

An Open Invitation for the Last Day of the Great Feast

There is a remarkable invitation given by the Messiah on the final Last Great Day during his human visit:

John 7:37 And in the last day of the great feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

John 7:38 He who believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

He could not provide what he was promising

It is remarkable firstly because he could not fulfill at the time he issued it what he was promising. Notice what the immediately following verse by John tells us:

John 7:39 (But He spoke this about the Spirit, which they who believed on Him should receive; for *the* Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.)

John was stating that this promise could only be met after His death, and He was not yet dead. It was not yet possible for them to receive the Holy Spirit.

Hence it was an invitation for something which could not be provided.

A reversal in preaching approach?

The second remarkable thing about this invitation is that it was open to everyone, no exclusions.

“If **anyone** thirsts, let him come to Me and drink”.

This would have been complete reversal of His approach to preaching, which had been to teach only a small select group while excluding others from the opportunity to turn to Him.

You may have heard that He preached in parables to make it easier for the crowds to understand his message. This is not what is recorded in the New Testament.

Note what Luke wrote. After hearing parables, rather than being enlightened, even the disciples were confused. They came to Him and asked why the use of parables. He explained the intended meanings to them, and gave His reasons for the use of parables.

Luke 8:9 And His disciples asked Him, saying, What might this parable be?

Luke 8:10 And He said, To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. But to others I speak in parables, so that seeing they might not see and hearing they might not understand.

Luke 8:11 And the parable is this: The seed is the Word of God. ...

Notice He said “to others I speak in parables, so that seeing they might **not** see and hearing they might **not** understand. “

Matthew also records this incident, and adds a little more.

Mat 13:9 He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Mat 13:10 And the disciples said to Him, Why do You speak to them in parables?

Mat 13:11 He answered and said to them, Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but it is not given to them.

Mat 13:12 For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance. But whoever does not have, from him shall be taken away even that which he has.

Mat 13:13 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not; nor do they understand.

Mat 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which said, "By hearing you shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see and shall not perceive;

Mat 13:15 for this people's heart has become gross, and *their* ears are dull of hearing, and they have closed their eyes, lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with *their* ears and should understand with *their* heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

Mat 13:16 But blessed *are* your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear.

Notice that He wanted the disciples to understand but he was adamant that the general public should **not** understand.

If we go back to the Book of John where this Last Great Day invitation is recorded, and look at some other verses, we find a consistency that the general public was not even invited at that time.

John 6:37 All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the *one* who comes to Me I will in no way cast out.

He is saying that the Father is in control of who is accepted by the Messiah. The verse does not say "All who decide for themselves to come to Me, I will in no way cast out."

John 6:44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who has sent Me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day.

Now He is claiming that "No one can come to Me unless the Father who has sent Me draw him."

This evidence indicates that there were only select invitations before His death, but didn't things change after His resurrection?

The Temple Veil

Mat 27:51 And, behold! The veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And the earth quaked, and the rocks were sheared,

The barrier between God and man, symbolized by the veil in front of the Holy of Holies, was removed. Does this mean that everyone then had the opportunity to go to God?

Later, as described in Acts chapters 10 and 11, Peter was shown a puzzling vision which led him to the home of a devout gentile, Cornelius, to witness the acceptance of Cornelius and his family by God.

Prior to this event, the believers, mostly devout Jews by culture, did not associate with gentiles.

Some people think this incident was intended to tell the young church they could eat prawns and other “unclean” food. The Resurrection changed history, making it possible for people to change to what pleases God, regardless of background, descent, or past culture. It did nothing for prawns, crabs, spiders, dead dogs, or rotting birds. They remained what they had been before the Crucifixion.

Act 11:15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us at *the* beginning.

Act 11:16 And I remembered the Word of the Lord, how He said, John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with *the* Holy Spirit.

Act 11:17 If God gave to them the same gift as to us, *they* having believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to be able to prevent God?

Act 11:18 When they heard these things, they were silent and glorified God, saying, Then God has also granted repentance to life to the nations.

