

Working for the Feast of Tabernacles

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Feast of Tabernacles Sermon - 2019

Welcome, everyone, to the Feast of Tabernacles 2019. It's hard to believe that another year has passed by and time just seems to keep ticking along, but here we are again celebrating what this time pictures for us and for God's plan. This is a time that I am sure we have all been looking forward to. This is a time when we can get together with those of like minds and be together for a little bit longer than what we normally get to do on the weekly Sabbath.

But this is also a time when we can get away from this world for just a little bit. And looking around at what is taking place out there, it is clear that we need help in this world. Mankind has been unable to solve its problems and unable to govern itself. It's just not possible.

But not only can we not govern ourselves but we've been unable to dress and keep this planet as God commanded us to do. It's something that would seem pretty basic but we've simply been unable to do it. It amazes me how fast we have been destroying this planet though since industrialization began and how this destruction keeps accelerating exponentially.

This isn't a new topic on the world scene. This has been around for quite a while but it seems like it's something that's new since we see it so much more now in the news and we see the effects now that our polluting over the years have had and the effect that they are having. But what is more interesting, too, is if you look back, and you can go on the internet and search out these articles if you so wish to, but you can find articles from the 90's, from the 80's, the 70's, and I think even going further back than that. You can find these articles that speak about the pollution and climate change or whatever and the funny thing is you can basically just take off the date, whether it's 1989 and put 2019 and the articles will read almost exactly the same. It's pretty crazy that these problems have been around for so long but we've been unable to do hardly anything to tackle them.

If you look here at how our modern lives are made possible, you know, mankind now thinks it's so advanced. They think, you know, "Look, we've got electricity, we've got oil, we've got power, and we can do so much!" We have phones, you know, we have smart phones, and not only today do we have smart phones, we have smart everything. You have smart light bulbs, smart dishwashers, smart you name it, smart microwaves, smart fridges, whatever, and it's gone to quite an extreme now of the technology that we have. I am not sure how important it is to have a refrigerator than can tweet, but we have that today too.

So we have all these things and much more, but mankind has still not been able to figure out the most simple things and has not been able to figure out how to make progress on this planet without hurting the planet or those around us. We can look at something as simple as where we

get our energy from. Say it's atomic energy - and a lot of people are surprised to find out that governments have no real solution for disposing of our nuclear waste. This waste is something that is dangerous for over 20,000 years, and a lot of times it's just been, you know, tossed into some metal containers or buried underground a little bit until someone in the future can come up with a better plan for the disposal. The politicians, it seems, have often said "Ok, let's make something temporary because we don't really have a solution, so let's make something that lasts for, you know, 10 years." Then time passes by and the next administration comes along and they're probably thinking, "Oh, these other people from before, I'm sure they came up with a solution, right? Because it would seem to be important." That's the problem a lot of times, is people often assume that, you know, smarter people have already worked out those types of issues and they think, you know, "The government wouldn't be irresponsible, would they?"

These types of issues are important, you know, you have radioactive material. But the truth is we've gotten in way over our heads very quickly and we just simply don't know how to solve these types of issues that we have. These are the things that make our life possible now, these conveniences that we have.

You can look at it the same with plastics, and just think about all the plastics that are floating out in the ocean out there that are being consumed by all the wildlife. They're eating all this garbage and then circle of life continues and in the end we end up ordering, you know, our fish at our favorite restaurant and we're eating the fish that was eating plastic. It's pretty mind blowing but that's how our oceans are right now. There is stuff out there that's been there since the 1950's because it just doesn't decompose. And, yeah, these plastics keep growing exponentially.

I could go on and on with these types of examples, but mankind has really turned this earth into a dumping ground. It's incredible that God has allowed for us to do this because it's all for a purpose and it's a lesson that's going to be taught into the Millennium. It's funny how, you know, sometimes we look back in the Bible, whether it's the Israelites or whoever it might be, and we'll look back and read these stories and we'll think, "Wow! How stupid were these people? Like, what were they doing? What were they thinking, you know? Why didn't they just obey God?" or whatever the issue may be.

But you know, that's going to happen again in the future, that people are going to look back on this time period and they're going to see how we just destroyed the earth and how we didn't really think about it too much and just kept doing it so that we could have our convenient lifestyles and have this, you know, have our smart phones and whatever because, you know, that's what makes people happy now. If they have their smart phone everything is fine. If they don't then you've got some problems, you know?

But in the future people are going to look back at this and think, you know, how are we so stupid? How are we able to do what we've done? And, you know, that's going to be a really strong lesson

in the future and it's going to be a lesson that shows man's lack of responsibility and how that we can't govern ourselves with just the simple issue of our own waste.

So we can see that man has been a really lousy steward of this earth and it's been that way for thousands of years. It's just that, like as I was saying, with industrialization, with technology it's been able to be destroyed at a much quicker rate than it was previously, but it's been going on forever.

We can see that we've got these serious problems in our society and that we need help and that's why we are here celebrating this time that we're celebrating. It's what we're looking forward to, you know, this time in the Millennium where we can be shown which direction we need to go, and so that we can go in that direction and live up to our full potential. This world is about to be cleaned up and that's a real blessing.

So let's start off today by heading over to Deuteronomy. Now, we're going to go to Deuteronomy 16:13 and we we're going to look at some scriptures about the Feast, and we are going to look into more specifically what we should be doing this week and also what our focus should be on.

We know that Christ will be returning soon and soon the Millennium will be here, but we need to stay focused and make sure that we make it there. Because that can be difficult sometimes. The whole journey, the whole, you know, the battles that we face every day, it's not easy. So we need to make sure that we can make it there. We need to be even more careful if we're just, you know, sitting around and waiting, if we're sitting around and waiting for Christ's return and not doing what we need to be doing in our daily lives that can give us a lot of problems. We need to be working towards specific goals that we have, and you know, this goal of becoming part of Elohim, of living into the Millennium or becoming part of the 144,000, whichever that may be. But we need to stay focused on that.

So the title of today's sermon is *Working for the Feast of Tabernacles*.

So hopefully you've all reached **Deuteronomy 16** right now, and we'll start off here, like I mentioned, 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 we're commanded here to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And today, of course, we're not harvesting grain or making wine but we do have jobs and we do have work that we do, and we are putting aside the money that we have earned based on what our hands have physically produced. So our tithe has been saved up and it's for use during these days.

