

Lord of the Sabbath

Program #40

The Eternal Jerusalem

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Last Sabbath, we began a discussion of the seventh, annual, holy-day, Sabbath of the Lord. Its proper Biblical name is Shemini Atzeret translated as the Eighth Day. It is always celebrated on the day after the last day of the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles. It is always the twenty-second day of the seventh month, or Tishrei 22 on God's calendar.

To grasp the meaning of an "eighth day" in God's mind, and how it fits in with His plan for mankind, we need to reflect upon the significance of "seven-days" to God. We find it right off the bat in the creation week. Six days were for creation work. Then, on the seventh day, He rested. It was not only an example of God's way, it was God's expressed pattern for the pinnacle of His creation: mankind, whom He made on the sixth day. Males and females, made in His very own image and likeness, were to follow His example. Mankind would work and create results for six days and then rest and worship Him on the seventh day. How much more simple can it be?

Obviously, the day after the seventh day is the eighth day. The eighth day represented the first NEW work day in the history of man. Praise God for His wisdom and His ways! In God's pattern, it is the first day of a NEW week. It is a time for a new beginning, a new start, a new era, a new age, a new world. That is how God works His plan for mankind.

We can see this idea of a new beginning, or a start of something NEW, in several places in God's word and His law for how mankind is to live. Are you willing to listen to His word? Are you willing to open your ears and hear His voice? Will you follow God's example in your own life and adopt His provided understanding for the future of mankind?

A quick search through a Bible concordance shows how key events come to pass AFTER seven days of doing what God says or commands. After the creation of man, the next example that God provides concerns Noah and the ark. God had decided to destroy evil men from the whole earth with a flood saving only righteous Noah and His family.

You know the story of Noah obeying God and building a huge boat on dry land. Can you imagine the ridicule the world gave him? Of course, God wanted more than humans to survive the flood. So we see Noah and his family obeying God and bringing into the ark the animals, birds and seeds of His original creation that God desired to repopulate and renew the earth. God gave them seven days to load the ark before the doors would be closed and the world-wide rains would begin. We find this stated in Gen. 7: 4:

For after seven days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made.

And Noah did according to all that the LORD commanded Him.

So, when all the living things that God intended to be in the ark were inside and the doors were shut, the rains and flood began like clockwork. The eighth day was a new day, or time, not like the prior seven days. The pre-Diluvian world was ending and a NEW world and age for righteous Noah and his family was beginning. Do you realize that you are the progeny of one of Noah's three sons? Does it make any difference which one? Well, that is the subject of a different prophecy study.

I must get back to the idea of NEW beginnings on the eighth day in God's ways for managing time and history and impurity or evil. We can easily find the link to being made pure and being restored on the eighth day in both the case of lepers (Lev. 14: 23) and women defiled with an issue of blood or men with an unnatural bodily discharge (Lev. 15).

But, probably the best known purification event done on the eighth day for a new beginning in both the old and the new testament is circumcision. Of course, circumcision of the male foreskin began with Abraham. It was a sign of the covenant made between God and Abraham that his progeny would be numbered like the stars of heaven. They were to be a special people among all the tribes and nations of the earth. We find the role of circumcision and when it was to be performed in Gen 17: 10-12:

This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendent. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

As an aside, I believe I am part of Abraham's Covenant with God. Some who keep the Sabbaths of the LORD think they are under the Covenant of Moses, or the New or Renewed Covenant with Israel. I do not.

Of course, the Lord of the Sabbath was also under Abraham's Covenant. Jesus was indeed circumcised on the eighth day as we read in Luke 2: 21:

And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

Of course, Jesus was Abraham's seed. For Christians, the idea of circumcision of the foreskin by the power of a knife has been replaced by the circumcision of the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit of God. This relates to being conceived or born again, born

anew from above. We are indeed a new creation, a new man in Christ, and a child of Abraham and heir to the promises God made to him.

