

One of the most perplexing questions within the Christian world has been whether or not the heathen can be saved. On his web page, Howard Culbertson of the Southern Nazarene University in Bethany, OK asks¹ –

“Are the heathen really lost? What happens to those who haven't heard the gospel when they die? Do the un-evangelized go to hell? Can God be considered loving and just if He fails to provide large numbers of people with an opportunity for salvation through Jesus Christ? If the un-evangelized have an opportunity for salvation, how is it made available to them?”

Yet, for some there is no question. For instance Dr. Jack Arnold has a ministry called Third Millinium Ministries. In his on-line magazine he has an article entitled “Are the Heathen Lost? A Study of Romans 1:18-23”² in which he writes -

“Are the heathen lost? The answer to this question has never been a problem to Bible-believing Christians, for the Bible, church history, and missions all give evidence that the heathen are lost, that they are under the wrath of God and are headed for eternal punishment without Christ.”

I guess to get the proper context of what he's saying, a person would have to know what he means by the word “heathen”, and Dr. Arnold gives us the definition later in his article. He writes:

“Scripturally speaking, the heathen are all Gentiles, whether they have heard the gospel or not.”

Then he quotes a couple of scriptures to sort of *nail down* his definition –

“But when it pleased God, . . . to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen” (Gal. 1:15,16).

“They (*James, Peter, and John*) gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision” (Gal. 2:9b).

So, since Paul was sent to the *heathen* and James, Peter, and John were sent to the circumcision, then that must mean that the Jews in the first century were not heathen. I don't suspect that's really what he meant, so to clear up all speculation, he continued with this point -

“Today “heathen” has come to mean those who have never heard the gospel”

Since Dr. Arnold's article is supposedly based on Romans 1:18-23, it is interesting to point out that Paul never uses the word *heathen* in the entire book of Romans. Instead, Paul uses the term *Gentiles*, which we understand to mean “the nations”. Of course, in the first century, being a part of one of the various sects of Judaism, and thus - a believer in the God of Israel - was the only way to not be considered a heathen.

It appears that Dr. Arnold has the answer that satisfies fits his theology . . . and it doesn't look to good for the heathen.

Dr. Arnold's sentiments are echoed by another theologian, Dr. Ralph Arnold, this time from Tampa, Florida. In his article entitled “The Heathen?”³ he submits the question:

¹ <http://home.snu.edu/~hculbert/heathen.htm>

² <http://cleartheology.com/expo/45Romans/NT.Arnold.Rom.09.html> quoting [IIIM Magazine Online](#), Volume 1, Number 9, April 26 to May 2, 1999



“But what about those (*heathen*) who have never heard? What about them?”

He goes on to answer the question by saying -

“God says that they will have no excuse because God has revealed His existence to every person born into this world. They may not have heard of Jesus Christ but they do know that God exists, so they become accountable and are without excuse.”

In his article, Dr. Arnold goes on to say that “there is no such thing as a born atheist” . . . that all human beings are born with a basic understanding of God. He states that since all humans have basic understanding of God, it is therefore their responsibility to search out the truth about salvation through Jesus Christ.

Pretty firm answer, and I’m sure that a number of fence sitters have taken a second look at their spiritual life after reading his article. But what about those for whom this information – a Bible – is simply not available? Most of these theologians don’t have an answer. What about the natives in the Amazon jungle, some who have never come in contact with what we call civilization? Maybe a missionary was on his way to teach them about The Messiah, but had a flat tire on the way. He never made it to the village, thus a whole tribe of people miss out on salvation because of a flat tire.

“That’s life”, you might say, or in this case – that’s death. But let’s get a little bit closer to home. What about the child who dies at a year old? I’ve got a couple of year-old grand-daughters; and neither of them are asking questions about their salvation. If they were to die in a car accident this afternoon on their way home from church, are they lost? Will they burn forever in hell fire because some drunk crossed the centerline and plowed into their car?

What kind of God is that?

