

The Significance Of The Eighth Day

by David C. Grabbe

Forerunner, "Ready Answer," September 2026

“ On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation . . . ”
—Leviticus 23:36

Every autumn, God’s people observe the fall holy days, including the Feast of Tabernacles. Immediately following the seven days of Tabernacles is an eighth day, a holy day about which Scripture says very little. We know it should be kept—and kept holy—yet for what purpose? What is its significance?

Although the Bible contains few instructions for the Eighth Day, God has not left us without resources to understand it. He has filled His Word with patterns that give us clues and rich food for thought, helping us to piece together an extraordinary picture.

Adjacent But Distinct

The basic, though sparse, instructions for the Eighth Day are found in Leviticus 23:36, 39-40:

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. . . . 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.

The Feast of Tabernacles is seven days long (verse 34). The Eighth Day is tied to the seven days, yet it is also distinct, with differences in their respective observances. For example, verse 40 mentions rejoicing for seven days, not eight. That omission does not mean that the Eighth Day should be one of sadness, but that the command to rejoice specifically applies only for seven days indicates that the Eighth Day's focus is different.

Similarly, the command to dwell in booths is only specified for seven days:

You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 23:42-43)

In later years, residents of Jerusalem whose homes were near the booths they made could return home on the Eighth Day, and John 7:53 even provides an example. Of course, pilgrims who traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast had nowhere else to go, and since it was still a holy day, they stayed in their temporary dwellings. The wording here reminds us again that the Eighth Day, though adjacent to the Feast, is distinct. One cannot separate it from Tabernacles, but neither is it truly a part of Tabernacles. It is its own day.

Numbers 29:35-38 contains the only other direct instructions for the Eighth Day:

On the eighth day you shall have a sacred assembly. You shall do no customary work. You shall present a burnt offering, an offering made by fire as a sweet aroma to the LORD: one bull, one ram, seven lambs in their first year without blemish, and their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bull, for the ram, and for the lambs, by their number, according to the ordinance; also one goat as a sin offering, besides the regular burnt offering, its grain offering, and its drink offering.

What is significant is how much more scaled back the offerings are on this day than on the previous seven (verses 12-34). On the Eighth Day, God requires fewer than half the sacrifices compared to the daily sacrifices during Tabernacles. Sacrifices were still required, but far fewer.

What we see, then, is that the principal aspects of Tabernacles are curbed considerably for the Eighth Day. The differences indicate that rejoicing is not the primary focus of the Eighth Day, nor are temporary dwellings and sacrifices. This begs the question of just what the focus is.

A Sacred Assembly

Leviticus 23:36 reveals another significant piece of this puzzle, mentioning that there is to be a “sacred assembly” (see also Numbers 29:35; II Chronicles 7:9; Nehemiah 8:18). All of God’s holy days, including the weekly Sabbath, have *holy convocations*, but He designates only two of those holy convocations as *sacred* or *solemn assemblies*. In Deuteronomy 16:8, God commands a sacred assembly on the last day of Unleavened Bread, but the Eighth Day is associated most often with a sacred assembly.

The Hebrew word translated as “sacred assembly” is *atzeret* (*Strong’s* #6116). *Atzeret* is a holy convocation, but with a special purpose. *Atzeret* comes from a root word (*atsar*; *Strong’s* #6113) that contains the ideas of stopping, restraining, closing, and retaining. Applying those ideas to the Last Day of Unleavened Bread and the Eighth Day helps us to glimpse what makes these sacred assemblies different from the regular holy convocation.

For example, the root word carries the idea of “closing.” Likewise, the two sacred assemblies are holy convocations held as a seven-day feast is brought to a close. Additionally, the Eighth Day not only “closes” Tabernacles but also the complete cycle of annual feasts.

Another element, that of “restraint,” is present because it is a solemn assembly. All of the holy days are to be observed without customary work, so restraining or holding oneself back from common activities is already part of the day. Recall 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 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 wants us to retain what He has taught, so we do not lose the lessons as we return to our lives in the world. He intends the sacred assembly to help us hold on to 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 God intends them to help us reflect on what we have heard and experienced to glean the right lessons as we return home. Given that the Eighth Day also closes off the year’s seven annual feasts, this idea of “retaining” could extend to everything learned from all the feasts in that year.

The Number Eight

Since the direct instructions tell us little about the day’s meaning, we must explore the Eighth Day from other angles, beginning with the number eight itself. The Hebrew word for eight comes from a root (*shmonah*; *Strong’s* #8083) whose basic meaning is abundance or even overabundance. It can suggest being completely satisfied. It typically has a positive meaning.

