

Is This the *Only Day of Salvation?*

A message for Shemini Atzeret — the Eighth *day* of Assembly

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Do you have friends or family, loved ones, that have died, or look like they will die, without receiving the knowledge of God's way of life? What is going to happen to them? It is knowing what God has planned for them that gives me hope and encourages me to remain steadfast in keeping God's law. It is God's plan for them that is foreshadowed by the eighth day of the Feast of Sukkot. And that is what I wish to address here.

God's intentions are clear:

John 3:16* "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the **world** through him might be saved."

1 Timothy 2:4 "Who desires **all men** to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing [desiring] that **any** should perish but that **all** should come to repentance."

Romans 11:25 "For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so **all Israel will be saved**, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; ²⁷ For this *is* My covenant with them, When I take away their sins.' [from Isaiah 59:20-21] ²⁸ Concerning the gospel *they are* enemies for your sake, but concerning the election *they are* beloved for the sake of the fathers."

So how is God doing? He said all Israel will be saved. Has that happened yet? Okay, so they were to be blinded until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. How is that coming along? If God is trying to save everyone in this life, you would think that when Messiah was on the earth, the most progress would have been made. And yet at the end of His ministry, only a relative few were disciples. The largest religion in the world today is Christianity, with Catholics in the majority. They bow down to idols, don't keep the Sabbath, or the Torah—some of the same things God accused Israel of through the prophets. What about the Protestants? They don't keep the Sabbath or Holy Days or Torah either. And what about the billions in China, India, and the rest of the world that have never even heard of Yeshua, the "only name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved", as Peter said in Acts 4:12? If God is trying to save the world right now, He is not as all powerful as we think He is. He's in a battle with Satan over the hearts of men, and He is losing. But in this message, I want to show that God can and will keep His promises to Israel and the world — that He knows exactly what He is doing and has all power to bring about exactly what He said He will do. So why does it look like God is failing?

*New King James version used throughout, unless otherwise noted.

John 6:44 “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Romans 11:7 “What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. 8 Just as it is written: ‘God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day.’ ” (Referencing Isaiah 29:10; see also Deuteronomy 29:4; Jeremiah 5:21; Ezekiel 12:2.)

2 Corinthians 3:13 “unlike Moses, *who* put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. 14 But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ. 15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. 16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.”

Matthew 13:10 “And the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ 11 He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 13 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: “Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; 15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.” (Citing Isaiah 6:9-10.)

Yeshua said His goal **at that time** was not to convert everyone. The parables were not given to make it easier to understand. This was because it was not their time. And He quoted Isaiah, showing it was not their time in Isaiah’s day either. Yeshua also said:

Matthew 10:34 “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. 35 For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; 36 and ‘a man’s enemies *will* be those of his *own* household’ ” (as prophesied in Micah 7:6).

How many of you have tried to convert your family and friends, to tell them all about keeping Torah, the Sabbath, the Holy Days? How did that work out for you? God is not calling everyone at this time. He is calling some into what the New Testament calls His Church. And He expects those in it to keep His law, overcome sin, and develop holy, righteous character. And to accomplish these expectations, these are the ones to whom He gives His holy spirit.

Romans 8:8 “So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”

Unless we are led by the spirit of God, we are not God’s children.

Romans 8:14 “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

He gives His spirit (Acts 5:32) and His eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:9) to those who obey Him.

So what happened to the promises to Israel—promises God made to Abraham about his descendants? Not just promises that if they obeyed, He would bless them physically, but promises that He would someday save them too.

Micah 7:18 “Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights *in* mercy. 19 He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our [their, AV] sins Into the depths of the sea. 20 You will give truth to Jacob And mercy to Abraham, Which You have sworn to our fathers From days of old.”

Psalm 130:7 “O Israel, hope in the LORD; For with the LORD *there is* mercy, And with Him *is* abundant redemption. 8 And He **shall** redeem Israel From all his iniquities.”

Ezekiel 11:19 “Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.”

Ezekiel 18:30 “ ‘Therefore I will **judge** you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,’ says the Lord GOD. ‘Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. 31 Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? 32 For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,’ says the Lord GOD. ‘Therefore turn and live!’ ”

Ezekiel 36:24 “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. 25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a **new heart** and put a **new spirit** within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put **My Spirit** within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*. 28 Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. 29 I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. 30 And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. 31 Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations.”

