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Presentation Transcript
Healing the Breach
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Today's title is *Healing the Breach*. It's about the Day of Atonement, a biblical holy day.

What's the most important of the biblical holy days? Some people would say Passover, because it's about Christ's sacrifice, and they wouldn't be far wrong. Others would say the Feast of Trumpets, because it's about what we've all been waiting for – Christ's return – where the rubber meets the road, so to speak. Others might point to the Feast of Tabernacles, the festival that lasts for eight days and that represents the Kingdom of God on earth. Those who keep it spend most of their time and dedicate substantial sums on it, so we might say that expenditure of time and effort makes that the most important. It's hard not to get excited about that festival.

For most of us, though, Atonement is a shadowy day, sandwiched in between Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles, but did you know that most Jews consider that day – the Day of Atonement – the most important of all holy days? More Jews go to synagogue on this day than any other day of the year. But we're not Jews by religion. We don't follow any of their traditions. We're Christians. We observe Atonement as a *Christian* holy day, just like the first Christians did in the New Testament. If Atonement has become the most important day to the Jews, should it even matter to us if Atonement is the most important day to the Jews? Could Christians make a case for Atonement as the most important day? Or should we even try? God says, "Keep it." Isn't that enough?

Well, I don't think I want to make a case for one being more important than the others. We're told to keep *all* of them, but I'll tell you, however, as I get older, I'm gradually attracted to the Day of Atonement more and more. What I'm inclined to think is that the Day of Atonement is a special day among holy days in its own way. And why is that? Well, I think many of us don't really understand the significance of it. We think it's about the

binding of Satan and becoming at one with God. And I think those things are only a part of what the Day of Atonement is about.

Let's look back into history and see how the Jews have historically looked at Atonement. The primary exposition of the Day of Atonement, in the Old Testament, is in Leviticus 16. And we can see there that the Day of Atonement is unique in that it was the only day of the year that anyone went into the Holy of Holies. That was the part of the temple that represented the throne room of God – to be in God's presence was in that room. So that's pretty significant, wouldn't you say? On that day, the high priest went beyond the veil, where the ark of the covenant was and the mercy seat – the place that represented the throne of God. He put on clean priestly garments and sacrificed for the sins of the people.

There were two goats involved and they cast lots on them. One represented the Lord, and it was sacrificed, and its blood was sprinkled all around to cleanse from sin. And on the other, the priest confessed the sins of the people. Then it was led into the wilderness and set free. The word in English there for that goat is translated *scapegoat* from the Hebrew. But the word actually is *azazel* – my rough attempt at pronunciation of the Hebrew language – a seldom used term. It's only used in the Bible here – one time. One of my commentaries says that that word could refer to a demon. So some think the goat was a type of Satan, the original cause of our troubles – the one who is responsible for all our problems. Others look at Isaiah 53, where it says that our sins were laid on Christ, like the priest did with the goat. They tell us Christ did two things: He took our sins and He died for them – so two goats. We know all of this is true. Christ did die and He did take on our sins. And Satan *is* the root of all our problems. So, is that important that we choose sides? Is it possible for both of these to be true? God shows us that He likes to fold meaning into meaning, so maybe that's an explanation. But, at any rate, it was a special day. And the Jews have held true to this meaning over time, with some embellishment of tradition and ritual.

Now let's look at the New Testament. Did you know that the Day of Atonement was in the New Testament? Paul, in Hebrews, the 9th chapter, does an amazing thing. Let's take an honest look at it. He's explaining the differences between the Old and the New Covenant. I know some of us play too many video games and we can't focus for more than a few seconds, but let's take some time this. It's worth it.

Hebrews 9:1 – *Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship in an earthly place of holiness. They're just talking about the tabernacle. For a tent was prepared, the first section, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of Presence. It's called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain, there was a second section called the Most Holy Place – the Holy of Holies, in other words – having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant – you saw the movie, right? – covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat – that's*

the lid on the ark and it's also representative of the seat of the throne of God. *Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. These preparations, having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties, but into the second, only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people. By this, the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the holy places is not yet opened, as long as the first section is still standing (which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drinks – speaking of the different food and drink offerings – and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.* What's he talking about? Well, as it says, he's talking about the Day of Atonement – the one time of the year when the high priest goes into the Holy of Holies. Now, notice what he does next. Verse 11:

V-11 – *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of good things that have come, then, through the greater and more perfect tent – not made with hands – that is, not of this creation – so there's another tabernacle that the first one was just a model of – He entered once for all into the holy place, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For, if the blood of goats and bulls and sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Therefore, He is the Mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.*

It's really interesting that the apostle Paul uses the Day of Atonement to explain the New Covenant to the church. Could the meaning of the covenant be embodied by this day – the agreement that delineates our relationship with God – how we turn from our own ways back to God's? Of course! It's right there in front of our eyes in the Bible in the New Testament. And it is a *holy* day – a day the New Testament church observed, a day dedicated to the meaning of the church's covenant with God.

