

The “Great Day of the Feast”

The Awesome Mystery of Hoshana Rabbah!

Many are confused about the “great day of the Feast” when Jesus stoop up and said for people to come to Him, and He would give them living water. What day was that? What does it picture? Is it the “Eighth Day”? Or is it the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles? What is the real truth behind the mystery of this “Great Day of the Feast”? What does it picture in God’s Plan?

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In John, chapter 7, we find that Yeshua went down to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. In verse 37 we read, “On the *last day of the festival, the GREAT DAY*, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the Scripture has said, “Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.”’ Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:37-39, NRSV).

What is the “last day” of the Feast? Why is it called, “the Great Day”?

Many have assumed, and taught, that this refers to the concluding festival which follows right after the Feast of Tabernacles, called “The Eighth Day.” In Hebrew it is called *Shemini Atzeret*, which simply means, “Eighth Day.”

However, a strict interpretation of this verse would suggest that it is discussing a festival itself which has more than one day, and the day in question is the LAST day of that particular Feast! Now the Feast of Tabernacles is just such a Feast. It has “seven days” (Lev.23:39-42). On these seven days the people of God are to take palm branches, and other branches, and rejoice before the Lord (v.40). During these seven days they are to dwell in booths, or temporary dwellings, called *sukkah* in Hebrew (verse 42).

After this festival, on the eighth day, comes an entirely NEW festival, called Shemini Atzeret! It also is an annual Sabbath day – a day of solemn assembly (Lev.23:39; Numbers 29:35).

During the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, the Jewish people celebrated at the Temple of God in Jerusalem a special ceremony, daily, called the “pouring out of the water

offering.” But on the day of Shemini Atzeret, the people no longer dwelt in booths; they no longer waved the palm branches and other foliage. And they no longer offered the daily water libation at the Temple!

Therefore, it seems most clear that the “last day of the Feast,” when Jesus spoke words about “living water,” He was connecting this with the pouring out in the Temple of the water offering on the last or seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles!

What is the special significance of this day? What does Jewish history tell us?

The Last Day of the Feast -- Hoshana Rabbah

The seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles is not an annual Sabbath day -- yet it has special meaning and significance of its own. In ancient times it was known as the “great day of the feast.” The entire Feast of Tabernacles pictured, in a spectacular way, the great fall harvest, and it was called “The Festival of the Harvest.” But the seventh and last day of the Feast -- and the culmination of the Feast -- had a special meaning of itself. It represented in a unique way the *FINAL DAY OF HARVEST!* Therefore, it also pictured the *FINAL DAY OF JUDGMENT!* It pictured the celebration of the gathering in of the final great harvest of souls in God’s plan.

We read in the book *Celebrate!* --

“Therefore, the *final day of the festival*, when the last sacrifices were offered on behalf of the other nations, was identified as the occasion *when the earth is JUDGED* regarding replenishment of water, and consequently, *when mankind’s FATE, collectively and individually, IS SEALED*. (Rabbinic literature identifies this *Yom Darvata*, Day of the Willow, as *Yom Hakhitum*, Day of Sealing, an *extension of Yom Kippur*.) Striking the willows then had the added connotation of casting away of sin or symbolizing the thrashings one would receive in punishment for sin” (p.214).

The seventh day of the Feast is called “Hoshanah Rabbah,” meaning “the many *hoshanahs*.” This is a contraction of *hoshiah na* -- or “The Great Salvation.” During the Middle Ages, customs associated with Yom Kippur -- such as dressing the Torah in white vestments, and the cantor’s wearing of a *kittel* -- were adopted for Hoshanah Rabbah, looked upon as “the *final day of judgment*.”

Says Avraham Finkel in *Essence of the Holy Days*,

“*Hoshana Rabbah*, the seventh day of Sukkot, has a solemn undertone, it is closely linked to Yom Kippur, for it is on this day that the *FINAL SEAL* is placed on the verdict that was pronounced on Yom Kippur. . .

“On *Hoshana Rabbah* we are mindful of the fact that during Sukkot, judgment is rendered concerning the rainfall for the entire world (*Rosh Hashana* 16a). The economic fortunes of the world depend on abundant rainfall, so our prayers for rain are of crucial importance for the global economy as a whole and for *Eretz Yisrael* in particular.

“This is evident in the special prayers of *Hoshana Rabbah*. During the *Shacharit* (morning) service of the first six days of Sukkot, the entire congregation makes one circuit around the *bimah* with *lulav* and *etrog* in hand while the *chazzan* leads the recitation of the *hoshana* prayer that is punctuated by the congregation’s saying aloud, *Hoshana*, ‘Please save!’ On the seventh day of Sukkot -- *Hoshana Rabbah* -- seven circuits are made, hence the name *Hoshana Rabbah*, which means ‘many *hoshanas*.’