With that brief background, what is new and purified on the Eighth Day in God's prophetic plan for mankind? What should we Christians in the church of God be rejoicing about now? Let us carefully consider what Jesus revealed would be new at the end of the 1,000 year Kingdom of God on earth. We find it first mentioned in Rev. 21: 1-5:

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new."

Now, there is a mouthful of prophecy! And, you will see many interpretations of what this account is all about. How much of the vision is meant to be actual future conditions and how much is symbolic having a spiritual meaning whose place in time is not even well defined?

My main goal is to use what the Feasts of the LORD reveal about the future of 1) the children of Israel, 2) the church of God and 3) the unbelieving Gentiles of the world. I have keyed on the idea of the Eighth Day relating to a NEW, PURIFIED, world, the beginning of a new age or era for the people of God; His NEW, holy family.

Note that in his vision, carried away in the Spirit of God to a great and high mountain, the Apostle John sees a NEW heaven AND a new earth. Is this a literal or symbolic observation? Well, two things suggest to me this is a literal prophecy of a totally new earth. One clue is the reference to "no more sea." The sea is a predominant physical feature of the present earth. If there is no more sea on the earth, one can reasonably conclude that the prior earth had indeed "passed away."

From natural law, we would expect this earth will tend to disorder and eventually disintegrate. It could even disappear being burned up by the sun's heat, frozen into an ice cube if the sun burns out, or even be sucked into the sun by gravity. There is no scripture that makes it clear that this present earth is an eternal tabernacle for God or for glorified mankind. In fact, Jesus Himself suggests that the earth will pass away in Mark 13: 31:

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

Doesn't this suggest that the words spoken by Jesus are eternal and everlasting but the earth is perishable and will indeed come to an end? Also note that Jerusalem is the holy

city of God on the present earth. If this earth does pass away, so will the earthly city of Jerusalem. But, alas, we clearly see there will be a replacement New Jerusalem, a great city that comes from God out of heaven with the glory of God. Is this symbolic of God's Eighth Day?

But wait, John was also told he could see the bride, the Lamb's wife. Can this city of New Jerusalem be the bride who has now become the Lamb's wife? Well, actually, in Rev. 21: 1, we see the city is prepared AS a bride (is prepared) for her husband. A bride at her wedding is dressed in white, characterized by purity and adorned with all the beauty she can muster. Would you expect anything less about the city where God, who is holy, pure and perfect, will eternally tabernacle with men and dwell with them as His very own family?

We are told even more about this incredible city of the eternal God in Rev. 21: 11-12:

...having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south and three gates on the west.

If there is such an actual New Jerusalem, should we be surprised that it has twelve gates just like the old earthly Jerusalem? A typical earthly compass, or a map, has the same ordinates described in the verse which also suggests a physical tabernacle in which God and His ultimate family can dwell. And, if we were to guess what twelve names would be appropriate for the gates where the chosen people of God finally dwell with God, wouldn't the names of His original chosen people, the children of the man He named Israel, make sense? I think so.

But wait, there is more and it is fascinating. In Rev. 21: 14 we read:

Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates and its wall.

Wow! Does it make sense that the foundation of the city of God and His people would be indicative of the names of the twelve Apostles hand-picked by Jesus, the Passover Lamb of God? Did not Jesus, John and all the disciples preach the good news of God's coming kingdom of heaven? Are you getting the picture of the Eighth Day? Were not all but John the Apostle martyred for their testimony of Christ? What greater love and good work can a man have than to lay down their life for their friend? They earned the permanent honor of having their name inscribed in the city of God. Amen!

Now comes still another physical description of this New Jerusalem. It is mind boggling. In Rev. 21: 16, we have the shape and measured dimensions of the city!

The city is laid out as a square: its length is as great as its breadth. And he (referring to the angel who spoke to John) measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal.

This appears to be a cube, although technically it could be a pyramid. It should be noted that the Most Holy Place in the Temple in old Jerusalem was made in the shape of a perfect cube. And, if a perfect cube, it suggests a supernatural origin. Cubes are not indicative of natural forces or phenomena. Spherical shapes would be natural forms.

