

Living to Win

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Personal from. . .

Ronald L. Dart

What You May Be Missing

I feel sorry for people who don't observe the holidays we find in the Bible. Seriously, they don't know what they are missing.

Years ago, when I was first introduced to the biblical festivals, there was a particular verse that was pressed upon me with a special meaning: "These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons" (Leviticus 23:4). Later, when I was ordained, I was told that when each holyday rolled around, that I should preach about the day and its significance in God's plan. I have been doing that for over 40 years now, and it has had a curious effect on me.

For one thing, I have developed a deep and abiding love for these days and what they mean. I have developed a very strong commitment to their observance. More important, I have come to see an ever deeper revelation of the plan of God year by year. And that in itself is remarkable for a curious reason. In the beginning,

I was taught that the biblical holydays picture God's plan, and I was told precisely what part of God's plan they picture. It was, I fear, a very static exposition of the days.

The problem for me was that there were things in the exposition that worked up to a point, but seemed to lack good solid scriptural basis. They were alright as far as they went, but they didn't go far enough.

Intrinsic to my earliest understanding of these days was the simple fact that God had a plan and was working His plan. That may sound obvious, but I don't think most Christian people give it a second thought. For most people, the events of this world are largely irrelevant to what God is doing.

God is evangelizing the world and saving those who believe, and the rest can go to hell. Literally. The saved will go to heaven and see the master's face and dine on milk and honey. The earth will be destroyed. That's all folks.

What I have discovered over the years is that God has a plan, He is working the plan, and the plan is a whole lot more complex than most folks ever imagine. For me, the biblical festivals are a key to that plan, and year by year, it has been like peeling away the layers of an onion, except that each layer differs from the others in some ways while agreeing in others. But if you don't observe the days at all, and don't bother studying them in season, you will, as I said, miss a *lot*.

That said, it occurs to me to wonder why God doesn't just lay it all out for us and have it over with. The answer to that one came about as quickly as the question. Why do people need to major in history as undergraduates, pursue

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You Can Help!

CEM is a service ministry to churches and individuals. The services we offer are the *Born to Win* broadcast, *Youth Educational Adventures* lessons for students between the ages of three and 20, tape program, assortment of literature, Bible Study Course, website, and an autumn Festival. We invite you to take advantage of all of our services. As you know each of these services requires financial backing. So we also invite you to share in this ministry. Your donations can make a real difference for others!

The 40th President

Like so very many people over the past weeks we have mourned the death of Ronald Reagan, the 40th President of the United States. For some reason, I kept noticing how often commentators noted that he was president number 40. I began to wonder about that because I knew that the number 40 is extremely important in the Bible. So many things revolve around that number that it has to be seen as significant.

It is so strong in the Bible, that it has taken on special meaning in Judaism as well. According to Rabbi Shraga Simmons, "The Talmud tells us that a Mikveh must be filled with FORTY measures of water, and a person, must completely submerge himself in it. After being submersed, he leaves the Mikveh ritually pure. It is no accident, that in the story of Noah, the rain poured for FORTY days, and surrounded the world with water. And just as a person leaves a Mikveh pure, so too when the waters of the flood subsided, the world was pure."

There is no way to conclude that there is some spiritual significance to Ronald Reagan being the 40th president, but he was surely a significant president. Peggy Noonan believes that history will place him in the top ten. Surely, she concludes, the presidents of the 20th century will be FDR and RWR.

It is probably meaningless to place presidents on a scale in relation to one another because the challenges each of them faced were different. No one could ever face again what George Washington faced at the birth of a nation. No one else besides Abraham Lincoln ever had to fight a war between the states. Each president is defined by the challenges he faces and by his response to those challenges. Franklin Roosevelt had to deal with World War II. Reagan had to face the possibility of WWII. Both of them were winners.

Both of them were men with great personal charm. Reagan was certainly one of the most likeable men ever to sit in the oval office. Some might even say, lovable. Perhaps one reason was because he loved us so much. I mean he loved the country, and we are the country.

