

BEYOND THE GREAT HARVEST

The Festival of the Eighth Day is a celebration with many meanings that point to one final climactic event, which will end the physical existence and the order of things as we know them today. This festival also celebrates and pictures a new beginning at a time far in the future, past the millennial reign of Christ and the elect of God, and after the conclusion of God's plan for the salvation of humanity.

THE PROPHETIC ORDER

In the prophetic order of events for the salvation of humanity, which is pictured through the annual observances and festivals, the celebration of the Festival of Shelters/Ingathering signals the end of the effort to convert humanity to the ways of God and the transformation of those who are worthy into spirit-beings.

With the harvest of humanity into the Kingdom of God finished, there will be only two major prophetic events left to take place:

1. The resurrection to death for all the incorrigibly wicked humans who have ever lived. See Ezk.18:4,20; Matt.25:31-46; Rom.6:23.
2. The coming of God the Father to claim the kingdom that he has placed under the rule and care of Jesus Christ. See 1.Cor.15:24-28.

THE RESURRECTION TO DEATH

While beseeching God to spare the Israelites who had rebelled at Mount Sinai, Moses says, *"Yet now, if you will forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray you, out of your book which you have written. And the Lord said to Moses, Whosoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book"* (Ex.32:32-33 KJV). See also Psa.69:28; Rev.3:5; 22:19.

The rebellious individuals who will not repent of their evil ways will have their names taken out of the Book of Life and their existence terminated. For these individuals, there will be no eternal pain or torment, just eternal non-existence. See Psa.37:9,22,34; Ezk.18:4; 20:25.

"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1.Cor.6:9-10 NIV). See also Pro.10:30; Gal.5:21.

It is very clear that everyone who is incorrigibly wicked will cease to exist at some time in the future, because the wages of sin is death (Rom.6:23), not eternal life in hell or some other place.

DEATH BY FIRE

"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.20:14-15 KJV).

Termination of Life

"The lamp of the wicked is snuffed out; the flame of his fire stops burning. The light in his tent becomes dark; the lamp beside him goes out. . . . He is torn from the security of his tent and marched off to the king of terrors. Fire resides in his tent; burning sulfur is scattered over his dwelling. His roots dry up below and his branches wither above. The memory of him perishes from the earth; he has no name in the land. He is

driven from light into darkness and is banished from the world" (Job 18:5-6, 14-18 NIV). See also Job 15:20-30; Psa.106:16-18.

Although the NIV is not a literal translation, its translators have powerfully captured the meaning of what Job was inspired to write. These verses convey the image of the destructive force of fire that will be used to terminate the existence of the incorrigibly wicked.

The Fiery Furnace

Jesus warned that a time will come when the wicked and the righteous will be separated and the wicked will be destroyed by fire:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, . . ." (Matt.13:47-50 NIV).

"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death" (Rev.21:8 NIV).

Those punished by the second death are those who refuse to obey God's law; therefore, they deserve the death penalty.

DEATH AND HELL DESTROYED

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Rev.20:14 KJV).

After the resurrection to the second death, hell (the grave) and death will be destroyed and cease to exist. This condition of deathlessness will exist for the following reasons:

- All things pertaining to physical life will no longer be relevant to the spiritual dimension of existence; therefore, the grave (hell) and death will cease to have a function and will vanish. See Rev.21:4; 1.Cor.15:54.
- Those who die the second death will be the incorrigibly wicked of all ages. After these people die the second death, all beings who continue to live will be those who are composed of spirit. See Rev.20:15; 1.Cor.15:35-50; 2.Thes.1:7-9.

THE DAY THAT BURNS AS AN OVEN

"For, behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yes, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. . . . And you shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, says the Lord of hosts" (Mal.4:1-3 KJV). See also Psa.37:20; 97:3-5; 112:10; 119:119; 145:20; Pro.2:22; Isa.47:14; Nah.1:2-6; Matt.3:10-12; 13:36-46.

The prophet Malachi was inspired to show that the fate of the wicked is complete and utter destruction without a continuance of life. Malachi does not say whether or not these wicked are human or spirit-beings. He merely states that the wicked will be destroyed by fire and cease to exist.

THE APOSTLE PETER'S LETTER

The apostle Peter was also inspired to speak of the cataclysmic end of today's existence and the death of the wicked.