So let’s go back to the first question –

“Are the heathen really lost? What happens to those who haven’t heard the gospel when they die? Do the un-evangelized go to hell? Can God be considered loving and just if He fails to provide large numbers of people with an opportunity for salvation through Jesus Christ? **If the un-evangelized have an opportunity for salvation, how is it made available to them?**”

Thankfully, the Bible does have an answer, and the answer can be found by practicing God’s *blueprint for salvation* – the festivals of God. The overall theme of God’s festivals is how He will bring salvation to mankind. He sent His son Yeshua within the framework of the festivals in order to bring about that salvation. And what’s more, Yeshua came at a time in history where He could use Jewish tradition to support and illustrate His role in the salvation of all mankind.

Today, we are going to discuss the festival of Sukkot with a focus on the last day of the festival, which in Judaism is called *Hoshanna Rabbah*. This Jewish tradition is filled with meaning and hope, and as we study it, we’ll gain a bigger understanding of God’s plan for mankind.

Christianity has, for the most part, misunderstood God’s plan of salvation because they have failed to observe the *moedim*, the festivals that are spelled out in Leviticus 23.

^{NKJ} **Leviticus 23:1** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.



In this passage, the word for *feasts* is *moedim*, a word that basically means an *appointment*. It is an appointment God has made with His people where He reveals to them the things that are near and dear to His heart. One of those things is His plan of salvation.

The apostle Paul understood the purpose of the festivals, thus he said –

^{NKJ} **Colossians 2:16-17** So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

Paul understood that the festivals portray a plan by which all mankind would have the opportunity to come in contact with the knowledge of the God of Israel, and Israel's redeemer – Messiah Yeshua. Being that Paul was raised in a Pharisee home, and was himself a Pharisee, it would stand to reason that he also understood Jewish tradition pertaining to the resurrection of the dead, for of all the Jewish sects, the Pharisees were the staunchest believers in the resurrection. So let's look at that tradition, but before we do, let's take a quick glimpse into the concept of biblical cycles and the Feast of Tabernacles, which is oftentimes referred to simply as 'Sukkot' or 'booths'.

Biblical Cycles

Our reference of time is based on cycles. For instance, a minute is a cycle of sixty seconds; sixty cycles of minutes is an hour; and a cycle of twenty-four hours is a day. Though we have no natural representation of such, the Bible tells us that a cycle of seven days is a week.

Another cycle we have is the agricultural-harvest cycle of the spring, summer, and fall harvests. The Biblical festivals are based on that harvest cycle. Without getting into a lot of detail, the spring 'barley' harvest coincides with Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. The summer 'wheat' harvest coincides with Shavuot, or as it is called in Christian circles – Pentecost. The fall harvest appears to be a general harvest and includes the festivals of Yom Teruah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles, and Shemini Atzaret.

Note that the festival seasons depict an 'order' of harvests (barley, then the wheat, and finally the general crop harvests), but do not necessarily indicate a timing of that harvest. In other words, as we begin to talk about the resurrections – the harvest of God's people - we do not have a one-to-one relationship between the timing of a festival and its corresponding harvest season.

Festival of Sukkot

The Feast of Tabernacles is also referred to as 'the Festival of Ingathering' and the "Feast of Booths". The scriptures say that the reason for staying in booths during this festival was "...that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt..."⁴. Though there was a lot of turmoil during the wilderness journey, when you think about it, that time was very unique. It was a time when God fed the people bread from heaven, provided water from a rock, fought their battles, preserved their cloths, extended the life of some, provided Israel with a person who could interpret the law, gave them righteous judges, and dwelt visually in their midst. It was a type of the messianic kingdom! Sukkot's location in the biblical cycle of festivals supports that view as well.

