

**Triumph Prophetic Ministries (Church of God)**

**The Mystery of Shemini Atzeret -- the "Eighth Day"**

What is the real, true meaning of the one day festival that occurs at the close of the Feast of Tabernacles -- called Shemini Atzeret in Hebrew, or "the Eighth Day"? The awesome significance of this final festival day in God's Plan has gone unnoticed, misinterpreted, and misunderstood by millions! It does not picture the "Great White Throne" judgment at the close of the Millennium, as thousands have assumed -- but something far greater than that! Here the truth is made plain!

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In the book of Leviticus we read a description of all the annual holy days of God, beginning with Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the seven day Feast of Tabernacles or "Ingathering" of the harvest (Lev.23:1-36). Then, at the close of the Feast of Sukkoth or Tabernacles, in the fall, we read:

"On the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein" (Lev.23:36).

This one-day festival occurs right at the end of the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles, which pictures the Millennial Reign of Christ (Rev.20:4; Isa.11). The last or seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles pictures the FINAL DAY OF HARVEST or INGATHERING-- that is, the final time of spiritual harvest which is pictured by the Great White Throne judgment, when all those who ever lived are resurrected and "judged" according to their works (Rev.20:11-15). This "seventh day" of the Feast is also called "the great day of the feast" (John 7:37), and is the time when God's Spirit is poured out on all mankind (John 7:37-39). It pictures a truly "great day of salvation" when billions will be saved, and will come to know God!

Since the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles completes the "harvest festival" of the great fall harvest -- and therefore represents the FINAL DAY of "harvesting" and "ingathering" -the COMPLETION of the salvation process, and God's Plan with mankind-- what is the meaning and purpose of the ONE-DAY festival that appears to be "tacked onto" the end of the Feast of Tabernacles?

What is the hidden, unrealized meaning of "Shemini Atzeret" -- or "the eighth day"?

**Shemini Atzeret in Jewish Lore**

Before seeing what the Scriptures tell us about this subject, let's review briefly the teachings and concepts which Rabbinical Judaism has put forth concerning this ancient festival. The Jews have been observing this day, along with all God's festivals, for the past 3,500 years, since the time of Moses. Therefore, their insights ought to be instructive and meaningful.

To understand the full meaning of this final holy day, it will help us to compare -- and to contrast -- it with the Festival that precedes it, the Feast of Tabernacles. As *The Jewish Book of Why* explains:

"Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah ["the rejoicing of the Law"] are holidays totally independent of the Sukkot holiday. "In Israel, as dictated by the Bible, Sukkot is observed for seven days. The first day is a full holiday, on which one is to abstain from work. The next five days are Chol Hamoed, Intermediary Days, which are considered half-holidays. The seven and last day of Sukkot is Hoshana Rabba, also a half-holiday. The day after Hoshana Rabba is a separate holiday called Shemini Atzeret. Simchat Torah is not observed as a separate holiday. It is observed as part of Shemini Atzeret. . . ."

"The seventh and last day of Sukkot was endowed with special sanctity by the last of the Prophets: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Coming at the beginning of the rainy season, it became known as a Day of Judgment for Rain. (A special service for rain became part of the Shemini Atzeret service held on the next day.)" (p.254-255).

This Jewish authority goes on to explain further:

"Shemini Atzeret, the Eighth Day of Solemn Assembly, is often thought of as the eighth day of Sukkot. Actually, it is an INDEPENDENT HOLIDAY. The Rabbis refer to it as regel bifnay atzmo, a separate holiday, and required that the Shehecheyanu prayer be recited when the candles are lighted and when the Kiddush is recited. (This would not be required if Shemini Atzeret were not an independent holiday.)

"Shemini Atzeret is a ONE-DAY HOLIDAY marking the conclusion of the festivities and observances of Sukkot, and NONE OF THE SUKKOT CEREMONIALS APPLY TO IT" (p.256).

