

Elul 2017

Break 1 - Intro – Is God In It

How do we interpret signs in the heavens?

The wise men figured out His birth. But His death 33 years later was the real story.

This is the exact same sign.

So what is God saying?

Is it about His second coming? It's really the wrong sign for that.

Rev 12 is a sign that tells the story of creation, redemption, victory over evil, and so much more.

It's important to not assume too much.

Signs in the heaven rarely mean the end of the world is right now.

Or that the rapture is imminent. Or the tribulation is here. Signs often repeat.

Jesus laid out the signs of the end of the world. They are very clear.

This happens and then that happens.

We are not waiting for the rapture or the return of Christ at the moment.

The signs that precede that have not happened yet.

No sign in the heavens trumps those signs.

So - no the eclipse and what's being called the revelation 12 sign **are not warning us that the rapture or the end of the world is imminent**.

When Jesus ascended, the apostles stood there waiting looking up at the sky until God sent an angel to say, "What did He just tell you?"

First the Holy Spirit is coming, then...now go do what He told you to do.

It's ironic that those who have neglected to do what Jesus said are still looking at the sky expecting Him to return at any moment.

First seek Him and find Him. Straighten out where men's teaching has led you astray and then you can focus on what He has for you to do at the end of the world.

These signs are all setting up the Fall Feasts and coincide with Moses on Mount Sinai the second time. That's all about Pentecost. It's when Moses' face began to glow from being in God's presence. It's about the Holy Spirit and how we can all encounter Him.

It's an invitation...a reminder...God is a God of order and He is waiting for us to enter in.

Break 2 – Elul Begins & Does God Use Eclipses

The Fall Feasts are approaching and there are a number of signs in the heavens as part of them this year. **We have a spectacular solar eclipse today, the month of Elul begins tomorrow, then one month later on Sept 23rd, the sun, moon and stars all take part in what's being called "the Revelation 12 sign in the heavens" during the Days of Awe.**

Genesis 1:14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and **let them serve as signs** to mark sacred times, and days and years.

For our nation this will be the first coast to coast total eclipse in 99 years (1918). It will be the first total solar eclipse of its kind for the United States since 1776 when we became a nation.

The month of Elul is the beginning of a 40-day period of repentance. It was on Elul 1 that Jonah left for 40 days to tell Nineveh to repent. It was on Elul 1 that Moses went up to Mt. Sinai after the sin of the Golden Calf, trying to make atonement while Israel was repenting for that. It was on Elul 1 Jesus went out into the wilderness for 40 days, coming out on Yom Kippur.

World War I started in August of 1914 and there was a total solar eclipse over Eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire on August 21st." The Ottoman Empire is destroyed. The eclipse even went over Nineveh, the same place as where Jonah was.

According to Jewish tradition, because Gentiles go by the sun for their calendar, a solar eclipse represents judgment coming upon a non-Jewish nation, whereas a lunar eclipse, because Jews use a lunar calendar, represents judgment coming upon Israel.

Are eclipses part of God's method of warning nations? Let's look at Nineveh. In 763BC God prepared the ground before he sent Jonah. They found these cuneiform tablets that say there was a major plague three years before Jonah came, then a civil war, and another plague, and NASA records one of the most famous eclipses in all history, called the Bur-Sagle eclipse. It was a total solar eclipse over Nineveh, one month before Jonah came. No wonder they were so willing to repent.

Exodus 33

18 Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory." 19 And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." 21 Then the Lord said, "There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. 22 **When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. 23 Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.**"

That is, by definition, an eclipse.

The Hebrew word for eclipse is "likui" (le-coy melwhat), or defect.

Break 3 – Voices and Fire

"When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear." (Exodus 20:18). In Hebrew, the "thunder and lightning" in this passage literally reads "voices and (torches or fires or lights)." "Voices" was translated "thunders", because voices are normally heard rather than seen, and "torches" was translated "lightnings" to perhaps match logically.

The word "voices" is plural. What the people heard was one God, but many voices or languages. This means that everyone heard the Torah in a way that they could understand it in the language that they spoke, even though they were a "mixed multitude" (Exodus 12:38).