“In the *hoshana* prayers we ask for rain, ‘to give life to the forsaken wastes, to sustain with trees, to enhance with sweet fruits, to rain on the sproutings, to elevate the thirsty earth.’ After the seven processions around the *bimah*, additional prayers are said, after which the *lulav* and *etrog* are laid aside and the *hoshana* bundle, consisting of five willow branches, is picked up. The *hoshana* bundle is beaten on the ground five times in accordance with *an ancient custom that was instituted by the prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi* (c. 350 B.C.E.)” (*The Essence of the Holy Days*, p.94).

Notice that although this custom of shaking the bundle of willow branches is not found in the Torah, Jewish history tells us it was added by God’s prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

What does this final day of celebrating the Harvest, and Ingathering, therefore, picture?

As most of us know, the Feast of Tabernacles as a whole, pictures the Millennial Reign of the Messiah, Yeshua, over the nations of the world for one thousand years. But what about this “last day” of the Feast?

During the Millennium, all the nations will be taught the ways of the Lord. “In days to come the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths. For out of Zion shall go forth instruction and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:1-3, NRSV).

Isaiah says further, of that time, “For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isa.11:9).

That’s all very good. But in the book of Revelation, we read of what is to happen after the millennial reign of Christ. The apostle John declares that the righteous dead will be resurrected to reign with Christ during the millennium (Rev.20:1-4). But, he adds, “The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended” (v.5). This encompasses all the millions and billions who ever lived, who will not be in the “first resurrection” which occurs at the coming of the Messiah!

John goes on, “Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it; the earth and heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. *And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before the throne, and BOOKS were OPENED. Also another book was opened, THE BOOK OF LIFE. And the dead were judged ACCORDING TO THEIR WORKS, as recorded in the BOOKS*” (Rev.20:11-12).

Here is depicted the resurrection of all who ever lived, from Adam to the End Times – all who lived, died, and did not come up in the first resurrection. Notice that they will NOT all be condemned to death and destruction, but that they will all be JUDGED according to their WORKS while they were alive!

This great time of judgment is also pictured in Matthew, chapter 25. We read of the Son of Man, after He comes: “All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those on his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me’” (Matt.25:32-40).

Notice! This is resurrection to LIFE, for many people who lived, because they will be judged according to their righteous deeds in their lives – the GOOD that they did! There are many “good” people in the world, and they will be judged accordingly, at that time.

However, there are also people who have been predominately wicked in their lives. They have rejected the good and turned to selfish evil and wickedness. The Messiah will condemn these “goats,” because they did NOT do the righteous, loving, caring deeds which the righteous did! He will say to them, “You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (v.41-46). John says of these, in Revelation, “And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and ALL were judged according to WHAT THEY HAD DONE. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; *and anyone whose name was NOT found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire*” (Rev.20:13-15).

On the other hand, there will also be many people who were neither very good or very bad. There will be many who are “in between.” There will be many who died as babies, or who were born without a mind to understand, deficient in mental ability, and many who just never had real understanding. What about them? And what about aborted babies, or those who were miscarried in the womb? Will they be resurrected and be given a chance for salvation?

Yes, they too will come up in this “second resurrection,” to receive their own opportunity to learn God’s way and receive eternal life! God says of that time, “No more shall there be in it [Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God] an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person that does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth” (Isa.65:20). Those who never really understood or had a chance will be given a chance to live out full lives, and to repent of their sins and to receive their chance for salvation!

This “second resurrection,” this final stage of God’s plan of salvation – this is the Seventh Day of the Feast of Tabernacles, also known as the “Last Great Day.” In Judaism, it is called ‘Hoshana Rabbah’ – the “Great Salvation” – because that is the time when BILLIONS will be judged and enter the Kingdom of God! It is the time period called the “Great White Throne Judgment” in Revelation, chapter 20! It literally pictures the final day of “judgment” and sealing those who will receive eternal life (compare Rev.20:11-15), as opposed to those who will suffer the second and final death penalty (v.14-15).

This final day of harvest celebration pictures the vast second resurrection – the resurrection of all people who ever lived, who did not qualify to be in the first resurrection, at the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah (Rev.20:1-4). All these others will rise up, to human life, after the 1,000 year period (Rev.20:5-6). They will be judged at that time – the time of the “Great Salvation,” or “Many *Hoshanas*.”

