

John 7:37 Examined (Part 1)

The Last Day of the Feast and the Last Great Day

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I am going to speak on a subject of which I most definitely had a wrong conception. I am also sure that most of you have that same misconception that I had to this very day. I am not saying everybody, but maybe some of you do have it, and I think most of you do.

All of us were deceived regarding this, and we did not realize it, so we never seriously looked into seeing whether the concept that we have was correct. We just did what everybody pretty much does. We just accepted it, believed it, had no problem with it, and on we went. But somebody did have a problem with it, or somebody did get inspired about it in order to straighten the rest of it out. I do not know where it came from, except that I know he was in the United Church of God.

One very good part of this wrong concept is, that being wrong, in this regard was not damaging to our salvation or character. So why are we going into this subject if it is not damaging to our salvation or character? Why go into it? Well, the answer is really simple, because it is always better to be right. You never know when it is going to come in handy because you have the right answer.

Today we are going to examine John 7:37 in its context more thoroughly I am sure than the vast majority of us has ever studied into it before. Our study is going to involve some changes as a result of this thinking, and because our thinking changes a bit, I think that maybe some gaps will be filled in that are going to, in the long run, be helpful to us.

This sermon involves the Last Great Day about which we were somewhat wrong, and this sermon will correct this misunderstanding. It will clarify, because the Scriptures are better understood now than they were before. There will be other truths connected to this and they will emerge as we go through this.

None of these things is really much of a change from what we had before, but it is clarifying, and I can assure you that once you begin to think this through, it will be faith-building. It will be faith-building because we are going to feel solid about a couple of things that maybe we have felt unsure about up to this time.

A second truth—(I mentioned about the Last Great Day)—that will emerge from this study is not truly a change, but it is an encouraging confirmation that Herbert Armstrong was right all along on a particular point. We will not get to that until we get pretty close to

the end.

This sermon is going to follow a study paper approved by the Council of Elders of the United Church of God in 2002. This is how long it took to get here. This is 2010, but it was approved in 2002, and I think is witness as to how little communication there is amongst the groups, and I would think that maybe if we were looking at one another a little bit more favorably this would not have taken this long to get to us.

I came into possession of a transcript of a Bible study given on this subject just a couple of months before the Feast, and I decided that it needed to be given here, and that we need to make some adjustments to our thinking, because it is right.

There may be some things in this study that you may have wondered about. Perhaps you did do some thinking about it, and maybe you did look into it more deeply than most would, but maybe you did not find the Scriptures that need to be put together in order to make a coherent and truthful statement that the church needs to live by.

All of God's feasts and holy days are full of meaning and purpose, and most especially to Christians. It was meaningful and full of purpose for the Jews thousands of years ago, but the real truth regarding God's holy days is understood from a New Testament perspective. Even though each feast has a unique perspective and understanding, each is especially unique in understanding to the Christian because the New Testament is needed in order to put the stamp of authority on what they mean. This is because only the true meanings of the festivals are revealed in the New Testament.

Of this particular festival—the Last Great Day—I challenge you to find its meaning stated anywhere in the Old Testament. We will see witness of this from the Jews themselves. They did not get it, and that is because they were only operating with the Old Testament. It is just not there. When you get a little bit of information out of the New Testament, then you can go back to the Old Testament and you can begin to see a few things there that pertain to the Last Great Day.

We will begin with the Scripture that is going to be of issue here, especially at the beginning of the sermon. So turn now to John 7:37. I know that you are all familiar with it.

John 7:37 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.

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There is no need at this point to go any further, because that is really the key scripture here. We know what He says there about the Holy Spirit, and we are not going to be concerned about the Holy Spirit in this sermon, except maybe very briefly.

As we begin, here is the question: What day of the week was this? Was it Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Sabbath? What day of the week was John 7:37?

We are not going to get to the day yet, but we are going to mention here what we have always used John 7:37 for. We have always considered it as the day in which we are now meeting—the seventh and final festival of the year. I will tell you immediately that it does not pertain to the day that we call "the Last Great Day." It was not that day, and it is now provable to us.

Jesus made this address of John 7:37 on the seventh and the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles! He did not give this address on what we call "the Last Great Day," but actually He gave this address on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles—on the day before the Last Great Day.

