

United Church of God, *an International Association*

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## **The Eighth Day (Last Great Day)** *Study Paper*

*Approved by the Council of Elders December, 2025*

All scriptures are quoted from *The Holy Bible*, New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

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# THE EIGHTH DAY (THE LAST GREAT DAY)

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In the Church of God, we have used the term “*Last Great Day*,” based on John 7:37, to describe the “*Eighth Day*” festival of Leviticus 23:36.<sup>1</sup> We see from Leviticus 23 that the Eighth Day is a distinct festival following the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles, and it is a Sabbath. While it is connected with the Feast of Tabernacles, it is not specifically a part of that festival. Notice the instruction regarding the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day:

“Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it. For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. On the eighth day 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’ (Leviticus 23:34-36).

God’s law clearly states that the Feast of Tabernacles lasts for seven days, and on the following day—the eighth—there is to be an annual convocation with no customary work; that is, it is an annual Sabbath. Therefore, the final two festivals of the fall Holy Days are the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles, followed immediately by another festival simply called the “*Eighth Day*,” which is not a day of “tabernacles” (Leviticus 23:34–36, 39). Within the combined context of eight consecutive festival days, the “*Eighth Day*” is the *last day* of this eight-day period of feasting. It is also the *last day* of all of God’s annual festivals.

The phrase in John 7:37, “On the last day, that great *day* of the feast,” fits the Eighth Day perfectly, since nothing in Scripture suggests that the seventh day of the Feast was ever described as a “great” day or a “high” day (“*megas*” in Greek). The seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles is not designated in the Law (Leviticus 23) as a day of holy convocation, nor as a day on which no customary work is to be done. It is not an annual Sabbath. The only specific instructions regarding the seventh day in the Old Testament concern the required sacrifices (Numbers 29:32–34) and the reading of the Book of the Law (Nehemiah 8:18), which was the same practice observed on the preceding six days.

Although various Jewish traditions assigned special significance to different days of the Feast, the Bible itself gives no unique meaning to the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles. In contrast, the Eighth Day is explicitly designated as a high day—a solemn annual Sabbath. Therefore, applying the term “great” to the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles has no biblical basis, whereas its application to the Eighth Day is fully supported by Scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> Booklets “*Pagan Holidays - or God’s Holy Days - Which?*” editions of 1957 and 1976, state “this eighth day, technically a separate feast, is called “the last day, that GREAT DAY of the feast” (John 7:37). What does this final Holy Day represent? Notice what Jesus preached about on that day. “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink... out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive...)” (John 7:37-39). This was Jesus’ sermon giving the meaning of the LAST GREAT DAY!” Also mentioned in *Bible Correspondence Course*, Lesson 39, 1965 and *Good News* of 1973, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1979, 1981, 1983 and 1985.

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The Greek adjective translated as “great” in John 7:37, referring to the last day of the Feast, is *megale*, derived from the word *megas*<sup>2</sup>. Note that the apostle John, in the same gospel, uses this same adjective, *megale*, in John 19:31 when referring to the First Day of Unleavened Bread as an annual Sabbath: “*on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high [megale] day)*” (NKJV).

Notice the similarity in the key words in the Greek referring to the “*megale*” day in both scriptures in John:

John 7:37, “*hemera te megale*” (ημερα τη μεγαλη) – day the great

John 19:31 “*megale he hemera*” (μεγαλη η ημερα) – great the day

There is essentially no difference between the two phrases. The word *megale* is translated into Spanish, French and Portuguese in both passages—John 7:37 and John 19:31—with the same word: *grande* (“great”). Only in English have translators chosen to use two different words in these two verses. Consequently, John 7:37 could have been translated in English using the same term as John 19:31, as it is in Greek, rendering it: “On the last day, that *high day* of the feast.” This translation clarifies the meaning of the day for English readers, just as it does in Spanish, French and Portuguese. Therefore, in both instances where John treats the day as *megale*—a *high* or *great* day—it implies that both are Holy Days.