The festival is mentioned in a number of Old Testament prophecies, and in many cases, it carries the theme of restoration. For instance, Solomon's Temple was completed and dedicated during the Feast of Tabernacles, a representation of the restoration of the unity Israel and Judah had not shared since crossing the Jordan nearly 400 years earlier. Five hundred years later, Ezra restored temple worship to Israel during the feast of Tabernacles

⁴ Lev. 23:43



So Sukkot is when the restoration of God's kingdom will begin in earnest by the hand of Israel's king – Messiah Yeshua. When He returns, He will once again reign over a united Israel, and true worship will be restored. But that's not to say that all nations will immediately jump on the bandwagon and submit to Israel's King. It is going to take years . . . maybe hundreds of years to clean up the cultural mess here on earth. As the knowledge of the Kingdom continues to spread, there will come a time when all the families on earth will be raising Torah observant children in Torah observant homes; when children will be able to play in the streets without fear; and when all mankind will look to YHVH and praise Him for giving us His Son. It is during this time, and under these circumstances that God will begin the harvest that is depicted by its other name, the "Festival of Ingathering", and with this thought in mind, we can begin to find the answer to the question; **"If the un-evangelized have an opportunity for salvation, how is it made available to them?"**

The Feast of Tabernacles is a seven-day festival. After this festival ends, there is another one-day festival called Shemini Atzoreth, which simply means the *Eighth Day Assembly*.⁵ Shimini Atzoreth is not the Last Day of the Feast of Tabernacles, it is a different festival. The Last Day of the Feast of Tabernacles is the 7th day. On the Jewish calendar, it is Tishri 21. The Jewish people have attached a name to this day – *Hoshanna Rabbah*, which means the *Great Salvation*. To understand the significance of this day, one must understand a first century Sukkot tradition called the 'Beit haShoava', or the "House of the Water Drawing".

The first century Jewish people had a tradition of drawing "living water" from the Pool of Shiloam each morning during the feast of Tabernacles. They would take that water, and along with a pitcher of wine, pour it on the Alter. At the same time, other priests would bring long willow branches through the eastern gate of the Temple, waving them back and forth as they marched one time around the altar - just as Israel marched one time around Jericho after entering the Promised Land. The purpose of this was to simulate the Holy Spirit which they felt would be prevalent during the Messianic Kingdom.⁶

They would continue this custom each of the first six days of the festival, but the seventh day was special. It was called "the great day" because on it they would march around the altar seven times, again as Israel had marched around Jericho seven times on the seventh day. At the conclusion of the seventh circuit, the priests would blow the silver trumpets and the people would begin to shout. Fourteen hundred years earlier at Jericho, that shout resulted in the walls of Jericho falling down, but for the Jews in the first century, it signified a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Because this great outpouring of the Spirit happened toward the end of the festival of Sukkot, the message is that there would be a great outpouring of the Spirit accompanied by a great salvation (Hoshanna Rabbah) at or towards the end of the Messianic Kingdom.

There is a reference to this in John chapter 7 where we find Yeshua keeping Sukkot at the Temple in Jerusalem –

^{NKJ} **John 7:37-39** 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. ³⁸ "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." ³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Though I can't say for sure, I can picture Yeshua standing in the Court of the Women, on a pedestal of some sorts, waiting for the trumpets to blow. When they did, He shouted out the message of the living waters. In effect, Yeshua was substantiating their tradition of Hoshanna Rabbah, the great salvation.

⁵ See Lev. 23:36

⁶ The Hebrew word for *wind* is the same as for *spirit* – "ruach"



But where did the Jews come up with this concept of a Great Salvation towards the end of the Millennium? Why did they believe there would be a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit at that time? Did they just pull it out of thin air, or is there a basis for their belief. We know that the Jewish sages searched diligently within the scriptures for clues to what YHVH was doing. They would often link a thought in one verse with that in another in order to develop a theory. Sometimes they were right, other times they were wrong. In the case of the Beit haShouava – the House of the Water Drawing, it appears they were correct since Yeshua used that occasion as a backdrop for one of his greatest teachings.

We'll take these next few passages and link them together to see if we too can find a basis for this exciting Jewish tradition. I'm not saying this is how the Jewish sages did it, but I can see a basis in these scriptures.