But was it now possible for everyone, not just a select few?

Let's look at the what Paul wrote, years after Peter's experience. Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome

Rom 11:7 What then? Israel has not obtained that which it seeks, but the election obtained *it*, and the rest were hardened

Rom 11:8 even as it is written, "God gave to them a spirit of slumber, eyes not seeing, and ears not hearing" until this day.

Rom 11:9 And David said, "Let their table become for a snare and a trap and a stumbling block and a recompense to them.

Rom 11:10 Let their eyes be darkened so that they may not see, and their back always bowing."

Rom 11:11 I say then, Did they not stumble that they fall? Let it not be! But by their slipping away came salvation to the nations, to provoke them to jealousy.

Rom 11:12 But if their slipping away *is* the riches of *the* world, and their default is *the* riches of *the* nations, how much more their fullness?

It was still the same story: an elect, or select group, obtained, but the rest were hardened so that they missed out. Yet Paul refers in verse 12 to “their fullness”.

Their fullness, and that of preceding generations, hadn't happened. But Paul was confident that there was to be a future time when things would be made right.

Rom 11:25 For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, lest you should be wise within yourselves; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the nations has comes in.

Rom 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved; ...

Paul tells us that the blindness will continue “until the fullness of the nations has comes in.” What happens then? “And so all Israel shall be saved;”

The question that follows is: when will that be? That thought is continued later in this article in “John's only report. Why?”

Peter missing from Rome

Incidentally, the fact that Paul wrote to the group at Rome indicates that the Apostle Peter had never been to Rome. Note what Paul wrote in the same book:

Rom 15:20 Yea, so I have been eager to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation;

Paul states he eagerly preached where no other man had preached, so he would not be building on what some other man had established. The only logical conclusion is that the Apostle Peter had never been to Rome. This should not be a surprise, because Peter saw it as his duty to go to the “circumcision”, no to the “gentiles” or “nations”.

Gal 2:7 But on the contrary, seeing that I have been entrusted *with* the gospel of the uncircumcision, as Peter to the circumcision;

Gal 2:8 for He working in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision also worked in me to the nations.

Gal 2:9 and knowing the grace given to me, James, and Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, gave right hands of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we *go* to the nations, but they to the circumcision.

Note that three times in three verses, Paul wrote that Peter was to work with the “circumcision”, not with the “nations”, to which he Paul was assigned.

Paul claimed of himself to the Romans: “ I am the apostle of the nations (gentiles)”. Yes, Paul, not Peter.

Ezekiel's Resurrection

Long before the time of the Messiah, the prophet Ezekiel had a vision of a future event involving very many people long dead.

Eze 37:1 The hand of Jehovah was on me, and brought me by the Spirit of Jehovah, and made me rest in the midst of a valley, and it *was* full of bones.

Eze 37:2 And He made me pass among them all around. And behold, very many *were* on the face of the valley. And lo, *they were* very dry.

...

Eze 37:11 And He said to me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, Our bones *are* dried and our hope is lost; we are cut off by ourselves.

Eze 37:12 Therefore prophesy and say to them, So says the Lord Jehovah: Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, and will bring you into the land of Israel.

Eze 37:13 And you shall know that I *am* Jehovah when I have opened your graves, O My people, and have brought you up out of your graves.

Eze 37:14 And I shall put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land.

And you shall know that I Jehovah have spoken and have done it, says Jehovah.

Note that verse 14 shows these people had not had God's Spirit, and therefore had not been Christians. (Romans 8:9 tells us "But if anyone has not *the* Spirit of Christ, he is none of His".)

Ezekiel is therefore previewing a time when all physical Israelites who had died before then, would be resurrected to a new physical life.

This vision would have been well known to the Jews at the time of the Messiah, including Paul.

Putting Ezekiel and Romans together

It seems reasonable that there will be only one time when all of the dead who had been spiritually blinded will be resurrected and have their spiritual eyes opened for the first time.

Paul told the Romans it would be when the fullness of the nations has come in. When will that be?