Now there is something that is attached to this that is also exceedingly important, because what we are going to show as we get to the conclusion of this sermon is that we will be able to show you absolutely provable that Jesus was crucified on a Wednesday, and He was resurrected on a Sabbath. I will tell you why. It is because the events that we are going to look into must absolutely connect perfectly with Jesus' crucifixion, or they do not work. The Bible is a completely, totally, absolutely coordinated work, and there are no hitches in its get-along once we begin to see how to connect the dots.

There is also some disagreement in the Church as to whether Jesus was crucified in 30 A.D., or in 31 A.D. Again, I am going to tell you right up Mr. Armstrong was right all along. Jesus was crucified in 31 A.D. Mr. Armstrong figured it out mathematically, and that was good, but now we can prove it internally from within the Bible using the calendars that are available to us. This thing about using the calendars that are available to us may be the most comforting thing of all that comes out of this. Why? Because now we can prove that in Jesus' day they were using the calculated Hebrew calendar with postponements.

You ought to understand how much argument there is in the Church going on regarding this subject. When the Church of the Great God began in 1992, for about five to seven years it was the single biggest question dividing the church. One guy was going this

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way, and one guy was going that way, and another guy was going the other way, each with his own calendar invention. How many splits calendars caused, I do not know. It caused several splits in the Church of the Great God because people became convinced that they needed to use another calendar.

I want to establish something here I know you all know, but we are going to go through this anyway to put this in place so that you understand as we go along, and the pieces begin to fall into place.

Turn with me to Matthew 12:39-40.

Matthew 12:39-40 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Here was the only sign that Jesus directly gave as to His being the Messiah. It would be the length of time that he would be interred in the tomb following His crucifixion. Not the length of time from the time that He died, but from the time that He was interred in the tomb till the time He was resurrected and came out of the tomb.

Without going into it, we all know that Jesus was crucified on the Passover Day. On the calendar, that would have been on the afternoon of the 14th of Nisan (or the 14th of Abib).

Now turn to John 19:30-31. This is another piece of information that is helpful to know so that we can keep track of time.

John 19:30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

He died then. Verse 31 is helpful.

John 19:31 Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, . . .

Passover, the 14th, was the Preparation Day for what? For the 15th day, which of course

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is the first day of Unleavened Bread, and the first day of Unleavened Bread is a holy day. It is a Sabbath.

John 19:31 Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day).

It is interesting that John then inserts, parenthetically, "for that Sabbath was a high day." Now why do you think he put that in there? He put it in there so that anybody reading through here would know that the next day, though it was a Sabbath, was not a weekly Sabbath. Everybody got that?

John 19:31 The Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

Turn now to John 20.

John 20:1 Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

This is now Sunday morning. Jesus was interred in the tomb just before sunset on Wednesday. Count it out—3 days and 3 nights. If we wanted to spend the time, I could take you through and show how God inspired the prepositions used, so that when He spoke of when He was going to be resurrected, He used "in," He used "after," He used "within" to describe it. In other words, by doing so, He was proving He was going to be there in the tomb exactly 72 hours—within 3 days, on 3 days, after 3 days. It had to be exactly 72 hours.

In John 20:1, we find that it was very early on Sunday morning. That is 4 days from the time He was interred. We know then that by the time He spoke to Mary—a Sunday morning—He had been resurrected for about 8 or 10 hours already. Because we know that He was crucified on the 14th, and that the next day after He was crucified was a high holy day (the 15th), and He was resurrected on the 17th, it is therefore absolutely necessary that He be crucified in a year in which Passover would fall on a Wednesday. That is the only way it can be in order to be Scripturally true. There can be no deviations from that.

One of the reasons there is a bit of a problem within the Church is because in both 30 A.D. and 31 A.D. Passover fell on a Wednesday. There is a bit of confusion there, but the calendar in 30 A.D. does not fit into a Wednesday crucifixion, and I will explain why. The resurrection could not have been in 30 A.D., as Mr. Armstrong said. It had to be in 31 A.D. So one of the issues here is going to help us prove, demonstrated by Scripture, which calendar would have been used in the time of Christ.

We are going to step away from this part of this presentation and go back to concentrating on the book of John, chapter 7.

All of God's feasts and holy days are clearly named in the Bible, with one exception. We will hop-scotch very quickly through Leviticus 23.

In Leviticus 23:5, Passover is named.

Leviticus 23:5 On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LOORD'S **Passover**.

In verse 6 the First Day of Unleavened Bread is named.

Leviticus 23:6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of **Unleavened Bread** to the LOORD.

In verse 17, the firstfruits are named.