Mitch and Zhava Glaser tell us concerning this day of Hoshana Rabbah:

“The seventh and last day of Sukkot, known as Hoshana Rabbah, ‘The Great Hoshana,’ is somewhat a festival in itself. On other days of the feast, when the family goes to synagogue, one procession is made around the sanctuary with lulav and etrog while the congregation sings, ‘*Hoshianah*, save us.’ This particular tradition is believed to date back to the time of the Maccabees, around 165 B.C.

“On the final day, the entire congregation marches around *seven times*, carrying even more willow leaves with them. These seven times, a memorial of the circuits made by the ancient priests around the Temple altar during worship, remind us of God’s goodness in destroying Jericho once Israel had circled it seven times.

“After the seventh time around the synagogue, the willow branches are beaten until their leaves fall off – a symbol of *beating off our sins* and a *prayer for plenteous water* for next year’s willows. . .

“In contrast to the festive days of Sukkot, Hoshana Rabbah is observed solemnly, as an extension of the Day of Atonement. On this day, the rabbis tell us, the GATES OF JUDGMENT FINALLY CLOSE and the decrees pronounced by God *on the Day of Atonement take effect*” (*The Fall Feasts of Israel*, p.198-199).

At this time the Spirit of God will be poured out on all these nations and people who come up in this resurrection, who never had a real opportunity for salvation, who died in ignorance of the ways and truth of God. They will “beat off their sins” and pray for God’s Holy Spirit, which is typified by “water,” and they will receive it abundantly (Joel 2:28-29).

Joel Ziff, in *Mirrors in Time: A Psycho-Spiritual Journey through the Jewish Year*, tells us more about Hoshana Rabbah:

“The seventh day of Sukkot is known as Hoshana Rabbah. On this day, the ritual of *Hoshanot* [marching around the synagogue or room] involves seven circlings of the synagogue with the four species. At the end of this ritual, willow branches are beaten against the ground. Hoshana Rabbah is viewed as the *END of the cycle which began*

on the first day of Elul” (p.235).

In other words, Hoshana Rabbah is the culmination of the holy day season that begins with the month of Elul, which is the preparation month for the great feasts of the month of Tishri. Thus the process begins with self-examination and repentance, enjoined on us during Elul, heightened with Rosh Hoshana, and the trumpet warnings sounded on that day to repent and draw close to God. This Feast of Trumpets is followed by the Days of Awe, leading up to Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement, picturing judgment and cleansing -- forgiveness to the deserving and judgment upon the wicked. This is followed by the joyousness of the Feast of Sukkot, but this time is terminated by the FINAL judgment of Hoshana Rabbah!

In reality, then, we have the following scenario:

- 1) Month of Elul – 29 or 30 days -- warning to examine ourselves and come to deeper repentance
- 2) Rosh Hashanah -- Day of Blowing -- pictures final warnings of God symbolized by the seven trumpets of Revelation, picturing the final call to repentance
- 3) Days of Awe -- final “ten days” of warning to prepare to meet the Messiah
- 4) Yom Kippur -- Messiah returns, and judges the world, and marries His bride
- 5) Feast of Sukkot -- seven days of joyous exuberance and feasting -- symbolizing Millennial Kingdom of Messiah, and the wedding feast and Marriage of the Lamb
- 6) Hoshana Rabbah -- last great day of the Feast of Sukkot -- symbolizes Great White Throne Judgment, when all who ever lived receive opportunity for salvation

After this comes Shemini Atzeret, the “Eighth Day,” which we will discuss later in this article.

The Water Pouring Ceremony

Each day of the Feast of Tabernacles, a vital celebration took place called *Simkhat Beit Hashoavah*, that is, “The Rejoicing at the Place of the Water-Drawing.”

“Each morning of Sukkot, the priests went to the pool of Siloah (Silwan) near Jerusalem to fill a golden flask. *Shofar* blasts greeted their arrival at the Temple’s Water Gate. They then ascended and poured the water so that it flowed over the altar simultaneously with wine from another bowl. When the priest was about to pour the water, the people shouted ‘Raise your hand!’ because of an incident that occurred in a previous year: The high priest Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 B.C.E.) showed contempt for the rite by spilling the water at his feet, a transgression for which worshippers threw their citrons at him.

“The pelted priest had demonstrated his alliance with the Sadducees, who literally followed Torah and only what was specifically in Torah. (Explained as an oral instruction given to Moses at Sinai, this water rite was not mentioned in The Five Books.) The deliriously happy celebration connected with the water drawing developed when the Pharisees (who believed in the Oral Tradition and interpretation of Torah and gave us the rabbinic Judaism we know today) triumphed over them in the first century.

