

# United Church of God, *an International Association*

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## **The Last Great Day** *Doctrinal Paper*

*Approved by the Council of Elders*  
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All scriptures are quoted from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee) unless otherwise noted.

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In the Church of God, we have by tradition used the term “Last Great Day” to describe the “eighth day” festival of Leviticus 23:36. We see from this section of Scripture that the “eighth day” is a distinct festival and it is also a Sabbath. While it is connected with the Feast of Tabernacles, it is not specifically a part of this festival. Notice the instruction regarding this eighth day:

“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 23:36).

The final two festivals of the fall are the Feast of Tabernacles, for seven days, followed immediately by another festival, simply called the “eighth day” (Leviticus 23:34-36, 39). In the context of a seven-day feast, the term *last day* would be the seventh day of the Feast. However, in the combined context of eight consecutive days, the “eighth day” would be the *last day*.

The term “Last Great Day” does not appear anywhere in Scripture. The term “the last day, that great day of the feast” only appears in the book of John. There is no reference in the Old Testament to a “Last Great Day” festival. The reference in John is in the context of the Feast of Tabernacles. John 7 begins with a discussion of the Feast of Tabernacles and then proceeds to the statement “the last day, that great day of the feast...” Notice the full statement in 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’” (emphasis added throughout).

This leads to an obvious question. Does John 7:37 refer to the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles as the “last day” or does it refer to the separate festival, the eighth day? Scholars are divided in their opinions. Leon Morris in his commentary on John writes, “It is not quite clear whether it was the seventh day or this eighth day which was the climax of the whole celebration, and of which John speaks as ‘the great day of the feast.’”<sup>1</sup> Similarly, we find in *The Expositor’s Commentary on the Bible* under the explanation about John 7:37, “Whether the ‘last day’ of the feast was the seventh or the eighth day is not clear.”

One could certainly conclude that this reference in John was to the festival that occurred on the eighth day. On the other hand when the Bible speaks of the Feast of Tabernacles it always mentions seven days. In a seven-day festival, the last day would be the seventh day. Here is what the Bible has to say about the Feast of Tabernacles.

*Leviticus 23:34-36* “The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD.<sup>35</sup> On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it.<sup>36</sup> 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 23:39-43* “Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month...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.<sup>40</sup> And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees,

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<sup>1</sup>Morris, Leon, *The New International Commentary of the New Testament, The Gospel According to John*, p. 422.

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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*.<sup>41</sup> You shall keep it as a *feast* to the LORD *for seven days* in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations.<sup>42</sup> *You shall dwell in booths for seven days*. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths,<sup>43</sup> 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.”

In the Old Testament, the “eighth day” is not given a specific *title* such as the “Last Great Day.” It is simply known as the “eighth day.” The biblical distinction between the seven-day observance of the Feast of Tabernacles and the observance of the eighth day continued during the days of Solomon.

*1 Kings 8:65* “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*.”

The *last day* of Solomon’s seven-day feast for the altar was the *seventh day*. And the *last day* of the following seven-day feast, the Feast of Tabernacles, was the *seventh day*. The total of “fourteen days” clearly omits the eighth day from the number of days in the *literal* “feast.” Therefore, the eighth day was observed *after* the seventh and *last day* of the Feast of Tabernacles. Yet if the Feast of Tabernacles were *literally* an eight-day feast, then a total of “fifteen days” would have been given for the “feast” in 1 Kings 8:65-66. This is also reflected in the parallel account in 2 Chronicles.

*2 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.<sup>9</sup> *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*.”

While the “Feast of Tabernacles” can be expanded to imply the eighth day, the Talmud records how the Jews literally understood this feast, “It really consists of two groups; the *first seven days, Tabernacles proper*; and the eighth day, ‘*Azereth*.’ The *seventh day* of Tabernacles became in later times *an echo of the Day of Atonement* and was known as *Hoshanah Rabbah*...” (*Shabbath*, Foreword, p. viii). The Talmud gives six reasons why the eighth day was considered to be a “*separate festival*.”<sup>2</sup>

1. “i.e. with regard to *balloting* it is a separate festival” (a ballot was necessary on the eighth day, only, to determine who would sacrifice the lone bull sacrifice),
2. “with regard to the *benediction* of the season it is a separate festival” (a separate festival benediction was given),
3. “with regard to the *nature* of the festival is a separate festival” (on the eighth day the booth is viewed as an “ordinary hut,” not a *sukkah* of the Feast of Tabernacles),
4. “with regard to the *sacrifice* it is a separate festival” (only one bull was sacrificed on the eighth day. But on each of the seven days of the feast several were sacrificed),

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<sup>2</sup> *Sukkah 48a*, Gemara (*Tractates Sukkah/Moed Katan*, Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud, London, The Soncino Press, 1990).