Further enlightenment concerning this holy day of God is provided in the book *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*, by Rabbi Irving Greenberg. He relates:

"When the seven days of Sukkot end, the Bible decrees yet another holiday, the Eighth Day of Assembly. The Rabbis interpreted this as an encore. After the High Holy Days, after the intense seven days of Sukkot and pilgrimage, the Jewish people [or, we should say, more accurately, "God's people"] are about to leave, to scatter and return to their homes. God grows nostalgic, as it were, and pensive. The people of Israel will not come together again in such numbers until Passover six months hence. God

will soon miss the sounds of music and pleasure and the unity of the people. The Torah decreed, therefore, an eighth day of assembly, a final feast/holy day. On this day Jews leave the sukkah to resume enjoying the comfort of solid, well built, well insulated homes. The lulav and etrog are put aside; this day, Shemini Atzeret, is a reprise of the celebration of Sukkot but without any of the rituals. The message is that all the rituals and symbolic language are important but ultimately they remain just symbols" (p.115).

### **Shemini Atzeret and the Prayer for Rain**

In the book *Celebrate! The Complete Jewish Holidays Handbook*, Lesli Koppelman Ross explains more about the "eighth day" or Shemini Atzeret. Not only is this feast distinctly different from Sukkot, but it includes a very special "Prayer for Rain." We read as follows:

"Just as Sukkot gives us a transitional period between the Days of Awe and our normal routines, the last day of the festival, Shemini Atzeret, or the Eighty Day of Solemn Assembly, the day we are held back to extend the party with God, eases us out of the transience of the sukkah.

"As a separate holiday in its own right, also referred to as Shemini Khag (festival) Ha'atzeret, the eighth day is honored with the lighting of candles and reciting the festival kiddush. . .

"The distinct feature of the day is recitation of the prayer for rain so that the earth will be able to produce in the coming year. It is not said earlier during Sukkot, which marks the beginning of the rainy season in Israel, because we do not want rain to prevent us from dwelling in the sukkah or to interfere with our enjoyment of doing so" (p.229).

Rain, of course, is made up of water, descending from the skies. It is a type of the Holy Spirit of God. Comparing God's Spirit to rain, the prophet Joel writes, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit" (Joel 2:28-29).

Water is itself a symbol of life, and is the foundation of all carbon-based life forms on earth. We could not live without it. In fact, water forms about 80% of our physical human bodies!

Water and the prayer for rain is a vital ingredient in the celebration of Shemini Atzeret. It represents God's Holy Spirit in a very special way. David prayed, "As the hart panteth after the water brook, so panteth my heart after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42:1-2).

Isaiah the prophet wrote, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa.55:1).

God also compares His Word to the rain that waters the earth. In the same chapter, He tells us, "For as the RAIN cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me VOID, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with JOY, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an EVERLASTING SIGN that shall not [ever] be cut off" (Isa.55:10-13).

The Messiah, Yeshua Ha Moshiach (or Jesus the Christ, in English), offers each one of us "living water" (John 4:10) -the water that leads to eternal life. He said to the Samaritan woman at the well at Sychar, in Samaria, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

This is the very water that Isaiah the prophet foretold, when he declared, "Behold, God is my salvation [Hebrew, Yeshua]; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH [YAHVEH] is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation [Yeshua]. Therefore with JOY shall ye draw WATER out of the wells of salvation [Yeshua]. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name [Yeshua], declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in ALL the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel [Yeshua] in the MIDST of thee" (Isa.12:2-6).

God also prophesied through Isaiah, His prophet: "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour MY SPIRIT upon thy seed [children], and MY BLESSING upon thy offspring" (Isa.44:3).

Yeshua (Jesus Christ) put it this way: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth in me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow RIVERS OF LIVING WATER (but this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)" (John 7:37-38).

The theme of water is intimately tied up with the final holy day of the year, Shemini Atzeret. We will discuss this amazing feature later.

### **Essence of Shemini Atzeret**

In the book *The Essence of the Holy Days: Insights from the Jewish Sages*, Avraham Yaakov Finkel tells us more about Shemini Atzeret:

"The seven days of Sukkot which end with Hoshana Rabbah are followed by another holiday, Shemini Atzeret, the Eighth Day of Assembly. . . It is a festival in its own right, independent of Sukkot, and is observed one day in Eretz Yisrael . . . The fact that Shemini Atzeret is a separate Yom Tov is evident in the blessing of Shehecheyanu (Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season), which is recited by women when lighting the candles and by men when reciting the Kiddush.

