



P.O. Box 66540
Albuquerque, NM 87193
505.890.6806
E-mail: lrn@liferesource.org
Website: www.liferesource.org

Presentation Transcript
Salvation Plan Holy Days – A New Christian Holiday
By Bill Jacobs
September 8, 2023

This presentation is part of our *Salvation Plan Holy Days* series. The title is *A New Christian Holiday*.

Let's do a little time traveling today. Let's zap back in time to the first century. Jesus founded His church on the Day of Pentecost, we're told in Acts – a strange thing to do since Pentecost was a Jewish holy day up until Jesus made it something else. While it sounds perplexing to modern-day Christians, it's a harbinger of understanding and opens up an incredible vista into the future of humankind. But to be a harbinger of the future, one would have to know why the church was founded on the Jewish holy day. But that's a story for another time.

At first, the church was primarily Jews. As it grew, it threatened the Jewish religious hierarchy. This caused the Jewish leadership to incite their followers to persecute the church, as they had incited them to persecute and eventually kill Jesus. As a consequence, many Christians fled to the north into Asia Minor to Gentile cities to get away from the persecution of the Jews. And everywhere they went, much to their amazement, the Gentiles took to Christ like a duck takes to water.

Soon, God called Saul – where He named him Paul – and delegated him the job of reaching out to the Gentiles. He traveled over much of the known world, where everywhere he went, he found many Gentiles responsive. They were coming to Christ in droves. Well, all this terrified the Jews, who had become Christians. That thought this was going to be a thing for them, but it's turning out that, maybe, the Gentiles were a greater part of it. And, from their perspective, Paul wanted to invite them into their religion without even circumcising them. Imagine that! They were afraid he was even going to do away with the temple rituals, which he didn't. God did that by allowing the Romans to destroy the temple in 69 AD.

So, there was a huge controversy in the church over this. The Jews, who had followed the law of Moses and the oral traditions – those were the add-ons that the Jews added after they came back from captivity – vehemently demanded that all the law be kept. But Paul understood something that they didn't yet grasp. Many of the Jewish Christians believed Jesus was God, but they didn't understand that, by calling Gentiles into the church, God was changing things in a major way. God was not allowing Gentiles into Judaism, He was calling them into the church – two different things. Both Jews *and* Gentiles were invited into this new religion on an equal footing. Judaism was no longer God's primary effort. Christianity was.

So, Paul wrote an incredible letter to the entire church, explaining the implications of what Jesus did in dying for us and then starting a new religion on Pentecost. When Paul wrote this letter, he wrote it to the part of the church who were Hebrews – and that's where the book gets its name. That makes sense. They were the ones who were upset about all this. And to explain Jesus Christ to the Hebrews in the church, he started with something they were familiar with – the Day of Atonement. That makes sense, don't you think? Unless you never knew you could explain Jesus Christ by explaining the Day of Atonement!

So, how does that work? Well, let's see. In the New Testament book of Hebrews, we have Paul using the Day of Atonement – a Jewish holy day – and that's just as curious as starting the church on a Jewish holy day, isn't it? Paul used that day to teach Christ to them – the Day of Atonement. It's right there in your Bible! And it has been all along. Well, imagine the mind-blowing effect that that had on the Jews – and should have on all of us as well. There it is – as plain as the nose on their faces. Jesus Christ was in the Day of Atonement all along. They just never knew it.

So, a few of us are sitting here today observing this Day of Atonement. Christians! A day about Jesus Christ and what His coming means to the world – a day clearly owned by Jesus Christ with His name written all over it, and that because the Day of Atonement is also a Christian holy day. Did you know that? All the people who think the biblical holy days are just for the Jews and not for them will, one day, be keeping these biblical holy festivals. Would you like to see that in the Bible?

Let's look in Zechariah 14:16. It doesn't mention all of them – just one – but that's an indicator for us.

Zechariah 14:16 – *Then everyone who survives of all the nations – this is talking after Christ returns to the earth – that have come up against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths – the Feast of Tabernacles – Jewish holy day.*

Why would that happen after Christ returns and establishes His New Covenant with the entire world? We can find references to the early church members observing these holy days – not

because they were Jews, but because they were Christians. And we know they followed the will of Jesus Christ. So, we hold in our hands today something Paul wrote back not long after Christ died – relative for how long ago it’s been for us. Would you like to read how Paul so deftly took what they were familiar with – the Day of Atonement – and expanded their minds to see the truth that was new to them? And it might be new to you too. Well, let’s do that right now.