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5. “with regard to its *psalm* it is a separate festival,”
6. “with regard to its *benediction* it is a separate festival” (on the eighth day one was not permitted to mention the “Feast of Tabernacles” during prayer).

The Jews during the time of Christ made a clearer distinction between the seventh and eighth day than we do today. These six points also amplify the fact that the seventh day is the *literal* last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. Therefore, if the eighth day is called the “last day,” then the *combined* context must imply that it is the last of *two separate festivals* or the last Holy Day of the year.<sup>3</sup> (For additional information from the Talmud see *Appendix A*.)

Again, if the “feast” in John 7:37 indicates the “seven days” of the Feast of Tabernacles, then the “last day, that great day of the feast” is the seventh day of that festival followed by the holy convocation on the “eighth day.” But is it that simple? As with most things in the Bible, the context is often the determining factor. In the Old Testament, the only occurrence of “the last day” in association with the fall Holy Days is found in the book of Nehemiah.

*Nehemiah 8:18* “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.”

Here the “last day” is not an official *title* of a Holy Day. Given that they “kept the feast seven days,” the last day of this feast could have been the seventh day. The public reading of the Law, before *all Israel*, was not as common as one might assume. Typically the males, only, were commanded to attend the feast—“all your males” (Deuteronomy 16:16). But in Nehemiah 8, the Law was read before the “men *and women*” (verse 2) along with the children, of course, who would have been in attendance with their parents. Deuteronomy 31 shows that this was not a common scenario.

*Deuteronomy 31:10-12* “...At the end of *every seven years*, at the appointed time in the year of release, *at the Feast of Tabernacles*,<sup>11</sup> when *all Israel* comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, *you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing*.<sup>12</sup> Gather the people together, *men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates*, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law.”

It is unclear whether Nehemiah 8 is a year of release; however there was something extra special about the Feast that year, a renewed enthusiasm. Nehemiah 8:18 shows the seventh day of the Feast being the “last,” followed by a *separate* holy convocation on the eighth day. Of course, every time the Feast of Tabernacles is mentioned, the “eighth day” does not have to be noted, as if it needs repeated validation. However, when “the last day” is noted, then one must decide which *last day* is being discussed.

Before taking a closer look at John 7:37, the following is a summary of some of the points noted from the Old Testament:

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<sup>3</sup>*Sukka* 48a, Mishnah.

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1. The “seven days” refers to the Feast of Tabernacles, therefore the seventh day is *literally* the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles
2. The “eighth day” is not given the specific *title* of the “Last Great Day.”
3. Taken in context we see that the term “last day” may specify the “seventh day” of the Feast of Tabernacles or it may be the “eighth day,” a *separate* festival.

John 7:37 is the only New Testament scripture that mentions “the last day” in association with the fall Holy Days. As with Nehemiah 8:18, this phrase is not an official title for that day. As we have already seen in John 7:37, either the seventh or eighth day is indicated.

The term “the eighth day of the feast” appears nowhere in Scripture. Had this been stated in Leviticus 23, then the answer to this question might be simple. However, the qualifier “of the feast” may help us to understand John 7:37. It’s easy to assume that the “great day” is synonymous with “a high day.” The Greek word for “great” is *megale*, from *megas*, which means “great,” much in the same way that we use it in English. This same word is used in John 19:31 in reference to the First Day of Unleavened Bread—an annual Sabbath day. However, *megas* is not limited to things that are holy. It is used dozens of times in the New Testament. It describes evil things as well as good things. See Revelation 12:3; 17:5; 18:10; 18:23; 19:2; 20:12. It is also used in Revelation 16:14 in reference to the “great day of God Almighty.” While this refers to a special time of great importance, it does not indicate that it is holy time. In other words, *megas* indicates that the day in John 7:37 is special and it *may* indicate that it is a Holy Day, but the use of the word does not prove conclusively that this reference is to a Holy Day and therefore the eighth day.