At the beginning of John 7:37, the expression “on the last day” (NKJV, NLT), “in the last day” (KJV), “and in the last” (YLT), or “now on the last day” (EMTV), indicates that John is introducing a distinct day, the Eighth Day, which in God’s way of counting the days, begins at sunset. John then clarifies which “last day” he is referring to—as the *megale* (high or great) day of the Feast—clearly identifying it as the final annual Holy Day of the festival period. In purely biblical terms, this can refer only to the Eighth Day, which is the last of the eight festival days and is designated as a Holy Day.

John in his Gospel, repeatedly presents “*the last day*” as the moment of resurrection and final judgment—understood to correspond to a resurrection, either the first resurrection, or the White Throne Judgment, which is the second resurrection after the Millennium. Jesus declares that it is the Father’s will that He “should lose nothing, but should raise it up at *the last day*” (John 6:39), and He affirms four times that those who believe in Him will be raised on *the last day* (John 6:40, 44, 54). John also records that “*the last day*” is understood as the time of the resurrection (John 11:24). He further notes that Christ’s own words will judge each person “*in the last day*” (John 12:48). And in the midst of the Feast, John highlights that Jesus spoke of salvation and the Spirit on “*the last day, that great day of the feast*” (John 7:37), tying the festival imagery to the ultimate period of God’s saving work during the second resurrection.

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<sup>2</sup> Why does Strong’s Concordance list entry 3173 as “*megas*” even though the text in John 7:37 and John 19:31 shows “*megale*”? Because Strong’s numbers refer to the base standard form (*lemma*), not the inflected form. The Greek adjective 3173 — “*megas*” changes its form depending on grammatical gender, number, and case. Since the Greek noun for “day” is feminine, the adjective takes its feminine form, “*megale*.”

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### The water-libation ceremony

With regard to the *water-libation ceremony* (the term “water libation” encompasses both the act of water-pouring and its religious significance), a *distinct majority* of commentators have suggested that Jesus *must have made* His statement in John 7:37-38 on the seventh day, which is *generally viewed* as the last day of the water ceremony. Some examples are:

- Alfred Edersheim (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*) argues that Jesus spoke on the seventh day, tying His words to the water-drawing ceremony (Simchat Beit HaShoevah) at the Temple, which climaxed on the seventh day.
- Andreas Köstenberger (*John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament) notes that many scholars favor the seventh day, because the water-pouring ritual took place then and provides the best backdrop to Jesus’ declaration.
- F. F. Bruce (*The Gospel of John*) suggests the imagery of water fits better with the seventh day, when the libation ceremony reached its peak.
- Leon Morris (*The Gospel according to John*, NICNT) also leans toward the seventh day, reasoning that the water symbolism naturally connects to the well-known ceremony of that day.
- D. A. Carson (*The Gospel according to John*, Pillar Commentary) emphasizes that the water-pouring ritual gives strong grounds for interpreting this as the seventh day.

However, there are a few commentators that place Jesus’ statement on the eighth day. The *Commentary on John 7:37* (Hastings’ “*Great Texts of the Bible*”) admits that the “eighth day” (Shemini Atzeret) is a viable candidate for “the last and great day,” and argues that the absence of the ritual water-drawing on that day might make Jesus’ “living water” promise more symbolic and powerful.

The *Exegetical-Theological Analysis of John 7:37-39* (Literary Context by Adrian P. Rosen [M.A. 2010] Master of Arts in Theological Studies Paper, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary) states, “convincing arguments may also be delineated in favor of the eighth day as the more likely referent. First, by John’s day, the feast was commonly regarded as eight days in length.<sup>3</sup> In support of this, 2 Maccabees states, “They celebrated it for eight days with rejoicing, in the manner of the feast of booths” (RSV). Furthermore, the first-century Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, refers to the feast as an eight-day festival.<sup>4</sup> Second, the eighth day marked both the end of Tabernacles and the end of the annual cycle of Jewish religious festivals as a whole.<sup>5</sup> Thus the eighth day truly was “great.”“