“Based on Isaiah’s promise ‘With joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation’ (12:3), rejoicing began at the end of the first day and took place every night except Shabbat. Talmud recorded that ‘one who had never witnessed the Rejoicing of the Place of the Water Drawing has never seen true joy in his life.’ (Although the celebration was for the *libation* that would be made the next morning, it was named for the preparation for the ritual -- the water drawing -- which the rabbis said showed that getting ready was sometimes of greater merit than the *mitzvah* itself because of its positive effect on the person doing it.)” (p.213-214).

For this fascinating ceremony, four immense candelabrum were set in the Temple courtyard for the Feast of Sukkot, 75 feet in height. Each candelabra had four golden bowls, and was reached by four ladders. Each bowl was capable of holding many gallons of oil. Four youths of priestly descent each held a pitcher of oil, which they used to fill the bowls. Wicks were made from the old, cast-off priestly garments and rags from worn-out vestments. When the candelabrum were lit, they generated such intense and brilliant light, that not a courtyard in the whole city of Jerusalem failed to be illuminated by the blazing light. As the mighty torches blazed in the night, we read:

“A Levite orchestra of flutes, trumpets, harps, and cymbals accompanied torchlight processions, and men who had earned the capacity for real spiritual joy through their purity, character and scholarship danced ecstatically to the hand-clapping, foot-stomping, and hymn-singing crowds.

“We do not imagine our distinguished sages as acrobats and tumblers, but they were often agile physically as well as mentally. Rabbi Simon ben Gamaliel juggled eight lighted torches and raised himself into a handstand on two fingers, a gymnastic feat no one else could master. Others juggled eight knives, eight glasses of wine, or eight eggs before leaders and dignitaries” (p.214).

Why was this ceremony called “The Water-Drawing Ceremony”? Alfred Edersheim gives us the emphatic reason, as understood by the Rabbis. He writes:

“For though that ceremony was considered by the Rabbis as being a subordinate reference to the dispensation of the rain, the annual fall of which they imagined was determined by God at that feast, its main and real application was to the future *outpouring of the Holy Spirit*, as predicted -- probably in allusion to this very rite -- by Isaiah the prophet. Thus the Talmud says distinctly: ‘*Why is the name of it called, The drawing out of water? Because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit*, according to what is said: “With joy shall ye draw waters out of the well of salvation.”’ Hence, also, the feast and the peculiar joyousness of it, are alike designated as those of ‘the drawing out of water’; for according to the

same Rabbinical authorities, *the Holy Spirit dwells in man only through joy*" (*The Temple*, p.279-280).

In the days of Nehemiah, at the return of the Jews from Babylon, when they celebrated God's festivals once again, the people were told, "Do not sorrow, for the *joy of the LORD is your strength*" (Nehemiah 8:10, NRSV). "Joy" is a product of the Holy Spirit of God (Gal.5:22), coming right after "love." The Rabbis said the Spirit of God "dwells in man only through joy," and surely true JOY is proof of the Spirit of God! Those who don't have it are missing out, and evidently don't have God's Spirit dwelling within them!

The celebration of the Water-drawing was a highlight of the Feast. It was a happy, even ecstatic occasion, with a torchlight parade, including musicians, jugglers, and dancers, marching to the Temple, at night, as the whole city of Jerusalem was lit up by giant torches and the light of giant menorahs. As the lyres, drums, cymbals, trumpets, drums and horns played, the Rabbis entertained and clowned, adding to the joy. Not one day of Sukkot passed without joyous festivities that celebrated the happiness of the harvest, and the joy of community.

As the dawn of each day approached, the priests descended the steps to the Women's Court, with trumpets blaring, and marched in procession to the Eastern Gate of the Temple, and then turned their faces toward the Temple, to the west, and proclaimed, "Our fathers who were in this place stood with their backs to the Temple and their faces eastward and worshipped the sun, but our eyes are unto the Lord" (based on Ezekiel 8:16).

We read in the gospel of John that Jesus Christ went up to the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem (John 7:1-9). Then, about the middle of the Feast, He went up to the Temple, and taught the people (v.14-30). We then read this amazing fact:

"On the LAST DAY, THAT GREAT DAY OF THE FEAST, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:37-39, KJV).

The last day, the "great day of the Feast," was clearly this day -- Hoshana Rabbah! It was the seventh or last day of the Feast of Tabernacles! Jesus therefore made this statement, about the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, on the last day of the Feast of Sukkot -- picturing the Day of Final Salvation, the Day of Great Salvation, and the Great White Throne Judgment!

