
Christian Holidays: Overview of Christian Holidays

by: Ronald L. Dart

Why does God hide Himself? Why not come right out and reveal Himself to man? This is an old question. If there's something He wants from us, why doesn't He just say so. Well the answer is really quite simple. He did!

Right there in your house, you have a Bible, which contains the testimony of dozens of people down through the ages who encountered God and lived to tell the story. You have to also credit though, the stubbornness and the obtuseness of men who really don't want to know. I mean God could tell us and we don't want to believe it. I think God could show Himself to us and we would figure out some kind of an explanation for it. Men may say they would like to see God, but deep down inside I don't think so.

What Does The LORD Require Of You?

And then there's this, another side to it. The very being of God, the existence of life, the actions of God and of men in the world create a very complex set of relationships that aren't so very easy to deal with. So that's why the Bible tries to keep it simple.

Here's what a prophet had to say about this. His name was Micah. You'll find this in his sixth chapter verse eight. "He has showed you, O man, what is good, and what does the LORD require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."

Now, how hard is this? God doesn't ask us to climb every mountain, ford every stream. He doesn't require heroic efforts. He just requires a good life, lived well.

Why Christian Holidays?

Okay then, you want to know, what was the rest of all the stuff about? Why all the laws, the ceremonies, the rules and all these holidays you keep talking about? Well, there are a couple of reasons. For one thing, the laws, Commandments, rules and stuff, are all given to define justice and mercy, right and wrong.

The prophet Micah said, "Here's what's good. Here's what God requires of you, to do justly." Well, how are you going to know what that is, unless there's something to explain it to you and to lay it out for you. I know people say, "When you receive the Holy Spirit, it will tell you all these things. Yeah I know that's true, but when the Holy Spirit comes to tell you all these things, it is not going to tell you anything new. It is not going to be something that isn't already written in the Bible. The Holy Spirit will not lead you off in some other direction from what God has led man down through history and how on earth is your conscience going to be educated, and why should the Holy Spirit tell you something, that God told you a long time ago, in writing.

Secondly, if you're going to walk humbly with God , you have to know where he's going. Otherwise, you may not be walking with Him, you may be walking with someone else. The problem is, we human beings are never satisfied. We were made with a restless spirit. We can walk the simplest way with God but something inside us says, "Hey, there's more." And we are right, there is.

It's in the observance of the Holidays of the Bible that we learn about the plan of God. We learn where He's going, and we learn how we can walk more closely with Him.

In this series of programs, I have insisted that these are Christian Holidays, not just Jewish Holidays, as they are so often dismissed as. And they are the only holidays found in the pages of your Bible.

Christmas And Easter

Now I can recall my own surprise many years ago when someone pointed out two important things about traditional Christian holidays like Christmas and Easter.

One, neither of them is found in the Bible, either in instructions or in observance. Nobody is ever told to do them. No one has ever been told how to do them, and there are no instructions for them.

Second, almost everything about Christmas and Easter is of non-Christian origin. Everything about Christmas from the date, December 25th., to the tree, is of pagan origin, with one exception, the Nativity of Jesus. That's the one thing about Christmas which didn't come from paganism.

Everything about Easter from the date, to the colored eggs, to the rabbits, is of pagan origin with one exception, the resurrection of Jesus.

God's Seven Annual Holy Days Are Commanded In The Bible

Okay, I saw all that, then came an even bigger surprise. These holidays are not in the Bible, but there are seven annual holy days commanded in the Bible (Leviticus 23) that are not pagan but have everything to do with the life, the ministry, and the work of Jesus Christ. One of the greatest losses of the Christian faith is that so many have lost touch with these festivals and no

longer see Christ in them. Even though the early church did keep them and did see Christ in them.

I have told the story in earlier programs about how these changes came about. The tough question is how Christianity has lost touch with them, could ever restore them? The resistance is strong and persistent and has hundreds of years of custom and habit built up.

There was one of the apostles in the New Testament and his name was Jude who said this in verse 3, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write to you of the common salvation, it was necessary that I write to you and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints."

Notice there was a faith that was once delivered and already by the time Jude wrote, it was being corrupted.

He says this in verse 4, "For there are certain man crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

The faith had already been corrupted by people, who having been given the marvelous doctrine of the grace of God, went way beyond grace and turned it into license. The departure from the faith began in the first century and has continued to this day. There is among some teachers a rank hostility to the law of God. in spite of all the statements in both Testaments, that "the law is holy and just and good" (Romans 7:12). There are some who persist in condemning the law at every turn, but for those who respect the law of God, it still serves as a lamp to their feet and a light to their path (Psalms 119:105), so they don't have to stumble in the dark.