In Acts 2:1-4, we have: "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. **(a large fire of some sort came down from heaven and then divided and covered each one of them)** 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." You have voices and torches again.

Acts 2:5-8 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?

The Bible says the people heard in their language but it doesn't say they spoke in that language. Just like at Sinai, everyone heard in their own language as God spoke.

This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

Notice a couple of things:

1. God will speak to you in a language that you relate to. Music, art, dance, reading, nature, water, stars and constellations, tongues
2. God Himself said He will show wonders in the heavens when He wants to communicate to us

Break 4 - Revelation 12 and The Days of Awe

Luke 21:25, Jesus says there will be signs in the sun and the moon and the stars.

We have a spectacular solar eclipse today as Elul begins, then one month later on Sept 23rd, the sun, moon and stars all take part in what's being called the "Revelation 12 sign in the heavens" during the Days of Awe."

Revelation 12: 1-2 reads: 'A great sign was seen in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child. She cried out in pain, laboring to give birth.'

The Bible was written to those who lived under the stars. We are not talking astrology, but astronomy. The woman clothed with the sun is seen as the constellation Virgo and also represents the nation of Israel. The 12 stars represent the 12 tribes of Israel. Interestingly, the constellation Leo, the Lion, which is above Virgo, is made up of nine stars. The Lion represents specifically the tribe of Judah. It just so happens this year during the Days of Awe, three planets will join the constellation Leo making up 12 stars. Virgo will be clothed with the sun, and the moon will be under her feet, fulfilling this sign to precise detail!

And for the Virgin giving birth - the planet Jupiter (which is called the King) shoots through the constellation of Virgo. It entered in November 2016 and exits or is birthed nine months later on September 23, 2017.

Interesting notes: Rosh Hashanah on Sep 21st if the 6th day of creation, Sep 22 would be the 7th day or Sabbath, and then Sep 23rd would be day 8 – 5778 is all about the 8 which means change or new beginnings.

The timing of the today's eclipse certainly points towards a call for repentance. The eclipse will end just hours before the Hebrew month of Elul begins, initiating a forty-day period of repentance culminating in the holy day of Yom Kippur, the most somber day of the Jewish calendar.

The forty days between the first day of Elul and Yom Kippur correspond to the 40 days that Moses spent repenting to God for Israel on Mount Sinai. It was on Elul 1 that Moses went up to Mt. Sinai after the sin of the Golden Calf, trying to make atonement while Israel was repenting for that. During those 40 days, the Jewish people blow the shofar daily and recite special pre-dawn prayers for forgiveness.

Essentially it's Pentecost 2.0

Pentecost is Learning to Better Hear the Voice of God - And it's discovering that He is your Helper
It's learning to not just study Him, but to encounter Him, to be filled by Him continually

Feast of Unleavened Bread April 13 to sundown April 19

Passover April 13 / First Fruits April 16 - Second Passover May 13

Shavuot Pentecost June 4

Pentecost 2.0 (Elul begin Tuesday afternoon August 22nd)

Feast of Trumpets September 22

Yom Kippur October 1

Feast of Tabernacles October 5-13

Break 5 – The Voice of God

What does the voice of God sound like?

He warns us when we start to stray; whispers encouragement to us when we struggle; commands our enemies to flee; comforts us when we fail or lose someone dear; and even sings over the deepest parts of us in the good and bad times because life is hard and he is familiar with our suffering.

He does it with His presence, through words or even groans we can't comprehend, and He does it in symbolic ways. The blast of the shofar is one of the more interesting symbols of His presence. Since God speaks in diverse ways for different situations, the shofar has several distinct blasts.

In ancient Israel, **one long sustained blast** was a common reassuring sound that meant the watchmen guarding the city were on duty and all was well. That sound divided up the watches of the day and night. He is always calling us to be prayerful watchman on His walls. If we were more alert, we would notice that from morning to night He woos us to draw near so that we might receive His strength and comfort.