"None of the special mitzvot associated with Sukkot are observed on Shemini Atzeret, and thus there is no requirement to take the lulav and etrog. . . .

"The word atzeret is derived from atzar, to collect, to store. The purpose of this festival is to recapitulate and to store in our memories everything we experienced and gained during the preceding Yamim Tovim [Good Days], so that we will carry out the resolutions we have made, will retain the spiritual elevation we have reached, and will not lose them in the everyday life to which we are about to return" (p.95-96).

The Rabbis recognized that this day, in itself, is a very special holy day. They saw that it is distinct from the Feast of Sukkot or Tabernacles. They understood that in a special sense, this day is connected to STORING UP and COLLECTING all the knowledge, spiritual food, and instruction that we have gained in the preceding holy days -- especially from Rosh Hashana (Feast of Trumpets) through the Feast of Sukkot -- all the spiritual lessons of repentance, forgiveness, character development, obedience, faith, joy, love -- the lessons of complete spiritual maturity -- that we have learned during the High Holy Day season through the Feast of Sukkot.

### **Spiritual Aspects of Shemini Atzeret**

The Rabbis also contemplated why on this day -- Shemini Atzeret-- there is no living inside the sukkah required, and no waving of the lulav, two rituals which were prominent during the preceding seven-day festival of Sukkot. Finkel goes on to explain:

"Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi said, Shemini Atzeret is a Yom Tov that is not identified with any specific symbol or mitzvah. It is not celebrated with either matzah, shofar, or lulav. The reason is that on Shemini Atzeret we reach a stage of TRUE AND PURE JOY, a state of happiness that requires no external symbolic stimuli. It is a joy that stems from the depth of man's inner self. Sadness and depression are the marks of a person who is distant from his inner core. A person who 'is himself' and is in harmony with his inner core is filled with pure joy.

"This is what the sages meant when they postulated in the Talmud, 'Shemini Atzeret is a Yom Tov by itself,' it is a celebration and rejoicing of the essential inner self" (p.96).

Seventy bullocks were sacrificed to God during the Feast of Tabernacles, picturing the "seventy" nations of mankind having their sins atone for, and becoming obedient to the truth of God and the commandments of the Lord (Isa.2:1-4; Micah 4:1-4). But on Shemini Atzeret, only one bull was offered. Why? Finkel explains:

"During the week of Sukkot, altogether seventy bulls were brought as Mussaf offerings on the altar in the Bet Hamikdash. However, on Shemini Atzeret, only one bull was sacrificed. Why? The seventy bulls represent the seventy nations of the world; the one bull of Shemini Atzeret represents the unique nation of Israel. You may compare it to a king who had held a festival for seven days and invited all of the country's inhabitants (the nations of the world) to the seven days of feasting. When the seven days of feasting were over, he said to his friend (Israel), 'Let us now have a small meal together, just you and I' (Bamidbar Rabbah 21, Sukkah 55b)" (p.98).

Obviously, the picture of Shemini Atzeret is of a very intimate union and fellowship, which follows after the broad-based and universal Feast of Sukkot. It is a close family union, with much deeper and more pure insights and depth of meaning and spirituality. Finkel goes on:

"Rabbi Noach of Lechowitz expounded, The theme of Shemini Atzeret may be better understood if we think of it in terms of a BRIDE AND GROOM. During the wedding, they are both decked out in a wardrobe of exquisite, elegant clothes and jewelry. However, when they come together in their private chamber, they remove their garments and jewelry.

"It is the same with Shemini Atzeret. During the seven days of Sukkot, the Jewish people offered a profusion of seventy bulls, but on Shemini Atzeret-the moment they achieve COMPLETE UNIFICATION WITH GOD -- they brought only one bull (Num.29:36)" (*The Essence of the Holy Days*, p.98-99).

