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Presentation Transcript
Courts of God – Day of Atonement
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Good afternoon! This is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries

Here we are today, celebrating another of God’s annual biblical festivals. This one...the Day of Atonement. There are a lot of things we traditionally talk about on this day – hopefully not all at once. We could talk about all the holy days and show, out of the Bible, how this day is one of seven, and that each one is a step in God’s salvation plan. So while a lot of people think they’re just from the Old Testament, it’s actually about New Testament things as well. We could show that these days were observed by the original Christians and Christ, and ask, “Why aren’t Christians still doing that, like Jesus and the disciples did?” Or, we could talk about the big impediment to our relationship with God in this age and why people are not at one with Him now. And that, of course, is our adversary, the devil – and how he will be bound – probably on this very day, or close to it, in the future. Or, we could talk about the two goats sacrificed on the Day of Atonement in the previous age. Or, we could talk about what the world will be like once the entire world will be at one with God after Christ returns. Or, we could discuss why we fast, since it’s the only festival on which God tells us to fast. In fact, I think I’ve spoken on all of these topics on this day over the years.

But today, we’re going to talk about something else, as related to the day. We know that the entire world will have a chance to have relationship with God once Jesus returns to the earth. And that kind of being at one with God will be like the being at one Christians can have with God now. Those people will be physical beings, like we are now. They’ll be able to worship God, and have services, and keep the Sabbath, and pray, and all the things that we do. But what will it be like to be at one with God for those who are resurrected at Christ’s return? They’ll be *spirit* beings, not physical.

Now, it’s clear that the term *relationship* is going to be elevated to an entirely different level when we’re in that state with God. Does the Bible give us any clues about what that might be

like? Well, it does, actually. So let's open our perspective a bit today and look at some of them on this day that draws our attention to that new kind of relationship with God.

Now, here's one caveat. When we talk about what it will be like in God's Kingdom – after we are all changed to immortal beings – it's impossible to grasp the fullness of it. God tells us about what it will be like in human and other physical terms, because He knows that we cannot yet experience life as He lives it. So the terms He uses in the Bible are like icons, or symbols, for something much greater – things that will remain mysterious to us until our change. Here's an example. It's in the book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel recounts something that he saw. It starts in 1, and verse 4.

Ezekiel 1:4-14 – *As I looked, behold, a stormy wind came out of the north, and a great cloud with brightness around it. Now I can relate to that a little bit. Have you ever seen a cloud in front of the sun at sunset? You can see the sunlight around the edges of it. But then he said: ...and fire flashing forth continually. And in the midst of the fire as it were gleaming metal. And from the midst of it came the likeness of four living creatures. Did you notice he's using a lot of modifiers here – as it were and the likeness of. And this was their appearance: they had a human likeness. They weren't human, but they kind of looked like it. ...but each had four faces – okay... – and each of them had four wings. Have you ever seen a person with four wings? Their legs were straight and the soles of their feet were like the soles of a calf's foot, and they sparkled like burnished brass. And under their wings on their four sides, they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their hands thus: their wings touched one another. Each one of them went straight forward without turning as they went. And as for the likeness of their faces, each had a human face, and the four had the face of a lion on the right side, and the four had the face of an ox on the left, and the four had the face of an eagle. Such were their faces. And their wings were spread out above. Each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies, and each went straight forward. Wherever the Spirit would go, they went, without turning as they went. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire – like the appearance of torches moving to and fro among the living creatures – and the fire was bright. And out of the fire went forth lightning, and the living creatures darted to and fro, like the appearance of a flash of lightning.*

And it goes on for many more verses. I get the sense, as I read this, that Ezekiel is struggling to put into words what he has seen, and also, that the translators, translating what he said or wrote, were having trouble translating it – to make sense of it, as well. And I know, after reading it, I haven't a clue what it looked like. And that's my point. These four living creatures, flashing about like lightning, that he saw and described, were just symbols that God sent to help us, in human terms, get some sense of what it's going to be like later – but nothing compared to what it's going to be like, because we can't understand it.

Look at what Paul says in Hebrews 1:13.

Hebrews 1:13-14 – *And to which of the angels has He ever said, “Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?”* Well, the answer to that is, “None of them.” And then he adds, *“Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?”*

So angels were created, apparently, to take care of and minister to us as we go forward in the task God has given us – which is to inherit salvation.

So we explained in our presentation, *The Devil’s Best Kept Secret*, that our destiny is to be children of God, brothers of Christ, not lower than, but the same kind as God is – not something else – not like an angel, or one of these spirit creatures, but brothers of Christ and children of God, as God is God. You can go to liferesource.org – our Website – and search for that presentation, if you like – *The Devil’s Best Kept Secret*.