Three successive blasts signaled some significant event – usually it meant good tidings. Likewise, He rejoices over us with singing and dancing. I love that God finds joy in celebrating us. Most of us will never hear the sound of applause on earth, but if we draw near to God in those moments, we will feel His deep affection. What so many of us are trying to get from “likes” on Facebook is available from the One who created and sustains everything.

And the third trumpet call, **nine rapid bursts**, was the sound of alarm. It meant they were under attack and all the fighting men were needed to draw together immediately for battle. Like Israel, we all need to be alarmed so that we become aware of sin that separates us from God. We need to know an enemy has drawn near. And we need to hear His voice reminding us of our need for atonement. When your spirit feels shaken within you, learn to respond to the sound of His alarm. We need to constantly pray, “lead us not into temptation but from deliver us from evil”.

Acts 3:19

Repent, then, and turn to God,
so that your sins may be wiped out,
that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

Repent – sins are removed – times of refreshing come

We want to get our way and be refreshed by people (spouse) or things

If we turn to God, He will remove the things that are hindering us from being refreshed

He is our Bridegroom – when we submit to Him everything changes

Break 6 – Be Comforted

Moses spent 40 days to receive the 10 commandments then smashed them by the golden calf. After destroying the golden calf and judging the guilty, Moses went back up Mt. Sinai for 40 more days to intercede for the Israelites.

Moses came back to camp and one day later on Elul 1st God called him back up the mountain to receive the 2nd copy of the 10 commandments.

Moses came down the mountain on Yom Kippur with the new tablets.

So, the month of Elul (plus the first 10 days of Tishri in the New Year) is used for repentance in preparation of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Teshuvah - often translated as repentance but it's much bigger than that.

Shuv means to return or to turn back (to God and from evil).

Since God is the means by which we turn from evil, shuv is more about turning back to God with all of your heart, soul, and strength to change your direction or destiny.

[1 forsake the sin (agree with the Truth or saying the same thing); 2 regret the break in your relationship with God; 3 confess the truth and make amends; 4 accept forgiveness]

We all make choices, some good and some bad, but we can't choose the consequences of our choices. Those are inherent in the choices. We are all becoming something and someone beyond ourselves. No one is shocked when they harvest tomatoes unless they planted something else. Still, we all hope to escape the fruit of our worst decisions.

The Spring Feast of Pentecost celebrates the giving of The Law on Mt. Sinai, but forty days later in the heat of summer, as Moses descended from the mountain with the Law, he smashed the stones in a fit of rage when he saw the Israelites worshipping a golden calf. That occurred on the 17th day of the month of Tammuz (July 11th this year). The date marks the beginning of a three-week period of mourning leading into Tish B'Av, the ninth day of the month of Av, (August 1st this year).

Both dates are filled with tragedies. It was on the 9th of Av that the Israelites took the very bad advice of ten spies, that led them to wander the desert for 40 years until they died and their children entered the Promised Land. The First Temple was destroyed on the 9th of Av. Five centuries later, on the same day the Romans destroyed the Second Temple. Yes, both temples destroyed five hundred years apart on the same day. To add irony to the tragedy of the 9th of Av, it was on the 17th of Tammuz that the walls of Jerusalem were breached (first by Nebuchadnezzar and five centuries later by the Roman leader Titus in 70 AD).

Break 7 – Being Set Apart

Let's journey back to Exodus 32 for the origins of the tragedies, "And Moses took the calf the people had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it. He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin...They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.' So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!" [Yes, that was literally Aaron's excuse.]

Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, "Whoever is for the Lord, come to me." And all the Levites rallied to him. Then he said to them, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.'" The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died. Then Moses said, "You have been set apart to the Lord today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day."

We later learn in Numbers 8, just how the Levites had changed their destinies on that bloody day. "Have the Levites stand in front of Aaron and his sons and then present them as a wave offering to the Lord. In this way you are to set the Levites apart from the other Israelites, and the Levites will be mine. They are the Israelites who are to be given wholly to me...When I struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, I set them apart for myself. And I have taken the Levites in place of all the firstborn sons in Israel. From among all the Israelites, I have given the Levites as gifts to Aaron and his sons to do the work at the tent of meeting on behalf of the Israelites and to make atonement for them so that no plague will strike the Israelites when they go near the sanctuary."

