

Lessons From The Eighth Day

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For speakers, an Eighth Day assignment is challenging because there just is not much that is directly stated in God's word. And yet, we know it is a significant day because God says we must keep it holy and even have a sacred assembly. But this day takes more digging than pretty much all the other holy days to understand what God wants us to glean.

We will begin in Leviticus 23 with the instructions for this day:

Leviticus 23:36 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 23:39-40 'Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest. And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.

Verse 34 says that Tabernacles is seven days long. However, there is then this Eighth Day that is tied to the seven days, but it is also distinct. It's not just another day before we go home. As we will see, it is really is the culmination.

Notice that verse 40 mentions rejoicing for seven days, not eight. Now, that absence does not mean that today we should be sad. Even so, since rejoicing is commanded specifically just for seven days, it can indicate a turning of the focus.

Similarly, in verse 42, the command to dwell in booths is only specified for seven days. Of course, the pilgrims who traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast did not have homes nearby, and the Eighth Day was not a travel day, so they stayed in their temporary dwellings for the Eighth Day like we do today. But this specific wording gives another indication that the Eighth Day, though connected to Tabernacles, is distinct. It is its own day.

The only other direct instructions for this day are found in Numbers 29, which we won't turn to. Numbers 29 has the offerings for all the holy days. What is significant is how scaled back the offerings were for the Eighth Day. Less than half the sacrifices were made on the Eighth Day compared to the daily sacrifices during Tabernacles. Sacrifices were still required, but there were significantly fewer on this day.

So, to summarize these differences, the main aspects of Tabernacles are pulled back for the Eighth Day. Looking at these contrasts, we can see that rejoicing is not the primary focus, and temporary dwellings are not the focus, and the sacrifices are not the focus. This begs the question of just what the focus is.

We find another piece of the puzzle in verse 36, which says there is to be a "sacred assembly." All of God's holy days, including the weekly Sabbath, have holy convocations, but only two of those holy convocations are designated as sacred or solemn assemblies. In one place, the Last Day of Unleavened Bread is commanded to have a sacred assembly, but it is the Eighth Day that is associated most often with a sacred assembly.

The Hebrew word translated as "sacred assembly" is *Atzeret*. *Atzeret* is a holy convocation, but with a special purpose. *Atzeret* comes from a root word that contains the ideas of stopping, restraining, closing, and retaining. Applying those ideas to the Last Day of Unleavened Bread and this Eighth Day helps us to glimpse what makes these sacred assemblies different from

the regular holy convocation. For example, the root word has the idea of closing. Likewise, the two sacred assemblies are the holy convocations held as a seven-day feast is brought to a close.

Another element, that of “restraint,” is present because this is a solemn assembly. All the holy days are days without customary work, so stopping or restraining, or holding oneself back from common activities is already part of the day. Remember that the command to rejoice is only for seven days—it is missing for the eighth. That difference implies a greater degree of solemnity, and thus, there is a greater sense of restraint. We could say that a sacred assembly is an extra holy, holy convocation.

The sacred assemblies are also more solemn because of the idea of “retaining” found in the root word. God intends that we retain what He has taught, so the lessons are not lost as we return to our lives in the world. The sacred assembly is meant to help us hold onto what came from the previous days. We need to retain what the feast has produced. So, the sacred assemblies are a bit more serious because their intent is to help us reflect on what we have heard and experienced, and glean the right lessons as we return home.

We will keep gathering pieces for this Eighth Day puzzle. First, we will look at the concept of eight. The Hebrew word for eight comes from a root that means abundance or even overabundance. It can indicate being completely satisfied. It has a very positive meaning.

Biblically, eight has the meaning of the number seven plus something additional. The number seven represents perfection, and so eight indicates over and above that perfection, which coincides with the idea of superabundance found in the root word. In the context of days, the eighth day is also the first day of a new week. It is from this that eight carries the idea of a new beginning. Eight can indicate regeneration, renewal, and a new start with great abundance.

The configuration of seven days plus one day is found in several other places. When we put them together and compare the patterns, we find commonalities that add to our understanding of this holy day. The first usage of seven days and then an eighth day is found in Genesis 17:

Genesis 17:12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.

Circumcision is the sign of God's covenant with Abraham. The eighth day marks the start of a new life—a life now under the covenant with Abraham's God. It is a new beginning, and one with abundance because of God's promises to Abraham. The eighth day here shows a type of regeneration after having been set apart for seven days. Notice that an eighth day shows the effects of the seven days, which we will continue to see.

Several of God's laws follow this same pattern of seven days followed by an eighth day that is distinct. You don't have to turn to these, but just think about the repeated pattern. Exodus 22:30 teaches about the firstborn of oxen and sheep being dedicated to God. Similar to circumcision, the newborn animal should be with its mother for seven days, and on the eighth day, the animal was given to God. It was set apart for seven days, and on the eighth, God receives what He claims—what belongs to Him. So, make note of this piece as well: The eighth day can be a day of God receiving His portion.