Let's continue in **verse 14—And you shall; rejoice in your Feast, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your manservant, and your maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates**. Here we are commanded to rejoice, and this is stated several times in these scriptures that speak about the Feast and that's because it's a special time. To rejoice here is just simply meaning to be full of gladness. This shouldn't be very

difficult for us here at the Feast. I know that a lot of times it has been customary before the Feast, the evening before the Feast starts, or the evening that the Feast does start, rather, we will all get together and have a little bit of some drinks, some snacks, or whatever, and so that we can meet the people, you know, your friends from before and meet new people at the Feast sites. I know that these times specifically, that it can get really, really loud in the rooms there. You can hear from far away, normally, the noise that we're causing, but that's exciting, and as a whole that's exactly how it should be. We should be excited to be here at the Feast. This is essentially what's been said here, too. God is commanding us to have a good time.

Let's continue on into **verse 15—Seven days you shall keep a solemn Feast unto the LORD your God in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD your God shall bless you in all of your increase, and in all the works of your hands, therefore, you shall surely rejoice.**

This scripture is saying that we are to celebrate the Feast because God will bless us in the increase and the works of our hands, just as it says. How did God do that before with the Israelites who were in an agricultural based society? Well, it's actually a very good example of how we are to work with God. If you remember, in the New Testament there is a scripture here which we're going to go into right now where the word "laborers" is used and that word for "laborers," the Greek word is from where we get our word for "synergy." So let's take a look at that real quick.

If you'll turn with me over to **1 Corinthians 3:6**, and this is Paul speaking here and Paul says, **I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that plants anything, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase.** So here we have another great agricultural analogy. There are thousands of them in the Bible. This is speaking about the congregation. It was Paul that started it, and it was Apollo that continued to feed the congregation, however, the fruit from this congregation was given by God.

Continue on in **verse 8** here, **Now he that plants and he that waters are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God: you are God's husbandry, you are God's building.** This where we find that word "laborers" being used, and this word in the Greek is "synergos," and like I just mentioned, this is where we get our word "synergy" from. The definition of synergy is, "Now he that plants and he that waters are one, and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God. You are God's husbandry; you are God's building."

This is where we find the word "laborers" being used, and this word for "laborers" in the Greek is "synergos," and that's exactly where our word "synergy" comes from, and the simple definition for "synergy" is just "working together in cooperation." But synergy also results in an increased effectiveness when two or more parties work together. God's goal for us is that we become part of Elohim, and for all of us here that are celebrating the Feast that is our goal. But you see, we have to put in the work from our side. We have to "dress and keep" what God has given to us and

then God will bless us in the fruit. It doesn't come the other way around. God doesn't bless us in the fruit and then we do something. No, it's like we have to put in our side first and then we can be blessed in the fruit.

I've come to like more these comparisons with farming and growing crops here recently since I've started to have my own little garden. It's something that's very basic and probably until a hundred years or so, it was really, essentially, part of everybody's everyday life, growing food and providing for yourself. And being able to eat, it wasn't just going to the supermarket and grabbing a whatever off the shelf. But it's unfortunate to a certain extent that some of that has kind of been lost. Maybe there is less meaning in it.

Farming is a really good example of us relying on God and the balance that we should have in life. Farmers have all kinds of tricks and techniques that they use to get the best results, and the farmers I know will experiment with different ways to get bigger and better yields.

But that is something that we need to do in our lives as well. We need to work to get bigger and better yields. That can be, for example, in our jobs, that we need to look for ways that we can grow and improve. How can we be better employees? How can we contribute more? What are ways that we can make ourselves more successful and to make the lives of the people around us better and more successful? These are questions we should meditate on and analyze, and along the way to ask God for help and guidance.

But as I was mentioning before, we have to put in the work, and God has given us the seeds and it's up to us to plant them and to grow the food. But if we aren't doing anything in that process to cultivate them then it's not going to be fruitful.

So, you know, you can listen to sermons day and night, you can study the Bible ad nauseam, but that's not really going to do us any good if we aren't acting on what we're reading and what we're learning. That's one of the reasons, too, you know, if you don't know what your main challenges are in life then how can we go about working on them and improving them. The reality is that we have to look at those things we have to take everything that we learn and actually apply it to our lives and we have to put in the time. It's an investment, if you will.

Joshua said that he and his Father work, and we have to learn to do that too because in the future we're going to be creating projects that we can't even dream of right now. We need to work and God will bless us in our increase. Of course you're going to have challenges along the way, just like the farmer does, and in the end maybe it even doesn't rain and your crop is a failure. That is kind of where the balance starts to come in, the balance between self-reliance and relying on God.

As it states in the verses that we just read, we are co-workers with Joshua and we are benefiting from the synergy. God gives us this basic structure that we need for having success whether it be His laws or seeds for planting, and so we have to put those things into practice and not forget

that God is the all-powerful one that created these structures and all the living things around it. We cannot do anything or have anything successful without Him. When things go bad for us and we put forth all the effort and all the work into something and it doesn't succeed, then that is a good time to look for God. We have to rely on Him and get back up and maybe learn from our mistakes and look to Him for the rain, look to Him for those things that are out of our control.

Let's go back to Deuteronomy here. These scriptures in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, they talk a lot about God blessing us in our increase. We are going to dive deeper into that topic a little later on. But right now, let's go to Deuteronomy 16:16 and we will read a little bit more about what we are to do at this Feast of Tabernacles.

Deuteronomy 16:16—Three times in a year shall all your males appear before the LORD your God in the place which He shall choose; in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and in the Feast of Weeks, and in the Feast of Tabernacles. And they shall not appear before the LORD empty. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessings of the LORD your God which He has given you.

So here we see that we are commanded to come before God at the Feast in a place that He should choose. As you know, this is just speaking of any of the designated Feast sites that we have for the Church, and for those who can't travel to those Feast sites for health reasons or for whatever other reason, then that is their home and that's where God is. That's where they are listening to the messages.

We are also commanded here in these scriptures to give an offering. We're not to come before God empty-handed, as it says. It's about whatever you can give and that is based on the fruit that you feel that God has blessed you to be able to share in. So as we do normally as a custom, in each site we have a basket in the back of the room or, yeah, I think it's always in the back of the room. But yeah, where you can go there before or after services and you place your offering in there. It's pretty simple.

Let's head over to Leviticus 23:1. **And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the Feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My Feasts.** So these are appointed times which God has given to man. These are the times which we are to observe year after year. It starts off with the weekly Sabbath, goes through the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and you know the rest until we get to the Feast of Tabernacles here.

Dropping down to verse 34, **Leviticus 23:34—Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of the seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. And on the first day shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no servile work therein. Seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. On the eighth day shall be**

a holy convocation unto you, and you shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. It is a solemn assembly, and you shall do no servile work therein.

Verse 39—Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep a Feast unto the LORD seven days. On the first day shall be a Sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a Sabbath.