J. C. Ryle (*Monergism, Teaching about the Spirit*, technical notes 2) states that some “as Lightfoot, Gill, Alford, Stier, Wordsworth, and Burgon, think it must be the eighth day, because

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<sup>3</sup> Hendriksen, 2:21 (Hendriksen, William. *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*. Two volumes in one. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953-54); Köstenberger, 240 (Köstenberger, Andreas J. *John*. In *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Edited by Robert Yarbrough, and Robert H. Stein. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> *Antiquities of the Jews*, III, x, 4. See H. St. J. Thackeray, trans., *Josephus IV: Jewish Antiquities, Books IIV*, in *The Loeb Classical Library*, ed. E. H. Warmington (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930), 435.

<sup>5</sup> Hendriksen, 2:21; Köstenberger, 239n51.

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in reality the feast could hardly be said to be finished till the end of the eighth day; and even in the account of the feast in Leviticus, it is said that the eighth day is to be “a holy convocation” and a “Sabbath.” (Lev. xxiii.36 and 39.) ...The objection that no drawing and pouring of water took place on the eighth day appears to me of no weight. That our Lord referred to it is highly probable.”

Dr Hoeh, in *Good News* July/September 1973, page 7, states: “Jesus’ evening message, as that Last Great Day began, centered on *water* as symbolic of the Holy Spirit of God. It was customary, as we have noted, to have a special ceremony of water drawing from the pool of Siloam during the Feast of Tabernacles (*The Babylonian Talmud*, Seder Mo’ed, Sukkah, iv, Soncino Press, 1938).”

Bible commentators do not agree whether Jesus spoke on the seventh day or at the beginning of the Eighth Day, although *a distinct majority of* commentators suggest the seventh day. However, the preponderance of biblical evidence appears to support that Jesus stood up on the last day—the Eighth Day—an annual Holy Day and contrasted the ceremony to what He could provide, which is the true living water.

### **Everyone went to his own house**

Now, did Jesus stand up and speak at the beginning of the Eighth Day, or during the daylight portion of the Eighth Day? To answer that, let us consider why John 7:53 states, “And everyone went to his *own* house.”

Those Jews who had returned from captivity, as recorded in Nehemiah 8:14-18, also resumed the practice of making temporary booths (*sukkot*) to dwell in during the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles. It is interesting that the Mishnah indicates that after the seventh day of dwelling in booths had been met, the practicing Jew “...should *not* untie [or *dismantle*] his *sukkah* [booth] right away... on account of the *honor due* to the *last* festival-day of the Festival” (*Sukkah* 4:8c-f).

A practicing Jew would not take down the temporary *sukkah* booth until after the Eighth Day had concluded. *Sukkah* 4:8e permits them to bring their eating utensils and similar items out of the booth and into their nearby house or lodging toward the end of the seventh day, so they could be used in the observance of the Eighth Day. This explains why John 7:53 adds the unusual statement that “everyone went to his own house” later that evening.

The *sukkah* booth, with its roof of leafy branches, remains standing throughout the Eighth Day according to modern *Sukkot*/Tabernacles practices in Jerusalem. These customs are based on scriptures such as Nehemiah 8:14-18, as well as on the oral Mishnah traditions that were written down around 200 A.D.

Seeing that the Eighth Day is *not* a day that on which a practicing Jew would need to remain in tabernacles, and that at night they could go to their homes, the sequence of events was, that after Christ finished speaking, the people expressed their opinions (verses 40-44); then the chief priests and Pharisees gave their response to the guards for their failure to arrest Jesus, and Nicodemus reasoned with them, asking, “Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is

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doing?” (verses 45-52). Consequently, they dispersed and “everyone went to his own house” (verse 53).

Johann Peter Lange (a 19th-century German biblical scholar who wrote an extensive Bible commentary) and others argue that the absence of the water-drawing ceremony on the Eighth Day—an annual Sabbath—created an equally strong setting for Jesus to stand and boldly proclaim the words in John 7:37–38.