2.Peter 3:1-7, 9-14 Paraphrased

"Beloved this is the second letter I write to you; in order to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That you may be mindful of the words which were spoken by the holy prophets, and that we, the Lord and Savior apostles commanded you" (vs.1-2).

As Peter spoke of the end of the old order of things, he encouraged the elect of God to remember the teachings of the prophets, the apostles, and Jesus Christ, because they all spoke of the events that would end the physical work of God on the earth and begin the new order of things.

"Know this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (vs.3-4).

There have always been those who have not believed God's prophets, his teachers and his written word. However, Peter did not speak specifically of people of past ages or those of his time; he spoke of the future and those who know the prophecies concerning the final events that will end the existence of humans on earth and usher in a new age.

In verse 4, *"his coming"* does not refer to the second coming of Christ, it refers to the first coming of God the Father to the earth. Many of the people who will live during the time that Peter prophesied about in chapter three will have forgotten or simply will not truly believe the lessons of history and they will believe that life will continue on as it always has. But, why will they believe this?

"For they are willingly ignorant of this. That, by the word of God, the heavens came into existence eons ago, and that the earth and the waters that were divided, and that God destroyed the earth with a great flood" (vs.5-6).

Although they will have been taught God's plan and way of life, these people will be willingly ignorant, they will not want to believe God's plan nor obey his law.

Peter reminds the elect of the first worldwide destruction of the earth and its unrighteous inhabitants by water and he foretells the future destruction of the earth by fire:

"But the heavens and the earth, which now exist, by this same word are preserved until the fire of the day of judgment and punishment of ungodly men" (v7).

This prophetic event concerning the earth's destruction by fire will close the final chapter of human existence and usher in a new age wherein only righteous spirit-beings will exist in the Kingdom of God on earth.

An Ending and a Beginning

The Father's primary objective and earnest desire is for all of humanity to obtain salvation and eternal life in his kingdom. The Father is extremely merciful and does not want anyone to perish; however, there is a point in time when his present plan for humanity will end and the next phase of his plan will begin. At this point in time, the physical creation that housed humanity will vanish in flames along with all wicked individuals:

"The Lord is not lax concerning his promise, as some men seem to think; but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all would come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. In which the heavens and the earth shall vanish with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with intense heat, the earth also and the works that are in it shall be burned up" (vs.9-10).

Verse 10 shows a prophetic event that has not yet been fulfilled. This event will come at the end of one age and the beginning of another. Just as the earth was purged of all wickedness during the Great Flood of Noah's time, it will again be purged. But, this time, it will be purified with fire, and only righteous spirit-beings will survive.

"Because all these things shall be dissolved, what kind of people should you be in all holy conversation and godliness?" (v11).

Peter warns of the importance of being found to be a righteous individual when this day arrives and he encourages those who are called of God to diligently pursue a righteous life. He also encourages them to look forward to the great and wonderful day when all that is impure and sinful will be eliminated and God the Father will come to dwell on the earth.

"Looking for swift appearance of the day of God, in which the heavens will be on fire and will be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with intense heat?" (v12).

A NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH

"Nevertheless, according to his promise we, look for the new heavens and the new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (vs.13-14). See also Matt.3:10-12; 7:19; Rev.21:27.

Notice that righteousness is a prerequisite for existence in the new order of things. Nothing evil will exist in the new heavens and earth; all that is evil will be purged away with fire. The events that Peter spoke about are the events that will prepare the earth for the coming of God the Father.

The scriptures clearly show that the purging of the earth with fire will culminate with the coming of God the Father and his holy city to earth. From this magnificent city, God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Father's elect children will reign and rule forever over his ever-expanding Kingdom.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE KINGDOM

The apostle Paul was inspired to foretell the presentation of the earth and all the righteous individuals to God the Father who will make the earth the focal point of his realm.

1.Corinthians 15:24-28 KJV

"Then comes the end, when he [Jesus Christ] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death:" (vs.24-26).

Paul begins this prophecy with the statement *"Then comes the end."* But, what is this the end of and when does the end come? Here, *"the end"* refers to the end of the physical existence as the Father arrives to dwell upon the earth.

The day God the Father comes to earth will be the climactic end of the old order of physical existence.

"For he has put all things under his feet. But when he says all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him" (v27).