For more information on this, be sure to read the article "The Annual Holy Days Reveal the Awesome Plan of God," and the article entitled "The Mystery of the Resurrection of the Dead!"

The Plan of Salvation

Notice how everything fits in perfectly and dove-tails with God's Plan, His mercy, and provides a wonderful way of salvation for the *billions* who have lived and died, never having understood God's Plan, and never having even heard the name of Jesus Christ -- Yeshua the Messiah!

Nineveh, Tyre and Sodom

Jesus alluded to the many wicked of past ages, who died in their wickedness, when He said to His disciples: “The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here. The queen of the south [queen of Sheba during Solomon’s day] shall *rise up in the judgment* with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here” (Matt. 12:41-42).

Jesus went even further. He told His disciples that if a city rejected their message, “Verily I say unto you, It shall be *more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment*, than for that city” (Matt. 10:15). Notice also Matthew, chapter 11. We read: “Then began he [Jesus] to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in *Tyre and Sidon*, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be *more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment* than for you.

“And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee” (Matt. 11:20-24, KJV).

The time is coming when all these ancient cities, and their inhabitants, will be judged -- some more severely than others. This will occur on the FINAL day of salvation, pictured by Hoshana Rabbah – the day of “Great Salvation,” which is the concluding day of the Feast of Tabernacles!

The Valley of Dry Bones

Ezekiel prophecies of this same future time of salvation for the billions who have died. He says: “The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was *full of bones*, and caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and lo, they were very dry” (Ezek. 37:1-2). These dry bones symbolize the millions of people who lived and died long, long ago -- perhaps thousands of years ago in many cases. That is why they were “very dry.”

What happens to these bones?

“And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O Ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause *breath* to enter into you, *and ye shall live*, and I will lay *sinews* upon you, and will bring up *flesh* upon you, and cover you with *skin*, and put breath in you, AND YE SHALL LIVE: and

ye shall know that I am the Lord” (verses 3-6).

Here a great resurrection to physical, mortal life is described! These people will be raised to physical life once again. They will be breathing creatures. They will have sinews, flesh, skin -- they will be physical human beings once again!

Ezekiel says: “So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them.

“Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these *slain*, that they may live.

“So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, *and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, AN EXCEEDING GREAT ARMY*” (Ezek. 27:7-10).

Who are these people?

“Then he said unto me, Son of man, *these bones are THE WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL*: behold, they say, Our bones are died, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophecy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I WILL OPEN YOUR GRAVES, and cause you to come *up out of your graves*, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall *put my spirit in you*, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord” (verses 11-14).

When will this great resurrection to physical life occur? It will be at the same time God brings the peoples of ancient Sodom, Gomorrah, Tyre, Sidon, and the Queen of Sheba, back to life, to stand before judgment!

The time frame of this stupendous event is given in the book of Revelation!

The Great White Throne Judgment

John writes: “And I saw a *great white throne*, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great [who are these?], stand before God; and the *books* were opened: and another book was opened, which is the *book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Rev. 20:11-12)

Here is the same time of resurrection that is described in Ezekiel 37, the “dry bones” chapter. These vast teeming millions, including the vast majority of mankind that ever lived -- billions of people -- will be resurrected to new physical life, and they will be “judged.” All those

who never had a true opportunity for salvation will be given a time to qualify and to be tested, so that they can enter God's Kingdom also. They will be flesh and blood, not immortal. These people will be the millions who were never called by God during this life; those millions who never understood the Plan of God, who never heard of Jesus Christ, the only name under heaven whereby men may be saved, or never understood the whole thing even if they did "hear" the name itself, because of the deception of false religion and false teachers (Acts 4:12). These millions will include the little babies who died in childbirth, the young children who died at a very young age, and others who died in simple ignorance.

Among them apparently will be all the babies who were aborted in their mother's womb, and killed, through no fault of their own – and even children who died because of accident in the womb, such as miscarriages. These children died never having had a chance for salvation. They will be given that opportunity! Those who were blinded to God's truth from Adam to the present day, and just never understood, will at that time be resurrected to mortal life, and given their first and only real opportunity for salvation (see Matthew 12:41-42).