So we see that the Feast was celebrated after they had gathered in the fruit of the land. This time of the year is not necessarily a time when any particular harvest is being done, however it's towards the end of the summer months and it's a time when you have most of everything that you've been growing throughout the year. So you have all your different types of grains, you have your olives, you have your figs, grapes, wine, maybe some dates. So if you wanted to have a real feast back then this is the time of the year when you would have plenty of everything, so much so that you will have so much that you had produced that you would have to save some of it and store it away during the winter months so it would take you into the next springtime when you could begin to harvest again. So if you wanted to have a feast with the most variety, the most of everything, this would be the time to do it and when you'd be able to enjoy all the increase that God has blessed you with. This is the time.

Let's go to verse 40—And you shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. And you shall keep it a Feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

So we know here that the word for “boughs” is really speaking about fruit. We also know that back then the Israelites, they were commanded, they were instructed to build tabernacles or booths. So think about how it must have been for those who were building these booths and sitting in them during the Feast. They were told to meditate on what had happened to their ancestors and to remember how God had brought them through to this promised land, a land that was flowing with milk and honey.

That's a big change from what they were doing before when they were eating manna all day every day, day after day, forever, a lot of manna, a lot of manna going around there in the wilderness. So to go from that to having all these riches from the land that's a big change and it's kind of like a rags to riches story, if you will, but except it's not with money, it's with food. But they went from being slaves in the wilderness and to only having manna to having this incredible feast.

It says in **verse 41—It shall be a statute forever in your generations.** In other words, it's commanded that we observe the Feast year after year forever. It's good for us to think back about the journey that these Israelites had from Egypt and into the promised land because it shows

what's in store for us if we follow God. If we obey Him and follow Him then He will lead us to where we need to be. He knows what is best for us and He knows what we need to become truly happy and to be fulfilled.

So what does it take to be truly happy and fulfilled in life? That's an important question and it would be good for us to start to answer that now while we are in these temporary bodies, while we're in our journey, so to say, to become part of Elohim. We have a lot to learn about this topic before we become members of the God Family, and if you're going to be given eternal life at some point it would be poignant that we know what makes us fulfilled and happy in life, because God's not going to let that happen, He's not going to let us be, you know, sad and moping around and not living up to our full potential, if you will.

So I think it would be good at this point if we go in a little bit further, and since we're at the Feast here we're commanded to rejoice and look into that a little bit further.

Let me read **Deuteronomy 16:15** again one more time real quick. You don't have to turn there. It says, **Seven days you shall keep a Feast unto the LORD your God in the place which the LORD shall choose.** So there is a command that we keep the Feast, and the next part tells us why. So, why? **Because the LORD your God shall bless you in all your increase, in all the works of your hands, therefore, you shall surely rejoice.** So it's easy to gloss over this scripture and not fully understand what's being explained here, but this is about a process and we touched on it a little bit before with the scripture about Paul and Apollos, but now let's go a little bit deeper, and we're going to spend some time in Ecclesiastes.

So Ecclesiastes was written by king Solomon and this book is basically filled with his musings about life and about his journey. Inside of it he details a lot about his successes in life and also his failures and what he learned throughout all it all, and for such a short book (it's about eleven chapters), it really has a lot of information in it. But unfortunately though the way it's been translated it's fairly difficult to understand. It's written in really archaic type of old English, like a lot of the Bible is, but it seems like this book is a little bit, yeah, more difficult to just read through it in a nice smooth flowing manner, and so you kind of have to take this old English the way it's written and put it into modern English to be able to kind of grasp what it is.

One of the other problems, sometimes I feel, that with going through this book, is the term "vanity" and how that's used. As you know, today the word "vanity" comes from "vain," and the word generally refers to two different things—either that something is vain in the sense that it is lacking substance or it's fruitless, or in the egotistical meaning of the word where someone has excessive pride in one's own appearance or in their own accomplishments. The problem is that this word in Hebrew is used in a much more abstract meaning, and because it's used in an abstract way it can be used in various ways to have kind of different means. It's a little bit poetic in that sense. It's kind of nicely written, I would say.

But the word that's used here in the Hebrew is the word "hebel," and this word means "vapor or breath." That is it, simply "vapor or breath" - nothing more, nothing less. But you can start to think about what vapor or what breath is and it's something that's here now and it's gone quickly, and so it can be seen as insignificant or fleeting. It can mean "vain" in the sense of, you know, something being fruitless, but that isn't always the case in the scripture. So when we read these scriptures I think it can help if we try to think of those, you know, "vapor" or "breath," when the word "vanity" is used and it gives a little bit more of a complete meaning of what the scripture is actually saying.

So anyway, let's jump into **Ecclesiastes 1:3**, and he says, **What profit has a man of all his labor which he does under the sun? One generation passes away, and another generation comes: but the earth abides forever. The sun also rises, and the sun goes down and is swallowed up in the place where it arose.** So it starts out here talking about how things in life, how they come and go— "The sun rises and the sun sets." And it's basically asking, what is the point of all this? Everything is fleeting. It's here for a minute and it's gone the next. Then it goes on to ask, why should we undertake this hard work that's under the sun?

I like how this seems almost a little bit cynical in its tone. It's kind of like when someone gets their first job and they start to do a little bit of hard work and they're not accustomed to it. At first, you know, sometimes making money isn't enough motivation for you when you are first learning to work and you're kind of like, "What's the point of this? This is hard. I'd rather be at home playing video games," or whatever, just sitting around because life is easier like that.

But this is coming from king Solomon, and King Solomon was somebody that was incredibly wealthy, and from a physical standpoint he had just about everything and anything that anyone could possibly desire in this world. So even he starts off by asking, what is the purpose of it? So you can see it's coming from somebody that already knows how to work so, you know, maybe it's got a little bit more credit to it, you know? But there is a deeper answer to this question and we're going to find that out here.

So let's drop down to **verse 13**. He says, **And I gave my heart to seek and search out wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven. This sore travail has God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith.** So he tasks himself here with searching out wisdom in all things that are done on the earth. Then he says, "This sore travail has God given to the sons of man to be exercised," meaning that our quest to search out wisdom and understanding on this earth is an unpleasant or it's a difficult task that God has given for us to undertake.

If you think about it, God has given us this physical world that we live in and He's designed everything so meticulously. He has made systems that perfectly govern nature and all the universe. Man is always trying to understand more about the world around him, and that is part of God's plan, but we can only reverse engineer what God has created and we only have such a

small understanding of the universe around us. God, of course, is the source of wisdom and so we have to look to Him for guidance and understanding.

Let's continue in **verse 14**. He says, **I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit**. So here we find the first instance where the word "vanity" is being used, and as I was explaining just a minute ago, the Hebrew word just means "breath or vapor."

"Vexation of the spirit" is also kind of a strange translation. When I read that, you know, "vexation of the spirit," what does that mean? That doesn't really mean too much of anything to me. I have to kind of go in and translate it back into regular English. But if you look into the words, the meaning of them and everything, the word that's used for "vexation," it means "longing or striving." So it could be used for "grasping after something." The word for "spirit" is defined as "wind," sometimes also even as "breath" but more so "wind." So if you put this kind of puzzle together it should read something like this, should say, **I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is a breath and like grasping for the wind**.

