

Well, greetings to all of you, God's people, and welcome to the 2016 Feast of Tabernacles, and especially to all of those of you down in Australia, those visiting, who have come over as well there from New Zealand. There are just a few of you, but primarily those of you from the Australia region. And I think there are some that did come over from the States. So, again, welcome to everyone for this Feast of Tabernacles that is able to listen to this particular pre-recorded sermon that I'm doing right now in late summer.

So again, it's going to be a little bit different when I'm going to be in Europe, being able to welcome everyone personally there, and then they're going to be able to hear the live sermon, that same sermon then later that same day. But those of you down there in Australia, I'm sorry we couldn't make it down there this year. I wasn't intended to be. If we were supposed to be there, we would be. I think...at least I'm hoping that at this point in time it may work out that we may be able to come down there during the days of Unleavened Bread.

So again, greetings to all of you, God's people, and welcome to this 2016 *Feast of Tabernacles*. How awesome is it!

This is a sermon that I haven't given in a while—meaning, in other words, this particular welcome and opening sermon for the Feast. For many years now I have given this specific assignment, if you will, to others. And it's been a lot of years. However, this year I truly desired to be the one who gives this particular "welcome" sermon this year. Much of this has to do with the fact that over the past 3 years I have basically kept the Feast of Tabernacles alone, other than a few visits, particularly on a weekend, the only time I could have visits anyway where I was able to have a couple of days anyway with some of my family, and the Harrell's on one particular occasion one year when they had not been assigned to another site. So this is a very special occasion for me and *I am excited* to give this particular sermon and get this year's Feast off to a great start.

You know, Mr. Armstrong used to say, "Why are we here?" Well, first and foremost it's because God commands it, obviously, and we come to embrace that. I would be amiss if I didn't begin from where God introduces us to His Sabbaths and His Holy Days. So, let's begin there because it is a matter of God commanding it, and good for us to review these things.

Going back to **Leviticus 23**, because this is the right way, really, in many ways just to begin this Feast, just to go right over here to Leviticus 23 where God tells us about appointed times and things we're to do when we come before Him. And so just beginning right there in verse 1. And, you know, even just going through this I think of all that God has given to us since the Apostasy. And this is one of those things that God has enhanced mightily for us to grasp and comprehend

some of the things actually being said here just in the first few verses. And in **verse 1** it says, **And the Eternal spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, Concerning the,** and we understand now. For years and years and years throughout the period of Philadelphia and on into the period of Laodicea, we never knew these things and specifically what was being said here. But again here it says, **Concerning the,** not the word for **feasts**, but **appointed times/appointed meetings**, appointments that God established from the very beginning of time that we are to keep with Him, special time. And certainly this Feast of Tabernacles is incredibly special to God's people. Always has been.

So again, **Concerning the feasts**, or not the "feasts," there's a different Hebrew word for that, but **the appointed times/appointed meetings of the Eternal**. And so they're from God Almighty. And that's awesome! To understand the calling we have, the few on the earth that have been given such a calling through time over 6,000 years, and we have such an opportunity to come before the Great, the Almighty God. And the Church has been able to come before Him and Jesus Christ now for the past 2,000 years, nearly. And so it says, **these are appointed meetings/appointed times of the Eternal, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations.** We're to convene. We're to convene together wherever we can, whenever we can on these occasions. There are times for convening before God. We may have to do it alone sometimes, but it's a convening, it's a coming together with God, coming before God.

And so, **to proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My appointed times**, again, that word. And so God's making it very clear this is something He established. And we learn to love God, we learn to cherish such time. And that's really how we need to look at this Feast of Tabernacles. And really, every Sabbath and every Holy Day we come before God. But even more so now let's focus upon that at this Feast of Tabernacles when God says, "These are My appointed times." To understand the awesomeness of being able to come into, in a unique way, God's presence to be instructed, to be guided, to be directed by Him.

So, going on then it says, **Six days shall work be done...** So we have our routine in life that we go through and the work and the things that we're to involve ourselves in throughout the week, but **the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest**, not to have our own work and to do our own thing, but to focus upon God, to focus on the reason God has set aside these times for us. So again, a **Sabbath of rest, a holy convening/a holy convocation; you shall do no work therein: it is the Sabbath of the Eternal in all your dwellings. These are the appointed times of the Eternal, even holy convocations, which you shall proclaim in their appointed time.** And so we do that, especially on the annual Holy Days. And there are those things that are given week by week on the Sabbath, the food that God gives to us, the food that He stirs us up and strengthens us in the power of His holy spirit in a very special calling. Because that's the purpose of these appointed times, time that God gives to us to be led, guided, directed, instructed by Him, and to be able to have the opportunity to grow more spiritual, to be given more so that we can grow more spiritually, to put things into effect in our life, to be able to pray about them and seek God's

guidance and direction and correction and help so that we can be something different, become something different, become a part of His Family - not just with human life, but one day to have God-life, Elohim.

And so again, "These are even holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed/in their appointed time. And so we do that, especially on Holy Days even more so, the instruction that's given there, that which we are to focus upon, the meaning of the Holy Days, each one that we observe.

Verse 5—In the fourteenth day of the first month at even; again, that word, "ben ha arbayim," which means, "between the evenings." So it's something that's *in* the fourteenth day, between two evenings, and just like any High Day, if you will, or a Holy Day. And this is not an annual Holy Day, but it is an appointed time. It is a holy convocation that God has given for His people and something to be observed. And so though it's not a High Day, an annual Sabbath, it is a holy convocation that God has given to us to observe, a convening of His people. And so, **in the fourteenth day**, between two evenings; so as with the Sabbath or any day, or especially, then, an annual Holy Day, we know what that means, "between two evenings." We know when a Holy Day is. We know when the Sabbath is, Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. The sixth day of the week sunset to the seventh day of the week sunset. And so this one here is talking about, **is the LORD's Passover.**

So, "In the fourteenth day of the first month is the Eternal's Passover." So here with the Passover, here is where it all begins. It's a beginning of God's plan and a time to be so thankful and to rejoice in what Christ, our Passover, has made possible for each of us to experience so that we can be here at this Feast. So, again, awesome to understand!

So going on then, on down to where it talks about the Feast of Tabernacles. Let's drop on down to **verse 39**. It says, **Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land;** so, yes, it's physical. We're very much physical creatures. We have that which we are to do. But there is a lot more said here as well. Yes, it's physical, but again, much, much more. What about what we have gathered in spiritually? *How much* has God given us? That's something we should think about at this Feast of Tabernacles, indeed. How much has God given us? I think of the time of the Apostasy and everything that has been given to us, things that began to separate us from the rest of the Church that had become scattered. And now we have so much that God has given to us, because of an anticipation and a desire He has to establish His Kingdom that's going to be here not too long from now, and Jesus Christ to return, but so much knowledge, so much insight, so much understanding that has been given to us it's absolutely incredible. It truly is. So I think about how much God has given to us, and didn't stop giving to us even during the past three years. He just continued to give us more and more and more.