For me personally, the opening up of the festivals of the Bible in a Christian application, was like turning on the light in a dark room. These festivals are called the "appointed times of Jehovah" (Leviticus 23:4), and around them flow the entire history of the people of God from the Israelites to the Jews to the Christians of every race, and not only the history of God's people, but their future as well because all these Biblical Festivals are prophetic as well as historic.

What God's Holy Days Mean To Me

I've been observing the Biblical Festivals, the Biblical Holidays for something like 40 years now, but I really can't say that when I first started that I understood what they were all about. There was an old rule that I used to follow though, called, "When all else fails do as you're told," and since God said do it, and since all I had to do, to do it, was to take a day off work and go to church. I thought let's do that. It was a simple first step, and because it was our custom to teach the meaning of the days in their season, year by year, I learned the rich history of God's dealing with His people, especially at those pivotal points in their history like, the original Passover.

Once the original groundwork was laid in the history, the analogies from that history became more and more obvious and the connections to Christ became more and more obvious. That history was not to be ignored.

Paul warned the Corinthians about this. In his first letter to them. chapter 10 and verse 1, he said, "Moreover, brethren, I don't want you to be ignorant, how all of our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea."

Paul is referring back to the Exodus, to Israel coming out of Egypt and crossing dry shod across the bottom of the Red Sea.

We are in chapter 10 of first Corinthians, {2} "And they were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and the sea, {3} And they all ate the same spiritual meat, {4} And they all drank the same spiritual drink. for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ."

Now this may be a surprise to you, it was to me at one time, but most Christian churches believe that Jesus preexisted his human birth. They believe that Jesus, yes, the Jesus that we know from the New Testament was with Israel in the wilderness, and so did Paul, because he said that "Israel drank of a rock, and that rock was Christ."

Continuing in verse 5, "But with many of them, God was not well pleased, because they died in the wilderness." Then he says this, {6} "Now all these things were for our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted."

We are supposed to read these things and learn from them. He said, {7} "Don't be

idolaters, like some of them were, as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. {8} Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day 23,000 {9} And let's don't tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents, {10} And don't murmur like some of them murmured and were destroyed of the destroyer."

Then Paul says this astonishing thing, {11} "Now all these things happened to them for examples, and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come. {12} Wherefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

So, I am appalled when I hear people say they don't think we need the Old Testament any longer. One fellow I was chatting with once said, "Well, the Old Testament is like a road map you use to get from Texas to California, and when you get to California you don't need the road map anymore." Well Paul didn't see it that way.

Paul said, "All these things were written down for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come."

We are supposed to be admonished by these things, so that means to me, we do need them. They are part of the road map. They help us to understand where we are and where we are going.

Everything about the history of Israel was written down as an admonition for those people upon whom the ends of the earth have come and guess who that is?

Passover

From the Old Testament, I began to learn what Paul meant when he said, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). He speaks of this in writing to the Corinthians a little earlier in the same letter because the letter was written, as we learned, during the Passover season, right at the time of the year when they were thinking about these things.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians in first Corinthians 5 verse seven, "Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump as you are unleavened, for even Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us. {8} Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

This is what I mean, when I said, that I learned from the beginning to do what I was told, "keep the feast" (1 Corinthians 5:8).

As time went on, the analogies that grow up out of the observance of these feasts began to become more clear to me, as they did for Paul, as he explained, "Yes, we keep the feast, Christ is our Passover, but it is not a question of having just old leaven, it is the leaven of malice and wickedness, that we have to get out of our lives. We have to have the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

I learned in connection with this what John the Baptist meant when he looked up and saw Jesus coming down the bank of the Jordan River and said to the people around him, "Behold, look the Lamb of God" (John 1:29). We take that statement for granted looking back through all this time, but it must've sounded very strange indeed to the people who heard him say it. What do you mean "The Lamb of God?"

Well, possibly they did understand it better than we might have, in that, they were used to the idea of a lamb being sacrificed and then I learned at the very moment when the High Priest cut the throat of the Lamb at the Temple for the Passover, at that very moment, a Roman soldier was thrusting a spear into the side of Jesus as he hung nailed to a cross and blood and water came out of the side (John 19:34).

The connection between the Passover lamb and the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world was inescapable.

Oh sure, the Old Testament Passover (Leviticus 23:4-8) was an Israelite institution, sure it was a historical thing for them. But we've gone beyond that now, we've gone to the world, and even in going to the world we take to them the message of the Passover lamb.

Days Of Unleavened Bread

I learned that I was supposed to eat unleavened bread for seven days after Passover (Leviticus 23:4-8), because leaven is a symbol of sin and as a disciple of Jesus, I should live a holy life. At first it seemed like a strange thing to do, and yet one Easter Sunday morning I was in a hotel in

Chicago, sitting there having brunch, and there bounced into the room, a 6-foot rabbit, with big ears, and a basket of eggs in his hand. He went around giving eggs to all the kids.