The fact that there are no outward rituals or symbols connected with Shemini Atzeret, unlike Passover, Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets, Atonement, and Sukkot, speaks of the unique spiritual quality of this final Festival of God. It is as if we have transcended from the physical to the purely spiritual -- from the concrete and palpable to the sublime and untouchable -- from that which can be seen to that which cannot be seen. As the apostle Paul wrote, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal [temporary, transient, evanescent]: but the things which are not seen are ETERNAL" (II Cor.1:18).

We move from the threshold of the visible to the invisible from those things which can be shaken to the unshakable. As Paul also wrote, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things that cannot be shaken may REMAIN. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which CANNOT BE MOVED, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb.12:25-29).

Comparing the symbolism of this Holy Day with the imagery of a Bride and Bridegroom, and their intimate togetherness, by themselves, after all the guests and party-goers depart, gives us a special insight into the real spiritual implications of Shemini Atzeret. The picture reveals that after the Millennial "Feast" of Sukkot is finished, and the great "Fall Harvest" has been gathered in, the Bride -- the Church of God, spiritual Israel (Gal.6:16) -- and the Groom, Yeshua the Messiah -- will have a special "day" or time to themselves, in an even deeper expression of intimate love, sensitivity, and pure joy.

But there is even more.

Joel Ziff, in *Mirrors in Time: A Psycho-Spiritual Journey through the Jewish Year*, gives us even greater insight and understanding into the deep spiritual meaning of Shemini Atzeret. He informs us:

"... Sukkot is associated with the earth. There are two qualities of earth -- one implying humility and the other expansiveness. We pray for humility with the words, 'May I be like the dust of the earth before all of creation' . . . Paradoxically, the image of earth is also used to suggest expansiveness when God promises Abraham and Sara their progeny will be like the 'dust of the earth.' In this same manner, developing a sense of humility and an acceptance and appreciation of our vulnerability, we also connect to the source of our power and hope.

"On the eighth day, we collect the water we have accessed. It becomes a WELL from which we can nourish ourselves as we resume ordinary life. The connection of the well to Shemini Atzeret can be translated as assembly or collection. On this day, we assemble within ourselves the STOREHOUSE OF ENERGY which will fuel our efforts through the remainder of the year, as we bring light into the darkness. Just as we can store water in a cistern, JOY energizes our continued efforts through the year.

"We have been able to experience ourselves in a new way while under the protection of the sukkah. On the eighth day, we set aside the external supports which have helped us to respond in a new way. We no longer use the lulav and etrog. We return to our homes and say farewell to the sukkah. In some respects, the props are no longer necessary -- just as a plant which has grown from a seedling no longer needs special protection from the elements. We are now more able to support ourselves.

"However, we are not completely self-sufficient. The Israelites were more able to sustain themselves when they reached the land of Israel. They worked hard to plant and harvest crops rather than rely on the manna for food. However, they still required help from God in the form of RAIN. On Shemini Atzeret, the beginning of the planting season, a special prayer for rain is added to the daily service. In this same spirit, we are able to work hard to nurture our NEW BEGINNING, but we still need nourishment to flow down to us from the heavens to HELP US GROW AND DEVELOP" (p.241-242).

Shemini Atzeret, then, represents the completion of one cycle, and the beginning of another NEW cycle, according to God's Plan. It represents a NEW BEGINNING. This "new beginning" requires "rain" -- a type of the Spirit of God poured out in order to produce a new crop and a new harvest! Shemini Atzeret represents the beginning of a new RAINY SEASON, during which the earth is nourished by rain from the heavens. Spiritually, then, it represents the pouring out anew of God's Holy Spirit and the continuation and expectation of a NEW HARVEST for the Kingdom of God!