So it says, in essence, that we are to gather in the fruit of the land. So that fruit is, indeed, that which we do from physical labor, that which even enables us to come or to attend the Feast of

Tabernacles, to exist, to be able to have the things that we need in human life to continue on to sustain ourselves and our families. But there is that which we need in our spiritual lives to be sustained. And so again here, "When you have gathered in the fruit of the land." So a special time to remember that God has blessed us mightily physically, but He's also blessed us mightily on a spiritual plane. ...**you shall keep a Feast unto the Eternal seven days.** So a part of the feasting in attitude and spirit and mind is to understand what God continues to give to us on a spiritual plane. Not just in our physical lives, but, really, if we understand it even deeper, even far more important, is that which is given to us on a spiritual plane. So we shall keep... So it says, **you shall keep a Feast unto the Eternal seven days;** in other words, to Yahweh, the Eternal Self-Existing One. **And on the first day shall be a Sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a Sabbath.** So, annual High Days, annual Sabbaths. **And you shall take unto you on the first day the boughs...** Now, some translate this as "branches," yet it's neither "a bough" or nor "a branch," but we'll come back to this. And it says, **of good trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Eternal your God seven days.** And so here we see something that generally I have always felt it absolutely essential to mention this part in an opening sermon for a Feast of Tabernacles, something that God wants us to focus upon, something He instructs us very early on in the observance here of His Feast. And He tells us, "*You shall rejoice* before the Eternal your God seven days." So that's during the Feast of Tabernacles. Certainly we continue to rejoice beyond that even more so in the Last Great Day because we understand how great and awesome that is as well, a continuation, a going on beyond what God has given during the Millennium and all that prepares for the Last Great Day that we will hear about on the Last Great Day.

But again here, this very specific about the first seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, a time to rejoice, when God had given this instruction concerning these boughs. Again here, as I mentioned here some translate it "branches," yet it's neither, in this particular case here, "boughs," nor "branches." But we're going to come back to this.

So it says, "of good trees, and branches of palm trees, and the boughs," in this case, indeed, "of thick trees, and willows of the brook." So the first matter God has address, once we acknowledge the need to obey Him and observe this time, is that we come to His Feast and rejoice. So we are to rejoice! So we need to focus on that right away, right now at the beginning of the Feast and be determined that we are going to *obey* God Almighty. We should *want* to rejoice. We should be stirred to rejoice. But we are carnal, selfish human beings and sometimes we're tried and tested even at the Feast of Tabernacles when we all come together, even though we haven't had an opportunity to be together like this for a long time. Sometimes people can be tried and tested, and we're not to let any of those things that happen in the world around us or drama, as I mentioned in times past here, begin, or any fashion or form come into the Feast of Tabernacles. We are to rejoice before God. We are to be *thankful* and *excited* about what God has given to us and *maintain* that excitement, and that rejoicing, and not let anything interfere with it throughout this Feast of Tabernacles.

So again, we're to be filled with excitement, thankfulness, and happiness. And if we're not something is mightily wrong with us. We go off track when we don't have such attitude and frame of mind. And God has us and tells us to focus upon that in the Feast of Tabernacles.

So again here, we're to be filled with excitement, and thankfulness, and happiness. We're to think about those things, brethren, because they don't just happen. So we're to be filled, again, with excitement, thankfulness, and happiness. We are to *work* to make certain that our environment around us is kept in a spirit that yields itself to ourselves and others around us to be of that spirit. In other words, to rejoice in this Feast. And so again, nothing is to besmirch or to tarnish that spirit, that spirit of rejoicing.

Now, let's look a little more closely at that last verse here, **verse 40**, when it says, **And you shall take unto you the first day/on the first day the boughs of good trees...** So again, I mention this is not "boughs" in Hebrew, but it is the word for "fruit," and it's only translated once like this as "boughs," and that's right here. But it's translated 118 times as "fruit." Now, I think all the years in Worldwide, Feast after Feast after Feast, and when I went to the Feast I never knew this. All we focused upon was something that we heard a little bit about, tradition that they had, something that they did as a part of the Feast of Tabernacles when they'd make these booths and they would get these boughs together and different things to make the booth. But "fruit"? We never knew that. I was never taught that. And yet it has so much meaning to it when we grasp it.

So again, it's talking about in the very beginning of that, before it even gets to a point where it talks about "boughs," it talks about "fruit". And so it says here, again, **the first day the boughs of good trees.** It goes on to say, **branches of,** or "the hands" if you will, **the palm/of palm trees, and the branches,** in this case proper translation, **of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Eternal your God seven days.** So we shouldn't have to think about it, but God says we should. We are to think about it. It is something that we must focus upon in order to do, obey, and observe it in a manner that God wants us to. It is to be unique and special in every way because of that particular focus.

So again here, **verse 41—And you shall keep it a Feast unto the Eternal seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month.** So again here, it's a matter of something we are to celebrate, to rejoice before God. **And you shall dwell in booths,** so meaning here you are to "continue in", "abide in" booths, to dwell in booths. The word is even translated over 200 times as "sit". So, again here, unique, "to dwell in." So we understand this thing about continuing in and how that is used especially in the New Testament when we talk about abiding/dwelling in, but here it's very specific although it does have this meaning with it about dwelling and to abide in, but very literally it is about sitting. And so they were to sit in this little booth. Now, again here, here is something unique, and they were to do it for seven days.

So they were to make this little thing out of wood. It wasn't a great structure. It wasn't something to protect from the elements, the wind the rain and so forth; those things were still there. It was just kind of a wooden structure of a few palms, just for some shade, and some of the framework that would have to be there out of some of the wood that would be made, used together, obviously, to bind something together to make a small booth type thing to sit in. But there's a purpose for it that God gave to it. And so He said you're to do this for seven days. You are to sit in it, in this booth, sit in it for seven days. And it says, **all who are Israelites born shall dwell**, in other words "continue," "abide," or "sit". It doesn't mean you live there for the seven days. It doesn't mean that's your primary place of staying. It wasn't made to be a large structure so you could have beds in it and people be able to stay in it. It was just a very small, little structure that one or two people could sit in. That was the size of it. That was it. And so again here, all who are Israelite born shall dwell (continue/abide), but it means something you're to do throughout the Feast. You're to do it every day, in other words - sit in it, in other words. So "sit in," or as the word even in here is "with," but in or with these booths. In other words, for those seven days that was to be done. **So that your generations may know**, so here is something here to learn from this. Here is something that they're to think upon during this. Here is something that is very much to be a part of their mind, **that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell (continue) in booths**. So they continued, stayed in, in other words, temporary dwellings during their journeying. So again here, this wasn't made to be a large structure like the children of Israel had, the tents and different things they had as they travelled through the wilderness. But again, something really small, and they were then to reflect upon what their ancestry had done that make it possible for them as they went through the wilderness and God delivered them out of Egypt so that they could be where they were in the land of Israel then observing His Holy Days. And so again, this was something for them to reflect upon - where they came from, what had come before them.