But if the day referred to in John 7:37 is the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles, what’s so “great” about the seventh day of the Feast in comparison to the other days? To the Jews, the seventh day of the Feast depicts the time when all gentile nations will be granted salvation, thereby joining the Jews in God’s Kingdom. During the seven days of this festival, a total of 70 bulls were sacrificed (Numbers 29:12-34), which the rabbis associated with *gentile* nations. On the eighth day an additional bull was sacrificed but the Jews did not include this in the total number of 70 bulls that were sacrificed *during the seven-day Feast*. The *Jewish New Testament Commentary* states, “Rabbi El’azar said, ‘To what do these seventy bulls correspond? To the seventy nations’ (Sukkah 55b). In rabbinical tradition, the traditional number of Gentile nations is seventy; the seventy bulls are to make atonement for them.”<sup>4</sup> Alfred Edersheim explains, “But, whereas the number of the rams and lambs remained the same on each day of the festival, that of the bullocks decreased every day by one—from thirteen on the first to seven bullocks on the last day, ‘that great day of the feast.’”<sup>5</sup>

The Jews taught a plan of salvation in accordance with their understanding of the Holy Days, where the seventh day of the Feast (called *Hoshanah Rabbah*) represents a *final opportunity* for salvation—“Hoshanah Rabbah was understood to be the absolutely *final chance* to have one’s sins for the year forgiven...in Jewish tradition there remained opportunity for

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<sup>4</sup>Stern, David, *The Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 175, 1992.

<sup>5</sup>Edersheim, Alfred, *The Temple—Its Ministries and Services*, The Feast of Tabernacles, Chapter 14, 1999.

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forgiveness up to Hoshanah Rabbah.”<sup>6</sup> However, the eighth day (called *Sh’mini Atzeret*) was more simple in its significance—“Whereas the other holidays celebrate specific events, Shmini Atzeret is a day when God in effect says to the Jewish people, ‘Stay with Me just one day more so that we can enjoy being together *just for the sake of being together.*’”<sup>7</sup>

These sources show that for the Jews the seventh day of the Feast had a special significance in terms of salvation. However, the Church of God appropriately understands that it is the “eighth day” that represents the ultimate last opportunity for everyone who has ever lived. Our application of the “Last Great Day” to the eighth day reflects our understanding of the plan of salvation as depicted in God’s Holy Days. Of course this does not prove that the “last day, that great day of the feast” in John 7:37 refers to the eighth day and not the seventh. We simply recognize that we have a different understanding of the festivals in view of the plan of salvation than the Jews have.

Other religious practices of Christ’s time reflect that the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles was a special day to the Jews. The *Jewish New Testament Commentary* notes that the Greek word for “great” corresponds to the Hebrew word *rabbah* and that the significance of the activities on the seventh day led to it being called “*Hoshanah Rabbah*, the Great Hosanna.”

*“The seventh day, last day of Sukkoth was its climax. Throughout the seven days of the feast a special Cohen (priest) had carried water in a golden pitcher from the Pool of Shiloach (Siloam) to be poured into a basin at the foot of the altar.... It symbolized prayer for rain, which begins the next day...and it also pointed toward the outpouring of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) on the people of Israel.... On the seventh day, the water pouring was accompanied by cohanim (priests) blowing gold trumpets...singing sacred songs and ordinary people waving their Lulavs (palm leaf, myrtle and willow) and chanting the Hallel (Psalms 113 – 118).”<sup>8</sup>*

*“The words, ‘Please save us!’ (Ps. 118:25-27) led to the day’s being called Hoshanah Rabbah, the Great Hosanna.... Hoshanah Rabbah was understood to be the absolutely final chance to have one’s sins for the year forgiven...in Jewish tradition there remained opportunity for forgiveness up to Hoshanah Rabbah.”<sup>9</sup>*