Isaiah 11:9 “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. 10 And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the **Gentiles** shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious. 11 It shall come to pass in that day *That* the Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left.”

Isaiah 49:5 “And now the LORD says, Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, So that Israel is gathered to Him (For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, And My God shall be My strength), 6 Indeed He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the **Gentiles**, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’ ”

This is not happening now. This is what happens to Israel and the Gentiles after Messiah returns at the seventh trumpet. God is working with a relatively small group of people now. Hopefully we are part of that group, The temple was given in the Torah. A priesthood was established to help teach the Israelites, who would, if they followed God's law, be a model nation setting the example and teaching the nations around them. We are learning God's way, and hopefully, with the help of God's Spirit, we are overcoming and developing the character He wants. When that seventh trumpet sounds, if we have overcome, we will be changed, and this mortal will put on immortality. As it says in Revelation 5:10, God will make them kings and priests, to reign on the earth. Then, those who are changed are put to work helping those who are still alive, both Israel and Gentiles. God will pour out His Spirit, they will see the Messiah and learn His ways. They too will be expected to overcome and develop godly character.

But what of those who have died? What about the Israelites who died in the wilderness, and later generations who did not follow God and rejected the message of the prophets. What of the Gentiles who never knew God. What of our friends and relatives who don't believe us when we witness to them. Even if they've heard of God, did they really believe Him? Did they follow His ways, keep His Sabbaths and His laws? If so, they will be resurrected with the saints in the resurrection at the return of Christ. This is God's decision. He knows whom He has called; and He knows who is ready for eternal life. But we know there are many who have not been called. And they need to be given that same opportunity to believe and trust in God—the same opportunity that we have been given to develop righteous character through God's spirit—so they too can be saved.

Revelation 20:4 (AV) “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. **5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.** [Death is a sleep, from which the dead need to be awakened. That is a subject I do not have time to address now, but scriptures are numerous in showing that.] This *is* the first resurrection. **6 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 a thousand years.”

Revelation 20:11 (AV) “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. **12** And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened [to understanding]: 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.”

How long is this **great white throne** judgment? Does it take place instantaneously? Are the dead judged solely on what they did in this life? What about those who never heard of the name of Yeshua, or even of the true God?

Acts 24:15 “I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of *the* just and *the* unjust.”

Matthew 10:15 “Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the **day of judgment** than for that city” (which rejected the witness of the Twelve).

Matthew 11:20 “Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: 21 ‘Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, 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. 22 But I say to you, it will be **more tolerable** for Tyre and Sidon in the **day of judgment** than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I say to you that it shall be **more tolerable** for the land of Sodom in the **day of judgment** than for you.’ ”

If God is saving and judging them based only on what they have done in this life, Sodom is certainly a candidate for the lake of fire. And yet Yeshua said it will be more tolerable for them than for Capernaum. Their fate could hardly be the lake of fire and be more tolerable. And Yeshua says if He had witnessed to them, they would have accepted the witness. Is God unfair? Or will He indeed someday witness to them?

Matthew 12:41 “The men of Nineveh will rise up in the **judgment** with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah *is* here. 42 The queen of the South will rise up in the **judgment** with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon *is* here.”

Luke 12:45 “But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, 46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him*, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the unbelievers. 47 And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare *himself* or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”

We see here glimpses of punishment, condemnation for bad behavior, witnessing, teaching. So what is the day of judgment? 24 hours? The day of the Lord is a period of time, probably a year. The day of trial in the wilderness was 40 years (Psalm 95:8; Hebrews 3:8). With God, a day is as a thousand years (2 Peter 3:8; Psalms 90:4). Think of it more as the “time of judgment”, and keep in mind that *judgment does not just mean sentencing*.

1 Peter 4:17 “For the **time has come for judgment** to begin at the house of God;”

This is our day of judgment. It is not instantaneous, and it is not just a sentencing. It takes time. It is a process of learning and overcoming with God’s spirit. And this will also be true for those who have not been called at this time.

Acts 17:30 “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

1 Corinthians 15:22 “For as in Adam **all** die, even so in Christ **all** shall be made alive.”

John 5:28 “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

The word for “condemnation” in the above verse is usually translated “judgment” and should be so translated here (as it is in numerous other translations: ASV, RSV, ESV, YLT...). It refers to a period of teaching, trying and testing, not just sentencing.

And there will of course be punishment and correction, just as there is for us:

Hebrews 12:6 “For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”

Deuteronomy 8:5 “You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you.”