Leviticus 23:17 You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the **firstfruits** to the LOORD.

In verse 24 Trumpets is named.

Leviticus 23:24 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of **trumpets**, a holy convocation.

In verse 27 Atonement is named.

Leviticus 23:27 "Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement.

In verse 34 Tabernacles is named, and the names stop right there.

Leviticus 23:34 "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 8th day you are keeping a holy day that has no biblical name. God never names it in the Bible. Well then, where did the name come from? It came from the Radio Church of God.

I do not have any idea who the person was who actually came up with that name. I am sure that Herbert Armstrong approved of it, and as we are going to see, I think the name fits. We just had the wrong day, that is all. In other words, the name arose because of the 7th day of the Feast of Tabernacles rather than on the 7th festival. But by accident, on purpose, or inspiration by the Divine God, they came up with, I think, a pretty good name even though it is not named in the Bible.

When Evelyn and I were baptized it was called the Last Great Day in the Radio Church of God, because that was what we were baptized in. Then during the mid-sixties the name of Radio Church of God was changed to the Worldwide Church of God, and the name, ["the Last Great Day,"] continued right on.

Let us look at the book of John. We are going to start there in chapter 7. I want to look at verse 2 just very briefly.

John 7:2 Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand.

Sometimes this is how people get in trouble because it is called "the **Jews'** Feast of Tabernacles" here. But I think John did this under the inspiration of God. God is showing some measure of displeasure because of things the Jews were doing, the attitude they had toward the Feast, and He was kind of distancing Himself away from it here. It had nothing to do with the Jews keeping it on the wrong day, because they did keep it on the correct day. They had also added a fairly large number of traditions to the observation of

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the day, the most famous of which apparently even Jesus approved of, at least to some degree, because He picked up on it, and He said what He said in John 7:37.

I have read in other places some of the other traditions they attached to the Feast of Tabernacles, and one or two of them I found were pretty wild. They had absolutely nothing to do with anything biblical. I do not know how they came up with it, but you know how traditions get started. They start out small, and they just keep growing, and maybe over a couple of centuries they turn into very interesting things, and a little Jewish boy says to his father, "Why are we doing this?" and his father says, "I don't know."

The one we are going to look at just very briefly of course is the one that took place on the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles. I think you are all fairly familiar with it, and that is that a priest, who was appointed to this responsibility, took water from the Pool of Siloam in a golden pitcher. From the Pool of Siloam he marched through some of the streets of Jerusalem, making his way to the Temple. When he got to the altar, he circled the altar one time, and then he poured the water into a basin that was at the foot of the altar.

This continued six days, and then on the seventh day—"the great day"—they went through the same thing, only with some embellishment. The priest went down to the Pool of Siloam, got a pitcher of water in the golden pitcher, and then he started back to the altar. But this time a pretty sizeable company of singing priests accompanied him. They were singing praises to God all the way back to the altar, and at the same time the people of Jerusalem joined in the procession, and they sang along with the priests as they were marching along. Besides the singers, there were trumpeters. They were playing their tunes all the way back there. When they got to the altar, this time the priest circled the altar seven times on the seventh day before he poured the water into the basin at the base of the altar.

Let us drop down to verse 6. We are going to see here, and all the way through chapters 7, 8, 9, and most of chapter 10 the Bible is testifying of the Jews' wrong conception of Jesus Christ, specifically in chapter 7. It carries through the other chapters as well. The reason they have things misconceived is because the teaching that was in their mind, and by which they were going to be judged, was largely based upon tradition, not biblical fact.

John 7:6-8 Then Jesus said to them [His brothers], "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil. You go up to this feast. I am

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not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come."

I said that this is going to show us a bit about how the Jews misunderstood Jesus, even as I showed you in that other sermon—John 3, John 4, John 5, and John 6—that they just completely misunderstood what He said, and it is continuing in John 7 and leading up to an understanding of the Last Great Day. That was His brothers who did not understand it. They did not get it. They grew up with Him, but they did not get it.

John 7:14-15 Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, "How does this Man know letters, having never studied?"

This is in the third year of His preaching all over the area, and they are still asking questions about Him. Notice the way Jesus answered them.

John 7:16 Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.

They made no connection apparently between the Father and the Son.

John 7:17 If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.

Sometimes Jesus' apostles did not quite get the finer points of something, but they had really no problem with the teaching, especially when He said clearly what He meant. But this is the world we are talking about here.