I believe Ronald Wilson Reagan will be rated among the greatest of American presidents. In an age of decline, he reversed the course of history. If only for a little while.

CEM Family Retreat

Memorial Day Weekend 2005

Family reunions, get-togethers, and retreats are important for bonding, renewing acquaintances, making memories, and growing in God's love. You are CEM's family and we feel an enormous need to get together with you and your family for a retreat. What better place is there to do this than in the heart of the beautiful Ozark Mountains at the Bel Arco Resort? What better time than the Memorial Day Weekend 2005?

Bel Arco Resort is nestled among undulating hills overlooking the Bull Shoals Lake. It looks as though it's inviting God's people to congregate there for a relaxing family retreat. Young and old alike will have plenty to do. If you don't bring your own boat, wave runners, pontoons, ski boats, and fishing boats can be rented. Maybe you would prefer to scuba dive in the Bull Shoals Lake, or play 18 holes of golf at the River Cliff on the White River just five minutes away. Among other interesting things to do are day hiking or a visit to a quaint Ozark museum only minutes away.

But you don't have to leave the Bel Arco 25 acre resort to find a swimming pool, tennis courts, and a playground for the kids with swings and a climbing gym. Oh yes, there's a game room with several modern arcade games as well.

Bel Arco is a pet-friendly resort. So you can bring your pooch along. Every room has been completely and attractively redecorated. Rooms with two queen size beds are only \$69 a night. You can share a kitchen that's between your room and the room next to you for only \$5 per nights. Both adjoining rooms can be locked and made totally secure. Rooms with king size beds are available for slightly more. Every room has its own telephone and television.

For those who own a camper, there's a great campsite overlooking the White River only minutes away. Tent campsites are also available in the area. There's a restaurant right on the Bel Arco Resort and a couple of others just minutes away. If you're looking

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*What you may be missing, continued
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an advanced degree in the subject, and then do research for years afterward? The answer is simple. There is an awful lot to know about history. You can't learn it all in a semester. You have to start somewhere and then build the layers of knowledge and understanding one layer at a time.

Realizing how complex God's plan might be, we obviously have to start somewhere and build layer upon layer of knowledge and understanding. Some things simply can't come clear until you understand other things. We know we can't take advanced algebra until we have mastered the basics. So, it should come as no surprise that the entirety of God's plan won't come clear immediately. I take great hope in a short passage from Jeremiah: "Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: {24} But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

So what do the festivals of the Bible have to do with any of this? There was a day when Jesus was walking along the banks of the Jordan toward John the Baptist. John turned to his disciples and said, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." I can't help wondering what John's disciples thought when they heard this. The idea of a lamb taking away sin was not entirely foreign to them. But a man as a lamb?

John's disciples knew all about the Passover lamb, and the Passover as a Jewish institution. What they had no way of knowing was that an entirely new layer of meaning was about to open up relative to the Passover. The Passover would retain its Jewish historical meaning, but now it would also carry a Christian salvation meaning.

Several years ago, now, I came to realize that most of the arguments about whether Christians should observe the biblical festivals or not were largely irrelevant. They depended on interlaced proof texts, and both sides had enough proof texts to defend themselves against the other. What I came to see was that the issue will never be settled by this kind of argument.

One year at the Feast of Tabernacles, I came to realize that there was a strong Christian connection here. Not merely in what Christians do, but in what Christ did. I did the necessary work to follow through the chronological implications of Jesus' birth and realized that Jesus was most likely born on or near the first day of the Feast. And I realized then that I had closed a circle.

In the beginning of his Gospel, John introduced us to the concept of the Word of God. It is a familiar passage: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1-3). Then, John plainly identifies the Word as Jesus Christ: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (verse 14).

The word, "dwelt," in Greek is the verb form of the word

"tabernacle." John said that "the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us." I realized that I now saw the life, work, and ministry of Jesus in every single one of the holydays. Naturally, this changed completely my presentations on the festivals.

And once you understand that the festivals of the Bible are all about Christ and His work, the idea that they might be abolished becomes absurd. And all the typical proof texts have to be looked at in a new light. When you understand that Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles all picture the work of Jesus Christ, you have made a major step forward in understanding.