Joel Ziff goes on, describing how this day integrates with the High Holy Day season, the Days of Awe, and the Feast of Sukkot. He writes:

"Shneur Zalman also describes the process at this time of year with the image of a PLANTING A SEED in the earth. The planting of the seed in the earth is a symbol of humility; when we plant a seed, we cover it with earth. We are like that seed in our process of self-evaluation during the Days of Awe. . . Eventually the seed sprouts and emerges into the light of day from inside the earth. Empowered by the work of self-reflection, the actions take place with a positive feeling. After doing the work of self-reflection on Yom Kippur, we are able to respond whole-heartedly on Sukkot. As we dig into the earth, we find a spring, a well of water that flows up to us from the depths. On Shemini Atzeret, we ACCESS THE 'LIVING WATERS' OF SALVATION which flow the quality of God's lovingkindness, Chesed" (p.242).

Thus the Festivals of God are intimately bound up with the cycles of the earth -- the seasons of spring, summer, fall, and winter. They are connected closely and in depth to the AGRICULTURAL HARVESTS of the year -- both spring and fall. But there is a mighty, profound, rich spiritual lesson in all this. What is this lesson? What do the annual cycles of planting and harvest have to do with God's spiritual Plan?

Let's understand this!

### **The Meaning of the Number "Eight"**

The very name of this festival, "Shemini Atzeret," literally means "The Eighth Assembly." It is the final holy day of God's Holy Day Plan. However, there is great significance in the number "eight" itself!

E. W. Bullinger, in his book *Number in Scripture*, explains about the meaning and symbolism of numbers, including the number "eight." He declares:

"In Hebrew the number eight is Sh'moneh, from the root Shah'meyn, 'to make fat,' 'cover with fat,' 'to super-abound.' As a participle it means 'one who abounds in strength,' etc. As a noun it is 'super-abundant fertility,' 'oil,' etc. So that as a numeral it is the super-abundant number. As seven was so called because the seventh day was the day of completion and rest, so eight, as the eighth day, was over and above this perfect completion, and was indeed the FIRST of a new series, as well as being the eighth. Thus it already represents two numbers in one, the first and eighth" (p.196).

Even as "seven" is God's number of perfection, or completion (as the Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, which completes and perfects the week), so "eight" is the same as the first day of the NEXT week, but counting from the days of the previous week. Thus it represents clearly "A NEW BEGINNING."

An example of "eight" used in this connection in the Scriptures is the fact that as Peter tells us, there were EIGHT souls in the Ark of Noah, who began the NEW WORLD after the Flood! We read of the time when "the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (I Peter 3:20).

Interestingly, in the future Temple of God described in Ezekiel, we find that there were seven steps that led into the outer court (Ezek.40:22, 26); however, there were eight steps that led from the outer court to the inner court (Ezek.40:31, 34, 37). The first seven led from labor to rest, but the eight led from rest to intimate fellowship with God and pure worship!

The consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests of God required seven days of being set apart (Lev.8:35), but it was on the "eighth day" that they were anointed as "priests," thus beginning a "new" ministry and office before God and the people.

David was the "eighth" son of Jesse, thus also beginning a "new dynasty" in Israel when he became king (I Sam.16:10-11; II Sam.17:12).

Bullinger adds concerning the significance of this number "8":

"It is 7 plus 1. Hence it is the number specially associated with Resurrection and Regeneration, and the BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA OR ORDER.

"When the whole earth was covered with a flood, it was Noah 'the eighth person' (II Pet.2:5) who stepped out on to a new earth to commence a new order of things. 'Eight souls' (I Pet.3:20) passed through it with him to the new or regenerated world.

"Hence, too, circumcision was to be performed on the EIGHTH DAY (Gen.17:12) . . . . The first-born was to be given to Jehovah on the eighth day (Exo.22:29-30).

### **The Holy City, New Jerusalem**

Eight is the first "cubic" number -- it is  $2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8$ . Whereas "3" is the symbol of the first plane figure (a triangle with 3 sides), and "4" is the first square, so here in the first "cube" figure we see something of transcendent perfection, something in which length, breadth, and height are all equal! But what does this fact have to do with Shemini Atzeret, the "eighth" day?