In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31), the rich man is waking up in a future resurrection. Whatever nightmare or vision he is experiencing, he is oblivious to the passage of time, totally unaware that his five brothers have long since died. This time gap is a “great gulf” that stands in the way of taking any message back to them. And besides this, it was not God’s time (during Yeshua’s human life) to save the world.

The Eighth Day festival reminds us of the many times scripture speaks of events occurring on an eighth day. Whether it be the consecration of the altar, or of the priests, the healing of lepers, or cleansing from abnormal discharges, this symbol of the eighth day following a seven-day period of cleansing represents a new beginning, and also a dedication, and often a return, to God. There is a parallel in these with what we see in the Eighth Day. Many have noted that the thousand years mentioned in Revelation 20 is the Millennial reign of the Messiah, and that the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) reminds us of that time. And at the end of that time, the rest of the dead will be raised, as pictured by this Eighth Day. It is perhaps the most comforting feast day of the year, confirming that ours is not the only day of salvation.

God starts things small. He likens the kingdom to a grain of mustard seed that grows to become a huge tree. He chose the smallest of nations to eventually become great and teach the world, even if they failed. His church started with 12 apostles and grew from there. The firstfruits will be in the first resurrection and teach those in the Millennium. Then the rest of the dead will be resurrected and the whole world will be offered an opportunity for salvation.

What is the purpose for this temporary life in the process of receiving salvation and eternal life? It is not an easy life. Why do we have to go through trials and training in the law of God? This is a major subject in scripture, but simply put, it is to develop godly character. Character is the ability to come to the knowledge of the right way to live, then of one’s own free will to choose the right instead of the wrong, and then to actually do the right. God created us with free moral agency. He cannot just speak the word and instantaneously make us righteous because He does not want automatons for children. He is teaching us to obey — sometimes through hard-earned experience, and sometimes with the rod of correction. The goal is for us to learn how wonderful and good God’s way of life really is, so that we will choose that way **of our own free will**. God will not give eternal life to those who have not proven that they will *always* obey Him, because they fear, respect and love Him, *knowing* in the depths of their beings that their Heavenly Father knows best. We must have God’s law written in our hearts, meaning that God’s way is our way. For God to *know* that we have achieved that goal requires teaching, testing and correction.

Those in the second resurrection cannot receive eternal life without this same teaching and testing. And this requires time. It cannot be done by divine command alone. It requires the cooperation of each person being led by the Spirit of God to overcome. A death bed repentance does not cut it.

Repentance is just the beginning of a new life. The thief on the cross (Luke 23:42-43) was not told that he had it made. (Jesus was put in the grave that day; He was *not* in paradise that day.) Rather, the thief was told that very day (from the very time of his repentance) that he would someday make it, because God declares the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10).

We will see our friends and family again. We are not being offered salvation and eternal life just for our own benefit. We are being trained now, ahead of most, for a job: to be able to teach our friends and loved ones, and the whole world, God's way of life. Our individual life experiences help equip us to have the understanding, compassion, patience, mercy and love we will need to carry out this responsibility. The Eighth Day will be a new beginning for the world, being cleansed of their uncleanness and returned to God.

God is indeed all powerful. He will fulfill His promises. His plan will play out just as He said it would. And all will be given an opportunity for salvation and eternal life. The physical creation was easy. Creating character in free moral agents is God's greatest and most challenging work.

In summary:

1. God has said He wants all to come to repentance and be saved.
2. Only a relatively small number are being called at this time. The vast majority, if they have even heard of the one true God, are not obeying Him.
3. Only those who are "called, chosen and faithful" (Revelation 17:14) are destined to be raised in a "first" resurrection, to rule with Yeshua for 1000 years as priests (teachers). During that time the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God, and His Spirit will be poured out on all flesh.
4. The Biblical Holy Days picture God's plan of salvation from beginning to end — from Messiah being slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8) because of Adam's sin (as pictured by the Passover sacrifice) ... all the way through to the time of the "Eighth Day" when forgiveness through that same sacrifice will be offered to the whole world, all the way back to Adam and Eve.
5. Creating character requires time, teaching and testing. The judgment day (Eighth Day) is that time of teaching and overcoming for most of the people who have ever lived. The scriptures show it is not a momentary sentencing based solely on past behavior. There is an opportunity for all mankind — to repent and overcome and be saved — to be granted life forevermore.

"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life."

(Revelation 3:5)