So this is one of the reoccurring themes in this particular book. It's about Solomon who is constantly striving to understand God and life in general and he's asking deep questions. "What is the point of all this?" And it seems that throughout his life and throughout these musings of his, he tries something and then he gets tired, or he looks for an answer and is frustrated. That happens with us from time to time. When you put forth a lot of effort towards any goal, it can become wearisome, and especially long term goals that we have that we work towards it's easy for us to stop at some point in these, when we're trying to achieve these goals, and we stop and we think, what's the point of all this? It's a lot of hard work. We can easily become overwhelmed, and that's the moment where we need to pause and reassess the situation. It's the easiest point right there where you can throw in the towel and give up, but that's not the time when we should do that.

Solomon compares many things in this book to vapor, because that's just how life is. That is one of his main conclusions. We are temporary beings now and we're just here for a bit, just like a breath, we're here today and then, you know, gone tomorrow. Everything we physically create is like a breath. Things will fall apart when we are gone and nobody is going to remember them. That's just how it is. God is the only source of anything that can last for eternity, and I think it's clear that Solomon came to that exact understanding. In that sense it's kind of a humbling comparison to make that of everything that we humans do it's just like a breath - nothing more, nothing less. That is all we are really capable of doing right now.

Let's go ahead and skip to Ecclesiastes 2:4. He says, **I made great works; I built me houses; I planted me vineyards. I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in all of them of all kinds of fruits. I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that brings forth trees**. In other words here, he created these irrigation systems in order to water his sapling trees.

So, I had the opportunity recently to visit some old Moorish palaces in Spain and some of them have some really massive orchards and garden. These were essentially the private parks for the rulers during that time and they had a lot of old irrigation channels in them that were still being used, in fact, by the gardeners there. It was a really interesting thing to see this network of channels that they had created and how they were able to, you know, block off one section and then open up another section and have the water flow in such a way that it would water this area, and then they would, after that was watered for an area then they would go over and do another area. They could just keep doing that around the entire huge massive gardens that they had there.

That was not a small task back then. You think about it from today's point of view, we're used to city water. You go and you turn on the tap and you never think of where the water actually comes from and it just flows forever, you know. As long as we can pay for the bill then you know you have the water. But back then that wasn't the case. There was a lot more work that had to go into these types of things. They had to figure out first of all how to get water into a city. That in of itself was a huge undertaking. So if you think of the aqueducts and everything that the Romans build and these irrigation systems and everything, that was a lot of work and that was an amazing feat of engineering that they had to undertake.

I just wanted to throw that out there kind of so that when you read about these types of things that we don't, you know, compare it from our perspective from today, that we think about what were these things that they actually did back then. That was much more than what the work might even be today because they had simple things. They really had to engineer these things to be able to get them to work.

So let's go on down to **verse 7** there. He says, **I got servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me. I gathered me also silver and gold, and the special treasure of kings and of the provinces. I had me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem. Also, my wisdom remained with me.**

So he's just saying here he was able to accomplish all of these things without losing his wisdom. In other words, he was able to keep a level head about it, and if you look back through history there haven't been many kings or rulers that have been able to handle their wealth very well. Most have taken it to themselves and it's just a way to say, "Look what I did and how amazing I am! Look what I built! Look at 'this.' Look at 'that'!" Well, Solomon understood that he indeed put in the work, but God was the one who put the structure in place for him to even be able to do this kind of work, and that God was also the one that blessed him in his increase. Again, like I mentioned earlier, we are co-workers together with God.

So he goes on in verse 10—**And whatsoever my eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor: and this was my portion of all my labor.** Like I was saying, he was king and he had everything, and yet he still worked and undertook massive projects. He was rejoicing in his work. When you work on something difficult and then reap the benefits of it it's pretty rewarding. That's part of enjoying what our work produces; it's the reward in and of itself!

Again, from Deuteronomy 16:15 (don't turn there, I'll just read it real quick), **Because the LORD your God shall bless you in all your increase, and in all the works of your hands, therefore, you shall surely rejoice.**

So God has us save up our tithe for the Feast so that we can enjoy this to the fullest and so that we can rejoice to the fullest. But we are also to look back on our past accomplishments, just like Solomon was doing here, and thinking about everything that God has given us both physically and spiritually and seeing what together as co-workers we've been able to produce. This is very much like a race, what we're doing here, and every year that we're able to be at the Feast here, that's an accomplishment. That's one step further in the race, so to say, and that's something that should be celebrated. It's much easier for us, of course, to be like the rest of the world and to conform to those around us instead of living how God instructs us to. But look at our reward. What would you trade that for? Hopefully, your answer is nothing. We can't forget that that during the rest of this year, too. We need to keep reminding our self constantly. There is nothing that's worth trading this for. If we remember that, then hopefully we will be able to meet back at the Feast next year, and then the year after, and the year after, and on and on and on.

So I was looking up the etymology of this word "rejoice" because that's just what I do in my free time. But, so anyway, I made it to the etymology dictionary and had a look in there and found a definition from the 1300's. Back then this is what the definition was. It was "to own, possess, enjoy the possession of, and have fruition of." I think that definitely encapsulates this whole process of rejoicing that we're instructed to do here at the Feast, especially the point about "enjoying the possession of" and the "have the fruition of," because that's exactly what we're to be doing. We're to look at what we have. We have been given so much. So if we are unable to look back at what we've been given, at what we have, what's in our possession, then how can it be that we can rejoice?

This kind of goes along too, you know, with how it was for the Israelites. They had to build these booths and they were supposed to take fruit in there with them, and so they had something in their possession and to think about before when they were just eating manna all day, they didn't have anything else, but now they finally had fruit, you know, and to really think about that, to think about everything that they had been given.

So that's something that we need to do too, you know. We really need to meditate on everything that we have, all the truths that we've been given, and all the understanding that we have. Other

people in the world, they just don't have that. So how thankful are we that God has blessed us to share in this? There is so much in life to be thankful for, and we above all others, we have the most.

Let's continue down in **verse 11**—**Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do, and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.**

I find it interesting how just a few verses before Solomon was saying how he rejoiced in his work and how his reward was his portion that he received from the work. Then a few verses later he saying the opposite almost. He's saying that all that he had labored for and accomplished was again, like a breath, trying to reach out and grab the breath, to hold on to it. And both of his conclusions are true, though. We are temporary beings and because of that we can only create temporary things. So while he may have undertaken all these huge projects and had a lot of success and enjoyed it, but he still had that question kind of lingering in the background of "What's the point of all this?" Especially when he starts to consider what we're going to go into now, of what will happen to him once he's gone.

