

November 2024

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THE LAST GREAT DAY

All of us in God's Church are very familiar with the significance of the Last Great Day. We have understood the meaning attached to the Last Great Day for as long as we have been in God's Church. It is a well-established teaching in God's Church. I first heard it explained almost 60 years ago, at my first Feast of Tabernacles observance in the 1960s. We understand that the Last Great Day is intimately connected to the second resurrection.

But there is something different about understanding the meaning of the Last Great Day, when compared to understanding the other teachings of God's Church. Here is the point:

The world's churches can see that in the Bible people observed the **weekly Sabbath**, but they argue against this teaching and teach Sunday observance instead.

The world's churches can see that the Bible teaches **tithing**, but they then argue that tithing was done away.

The world's churches can see that in the Bible God designated only certain animals as acceptable for human beings to eat. They can see these **dietary laws**. But they argue that those laws were done away, and that we can now eat all animals.

The false religions can see that the Bible speaks about **a resurrection**, but they argue for people at death going to heaven instead.

They can see that the Bible speaks about observing **feasts and Holy Days**, but they argue for Christmas and Easter instead, claiming that those feasts in the Bible were only for the Jews to observe.

They can see that the Bible speaks about **Jesus Christ returning**, but they largely don't take that seriously.

For all of these biblical teachings, and several others, they can see what the Bible teaches, and then they argue against that, attempting to do away with those teachings as being only for the Jews.

But in one regard **the Last Great Day is different** from all of these other biblical teachings.

where they will all then be given life for 100 years, with the opportunity for salvation.

After the flood God then started to reveal some aspects of the revised plan in a disguised way to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. And then in the days of Moses God continued to reveal more details of His plan, also still in a disguised way. That's what we have in Leviticus 23, with all the annual Feasts and Holy Days.

We in God's Church understand that these annual observances, from the Passover all the way to the Last Great Day, represent different aspects of God's plan of salvation for mankind. **But the world doesn't understand that!** To them God's plan is a mystery. To them all those days are just "Jewish observances". For that matter, even the Jews themselves don't understand the real significance God has attached to these annual observances.

Let's look at what God had already revealed to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

THE TIME OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JACOB

As we examine the following Scriptures, I don't want to diminish that they all basically have an application on the physical level, in this present life. But they also have an application in revealing the various steps in God's revised plan after the flood. But this understanding requires a greater level of discernment.

Let's start in Genesis 12.

And **I will make of you a great nation**, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing: (Genesis 12:2)

This is the first hint in the Old Testament that God was now planning to have **a first resurrection!** This is what God revealed when God called Abraham at age 75 years.

Israel is one nation consisting of twelve distinct tribes. Israel is "a great nation" not because of a large population. Israel is "a great nation" because Israel will be **the most important nation within the Family of God**. And then Israel will consist of exactly 144,000 individuals, divided into twelve tribes of 12,000 each.

It is the first resurrection that will create one distinct nation within the Family of God. That nation, called "Israel", will be the Bride of Jesus Christ. It will without question be the greatest nation within the Family of God, which Family will ultimately consist of many "nations".

And that is what God was already hinting at when God called Abraham.

Let's look at the next Scripture.

Seeing that Abraham shall surely become **a great and mighty nation**, and **all the nations** of the earth **shall be blessed in him**? (Genesis 18:18)

Note the reference to one single mighty nation. It is not a matter of not finding some meaning for this in our world today. That is fine. But there is the additional dimension that **the real children of Abraham are those who have faith** and become a part of the called-out ones in this age.

Know you therefore that **they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham**. (Galatians 3:7)

This is a reference to those people who are heading towards the first resurrection. And the people in the first resurrection will constitute "a great and mighty nation" within the Family of God for all future eternity. And it is through them, though the people in the first resurrection, that all nations are going to be blessed.