Let us look at the annual holy days given by God to Israel, but eliminated from the Graeco-Roman based Christianity which is widely followed today.

These days picture the great plan of God for us.

God's Festivals

These festivals are outlined in chapter 23 of the Book of Leviticus.

Lev 23:2 Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, The feasts of Jehovah, which you shall proclaim, holy convocations, even these are My appointed feasts.

Note these are not the feasts of Moses, not the feasts of the Jews, not the feasts of Israel, but the feasts of Jehovah (or similar name, there being some uncertainty over the exact name).

The festivals include three harvests over the year. Palestine, like many other areas, has two grain growing seasons each year. One is in the spring, harvesting the grain grown over winter. The other is for grain grown over summer, and this is the larger crop.

At the time of the Exodus from Egypt, God told the Israelites to start their year then, in the Spring, at the time of the smaller crop.

The **first harvest** in Leviticus 23 is the Wave Sheaf Offering.

Lev 23:9 And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying,

Lev 23:10 Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, When you have come into the land which I give to you, and shall reap the harvest of it, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.

Lev 23:11 And he shall wave the sheaf before Jehovah to be received for you. On the next day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

...

Lev 23:14 And you shall eat neither bread, nor parched grain, nor green ears, until the same day, until you have brought an offering to your God. *It shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

This harvest was ceremonial and did not itself produce enough grain to feed the people.

However it was extremely important in that they could eat no bread, no parched grain, no fresh grain, no green grain, until this sacrifice had been accepted. (This instruction is ignored today, as it has been for centuries).

The wave sheaf offering represents the presentation of the Resurrected Christ on the morning after the weekly sabbath after his Crucifixion.

Joh 20:17 Jesus said to her, Do not touch Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father. But go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and Your Father, and *to* My God and your God.

Later that day He was back on earth talking to his disciples.

Joh 20:19 Then the same day at evening, being the first of the sabbaths, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, Peace to you!

A lesson from this very tiny harvest is that no harvest of any people could take place if this harvest is not carried out first. Fortunately for us, the Father accepted this harvest and salvation is now possible.

The **second harvest** was seven weeks later, described in Leviticus 23:15-22. This is the feast of weeks, also known as Pentecost. It represents the harvest of those first called.

1Co 15:23 But each in *his* own order: Christ the first-fruit, and afterward they who are Christ's at His coming;

The **third harvest** is the large harvest held after summer, in the seventh lunar month of Leviticus 23. This is an eight day festival, comprising the seven day Feast of Tabernacles, immediately followed by the Last Day (or Great Day).. This eighth day is treated very briefly in the Old Testament: it is left to the New Testament to explain its significance.

Lev 23:36 Seven days you shall offer a fire offering to Jehovah. On the eighth day shall be a holy convocation to you. And you shall offer a fire offering to Jehovah. It *is* a solemn assembly. And you shall do no work of labor.

Following on from the meanings that we have been told for the first two harvests, this latter harvest must be for the rest of humanity.

Now let us look again at the invitation of John 7.

John's only report. Why?

Here is the remarkable invitation which began this article.

John 7:37 And in the last day of the great feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

John 7:38 He who believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

As shown above, this invitation was not deliverable at the time it was made, and, being open to "anyone who thirsts", was at odds with God's practice of working with only a small group and not with the masses, a practice which applied before and after this invitation. This consideration leads to further questions:

Why was it made at all? Why is there so little reported here?

Since it did not apply then, it must be for the future.

Because the people at the time did not know what He was talking about, the words must have been for people in a later time.

Why is the inclusion in the Gospel of John so short?

The statement that this occurred on the "Last Day of the Great Feast" (Modern King James Version, as elsewhere in this article unless stated otherwise), or "the last, the great day of the feast" (Young's Literal Translation), serves to link the invitation to the Last Day, also known as the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Old Testament tells little of the meaning of the Last Day. It immediately follows the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths, implying it represents an important event in God's Plan closely associated with the event represented by the Feast of Tabernacles.