E. W. Bullinger points out this salient fact:

This significance of the cube is seen in the fact that the 'Holy of Holies,' both in the Tabernacle and in the Temple, were cubes. In the Tabernacle it was a cube of ten cubits. In the Temple it was a cube of twenty cubits. IN REVELATION 20, THE NEW JERUSALEM IS TO BE A CUBE OF 144,000 FURLONGS. Dr. Milo Mahan is inclined to believe that the Ark of Noah, too, had a kind of sacred Shechinah in 'the window finished in a cubit above' -a cube of one. If so, we have the series of cubes: -- 1 = The Ark 103 = 1,000, The Tabernacle 203 = 8,000, The Temple 12,0003 = 1,728,000,000,000, The New Jerusalem" (*Number in Scripture*, Bullinger, p.201-212).

Bullinger points out that the number 1,728 (see above) is also a very unusual number. It is the product of 82 (Shemini -- "a new beginning" squared), times 33 (the number of Decision, Finality, Judgment, cubed).

But what does all this have to do with the "Eighth Day of Assembly"?

### **The Plan of God Unveiled!**

As we have already seen, in discussions of the previous holy days of God, the Fall Festivals picture the whole Plan of God. The Feast of Rosh Hoshana pictures the call to Repentance (the blowing of trumpets of warning), followed by the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, which pictures the Judgment Day when the Messiah returns to judge the world. This holy day is followed by the seven day Feast of Sukkot, or "Ingathering," which pictures the Millennial Reign of the Messiah, for 1,000 years (Rev.20:10-4). The last day of this feast, the seventh or final day, called Hoshanna Rabbah (The Great Hoshannas), pictures the final day of salvation or harvest -- the Great White Throne judgment, which occurs at the close of the Millennium (Rev.20:5-14).

But what happens AFTER this final period of JUDGMENT of the multiple billions of people on the earth, including all who never understood God's truth, the vast numbers of Gentiles, and those who were not called to be part of the "firstfruits" from the dead? What happens after they have been "harvested" and "in-gathered" into the Kingdom of God?

Notice!

### **"New Heavens and a New Earth"**

The apostle John records: "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. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW" (Revelation 21:1-5).

John then describes this magnificent "holy city," the New Jerusalem, "descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal: and had a great wall and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel . . . . And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs [that is, approximately 1,500 miles to a side]. The length and the breadth and the height of it are EQUAL" (Rev.21:10-16).

Could this magnificent city be in the shape of the Holy of Holies of God's Temple -- a huge magnificent CUBE? It will represent the "Holy of Holies" in the earth, which will be the very Throne of God. Those who will be the "Bride" of Christ those who are in the first resurrection -- will dwell with God and Christ in this magnificent "Holy of Holies"! They will be part of the divine, celestial, eternal "Trinity" of God -- the Father, the Son, and the Bride (Israel)!

But notice further. Outside this city, in the magnificent New Earth, will dwell ALL THE NATIONS OF MANKIND that will be SAVED, and given immortality and eternal life!

John continues his description: "And the NATIONS of them which are SAVED shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory 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 honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise come into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev.20:24-27).

Here the rest of "saved" mankind is described -- those who will enter the Kingdom of God, during the Millennial reign of Messiah, and, those who are resurrected to moral life to be given their chance for salvation after the Millennium, during the "Great White Throne" judgment period -- the "Great Day of Salvation" represented by Hoshana Rabbah, the seventh and final day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

However, the term "saved" also has a "present" connotation to it -- that is, the Greek word "saved" also means "those who are in a saved condition," or "those who are in the process of being saved" (see I Cor.1:18, 15:2, II Cor.2:15, II Tim.1:9). Therefore, this verse also has another incredible meaning and fantastic implication. Let's notice!

### **The Prophecy of Isaiah**

Isaiah the prophet also describes this incredible scene of the new heavens and the new earth. He prophesied, in chapter 65, of God creating the new heavens and earth, as something to be rejoiced in FOREVER -- that is, for all eternity! But notice what else he says about this stupendous, fantastic time. Isaiah quotes God as saying:

"For, behold, I create NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye GLAD and REJOICE FOREVER [Hebrew, *olam*, meaning forever, eternity, literally, "to the vanishing point" or "time out of sight"] in that which I CREATE: for, behold, I create JERUSALEM A REJOICING, and her people a joy.