Consider the following:

God "divorced" both the House of Israel and the House of Judah before the end of the Old Testament. So from New Testament times onwards none of the physical tribes of Israel have been "married" to God. So for the past 2,000 years, in round numbers, Ephraim and Manasseh and Judah and all of the other tribes of Israel have been "divorced from God".

Now do you want to tell me that the "divorced from God" nations of Israel have been "**a blessing to all nations of the earth**"? Really? How?

Are people in China and Vietnam and India and Korea and Nigeria and Brazil and Ghana and Uganda and Russia and Chile and Botswana and Borneo and Ecuador and Colombia and Tibet and Thailand and Trinidad, etc. today really better off **because of a great and mighty nation of Israel**? Really?

Are they healthier and happier than they were before coming into contact with the nations of Israel? Are they more content? Or are they more focused on money and materialism and wealth and perverse ways of living than they were before any contact with "the great and mighty nation" of Israel? Did the nations of Israel today invent and promote "junk foods" for those nations to copy? Did not the nations of Israel develop the chemical fertilizers and pesticides that destroy agricultural land and pollute our foods, and then export those chemicals around the world?

Did the morals in those countries become better or worse because of the film and music entertainment we have exported to them? As a result of contact with the nations of Israel, are those other nations really closer to the true God in heaven, or are they disciples of evolution? Did Darwin and Huxley, of Israelite background, influence the nations of this world for better or for worse?

Colonialism focused on taking as much wealth as possible out of those colonies, and sending it back to the colonial power. While the colonial powers became very wealthy, the local people in the colonies remained poor. Colonialism wasn't a blessing for the native inhabitants of those colonies, was it? **Some of the poorest nations on earth** today were once colonies of one of the European nations. The former colonial powers include the nations that make up the "divorced from God" tribes of Israel.

Okay, you answer those questions however you want to. And your answers make no difference to me. My point is simply:

To find some kind of "blessings" that other nations have received because of contact with "the great and mighty nation" of Israel requires some rather **convoluted arguments**. It's not just a straightforward clear conclusion.

The principle here is Proverbs 10:22.

The blessing of the LORD, it makes rich, and **He adds no sorrow with it**. (Proverbs 10:22)

The blessings all nations on earth would experience because of contact with "the great and mighty nation" of Israel would not also add problems to those nations. Israel would **not at the same time** be a good influence and a bad influence on all other nations. Israel would not "add sorrow" to other nations.

So while people may argue for the colonies having received some benefit from the European colonizing nations, there are without question also many "sorrows" that the colonizers caused for the indigenous people in those colonized nations, in addition to bringing various diseases to those nations. But that doesn't stack up with Genesis 18:18.

On the other hand:

When, in regard to Genesis 18:18, we understand that **the great nation** of Israel refers primarily to the people who will make up the total number of individuals in **the first resurrection**, then **it is easy to understand** how all those in the first resurrection will be an enormous blessing for not only some, but **for all nations on earth during the millennium**, and also during the period for people in the second resurrection.

Those in the first resurrection will help people in the millennium, and in the 100-year period that follows, to overcome the selfish pulls of human nature and to eventually also become spirit-born sons and daughters of God. 144,000 sons of God will be available to work one-on-one with all those people around the world who seek God's ways. Now **that will be a real blessing** for the people in those nations.

Consider the meaning of the name "Israel".

And He said, your name shall be called no more Jacob, but **Israel**: for **as a prince you have power with God** and with men, and have prevailed. (Genesis 32:28)

The name "Israel" means: to as a prince (i.e. ruler) have power **with** God. Do you understand this? It means that **God shares some of His power** with those God calls "Israel". Do you grasp this?

Now in this present age the physical "divorced from God" nations of Israel don't really have any power with God, do they? They have no power at all with God! So in our world today **the actual meaning** of the name "Israel" **doesn't really fit with the physical descendants of the twelve tribes of Israel**. It just doesn't!

But the meaning of the name "Israel" fits perfectly for all those people who will be in the first resurrection. They are the ones who will be "kings and priests", and they will "reign on the earth" with Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:10 again). Yes, they will indeed "have power **with** God".