This verse in John's Gospel tells us more: that the Last Day is related to a time when all, even those who have died, will have a fair opportunity for salvation as have those relatively few who have already been called. One sentence is enough to help us make that link.

Later in his life, the Apostle John wrote more, giving us more details of what is to come.

Revelation reveals

There is more information provided some decades later, again through John, this time via the Book of Revelation.

After the horrors of the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven bowls of wrath, and the elimination of the servants of Satan, we read:

- Rev 20:1** And I saw an angel come down from Heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.
- Rev 20:2** And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.
- Rev 20:3** And he cast him into the abyss and shut him up and set a seal on him, that he should deceive the nations no more until the thousand years should be fulfilled. And after that he must be loosed a little time.
- Rev 20:4** And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast nor his image, nor had received *his* mark on their foreheads, nor in their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.
- Rev 20:5** But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.

There will be one thousand years free from Satan and its influences, one thousand years of peace and freedom and happiness and prosperity, foretold annually by the Feast of Tabernacles.

What of the Last Day, which follows immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles?

- Rev 20:7** And when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be loosed out of his prison.
- Rev 20:8** And he will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle. The number of them *is* as the sand of the sea.
- Rev 20:9** And they went up over the breadth of the earth and circled around the camp of the saints, and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of Heaven and devoured them.
- Rev 20:10** And the Devil who deceived them was cast into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *were* . And he will be tormented day and night forever and ever.
- Rev 20:11** And I saw a great white throne, and Him sitting on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And a place was not found for them.
- Rev 20:12** And I saw the dead, the small and the great, stand before God. And books were opened, 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.
- Rev 20:13** And the sea gave up the dead in it. And death and hell delivered up the dead in them. And each one of them was judged according to their works.

When the thousand years expire, the rest of the dead are brought back to life. They will see for themselves the difference between the world they lived in, under Satan's influence, and the world of the Millennium, blessed by God and free from Satan. They will be amazed at the difference.

Verses 12 and 13 tell us these newly resurrected people are “judged”. Does this mean appearing in a court and being sentenced? Note that Peter wrote that those being called now are being judged now:

1Pe 4:17 For the time *has come* for the judgment to begin from the house of God. And if *it first begins* from us, what *will be* the end of those disobeying the gospel of God?

This process does not involve just a one time appearance in a court. It involves our daily lives, how we respond to different events, how we behave pro-actively. Can we expect any less for these risen dead? The prophecy of Ezekiel 37 expresses care, affection, help, and assistance. Read all of it in Ezekiel 37.

There is a prophecy of a peaceful abundant period in the future, when Jehovah has created a new society, found in Isaiah 65. The duration is implied to be one hundred years, see verse 20. This seems to fit well with the Last Day of the Great Feast.

Isa 65:16 *He* who blesses himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth. And he who swears in the earth will swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hidden from My eyes.

Isa 65:17 For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. And the things before will not be remembered, nor come to mind.

Isa 65:18 But be glad and rejoice forever *in that* which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

Isa 65:19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and I will rejoice in My people; and the voice of weeping will no more be heard in her, nor the voice of crying be heard in her.

Isa 65:20 There will not be an infant, nor an old man that has not filled his days. For the child will die a hundred years old; but the sinner *who is* a hundred years old will be despised.

Isa 65:21 And they will build houses and live *in them*; and they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

Isa 65:22 They will not build, and another live *in them*; they will not plant, and another eat. For like the days of a tree *are* the days of My people, and My elect will long enjoy the work of their hands.

Isa 65:23 They will not labor in vain, nor bring forth for terror. For they *are* the seed of the beloved of Jehovah, and their offspring with them.

Isa 65:24 And it will be, before they call I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.

Isa 65:25 The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust *will be* the food of the snake. They will not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, says Jehovah.

The Last Day of Leviticus 23 implies that the future judgment of those who have not been given an opportunity for salvation is a significant period of time, worthy of its own annual holy day.

Isaiah implies it will be one hundred years long.

John 7 implies it is a time when the King of Kings will greet each and every one of them with open arms, saying

If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

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