Don't you think that it's a bit odd that the modern church, reputedly based on the New Covenant no longer observes the day God gave us to represent what we call ourselves? It's more than odd. It's bizarre! If you read about the two previous holy days – Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread – we see the same themes of reconnecting with God – all New Covenant stuff. And if that's true, then, why does it come around again in this holy day? Well, let's look at the expanded meaning of this day.

In Acts 3, and verse 18, it says:

Acts 3:18 – *But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets – that Christ would suffer – He thus fulfilled. Repent, therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord and that He may send the Christ appointed to you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all things about which God spoke by the mouth of the holy prophets long ago.*

So there's a time of repentance for those of us now that God has called, but there is something else coming later – not something new, but something *old* will be restored. It's much bigger. It's a new covenant for *everyone*. Those of us who are New Covenant Christians today, we're just the beginning of it.

Let's look in Hebrews 8:8.

Hebrews 8:8 – *For He finds fault with them when He says, "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah – not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, for they did not continue in My covenant, and so I showed no concern for them," declares the Lord. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days," says the Lord. "I will put My laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. And I will be their God and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach one another, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me – from the least of them to the greatest, for I will be merciful toward their iniquities and I will remember their sins no more."* Has this happened yet? Well, for some, it has. But for everybody – where everybody knows God? No, there's something yet ahead – a new covenant for *all* people – a time when *everyone* is going to know God. No more need for evangelism then. That's kind of an interesting thought, isn't it?

Let's look at what that might look like. Let's start in Revelation 20, and verse 1.

Revelation 20:1 – *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain. This is right after Christ's return in the context of the story. Chapter 19 in Revelation is about the return of Christ. And he sees the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years – I think he wants us to know who he's talking about – and threw him into the pit, and shut it up and sealed it over him so that he might not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be released for a little while. Then I saw thrones and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also, I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the Word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or its image, and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. And they came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. So those are the saints. Those are the people that are part of the Church of God – Christians who did not cave into the governmental pressure of the beast and who – some of them – were martyred – killed – in Christ's name, because of their*

belief in Him. And it says that they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousands years. And it says: *The rest of the dead* – this is a parenthetical statement – *the rest of the dead* – not everybody is in that category – *did not come to life until the thousand years were ended*. See, this is what the Bible says happens to people after they die. They go in the grave and they rest – they die. Their consciousness...it's like being asleep. In fact, that's what the Bible calls death. It calls it sleep. Then, at the end of the parenthetical statement, it says: *This is the first resurrection*. That's when those saints come up. *Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such, the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with Him for a thousand years*.

So, if there's a *first* resurrection, there's going to be a second one, right? We'll see. So we just read, in verse 3, that Satan deceives the whole world. How long has that been going on? When did it first start? Well, it started in the Garden of Eden, didn't it? And who was the king in the Garden then? The Creator. Who was He? Scripture tells us in, John 1, that that was Jesus Christ, by Whom He created all things – talking about the Father of Christ. See, we were hijacked by the devil. Our first parents were kidnapped and Christ ransoms us back by His blood. We were redeemed – bought back. It's interesting that the Bible uses that language. He doesn't use the word *kidnapped*, but it uses the word *ransomed*. So, when you kidnap somebody, you ask for a ransom. Right? When Christ returns, He will be *returning* – not coming for the first time, but returning – taking it back – a restoration of a government lost in the Garden of Eden – healing a grievous breach – a relationship is going to be restored – a relationship delineated by a new covenant. Some of us are under it now, but the whole world will be under it then, as it once was long ago.

