates, but mercifully I'm going to spare you all those.

There Is A Judgment Day!

But I do have to tell you, there is a Judgment Day. The writer of Hebrews drops this little bombshell on us in chapter 9 verse 27, where he says, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." So in dying, we don't even get away from this. Sooner or later we have to face up to the Judgment Day.

This Judgment Day is nothing like the traditional depictions of it and there is one very surprising thing about it that I'll come to later. The first thing to know about it, is that the writer of the book of Hebrews connects the Judgment Day to the Day of Atonement, otherwise known as Yom Kippur, a day usually dismissed by Christians as a Jewish holiday.

Christian Holidays

In this series of articles I have been making the case that these are not merely Jewish holidays but Christian holidays as well. Why so? Well because everyone of them is about the life, work, plan and ministry of Jesus Christ. So why should we assume that they are merely

Jewish holidays? The fact is that most Christians have forgotten them in favor of holidays that are not in the Bible. These Holy Days are crucial to the understanding of the plan of God.

What Do We Know About The Judgment Day?

In Matthew chapter 10, this is an occasion where Jesus is in the process of sending out His disciples and He says, {5} "Don't go into the way of the Gentiles and into any city of the Samaritans don't enter." Then in verse 11 He says this to them, "In whatsoever town or city you enter, inquire who in it is worthy and you go and stay there." It was a habit or custom to stay in people's homes. {12} "And when you come into a house salute it. {13} "And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it's not worthy," whatever that may mean, "Then let your peace return to you. {14} And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when you depart out of the house or city shake off the dust of your feet."

Then Jesus says a very sobering thing, {15} "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."

The shaking off of the dust of the apostles feet on a city was bad news. Now it is hard to imagine a place more corrupt than Sodom and Gomorrah. And yet we find a curious fact here, that there may be some level of toleration for them in the day of judgment, than for some other cities. So there is a day of judgment and there is some level or some degree of toleration to be found there.

Woe Unto You

On another occasion, Jesus was preaching and He began to upbraid the cities where in most of His mighty works were done because they didn't repent. If you consider some of the things that He did, the people He healed, the miracles He performed in a town that then turned around and rejected Him. This is what He said in Matthew 11 and verse 21, "Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon (Gentile cities), they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. {22} But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you. {23} And you, Capernaum, which are exalted unto heaven, you shall be brought down to Hades (the grave): for if the mighty works, that had been done in you, had been done in Sodom, it would still be a city to this day. {24} But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you."

Well, once again, we find the day of judgment on which a level of toleration can be shown and people are judged in that day of judgment based upon what they have been given. Those who didn't know any better may find some level of toleration from God. Those who ought to have known better, well that's another story.

Be Careful of Idle Words

On another occasion, Jesus was speaking to a generation of people that had gathered around him and He called them, and you may wince when you hear Him say it, "A generation of vipers," and He says in Matthew 12 and verse 34, "How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. {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. {36} "But I tell you this, that for every idle word that men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. {37} For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Now that sends a little chill down your spine, doesn't it? When you think about it, that every flap of the lip is going to be judged. What about some of the more serious things that you and I have done? Every idle word! Not just the malicious ones, but every idle word, we are going to be judged for.

What Sign Did Jesus Give?

Jesus isn't finished yet. In Matthew 12 and verse 39 He says, "Some of the scribes and Pharisees answered saying, "Master, We want to see a sign from you." {39} But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, but there shall be no sign given to it but the sign of the prophet Jonah, {40} For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of earth."

Then Jesus said this, {41} "The men of Nineveh where Jonah went and preached shall arise 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! This is that remarkable book, the one place in the Old Testament, where a prophet comes rolling into town with a message of coming destruction and the King and everybody in the town, bitterly and severely repent. I mean they even put sackcloth and ashes on the cows and didn't feed them. Everybody was mourning and turning away from sin when Jonah came in with his prophecy.