This first passage we want to look at clearly pertains to the Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles –

^{NKJ} **Deuteronomy 31:10-13** And Moses commanded them, saying: "At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, ¹¹ "when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. ¹² "Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, ¹³ "and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess."

Notice what Moses is saying. At the end of the seven year cycle (the land Sabbath cycle⁷), at the Feast of Tabernacles, have a public reading of the Torah. This would be a history lesson, a reminder of what God had done for them, and would be the opportunity to teach the people, including women and children, the Torah. Now think about it. Moses was giving these instructions to a people who were to soon enter the Promised Land – a forerunner of the Kingdom of God, a nation that was to be governed by the Torah on a daily basis. But did you notice that there are two different types of children spoken of here? In the first group there are men, women, children, and the stranger in your gates. These are all people of a household who, you would suppose, would have been taught the ways of YHVH during their previous 6 years in the land. But Moses goes on to mention "their children, who have not known it". Who would have not known the Torah? Is Moses speaking of the families already in the land? I don't think so. Instead, I would assume that these are proselytes, people who were not raised in Israel but came in later. What is significant is that these "children" were to be introduced to the Torah on the seventh year of a seven-year cycle of festival observance, and during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Because the seven days of Sukkot picture the Messianic Kingdom, when you apply this 7th year reading of the Torah to these two groups of people, we can surmise that in the Kingdom, there will be people who had been practicing the Torah walk and would be reminded of it at the end of the cycle, and there will also be people who are introduced to Torah at the end of the cycle, toward the end of the Messianic Kingdom.

Tying this in to what traditionally happens at the Temple, and to what Yeshua taught – the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the seventh or 'Great Day' of the Feast of Tabernacles, it appears that the outpouring of the Spirit would be for those who were just learning about the Torah during the Messianic Kingdom.

To what we've seen so far, let's add the fact that in the age in which we live, God has not revealed Himself to all mankind. To put it another way, God has chosen to not call everyone in this age.

Very early in ministry of Isaiah the prophet, he was told to make this quite puzzling proclamation to Israel and Judah. He was told –

⁷ Deut. 15:1



^{ESV} **Isaiah 6:9-10** "Go, and say to this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.'¹⁰ Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.'"

What God is saying is that there would be a time when Israel and Judah would be blinded to the deep ways of YHVH. They would read the words, but would not understand what they're reading. They would see Messiah, but would not understand Him. This is precisely what happened, and Yeshua referred to it during His ministry –

^{ESV} **Luke 8:9-10** And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant,¹⁰ he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'

Yeshua very clearly stated that He spoke in parables so that the majority of the people would not understand. All four of the gospels make mention of this, in fact John makes the statement that in spite of the prophecy, Yeshua's signs were so overwhelming that many could see through the blindness and recognize that He was the Messiah.

^{ESV} **John 12:37-42** Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him,³⁸ so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?"³⁹ Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said,⁴⁰ "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them."⁴¹ Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.⁴² Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it . . .

Recall that Moses had predicted a time when during the Feast of Tabernacles when the Torah would be preached, there would be those who would be reminded of it, but there would also be those who had not previously heard it. And why had some not heard it? Because they had been blinded. It was all a part of God's plan.

Isaiah speaks quite often of the Spirit of God and of spiritual blindness. Not only did he speak about spiritual 'blindness', he also spoke of a time when that blindness would be removed through the outpouring of God's spirit.

^{ESV} **Isaiah 44:1** "But now hear, O Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen!² Thus says the LORD who made you, who formed you from the womb and will help you: Fear not, O Jacob my servant, Jeshurun whom I have chosen.³ For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams (*rivers, floods*) on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants.

In that passage of Hebrew parallelism, God likened Israel to a dry and thirsty land. He said that he will pour water (*mayim* in Hebrew) on a thirsty people, and the water would be like a flood (*nazal* – Strong's 5140). He then likened this flood of water to His spirit. If we read on, this outpouring of the spirit will cause that person to identify himself with the God of Israel, implying a turning back to the Torah. This desire will cause the blindness of their eyes to depart.