As Frédéric Louis Godet observes, “This method of acting was much better than creating a sort of competition with the [water] rite, at the very moment when it was being performed as on the preceding days in the midst of tumultuous joy” (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*, p. 635).

### Water from the Rock for drinking

Godet further postulates: “The word which [Jesus] utters stands in a much more direct relation to the miracle [*of water from the rock in the wilderness for drinking*] than to the [water] ceremony. In the [ceremony] it was *not* the question of *drinking*, but only of drawing and pouring out the water, while, in the miracle in the wilderness, the people quenched their *thirst* from the *stream of water* coming forth from the rock. It is [more likely] then, not to this golden pitcher carried in the procession, but to the *rock* itself from which God had caused the living water to flow, that Jesus compares Himself. In *chap. ii*. He had presented Himself as the *true temple*, ...in *chap. vi*. as *the bread from heaven*, the true manna; in *chap. vii.*, He is the *true rock* [out of which thirst-quenching water flows]; in *chap. viii.*, He will be the *true* [light-giving] luminous cloud [and the Great I AM] of Exodus 3:14 who uttered the words “Let there be light” in Genesis (cf. John 1:1-5)], and [in] *chap. xix.*... He will finally realize the Paschal lamb [alluded to as early as John 1:29]. Thus, Jesus takes advantage of the particular circumstances of each feast, to show the Old Covenant realized in His person, so fully does He feel and know Himself as the essence of all the theocratic symbols” (635-36) [emphasis added].

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul refers to similar wilderness miracles “For they *drank* of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4).

### The meaning of the Eighth Day

Herbert W. Armstrong, on page 101 of *The Incredible Human Potential* (1978 edition), describes the spiritual meaning of the Eighth Day by stating, “it pictures a resurrection to judgment of all previously uncalled by God – all who ever lived – billions who lived under Satan’s way and died uncalled – neither then “lost” or “saved” spiritually. These billions will be resurrected MORTAL – as they were – flesh-and-blood humans. *Then* they shall look back on the 6,000 years of Satan’s sway – of human wrong-doing, sin, and consequent suffering, anguish and death. Then, for their first time, God shall call them. Satan will be banished forever! But they still shall have to make their own DECISIONS!”

Considering the spiritual significance of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day, the scenario in which Jesus stood up at the beginning of the Eighth Day—after the evening sacrifice, the water ceremonies, the prayers and the lighting of torches had concluded—is a strong

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probability. At that moment, He emphasized that anyone who thirsted should come to Him and drink. The fact that later that night “everyone went to his own house” further supports this scenario.

### The spiritual significance of the miracles on the day portion of the Eighth Day

On the next day—the daylight portion of the Eighth Day—everyone returned to the temple for the holy convocation. John 8:2 says, “early in the morning He came again into the temple.” Under this scenario, the account of the woman caught in adultery would have taken place during the daylight portion of the Eighth Day (verses 3-11), which aligns perfectly with the teaching and spiritual significance of this Eighth Day of the Feast.

The Pharisees evidently took Nicodemus’ advice and strategically confronted Christ on the Eighth Day, “to hear Him and know what He is doing” (John 7:51). The narrative of the Eighth Day continues in John 8:12: “Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’”

The scenario above aligns with our understanding that the Eighth Day fell on a weekly Sabbath in A.D. 30 (refer to UCG’s *Hebrew Calendar Appendices*, pages 111-112).