John 7:18-24 He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him. Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?" The people answered and said, "You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?" Jesus answered and said to them, "I did one work, and you all marvel. Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man

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completely well on the Sabbath? Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

That is why they were so confused. They were using their conception from their worldly tradition rather than from the word of God, and therefore they could not reach a right judgment about who He was and what He was doing.

The Jews did have some framework of understanding regarding another judgment period. They understood somewhat about the Feast of Tabernacles. They knew, at least vaguely, that God meant for all of mankind, beyond Israel, to be converted at sometime in the future, but their specific understanding of future conversions ended with the Feast of Tabernacles and what it symbolizes. They got that far, and no further. In other words, it did not go on to what we call "the Last Great Day." They did not have the foggiest idea, because that holy day is not even mentioned, other than that it is a holy day. No name was given to it, and very little teaching regarding it in the Old Testament, and so because the Old Testament does not teach very much beyond the Feast of Tabernacles, they were left bereft of a certain amount of knowledge.

Let us go now to II Peter 3:8. Here is ours, and therefore a true understanding.

II Peter 3:8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Assuming that our understanding of this verse is true, six thousand years of mankind's existence on earth is about up. Now the 7th one thousand years lies just ahead of us. The Feast of Tabernacles represents that 7th one-thousand-year day, commonly called the Millennium. Again, just to touch on something here so that we are anchored into the Scripture and never get very far from it—(we do not want to leave it at all)—we are going to go to Zechariah 14:16-19.

Zechariah 14:16 And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

And then you know what those next two verses are talking about. This, as it is shown in Zechariah 14, is talking about the Feast of Tabernacles. It is talking about the Millennium. It is talking about the one-thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ.

Turn now to Isaiah 2:1-2. This is very plain.

Isaiah 2:2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain [the Kingdom of God] of the LOORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains [the great nations], and shall be exalted above the hills [the smaller nations]; and all nations shall flow to it.

During the Millennium—the one-thousand years—the Kingdom of God is going to rule over all nations. This is what essentially the Feast of Tabernacles represents. It represents that period when Christ rules on the earth, and when conversions to Christ and God's way and God's spirit will be available to all living at that time.

The Jews understood a bit about the conversion of the Gentiles. When Christ made that statement in John 7:37-39—"Let anyone who thirsts, let him come to Me"—it perfectly fit the Jews understanding of the Feast of Tabernacles. They knew the time was coming that the knowledge of God would cover the earth as the waters the sea, and that salvation would be open to all. They understood that far. They did not know what we know about the Last Great Day. They understood John 7:37—that the 7th day of the Feast of Tabernacles is a **great** day, because it represents the final period of Christ's rule over the earth during that period of time. They understood that far. However, nowhere in Scripture is the eighth day—the 7th festival—called "the Last Great Day."

I am going to quote from Alfred Edersheim's commentary, 1994 edition, pages 212 through 228. I am not going to go through all of that. I am just going to tell you what Edersheim said. Alfred Edersheim was a Jew who converted to Christianity. In his commentary he applies all the things I have already given to you to the 7th day of the Feast of Tabernacles, and as we will see, so does the Bible.

We are going to go back to Leviticus 23. If you will remember, earlier I stopped at verse 34. Now we are going to pick it up at verse 34.

Leviticus 23:34 "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 LOORD.

Do you see that?—**seven** days.

Leviticus 23:35-36 On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You

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shall do no customary work on it. For **seven** days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LOORD. On the **eighth** day [notice, no name] you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LOORD. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it.

Do you see that the Feast of Tabernacles is 7 days long? Only 7 days long, and when Jesus spoke in John 7:37, it was on the 7th day of the Feast of Tabernacles. I will keep giving you proof.

Now verse 39 of Leviticus 23.

Leviticus 23:39 '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 LOORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest.

But there is no name for the 8th day, and it is not part of the Feast of Tabernacles. Mr. Armstrong got that part right, thankfully, and I think God led him to see that the eighth day is a separate festival, completely and totally, even though it is adjacent to, right smack-dab against the Feast of Tabernacles.

We will keep going here with verse 40.

Leviticus 23:40-41 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 LOORD your God for seven days. You shall keep it as a feast to the LOORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

Pay close attention here to verse 42.

Leviticus 23:42 You shall dwell in booths for **seven** days.

Seven days. Not eight. Seven. We will get to a little bit of explanation of that, but I want you to see that this was the original command: seven days.