Now you tell me, is that a strange custom or what? Why should I feel strange with a custom like eating unleavened bread for seven days, when the rest of the Christian world is doing this 'normal thing' of dressing up like rabbits and giving out eggs to kids and claiming that rabbits lay eggs! Who is crazy here?

But the fact is, it's not merely a matter of abstaining from leaven as a type of sin, I also learned that I'm actually to eat unleavened bread during that seven-day period (Leviticus 23:6). The connection with the Last Supper is kind of hard to miss (1 Corinthians 11:20).

Paul wrote this in first Corinthians 11 verse 23 he said. "I have received of the Lord, what I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread, {24} and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me."

The eating of unleavened bread for seven days came immediately to mind that symbolized my need for the bread of life, every day of my life. And you know there was one little season in Jesus' ministry, it was right before the Passover, when He revealed Himself to the people.

Jesus said John 6 verse 48, "I am the bread of life. {49} God gave your fathers manna in the wilderness." And they ate the manna and they died after a period of time, they didn't live forever, but {51} "I am the living bread, If any man eats of this bread, he will live for ever."

That's when I came to understand, why I needed Jesus Christ in my life every day of my life.

Wave Sheaf Offering

It was in the observance of these days that I came to understand what happened the Sunday morning after Jesus' resurrection. You may recall the event in John chapter 20, where Mary Magdalene met him and tried to grab Him by the feet and He said. "Don't touch me, for I have not ascended to my Father," yet later that same day He allowed Himself to be touched.

I learned that on this day (Wave Sheaf Sunday) (Leviticus 23:9-14), Jesus Christ, at the very moment the High Priest in the Temple was presenting the first fruits of this year's grain to God, Jesus was being presented to the Father in heaven as the first fruits from the grave (Acts 26:23, 1 Corinthians 15:20, Revelation 1:5). The first human being to be rescued from death and presented to the Father. And I learned that Jesus is only the first of many to be so presented to the Father (Revelation 14:4).

Pentecost, I learned that the seven weeks of harvest between the day of Jesus being presented to the Father to the day of Pentecost pictured the time of harvest in which we now live, and I recalled how Jesus told His disciples, in John 4 verse 35, "You're saying that there are still four months to harvest. I'm telling you the harvest is white and ripe right now and you need to be

busy in it. You need to pray that God will send more workers into the harvest because the work is being done right now, even as we speak, not later."

I learned that the Feast of Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-22, Acts 2) pictured not only the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh, but the time of the presentation of the rest of the first fruits to God, that is you and me.

Feast of Trumpets

I learned that the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:23-25) in the autumn looks forward to the return of Christ and the 'day of the Lord' when seven great trumpets (Revelation 8) are blown and I noticed that the last great trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:52) that is blown is the time of the resurrection from the dead.

Day of Atonement

I learned that the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:26-32) pictures the reconciliation of man to God in the final disposition of the age-old problem of sin, which stays with us, it seems no matter what.

Feast of Tabernacles

I learned that the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-44, John 7:37-39) is a confession that we are strangers and pilgrims in the earth and that we look for the kingdom to come, that this festival looks forward to the thousand year reign of Christ on this earth (Revelation 20:4), a time of peace, a time when Satan is bound (Revelation 20:1-2), and a time when men will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks and won't learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:4, 11:6). A time when the lion shall lie down with the kid, when a child can put his hand on the hole of the cockatrice' den and nobody will hurt anybody for 1000 years.

Eighth Day Festival

And finally, I learned that there is a shadowy eighth day at the end of this festival (Leviticus 23:36) that implies that all is not yet finished.

The Patriarch Job

There was an ancient man named Job, one of the oldest of the patriarchs in the Bible and in the 14th chapter of Job, Job revealed that he understood things that frankly many men for many generations after him never quite grasped.

Job starts off in the 14th chapter of Job by talking about the way of a man. He says, "Man that is born of a woman is few of days, and full of trouble." And boy isn't that like life. {2} "He comes forth like a flower and gets cut down. He flees like a shadow, one minute he is there and then he is gone. {3} "And do You open Your eyes upon one like this? Are you going to bother God to bring me in judgment with you? {4} Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Nobody.

{5} Seeing man's days are determined, the number of his months are with you. You've given us boundaries we can't pass. {6} Turn from him that he may rest till he shall accomplish like a hireling his day."

He is basically crying out that God would take His hand off of him and just let him rest.

Continuing in verse 7, "There's hope of a tree, if it's cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. {8} Though the root wax old in the earth and the stock dies in the ground, {9} but give it water and it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant."