So let's go down to the next verse, **verse 12**, and he says, **And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly, for what can the man do that comes after the king? ...even that which has been already done.** So what happens to the next one in line for the throne? What happens to them? We've seen over the past thousands of years what happens. We've seen how rulers whenever they come along they want to leave their mark. They want to produce something greater than the one did before. They want to be remembered, and every one of them is trying to be different and unique.

So Solomon is thinking here again, what is the point? He had already accomplished a lot as a king. Once you have already built beautiful palaces and gardens, and maybe you grow and expand your kingdom, then what is left for the next king to do that comes along? What would be the point be them to repeat everything that the last king did and accomplished? He could already see that that would be a challenge for the next one in line.

Let's continue on in **verse 18**. It says, **Yes, I hated all my labor which I had taken under the sun: because I should have to leave it to the man that shall be after me, and who knows whether he should be a wise man or a fool? Yet shall he have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored, and wherein I have showed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity.** So he's come to the realization that he's going to have to leave everything that he has worked for behind when he dies. His son might be a complete moron; who knows? But it bothered him to think that someone who maybe doesn't deserve to have all of his possessions was going to inherit them, inherit everything that he had worked for. This, too, is vapor. And who knows at what point in his life he wrote this book, because Solomon made some big mistakes in his life, and so much so that God told him that He was going to break his kingdom apart. Although, you know, he told

him that Solomon wouldn't actually see it—that was for David's sake—but that that would happen to his son.

So it's possible that when he wrote this he was already aware of this at the time, and if so then you can see how he might be a little bit bitter or he might have some regret. Just imagine if you been in Solomon's place and you had done all this work, spent all this time, all this blood, sweat, and tears, so to say, and then been told that it's all going to come crumbling down. Not only that, but it's going to come down within a few years, you know, with your next generation. It's not even going to last that long. So if that was the case then, yeah, you can see how that would have given him something to think about.

Let's go to **verse 20**—**Therefore, I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labor which I had took under the sun. For there is a man whose labor is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that has not labored therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil.** So again, what I was just saying. He was sad to think about his portion going to someone else.

Verse 22—**For what has man of all his labor, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he has labored under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yes, his heart takes not rest at night. This is also vanity.** This last part can be better stated, you know, “For his days are afflicted,” meaning that they're painful mentally and physically, and his tasks are full of frustrations, and his mind doesn't rest at night. Thankfully though, this is vapor and it goes away.

Verse 24—**There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God. For who can eat, or who can hasten hereunto, more than I? For God gives to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, and knowledge, and joy, but to the sinner He gives travail, to gather and heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God. This also is vanity and vexation of spirit.**

So God wants to give us more insight, more knowledge, more wisdom, but He can't do that unless we are responsible with it. I don't know if you've ever heard the expression that someone is too smart for their own good, but that is how it can be with us and with God. We ask Him to help nurture us so that we can grow and the truth is that sometimes He can't work with us, and that's because of sin. Oftentimes we put up our own stumbling blocks and sometimes we even make barricades. That is why we need to look inward and see our true nature. Once we admit what we are and we can more accurately see it then God can help us to change. But we still have to put in the work. Sometimes we need to analyze why we do what we do or why we react like we do, and sometimes we just need to change the environment around us or not let ourselves be put into tricky situations. Sometimes it can just be very simple.

So, for example, I know I can get into a bad attitude if I don't eat, especially in a timely manner. It's brought to my attention some time ago there is even a term for this. It's called "hangry." It's a combination of angry and hungry together. It's a pretty funny word and, yeah, it does exist. I think it's quite a nice new addition to the English language. But, yeah, I have suffered from this for my entire life and I am a lot better now than what I was when I was younger, I think, but that's probably to do with, you know, my wife makes sure that I eat when I need to. But I also need to put in extra steps sometimes so that I don't put myself in a situation where I'm feeling strained. And like I said, too, my family will happily remind me that maybe I need to eat, because the truth is nobody wants to see me when I'm like that.

But there are times when I am traveling and when I get out of my normal routine and I'll start to feel the effects, and everything, and when that happens I know that I need to be more on guard. I'll usually just try and stay quiet and avoid conflict and try to get some food as soon as possible.

But, you know, we all have things or situations that can affect our spiritual performance, so to say, and we need to be aware of these situations so that when they rise up that we don't get caught off guard. We always need to be on guard and we need to help ourselves to build systems in place to where we can recognize them and be able to react in a proper manner. That would be us putting in the work. If God sees that, then He's going to want to help us. He sees us giving the effort and everything and then He can bless us with the fruit.

It's similar to that of not wanting to spoil your kid, in a way, because you can give them everything but, you know, sometimes everything isn't the best for them. If you give them more than they can handle then it could even be to their detriment. That's the same with us and then with God as well.

Let's go on to Chapter 3. So we'll go to **Ecclesiastes 3:9**. It says, **What profit has he that works in that wherein he labors? I have seen the travail, which God has given to the sons of men to then be exercised in it.** So what advantage does one have that has worked in that which they have labored? The word for labored has to do with working, but this word also has to do with weariness and exhaustion. So what do we get from all this work and everything that is tiresome? A lot of times, you know, we just feel tired and worn out. It can come from our jobs, of course, but it can also come from fighting particular sins in our life that keep showing up maybe again and again, and it's easier to just quit trying. That is what most people in the world will do. Maybe some people know that they're doing something wrong and they might try a little bit from doing it, but the easier way to go about it is just to not address it and just continue on with your life.

That's where we've been called to change. When we fall down we need to get back up and we need to try again. But sometimes we can get discouraged because we are doing the same thing over and over. It's easy to think, "You know, what difference does it make?" Sometimes we feel like that.

I know, you know, we are all waiting for Christ to return so we can either be a part of the 144,000 or so that we can live into the Millennium, and that waiting can be excruciating and it's been too much for many that have been around us in the past. Maybe it has to do with them not having their goals outlined in our heads as they should have, or maybe they just have forgotten them. And how many people before have said, you know, they had it in their mind that "I will run this race until 2012," and then after that when Christ didn't return, they just went back into the world, back into doing exactly what they were before. So where were their priorities? What kind of resolve did they have? I am sure that there are some of you here that had to struggle with exactly that, but our resolve and our goal should be to follow God in whichever direction He leads us and to always strive to overcome sin and to grow.

We do need to focus on our goal of becoming part of Elohim, but it's a goal to have for our entire lives until we finally get there, because until our change comes we aren't there yet. While we are waiting for Christ to return we have to keep moving. We need to focus on our spiritual lives but we also can't have physical idle hands. That is often when we can get into trouble. If you stay busy with things in life, you will eliminate a lot of the stupid drama you have. Being busy and struggling to better yourself, it has a way of showing, you know, what your priorities in life are.