We saw, in Revelation 20:4, a statement – *the rest of the dead*. Let's talk about that a little bit. It actually says that – *the rest of the dead* didn't live until the thousand years were over. So there are two resurrections, right? – the resurrection when Christ returned and then another one a thousand years later. Since there's a first resurrection, there's got to be another one. Right? We're not reading some sci-fi book here. This is the *Bible* we're reading out of. It's important that people haven't heard this, but it's right in there. All you have to do is read it. This is the Bible we're reading out of. There are billions of people who won't have a chance to know Christ before He returns. Think of all the people who have died who were Buddhists, and Shintoists, and Muslims, and Hindus. The vast majority of human kind has *not* known Jesus Christ. And they will not have known Him before He returns because they're dead. Some of you were taught that, if you don't know Christ in this life, then that's it for you. God is *not* like that! He's fair. And He explains to us how He's fair. All those people *will* have chance at the end of the thousand years when the earth has been restored over a thousand years of following God's way. It'll be a jewel! You know, there's not much here about that, but, in the Old Testament, the prophets expounded in detail about that day when Christ returns and what it's going to be like afterwards. It'll be a time of incredible abundance, and families, and happiness – the way it

all started out – a time when the devil will not be around to deceive us, a time when God will be *our* God and we will *all* be His people.

What does that mean to God? It's not really portrayed that way, but I'm certain that God has strong feelings about it. I worked with a family once. They had a daughter who was a heroin addict – just in the grip of a terrible addiction. Under that addiction, she did things she *never* would have done. They had to lock their bedroom with a padlock because she would steal to get money for heroin. She'd break into their room if they didn't have that big padlock on it and take things from them. And she had a daughter, but the parents had to take custody, because she'd lost her care for her child. Her mother sat in my office and wept bitterly. She loved her daughter, but no amount of second chances or TLC would bring her back. It was her own choice that kept her an addict. Only *she* could choose to fight it. So her daughter went to rehab, finally. Everybody was happy about that. And, when she came back, she signed up for college courses, started therapy, got some nice clothes, had a new boyfriend who wasn't an addict. She was enjoying taking care of her daughter. But then one day, she came home high. She'd spiraled down – relapsed – and it started all over again. They found heroin syringes, spoons, tourniquets and a lighter in her room. So they had to put her out of their home. It was heart breaking. They came to my office – or the mother did – and poured out her heart, but she knew the best thing she could do was put her out. She had to. So she did. She cast her out into the street. God says the way of the transgressor is hard. God created some laws for us that make life good and, if we break them, then they break us.

By the way, does this story sound anything like something you've read in the Bible? Sounds a lot like the Garden of Eden, doesn't it? The devil talked Adam and Eve into sinning. And they spiraled down. And they started to distrust God and disobey Him. The only thing God could do was to kick them out of the Garden – a tough choice, but He had to do it.

But we don't really see, in the story, how God felt about that. You know, this binding of Satan, this becoming at one with God again – that we looked at there in Revelation – all His children entering into a covenant with Him again, healing that breach – that's meaningful stuff to God. He's been looking for that for a *long* time. And that's why we fast. We fast on the Day of Atonement. It's a very serious thing to God. He suffered a great loss. He gave up a lot. He had to give up His own Son, even, to restore things. And now He's taking it back – in the picture – entering into a relationship with *all* the people, not just a few. And we're fasting on the Day of Atonement to show that there's something different – something pivotal, something vital – about what this day means. We afflict our souls so that we become a bit more sober minded.

And then, after the fast, well, of course, what happens after we fast? Everything tastes better, doesn't it? We're hungry and everything just tastes so good. Most of us break the fast with a special meal. And, because we've been fasting, it's just wonderful. So when

we're doing that – when we're enjoying that meal after that fast – that pictures the beginning of the millennial reign of Christ, when everything will work properly, when everything is going to be great – good weather, good soil, good soil management, everybody is going to be on the same page religiously and politically. I don't know if we'll even have politics. Won't that be a great thing! People won't be starving or malnourished any longer. You know, the vast surface of the earth is uninhabitable right now, but the prophets tell us that it's going to become like a garden place all over the earth – no more deserts, no more high mountains. Everything is going to be great – a time of abundance! And we will all know Him – from the least to the greatest. He'll be our God and we'll be His people.

Isn't it great, after fasting, to eat a really great meal and know that it's a celebration of the best thing that's ever happened on earth? Isn't it nice to know that, while we're enjoying a wonderful meal, we're picturing a time that the world has never experienced? The Day of Atonement is a tiny pause before all that begins – a day to pause and think about what the angel said to Jesus in Revelation, “You have taken Your great power and have reigned.” The battle of Armageddon has been fought and won. The troublemakers are no more. The devil has been chained. Jesus Christ is King. His saints rule with Him. And He's going to reach out in grace and love. And let everyone come to Him. Let the planet be restored. Let the breach opened in the Garden of Eden, at last, be healed.

Well, that's all for this time. We publish every other Thursday, so check back for more.