^{NKJ} **Isaiah 29:18** In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.

Let's now tie in a little Biblical chronology.



We've already seen back in Deuteronomy that in the seventh year, the end of the seven-year cycle, the Torah was to be read and explained to a people who did not know the Torah. Could this event coincide with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit during the Messianic Kingdom? Let's see.

The entire second chapter of Joel speaks of end time events. Each event is attached to the order of the various fall festivals. Therefore, we can build a chronology based on the festivals. The first festival is Yom Teruah, the Feast of Trumpets –

^{NKJ} **Joel 2:1-14** Blow the trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm⁸ in My holy mountain! . . .

Which is followed by Yom Kippor -

^{NKJ} **Joel 2:15-17** Blow the trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly . . .

The next festival is Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles -

^{NKJ} **Joel 2:18-27** Then the LORD will be zealous for His land . . . ²¹ Fear not, O land; Be glad and rejoice, For the LORD has done marvelous things! . . . ²⁶ You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied . .

Joel ends his discussion of Sukkot by showing the state of the people that are alive at that time in the Messianic kingdom. He says –

^{NKJ} **Joel 2:27** Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the LORD your God and there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame.

It seems that by the time we get to the end of verse 27, all mankind would be worshipping the God of Israel. Everyone would be walking in Torah, and the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 would be fully implemented. But immediately after this Sukkot passage, the prophecy continues -

^{NKJ} **Joel 2:28-32** " And it shall come to pass **afterward** That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh . . . ²⁹ And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

Sometime after Sukkot is underway, when all mankind begins to learn the benefits of submitting to the God of Israel, He will again pour out His spirit. Why would there need to be another outpouring of God's spirit if all mankind is already following God? Will there be some event that will take place sometime during the millennium by which people will come on the scene and need His spirit to see things they previously could not see? I believe there is, and I believe the Jewish sages saw it in the scriptures, and they called it Hoshanna Rabbah – the Great Salvation. It is at this time that God will commence the harvest that is associated with the festival of Sukkot.

Sukkot – the Feast of Ingathering – will begin the greatest of all harvests. All those who had died without knowing or outright rejecting God and His Servant the Messiah will be resurrected. Because of the massive numbers involved, the resurrection will probably span most of the Messianic Age. It will include everyone who never had an opportunity to really know and follow God. He will pour out his spirit in that day, and there will be teachers to whom they can turn to learn the true Hebrew walk. Those who choose to follow that walk will eventually inherit eternal life. Those who do not, will not and will eventually die..

Why is God doing it this way? In a letter of encouragement to his friend Timothy, Paul tells Timothy to pray and make intercession for the civil leaders in the places he goes to evangelize. In all likelihood these leaders would be considered *heathen*, yet it is within this context that Paul says that it is God's desire for all men to be saved.

⁸ a 'ruah' – the sound made by the shofar to warn of danger. See Numbers 10:9



^{ESV} **1 Timothy 2:3-4** This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The word *desire* in this passage is somewhat misleading. YHVH does more than just desire, He intends for it to happen – both believers and non-believers to be saved. The Greek word for desire is “thelo” (Strong’s 2309) and means *to will* or *to be determined*. God is determined to make this happen. He is going to make salvation⁹ available to all mankind, and they can either accept it or reject it. Each person will have to make his choice.

So let us ask our question one more time. **“If the un-evangelized have an opportunity for salvation, how is it made available to them?”**

The answer is Hoshanna Rabbah, the Great Salvation.

^{NKJ} **John 7:37-39** "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of His heart will flow rivers of living water."

Yeshua stood up and made this proclamation on Last Great Day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the day that in His day was called “Hoshanna Rabbah – the Great Salvation”, It was the appropriate statement for the appropriate day of the festival cycle, and it is all a part of God’s festival plan.

Shalom Aleichem

⁹ See our article – Salvation Cycles / Salvation - <https://www.amiyisrael.org/articles/SavationCycles/SalvationCycles-P4-Salvation.htm>