A second aspect of the number eight is that it is composed of seven and one. While obvious, it is significant in biblical numerology. Eight contains the meaning of the number seven, plus something additional. The number seven represents perfection. The number eight, then, is over and above that perfection, coinciding with the idea of superabundance found in the root.

In terms of days, the eighth day is also the first day of a new week. In Leviticus 25:22, the eighth year is also the first year of a new sabbatical cycle. Thus, eight carries the idea of a new beginning, indicating the first in a new series, as well as regeneration, renewal, and a new start with great abundance.

With these themes in mind, we will consider other sequences of seven days followed by an eighth day that portrays the abundant effects of those seven days. The eighth day in these examples is distinct, but also relates to the

seven preceding days. The first such occasion is also the first place that the number eight is used by itself in Scripture, which makes it foundational:

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.
(Genesis 17:12)

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 typifies regeneration after being set apart for seven days.

Several of God's laws follow this same 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 owner gives it to God. It was set apart for seven days, and on the eighth, God receives what He claims—what belongs to Him. So, we can understand the eighth day as a day God receives 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. Again, seven days are used for setting apart. In this case, the person was not only set apart for quarantine, but the instructions also hold a hint of preparation, even perfect preparation, because of the number seven. The eighth day is 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, an opportunity for a new beginning.

The law for Nazirites also contains this pattern (Numbers 6). 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 eight-day-old firstborn animals, the idea of being dedicated to God arises again.

As another example, Noah was in the ark for seven days before the Flood started (Genesis 7:10). The Bible does not specifically mention the eighth day, but it does say that *after* seven days, meaning the eighth day, the rains came, and the earth's underground reservoirs opened. What followed was a superabundance of water—and death—as God began again with Noah and his family, eight people in all.

A similar pattern appears in the Feast of Weeks. For that festival, our count comprises seven Sabbaths—seven complete or perfect weeks—and then at the beginning of the eighth week, we observe Pentecost. Abundance figures prominently in that observance, both in the covenant's ratification at Sinai and the outpouring of God's Spirit in Acts 2.

Consecrating the Priests

A final example to consider is the consecration of the priesthood and the elaborate ritual the priests underwent before they could serve. Leviticus 8 describes the initial consecration, including the holy garments and the sacrifices performed at the outset. Of special note is verse 31, commanding the priests to eat part of the offerings at the door of the Tabernacle.

Leviticus 8:33-35 describes the core of the priests' consecration:

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.

Thus, the consecration of the priesthood took seven days, and during that time, they had to stay, not in their own tabernacles, but in *the* Tabernacle. They were set apart for seven days in God's temporary dwelling, and they literally ate before the Lord, even as we do during the Feast of Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 14:23).

In Leviticus 9:1, the ritual's eighth day takes center stage. Verse 5 states 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, God commanded them to give various offerings. Their purpose appears at the end of verse 4: ". . . for the LORD your God will appear to you." Seven days of consecration, and on the eighth day, God would appear.

And so it occurred (Leviticus 9:23-24). The glory of the Lord appeared, fire came out and consumed what was on the altar (indicating its acceptance), and all the people shouted and fell on their faces. The Hebrew indicates this shout was one of joy and praise rather than terror, and the people fell on their faces in worship. God's appearing—seeing God—qualifies as superabundance, as does the initiation of the priesthood.

Yet this eighth day also contains a judgment, for it appears to have been on this eighth day that Nadab and Abihu, newly consecrated priests, offered profane fire and were executed by God (Leviticus 10). It is a day of abundance, but there is also a measure of sobriety in it because of the paramount lesson God gave that eighth day: "By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified" (Leviticus 10:3). Nadab and Abihu went through their seven-day consecration, yet God slew them on the eighth day because they did not maintain God's holiness nor ensure that God was glorified. He will not accept what is profane, nor is He glorified in careless service.

Links to Tabernacles

We see, then, that in matters of holiness, the worship of God, and things or people dedicated to Him, the Scriptures supply numerous examples of seven days of one activity followed by an eighth day that contains the real object, which always involves something new and usually abundance. In the rituals for leprosy and for a Nazirite who accidentally broke his vow, the focus during the seven days was on cleansing. The Feast of Tabernacles does not focus on cleansing to nearly the same degree, but God requires a daily sin offering, so it includes an aspect of cleansing. Even in rejoicing and abundance, we cannot let the reality of sin and its payment stray far from our minds.

For seven days, the priests ate before the Lord within God's temporary dwelling, even as we also, in our temporary dwellings, eat before the Lord for seven days, rejoice, and grow in our reverence and awe of Him. From this, it appears the seven days of Tabernacles, followed by the Eighth Day, are an echo or at least 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 just the sacrifices, but more importantly, the priests.