So again here, says, **that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell (continue) in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am the Eternal your God**. So we're to remember. We're to reflect upon. You know, if we think about those things that God has done to bring us to where we are - and we're going to hear a lot of that during this Feast. It's inspiring. It's exciting. And we *are to remember*. We are to look back at our history and see the things that God has done, because they're always so astounding, so awesome. And especially as we look about the Church and what's happened since the Apostasy and what God did to bring us to where we are today. It's been an incredible journey, it truly has been. And we're to think about those things. We're to think about where we've come from and where we're going. And so God blesses us - but a very special focus during this period of time for the children of Israel back at that time - to reflect back. And yet as time has gone on, God has shown us even greater and greater meaning concerning the Feast of Tabernacles. Because at that time they were to look back and remember where they came from and what made it possible for them to be where they were *then*, but there is also that which we look forward to. So, again, we understand our lives -

temporary dwellings. We learn something spiritual, on a spiritual plane in where we're going that is so far, so far beyond what we have, so far beyond what we are as physical human beings.

But anyway, the point in all this is that the Israelites, again, were to look back at that which was temporary for the Israelites, as they had no permanent place while they were in the wilderness but had to continue in tents and temporary dwellings until they were brought into the promised land; you know, a physical promised land. And they could only understand a physical nature in all this in order to rejoice for what God had given them. Now, in a land filled with good fruit and prosperity that came from God. So they were to think about those things and what made all that possible.

Now, that was for them. And we're to remember those things, we're to think about how we're able to be where we are today. We're to think back about the things that God has brought us through, all the time. Again, to just think about the Feast of Tabernacles and where we are and where we're going and what it pictures, when we understand it pictures a period of time, as we look into the Millennium that's almost upon us, and even on into the Great White Throne as we have the eighth day. So we're to look *forward*, understanding, again, that man has been given a temporary body in which to dwell, and once called has opportunity to *eat* of the *fruit* of God spiritually and to look forward to a permanent dwelling in God's Kingdom, in God's Family. And so God has given, over the years, much, much more for us to understand concerning our calling and concerning the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles, things about the Millennium that we grasp and comprehend that the Israelites didn't know.

And so, let's go to an example of how the Israelites actually observed this instruction concerning the Feast and this matter of dwelling in booths and just notice how they observed it. This is in Nehemiah 8. I think it's good to go back and look at that, to remember, to think about some of those things they did and what God gave to them. And all along the way there are always things that we can learn and grow in, especially on a spiritual plane. And that's what we're to do. We're to reflect upon all these things and the greater meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles, and again, *why* we're here.

Before we continue I think it's really important to know the context and use of the term, again, "to dwell in booths," as in this case the Hebrew word for "dwell" literally, again, has more to do with the meaning of "to sit down." So again, I've mentioned that. But before we go on let's think about that and what's being said here, "specifically in matters that had to do with judging an issue," that's how the word is used sometimes, this specific word here that's translated as "dwell" or "to sit." It had to do with sitting in judgment. It had to do in some cases of "sit in ambush." So it had to do with sitting. Or "to simply sit quiet," to sit quiet "as in contemplation or meditation," and that's more really the use of it here. And it also carries with it the meaning of "to continue in," "to stay in" with the context "to dwell in," as well. So again, the Israelites did not live, again, in these booths, but they sat in them each day and *continued* in doing so throughout the Feast.

And so here in Nehemiah we see this, in **Nehemiah 8:14—And they found written in the law which the Eternal had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the Feast of the seventh month.** Now, again, when people read this it's very easy thinking that this was really about dwelling in some kind of a larger constructed place. It wasn't. It was just a kind of a little flimsy thing, in many ways, but just enough so that someone could have some palms, some things for shade above them in the structure, and then something to sit on, something in the wood there, of the wood of a place to sit. Not for all day. They didn't just sit there all day long during the Feast or stay there during the night. It was really small, just a big enough thing to sit in. So, but, we haven't always understood that as a Church. People have had all kinds of ideas.

So going on here, it's something that they were to do on a regular basis, just as sometimes we do when we have prayer. We don't pray all day long. There is a period of time we observe and reflect upon certain things, and this is what this was for, for reflection upon something very specific that they were to do. So, **verse 15—And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees to make booths, as it is written. So the people went forth and they made themselves booths,** again, not to live in but to sit in for this contemplation, for this meditation, for this remembering of the things they were to think upon. And it says, **everyone upon the roof of his house, or in their courts,** so again, they had houses where they slept, where they put together meals and so forth and had people together. That was a house. But this was just a little structure, and in some cases on top of their flat roofs that they had, just in one little part of it, not over the whole area, and in their courts. So these were, again, really small structures. **...and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street,** so something that could just sit on the side of the street there, put it up in a little area, enough room to sit down, like a bench, a park bench, except this had a little top to it and some palms on it for shade. **...and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim.** So again here, very unique in how they were used, and not at all a big structure, not at all like a tent you could sleep in or dwell in.

Verse 17—And all the congregation to them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths. So again, makes it very clear here what they did. And again, for what purpose? Well, to judge some matters, perhaps, as the word even has the meaning of in their own lives, and if they were able to reflect that much. Sadly, carnal Israelites didn't go too deep in some of their thinking, but they were to consider and contemplate, meditate upon, if you will, the meaning of what it was - and God told them what to think about, of what made it possible. So they probably didn't stay there too very long, but at least it was a routine in something that they saw, something they were involved in when they built it, and they did think about then what made it possible for them to be in the land of promise that they were and to have the abundance that they had at that time. But again, it was rather limited in understanding, but it wasn't meant for people who were begotten of God's spirit. It wasn't meant for people like

those that have been in the Church for the past 2,000 years that could have things built upon this in greater understanding on a spiritual plane concerning God's purpose in the Millennium and those things that would take place through time and what the purpose of life was all about in the first place - you know, living in a temporary body, being in a temporary dwelling until just as the Israelites were for forty years we live in a temporary dwelling until we get to where we're going, to have life-everlasting in the God Family.