All this led me to do a complete radio series of 24 programs titled, "Christian Holidays." I went through the Christology of all the days systematically. It still gets the largest response of any series of programs we have ever done. An album of these programs is available. You can request information on how to get it from our office.

Meanwhile, I would like to send you a free cassette tape of a sermon I gave recently that more fully develops this theme. The title is, "What You May Be Missing." You can get a copy by simply checking the box on the return card and sending it back in the envelope we have provided. Don't delay. The tape is *FREE* and without obligation.

God bless you as you learn more about Him.

Ronald L. Dart

Family Retreat continued from page 2...

for good, reasonably priced food in a nostalgic old fashioned, soda fountain atmosphere head for Sodies about 11 miles away in Flippin. And yes, they do have great, old fashioned ice cream sodas. Head for Gaston's if you want a first class meal overlooking the White River while you watch the humming birds feed.

Now for the icing on the cake, CEM's fall Festivals have always been the best anywhere. CEM is in the process of putting together a full menu of seminars, workshops, sermons, and youth classes for this retreat. Outstanding speakers, including Ronald L. Dart, will be there fully prepared to enlighten, inspire, and delight you with God's Word. Every effort is being made to ensure you and your family have a relaxing weekend filled with spiritual renewal, fellowship, fun, and encouragement. This is truly the best of both worlds—a family retreat where we can all be together in one place, and the chance to learn more about our heavenly Father.

We're planning a good ole' family reunion night starting about 7 p.m. Friday, May 27. CEM will provide snacks for you after your long trip there. We just want to say "Howdy" and welcome! Mr. Dart will give a sermon on the Sabbath, and there will be seminars and classes Sabbath, Sunday, and Monday morning. You can attend as much or as little as you would like. So mark your calendar for the evening of May 27th through the morning of May 30th and call Bel Arco toll free today at 866-235-2726 to reserve your room. Tell them you're with the CEM group. Watch for additional information later.

Letters To The Editor

Thanks seems so lame to express my feelings and how like a loving God to inspire your reading and discussing Psalms 1-15. The music is so awesome and touches the heart as each Psalm is read. Totally AWESOME and can hardly wait for the next installment.

Thanks for inspiring and teaching in such a way we learn and grow. I often turn to the Psalms and it makes sense to go thru the Psalms in order in the way you've learned to. JF

Thank you for the first tape of the "Book of Psalms." Your reading of the Psalms, along with your added comments, is a true gift bringing beauty, meaning, and understanding to me. MC

Mrs. Dart asked me if I had any surprises while helping out with the 3-5 year olds, (at the Feast) and at that time I couldn't think of any. Later I recalled that I was surprised the first 10 minutes that I was there. . . It was also surprising how quickly they learned. I still don't know the words to some of the songs that they picked up in a couple of days. FP

Radio Update				
Dallas, TX	1630 AM	KKGM	10:30 am	Sun-Fri
Pace, FL	90.5 FM	WTGF	4:00 pm	Mon-Fri
Parkesburg, WV	1050 AM	WADC	11:30 am	Sun
Prescott, AR	1370 AM	KTPA	7:30 am	Sun
Hope, AR	1490 AM	KXAR	7:30 am	Sun
Columbus, MS	1400 AM	WJWF	9:00 am	Sun
Starkville, MS	980 AM	WKOR	9:00 am	Sun
Starkville, MS	1230 AM	WSSO	9:00 am	Sun
Burlington, NC	920 AM	WPCM	9:30 am	Sun
Indianapolis, IN	1500 AM	WBRI	6:00 pm	Mon-Fri

Calendar of Events

Chicago, IL - July 17, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Avery Coonley School, 1400 Maple Ave., Downers Grove, Il. July 18, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Oak Park District Family Recreation Center, Rooms 4 and 5, 1450 Forest Gate Rd., Oakbrook, Il. Contact Lauren Blissard, (630)416-7115.

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That the man of God may be proficient and equipped for every good work.