"And I will rejoice in Jerusalem [God Himself will rejoice!!!], and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

"There shall be no more thence an INFANT OF DAYS, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed [judged and condemned to the lake of fire].

"And they shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them . . . for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; FOR THEY ARE THE SEED [OFFSPRING, CHILDREN] OF THE BLESSED OF THE LORD, and their offspring with them . . . . The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in ALL MY HOLY MOUNTAIN, saith the LORD" (Isa.65:17-25).

Notice! This passage is clearly dual in application. It describes the Messianic Kingdom of Jesus Christ, Yeshua, who is coming soon to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, as the fulfillment of hundreds of Messianic prophecies. But it also describes in a vivid and clear sense the "new heavens and new earth" (Isa.65:17). It clearly states that in that New Heavens and New Earth, there will be CHILDREN BORN -- that God's plan of pro-creation and multiplication of potential members of the Divine Family through human beings, will continue, throughout the ages, and perhaps even "beyond time"!

Is such a thing possible?

Is "Shemini Atzeret" in reality the "staging ground," THE THRESHOLD, the NEW BEGINNING of the NEXT PHASE of God's Plan? Its very name identifies it as a "new beginning." God will create a "new beginning" when He creates new heavens and a new earth. Jesus plainly told John, "I make ALL THINGS NEW" (Rev.21:5).

The apostle Peter writes of that coming awesome time: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which 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. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless, we according to his promise, look for NEW HEAVENS and a NEW EARTH, WHEREIN DWELLETH RIGHTEOUSNESS" (II Peter 3:10-13).

### **God's Incredible Plan**

In the book of Genesis, God said, at the original creation of mankind:

"And God said, Let US make man in OUR IMAGE, after OUR LIKENESS: And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over ALL THE EARTH, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

"So God CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE, in the IMAGE OF GOD created he him: male and female created he them.

"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, BE FRUITFUL, AND MULTIPLY, AND REPLENISH [Hebrew, *FILL UP*] THE EARTH, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen.1:26-28).

How much authority did God really intend to give mankind? David tells us in the Psalms, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou hast put ALL THINGS [that is, ALL THE UNIVERSE!!!] under his feet . . ." (Psalm 8:4-6).

The apostle Paul referred to this Scripture, when he wrote, "Thou hast put all things under his feet. For in that he put ALL in subjection under him [mankind], HE LEFT NOTHING THAT IS NOT PUT UNDER HIM. But now we see NOT YET all things put under him" (Heb.2:8).

God intends for mankind, after he repents of his sins and learns his lessons, and learns to obey God, and develops righteous, holy, godly character, to become GLORIFIED AS HIS OWN CHILDREN -- HIS DIVINE SONS -- whom He will give AUTHORITY to rule the entire Cosmos -- the UNIVERSE -- all the galaxies and star systems of space!

As Paul wrote to the Church in Rome, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we ARE the children of God. And if children, then HEIRS; heirs of GOD, and JOINT-HEIRS with CHRIST: if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also GLORIFIED TOGETHER" (Rom.8:16-17). Paul was so overwhelmed by the thought of our destiny, that he exclaimed, "For I

reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the GLORY that shall be revealed in us" (Rom.8:18).

How awesome is the Plan of God!

Will God's Plan of reproducing Himself, expanding His divine Family, through human beings made in His express image and likeness, continue throughout eternity? There are many indications in the Scriptures that it is so. Consider!

### **Onward and Forward Forever!**

Isaiah the prophet wrote, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the INCREASE of his government shall be NO END, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth EVEN FOREVER. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isa.9:6-7).

The word "increase" in this passage is the Hebrew word marbyth and literally means, "multitude, offspring, greatness, increase." The word for "end" is the Hebrew word quetz and means "extremity, utmost, border, finite."

In other words, God is telling us here that the growing and multiplying and INCREASING of the SIZE AND SCOPE AND NUMBERS in God's Kingdom will have NO "limitation" or "border" or be in any sense "finite" or "limited." The increase will grow and continue like "compound interest," FOREVER AND EVER AND EVER throughout the future ages and aeons of time and space!