Paul speaks of a time far into the future, after many centuries of Christ's rule, when all resistance to the Kingdom of God will have been overcome and Christ will be ruling as the supreme sovereign of the earth for his Father.

"And when all things have been brought under his control, then shall the Son also himself be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (v28).

The presentation of the Kingdom to the Father signals the end of the opportunity for redemption and salvation. At this point in time, all of the righteous individuals who have obtained salvation will have been transformed into eternal spirit-beings.

THE COMING OF THE FATHER

Revelation 21:1-7 Paraphrased

The coming of the Father to earth is the primary meaning that is at the very core of the celebration and fulfillment of the Festival of the Eighth Day.

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and the sea was no more" (v1).

Here, we see that the earth will be completely transformed into a new and different place, which has no vast oceans.

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having been prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (v2).

John sees the magnificent and beautiful city of God, which Abraham and his descendants Isaac and Jacob longed to see.

"By faith he [Abraham] sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God . . . But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he has prepared for them a city" (Heb.11:9-10,16). See also Jn.14:2-3.

This is the event which is foretold and pictured by the Festival of the Eighth Day. The old order will be gone, physical humanity will be gone, all evil spirits will be gone, and only righteous spirit-beings will exist within the Father's family and kingdom.

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the lodging of God is with men! And he will reside with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them, as their God" (Rev.21:3).

After the announcement is made, God the Father will dwell on earth with his children. As well as fulfilling the prophetic meaning of the Festival of the Eighth Day, this event also fulfills the prophetic meaning of the Feast of Shelters, which looked forward to a time when only the righteous would dwell under the care and protection of the Father within his family and kingdom for eternity.

What comes after God brings his kingdom to earth is a prophetic promise from God the Father to his faithful children who have shown by their lives that they love him and desire with all of their being to dwell with him forever.

"And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (v4).

These conditions will only exist after all of humanity has advanced beyond this physical existence and into the spirit realm of God the Father. Why will there no longer be tears, sorrow, pain, or death? This is possible because the things that were solely a part of the human experience will no longer exist.

The next few verses sum up the primary prophetic intent for the Festival of the Eighth Day and the reason to look forward to and celebrate its future fulfillment:

"And the One [the Father] sitting on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. . . To the one thirsting, I will freely give of the fountain of the water of life. The one overcoming will inherit all things, and I will be God to him, and he will be the son to me" (vs.5-7).

The Festival of the Eighth Day pictures and celebrates the consummation of God's plan for physical humanity. The old physical order will be gone, the new spiritual order will have begun, and God the Father will have increased his family and kingdom by adding spirit-sons made in his likeness—both in image and character.

This festival also prophetically celebrates the coming of the Father to earth and the many things that contribute to this great day, which are pictured and symbolized by the many positive concepts and meanings associated with the number eight.

With the coming of God the Father to the earth, seven of the most profound meanings of the Festival of the Eighth Day will have been fulfilled.

- The punishment of the incorrigibly wicked with death
- The ending of the old order and the beginning of the new
- The securing of eternal salvation through repentance
- A covenant relationship with the Father forever
- Firstborn status (first-born sons of the new creation)
- Final victory over the flesh
- Access to the God family for eternity

BEYOND THE EIGHTH DAY

We are told very little about the Father's future plans beyond the bringing of his throne and holy city to earth. However, there is an indication in the Gospel of Luke that, in addition to its many other meanings, the Festival of the Eighth Day pictures the beginning of a larger plan for the future:

"And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give to him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Lk.1:31-33 KJV). See also Dan.2:44; Mic.4:7; Rev.11:15.

Notice that, in the last part of Luke 1:33, when the angel announced to Mary that she would give birth to the Messiah, he also announced that "his" (i.e., God the Father's) kingdom would continue forever. Therefore, it seems that the Father plans to continue the expansion of his kingdom into eternity.

King David who was a man after God's own heart was inspired to include the following within a prophecy of the coming Messiah:

"You will show me the path of life: in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psa.16:11 KJV).

The apostle Paul spoke of the time beyond the Father's coming to earth, when he said: *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him"* (1.Cor.2:9 KJV).

With the prophetic fulfillment of the events pictured by the Festival of the Eighth Day, the awesome reality of what the Father has promised and prepared for his children will begin to be fully realized. Whatever the Father and Jesus Christ have planned for the future after the Eighth Day, we can be sure that it will be extremely interesting, exciting, and enjoyable.

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