How many days are we supposed to eat unleavened bread? Seven days. It is not specified eight, and yet people try to keep Passover day as a day of unleavened bread. Now we eat unleavened bread on that day for the Passover service, but it is not a day commanded by God to eat unleavened bread in the same way that it is during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. God warns us, "Don't you add anything to what I said." I will give you a speculation about the 7th and not the 8th day they were commanded to keep.

In Alfred Edersheim's 1999 edition, he says this in chapter 14: "On the afternoon of the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles the people began to remove from the booths, and on the eighth day, on the day after the Feast, on the 22nd of Tishri, they no longer lived in booths."

The booths, at the time of Christ, were usually built on their housetops, which had flat roofs, or in the courtyard next to their homes. So on the afternoon of the seventh and last day of the Feast of Tabernacles they would return to living in their homes, which indicates what? It would indicate, brethren, that the eighth day was a totally separate and distinct feast day with a distinct meaning all its own.

This is similar to Passover being a separate and distinct festival from the Days of Unleavened Bread even though it is abutted right against the Days of Unleavened Bread. Certainly there is a relationship between Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, but brethren, there is also a connection between Unleavened Bread, Passover, and all of the rest of the feasts of God. Each one is separate. Each one has its own teaching. Each one is to be kept in the spirit that God has given us in His word, and to use the teaching assigned to that day, but each is to be assigned to being separate, but very important.

Incidentally, we find in another reference regarding this 7-day thing—"in their booths"—that the only people who actually did this were the people who lived in Jerusalem, right in the environs of Jerusalem.

On the holy days, like the Feast of Tabernacles, there would be a huge crowd of people. (Roman census has shown that on Passover the population of Jerusalem would swell to around two million people coming in from all over the land.) When they were in Jerusalem [for the Feast of Tabernacles] they did not have anywhere to live except in their temporary dwelling place, and there was one more day—the 8th day altogether—that was to be observed. It was either that, or they did not keep it. But they understood, that as far as God was concerned, the Feast of Tabernacles only applied to seven days, and so those who lived in Jerusalem would break up the booths and they would go back into their dwelling from that point on.

We today are in a little bit different situation. We are not all in Jerusalem. We do not all live in Jerusalem, so we have nowhere to go. If you want to park out there and throw up your tent on the grass, I do not know, but Mr. Armstrong made the decision that we will not do that because our situation is a little bit different from those people in Jerusalem.

I still want to show you that the Feast of Tabernacles is only seven days long. So let us go to II Chronicles 5:1. I only want to touch on this because I want you to see the time element, when it was that what I am going to read to you took place.

II Chronicles 5:1 So all the work that Solomon had done for the house of the LORD was finished; and Solomon brought in the things which his father David had dedicated: the silver and the gold and all the furnishings. And he put them in the treasuries of the house of God.

We are talking about the time period immediately following the finishing of the Temple that Solomon built.

II Chronicles 7:8-9 At that time Solomon kept the feast seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt. And on the eighth day they held a sacred assembly, for they observed the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days.

He mentions an eighth day, but interestingly, it is mentioned separate from the seven days, and that they held a sacred assembly then.

II Chronicles 7:10 On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people away to their tents, joyful and glad of heart for the good that the LORD had done for David, for Solomon, and for His people Israel.

Let us go now to I Kings 8:65-66. Again the Feast of Tabernacles shows 7 days long. This one shows the order of events just a little bit more clearly. Same general story, same time element.

I Kings 8:65-66 At that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven more days—fourteen days. On

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the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the good that the LOORD had done for His servant David, and for Israel His people.

The order of events was they had the dedication of the altar, and then they held the Feast for seven days. That was a total of fourteen days, and then he sent the people home on the 23rd. By that time, the 23rd, the eighth day was over too.

The eighth day cannot be the last day of the feast in John 37:7 either, because God does not change something like that. Nehemiah has something to say about this that really makes it clear.

Nehemiah 8:14-18 And they found written in the Law, which the LOORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, and that they should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written." Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim. So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast **seven** days; and on the **eighth** day there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner.

That is so clear. The Feast of Tabernacles is seven days long, and the eighth day is a separate festival. So when John wrote what Jesus declared on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, it was the seventh day of the feast. It was on the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles and not on the Last Great Day

Let us throw in a little bit of logic here. Even as Passover is a festival distinct from the Days of Unleavened Bread, how could Passover be the last day of the feast? It is a separate festival. It is a **one-day** festival. How can you call a one-day festival the last day of the feast? Pentecost is one day long. Can we call it the last day of the feast?