Notice that the "book of life" will be opened. And that they will be judged according to their "works" (Rev. 20:12). These people will apparently live, build houses, and plant vineyards, and live a natural, normal life for perhaps one hundred years (Isa.65:20), during which time they will be tested and tried and receive their opportunity for salvation. They will be taught, for the first time in their existence, the real truth of God. They will be able to compare their previous life, under Satan's way, with life and blessings under God's way, in the Kingdom of God. And the vast majority will repent of their sins, accept Christ as Saviour, and be saved. As Paul wrote: "And so *all Israel shall be saved*" (Rom. 11:26). God is longsuffering and patient, not willing that any should die or perish (II Pet.3:9). Everyone who ever lived will have a complete and unhindered chance to learn God's ways, and to be saved.

But what about those who are the incorrigibly wicked? What about those who refuse to repent, and to obey God, and who continue on in sin no matter what God says, and no matter how patiently He holds out His hand offering them forgiveness? What about those who REJECT the laws of God and give themselves over to sin and wickedness?

The Awesome Fate of the Wicked -- Total Destruction

As we already saw, the "goats" will be cast into eternal fire, where they will be burned up. As we read in Revelation, "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. *This is the second death.* And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:13-15). Those who perish in the lake of fire will never again be resurrected. Their chances were wasted, and their punishment is final.

At the end of this great time of testing and trial, at the conclusion of this period of DIVINE JUDGMENT, all the incorrigible wicked will perish – they will be cast into a lake of fire, and consumed to nothing but smoke and ashes. Those who refuse to repent of their sins and blasphemies, who turn aside from God's way and trample on the shed blood of Christ, treating it

as a little thing, those who *reject and refuse* God's way, will suffer the final judgment -- they will burn up in the lake of fire. And they will never live again. Their life will be extinguished, with finality. They will be put out of their misery. That is how God will banish all sin and punish the sinners who refuse to repent.

At that time, Peter says, "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Pet. 3:10). At that time "sinners [shall] be consumed out of the earth" and "the wicked [shall] be no more" (Psalm 104:35). At that time God will "renew the face of the earth" (Psa. 104:30).

The prophet Malachi describes the scene this way: "For, behold, the day cometh, saith the LORD, that shall BURN as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall *burn them up*, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. . . And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be *ashes* under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 4:1-3).

Hoshana Rabbah pictures that awesome day! It is the last, final day of judgment -- the final opportunity for all mankind to be saved, and to enter into the eternal Kingdom of God as His sons. Those who reject God's mercy and plan, those who fail to make the grade, those who turn away from God and rebel as Satan the devil did, will suffer the same fate as the devil. They will be destroyed -- forever! If you haven't read it, be sure to read my article, "Satan's Fate -- Will Satan Be Punished Forever?"

Yes, God *IS* supremely *FAIR!* He is perfectly just, righteous, and absolutely perfect in judgment! All will have a chance -- an opportunity -- for salvation. What they do with that opportunity, however, is up to them.

Isn't that wonderful? Isn't God wonderful? Isn't the Plan of God marvelous, surpassing human wisdom and understanding?

Paul wrote: "For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have *mercy upon all*. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11:30-36).

This day, Hoshana Rabbah, pictures the LAST GREAT DAY of harvest -- the final great time or dispensation of SALVATION! After it, there is no more harvest -- the harvest is finished -- over.

The last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, then, represents the Great White Throne

judgment, the time when the billions of people who have lived and died, never understanding God's Plan of Salvation, will be resurrected to mortal life, and will be given their first and only chance for salvation, as they, too, will be re-educated and taught the truths of God! It also pictures the awesome time of final judgment -- and the final judgment of God upon the wicked, the proud, and the ungodly, who refuse God's Laws and His way.

But there is still one Holy Festival left in God's sacred calendar. What about it? Many have confused it with the "Great White Throne Judgment." Many think it is the "final day of salvation." However, they have totally misunderstood its real, vital significance and spiritual meaning! It pictures something else entirely. It pictures *eternity!*

Shemini Atzeret -- the "Eighth Day"

The Plan of God now stands almost complete -- except for one final thing. And that final portion is pictured by the LAST of God's seven annual holy days! Notice!

Right after the Feast of Tabernacles comes the final "Feast" of the Lord -- the last "holy day" of the religious year. This is "Shemini Atzeret," that is, "the Eighth Day." What does it represent?

The eighth day itself is a special Holy Day and the concluding Feast of the Lord. During the feast of Tabernacles, or Feast of *Sukkot* in the Hebrew, the children of Israel dwelt in flimsy, quickly constructed booths, with thinly thatched roofs which were open to the sky, so the people could see the stars. This observance connected them with the "booths" which the harvesters used to dwell in, out in the fields, during the fall harvest. The "booths" also depicted the temporary shelters the children of Israel lived in as they journeyed through the desert, after leaving Egypt, before they settled in the Promised Land.