But, perhaps an even more amazing aspect about this heavenly city and new earth is its size. Twelve thousand furlongs is about 14,000 miles. Can you image these city limits? The diameter of our current earth is only about 8,000 miles! How can anyone claim the city is on a renewed earth? Why would Jesus give dimensions for a “spiritual” earth?

But, the incredible size is not the only thing that will be spectacular about this eternal city of God. Its beauty will be breath taking. Its wall is some 200 feet thick and made of a diamond-like material. And the streets will be like pure gold, but clear as glass! And the gates were each as one giant pearl. It is not clear how much of this description was meant to be literal. It is quite possible that these were how these city features appeared to John from his limited earthly experience. But, it sounds extraordinary and I would surely like to get a peek and perhaps a nice “mansion” in New Jerusalem. How about you?

There are some things that were in the former earthly Jerusalem that won't be found in this New Jerusalem. There is no physical temple in it. There is only the spiritual temple of the LORD God Almighty and the Lamb that we can live within as “one with God.” This city needs neither a sun nor a moon for light. It is illuminated by the glory of God and the light of the Lamb. No wonder the heaven is also physically new! How would heaven look to us if there were no more sun or moon? It would look like our observable heaven had passed away and was no longer there, just like Jesus said it would be! Amen!

But, perhaps the most interesting question of all about this New Jerusalem is who will live in it along with God and the Lamb? Here are some hints from scripture as found in Rev. 21: 24-27:

And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. But, there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

We learn that nations who are saved will be there along with kings of the earth. How and when do nations and their kings enter this city to bring their glory into it? Here, we must be well-studied in the Feast of Tabernacles and its connection to the Kingdom of God on the old earth. For there is a clear ending prophesied for it. And what comes next? The Eighth Day picturing the new eternal heaven and the new earth. Is this making more and

more sense to you? Is this what your Church or favorite TV preacher is teaching?

To piece this transition together, we need a greater understanding of how the Kingdom of God on the earth ends. This entails a meticulous study the Book of Revelation along with the prophecies of the Apostles and the Prophets of old. We must comprehend that this revelation of Jesus to John was meant to be read and understood only by the church of God and not by unbelieving Jews of Israel or by Greek philosophers. Do you know any Jews or Gentiles who even read the Revelation of Jesus, much less comprehend what the Lord of the Sabbath is conveying to His symbolic bride, the church of God?

Let's look for this amazing transition from the Kingdom of God on the present earth which Jesus will rule as King for 1,000 years to the kingdom of heaven where God the Father will dwell forever with His eternal family. This end is told to the church of God by the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. Here we find the mysteries about the death and resurrection of the church of God with their immortal bodies. Clearly, the Corinthians wanted to understand what was to come both for themselves and for all those in His church, His human body, who already died believing in Christ per 1 Cor. 15: 23:

Then comes the end, when He (meaning the Lamb, King Jesus) delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

As the old earth and heaven ends, the NEW earth and heaven begins. Finally, the eternal kingdom of heaven is overseen by God, the Father, the Almighty. The Son of God has finished not just the work of His first coming hanging dead on the tree for us, but He, as the resurrected firstfruits of the harvest of the sons of God, now finishes the work of His second coming.

Let's be clear about Jesus ending all rule, authority and power, apparently even His own. Before Jesus ascended to heaven to be with His Father, He spoke to His Eleven hand-chosen disciples and gave them their great commission. Listen to what He told them in Mat. 28: 18:

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

He went on to also tell them in Mat. 28: 20 that:

...lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

An end will come to this age of man on the earth. On the Eighth Day, a new age will

begin and all authority will be taken back by the “one” God being who gave it to Jesus so His work for His heavenly Father could be finished.

My friends, the heaven we all seek, where we hope to dwell with God forever, IS NOT, a place we enter at the moment of our death. It is the new heaven that will descend to the new earth at the end of the Kingdom of God on this current earth. Flesh and blood cannot enter this kingdom of God, revealed as our Father. Only His children with new immortal bodies obtained in the first resurrection, or as the Great White Throne Judgment is finished, will enter that heaven where God the Father will dwell with His servants, the good angels and His very own children as the expanded family of God.