You cannot get a better fit for the meaning of the name "Israel" than the people in the first resurrection.

So when Jesus Christ gave Jacob the name "Israel", Christ was in fact revealing a major step in God's revised plan of salvation for mankind, that step being **the first resurrection**.

Consider also the following:

When God told Abraham that God would make him "a great and mighty nation", through which all nations would be blessed, God had not yet "married" the nation of Israel. So Genesis 18:18 is an expression of **God's intentions**. And those intentions were extremely significant.

With this statement in Genesis 18:18 God was telling Abraham that all of the remaining places in the 144,000 for the first resurrection would be filled by descendants of Abraham. At that time **it was God's intention to not have any non-Israelites in the first resurrection**. Abraham's descendants would fill all the remaining places.

That's what Genesis 18:18 really means!

Let's look at the next Scripture, where God is speaking to Jacob.

And God said unto him, I *am* God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; **a nation and a company of nations** shall be of you, and **kings** shall come out of your loins; (Genesis 35:11)

This is the first reference to the **two steps by which God builds His Family**, which two steps follow the step of Jesus Christ Himself becoming the first of the firstfruits in God's Family.

Don't confuse this statement, said to Jacob, with the statement in Genesis 48:19, which was said to Joseph. Genesis 48:19 is in a different context from Genesis 35:11. We'll look at Genesis 48:19 shortly.

Here in Genesis 35:11 God has expanded the statement God made to Abraham. In this verse "**a nation**" refers to the 144,000 in the first resurrection; and "**a company of nations**" refers to the people from the millennium and from the second resurrection, who will eventually be added to the Family of God. They will then be known as "**the nations** of them which are saved" (Revelation 21:24).

The physical people of Israel have **never** consisted of "a nation" plus "a company of nations". Yes, after Solomon the nation of Israel split into two distinct nations. But neither one of those consisted of only one tribe. The House of Judah actually consisted of **three tribes**! When the people rebelled against Rehoboam and made Jeroboam their king (see 1 Kings 12:20), Rehoboam actually ruled over the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The tribe of Benjamin was never a part of the House of Israel; it was always with Judah. See the next verse, verse 21.

And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, **with the tribe of Benjamin**, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. (1 Kings 12:21, also verse 23)

Then the tribe of **Levi** also came to the House of Judah.

And **Rehoboam** dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defense in Judah. (2 Chronicles 11:5)

And in every several city *he put* shields and spears, and made them exceeding strong, having **Judah and Benjamin** on his side. (2 Chronicles 11:12)

And **the priests and the Levites** that *were in all Israel* resorted to him **out of all their coasts**. (2 Chronicles 11:13)

So the House of Judah always consisted of **three tribes**. That is why the House of Judah in the New Testament still had Levitical priests and also Benjamites, like the Apostle Paul. Those two tribes had always been a part of the House of Judah. And the House of Israel consisted of the other **ten tribes** (two tribes for Joseph).

The point is this: **at no time** during the Old Testament did Israel ever consist of "a nation and a company of nations"! It was always a case of either "a three-tribed nation" or a "ten-tribed nation". It was never "one nation plus a company of nations". So it is hard to find an application for Genesis 35:11 at any point in time **from the days of King David to our time today**.

Genesis 35:11 is primarily a reference to **how the Family of God will be structured** for all future eternity.

Next, the statement regarding “**kings** shall come out of Jacob’s loins” is challenging for one simple reason.

While at the time of Jacob God was already planning to have Jacob be the father of twelve tribes, at that time **it was not God’s intention** that Israel would ever have human kings! It was God’s intention that God would **always** be Israel’s King! When the people demanded a human king, God told Samuel “... **they have rejected Me**, that I should not reign over them” (1 Samuel 8:7).

When God said that **kings would descend from Jacob**, God was not talking about human kings. Human kings are not really important; they just aren’t. God was referring to the **144,000 kings** (see Revelation 5:10), who God intended would all come from physical descendants of Jacob. That was the plan at Jacob’s time. At Jacob’s time it was absolutely not God’s intention, that centuries down the line God would “divorce” all of the tribes of Israel.