*“A connection between the possession of religious joy is found in the ceremony of water drawing...(‘feast of water-drawing’) on the festival of Sukkoth. The Mishna said that he who has never seen this ceremony, which was accompanied by dancing, singing, and music (Sukkoth 5:4), had never seen true joy (Jerusalem Talmud, Sukkut 5:1, 55a).”<sup>10</sup>*

It is unclear whether Christ spoke during or after the water-pouring ceremony in John’s account. It is also unclear whether the timing was at the end of the seventh day or after sunset and the beginning of the eighth day. Therefore, while it appears that the term “last day of the feast, that great day” refers to the seventh day, it is also possible that by the time Christ spoke, the eighth day had arrived. Stern describes below the water-pouring ceremony:

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<sup>6</sup>Stern, David, *The Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 179, 1992.

<sup>7</sup>Freedman, Rabbi E.B.; Greenberg, Jan; Katz, Karen A.; *What Does Being Jewish Mean?*, pp. 93-94, 1992.

<sup>8</sup>Stern, David, *The Jewish New Testament Commentary*, pp. 178-179, 1992.

<sup>9</sup>Stern, David, *The Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 179, 1992.

<sup>10</sup>*Encyclopedia Judaica* 14:365.

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*“It was in the midst of this water pouring, trumpet blasting, palm waving, psalm chanting and ecstatic joy...that Yeshua cried out in the temple courts, ‘If anyone is thirsty. Let him keep coming to me and drinking!”*

*“...there were four golden menorahs with four golden bowls at the top of each.... Four young cohanim (priests) would climb up with pitchers of 9 liters of oil...and there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that was not lit up with the light of the [festivities]. Pious men and men of good deeds would dance around [the menorahs] with lit torches in their hands, singing songs and praises, while the Levites played harps, lyres, cymbals, trumpets and innumerable other musical instruments’ (Sukkah 5:2-4).”<sup>11</sup>*

So what was so great about the seventh day of the Feast? Everything, according to the Jewish festival practices during the time of Christ. To them, the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles was *Hoshanah Rabbah*—the Great Hosanna—portraying salvation for Jews and gentiles.

Alfred Edersheim writes the following in his book regarding John 7:37:

*“It was ‘the last, the great day of the Feast,’ and Jesus was once more in the Temple. We can scarcely doubt that it was the concluding day of the Feast [feasts], and not, as most modern writers suppose, its Octave, which, in Rabbinic language, was regarded as ‘a festival by itself.’*

*“...Only during the first two, and on the last festive day (as also on the Octave of the Feast), was strict Sabbatic rest enjoined.... But ‘the last, the Great Day of the Feast,’ was marked by special observances....*

*“...on ‘the last, the Great Day of the Feast,’ this procession of Priests made the circuit of the altar, not only once, but seven times.... Hence the seventh or last day of the Feast was also called that of ‘the Great Hosannah.’ As the people left the Temple, they saluted the altar with words of thanks (g Sukk 4:5) and on the last day of the Feast they shook off the leaves on the willow-branches round the altar, and beat their palm-branches to pieces (au.s.1 and 6). On the same afternoon the ‘booths’ were dismantled, and the Feast ended (bu.s.8).*

*“We can have little difficulty in determining at what part of the services of ‘the last, the Great Day of the Feast,’ Jesus stood and cried, ‘If any one thirst let Him come unto Me and drink!’ It must have been with special reference to the ceremony of the outpouring of the water, which, as we have seen, was considered the central part of the service.... The forthpouring of the water was immediately followed by the chanting of the Hallel. But after that there must have been a short pause to prepare for the festive sacrifices (the Musaph). It was then, immediately after the symbolic rite of water-pouring, immediately after the people had responded by repeating those lines from Ps. 118...that there rose, so loud as to be heard throughout the Temple, the Voice of Jesus. He interrupted not the services, for they had for the moment ceased: He interpreted, and He fulfilled them.”<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup>Stern, David, *The Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 181.

<sup>12</sup>Edersheim, Alfred, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Volume 2, Chapter 7, 1999.