So it goes on to say, **for since the days of Joshua, the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so.** As it goes on to say, **And there was very great gladness and rejoicing.** So this was exciting! They weren't accustomed to this. It meant more to them because it was kind of some of the first time they'd done this in ages and it meant more to them. If you haven't done something for a long time, if you have lost certain knowledge and you're able to find it and to see the purpose of it, indeed, there can be a lot of gladness and rejoicing. So again, for us it's a little different, in that respect. We are to grow and grow spiritually, and we're to hold on to that first love that God gives to us. And it should never come to a point in time where we can't rejoice and be thankful and meditate upon the things God has given to us. You know, can't rejoice without being grateful, without being thankful, without really seeing what we've been given. And so even for us at this Feast of Tabernacles, it's truly a time to think about the things that have made it possible for us to be together, to hear the things we're going to hear.

In **verse 18** it goes on to say, **Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God.** And here at the Feast of Tabernacles that's going to mean so much more to us because we read out of God's word. But what we're able to see, what we're able to know, what we have in our minds, especially in the last many years since the Apostasy that God has added to understanding in the Church. We're going to talk about some things at this Feast that I find so incredible that God has given to us since the Apostasy. And it's dumbfounding, it really is. And it's inspiring. But it's exciting! And that excitement should carry over into rejoicing on a spiritual plane. It should be something that stirs us up, moves us, and causes us, indeed, to be able to cry out to God and thank Him, thank Him awesomely so for what we've been given and what we have. We don't want to forget what we have. We don't want to minimize it. We need to grasp how awesome it is that we have been given what we have.

And so it goes on to say, **And they kept the Feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.** So the greater lesson for us spiritually in all this is to understand "booths," "temporary dwellings," and what this means for our lives, again, and the connection to the Kingdom of God. We need to dwell upon that meaning, to contemplate, to judge various things, as we're going to have to through this Feast, meditate on what this means for us in the observance of this Feast. Don't take it for granted. Be thankful. Learn. Grow. Build upon what God has given to you. Seek to grab a hold of the fruit that's there available to feast upon that He desires to give, because that's what we receive in all the sermons. And so God wants us to feast - not just a physical thing on a physical plane like the Israelites did, because that of

and by itself doesn't have a whole lot of meaning - only if there's gratitude and thankfulness to God in the mix of it all, but especially that much more when it's on a spiritual plane, to grasp those things.

There's also another important part of the observance of the Holy Days, of God's Holy Days, and especially the Feast of Tabernacles, and I think it's good to reflect upon that right now. That's back over in Deuteronomy 16. Let's turn over to Deuteronomy 16. Because it's all a part. Everything fits together. God shows us unique things about observance of His time and gratitude and thankfulness and rejoicing and what do we see, what do we grasp? Do we see what we're a part of?

I can't help but think of what Mr. Armstrong said in that particular series we went through in the summer talking about, back in 1978, "Get behind this thing!" To understand what that means and what God has called us to share in. There is a work to be done and we're not just called to have opportunity to become a part of God's Family. That's going to be given to millions upon billions through time. But we live at a special time for a special purpose. And if we grasp that we're going to be able to rejoice even more.

So in **Deuteronomy 16:13**, it says, **You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, after you have gathered in your corn and your wine.** So again here, making it very clear here this is a particular time of the year, and especially in the northern hemisphere even more so, but even in part in the southern, depending on the kinds of crops and so forth that people might have, or the things that might be planted. But again here, just a bit of a different season, flip-flopped the way it is, but again here, the focus to think about those things that were in the area of Israel at that time. And so it says, "After you have gathered in the corn and your wine." So it's the major harvest after those things have been done that they had the ability then to come together and rejoice before God. The harvest was over, the opportunity to be together, to share in a festive time.

So this verse has never been focused upon in the Church, at least to my knowledge, as we are going to do so today. And we need to think about that. What does this mean? It means, again, that after you have *worked* and been blessed in your *labor*, and have gathered in all that you have done throughout the previous year, then you are to do something with all that you have been blessed.

And goes on to say then in **verse 14—And you shall rejoice in your Feast, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your manservant, and your maidservant, your employees...** and so a little bit different back in that time and talking to a nation. Today it's a matter of those who are called and those who are able to be together to whatever extent they are. Some can't. Some cases only one person's been called in a family. So again, it's very unique. But this was more of a national thing, for an entire national people, the nation of Israel, but it goes on to say, **and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that *are* within your gates. Seven**

days shall you keep a solemn Feast unto the Eternal your God in the place which the Eternal shall choose. So again, that's what we do. And they did that very specifically so being of the nation there and going to Jerusalem. That's where they were given to do this in a very specific thing.

For us we strive to have organized Feast sites that people can attend, but sometimes not everyone can attend because of health or whatever reasons or maybe different things totally. Sometimes maybe some individuals can only attend once every two years or every third year or something of that nature because of assistance and so forth that they receive and/or because of savings, of whatever it might be. A lot of people are getting older and health problems that exist. Sometimes it's better for them to remain at home so that they can be strong without being worn down from a trip and be able to receive more than from the Feast by what they hear from home. And so that's what their place is, what God has chosen for them to be. If they were to be someplace else, God would make it possible. But sometimes we learn through the other process as well.

So again here, this was on a very physical nature with them. For us it's physical and spiritual, things that we learn. It says, **because**, so again, **in the place which the Eternal shall choose, because the Eternal your God shall bless you in your increase**. Now, that says a lot, a lot more, I think, than sometimes people grasp. And it says, **and in all the works of your hands, therefore, you shall rejoice/surely rejoice**. So again here, this is important to understand. During the summer, I should say, just looking back, I focused upon this thing about working and how God desires to give us increase, to bless us. And the more we learn to put God first and the desire we have, the more His desire is to help us to have increase in our life, and to a point that whatever it might be there are going to be different examples, different things in different people's lives just for the sake of learning and the variety and the specific things in some cases that God is molding and fashioning in people's lives. But again here, the important thing to understand from all this is that God desires to bless us in increase and in the works of our hands. Therefore, once we see what God has given to us, the effort we put into it, whether it be on a physical plane or a spiritual, because we're only going to reap what we sow. You know, what we put into our lives on a spiritual plane, we're not going to get more out of... If we just come to Sabbath services and kind of listen but don't really strive to apply it, then we're not really going to have that kind of growth that God desires to give us in our life. So the increase that we're going to receive has a great deal to do with the effort we put into it. That's the way God works and gives increase accordingly. So, we work hard, God gives us blessings, He gives us help.

Then it goes on to say, you know, in **Deuteronomy 16:16**, so these verses go on to explain more that is connected with God's plan for our being able to observe annual Holy Days, *His* annual Holy Days. **Three times/three seasons in a year shall all your males appear before the Eternal your God in the place which He shall choose; in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, in the Feast of Weeks, in the Feast of Tabernacles**. Those are the three seasons. So we understand that.