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There is no logic there. The same is true with Trumpets. The same is true with Atonement. It is only those festivals that have more than one day that there can be a first and a last day, and that is Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Tabernacles. So, the last day of the feast in John 7:37 is the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

The eighth-day festival is mentioned only five times in the Bible: Leviticus 23:36, and Leviticus 23:39. That is two of them right there. Numbers 29:35 is three. II Chronicles 7:9 is four, and Nehemiah 8:18 is five. That is the extent of the mention of what we call "the Last Great Day" in the Old Testament.

Now what is the eighth day called in the Old Testament? It is translated as either "sabbath rest," "holy convocation," or "sacred assembly." No other names are given to it. The Hebrew words that are translated into those terms is *Shemini Atzeret*. *Shemini Atzeret* means "sacred assembly." It means "holy convocation." Incidentally, that is a term that is used frequently in the Bible.

A woman rabbi, Nina Beth Cardin, authored a book called, "The Tapestry of Jewish Times." In this book she goes through all the festivals that the Jews observe and attempts to bring out meaning so that non-Jews will be able to understand it. She calls the eighth day, "a holy day in search of a cause." They do not know what it is. She calls it, "a holy day in search of a cause." In other words, it is a search for meaning and purpose. Why is it here? The Jews are at a loss because all other feast days and holy days have instructions associated with them in the Old Testament. They have events that occurred at the time it seemed significant to those particular days. You are familiar with those things.

Passover is attached to the killing of the firstborn; the Days of Unleavened Bread with coming out of Egypt; Pentecost—meeting with God and the giving of the law at Mount Sinai; Trumpets—with the new moon in the Fall season, and it in turn incorporates the sounding of trumpets so that those things can give it meaning. Atonement is clearly associated with humbling one's self and reconciliation with God, and with the priest going into the Holy of Holies. Atonement was also when the Jubilee began. The Feast of Tabernacles is associated with their looking back on the wilderness experiences and God's providence where He continued to provide them with whatever they needed. There is nothing in the Old Testament that they can associate with *Shemini Atzeret*.

Now Cardin goes on in her writing of *The Tapestry of Jewish Times*, and on page 88 she says this: "The Torah tells us that immediately after Succoth—immediately after the Feast of Booths, on the eighth day you shall hold a solemn assembly—a *Shemini Atzeret*—and you shall do no customary work." Then she adds, "This is all we know

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about this holy day." That is a true statement because that is all God tells us in the Old Testament. The explanations for the eighth day are in the New Testament, and it is only here that we can see its meaning and purpose. Nothing about it is directly named in the Old Testament. Now there is meaning of it in the Old Testament, but you cannot connect the dots in the Old Testament without New Testament information.

In a way, I think this will be a true statement, that the fact of the true meaning and purpose of all of God's festivals is only really given to us in the New Testament, and in reality, those festivals named in the Old Testament are New Testament festivals. Every single one of those holy days focuses on Jesus Christ, on His acts and purposes. The Father shows how His purpose is going to be accomplished through Jesus Christ, and how His desire for all men is to come to the knowledge of the truth and to be saved, as

Paul says in I Timothy 2,

I Timothy 2:3-6 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

And that "due time," when that testimony is going to be made to most of the people in the world, is the one we are celebrating on this day—the Last Great Day.

Let us go to II Peter 2:8-9. The sermon takes a little bit of a turn here.

II Peter 2:8-9 (righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)—then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of **judgment**.

Now we are getting close to the Last Great Day—the day of Judgment.

The one-thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth is the 7th one-thousand-year day. It is a thousand-years-long Sabbath rest. There will be rest from war. There will be rest from Satan's influence. And after the 7th one-thousand-year day comes the 8th day following Satan's exit after him being tossed into the Lake of Fire, signifying that he is not going to be around to bother anybody. Going into fire symbolizes that. It is

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something you go into and you do not come out of. Once he goes into the Lake of Fire, that is God's signal that is it. No more troubles from him. The Feast of Tabernacles takes us that far.

Let us go to Revelation 20, verse 5, and verses 11 through 13. This is a very familiar Scripture. We have just passed through a resurrection.

Revelation 20:5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.