This truth is also brought forth when we study the fate of the unGodly who will not accept His Son as their Savior and Lord. Do they go to a hell, burning with fire, at the moment of death where they will be tormented day and night forever? Of course not! It is another myth of religious men and their imaginations.

There is insufficient time left in this program to substantiate in depth exactly who enters this eternal lake of fire and at what time. But, Scripture does just that. What man is suffering torment in this lake of fire today? None; no not one!

The problem here is, once again, that our English Bibles use the word “hell” for three entirely different Greek words. Aren’t you immediately suspicious? Every time the word hell is translated from the Hebrew Old Testament it is from the word “sheol” Strong’s #7585. And to what does sheol refer? It refers to the grave, where dead humans, whether in Christ or not in Christ, return to the dust of the earth. And, they will remain there, being dead, having no life, until they are resurrected back to life by God, their Creator.

By understanding the Holy Day Sabbaths of the LORD, and the Feasts of the LORD, we can’t miss the clear teaching in the word of God of a early harvest of the firstfruits in Christ BEFORE the King returns to the earth. This is the first resurrection of the dead in Christ back to life in their immortal and eternal bodies. But, when do the rest of the people who have ever lived and then died live again?

Jesus Himself makes it clear to those who read His revelation to the church of God and understand the plan of God for the children of God, the children of Israel and the rest of humankind referred to as Gentiles. This comprises the end for every human that was ever born of a woman as flesh and blood. We find this stated quite clearly in Rev. 20 the chapter just before the description of the new heaven and a new earth. In Rev. 20: 4-6 are the teachings which Jesus gives His church so that we may know how this age of created, but fallen and mortal man, will end:

And they (those who never worshipped the beast or his image but were beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God) lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is

he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him for a thousand years.

Here we see those men who are martyred DURING the Great Tribulation for their witness to Jesus and God. They are being resurrected to heaven and returning from heaven with those (both living and dead) caught up to be with Jesus BEFORE the Great Tribulation. These will be with Jesus in the Kingdom of God on the earth for the 1,000 year reign. Halleluyah to the Lamb!

But what of all those who have not been resurrected to life with immortal bodies? Isn't the scripture plain? They will not live again until the thousand years are finished. Where are they until then? They remain in hell, meaning sheol the grave of earthly dust. They are dead, without life or consciousness, awaiting a resurrection to life. But, their resurrection will be to judgment before the throne of God as humans, like Jesus raised Lazarus.

In the English New Testament, where the word "hell" is translated from the Greek "hades," the context makes it clear we are talking about sheol, the grave. Most of the other translations of hell comes from the Greek word "gehenna." This refers to the valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem which was a pit of fire where trash and dead bodies, of animals and criminals, were burned up. This is the equivalent of the lake of fire most Christians conceptualize as hell. The Lord of the Sabbath called it the second death.

Now look closely at what happens to those raised to life in the second resurrection for their final judgment at the end of the millennial reign of Jesus. They stand before God the Father on His throne and are judged according to their works. Some will receive eternal life if they are found in the Book of Life. But, the rest will be cast into hell, the lake of fire, where the beast and false prophet are already cast and will be devoured. Into this lake of fire, the devil and his angels will be cast and tormented day and night forever. Note that angels were created immortal and will not be burned up and devoured like fallen and mortal men.

I can't believe my time is up for today. Let me just summarize, that while we will rejoice before the LORD God in the Kingdom of God on earth for a thousand years as taught in the Feast of Tabernacles, we will rejoice WITH the LORD God in the pure and holy New Jerusalem for ever as taught in the LORD's holy Eighth Day Sabbath. Praise the Eternal One! I hope to cover in a later program the end time fate of the children of Israel for it is neither that reserved for the church of God nor for the unbelieving Gentiles. God will amaze you with His enduring love for His original chosen people Israel.