Passover and Unleavened Bread is the first season, and certainly, the High Days are when we come together in a festive environment, if you will, on those High Days before God. They're special annual Holy Days. And of course, the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost (called in different places here), but again, the Feast of Weeks. And in the Feast of Tabernacles period, which is Trumpets and Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day all in the fall season. Again here, those specific seasons. ...and they shall **not** appear before the Eternal empty/empty handed. You know, this is incredible! I marvel at this! And yet God says we're to observe the verses before this that we just read, talk about coming together and observing the Feast of Tabernacles and the different Holy Days as it gives there. But the one we just read about, the Feast of Tabernacles. And then God goes right on into then and explains this thing about these three seasons of the year that we are to appear before God, and we're *not* to appear before Him empty-handed.

Now, it said up here that, "He shall bless you in your increase and in the works of your hands." So it's a physical thing and a spiritual thing for us. But I found that the two are so very closely related because they reflect an attitude and a spirit inside of us as to how we live our lives, as to what we put into our lives, as to what we're really going to receive out of them when it comes to how God works with us in our life. The reason I mention some of this is because this is talking about Holy Day offerings. And God says *never* appear before Him empty. I have known of people, I have had to put out a lot of people within the Church (a lot, not a few), who simply have not done or obeyed this commandment. How can they be blessed if they're not willing to remember God and give to God of something special - even that which is above and beyond tithes, even if it's just a little bit. And if we're able to do more than that's awesome, that's exciting.

And so again here, it's about an attitude of mind. And it says, "You shall not," "They shall not appear before the Eternal empty/empty handed." **Every man shall give as he is able.** You know, God doesn't expect more from someone that they can't give. It's not about that. It's about the attitude and the heart and what's inside of us as to what we want to give to God. And we know we can't hand it over directly to Him so what is this about? Well, we learn in time, we come to understand, very much so, that it is about something that we're able to give, indeed, of ourselves that isn't required in the sense of a specific amount, of 10% or whatever it might be. It's whatever we desire to give, but it's according to our blessings and how we feel that we have been blessed in our lives. And a lot of that's going to reflect upon what did we put into it. And if we....

Now, please don't misunderstand me. There are people who are retired. There are people who physically, physically absolutely cannot work, they have certain things that are wrong with them or because of age are not able to have employment. But I'm talking about that which is obvious. I'm talking about those who are able to work, those who have the ability to work. I've known of people who wouldn't accept various kinds of jobs because, well, they were worth more. They were worth more than so many dollars per hour. Well, you know, there are times you work, and

especially if it's to observe God's Holy Days, if it's able to be together at a Feast of Tabernacles, even to save aside extra in order to be there.

So I'm tending to speak a little more plain about this this year because over the past several years, and especially even this past year there have been situations where I have had to ask people, or suspend people, ask people not to come back again because, "You're not giving to God as you're commanded to." This is a command! This is a part of the observance of a Holy Day! So it blows my mind that anyone thinks they can come before God at the Feast of Tabernacles, or during the days of Unleavened Bread, or Pentecost, and especially when we understand the meaning of those Holy Days, and come before Him empty-handed. Everybody, you know, adults, people baptized are supposed to give something. I've made comment, "Surely a dollar, whatever, surely." I think, how often do we buy bubblegum and do we buy candy bars, do we buy cokes - cokes, cokes, cokes - but we can't save aside a dollar or two to give to God on His Holy Days?" Now, I'm not saying these things to try to get more. I'm saying these things to help people to understand themselves, to understand what is expected, about a relationship that we have with God and an attitude people have toward God. That's what it's about. That's what these things can reflect.

And so I hope that the body has been thoroughly cleansed by this time. I hope there won't be anyone else to the time of Christ's coming that I will have to tell or suspend or say, "Hey, you've been doing this year after year and you're not giving Holy Day offerings to God. You're missing the mark. How can you...? You can't come before God and rejoice. You're not able to because you're not living right." And so it's an oxymoron; they don't mix, they don't fit. It doesn't fit. It blows my mind!

I think I mentioned during the summer here about an individual, a minister, been a minister for several years. Visited his home and knew there were some problems at this point in time, by this point because this is something I knew I had to talk to them about. They weren't giving Holy Day offerings. And when I got there saw this huge TV, much larger than what we've thought about having, and we have a pretty good size one in our room. But here was a huge TV on the wall, huge expensive speakers around the room, a stereo system, and yet not able to afford and was giving this thing about needing help and had been actually given help year after year to attend the Feast of Tabernacles - not just not only giving Holy Day offerings on the High Days, but actually receiving 2nd Tithe assistance to attend the Feast. Now, that's disgusting! Right now, thinking about that, that's just appalling! And candidly, I probably should have done something about that much earlier, I just didn't know fully about some issues there. But came to a far deeper conviction as time went along. And he's not the only one, sadly. There have been far too many.

So again, I just shake my head thinking about this right now, because our heart, our heart needs to be in God's work, and not on what we can get out of it, but what we can give. I think of a saying that John F. Kennedy gave, that he had in talking about a nation and talking about a nation

of people. And it's a very popular saying, something he said. He said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." Well, I'm not talking about a country. I'm talking about the Church. And sometime it's not a matter of what can the Church do for us, but what can we do for the Church? And really, we're commanded to right here in these verses about Holy Day offerings and in tithes and so forth. It's about being called to support and to do a work.

And so again here, there is so much to reflect upon, to think about during Holy Days, and I think about this. I think about this matter of working and being able to be given help, increase. If we don't work we can't be given help in an increase. God can't bless us.

So again, for most, in this particular case, the blessing is dependent upon your work, your job, your employment, the effort *you* put into it. And so I think about even going to the Feast of Tabernacles sometimes. I know it's difficult and people have difficult things, circumstances, but sometimes people, there are individuals that aren't willing to put anything into it. They aren't willing to put a little extra into it.

You know, the Church *wants* to give help to those who deserve the help, who need the help, who are in absolute need before God. I rejoice, I am *thankful* that we have the ability to help people, truly. But sometimes some don't put into it what *they* should. So, again here, for some the blessing is the result of God providing the means by which individuals can attend the Feast through the giving of 2nd Tithe assistance to them. And this is more fully for those who are of older age, unable to work any longer, those with health problems, and some who may have fallen upon hard times for legitimate reasons and are helped until they are able to get back into the work force again. Those are all understandable sound things. But sometimes some things can become a crutch in people's lives and need to be shaken free of it.

It needs to be said that if there are other circumstances in a person's life that full time employment is not able to be secured for a time, then they should do all that they can to save at least something aside for attending the Feast of Tabernacles. Something special at least for that, to work at that. And perhaps not all of it, but with effort and seeing that effort then, that's why we ask when people ask for help. We ask, "What effort has gone into it? How much has been saved aside for this?" Because something has to be done. It's not just a one-sided street. Something has to be done on this other side as well to show that, "I'm striving. I'm working at it. This is what I've done to put this aside."