Just look at what people complain about in life these days. What are the big issues to them? You turn on the news and it's easy to see all this outrage culture that we have. Everybody is outraged at some stupid little thing about some stupid little thing and, "Did you hear what this person said about 'this'?" and "Oh, it's just..." People just drama, drama, drama, you know, and this is coming from a lot of people that just don't have anything better to do, you know. They're just going to sit and type some stupid stuff on twitter and then unfortunately that's what the news picks up on these days and that becomes the news. But, yeah, when you start having that as your diet then that can start to become your life.

So, yeah, it's easy to prioritize these trivial things and to make something that's really meaningless into something big. So the best is that we just keep busy, you know, keep that stuff out of mind and focus on what you need to focus on and what you need to get accomplished in your life.

Let's continue on in verse 12. He says, **I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life.** The New King James says this a little bit better. It states, "I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice and to do good in their lives." But the word that's used here for "to do" is also, interestingly enough, the same word that is translated in Genesis as "to dress."

So let me read that scripture to you real fast. You don't have to turn back there. But for your notes you can put in there, if you want, it's **Genesis 2:15**. It says, **The Eternal God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and keep it.** So we've covered this before. It was in a series of posts from 2014 and 2015, I believe it was, and in there we learned that this

word means “to produce or cultivate.” We’re to take what God has given us and we’re to be productive with it, to make something of what we have been given.

So if we look at the scripture again in Ecclesiastes, he says, “I know there is nothing better than for us to rejoice and to produce good in our lives.” How do we produce good in our lives? It’s about producing fruit, and we do that by working together with God.

The next verse continues by saying, **verse 13, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of his labor—it is the gift of God.** So simple isn’t it? It’s a cyclical process that continues forever. We are here at the Feast and we are commanded to rejoice. Why are we to rejoice? Because we have so much. God has given us great wealth and we are to look at where we have come from and to focus on where we are going. What we are working towards right now is what will give us the greatest fulfillment and the greatest joy.

Verse 14—I know that, whatsoever God does, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God does it, that men should fear before Him. This last part is better stated, “That we should stand in awe of God.” We should do that during this Feast as well. If we can be in awe of God and everything that He’s done and is doing with His plan then we can be much more thankful to have any part in it whatsoever. That will add a lot to our Feast experience and that will help us to rejoice even more here at the Feast.

Let’s skip down to **verse 22—Wherefore, I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?** Here again, saying pretty much the same thing. We are to rejoice in our work. That is what gives satisfaction. The next part goes back to what I was saying before about keeping busy. It says, “for who will bring him to see what will be after him?” Who knows what will happen when we’re no longer alive? The future, to a large extent, is out of our control. Just like when Solomon was fretting over different outcomes from all of the work that he had produced, like his heirs would inherit everything even though they didn’t produce the work and they might squander it or do something really stupid with it. But in the end, he couldn’t worry about that. That was not a reason for him to not keep producing and to not being enjoying the fruits of his labor.

Worrying about the future is not going to change anything. Only God knows what will come next. We know Christ will return soon, but we don’t know exactly when. But don’t worry about it; it will happen in God’s time. We might want it to happen in our time, which that time is usually, you know, right now! But God has a perfect plan and He is working it out. We should just watch and stand in awe as it happens, and until that day comes we need to keep busy, keep working, and keep striving. That’s what we are celebrating here at the Feast.

Let’s turn over to **Ecclesiastes 5:18—Behold that which I have seen: it’s good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of his labor that he takes under the sun all the**

days of his life, which God gives him: for it is his portion. 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.

It really is a gift of God. God has given us everything and He has allowed for us to share in what He has created. It's a very giving God that we have, and during the Feast of Tabernacles, God wants us to really comprehend all that He has given us and all that He has shared with us. He wants us to remember Him. We are to meditate on these things just as He instructed the Israelites to make booths, to sit in them, and meditate. We need to be reminded of what He has done for us, and we have all of these Feast days that God has given us to help understand His plan for mankind. Each of these holy days has certain lessons that have to be hammered into our heads because we as humans are very forgetful, and that is why every year during each particular holy day we hear a sermon about that holy day year after year. That is also why Solomon speaks about this process of work and our reward for it, over and over. It needs to be hammered into our head.

Let's go to **verse 20—For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answered him in the joy of his heart...** Better stated, "because God keeps him occupied (busy) with the joy of his heart."

What is the joy of his heart? Is it work? Well, yes to a certain extent it is, but it's not just work, it's the whole process of working, of creating something and how we humans should view our relationship with work. A lot of people in the world today just don't want to work - they are lazy. They don't want to work because it's hard, because it takes effort, because of all these reasons that Solomon stated before: it's tiresome, it's wearisome, it makes you exhausted. It's easier just to sit around and do nothing.

That right there is Satan's idea of heaven, a place where you have nothing to do. That speaks to a lot of people that don't understand how work can be a reward in and of itself. Satan knows what our weaknesses are and how to manipulate us. That is why so many people think of this place called heaven and why they think it's so appealing. But if you think about, the idea of heaven would be really awful. Sure, maybe if you are working hard and you're needing a good break, then it could sound good. But how many days of a break could you endure? We are not made to function like that. That is the opposite of how God created us.

So Satan knows what God's plan for us is and he knows that it's far reaching and that we will have work for eternity. You think that he might maybe be jealous of that fact? That's why the image of people just floating around in clouds and doing nothing for eternity exists.

But if you aren't being productive in your life, if you aren't bringing forth any fruit, then you are robbing yourself from the joy that comes from this whole process. I am not just talking about physical work here either. But what about your spiritual life and your progress towards becoming part of Elohim? Are you making any progress? Do you see the progress in your life? Do you see

what you have come out of? Are you working on these top issues that you have in your life? Are your relationships with others improving? Consider all these things that I was just mentioning, and if you are able to see that progress and that fruit then you should rejoice, especially here at this Feast. Be glad that you are even here because every year there is somebody that just doesn't quite make it and they won't be around to be at next year's Feast. So if that is not you, then be glad.

You see, work is what will ultimately make us fulfilled. It's just putting in that extra effort that it takes to accomplish something or overcome something. Doesn't it feel good when we do that? Doesn't it feel good when you have worked so hard to overcome something and to accomplish something and then you finally do it. You may have failed a hundred times, or maybe even a thousand times before, but then when you finally do it that sense of accomplishment is quite satisfying.

Let's read that verse again. It says "For he shall not much remember the days of his life." So what is this part talking about? Well, God is keeping us busy with the joys of His heart, which as we stated, is the process of working, overcoming, and reaping the fruit of it all. The scripture is saying that if we are "busy with the joy of our heart" then we aren't going to remember the days of our life. In other words, time flies by when you are busy. How many times have you heard people speaking about how much time flies by and it seems like just yesterday somebody started a career and then suddenly, boom, 30-40 years have passed, their kids are grown, and now they are retired. That's what life is. Life goes by real quick.