Although the consecration of the priests directly involved only the sons of Aaron, Aaron's family represented the entire nation. God said the nation was to be a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6). Similarly, we are a royal priesthood (I Peter 2:9). We, too, have been set apart for holy service and circumcised spiritually.

Thinking back to what makes the Eighth Day distinct from the previous seven, God's Word does not contain a direct command to rejoice. However, if the seven days of the Feast are spiritually successful, the rejoicing on the Eighth Day comes naturally, even as the Israelites shouted for joy and prostrated themselves in worship when God responded on their eighth day.

As for the Eighth Day's sacrifices, only half as many animals were offered because what God is really after is people. His people are His portion. On the Eighth Day, God receives His due from what the seven days have produced in His people, things like growth or changes or lessons learned—some evidence of His work in us as we have sought Him during the Feast.

On the Eighth Day, God also releases us from our temporary dwellings and the commanded separation from our normal environments. It is still a holy day, though, which limits our activities, including travel. Now we can return to our homes, beginning again with spiritual abundance and retaining the experiences and lessons. Like firstborn animals, we had seven days of being set apart, and now on the Eighth Day we are dedicated to God, completely owned by Him, and enabled to serve as priests with renewed strength from Him.

Of special note within the consecration of the priesthood is Leviticus 9:22-23, which specifies that Aaron blessed the people *twice*. Leviticus 9 does not record the words of his blessing, but they appear in Numbers 6:22-27:

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them:

The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine upon you, and be
gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give
you peace.

So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.’”

For decades, the Church of the Great God festival choir has sung this benediction at the sacred assembly on the Eighth Day, echoing the priestly blessing upon the congregation as they assembled before God. The Eighth Day is a day of blessing (a fitting day for the blessing of children), a day of God giving abundant grace and peace, of dedication to God for service, and of His putting His name on His people as He receives His portion.

The Eighth Millennium

While the preceding patterns and principles present practical guidance for observing the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day each year, they also teach us about the future. Peter writes in II Peter 3:8 that “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” Applying this principle and stretching it across the biblical record, we can see 7,000 years of God’s work with mankind—His preparation, purification, and sanctification. It includes the 1,000-year Sabbath rest of the seventh millennium—the seventh day, as it were, when Christ Himself rules, which is the very definition of a Great Day. That seventh millennium will have peace and unity that humanity has not known since Eden.

In this view, the seven days of Tabernacles (temporary dwellings) correspond with not just the seventh millennium when Christ reigns, but all 7,000 years of mortal man, each dwelling in a “tent” of flesh (see II Corinthians 5:1-4; II Peter 1:13-14) for seventy or eighty years (see Psalm 90:10).

I Corinthians 15:25-26 says that Christ must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet, including death itself. This suggests God has reserved 7,000 years for mortality. Some of the mortality will continue into the eighth millennium, even as the priesthood consecration continued into the eighth day and as Israelites often used their temporary dwellings on the Eighth Day. But generally, there are 7,000 years of temporariness and impermanence; 7,000 years of futility; and 7,000 years of God getting things ready.

As great as the seventh millennium will be—and it truly will be great—the actual goal is the eighth millennium. One of the first things that happens as the eighth millennium dawns is that fire comes from heaven and devours Gog and Magog, who attack God’s holy ones (Revelation 20:7-9). Gog and Magog are judged, like Nadab and Abihu, showing that holiness must be maintained for there to be true abundance. God also judges Satan and his demons (Revelation 20:10), for they disregarded God’s holiness and gave glory to themselves rather than God. The eighth millennium is also the time of the second resurrection and the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-13), which is a new beginning if there ever was one.

Revelation 21:1-5 describes more of the eighth millennium, in which all things will be made new, with New Heavens and a New Earth, clear eighth-day themes. New Jerusalem, the city with foundations that Abraham awaited as he lived in a tent, will descend from heaven. The Father Himself will dwell with mankind, which is also new. The words in verse 3—“they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God”—are part of the New Covenant. Like the priests’ eighth day, it will be one of seeing the glory of God (Revelation 21:23-24). As Revelation 21:3-4 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 will be destroyed, swallowed up in victory, as everyone who has ever lived will have chosen either immortality or eternal death. The era of creation being subjected to futility will end (see Romans 8: 20-21), as will temporariness. After seven millennia of preparation, everything will be perfected and dedicated to God. His purpose of creating mankind in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26) will be complete.

In the eighth millennium, God will be all in all (I Corinthians 15:28), as is His due. He will have His portion, which is mankind, now made immortal through resurrection or change (I Corinthians 15:42-43, 50-54). God will be completely satisfied, and there will be abundance beyond imagination.

May God speed that day!