So again, we have come to a point within the Church that people need to more fully *grasp* a large part of the work that they have in their calling and what it's for. It's indeed to participate in and support God's work. That's why we've been called at this time and not during the Millennium or the Great White Throne. We have a work to do. And as Mr. Armstrong said, "Get behind this thing!"

So again, I'm saying these things at this Feast of Tabernacles because we *all* need to rejoice before God. But that means we need to be working as well. We all need to be putting effort into

it. We need to be striving to do what we can accomplish to do so that we *can* come before God and everyone rejoice. Because if a part of the Body is dragging it down and not rejoicing and not doing its part, then it hurts the Body. And that's being changed. We're being made ready for the return of Jesus Christ. And we are so exceedingly blessed and we're so blessed at this Feast of Tabernacles. And I know it's going to be a greater Feast this year, a happier Feast this year, one in which people rejoice in even more so this year, because much of the Body has been cleaned up. And that's an awesome thing! I am thankful for that. That is one of the things I'm rejoicing about at this Feast of Tabernacles. We're going to be able to have greater unity and oneness at this Feast of Tabernacles because of growth that people have made, but also because some that has been dragging on the Body and hurting the Body and some attitudes, some things have been gotten rid of. And I'm thankful for that! Because when those things are gone then we're able to rejoice more before God.

Let's turn over... Let's notice... I'll just read the verse to you. It's in Ecclesiastes 5. But there is a great and rewarding truth in what it says here, in **Ecclesiastes 5:19** (you can just jot it down). **Every man also to whom God has given riches and wealth, and has given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.** You know, there is something unique about being able to work hard, to sweat, to toil, to work, and to be able to have the fruit of that. It's not just in the financial part. That's a blessing. That's an increase. That's a needful thing, obviously. But sometimes the work, to know what it means to be able to have it, to be able to do it, whatever it might be - and we may be struggling with it - but if we're struggling and fighting then there should be that gratitude, that feeling once it's done that effort's been put into it, we've been blessed, we've been given what we have, and there is a satisfaction in there. There's an enjoyment in there, something that we should be able to rejoice in before God, to rejoice in our labor and to understand to be able to do so, to have the health to do so, to be able to have the means to do so when so many in this world don't even have that. To grasp, indeed, it's a gift from God, the ability to rejoice in our labor. There is a lot of people in this world don't rejoice in their labor and what they're able to do, and some people just don't like to work, and some people are just flat lazy and they don't understand that they're robbing themselves of joy that they can have, that God intends for them to have from the labor, from the work.

I think about marriage. I think about people who don't live like they should. Husbands towards wives - they rob themselves of the gift that God has given in marriage, that should be received when a husband and a wife obey God and love one another. And so there are people who never experience that, can't experience that - sometimes, sadly, even within God's Church! Because they've robbed themselves because they haven't applied the things they need to apply and work at in marriage. Everything takes work. And the more we work the more we're blessed, indeed, the more God can give increase in what we do.

Psalm 6. So in the beginning of this Feast, a little bit of correction, a little bit of guidance, because we all need to be on the same page. We all need to be looking forward even to next year's Feast - not just this Feast - but to be thankful we're here, to relax, to just let the world go. What a blessing just to know that you don't have to worry about the world right now. You're not involved in it. You're not involved in society, as a whole. I mean, we're going to be mixing with things, but not like you do on your job and your daily routine of life. This is a time to get away from it all and a time to be in a kind of booth, if you will, the Feast of Booths, the Feast of Tabernacles, and to be able to think about, to be able to meditate upon, to be able to rejoice before God for everything that we've been given, a time to contemplate and think about *why* we're here and what it is God has given to us and how *awesomely blessed* we are to be here.

Now, that's a lot. That's a lot. And we should be able to really, truly rejoice mightily then in this Feast of Tabernacles.

Then, again, **Psalm 6:11** here as I was getting ready to read, I guess. **But let all those that put their trust in You rejoice. Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them.** Do we realize the blessings that God gives to us and how He looks upon us as His people? He esteems us so highly, brethren. He's given us so much. He truly has. And that doesn't mean we don't have struggles, but God's on our side. God's there to deliver us and take us through the struggles of life, to give us hope, to give us focus, to give us direction, to give us something the world doesn't even have. They don't even know what's happening. **Let them also who love Your name be joyful in You.** What an awesome blessing! The joy we can have, what we're able to experience is above and beyond that which so happens so much in physical life where people are able to enjoy something that's very physical. But this goes beyond this because this has to do with the mind and what we know and what we understand, that adds a power, a level to it that goes beyond anything that human beings, as a whole, by themselves could ever experience in life. We have the blessing of God. And as it says here, if we love Him... as it says, "Let them also who love Your name," it's just... It's loving God. Loving God has to do with being thankful to Him. That means seeing what we've been given, and being thankful for what we've been given and the opportunities to be given increase in life, for participating, for sharing in. You know, to share with God means you have work to do. And sometimes it's very physical, and sometimes it's physical *and* spiritual. Sometimes when we've gone beyond in our age in health problems, it's very spiritual, but it's there, an ability to share with God in this end-time in a great work.

So again, **Let them also who love Your name be joyful in You.** God wants to give that kind of joy and that kind of fullness in our lives. **For you, Eternal, will bless the righteous.** Do you believe that? Do you live right? You know you're blessed. Incredible. If we fight against God and resist we suffer, we understand what curses are then, too. **...with favor You will encompass him as with a shield.** So God gives us great protection, and indeed shields us.

Let's turn over to Deuteronomy - back over, I guess I should say, back into Deuteronomy. This time now farther back into Deuteronomy 8. There is a warning that we must think upon during this

Feast as well now. It's a warning that God gives. **Deuteronomy 8:10—When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the Eternal your God.** It has to do with praising and rejoicing in the Eternal. That's what these words are about. And, indeed, that's the way we should be as. The Feast of Tabernacles here is a great example of that. And to realize that we have been incredibly blessed to eat so much. There is more than we can even receive in our life, that's a banquet. And you know when you have a huge banquet, you can't eat everything. You can't digest everything. But it's there and it's up to us to receive what we are able to.

And anyway, going on here ...**then you shall bless the Eternal your God for the good land which He has given to you**, whatever that is, whatever things that God has given to us in the land, in the earth, in our lives. Is that our focus? Do we see that for the good that God has given us in life? Do we appreciate? Do we grasp the good that God has given us to imbibe in, to share in in our lives, to share in an incredible work at the end of an age that ushers in the coming of His Son?

Verse 11—Beware that you do not forget the Eternal your God. And the reason I'm going through this is when I got out I've had to focus upon suspending and cleaning the Temple, and asking some not to return, getting rid of horrible, hideous attitudes that don't belong, that hurt the Body. And what amazes me sometimes is others in the Body, they wonder, "Well, what did they do? What did they do wrong?" Because people don't know. Because people learn how to hide things and keep things hidden and then they carry these attitudes and they say things sometimes that plant ideas and thoughts that are so out in left field. And sometimes that hurts others. And sometimes, if we're not careful, we don't see the spirit, we don't grasp the spirit.