Now in these towns, Jesus walks their streets and preaches to them and performs miracles among them, and they don't repent. So, {41} "The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation." Notice, rise in judgment. The judgment takes place in a resurrection. "They 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. {42} The Queen of the South shall rise up in judgment with this generation and shall condemn it, because she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon and behold a greater than Solomon is here."

So there is toleration in the day of judgment but there is also condemnation. It leaves you feeling a little uneasy, doesn't it?

Quickening of the Dead

The gospel of John records another incident where Jesus talks about this and He reveals something further on the subject of the Judgment Day. In chapter 5 and verse 19, in the gospel John, "Jesus answered the crowd and said, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing of Himself but what He sees the Father do, for whatever He does, the Son also does likewise. {20} For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. {21} For, as the Father raises up the dead, and quickens them, even the Son quickens whom He will."

Notice the term "quickenning of the dead" refers to the resurrection. The word 'quicken' in the Greek means to 'energize, vitalize, to give life to, make alive. The best term I like is to energize.

Who Is The Judge?

Let's continue in John 5, "As the Father raises up the dead, and energizes them, even the Son energizes whom He will. {22} For the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son." So now we know clearly that when judgment day comes, who it is that we have to answer to. It's not the Father. It's the Son.

He did this so {23} "That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honors not the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. {24} Now I tell you the truth," Jesus said, "He that hears my word and believes on Him that sent Me has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation." So when judgment day comes, we find that there are some individuals who will be standing there who will not come into condemnation. They will not just get more tolerance than others will get, they will not be condemned at all.

Continuing in John 5 and verse 24, "But they have passed from death into life. {25} I'm telling you the truth," Jesus said, "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. {26} For as the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the son to have life in Himself and," and, here's the clincher, {27} "He has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man." Who has the authority to execute the day of judgment? Jesus. Why? Because He was human. He had lived in the flesh, He had experienced all it means to be man and so He has the authority and the right to judge.

In verse 28 Jesus said, "Don't marvel at this, for the hour is coming, in which all who are in their graves shall hear His voice." And they are going to come up. {29} "They that have done good to the resurrection of life, they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." Serious businesses, Isn't it? {30} " I can of my own self do nothing, As I hear, I

judge, and my judgment is just and it's fair, because I don't seek my own will, but the will of the Father who sent Me."

So now we know who the judge is. It is not the Father, it is the Son and we know why? He was given judgment because He was the 'Son of Man' and I take that to mean, because He was human.

The Book of Hebrews is a Commentary on the Day of Atonement

Now there's something very important that follows on the heels of this piece of information. I told you before, that the statement in Hebrews 9 and verse 27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after that the judgment," came in the middle of the commentary on the Day of Atonement ceremony.

The Day of Atonement ceremony is described in detail in Leviticus 16 and is interesting for a number of reasons. One is the clear connection between the duties of the high priest on that day and the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. On this day the priest made certain offerings and went into the Holy of Holies for the one and only time of the year. He sprinkled blood there, made an atonement for the people, put all the sins of Israel on the head of the goat and sent him away into the wilderness at the hand of a fit man.

What Do You Do on the Day of Atonement?

What did the people do on the Day of Atonement? Nothing! Absolutely nothing! But didn't they have to fast? Well, yes they had to fast, but fasting is doing nothing. When you can't eat you can't say that fasting is doing something. Now, they had to come before God in a repentant spirit or attitude.

The ten days from the Feast of Trumpets to the Day of Atonement are called by the Jews the days of repentance. They engage in self-examination and repentance at this season.

On the Day of Atonement the Jews and Israelites did nothing, the high priest did everything for them. Everything!. The whole ceremony, all of the animals that were killed, all of the blood that was sprinkled, all the intercessions that were made, all the sanctifying of vessels of the Tabernacle, all of that was done by the high priest. The people stood there in assembly and did nothing.