There is further evidence of this stupendous fact! In the book of Genesis, we read that after the Flood, when God began a "new world" order under Noah and his descendants: "And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I will make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, FOR PERPETUAL GENERATIONS: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud, and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth" (Gen.9:12-16).

In verse 12, here, the word for "generations" refers to human generations. The word for "perpetual" is the Hebrew word olam which literally means "forever, eternity, the vanishing point." The expression "PERPETUAL GENERATIONS" therefore implies that human reproduction will go on FOREVER -- IT IS THE PLAN OF GOD TO CONTINUE REPRODUCING BEINGS IN HIS VERY LIKENESS AND IMAGE HIS OWN SONS AND DAUGHTERS -- FOREVER!!!

But for a final proof from Scripture, notice God's words in Deuteronomy 7. God tells His people Israel that He has chosen them as His special people, not because of their own greatness, or goodness (Deut.7:7-8), but He chose them because He loved them, and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, their ancestors, to whom He had made wonderful promises, when He intends to keep.

God then said to Israel, "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments TO A THOUSAND GENERATIONS" (Deuteronomy 7:9). The Hebrew word for "generations" here is dor and literally means "ages," "generations," "revolutions."

In the Bible, one of the key definitions of a "generation" is found in Numbers 14. The generation of Israelites that came out of Egypt were faithless and disobedient, and feared to go into the Promised Land and fight the Canaanites (Num.13:21-33). They rebelled against Moses and against God (Num.14:1-10). God therefore decided to punish them, and cause that generation to wander in the wilderness, and die there, for a period of 40 years (Num.14:34).

If we use the number "40" as the length of a Biblical "generation," then God's statement in Deuteronomy 7:9 that He would bless the righteous "to a thousand generations" would compute to a time period of 40 years times 1,000 generations. In other words, 40 x 1,000 = 40,000 years!!!

Since the time of Adam and Eve, mankind has been on this planet for only about 6,000 years. The Millennial Sabbath day, which is 1,000 years (Rev.20:4), will be the "final day" of God's "week" of seven days, picturing the 7,000 year plan of God, which encompasses the time from Adam and Eve till the end of the Millennium.

But what comes after that?

Clearly, when we put all these Scriptures together, there will be human beings born in the new heavens and new earth! They also will be given an opportunity -- without any Devil or Satan or his demonic hordes to tempt or seduce them -- to qualify for salvation and eternal life!

They will live in a wonderful Garden of Eden-like world, like Adam and Eve, only this time there won't be a Devil or his demons to deflect, sidetrack, deceive, or seduce them! But they will have billions of "sons of God," already in God's Kingdom, ready to help, instruct, guide and teach them, at a moment's notice! And when they have qualified, they, too, will become spirit beings -- literal "sons of God" in the ever-expanding KINGDOM OF GOD!

God's Great Plan will continue onward and forward -- for ALL ETERNITY, "to the vanishing point," that, is, throughout "all ages"!

Truly, there is far more meaning and significance to "The Eighth Day" -- Shemini Atzeret -- than mankind has even begun to imagine or entertain in his mind!

As the apostle Paul wrote, "As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor.2:9).

Isn't this fantastic? Isn't this just absolutely "GrrrrrrrEEEE-AAA-TTT"?

Think of it! We, who are called now, have the opportunity to get in on the "ground floor," so to speak, of God's Kingdom -to be a part of the BRIDE of Christ the Messiah, to be the "Israel of God" (Gal.6:16). The rest of the nations, mankind, including our

own children who are not called now, in this age, will become members of the God Kingdom at a later time, when their "calling" comes to fruition.

This great and awesome plan will stagger their imaginations, when they first learn about it, and see it being implemented in us!

And so, as the prophet declared, "And so ALL ISRAEL shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. . . . For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. 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" (Romans 11:26-32).

Thinking on these marvelous things, Paul exclaimed, "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.11:33-36). Absolutely, Amen!

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