Not man, you put man in the earth and water him and nothing is going to happen.

Verse 10, "Man dies. Man wastes away. Man gives up the ghost and, where is he? {11} As the waters fail from the sea, and a flood decays and dries up, {12} So man lies down and doesn't rise again, till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, not be raised out of their sleep."

This is the way of things. Just look at it. It's what you see around you all the time.

Job says, {13} "O I wish you would hide me in the grave, that you would just keep me secret, until your wrath has passed over me, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me! {14} If a man die, shall he live again?" Yes, is Job's answer. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, until my change comes, {15} You will call, I will answer you, you will have a desire to the work of your hands."

It is profoundly encouraging to realize that Job, one of the very earliest of the patriarchs knew about the resurrection and he understood something very important that it takes some of us a long time to learn, and that is, that God will not waste the work He has spent with us. He will not take us so far down the road and then cast us away. Human beings are not biological waste to be incinerated. We are made in the image of God and destined to be like Him. We are not born to lose, we are Born to Win! Think about that

Why Is There An Eighth Day Festival?

It was in the observance of the last day, that great day of the feast (John 7:37-39), as John describes it, that I came to understand that God will not waste anyone.

Oh, I'm not a Universalist. I believe there are some people who will push God away in spite of everything. I believe that there are some people who will know what there is to know and who just don't want any part of it, and that there will be some who will ultimately be destroyed, but I believe for those who are willing that God will do whatever it takes to make us in the glorious creatures that are just like Him. Whatever pain-and-suffering we have to go through in this life to get there, that's where He's taking us, and for some people, there may be even another round of this and what the Bible refers to as a second resurrection or the White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-13, Ezekiel 37).

Poor old Job suffered terribly to learn what that means. There's no way to understand suffering in this world and the way God allows things to go on, unless we understand what God is trying to make of us.

In Biblical terms, everything is finished in seven days. The creation was finished in seven days, probably man's generation upon the earth will be finished in seven days. Whatever days are to God. Seven is the number of wholeness. It's a number of completions.

Here's my question, what lies beyond the finish line? Why is there an eighth day festival? It is the only one in the Bible, you know. All the rest of them are taken in seven days.

When we get to the end of the Bible in Revelation 21, John is in vision, and he sees a 'new heaven and a new earth.' He says, "I saw a new heaven and new earth for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and there was no more sea."

Now the implications of this are, that if you were able to go out in the night sky and lookup, you wouldn't see Polaris or Orion and all the familiar stars of the night sky, for its gone. You have a new heaven and a new earth.

"Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared like a bride for her husband. {3} And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, "Look, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God, {4} And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, no sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain for all the old things are passed away. {5} Then He that sat upon the throne said "Look, I make everything new," He turned to John and said, "Write that down, for these words are true and faithful" and {6} He said to me, "It's done! I'm Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.""

That means you're going to live forever.

We Must Overcome

Continuing in Revelation 21 verse 7, "And he that overcomes shall inherit everything, and I will be his God and he will be my people."

Did you hear what you just read there? "To him that overcomes," not to him that drifts along. We're going to have throughout our lifetimes here, battles that we have to fight, and we have to join those battles. We have to take hold of them and we have to fight, and we have to overcome. You cannot just let it sweep you along. This is what the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega says, "He that overcomes shall inherit all things." To the winner belong the spoils.

The scientists tell us that out there in the universe that we are looking in both directions say some 12 billion light years. As someone once said, "What a terrible waste of space unless there's life out there." I think there is and I think there will be more. All the stuff we enjoy in science fiction,

from "Star Trek, the Next Generation," and all that, did it occur to you that someday we may do something like that? You don't want to miss out on that, do you?

The late Ronald L. Dart was a Christian evangelist whose teachings still inspire thousands of people around the world. His legacy spans decades. For more information about the teachings of Ronald L. Dart, visit RLDEA.com where you will find booklets, articles, sermons, Bible studies, and books by Mr. Dart.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree with Mr. Dart that people may say that they want to see God, but really deep down they actually don't?
2. What are your thoughts in regards to Micah 6:8?
3. Are Christians adhering to Micah's words?
4. Why do you think most Christians decide to keep days that are not in the Bible?
5. Why is it so hard for the majority of Christians to see the truth in God's annual festivals?
6. Do you believe that the Old Testament is still a priceless part of God's word full of examples, truths, and guides that are still applicable to us today?
7. Do you understand how God's Holy Days are very much Christian Holy Days rather than just the festivals given to Israel? Why or why not?
8. What are your thoughts in regards to Job knowing about the resurrection?
9. What new lessons have you learned from Mr. Dart's teachings about God's Festivals?
10. Do you have any other insights about God's appointed times that wasn't covered?