Jesus Is Our High Priest

The corollary with the ministry of Jesus is inescapable. There is nothing we can do to justify ourselves. We cannot earn the forgiveness of sin. We cannot accomplish it with sacrifices and never could have.

When the Judgment Day comes we will stand before God in judgment, there is nothing we can do! Everything has to be done for us by our High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Even Israel of old could not achieve forgiveness by their own efforts. There was nothing they could do. They had to assemble on the Day of Atonement in humility and fasting and do nothing, while the high priest made an atonement for them and reconciled them to God.

Salvation in the Old Testament

It's funny how many people seem to believe that there was a different way of salvation for people in the Old Testament than in the New Testament. Many think that salvation of the Jews in the Old Testament was by works and Christians' salvation in the New Testament is by grace.

I'm sorry, salvation has never been by works. It was never possible.

Ceremony on the Day of Atonement

Returning to Hebrews 9 and verse 24, "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, He has entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us, {25} Nor yet that He should offer Himself often as a high priest went into the Most Holy Place every year with the blood of another." Now again, this is a clear reference to the ceremony on the Day of Atonement in the Temple where the priests symbolically went right into the presence of God into the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood there on behalf of the children of Israel to make an atonement, a reconciliation, for them. Jesus, now is at the right hand of the Father, appearing in the presence of God for us.

Continuing in verse 26 of Hebrews 9, "For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world, but now once, in the end of the age has he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." And it is exactly like the whole cycle of God's Holy Days, that is the holidays that we find in the Old Testament, these happen once a year signifying a once in history event that is taught by the Holy Days.

So now back to verse 26, "Once in the end of the age has Jesus appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. {27} And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. {28} So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and to them that look and wait for Him, He will appear the second time without sin unto salvation." It's odd in a way, it's a lot like the Day of Atonement ceremony and that He goes before God once, to make an atonement for all of us and then for all of us who look for Him, He will appear the second time, like the high priest appeared returning from the Holy of Holies, this time without sin unto salvation.

The connection between the high priest returning and perhaps the ceremony of the second goat that is sent away with all of our sins into the wilderness is connected to that return without sin unto salvation.

Judgment Day is a Day of Salvation

Do you realize that Judgment Day that is talked about in the Bible is actually, for those in Christ, a day of salvation, not a day of condemnation. If you're in Christ and you stand before Him on the Judgment Day on the sea of glass before God at His throne, it is not to be condemned, it is to be saved.

And there is nothing for you to do when you get there. You don't have to bring a list of good works, you don't have to bring all your good deeds or all your accomplishments, all your righteousness. None of that works, what you need is Christ.

The Ministry of Jesus and the Ceremony of the Day of Atonement

The writer of Hebrews continues in chapter ten of Hebrews and remember this is all in the context of the ceremony of the Day of Atonement. He said in verse 1, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year-by-year continually, make those who come there perfect." It was not a question that the sacrifices were going to somehow make you right with God. He says, "For if that was the case, wouldn't they have ceased to offer them?" It would have been over with. "Because the worshipers, once purged, should have had no more consciousness of sin, {3} But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." What he seems to be saying is that the purpose of the sacrifice, the necessity of going up to the Temple to offer the animals, as a sin offering for what you had done, was to keep in your memory an awareness of the fact that you are a sinner.

Then he says something very, very astonishing in a sense, {4} "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." I am sorry, it can't be done. What he is telling us is, that was true in the Old Testament. It is not just some new thing. It was never possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. So, how did those people get their sins forgiven? The only way, had to be through looking forward to Christ in the sacrifices they made.

He says, {5} "Wherefore, when He came into the world, He says, sacrifice and offering you would not desire, but a body have you prepared for me, {6} In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin, you have had no pleasure." Folks that is an Old Testament quotation (Psalms 40:6). It's says plainly, that God does not take any pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin.