But on the final holy day of *Shemini Atzeret*, the people *no longer dwell in the booths depicting the harvest*. On this day, they once again lived in their homes. *By this day, the HARVEST IS OVER!* What does it represent, then, in the overall Plan of God?

The key to understanding is in the name of the day -- the "eighth day." The number "8" has awesome significance in Scripture! There were 8 people in the Ark of Noah, when his family was saved, to begin a NEW WORLD AGE.

There are seven days in the week, and the Sabbath Day depicts the Millennial reign of Christ and the Feast of Tabernacles. The day *after* the Sabbath is the "eighth day" -- and begins another week, another round of "time keeping" -- a NEW CYCLICAL WEEK. Since the "week" itself depicts God's Plan, the beginning of a NEW week depicts the beginning of a NEW PHASE in the Plan of God -- it represents A NEW BEGINNING!

The NEW Heavens and NEW Earth

What comes after the final day or time period of universal Judgment, pictured by Hoshana Rabbah, and The Great White Throne Judgment?

Notice!

God says, “For, behold, I create *new heavens* and a *new earth*: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (Isa. 65:17). John describes it in the book of Revelation: “And I saw *a new heaven and a new earth*: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, 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.

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be *no more death*, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:1-4).

At this time, God says, “See, I am making ALL THINGS NEW” (Rev.21:5, NRSV).

In that new heaven and earth, there will be NO MORE DEATH for those who have been given immortality! Everybody will live forever! The whole earth will be populated with SAVED CHILDREN OF GOD – IMMORTAL SONS OF GOD!

“And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, *I make all things new*. And he said unto me, *Write*: for these words are true and faithful.

“And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. *He that overcometh shall inherit all things*; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (vs. 5-7, KJV).

The new Jerusalem will sparkle like a diadem upon the earth (Rev. 21:9-21). It is the *bride* of Christ. Those who qualify to enter God’s Kingdom, to be born of God through the Holy Spirit, will be made immortal sons of God and *will dwell in the New Jerusalem, with Christ, and reign with Him on His throne, over the entire Universe, forever and ever!*

Jerusalem will be the headquarters for the Throne of God; from it God’s rule will extend throughout all the galaxies of space, to the uttermost bounds of the Universe, to the farthest reaches of all Creation itself! Yet, believe it or not, the Plan of God will CONTINUE!

In the new heavens and earth, there will be a NEW CYCLE of the PLAN OF GOD!

The Mystery of God

There are several “hints” to this ongoing Plan of God. It will enter into a new phase after the Millennium, during the “New Heavens and New Earth.”

In Genesis, during the time of Noah, God said, when He gave mankind the symbol of the “rainbow,” “This is the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living

creature that is with you, *for PERPETUAL generations*" (Gen.9:12). What is meant by "perpetual generations"? The Hebrew word for "perpetual" is *olam* and means "everlasting," "always," "eternity," "without end," "to the vanishing point."

Does this imply that God will begin again with new human life, and start a new cycle of His Great Plan?

Since the creation of Adam and Eve, about 6,000 years have passed. According to Scripture, there are 40 years in a Biblical generation (Num.14:34). So there have been about 150 generations since the time of Adam.

"A Thousand Generations"

Yet, God says in the Torah, speaking of God and His Covenant, "Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy FOR A THOUSAND GENERATIONS with those who love Him and keep His commandments" (Deut.7:9).

You'd better rub your eyes, and take another, closer look at that promise. God speaks of A THOUSAND GENERATIONS! Simple arithmetic shows that 40 years to a generation multiplied by 1,000 generations equals *40,000 years!* Yet we are living just past the 6000th year since the sin of Adam and Eve and their banishment from the Garden of Eden, in 3997 B.C. The year 2004 A.D. was 6,000 years from that ancient event.

But David also alluded to this promise of God. He wrote in the Psalms, "He is the LORD our God; His judgments are in the earth. He remembers His covenant FOREVER, *the word which He commanded for A THOUSAND GENERATIONS*" (Psalm 105:7-8).

In fact, when God revealed Himself to Moses, He revealed the "Thirteen Divine Attributes" of God to Him. "And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy *for thousands*, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty'" (Exodus 34:6-7, NKJV).