So even after we read scriptures about what we will be like, and what life with God will be like, and what’s up in heaven, we still won’t really get it until we’re there. That said, let’s take a look at this. Here’s what Job said in Job 19:25.

Job 19:25 – *For I know that my Redeemer lives. So he knew that he needed a redeemer, and that his redeemer was alive. And then he said: ...and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh, I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. “I’m going to see that! I’m going to see that myself!”* And at the thought of it, he said: *My heart faints within me.*

So Job looked forward to a resurrection from the dead. You know, if you’re skin is destroyed, and then you see God, that means you were dead and then alive again. So he was looking forward to a time when he would see God in person – meet Christ in person. I think of this scripture as one of the many proofs that there is another resurrection at the last, when all those, who are not resurrected at Christ’s return, will be resurrected at the end of the thousand years. That’s mentioned in Revelation 20, 21 and 22. And those people will once again be human beings.

But what I want to focus on is his *anticipation*. He said, “My heart faints within me. My eye will see Him and not another.” It’s actually going to happen. We can have this same hope as Job did. That’s a reality. And yet, it’s so hard to picture what that’s going to be like.

David also says some interesting things in Psalms 84:1 and 2. He said:

Psalms 84:1-2 – *How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts. My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of my LORD. My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.* And then verse 10, of the same chapter:

V-10 – *For a day in your courts are better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.* So he's looking way past this life, with all the problems and the trials, and dealing with evilness in the world, and all of that, to a time when he's going to be in the courts of God.

In Psalms 143, verse 6, he said:

Psalms 143:6 – *I stretch out my hands to you. My soul thirsts for you, like a parched land.*

So, do you get the feeling here that the man, whose heart was like God's, valued and craved to be with God and thirsted for him? And he talks about God's courts. In David's day, when a person was allowed an audience with the king, it was at court. So court was the place where relationship with God was conducted. To be in God's courts means David is a part of God's court, and he is *with* God and God is with him.

Let's look at what Peter said – 1 Peter 3:1 through 5:

1 Peter 3:1-5 – *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* Not revealed yet. No human has experienced it, except Jesus.

All the things that we desire about God – to be with Him – it's all saved up for us. It's just waiting for us – an inheritance that is *imperishable* and undefiled and unfading.

Look at something Peter said – something *else* he said – in 2 Peter 3:8.

2 Peter 3:8 – *But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*

When we're in this God-state – to come back to today – at one with God eternal, time will be a thing of the past. What will that mean to us then? Well, it will mean that we have all the time we need, if we.... It's impossible to understand what it means to be outside of time, so we have to use expressions of time to explain it. When I say, "We'll have all the time we have," it just means time won't be a factor anymore. We'll have all the time we need to do everything that needs doing and everything that we *want* to do. Think about how much anxiety you have because you're pressed for time during your day. That's all going to be ancient history. And all the fun things that you want to do – that you can't do, because you don't have enough time? That's all going to be ancient history. There'll be time to spend with those we love, including God.

Notice that I said that we would have time to *spend* – after I said, “Time will be a thing of the past.” It’s so hard for us to understand what it would be like to outside of time.

Now, I was talking about this with another minister once, and he didn’t accept the idea. He said, “I can’t even understand it.” And I didn’t say it to him, but just because we don’t understand something doesn’t mean it’s not true. If you read chapters 1 and 2 of *A Brief History of Time*, written by Stephen Hawking, he will prove to you that time is a physical thing. It’s all a part of the universe. It’s a part of the creation. God *created* time, but He doesn’t live in it. And neither will we when we’re with God. And all of that business about not understanding it, well, that’s especially true when dealing with the things of God and His nature.

And then Peter continues on. He says:

2 Peter 3:10 – *The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar. And the heavenly bodies – no exceptions there – all of them – the heavenly bodies – from the tiniest little asteroid and piece of space junk to the largest star – will be burned up and dissolved. And the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. And yet, after all of that, we will all remain with God.*

You know, it’s so hard to get a grip on the entire universe “dissolving,” as Peter said. Why would God do away with something so spectacular? David said we could look at the heavens and know that God exists. It’s His proof. Why would he want to do away with the evidence of His own existence? Well, the only reason I can think of is that something else so much better is coming.