Anyway, verse 11. I don't enjoy that part of the job sometimes, but I'm thankful, I'm rejoicing in this Feast for a cleaner Feast, for a stronger Feast, for a stronger people who can rejoice before God. So again, a bit of a warning here that we need to be careful that we do remember what our focus is supposed to be and that we see what God has given to us that's good in the Church, good in this age that we live in, though it be a struggle out here, though in our lives there are battles and struggles. But the good that is there to take in, to drink in, to have, to get us through, to get us where we're going and then what's just almost in our grasp now? Awesome!

Verse 11—Beware that you do not forget the Eternal your God, in not keeping His commandments. And so I marvel sometimes when people slough off and justify not tithing, when they justify not giving of Holy Day offerings. These are basic things! And that can work into other things in lives where people let down in morals and don't grasp things on a moral plane of life and relationships and sometimes drink in too much garbage that's in this world and bring it into your minds and bring it into your lives. And too often bring them into people's homes and then people are gone. What a time to be leaving! What a time to have to be cleansed out of the Body, out of the courtyard around the temple. And yet it still goes on. I just hope it's almost over, I truly do. By the Feast I hope it's pretty much over and we can get on with what we have before us, because we have a strong year ahead of us, plus beyond that, but a very strong year right in front of us.

Beware that you do not forget the Eternal your God. So we ought to be sobered and remember that part too, **and not keeping His commandments, and His judgments, and His statutes, which I command this day. Unless *when* you have eaten and are full...** You know, sometimes that happens. What are people filled with? Is it what God is giving to us and do we forget it? Do we remember it? Do we think upon it? Do we grasp the blessings we have? **...and have built good houses, and dwelt *therein*; and *when* your herds and your flocks multiply,** that which we've built in life. Sometimes it doesn't have to be much and people forget God. **...and your silver and your gold is multiplied.** Consider. Just think about... think about - and we're going to do that at the Feast here as well, consider all the truth that God has poured out upon us. There has *never been a time* in God's Church even to now where we have been given, people have been given so much ability to know and to see things, far beyond all other generations before it. This is astounding!

Anyway, sometimes if we're not careful that Laodicea, rich and increased with goods, can slip in and people are gone. It's always a matter of being thankful. And that has everything to do with our ability then to rejoice.

Verse 14. So be determined to rejoice at this Feast of Tabernacles. That's the point. Be determined. Don't let anything get in your way. You know, if there is something that's not right in your thinking ask God to help you to get rid of it. If there is something that comes up during the Feast here that tries to interfere with you having a great Feast, to rejoice, work to get rid of it. Seek God to help *you* in *your* mind and how *you* think. Not to make other people right, but to make *you* right so that you can constantly rejoice before God in this Feast of Tabernacles.

Verse 14—Then your heart become lifted up, and you forget the Eternal your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. I marvel at this! I think of people... I love it when I go into different church areas, different sites at different areas and I see people there that I've seen, that have been struggling through the Apostasy, before the Apostasy ever came. I think of those who go way, way back and they're still fighting. They have kept at the fight. And they know, you know, to be brought out of Egypt, to see all the things that have happened, and then to see what happened even within the Church and the struggle, the battle. But to see that, ah, that's encouraging to me. I really rejoice in that when I see those things in people's lives. But then I think about sometimes those who have come along since then who've had the benefit, the blessing of the battles that others have fought to make this possible for them. I think of individuals who've been called since, frankly, much later, since 2008, 2009, 2010, in through there, people who have come along and so soon forget they were called out of Egypt, to understand what they were called away from and what they've been blessed with to have in their life. And then to come to a point in time where, like one person recently, they're finding more in psychology to help them in their life than they can in God's Church. I mean, that's just nuts! That's just insane! That's just without God's spirit totally, and just astounding to me sometimes, that such things can happen. But they happen.

Verse 15—Who led you through the great and terrible wilderness. I think of the spiritual wilderness we're going through. It's great and it's terrible. It's a horrible world out here. It's sick. It's... I can't even find the word to describe how sick it is, perverted, how much worse it is now than... I mean, it's so far beyond what it was even ten years ago. It's astounding! ...**wherein were fiery serpents**, I think of Satan. I think of the demons that are still out there. And sometimes if people aren't careful they can give into those attitudes and then give them strength and give them power. And frankly, they have less power than ever before because the Church is becoming stronger and stronger. ...**and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought you forth water out of the rock of flint.** I think of some who have been in different groups and they were in a spiritual drought and not being fed and then they were drawn along, awakened, and blessed to have abundance. Incredible! How thankful? Do we forget? Or do we hold on to it and rejoice and rejoice during God's Feast of Tabernacles for everything He's given to us.

Verse 16—Who fed you in the wilderness with manna... That was physical, ours is spiritual. We're being fed with spiritual food throughout this journey more and more and more, and more than we can even drink in and eat, **which your fathers did not know.** I just said that. There has never been a time like this. There has never been a period like this where we've been given so much. ...**that He might humble you, and that He might prove you.** So I think about what God has given to us to change us, to transform us, **and to do you good at your latter end.** And I think of us living at the latter end of the end-time and what God is doing with us to give us opportunity to live on into the Millennium: some physical, some spirit. **And you say in your heart, My power and the might of my hand has given me this wealth.** Well, God is not going to allow that. It's going to be a matter of realizing where it all comes from. And the more we realize it, the more we know it, the more we're able to rejoice and be thankful, the more we really see that everything we have God has given to us, the more we can rejoice, if indeed we are deeply thankful. And as a whole I know God's people are deeply thankful.

So, as sitting in booths during this Feast we are to remember *how* God has been delivering us out of Egypt and how much riches He has poured out upon us more than any other age of mankind. So I think of some verses here. I think of Isaiah 66.

Isaiah 66. Great meaning here of things about rejoicing and so forth and our calling and things we can grasp and understand here. But let's start in **verse 5—Hear the word of the Eternal**, that's what we've had from the beginning of our calling, God's desire that we *hear Him*, that we hear what He's given to us and what He's prepared for us even at this Feast of Tabernacles, that that be the most important thing in our life here, to latch a hold of what God is going to let us share in with Him. So again, **Hear the word of the Eternal, you who tremble at His word**, you know, have great respect, reverence, desire toward His word, who are humbled by it. Not those... Well, I think of a couple people I saw here recently getting sleepy in the front row, and maybe they had a bad night and a bad week, and everything else. But I can't grasp that one, getting a little sleepy

in hearing God's word. It blows my mind! Especially in some of the kinds of sermons that have been given since I've been back; and I wouldn't want to get too sleepy.