Revelation 20:11-13 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

The Great White Throne is shown here in these verses, indicating judgment is taking place. The open books are the books of the Bible, which have been opened for these resurrected people to understand and to be judged from. The Book of Life is opened to enter new names of those saved, and everyone resurrected will be given an opportunity, including those resurrected from the sea.

Revelation 20:13 said something very important. It said that these people were going to be judged according to their works. So now we want to go back to John 5:22.

John 5:22 For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.

Verse 22 becomes a little bit more important a little bit later in this sermon. All judgment is in the hands of the Son.

John 5:28 Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice.

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This is speaking most specifically of the second resurrection that will occur after Satan's period of temptation of men has been brought to an end. These people will come up in the second resurrection so that they will have their works judged.

John 5:29 And come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

He is showing that the judgment is going to span judgment of righteous works all the way to judgment of unrighteous works, and each will receive their blessing or cursing according to their works. It does not mean that they will receive it immediately, because we know from other places that they are going to be given an opportunity to hear the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and begin to show their faith in God and to produce the kind of works that they should have produced a great deal earlier.

But Christ is going to judge. That is important to remember as we get back into the book of John, and we start to ask this question: What is going to be the manner of Christ's judgment of them when they are resurrected on that eighth day? Now in order for us to know, it is best to look at what Jesus preached on the very day that He kept the Last Great Day, because He made the most concentrated dose of teaching about the Last Great Day in the entire Bible, and we have been overlooking it.

Remember that John 7:37 is referring to the 7th and last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. Now I want you to look at John 7, verse 53.

John 7:53 And everyone went to his own house.

How about that? That is what you do at the end of a day, don't you? We have services here, and at the end of the day we go to our own house. I am staying in 720, and you are in another one, but right here that is my house. Well, that is what those people did. Many, many of the people there were living in their own homes in Jerusalem, and then there were maybe tens of thousands of others who were living in a booth.

Now here we are. John 7:37 is on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, so let us start watching the time pass by as we go through the next several chapters. We will hop, skip, and jump there, but it is something needful that we do.

After what Jesus said there on the 7th day of the Feast of Tabernacles, everyone went to his own house. He was done preaching.

John 8:1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

What do you think He went there for? He went there to pray. He went there to prepare Himself for the next day. What was the next day? It was the Last Great Day. It was a holy day, and what does a preacher do on a holy day? He preaches!

Now look at verse 2.

John 8:2 Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.

That is what you do on a holy day. If you are a preacher, you preach. Now where did Jesus preach? At the Temple. This begins the series of chapters of Jesus preaching what the Great White Throne is all about. We will see, as we go through here, how very meaningful these subjects are that He was preaching about.

So Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. The next morning He came back into town, and immediately then went to the Temple and began teaching again, because that is what a preacher does on a holy day.

Let us remember that when John wrote this, as well as when Matthew wrote, and Mark, and Paul, and so forth, there were no chapter breaks. They just went right on through with their letter, and that is what John does here. There is no break between John 7:53 and John 8:1. Time flows right on, and so it was early the next day, which was the beginning of the 7th festival, being the 8th day sacred assembly. The Old Testament calls the eighth day simply "a sacred assembly."

I will tell you that this one day, all of what John wrote, beginning in John 8:1, goes all the way through to John 10:21. All of that preaching took place on the same day. It all took place on the Last Great (8th) Day. It is not until John 10:21 that time actually moves into another time period in John's writing. So all the things recorded between those Scriptures occurred on the Last Great Day.

Now what do we have in John 8? All through chapter 8 we have Christ confronting the Pharisees over various questions and issues that they bring up. There is nothing in John 8, as you will see when you get home and you begin to study through this more slowly, to indicate nothing more than a scene change; no time change whatever once the time begins there in the Temple in verse 2. Nothing changes until the very last verse of

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chapter 8, where the Pharisees finally got so angry at Him, so frustrated, that they tried to kill Him.

We will go through the subjects better a little bit later. They had no idea that they were worshipping Satan. They did not have that truth in their minds. They thought they were worshipping God. Jesus straightened them out, and that is why they picked up stones to kill Him, and especially when He said to them, "**I am**," and revealed to them exactly who He was.

What happens in chapter 9? The first thing He does is heal a blind man. Hold that one in your mind. That one is really meaningful. That controversy does not end until chapter 9, verse 31. It is still the same day. In chapter 10 He begins to reveal to them that He is the Shepherd. He leads people in and out. He is the One around whom God's creation revolves. He even puts in a few bites there about the Gentiles being converted.