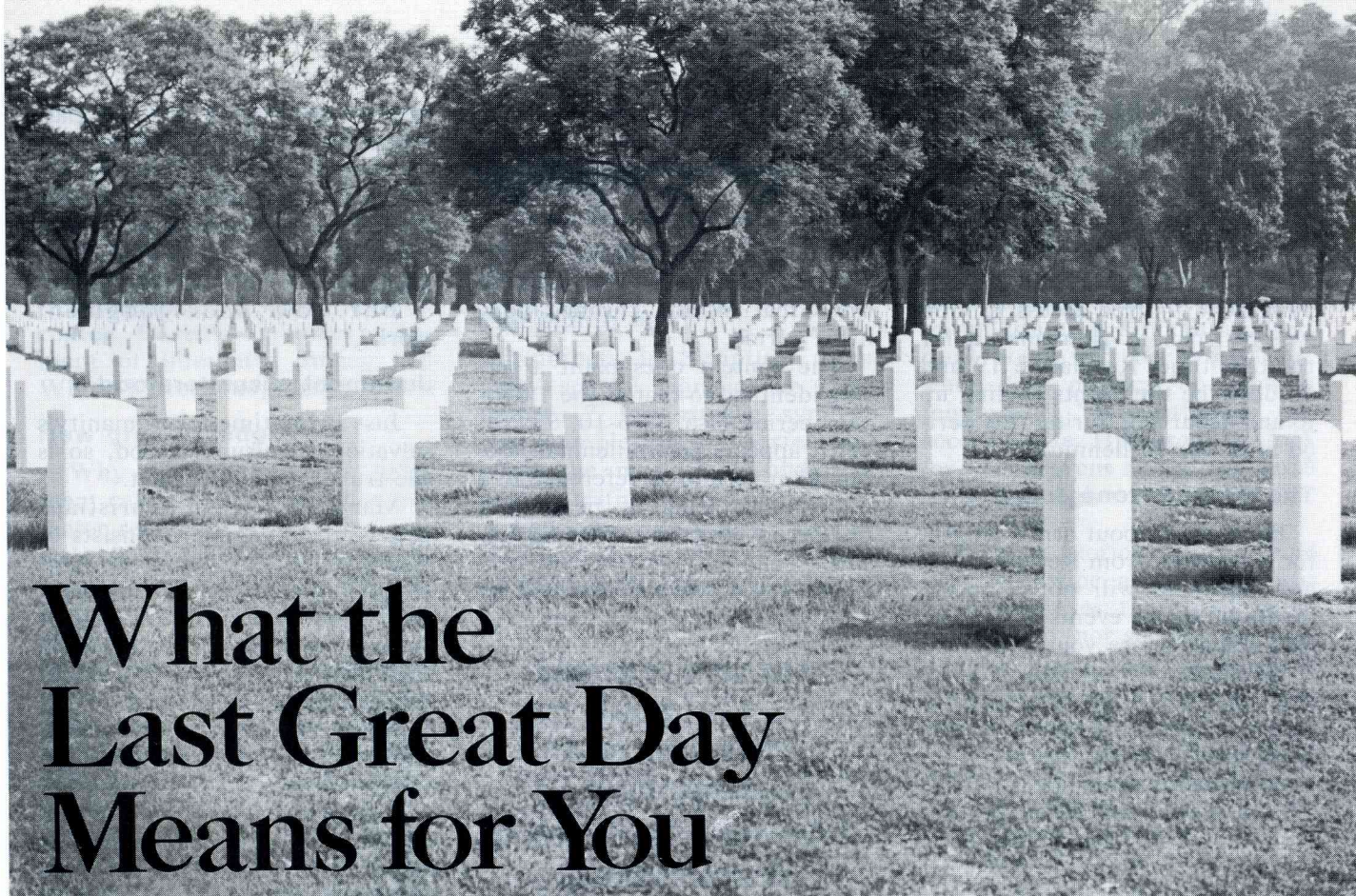




What the Last Great Day Means for You

Do you understand the vital meaning of God's seventh annual festival? What part will you play in its fulfillment?

By Jerold W. Aust

Know this: Today is not the only day of salvation!

According to the generally accepted view among professing Christians, it's "now or never." Millions believe that God is feebly attempting to save the whole world right now, and that if we do not "get saved" during this life, it's all over for us.

In effect, man himself — not God, as this article will show — has consigned humanity to an ethereal heaven or an asbestos-

suited hell. From minister to missionary, from rector to revivalist, from churchman to congregation, most seem to think this is the only day of salvation.

Yet this assumption lacks understanding, and God desires for you and me to know His will fully (John 17:17). Let's discover the truth!