Your brethren who hated you, who cast you out for My name's sake, said, Let the Eternal be glorified: but He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. You know, we go through a lot of things like this in our life, people who give us all kinds of difficulty, people in people's families when you come into the Church and some of the attacks that are there. But, you know, God will see us through and God will esteem us and raise us up. And there will come a time when others - and we shouldn't look forward to that time in the sense of wanting to see them ashamed, but that's just a reality. In time there are going to be those who are going to be shamed for things they have done; and just realize that's ahead and not to take things personal. Even within families, just realize they really can't help it. As Christ said, in essence, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." And they don't. They don't know what they're doing so why take offence to it? Why let it bother you that much?

Verse 6—A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Eternal that renders recompense to His enemies. And so we are coming to a time when this world needs to be chastened. This world needs to be stopped. It's headed over the cliff and it's horrible what's taking place. It's so, so sick! Thankfully it's not going to be allowed to become too much sicker!

Verse 7—Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. Now, this is a unique way that this is being expressed here, "Before she had labor, she brought forth," in other words, there was a delivery here, speaking of Christ, born of physical life, "before the labor came." It's not talking about Mary. It's talking about something else. It talks about here of being born of a physical life here first before labor pain was to come upon this world, labor spoken of that's to happen toward the end-time here.

Verse 8—Who has heard such a thing? You know, labor coming afterwards. That's what it's saying here, "Who has seen such things?" **Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day, or shall a nation be born at once?** I think of the things we should have patience for in what God is building. It doesn't happen overnight. There have been 2,000 years of great work being done. There has been 6,000 years of preparation for God's Kingdom to come, for those who are going to be 144,000 to reign with Christ. And so that's what it's talking about here. There have been several thousand years to prepare all this. It doesn't happen overnight. And because it's greater, it's something far greater here it's talking about. And we have that vision, we have that ability to see and understand that. So, "Shall a nation be born at once?" I think of the patience we need to have in realizing that even for the end-time, that there are those who are going to have greater opportunity, even in some nations having opportunity to repent. Are we willing to suffer longer? Are we willing to go through *more*? Are we willing to be laughed at and scorned more, longer in order to accomplish that? Well, so be it!

It goes on to say, **for as soon as Zion gave labor, she brought forth her child.** So again here, talking about that which is to come, the Kingdom which is just about here, Jesus Christ coming with 144,000 to establish a Kingdom, about what this Feast is all about, something to rejoice it. We see this! We're almost there! Incredible that we get to experience this! And so many, thousands before us, have looked forward to this time. Thousands thought it would come in their time, but it didn't. And we thought it would come before this and it didn't. But we see a greater purpose in why it hasn't. And how much are we willing to give? How much are we willing to sacrifice?

Verse 9—Shall I, God speaking here, Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to be brought forth? In other words, birth is given, but being brought forth comes first and labor, labor will come. It's coming. ...**says the Eternal: shall I cause to bring forth, and then shut the womb? Says your God.** So again here, unique way in which all this is expressed, because it's showing here something far greater than just something that human beings generally look at - just the physical - and talking about a simple physical birth. It's far, far greater. The plan is far, far greater to bring about a greater birth of something - God's own Kingdom, government of God that's coming to this earth.

Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, to rejoice in what this Feast of Tabernacles is all about. Not looking back like the Israelites did and sitting in a booth and thinking about where the children of Israel came from, though we should remember what we came from because then we're able to rejoice even more that God drew us out of a spiritual Egypt. But where we're going, the Millennium, God's Kingdom coming to this earth to reign over mankind.

So, **Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her;** that's what we're doing at this Feast. We're rejoicing in Jerusalem that's not quite here yet, **and be glad with her all you who love her.** We love it! We love what this Feast of Tabernacles pictures. We love the coming of the Millennium, the coming of Jesus Christ and that government that will be with Him. **Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her.** So there are those things that we go through sometimes that are difficult in battle, and we have battles to fight. And sometimes they're difficult and sometimes there are tears. But think about what's coming. Think about what's coming on the other side of all this.

Continuing here in **verse 11—That you may nurse, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations.** So God has given us the ability to be given hope, the ability to be consoled, the ability to put everything in its proper perspective so that we don't have the kind of drama that the world has and the kind of lack of hope that the world is in total turmoil and screwed up and messed up. And we're able to understand it all and know where we're going. What kind of comfort is that? That's awesome! ...**that you may fully nurse the milk.** And so God blesses us so that we can fully drink in of what He has for us, **and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.** And so we should be, indeed, at this Feast of Tabernacles, *delighted* with the abundance of the glory of Zion, of God's Kingdom that's coming.

For thus says the Eternal, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river. I look forward to that. I think of the name "Jerusalem," "Peace." And God, so long ago, gave up peace so that we could have what we're getting ready to be given, so that we could become a part of His Family. And we have to do the same thing. There are times we just have to realize we don't have peace yet and to understand the kind of battles and the wars that are around us. But we have to fight. And this isn't just going to happen. We have to put effort into it. We have to fight for God's way of life. And then the peace that's coming in the Millennium, what this Feast of Tabernacles pictures. **...and the glory of the gentiles like a flowing stream. Then shall you nurse, you shall be carried upon her sides, and be dangled upon her knees.** I think of what's coming for this world when there won't be the kind of pain and suffering and hurt, inequality, injustice, confusion, Babylon, all the things that exist today that are about to be gotten rid of in this earth so that we can go forward and learn peace and learn to be at-one with God and learn one way of life and learn what is what is true morality and to live it and people have happy families and full families and on and on it goes.

Verse 13—As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. I think of that which is coming - spiritual Jerusalem, Zion that's about to come. I look forward to being a part of it, I truly do. **And when you see this, your heart shall rejoice,** when it's finally here, ah, words... words will not even be able to describe it. But we're to rejoice in it now, too. That's the uniqueness of all this. We can rejoice in it now. That's why we have the Feast of Tabernacles. So we can rejoice in it *now* before it's even here, to experience a part of that *now* at this Feast of Tabernacles. **...and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the Eternal shall be known toward His servants, and His indignation toward His enemies.**

So, what an awesome time! What an awesome occasion! Every Feast of Tabernacles that we're able to keep, every Feast of Tabernacles that we're able to observe and the blessing that God gives to us... and even commands us. But He shouldn't have to command it. It should be something that's just within us, to rejoice in His Feast of Tabernacles.

So how do we magnify our ability to rejoice in this Feast of Tabernacles? It's in *how* we will dwell together at this Feast. It will be in *how* we treat one another and in *how* we fellowship with one another. It is in *how* we stop to consider and think upon the incredible blessings God has and continues to bestow upon us.

So indeed, let us be deeply thankful to God Almighty and His Son Jesus Christ, and let us rejoice before them *in spirit and in truth*, with great *gratitude of spirit and heart* during *all eight days* of this Feast season.