The first point Paul makes on this topic is in chapter 7. And his point is that there has always been a priesthood of God on the earth. He talks first about Melchizedek, who was God’s priest before Moses. And then he talks about Aaron, Moses’ brother, who was the priest after Melchizedek. And he explained that they had a tabernacle – that’s a word for tent – as a holy place. Once they came out of Egypt and out of the desert, Solomon later built a temple – physical building, instead of a tent.

He then switches to Christ, and he tells them that Jesus Christ – after Moses – is *now* our High Priest. His priesthood has superseded that of Aaron’s, just as Aaron’s superseded Melchizedek’s. He even uses the word *better* covenant to explain Christ’s new priesthood.

Now, I didn’t read all of that to you out of the Bible, because it would take a long time, but it’s all there for you to read, if you want it. It’s, essentially, just background material to where we’re going to today. So, if you don’t care to read it, that means you trust me to tell you the truth, or you’ve read it before, or maybe you don’t care one way or the other. But, no matter what your position, we’re going to continue on chapter 8, and let’s read that beginning in the first verse. Here Paul says:

Hebrews 8:1-10 – *Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest – one after the order of Melchizedek, one after the order of Aaron – one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven – not in a physical tabernacle or a temple; nor like Aaron did one day of the year – a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man. Oh! There’s a true tent! So, that implies that that first tent and that first temple stood for something later. And that is a tent or a throne in heaven. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices. Thus it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now, if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. Oh, so all the sacrifices and the offerings that the Jews used to make were just a picture of something greater that was to come. For when Moses was about to erect the tent – the tabernacle – he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.” So, when Moses was on the mountain with God, God gave him a pattern of what was in heaven and he was to reproduce that on earth, which he faithfully did. But he says, continuing on: But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. So, the current covenant, which is God’s ministry through Jesus Christ, is better – more excellent – than the Old Covenant the Jews used to follow. For, if that first covenant had been faultless, there*

would have been no occasion to look for a second. So, he explains later that there wasn't really a problem so much with the covenant as with those who weren't willing to keep it. So, there is also a temple in heaven. The tent Moses set up, and later, the temple Solomon built, were physical models of the temple in heaven. That's what they were. And he tells us that Jesus is there at that temple now in heaven. Then, as he tightens the noose, he quotes this scripture in 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 bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant – they didn't keep it – and so I showed now concern for them, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."* Now, that's quite a statement! That's not how it worked in the Old Testament. And that's only happening now in those people who are a part of God's church. But the Day of Atonement is about something *bigger* than just the church.

Now, we know that Jesus, in this New Covenant – or agreement – raised the stakes. No longer were God's people responsible to keep the letter of the law, but now the spirit. It's not good enough to avoid killing somebody these days, but it is now also necessary to avoid hating them. It's necessary to love and care for them as well. That is what we agree to when we become Christians. That's the *New Covenant*. We follow the full intent of the law – love and obey God with all our hearts and love our neighbor as ourselves – not just to avoid killing somebody.

But then Paul refers to something that has not happened yet. This is verse 11:

V-11-13 – *And they shall not teach, 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.* So, the next step after the church, and after Christ's return, is *everybody* getting know God. That's part of the fullness of the Day of Atonement. It's not just talking about atonement for those of us in His church now, or in ages past, but for *everybody* all over the world. There's a time coming when God will be known to everybody. And that hasn't happened yet. But, can you imagine what that will be like? You know, the Bill Gates, and the Klaus Schwabs, and the Richard Dawkins of the world will know God. *For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more* – because they have turned their hearts to God. *In speaking of a New Covenant* – he says, in verse 13 – *He makes the first one obsolete.* So, Judaism – what all of you folks in the church who are Jews used to do is obsolete. *And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.* That was a statement that probably rocked them. See, they thought they were still Jews, but now worshipping Christ – part of Judaism. But that *isn't* what he was talking about.