Look with me in Revelation 21, and verse 1 – John said:

Revelation 21:1 – *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. Can you think of that? Can you think of the sea passing away – how vast that is? And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. No more earth. No more universe. Something different and infinitely better. Something of surpassing beauty. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold the dwelling place of God is with man, and He will dwell with them. And they shall be His people. And God Himself will be with them as their God.*

So that’s what this day is about. It’s about us all becoming at one with God. And when this happens, God will be with us and we will be with Him. And what we have been longing for will, at last, be ours – not the new heaven and the new earth, but God. We were created to be with Him forever. All humans long for it – know it or not. It’s what’s missing in our lives right now. And in that day, that unnamed, undefined thirst will be assuaged. Verse 4 says:

V-4 – *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore. For the former things have passed away and*

He was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And also He said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and Omega – the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage and I will be His God and he will be my son."

Now, let's look at some things Jesus Himself said. Jesus, while He was with His disciples, told them that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. This concerted and discouraged them. You know, if you wonder why, maybe you need to realize that the disciples were not poor. They were successful business people. So when He told them that, they said, "If that's true, how can anybody enter in?" And Jesus said, "With men, it's impossible, but with God, everything is possible." And then Peter said, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." "We've given it all up," he said. And he wanted to know then, "What will we have?" He's saying to Jesus, "We've staked all that we have on you, and what are You going to do for us?" Now, when I just say it like that, it just sounds kind of selfish, but if you'll remember, Jesus is the one who brought up physical things and rich people. Right? So after he said this to Jesus, Jesus then made the disciples – and us – the promise. It's in Matthew 19:28.

Matthew 19:28 – *Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man will sit on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. So each one of those twelve disciples – in His Kingdom – will be also a king, sitting on a throne – one over each of the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone – that's us now – and everyone who has left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands for My name's sake will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.*

So Jesus started this whole discussion talking about physical things. So it was not inappropriate for Peter to ask Him about them. But possessions were not really what satisfies us, nor what the Kingdom of God is all about. Paul had something to say about that – and, for me, this is the cherry in the middle of the chocolate, or the gold ring, or the best thing ever. But before we read it, let me put it in context.

Let's go back, not to what Paul said, but what's written in 1 Samuel 16.

1 Samuel 16:7 – *But the LORD said to Samuel – who was God's prophet, and He was sending Samuel out to find the first king of Israel – "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him" – He's talking about Saul – "for the LORD sees not as a man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."* So God see what we're like. He can't be fooled. He knows when we're telling the truth and when we're lying. He knows our motives and our desires. He just knows us inside out and upside down.

Here's another thing – in Hebrews 4. Now we're back to what Paul said. Verse 12 of Hebrews 4:

Hebrews 4:12-13 – *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. No creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*

So I read these to you as context for what's coming next. After reading these two scriptures – that God looks not on our stature, but on our heart, and on this verse in Hebrews about the word God being living and active – after reading them, how well would you say God knows us? Well, there isn't anything else to know about us, is there?

Okay, so what comes next here is what it means to be at one with God. Are you ready? 1 Corinthians 13:8 – Paul wrote:

1 Corinthians 13:8 – *Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away. As for tongues, they will cease. As for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.* Okay, now he's going to give us some examples of what that means. *When I was a child, I spoke like a child. I thought like a child. I reasoned like a child. But when I became a man, I gave up childish ways.* Okay? You're way past how you thought when you were four. *For now we see in the mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.* Okay, so how much does God know about us? Everything. And how much are we going to know about God? Everything.

When we're at one with God, we will not have to think about how hard it is to understand no time or eternity. Those things will just be natural to us. When we're born sons of God, we will know God as well as He knows us. Do you have questions about God – about what He's like, about what He's doing, why He does what He's doing, and how He's doing them? Do you wonder if you are really loved by God, if you will ever be able to please Him, if He *really* has a place for you? When we're resurrected to eternal life, all our questions are going to be answered – probably not one at a time, but all of them at once. Why do I say that? Because there are too many questions now. It's just all going to come clear. In a way that we cannot understand now, we will probably just know, because we'll all be a part of Him and He will be a part of us. It's like Jesus said in John 17:22.

John 17:22 – *The glory You have given Me....* He's talking to God the Father in His prayer on the last night He was alive on earth. *The glory You have given Me, I have given to them, that they may be one, even as we are one – I in them, and you in Me – that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them, even as You have loved Me.*

So, to wrap this up now, at one with God – which is what this day is about – the Day of Atonement – means to be in God's court and in a loving relationship with God and His whole entire family. And that is what the Day of Atonement pictures in God's plan.

Page 8

Until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families and the Church of God.