God’s later decision to not restrict membership of the 144,000 kings to the physical descendants of Jacob was due entirely to **Israel’s endless idolatry** and rejection of God’s laws. That’s the “only evil continually” human nature once again causing God to change His original intentions. Had Israel been faithful to God, then all of the 144,000 kings would indeed have come “out of the loins of Jacob”.

Let’s look at one more occasion in the life of Jacob. Here is what Jacob said to Joseph shortly before Jacob died.

And now **your two sons**, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born to you in the land of Egypt, before I came to you in Egypt, *are* mine; **as Reuben and Simeon**, they shall be mine. (Genesis 48:5)

Reuben and Simeon were Jacob’s firstborn and second-born sons. So Jacob here appointed Ephraim and Manasseh as his own first two sons. Now let’s drop down to verse 19.

And his father refused, and said, I know *it*, my son, I know *it*: he also shall become a people, and **he also shall be great**: but truly **his younger brother** shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become **a multitude of nations**. (Genesis 48:19)

This statement certainly applies to this present life. That is not in any way questioned. But **it also follows the pattern** of the new (revised) plan God had implemented after the flood.

The firstborn (replacing Reuben) shall be great; he represents a great nation, the group of 144,000 that make up the first resurrection. The second-born (replacing Simeon) shall be a multitude of nations; he represents the people from the millennium and the second resurrection, who will eventually become a

part of God's Family.

Now in this statement "the younger is greater than the older" "**greater**" refers to **total numbers of people**. It does not refer to status, position, power or authority. While those in the first resurrection will be greater in status and in power within the Family of God, those people in the Family of God who are represented by the Last Great Day are **immensely greater in numbers** than those who will be in the first resurrection. Where there will be only 144,000 in the first resurrection, those who become a part of God's Family after them are likely to consist of multiple billions of people.

So the prophecies that basically refer to Ephraim and Manasseh in our world today again reflect **the pattern** God has chosen for building the Family of God. The questions we should ask regarding Ephraim and Manasseh are:

Why did God make the firstborn "**a great nation**"? This had nothing to do with the personality or the character of the man Manasseh. And **why** did God make the second-born "**a multitude of nations**"? This also had nothing to do with the personality or the character of the man Ephraim. God did this to reveal **the two steps** by which God inducts human beings into His Family.

It follows the pattern.

So yes, already in the days of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob God provided "hints" that reveal that human beings would join the Family of God in two steps. But those "hints" are well disguised, so that the world in general would not discover the details of God's revised plan. Specifically, God did not want people in general to understand that there will be a second resurrection.

That brings us to the time of Moses.

All of us understand that the annual observances presented in **Leviticus 23** reveal all the steps in God's plan for mankind. And the world (e.g. Bible scholars and Bible commentators) can see the Feasts and Holy Days that are presented in this chapter. They know about the Passover and Pentecost.

But when it comes to the Last Great Day, then the information is again disguised to some degree. Let's notice this.

Right up to the Feast of Tabernacles **every observance is given its own description**. And every observance has **its own name**. So we see the weekly Sabbath (verse 3), the Passover (verse 5), the Feast of Unleavened Bread (verse 6), Pentecost (verse 15), Trumpets (verse 24), Atonement (verse 27) and the Feast of Tabernacles (verse 34).

But there is no description for the Last Great Day!

Rather, the Last Great Day is just **discreetly slipped in there**, without any fanfare. And it is **not even given its own name**. It is easy to think that it is just a part of the Feast of Tabernacles. In other words, it is something that God didn't really want scholars and commentators and Bible-reading people in general to pick up on. Let them think that the Last Great Day, mentioned in two specific verses, is nothing more than a part of Tabernacles.