So, then Paul does this amazing thing. He goes to the tabernacle and the temple, and he shows them how all that was *not* the *real* temple, but only a copy – which he explained already – a

picture of what was to come because of Christ's new ministry. And he uses what they did for thousands of years on the Day of Atonement to explain all about the meaning of Jesus Christ and the church – that all that was just a copy – a model, a foreshadowing – of Jesus Christ. Let's read that, starting in Hebrews 9:1.

Hebrews 9:1-5 – *Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly place of holiness. For a tent was prepared, the first section – so there's more than one section – in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence. It is called the Holy Place. Okay, got it? Two sections. One's called the Holy Place and it's got these things in it. Behind the second curtain was a second section called the Most Holy Place – so this is more holy than the first one – the Holy Place. In that section was the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant.... Did you ever see *Raiders of the Lost Ark*? They portrayed the ark of the covenant there. That's what he's talking about. ...the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was the golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. The original tablets that Moses brought down from the mountain were in the ark. Above it were the cherubim of glory – so there were some statues that were attached to the lid of this ark. They were cherubim, which is the highest rank of angels. We only know of two of them – Michael and Gabriel. And they overshadowed the mercy seat. So we see a picture drawn, where the wings of these two great creatures reach out in an arch over the mercy seat, which is the lid to the ark, and touch each other. And he says: *Of these things, we cannot not speak in detail.* Hmm. I thought he was, but apparently, he knew a lot more than he was talking about right there.*

Now, I can think of three reasons why he might have done this. First, I think he wanted the Jewish Christians to know everything in the temple was the foreshadowing of something to come. And they were looking at it. It had arrived. God had made a new agreement with *them*. And they had agreed to it. And that temple picture was what they were now living.

And I think, also, that he wanted to familiarize the Gentiles with the things of Judaism, because it was the foundation of the church. So, it was good for them to know what he's talking about to the Jews in the church as well. Much of the New Testament is comprised of quotes from the Old Testament. The law of God was first codified in the Jew's covenant with God, but it had been on the earth and extant *forever* – from the very beginning! Anytime you can find the word *sin* in the book of Genesis, you know that there was a law enforced, because sin means you've transgressed a law. So, the law of God was first codified in the Jew's covenant with God, and it's really good to understand Moses' covenant for that reason. Paul was helping with that task – his explanation here.

And thirdly, Paul undoubtedly understood that the book he was writing would eventually be read by you and me. And he knew that *we* would be just like the Gentiles of his day, essentially ignorant of the practices of ancient Israel and of their foreshadowing of Jesus Christ – His new covenant with us – His death, His grace, His role as our heavenly High Priest.

Okay, going forward from that, he continues showing a foreshadowing that's even more astounding. Verse 6:

V-6-7 – *These preparations having thus been made, the priests go regularly into the first section, performing their ritual duties – that was called the Holy Place, right? – but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year – so that's the Most Holy Place – and not without taking blood, which he offers for himself and for the unintentional sins of the people.*

So, he's mentioned it before, and he mentions it again here, that every high priest in God's scheme is always sacrifices provided by the people, and they represented their desire to be forgiven of their sins and their allegiance to God. So, this is important to understand for Christians today, as well as for Christians back then. He's making the case that Jesus, as our High Priest, needed to have an offering too. That's what priests do after all. They take the sacrifices and they offer them to God in the Holy Place, and on one particular day, the Most Holy Place.

So, now he tells us that for this second, more weighty offering, the high priest went into the second portion of the tabernacle once a year. What does that mean for us? What's the picture?

V-8-10 – *By this – he says in verse 8 – 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 – killing a bull or a goat or a turtledove – that's a picture of something that's supposed perfect the conscience of the worshiper – but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation. So, what's the time of reformation? It's when Christ came and reformed everything.*

So, do you know which day of the year that was that the high priest went into that Most Holy Place? Well, all the Jews knew, and none of the Gentiles knew, and none of the Christians know, but it is *this* day – the Day of Atonement. I think we know which day of the year it was that the high priest went in. Yeah.