Then you have to ask the question, why on earth were burnt offerings and sacrifices offered? If they didn't forgive sins, how were people forgiven in the Old Testament of their sins? The only conclusion you can come to is, they were forgiven the same way we are, by the sacrifice of Christ and the only conclusion I can come to regarding why animal sacrifices were offered was that they were icons, that is images, they were reminders of sin and they

were a presentation to us, a little play on the stage of the Temple that told us how God was going to forgive our sins. It was by the shedding of blood that these animals were types, images, icons that represented the work of Jesus Christ.

Now in verse 7, he says, "Then I said, Lo, I have come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, To do Your will, O God." Now when He says, "sacrifice and burnt offering, and offerings for sin, you don't want, don't have any pleasure therein, which are offered by the law. {9} Then He says I come to do your will O God. He takes away the first that he may establish the second," He takes away the sacrifices, burnt offerings for sins so that He can establish the doing of the will of God.

Verse 10, "By the will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." The 'once' is emphasized again and again through this section because it connects to the one time in the year when the high priest was allowed to go into the Holy of Holies to make reconciliation for the children of Israel.

Lessons to be Learned

Now in verse 11 of Hebrews 10 he says this, "Every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins." Over and over again. Why? Because of the lesson to be learned, because of what is taught by them, that's why.

Verse 12, "But this Man, Jesus, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God. {13} From henceforth expecting till His enemies are made His footstool. {14} For by one offering, He has perfected forever them that are sanctified. {15} Whereof the Holy Spirit is also a witness to us, after He had said before, {16} This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord. I will put My Laws in their hearts and in their minds I will write them, {17} And their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more."

Now that is an astonishing statement. He says this covenant that I'm going to make with them is not that I am going to do away with My Laws, I'm going to write them in their hearts and in their minds. It is no longer a question of whether the Law, it's a place where the Law is. It is no longer external, it's internal.

Now He says in vers 18, "Now where there is remission of sin, there is no more an offering for sin." No person who has repented, gone under the waters of baptism for the remission of sins and come up as a new person ever needs to offer an offering for sin again.

"Having therefore, brethren," verse 19, "boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus." Now remember, we are talking about the ceremony of the Day of Atonement where the high priest killed a goat, representing Christ, took the blood of that goat into the Holy of Holies, the holiest place of all, and sprinkled it there on the ark of the covenant. So he says to

us, "That we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, {20} By a new and living way which is consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say His flesh, {21} And having a high priest over the house of God, {22} Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

Illusions to the Ceremony of the Day of Atonement

All of these are well recognized illusions to the ceremony of the Day of Atonement. The entering into the 'holiest of all', a new and living way, drawing near to the very throne of God, and a full assurance of faith, the sprinkling of our hearts, our bodies washed, just like the high priest and like the 'fit man' mentioned who took the goat into the wilderness. All had to wash themselves with pure water.

All of these things are well recognized to the Hebrew readers as the ceremony of the Day of Atonement.

He then says in Hebrew 10 and verse 23, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering for He who promised is faithful, {24} And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works, {25} Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the Day approaching."

Day of Atonement in the Book of Romans

The apostle Paul made another interesting allusion to the Day of Atonement and its service in the fifth chapter of his letter to the Romans. He wrote to them and it's all about the same theme, "Being justified by faith." There is nothing that we can do. We stand there on the Day of Atonement and the high priest does it all for us. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, {2} By whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, {3} And not only so, but we glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation works patience {4} and patience, experience and experience, hope, {5} and hope, well hope doesn't make us ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given to us. {6} For when we were yet without strength, when there was nothing we could do, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." And those people who were ungodly, for whom Christ died, will stand justified in the day of judgment.

"For scarcely," he says in verse 7, "For a righteous man will one die, yet perhaps for a good man. Some might even consider dying, {8} But God commends His love toward us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us."

Verse 10, "If, when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Because you see the whole idea

of atonement is the reconciliation of man to God, {11} "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

Finally, at long last, we have been reconciled to God. It's a pity that more Christian people don't observe this Day of Atonement, because this day is what their faith is all about.

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