In this year of the sword (The Hebrew year is 5777 and 7 in Hebrew represents a sword), it's important to remember the significance of the Levites choice all those summers ago. Destinies were changed around the sword and their willingness to use it at the command of God. Since Jesus is described in Revelation as having a sword coming out of His mouth, it's important to understand the symbolism.

The sword we yield, the Word of God, is sharper than any other sword, and capable of dividing soul from spirit. This summer of 5777 is a time when specific "priestly" destinies are being birthed by the willingness of saints to open their mouths to bring deliverance to sinners trapped in a world where darkness often appears to be more powerful than our Light of Truth. It isn't. Nothing and no one is greater and never will be. Just as priests are "set apart" for their service, God is setting apart those who are willing to stand out.

We cannot afford to lay down a sword that God has placed in our hands, when our destiny and the fate of the world hangs in the balance. Michelangelo wrote, "The greater danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it."

When Moses climbed the mountain to bring the Word of God to the people, he left Aaron in charge. Likewise, when Jesus ascended to heaven, He left us in charge and left specific directions. This summer, destinies are being determined. Let's be bold!

"Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly." Acts 4:29-31

Break 8 – The King is In the Field

It's important to note that every Hebrew year ends and begins the same way, With a transition from the month of Elul to Tishri, This includes a forty day period of returning to God and agreeing with His word and commands.

The month of Elul includes the beautiful imagery of "the King is in the field". Which is to say that God has drawn near to look closely at how you are tending the fields (blessings and responsibilities) that He has given you. Reading Isaiah 55 and Hosea 14 will provide a beautiful picture of how God responds to our pursuit of Him.

Elul, is a time of paradox -- the Jewish calendar distinguishes between "mundane" and "holy". Ordinary workdays are "mundane" portions of time; Sabbath and the festivals are examples of "holy" time. On "holy" days, you disengage from labor to focus on the spiritual.

Elul is a "holy" month when you assess the year gone by; a time to prepare for the "Days of Awe" of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur by repenting the failings of the past and resolving for the future - But the days of Elul are workdays. The activities of Elul are conducted amidst our workday lives at work.

The king's usual place is in the royal palace. To approach the king you have to jump through a lot of hoops. However, there are times when the king comes out to the fields outside the city. At such times, anyone can approach him; The peasant has as much access as the highest ranking minister in the royal court. The field is the workplace or our daily lives.

Elul is when you are preparing to meet God for judgment - But He comes to the field to be most approachable so we can truly know Him in His mercy. The activities required to build the tabernacle in the Bible were the same activities forbidden on the Sabbath. We are called to rest when we are with Him. Our obedience and our rest are His dwelling place.

Sabbaths - Holy times are compared to a Lookout Tower, where we rise high above our labor to see the purpose of the work from a higher perspective.

The exception to this rule is the month of Elul - when the king comes to the field.
No one labors for the sake of labor. The king is the reason for the labor.

When we see the king in his field, do we keep working?
Do we behave as if this were just another day? Of course not.
We might still be in the field, but the field has become a holier place.
Likewise, we don't clean up to be in His presence - no -
we commune with Him in the field.

This is a time to be nurtured, to allow Him to fix what has been broken and to nurture us back into a place of health and prosperity.

There are some things that have been recorded in our life's history that are incorrect, because God has come and dealt with them.

There are accusations and condemnations that need to be removed and mistakes that need to be reconciled.

God wants to rewrite our story and change the way we see it.

Break 9 with Keith – Wrap Up

Moon in front of sun

Like he did for Joshua, God will make His people great in the eyes of people so that His will can be done, His Word and message and love can go forth mightily

5778k is the temperature of the surface of the sun.

As we move into the year 5778 next month I think in a practical way we will no longer see Him just from a distance but will start to encounter Him in power more

8 is change or new beginnings

For many it's a do over year with a new perspective and a right perspective

Fake news will begin to be obvious even to those with an agenda

There will still be war - 2 sevens remain in 5778, but instead of just warfare, change will dominate and the kingdom will triumph