Let's notice: In verse 34 God introduces the Feast of Tabernacles. Within that context verse 36 then says:

Seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on **the eighth day** shall be an holy convocation unto you; and you shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; *and* you shall do no servile work *therein*. (Leviticus 23:36)

"Seven days ...", yes that's the Feast of Tabernacles. But **where did that "eighth day" come from?** So far nothing has been said about "eight days". Can you see that the eighth day is quietly slipped in there without attracting much attention? People in the world are not even supposed to notice it. Or if they notice it, they are supposed to assume that it is a part of the Feast of Tabernacles.

And that is the end of the account. The next verse is a concluding statement.

These are the feasts (Hebrew "mow'ed") **of the LORD**, which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day: (Leviticus 23:37)

And then from verses 39-43 the account reveals some **additional details** about the Feast of Tabernacles.

Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, **you shall keep a feast** (Hebrew "chag") unto the LORD **seven days**: on the first day *shall be* a Sabbath, and on **the eighth day** *shall be* a Sabbath. (Leviticus 23:39)

Again the reader expects a discussion about seven days. But again "the eighth day" is quietly slipped into this account. Most readers are not going to ask: **where did this eighth day come from?** I thought we are speaking about seven days?

And then verse 41 again refers to only seven days.

And you shall keep it a feast unto the LORD **seven days** in the year. *It shall be* a statute for ever in your generations: you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. (Leviticus 23:41)

And the next verse also again refers to seven days.

You shall dwell in booths **seven days**; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: (Leviticus 23:42)

The disguise for the Last Great Day here is that the only two references to an “eighth day” in this chapter are both **surrounded by** references to “**seven days**”. This ensures that the two references to an “eighth day” don’t stand out, and don’t attract much attention. It is easy to assume that this “eighth day” is somehow a part of the Feast of Tabernacles.

This “eighth day” is not something God wants people, who have not been called by God, to understand.

And unless God opens a person’s mind, the truth about the Last Great Day is never going to be understood. That is to ensure that worldly people don’t become accountable for this knowledge.

THE REST OF THE STORY YOU ALREADY KNOW

If you are a member of any of the Church of God groups that trace their origin back to the time of Mr. Herbert Armstrong, then you already know the other references to the Last Great Day.

- 1) The valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37 is a discussion of the second resurrection, which is a resurrection to another physical life.
- 2) The last half of Isaiah 65 tells us that in the second resurrection people will all be given a 100-year life-span.
- 3) Matthew 10:15 and Matthew 11:21-24, show that the people of Sodom and Gomorrha and Tyre and Sidon, etc. will come up in the second resurrection together with the people of Jesus Christ’s generation.
- 4) In John chapters 8-10 there are three things that apply to the people in the second resurrection: the woman caught in the act of adultery, the man who was born blind, and the other flock of sheep that Jesus Christ owns.

The above four points have all been expounded many times in the past, and you are very likely to be already familiar with those points. But note that the context for each of those four points does not spell out that they all refer to the second resurrection. And you have to read the Gospel of John very carefully to even notice that this is a discussion of the events on one specific Last Great Day. That obscurity is deliberate.

To tie these statements to the Last Great Day, to the second resurrection, requires some **additional insight and discernment**, which becomes available when God’s spirit opens the mind of a converted believer. But this additional insight is not available to people who are cut off from God.

The last Great Day, which represents the second resurrection, is an enormous expression of **God's mercy**. It is God's merciful response to the evil and perverse ways that human beings demonstrated during the first 1,500+ years after Adam's creation. It is a provision to make possible access to salvation for the much more than 99% of human beings, who would otherwise never have a real chance to become a part of God's immortal Family.

The Last Great Day is a day of hope. It is not for you and me, whose minds have been opened by God's spirit to understand the true purpose of human life. It is for the people who received the seed "by the wayside" in the parable in Matthew 13:1-9. And it is for the people who never received the seed in any way, not even by the wayside.

Let's rejoice that all those people will also receive the opportunity to become a part of "the nations of them which are saved" (Revelation 21:24).

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