God's annual Sabbaths

God has given us guideposts by which we can trace our history in advance. These are God's annual festivals and Holy Days (Lev. 23, Col. 2:16-17).

Passover, the first festival, shows Jesus' sacrifice for man. The Days of Unleavened Bread instruct Christ's disciples to conduct themselves in a holy manner. Pentecost pictures the coming of God's Holy Spirit to God's Church. The Day of Trumpets warns mankind of impending war and troubles and foreshadows Christ's Second Coming. The Day of Atonement shows that Satan will be incarcerated for 1,000 years. And the Feast of Tabernacles pictures Christ's mil-

lennial reign of unprecedented peace and prosperity.

(For more information on God's true Holy Days and their meanings, request our free booklet *Pagan Holidays — or God's Holy Days — Which?* You may write to us at our address nearest you — see the inside front cover for a list of addresses.)

But that's only six festivals, and there are seven in God's annual calendar. That brings us to the Last Great Day, which pictures an incredibly great and separate day for salvation for the vast majority of mankind.

Notice the instruction in Leviticus 23:36: "On the eighth day [after the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles] you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it."

Here is a festival separate from and occurring after the Feast of Tabernacles. It pictures the time — not now — when salvation will be offered to mankind, resurrected, as a whole — the time

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

During this Last Great Day — during the Great White Throne Judgment — free access to God will be open to all mankind for the first time. Revelation 19 and 20 describe the events leading up to and occurring during this period after the Millennium.

The White Throne Judgment

Back away about arm's length, for a moment, from Revelation 19 and 20. You will notice increments of signal events and times take shape before your eyes.

Revelation 19 introduces us to the glorious and astounding return of Jesus Christ to a war-torn, shell-shocked world — to save humanity from itself!

And Revelation 20 covers not less than five colossal events in God's salvation of most of humanity:

1) Christ incarcerates Satan and the demons (Rev. 20:1-3).

2) Christ establishes His 1,000-year reign (verses 4-6).

3) Satan is released after this Millennium and deceives the willing wicked, who are then destroyed (verses 7-10).

4) Christ judges the people, now resurrected, who lived during the first 6,000 years of human history on earth. This is the Great White Throne Judgment (verses 11-13).

5) The lake of fire, fueled by God, provides a merciful death for those who refuse to live God's way (verses 14-15).

Let's concentrate on the Great White Throne Judgment. This will be a time unprecedented in the annals of human salvation. At no time before or after will so many be resurrected and judged in such a short period of time!

An estimate of the number of people to be resurrected might be about 50 billion! Can we imagine the breathtaking scene when Christ will, by divine fiat, raise from the dead these untold billions to a vibrant physical existence?

This judgment will require a period of time. Where, in Scripture, is such a period discussed?

A 100-year period

Isaiah 65:20 mentions a 100-year life span that lends itself to the Great White Throne Judgment period.

The context does paint a setting identical to that of the 1,000-year period (Isa. 11:6-10, 65:25), yet it appears postmillennial, too. No other scriptural reference to a millennial setting of peace and prosperity hints of a 100-year life span.

We know Jesus Christ will be

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the great Judge seated upon this Great White Throne (Acts 10:42, Rev. 20:11, 6:14-17).

We know the "books" mentioned in Revelation 20:12 are the books of God's Word, the Holy Bible (John 12:47-48).

And we know that the names of the faithful saints, those being mercifully judged during the White Throne Judgment, will be recorded and preserved in the book of life (Rev. 21:27).

Since Christ will be the great Judge then, and since that same Christ will have ruled and judged for 1,000 years previous to this period, it should not seem surprising that the White Throne setting will be a continuation of the conditions to prevail during the Millennium.

Whether this 100-year life span is *the* time segment for the Great White Throne Judgment, it is sure that this special judgment does follow the Millennium,

just as the eighth day or Last Great Day Festival follows the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles. The very existence of this final annual festival indicates a separate and distinct period for judging billions of human beings.

But how does judgment work?

Judgment misunderstood

Just as the time for humanity's salvation is misunderstood, so is the truth about judgment.

Many professing Christians believe that judgment consists of Christ lining up humanity (this would require a very long line!), and pronouncing them either "sheep" or "goats" — deciding their eternal fate. But this is not Christ's judgment process.

Isaiah 65:20 explains how "the sinner . . . one hundred years old shall be accursed." What else but a judgment *time period* could account for the possibility that a sinner could live for 100 years under Christ's rule?