In *The Book of Our Heritage*, Eliyahu Kitov explains the Thirteen Attributes of God's Mercy. He writes:

"The following are the Thirteen Attributes:

1. *Lord -- I am He Who is compassionate before man sins, although I know that he will sin in the end.*
2. *Lord -- And I am He Who is compassionate after Man sins and repents.*
3. *God -- This too is an attribute of mercy, as it is said, "My God, why have You forsaken me?" And one cannot say to the attribute of stern justice: "Why have You forsaken me?"*
4. *Who is Merciful -- He has mercy upon the poor;*
5. *and Gracious -- He is gracious unto the wealthy;*

6. *Long-suffering -- He is patient and is not quick to exact retribution, in the hope that the guilty will repent;*
7. *Abundant in lovingkindness -- He acts with lovingkindness toward those who lack merit;*
8. *Truthful -- He rewards those who fulfill His will;*
9. *Guards lovingkindness unto the thousandth generation -- He guards the lovingkindness which a person does before Him, unto the thousandth, AND EVEN TWO THOUSANDTH, GENERATION;*
10. *Forbears transgression -- He is forbearing over transgressions which men commit willfully;*
11. *and Iniquity -- He bears the iniquities which a person commits in a spirit of rebelliousness;*
12. *and Misdeeds -- He bears sins which are committed unintentionally;*
13. *and He will not hold clear of guilt -- He will clear those who repent, but will not clear those who fail to repent."*

The Hebrew for "thousands" here is '*eleph*, a form of *aleph*, the first letter in the Hebrew alphabet. It denotes "thousands" – or , in this case, "thousands of generations." It also denotes "a family," as the Aleph is like an ox's head and is the first letter of the alphabet, and was eventually used as a numeral – it represents both 1, and 1,000, or thousands. *Alaph* is a primitive root, meaning "to *associate* with," hence, "to learn, teach, utter."

The Hebrew in Exodus 34:7 can refer to the thousandth or even two thousandth generation – which literally could be interpreted as 1,000 X 40 years or 40,000 years; or 2,000 X 40 years = 80,000 years. Or, literally, multiple "thousands" – stretching forward into virtual infinity/eternity.

"Eternal Increase Without End"

Isaiah the prophet also alludes to this mystery. He writes in chapter 9, "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. *Of the INCREASE of His government and peace there will be NO END*, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice *from that time forward, EVEN FOREVER*. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:6-7, NKJV).

That is, the Kingdom of God will grow and grow, multiply and expand – FOREVER – always INCREASING, with justice and peace, WITHOUT EVER ENDING THE INCREASING GROWTH AND EXPANSION! A growing Kingdom "with no end" – no limitation, no boundary, no termination point!

Is that exciting – or what? And we today have the opportunity to be, as it were, "on the ground floor"! We have the chance to jump on board just as the train is getting started out of the station! ALL ETERNITY stretches on before us, out in front of us, past the horizon, far as the eye can see, and beyond, forever!

John calls it the “New Heavens and New Earth.”

John declared, “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the *glory of God did* lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

“And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it” (Rev. 21:23-26). Says the NRSV, “The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day – and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations” (Rev.21:24-26).

The King James Version uses the word “saved” but this can be understood as the nations which at that time are “being saved,” or which are then “in a saved condition.” It does not necessarily mean those who have already been made immortal!

Rather, they will be in the process of attaining salvation, serving the LORD, and obeying His commandments!

What a society that will be! What a glorious Kingdom! Can you imagine it?

The earth will be the headquarters of the entire Universe! The Plan of Salvation will be extended throughout eternity!

How marvelous! How majestic and wonderful! Truly, as Isaiah wrote, “From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him” (Isa.64:4, NKJV). As Paul the apostle wrote, “But as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, or ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him’ – these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God” (I Cor.2:9-10, NRSV).

For more information about “Shemini Atzeret,” write for our article which explores that final holy day in detail. For more information about the Feast of Tabernacles, and its full meaning, write for our articles, “The Deep Meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles,” and “Secrets of the Sukkah.” For greater insight in the “Day of Atonement,” write for “The Awesome Mystery of Yom Kippur.” For the Feast of Trumpets, write for, “New Insight into the Feast of Trumpets.” For Pentecost, write for “Pentecost – the Whole Story.” For Passover, “The Awesome Mysteries of the Passover.”

In the meantime, let us celebrate God’s wonderful Holy Days, including the Fall Festivals, The Feast of Trumpets, the Days of Awe, the Festival of Yom Kippur, the Feast of Tabernacles, and Hoshana Rabbah, and Shemini Atzeret with renewed understanding, greater conviction, tremendous joy and excitement, as we rejoice in and review the wonderful Plan of God for our salvation, and His incredible TRUTH which He has revealed to us about His Holy Days in these last days! Let’s celebrate the Festivals of God with JOY!