When I finally realized what I was reading there, I felt like one of the four creatures at God's throne, that when they heard of God's amazingly brilliant pronouncements that God makes constantly, they cast their crowns to the ground and fell on their faces and worshipped, amazed at God's mind, love and power. It was astounding to me! There is was in the Bible all along, right there in front of my face – Paul, using the Day of Atonement to explain Jesus Christ. So, what does that mean? Well, that means that the Day of Atonement has *always* been about Jesus Christ.

So, changes were made. Now, step out of the narrative with me for a moment and ponder verse 10. In my Bible, by the phrase *food and drink*, there's a little notation. It says this is talking about Leviticus 12:2. And that is about clean and unclean meats. So, they're saying that the notation is

implying that God's law of clean and unclean foods were made unnecessary by Christ's sacrifice. But that statement is *not* sufficient proof. Why? Well, in context, have you ever read in the Bible that there were ceremonially unclean drinks? No, you haven't. And the *and* – food *and* drink – indicates parity. So, they're on an equal footing. And the context is the sacrifices in the temple. But there were no drinks that were unclean. But there were in the temple food and drink offerings, and they were a part of temple worship. And, if you read that verse over again, you will see that the offering that it's talking about – which is the context – is not clean and unclean meats. We have biblical evidence that the law of clean and unclean meats was *not* set aside. Those laws existed *before* Moses and they existed *afterwards*. A pig is *always* a pig. Peter, many years after Christ died said he never had eaten anything common or unclean. And later, when the big controversy mentioned in Acts came up about what Gentiles had to do, there was nothing at all said that would indicate that it was okay for them to eat unclean meat. It specifically mentions what Gentiles were to do as Christians – and that was *not* included.

So, let's go on to Hebrews 9:23. We'll just continue on from here with the topic we started.

V-23-28 – *Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things* – that's the things the Jews did – *to be purified with these rites* – the offerings, and the food offerings, and the drink offerings and all that – *but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.* So, are you starting to get the picture of what Christ's sacrifice is? *Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly* – that's Christ – *since the foundation of the world.* Oh, you mean that that they were keeping the Day of Atonement since the foundation of the world? That's a shocker, isn't it? *But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* He only had to do it *once!* ...*and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin* – He's already done that through His sacrifice – *but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.*

So, that's what the Day of Atonement is about – in part. It just keeps getting bigger though. Paul explains here that the Day of Atonement is about the application of Christ's sacrifice to the entire world – not just the Jews, and not just the church, but all humankind, no matter what age they live in or are living in – *all* humankind. All humankind. Think of it. It's not "Be saved in this life or go to hell." I know that's the common Christian belief, but the Day of Atonement teaches us that God's way is *bigger* than that – way more powerful, way more loving. The Passover, the first holy day in the biblical sacrificial year, pictures Christ's sacrifice – the Lamb of God sacrifice to save His people from their sins. And the festival that follows that the next day is called the Festival of Unleavened Bread. And that's a very personal festival where each of us – each one of us – picture living in a state of grace free of sin. Now, we know that we don't live completely sin free, because we're sinners. We have a hard time with sin. But, if we're living in a state of grace, then we're sin free. But when we come to the Day of Atonement, this picture

expands exponentially. It's way bigger! It's the most profound holy day of the in its meaning. The Day of Atonement is about *all* people – living and dead – becoming at one with God. One sacrifice covers *all* sin. And, if it's all sin, it has to be the sin of all people who have ever lived. That is why Paul said that when Christ returns to the earth, it will not be to judge and punish the sinful. He's already taken care of that in His sacrifice. No, He's coming back to joyfully save those who have been eagerly awaiting His return. It is *not* a day of punishment. It's a day of drawing close to God. It's a day of forgiveness. It's a day of salvation for all the wanted – past sins aside.

Now, there are six other festivals that fill in the gaps in the story that I told you today. And you may have questions, like, "If people don't go to heaven or hell when they die, what happens to them?" Well, there's a holy day festival about that. If you want to know more, you can go to our Website, liferesource.org, and just search on *Holy Days*. A lot of material will appear. I would especially recommend our series, *Jesus and the Holy Days*, because that shows how He inhabits each one. And each one has something to teach us about Him and what He's going to do.

And that aside for the moment, we've come to the end now. I wish you all a blessed and happy Day of Atonement. That comes true when we understand the true awesome meaning of this festival.