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It's significant to note that the Jews did not live in booths during the eighth day: "*On the afternoon of the seventh day of the feast the people began to remove from the 'booths.'*" For at the Octave, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of Tishri, *they lived no longer in booths....* But it was observed as 'a holy convocation'" (Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*, 1999, Chapter 14, "The Six Minor Days"). The *afternoon* of the seventh day was a significant time period. The Talmudic "twilight" was defined as 3 p.m. in the afternoon at which time the "evening sacrifice" occurred. The moving out of their booths during the afternoon heightens the view of the seventh day as the *last day* of the Feast: "*You shall dwell in booths for seven days*" (Leviticus 23:42). The booths were commonly built on rooftops, or near housing that was be used on the eighth day. For additional information on whether Jews can eat in their *sukkah* on the eighth day, see *Appendix B*.

When we read beyond John 7:37, the scriptures shed light on the distinction between the seventh and eighth day. After Christ finished speaking, the people expressed their opinions (verses 40-44). Then the Pharisees expressed their opinions and Nicodemus reasoned with them, "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?" (verses 45-52). The last verse in this chapter says, "And everyone went to his own house" (verse 53). This return to their homes is consistent with what is noted by Edersheim and the Talmud regarding the activities during the late afternoon of the seventh day of the Feast. Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. On the next day everyone returned to the temple for the holy convocation on the eighth day. John 8:1 says, "...early in the morning He came again into the temple...." Under this scenario, the story of the woman caught in adultery would have occurred on the eighth day (verses 3-11).

The Pharisees evidently heeded the advice of Nicodemus as they strategically confronted Christ on the eighth day. The record 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 is consistent with our understanding that the eighth day fell on a weekly Sabbath in A.D. 30 (the last fall festival season prior to the crucifixion, which occurred in the spring of A.D. 31), during which Jesus healed a blind man (John 9:14-16). This healing of one who was "blind from birth" ties in with the message of the second resurrection when Christ will suddenly offer "light" (verse 5) and give "sight" to the majority of mankind. These will have been spiritually blind from birth, unlike those who were "once enlightened" and then fell away (Hebrews 6:4-6). They will suddenly be transmitted from the darkness of death to the light of life, physically and spiritually.

The distinct observance of the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles and the "eighth day" is well documented, and is not affected by one's view of the day on which Christ was speaking in John 7:37. Additionally, the spiritual significance of the fall Holy Days in God's plan of salvation for all mankind remains unchanged. The Feast of Tabernacles represents the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on this earth, and the eighth day represents the period of the Great White Throne Judgment.

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Although we cannot say with absolute certainty that John 7:37 is referring to the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the evidence presented above points to this conclusion. That being the case, is it wrong to continue to call the eighth day the Last Great Day? First of all, the phrase “that great day” as applied by the Jews in the time of Christ to the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles is not an Old Testament term, as we have seen. It is a term which they used to denote the last day of that festival. There is nothing wrong in doing this as they also used the Greek word Pentecost to denote the festival called in the Old Testament the Feast of Weeks. The Church’s decision to use the term “last great day” to denote the eighth day festival is certainly not wrong given the precedent we see in Scripture.

Furthermore, the term “last great day” can appropriately be applied to the eighth day when one understands its meaning in the 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 day*.” The eighth day represents the last Day of Judgment for mankind and angels. Certainly, some of the prophecies concerning the “last days” apply to the eighth day. After the Millennium the *last* judgment period for mankind will begin: “Then I saw a *great* 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).

So there’s no need to change the Church’s traditional expression of “the Last Great Day,” in association with the eighth day. But in interpreting John 7:37, scriptural and historical evidence points to the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles as “the last day, that great day of the feast” and not primarily to the eighth day.

### Appendix A

The Talmud includes the Mishnah (the first writing of the oral law) and the Gemara (rabbinical discussion of the Mishnah). The traditions of the Talmud are not required for Christians. Therefore we are not commanded to have a water-pouring ceremony on the seventh day of the Feast. Yet Christ attended the “Jews’ Feast of Tabernacles” (or Judean Feast of Tabernacles), which included the Talmudic traditions. Therefore the Talmud can help us to understand which day the Jews viewed as the “last day, that great day of the feast” (John 7:37).