But if we can think about this process that this scripture is explaining, then we can also understand what is in store for us and what we are doing here at the Feast of Tabernacles. First we have to prepare for Christ's coming. Then, those that live into the Millennium and those that are a part of the 144,000, they're going to have a lot of work that has to be done in that thousand year period. It's really hard to imagine just how much progress the world will make in that time period when God's Kingdom will finally be ruling over mankind. There won't be all the chaos and stupidity that exists in the world now.

A lot of times people like to think of how advanced we humans are now and how much we have done in the last hundred years, and there is some truth in that, but look at how much we have destroyed in the process. Just look at this physical world. Cutting down all the forests in the planet, and now, that's just a real stupid one right there, you know, we need them for breathing! But, you know, dumping plastics all over the place, turning the place into our own personal dump, and in general it's just not being responsible for our actions and it's causing a lot of harm. We haven't done a very good job of dressing and keeping the planet like we were commanded to do.

But in these past 100 years, just imagine if we would have done things as God commanded us to do. Think about the real progress we could have made. Think about how nice it would be to live in a place like that. Well, that is what is in store for us during the Millennium, and it's going to be

very exciting. Then after the Millennium and after the hundred years, there will be a lot more that God will reveal to us - more for us to do and more ways that we'll be able to fulfill our inner joy. We'll always be growing and learning. And, if you think about it, that's a really beautiful thing that we can be occupied and fulfilled for eternity, not getting bored or looking for happiness in all the wrong places as is so much the case with people these days.

But the world right now still belongs to Satan. So thank God that He has a plan with His Son to bring us through this and into eternity.

Let's go to **Ecclesiastes 6:7**—**All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled.**

Skip to **verse 9** here—**Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit.**

Most listening today are coming from western countries that have been blessed with riches unlike any other times in history before, yet these are the same places that have the most issues with mental illness, where suicide rates are among the highest, and where people are just in general, they're unhappy. Even though from the outside it looks like they have everything that they could possibly want and they have a very plush existence, so how is it that we can have so much and yet be so unsatisfied? Why is it that somebody else that grows up in a severely impoverished condition in a third world country can somehow have a better outlook on life?

Sometimes we just need to stop and look around us and take inventory on all the blessing that we do have and looking at a particular object that maybe we've obtained through our work with different eyes. Because if you do that then it's possible that we can get more joy out of the things around us even, and so that we can actually see what we do have.

I'll give you a little example. I recently put in a bunch of new doors in my house and they are a type of bi-fold door that fold together like an accordion when you push them flat against the wall. The original ones that I had were installed by my wife and I, and we bought all the materials ourselves, the frames, the nuts, the bolts, everything, and we assembled them ourselves. We cut everything to size and did all the math for it, figured it out and put them together. And, you know, at the time it was one of the last things to be installed in the house and our budget was running low so we weren't able to buy ones from a factory that were more heavy duty and more what we had wanted originally, I guess you could say. So that just wasn't a possibility.

But with time here these doors were deteriorating in the elements, especially the hardware we had selected because we had difficulties sourcing the individual parts and everything, and so to make a long story short we were able to find a local place that was able to produce factory made doors for us that were really high quality and we've installed them now, and wow, they're really impressive. They're so much different than that ones we had before. They move really smoothly on the tracks, I don't have to be constantly taking out a wrench to do repairs on them, not

squeaking, making horrible scratching, squeaking noises, you know, with the metal rubbing against the other parts of metal and everything like that. But it's a huge difference and I'm really enjoying them now and it's just been a pleasure to use them.

Now since we've lived with the inferior ones before that we built and we have these new ones I can see the difference. I see what the old ones were and I know how much better these are and I'm just very thankful for them, in that sense. Every time I look at them I'm reminded and I get a certain amount of joy from just using them or looking at them. Don't get me wrong, the old ones were fine and everything too, and we enjoyed them for while we had them, but it just came to the point where if I would have been replacing the hardware on them I would have had the same thing happening again, they'd just deteriorate, and then I'd just be throwing money down the drain, and I didn't want to go down that road.

But now as time goes by I know that I might start to forget about how the old doors were or maybe stop realizing how nice these new ones are and I could begin to lose my appreciation for them and start taking it for granted. If that happens I'm sure I won't be feeling, at least partially as fulfilled as I do now. I think that being able to count our blessings, especially in something physical and simple as that, is very important, that we can do that in our everyday lives. How often do we look around us and see what we have and take inventory on, even just physical things like this?

This example I think of me getting the new doors is also very similar to how it is a lot of times when we're given a new truth from God. So we receive the truth and we learn something that we had no idea about before, and at the beginning we're excited. And you know, with time does that just dissipate? How quickly are we looking or waiting for the next new truth to be revealed? And if we do that are we letting our desires wander, as the scripture states, instead of paying attention to the sight of our eyes?

In other words, if that happens, then we are not focusing on what we already have. Here at the Feast we need to focus on what we do have more than other times of the year. It's good to go back, for example, and reread something like the 57 Truths to see what we do have. I remember several years ago Dave Connelly gave a Feast sermon where he just went through all the 57 Truths to remind us and to remind ourselves of what we do have. That's something we need to do, too. We need to make that part of our meditation, so to say, in the booths.

It's similar to how the Israelites were. They were doing it in a physical manner but, you know, they were delivered from Egypt and they were given this land that was flowing with milk and honey. They were instructed to construct the booths, to sit in them, and to reflect on what they had gone through previously in the wilderness. And, you know, some of these, they were the second generation as well of Israelites and they weren't necessarily even the ones that had experienced these things first hand. Some of them were in the wilderness when they were younger, but that was a forty year time period, as we know, and God did not allow for the older

generation to enter the promised land. So if you think about it, they were even more removed from these events; they didn't have direct memory. They needed to be reminded of their history and where they came from so that they wouldn't take it for granted so easily.

Think about those that have lived through the Apostasy. It's a similar situation for them because not all of us here have lived through the Apostasy so we don't have that firsthand experience as they do. But we can hear stories from them and we can be reminded of what did occur. That's important for us to realize, what has occurred, so that we don't take our history for granted.

Let me reread **verse 9** real quick: **Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire.**

So yeah, back to this example that I was giving about my new doors. I could have just installed them and went on to the next thing and pretty much just forgot about what had happened with the old ones and not think about the quality of the new ones and maybe thinking about the next project that I wanted to do or the next thing I wanted to spend my money on. But if we do that too much and we don't stop and look at what we have, then it's really easy to take things for granted, and not being thankful and not getting the fulfillment that we're search for.