Judgment requires a judge, laws, a group ruled by the laws, knowledge of the laws, time to be judged, a verdict and execution of the verdict. Once one understands that godly judgment is not demagogic caprice, but a deliberate evaluation based on love for the participant's benefit, one can see the profound mercy of God (Rom. 5:6-9). Judgment is a necessary blessing!

Why a white throne?

In Scripture, white can refer either to light or righteousness, which, spiritually, are one and the same (Rev. 19:8, 14).

It's fairly plain, then, that the white throne in Revelation 20:11 implies a judgment effected in righteousness.

The word *throne* in Revelation 20:11 means a stately seat or a potentate's seat or throne. It indicates a monarch who rules alone, with uncontested and unequalled power.

This truly fits with Scripture, for before the Great White Throne Judgment begins, Satan and the demons will be cast into outer darkness, beyond the

reaches of God's whole universe. They will be "wandering stars [fallen angels] for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever" (Jude 13). In Isaiah 50:3, God says, "I clothe the heavens with blackness."

Satan will not be around to contest Christ's righteous judgment of humanity during the White Throne Judgment!

How great a judgment!

Why is this particular judgment called a great one? For two major reasons:

1) Jesus Christ, the Judge, is astonishingly great in all His makeup, purpose, mercy, power and love.

2) This particular judgment is great because of the untold billions upon billions of physical human beings who will be mercifully and lovingly judged at one time.

Jesus personally observed the Last Great Day, for it was He who instituted the day to symbolize this very White Throne Judgment (John 1:1-3, 14).

What Jesus knew, you can know. That last and great day of the annual festival days foreshadows the greatest time of salvation for the greatest number of people at one time. How wonderful it is to know the truth!

The prophet Ezekiel sheds light on those incredible numbers. The setting in Ezekiel 37 is postmillennial. Remember that the first resurrection, to occur as the Millennium begins, is to spirit essence (Rev. 20:4-6). The resurrection at the beginning of the White Throne Judgment, however, is to a physical state.

Here God resurrects the whole house of Israel, which had lived and died during mankind's first six millennia (Ezek. 37:1-2, 11). Israel may number into the billions themselves.

But what of all the greater numbers of gentiles who also lived and died during that same period of time and who, too, will be awaiting their one and only opportunity to be judged and saved (I Tim. 2:4)? They will also be resurrected at that precise

time. The opportunities extended to Israel will also be offered to the gentiles (Rom. 2:9-10, Isa. 19:24-25).

Thank God this is *not* the only day of salvation (Isa. 49:8, Revised Standard Version).

The eighth day

Numbers in Scripture often carry special significance. The number 7, for instance, symbolizes completion or perfection, while the number 40 indicates trial or testing.

The same is true in the case of the Last Great Day, which is referred to as the *eighth* day of

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the Feast (Lev. 23:36). The word for the number 8 is related to a Hebrew word meaning "fatness," and can imply abundance, fertility, resurrection or regeneration.

Listen now to God's words of warning and encouragement concerning these latter days: "Give a serving to seven, and also to eight, for you do not know what evil will be on the earth" (Eccl. 11:2). We are told, "Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days" (verse 1).

This exhortation should ring loud and clear to us in the context of the Last Great Day, for God sets the example, follows His own instructions and inspires us to do the same.

God Himself will cast His spiritual bread upon the waters or nations of this earth both during the 1,000-year period, portrayed by the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles, and during the Great White Throne Judgment, sym-

bolized by the Last Great Day Festival or the eighth day of the Feast.

Following this White Throne Judgment comes a purging of this earth (II Pet. 3:10-11) and an end to human procreation and existence. But don't be sad — be happy and grateful! Your future spiritual body will be everlasting, while your physical one now is temporary. "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (verse 13).

What a glorious time! "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

Will you be there? Will you be waiting and anticipating throughout the millennial rule of Christ, while helping refurbish this earth for those billions to be resurrected at the beginning of the White Throne Judgment? Someone will!

And those who will be there at the dawning of that Last Great Day will be waiting as spirit beings — already literally born as spirit-composed children of almighty God and younger brothers of our Savior, Jesus Christ (Dan. 12:3).

At Jesus Christ's Second Coming, humanity will be saved from extinction because of a tiny group of "elect" people (Matt. 24:22). A similar lopsided ratio will be apparent at the raising of multiple billions of people at the beginning of the White Throne Judgment.

By comparison, the number of those who will already have been born into God's Family, though numbering in the hundreds of millions or billions, will be small. But those children of God — you among them — will have the tremendous opportunity to help the rest of humanity fulfill its awesome potential and also be born into God's Family.

Never will so many owe so much to so few. And they, even now, are waiting for you! Please — be there! □