The festival rejoicing *began* during the *daytime* on each of the seven days of the Feast. This was done according to Leviticus 23:40, “...you shall *rejoice* before the LORD your God *for seven days*.” The daytime rejoicing spilled over into the evening. Consequently, the rejoicing on the seventh day continued into the evening of the eighth day, or “last night” (*Sukkah* 48a, Gemara). Though the eighth night is called the “last night,” this section also refers to the seventh day as, “the concluding day” (footnote b1). The seventh day was the literal “concluding day” of Tabernacles proper. The rejoicing was not done on a weekly Sabbath, upon which the eighth day fell in A.D. 30 (John 8-9). Therefore if John 7:37 is linked to the upbeat rejoicing and water ceremony, then this points to the seventh day of the Feast.

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The Talmud says, “When a man has finished his [*last*] meal, he may not dismantle his Sukkah. He may, however, remove its furniture from the afternoon onwards in honor of the *last* day of the Festival” (*Sukkah* 48a, Mishnah). This *last* meal was eaten, “on the seventh day” (Gemara, footnote b2). Obviously, they didn’t fast on the eighth day. However, the meal on the *seventh day* was his *last* meal in that it was literally his *last* meal of the Feast of Tabernacles. Therefore, we should not assume that “last” always refers to the eighth day. On the seventh day a man was to move his furniture “from the Sukkah into the house where he is to have his meals *in the evening and the following day*” (footnote b4). But by the time the eighth day had arrived, the booth had been altered in some way (e.g., “four handbreadths” of the roof were removed) to indicate “it is no longer in use as a *Sukkah* but as an *ordinary hut*” (footnotes b8-11).

Regarding the festival offerings, “the time for offerings is *the day-time*” (footnote a8). The “water-libation and wine-libation, and the burnt-offering” occurred during the daytime (*Sukkah* 48b, Gemara). Therefore when John 7:37 is associated with the water ceremony, then this emphasizes the “day-time” of the seventh day.

On the first day 13 bulls were sacrificed and, each day, one less bull was sacrificed ending with seven bulls on the seventh day. Regarding the lone sacrificial bull on the eighth day, *Sukkah* 48a states, “The number of bullocks offered is not six as might have been expected if the sixth (eighth) day had been regarded as the eighth of the days of Tabernacles on each of which the number of bullocks was reduced by one” (footnote a4).

## ***Appendix B***

The Jews *in Israel* observe the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) for seven days followed by a *separate* Holy Day observance on the eighth day (*Shemini Atzeret*). However, years ago the Jews *outside of Israel* began the practice of adding an extra day to the annual Holy Days, just in case their calculation of the new moon was a day off. If so, then they might have begun an observance *one day too soon*. Consequently many Jews outside of Israel keep the Feast of Tabernacles for eight days to cover any doubt (*safek*) that the eighth day is really the seventh day of the Feast. However they do not believe that the eighth day is literally the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

This extra day led to questions regarding how the booth should be used on the eighth day. The Jews decided that one could sit or eat in the booth, just in case it was really the seventh day. But one could not mention the “Feast of Tabernacles” (“*Sukkot*”) in his benediction (*berakha*), just in case it was really the eighth day. Therefore, despite the added day, they maintain that *the seventh day is the literal last day of the Feast*.

This subject is discussed in an article titled, “Eating in the Sukka on Shemini Atzeret.” Here the interpretations of the Talmud are derived from some of the most reputable Jewish authorities in their history, e.g. the “Rif” (born A.D. 1013, author of an abridged version of the

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Talmud),<sup>13</sup> the “Rambam” (born A.D. 1135, considered to be one of the greatest Jewish scholars in history),<sup>14</sup> the “Chazal” (meaning “our sages of blessed memory,” an authoritative opinion of the Talmud),<sup>15</sup> the Book of the Chinukh (*Sefer Ha-chinukh*) and the “Bach” (a major Jewish commentary written in the 17<sup>th</sup>-century).<sup>16</sup> Below are excerpts from this article written by Rabbi Elyakim Krumbein:

“The explanation of the Rif is adopted by the Sefer Ha-chinukh (chapter 323), who explains it in greater detail. According to the Chinukh, the reason we make no berakha on sitting in the sukka on Shemini Atzeret relates to the essence of Shemini Atzeret itself. While the gemara (*Sukka* 47a) lists various ways in which Shemini Atzeret is considered *a holiday in and of itself*, it nonetheless refers to the day as ‘the closing yom tov of Sukkot’ (*Sukka* 48a). The question which naturally arises is, *should Shemini Atzeret be viewed fundamentally as an independent chag, or rather as the end of Sukkot?* This question could lie at the heart of the debate among poskim regarding the proper reference to Shemini Atzeret in Ya’aleh Ve-yavo: should one say ‘chag ha-atzeret,’ *festival of closing*, or ‘atzeret ha-chag,’ *closing of the festival* (the latter suggesting that the day is the conclusion of the ‘chag,’ namely Sukkot)? *The Chinukh opts for the first formulation, thus emphasizing the independent character of the day: ‘There is no reference made to Sukkot in this formulation at all.’* Why, then, do we sit in the sukka on Shemini Atzeret? The Chinukh continues:

“Chazal commanded us to sit in the sukka to fulfill the obligation [of Jews *outside Israel*] to add one day to every holiday; hence, *we add a day to Sukkot and make it eight days, but we don’t make a berakha on the sukka on that day because it is really a different holiday altogether.* Since nowadays we know the calculation of the calendar and hence the true date, it is more appropriate to make berakhot relating to the true character of the day rather than to the aspect of the day instituted by Chazal. Although one may ask: *why do we not mention both Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret in our blessings*, as we do with regard to Shabbat and Yom Tov when they coincide? [The answer is] we find that it is possible for Shabbat and Yom Tov to occur on the same day, but **TWO DIFFERENT HOLIDAYS CANNOT OCCUR AT THE SAME TIME**, and hence we should not recite such a berakha. But it is perfectly appropriate to sit in the sukka on Shemini Atzeret, **SINCE THIS DOES NOT DETRACT FROM THE HOLIDAY OF SHEMINI ATZERET AT ALL.**”

“While the Rif’s language is terse, the Chinukh provides an explanation. According to the Chinukh, the entire problem would not have arisen *had Shemini Atzeret not been an independent holiday. Had the eighth day been part of Sukkot, we would have been able to sit in the sukka and even make a berakha, and there would have been no conflict between Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret.* The problem lies not in the fact that there is no OBLIGATION to sit in the sukka on the Shemini Atzeret, but in the fact that Shemini Atzeret *IN ITS ESSENCE is a holiday separate and different from Sukkot....* Thus, for instance, we have no problem making a berakha of ‘al akhilat matza’ on the second night of Pesach outside Israel, despite the fact that there is no obligation from the Torah to eat matza then; this is because the second night of Pesach is part of the holiday of Pesach, *while Shemini Atzeret itself is detached from and independent of Sukkot.* The Chinukh

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<sup>13</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> Through 11<sup>th</sup> Century Gedolim (Torah Giants), <http://pages.nyu.edu/~asr209/rif>

<sup>14</sup> Judaism 101, A Glossary of Basic Jewish Terms and Concepts, <http://www.ou.org/about/judaism/r.htm#rambam>

<sup>15</sup> Judaism 101, A Glossary of Basic Jewish Terms and Concepts, <http://www.ou.org/about/judaism/bc.htm#chazal>

<sup>16</sup> 16<sup>th</sup> Century Gedolim, <http://pages.nyu.edu/~asr209/16cent.html>

## THE LAST GREAT DAY

### *Doctrinal Paper*

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believes that we need be concerned about the problem of *mutual exclusion* only with regard to *two entirely different and conflicting characteristics* which we attempt to impose on the same one day.”

(<http://vbm-torah.org/sukkot/sk60-ek.htm>).

The Jews *outside Israel* also observe the *ninth day* as *Shemini Atzeret* (or *Simchas Torah*), just in case this is really the eighth day. However in this case the rules of *mutual exclusion* are not applicable because neither the eighth nor the ninth day is *literally* part of the Feast of Tabernacles. Therefore the eighth and ninth day do not concern *two different holidays* that cannot occur at the same time. It’s conceivable that a Jew outside Israel might loosely refer to the *ninth day* as the *last day*. But this wouldn’t change his understanding of the *literal* last day of the Feast, the seventh day, followed by a separate festival, the eighth day.

Likewise, the Jews’ “great day of the feast” on the seventh day (John 7:37) doesn’t change the Church’s understanding of the Last Great Day on the eighth day (Revelation 20:11-12).