In the law for leprosy in Leviticus 14, the leper was set apart for seven days. On the eighth day, the priest made offerings and performed the rest of the cleansing ritual. Here again, seven days are used for setting apart. In this case, the person was not only set apart for quarantine, but the instructions also contain a hint of preparation, even perfect preparation because of the number seven. The eighth day was then a day of abundance as the now-former leper had a new lease on life. He could return to society with his flesh regenerated. He had a new beginning.

The law for the Nazirites in Numbers 6 also contains this pattern. If a Nazirite touched a dead body, he had to be cleansed for seven days. On the eighth day, he would bring an offering to the priest to offer to God. The eighth day in this instance marked a new beginning of his vow. After the man was clean, he could dedicate himself to God again. So, like the 8-day old firstborn animals, being dedicated to God comes up again.

The final example we will consider is in Leviticus 8, if you would turn there. Leviticus 8 & 9 are about the consecration of the priesthood, and the ritual the priests went through in preparation for service. There is a lot in these chapters, so I will just draw your attention to some things. But notice how much these instructions resemble the instructions for the Feast.

Leviticus 8:33-35 And you shall not go outside the door of the tabernacle of meeting for seven days, until the days of your consecration are ended. For seven days he shall consecrate you. As he has done this day, so the LORD has commanded to do, to make atonement for you. Therefore you shall stay at the door of the tabernacle of meeting day and night for seven days, and keep the charge of the LORD, so that you may not die; for so I have been commanded.”

Like the Feast, the consecration of the priesthood took seven days. During that time, they had to stay, not in their own tabernacles, but in the Tabernacle. They were consecrated for seven days in God’s temporary dwelling, and they ate before the Lord, as we do at the Feast.

In chapter 9, beginning in verse 1, the ritual moves to the eighth day. Notice in verse 5 that “all the congregation drew near and stood before the LORD.” It is a type of sacred assembly. They assembled in anticipation of what the seven days had produced. But before that, various offerings were commanded. The reason for the sacrifices is found at the end of verse 4, where it says, “...for the Lord your God will appear to you.” Seven days of consecration, and on the eighth day, God would appear.

And that’s what happened, if you look at verses 23-24. The glory of the Lord appeared, fire came out and consumed what was on the altar (indicating it was accepted), and all the people shouted and fell on their faces. The Hebrew indicates it was a shout of joy and praise rather than terror, and the people fell on their faces in worship. The appearance of God—seeing God—qualifies as superabundance, as does the initiation of the priesthood.

Now, let’s start drawing this together. In matters regarding holiness, the worship of God, and things or people being dedicated to God, Scripture shows seven days of one activity, and then an eighth day for the real goal or

purpose. The eighth day always involves something new, and usually abundance.

For seven days, the priests ate before the Lord within God's temporary dwelling, even as we also eat before the Lord for seven days, and rejoice, and grow in our reverence and awe of Him, in our temporary dwellings. From this, it appears the seven days of Tabernacles, followed by the Eighth Day, are an echo, or a reminder, of the consecration of priests, followed by God's appearance and acceptance of what was offered to Him. His portion on the eighth day was not merely the sacrifices, but more importantly, the priests.

Even though the consecration of the priests only directly involved the sons of Aaron, Aaron's family represented the whole nation. God said the whole nation was to be a kingdom of priests. Similarly, we are a royal priesthood. We, too, have been consecrated for holy service and circumcised spiritually.

Now, let's apply the principle of a day representing 1,000 years, and stretch this out over human history. In this expanded, 30,000-foot view, there are 7,000 years of God's work with mankind—His preparation. That includes the 1,000-year Sabbath rest of the seventh millennium—the seventh day, as it were. That is when Christ Himself rules, which is the very definition of a Great Day. That seventh millennium will have peace and unity that mankind has not known since Eden.

I Corinthians 15 says that Christ must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. That includes death itself. So, there are 7,000 years of mortality. Again, this is a big picture view. Some of this will continue into the eighth millennium, even as the priesthood consecration continued into the eighth day. But notice that, generally, there are 7,000 years of temporariness and impermanence. 7,000 years of futility. 7,000 years of God getting things ready.

As great as the seventh millennium will be—and it truly will be great—the real goal is the eighth millennium. That is when all things will be made new, with new heavens and a new earth, as described in Revelation 21. That

chapter also describes the Lamb's wife, New Jerusalem, that city with foundations that Abraham waited for as he dwelled in a tent. As with the priests' eighth day, it will be a time of seeing the glory of God.

As it says, "The tabernacle of God will be with men, and He will dwell [tabernacle] with them . . . And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

After 7,000 years, death is destroyed. There will be no more futility or corruption. Temporariness is over. After seven millennia of preparation, everything is dedicated to God. God's purpose of creating mankind in His image is complete—and it is perfect. In the eighth millennium, God will be all in all, as is His due. He will have His portion, which is mankind. God will be completely satisfied, and there will be abundance beyond imagination.

But for our purposes now, think about what the previous seven days of have produced as we have tabernacled with Christ. Think about what you are bringing to Him as His portion this Eighth Day, not merely in terms of money, but in terms of growth or changes or lessons learned—some evidence of His work in you as you have sought Him. Also think about going forth as a consecrated priest, retaining the experiences and lessons. Think about beginning again with this day of abundance. Think about being rededicated to God, and enabled to serve as a priest with renewed strength from Him.