YEAR	Festival	Calculated W/Out Postponements	Calculated With Postponements <sup>133</sup>	Observation <sup>134</sup>
AD 30	Passover First Day of UB Last Day of UB Trumpets First Day of FOT <b>Eighth Day (LGD)</b>	Wednesday, April 5 Thursday, April 6 Wednesday, April 12 Saturday, Sept. 16 Saturday, Sept. 30 <b>Saturday, Oct. 7</b> <b>Molad:</b> Sat. Sept. 16 2h, 352p	Wednesday, April 5 Thursday, April 6 Wednesday, April 12 Saturday, Sept. 16 Saturday, Sept. 30 <b>Saturday, Oct. 7</b>	Friday, April 7 Saturday, April 8 Friday, April 14 Monday, Sept. 18 Monday, Oct. 2 Monday, Oct. 9
AD 31	<b>Passover</b> First Day of UB Last Day of UB Trumpets First Day of FOT Eighth Day (LGD)	Tuesday, April 24 Wednesday, April 25 Tuesday, May 1 Friday, Oct. 5 Friday, Oct. 19 Friday, Oct. 26 <b>Molad:</b> Thur. Oct. 4 23h, 941p <sup>136</sup>	<b>Wednesday, Apr. 25</b> Thursday, April 26 Wednesday, May 2 Saturday, Oct. 6 Saturday, Oct. 20 Saturday, Oct. 27  Dehioth # 1	<b>Wednesday, Apr. 25</b> Thursday, April 26 Wednesday, May 2 Saturday, Oct. 6 Saturday, Oct. 20 Saturday, Oct. 27

Disconnecting the Eighth Day from its occurrence on a weekly Sabbath, risks *severing the very hopeful meaning* of the Eighth Day from the second resurrection to physical life, as illustrated by the miracle in John 9, where Jesus healed a man blind from birth (John 9:14-16).

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This healing of one who was “blind from birth” parallels the message of the second resurrection, when Christ will suddenly offer “light” (verse 5) and give “sight” to the majority of mankind. In the account, the man is instructed by Christ to go to the pool of Siloam (verses 7 and 11) to receive sight. The waters of the pool of Siloam symbolize Christ’s power in granting the miracle of opened eyes and understanding of the Truth, while Christ Himself is the Rock who provides the living water—God’s Holy Spirit.

The distinct significance of the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day is well documented. The Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on this earth, while the Eighth Day represents the period of the Great White Throne Judgment.

### May the term “*Last Great Day*” be applied to the Eighth Day?

Indeed, the term “*Last Great Day*” can appropriately be applied to the Eighth Day when one understands its meaning within God’s plan of salvation. Jude 6 states: “And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for *the judgment of the great* [G3173 - *megas*] *day*.” The Eighth Day also represents the final Day of Judgment for mankind and angels.

A number of prophecies concerning the “last days” apply to the Eighth Day. After the Millennium the final judgment period for mankind will begin: “Then I saw a *great* [G3173 - *megas*] white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away...And *the dead were judged* according to their works, by the things which were written in the books” (Revelation 20:11-12).

John 7:37 could also be translated *attributively*<sup>6</sup> as “*the last great day*” a reading supported by the New English Translation (NET) Bible footnotes, Arthur W. Pink’s *An Exposition of the Gospel of John*, Volume One, p. 406, Knapp, and other scholars. While the *appositional*<sup>7</sup> translation is more widely used, the attributive translation is also valid.

The New Testament provides additional ways to refer to the Holy Days. For example, the Feast of Weeks is called *Pentecost* exclusively in the New Testament. The Day of Atonement is referred to as “*the fast*” by Luke in Acts 27:9. Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread are also used interchangeably in the Gospels (Luke 22:1). Referring to the Eighth Day as the “*Last Great Day*” in no way contradicts Scripture. Therefore, the term “*Last Great Day*”, based on John 7:37, may be equally applied to the Eighth Day.

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<sup>6</sup> *Attributive translation* is when one element describes or modifies the other, like an adjective modifies a noun. For instance, instead of translating “he is a servant who is faithful”, an attributive translation would be “he is a faithful servant”.

<sup>7</sup> *Appositional translation* is when two elements are placed next to each other and refer to the same person, event or thing. For instance, “Jesus Christ, the Son of God”, the “Son of God” is in apposition to “Jesus Christ”, basically renaming or *giving more identity* to the same person. An attributive translation would be “God’s Son Jesus Christ”.