That is how our society works in many ways. We live in a capitalist society, and you could even say it über-capitalistic. We are taught from a very young age that buying something will somehow make us feel fulfilled and solve our problems and we're manipulated so often and we don't even realize it. Every time we buy something we're also getting a hit of dopamine so it makes things exciting; it's a drug to a certain extent. But how often do we go out and buy something and then we pack it away in the closet and we don't even maybe use it or take it out and then we're out buying something else because we desire something else? Always looking for the next thing and never actually feeling quite fulfilled. That type of lifestyle can be addicting, and as the verses say, it can be a fleeting moment. It's like vapor.

I know that is a very physical thing and I bring it up just because it's easy to get caught up in the world and this world's values, or the lack of them. But, after all, Satan is the prince of the power of the air and he comes at us through every avenue. He isn't stupid and he knows very well what will make man happy and content. He just uses that knowledge for the exact opposite means and we're exploited on a daily basis by that being.

I think about what we are talking about here today as well, about working and producing, about creating, and we have seen that we are suppose to be doing just that and that will make us the happiest when we are doing that. But Satan's trying to rob us from doing fulfilling work. We live in this society, too, where we buy everything already made for us and it makes our life convenient and easy. But that can come at a cost. If we never make anything ourselves then it becomes more difficult for us to be able to get that physical joy that we have from producing something.

You can take something as simple as food. I know everybody can have times in their lives where you just get really busy and the last thing you want to do when you come home from work is to

make a meal. But if you do have time it can be a good investment. If it's just something you do once in a while maybe it even turns into a hobby or something, but if you're able to maybe try some of these different things and get out of your comfort zone, so to speak, then you can be rewarded in it. Sometimes you're able to get just simple joy out of making something as opposed to popping open a premade jar of pasta sauce.

Well, let's look into this topic of creating a little bit more since it goes along with the topic of work as well. Let's go to Genesis, and we're going to go back to **Genesis 1:28**. It says, **And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.**

So in this verse we see that God said to subdue the earth and to have dominion over the various creatures. These two words are pretty interesting because they go along with the other verses where they talk about dressing and keeping the earth. All four of these words are very important because they are some of the basis of how we are to interact with the world around us. They also help to inform us about where we are today and, as we will soon read about in the New Testament, what God has in store for us in the future.

Let's first look at the word here that is used for "subdue." We know already from the words used for "dress and keep" that God intended for us to "cultivate the earth and to maintain it." The word used for "subdue" has some of the same connotations. It means "to bring in line with nature, as it should be, as God intended it to be." Not to destroy it but rather to bring it under cultivation. This is important because it's showing again what God's intention for man is. It's showing how we are co-workers with everything and our creative nature is needed to make God's design whole.

It's kind of like some Legos. Some guy invented Legos and they are just some simple building blocks, but look at what people have been able to build with them over time. If you search online you can find all types of really crazy huge projects that people have created with Legos. A lot of them are the size of a house, or whatever. But there is one I saw in particular that was a full-sized drivable car and it took, I think it says, about 13,000 man hours to complete. But imagine this guy that invented the Legos from the beginning. I don't think he had any idea that people would go on to create huge things with this little kid's toy? But I imagine if he were to look, or she or whoever it may be, to look at what has been created they would be very pleased and they would be impressed to see how far their little children's building blocks have been able to grow. The Lego blocks have a potential for something that is much bigger and greater than perhaps what he intentionally thought out to do.

Maybe that's not the best example, but hopefully you can kind of get what I am saying. But God is pleased when He sees what we create. He gave us these building blocks for life, and we can't create anything from nothing, although man has tried, but the best we can do is to manipulate,

to splice things, to hack things that God has already created and that is not bad. That is the plan for us right now. In the scheme of things, we still are not even a baby in Elohim yet. We still haven't even been born, and so there is a big difference between how we are now and how we will be as part of Elohim. That should be humbling for us to understand.

If you liken God to a musician, then we would be, right now we're only as DJ's where we can only take little pieces of music clips and put them together to make something of our own.

So we have limitations and we are a work in progress, and we are still very far from living up to our true potential. Obviously we have the potential to become part of the God Family, of Elohim, and that is what everything is working toward in God's plan. That is why He is so excited, and that's why the angelic realm is so excited, because they also play a vital role in the entire plan. It's exciting to see the progress made and God is pleased when He sees the fruit that we produce in our lives. He wants us to bring this earth under cultivation, to add to the design that He started, and that is what is beautiful in His eyes.

Now let's look at this other word that is used in **verse 28** (and I'll just read the verse really quick). It said, **and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.** Here the word "dominion" is showing that we have authority over every living thing on the earth, but not in the sense of we can do whatever we want just because we are higher in the food chain, so to say. No, not at all. Because God gave us responsibility with dressing and keeping we are to take these amazing creations that God has given to us and to improve the world around us with them.

So when we put those all together we can see that we have been given a great responsibility. You've probably heard the phrase before, "With great power comes great responsibility," and so far we have been given some responsibility. But God wants to give us much more. We just aren't ready for it yet. These first 6,000 years has been about us not living up to our true physical potential as humans, and that is because we can't rule ourselves.

But these next thousand years, they're going to show us what we as physical beings are capable of doing when we follow God. It's going to be a huge difference. It's really hard to imagine what a difference it will be just not having Satan around creating chaos as he always does. He is constantly trying to thwart mankind and he doesn't want us working together in any sort of cooperation.

It's funny sometimes how dysfunctional this world can be, especially when you look at governments and how they interact with each other and how they just don't communicate and things are always going awry. But a lot of times when you see these things or maybe it's with the economy or whatever, you get a lot of people that start having these crazy conspiracy theories. They don't see how that all of these things could be, yeah, so working together for such an awful agenda, so to say, without having one person in the background, some Dr. Evil type character

that's pulling the strings. But the truth is there is a being behind it all of this and that's what he does, he has control. He is the designer of chaos and that's the exact opposite of God.

Can you imagine a world where we don't have to deal with that though? Our human nature is bad, there is no doubt about that, but not to have that being around us that knows us inside and out, that knows how to push our buttons and really manipulate us? Yeah, he really knows how to bring out the worst of our character. And then, imagine not having this negative influence but instead having the Kingdom of God ruling over mankind and actively designing order. So we're going to go from having a negative influencer to a positive one, and it's going to be a night and day difference.

Let's continue over in Psalms 8. We're going to go to **Psalms 8:3—When I consider the heavens, the works of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man, that You are mindful of him? and the son of man, that You do visit him?** David could see with his own eyes what God had created and he was in awe, as we should be. It's humbling to look out around us and see everything that's been created and to realize how small we are and how we are so insignificant. That's what David was seeing here. He was saying, "How is it that we're just such this little, small speck and that You put so much emphasis on us?" That should be really humbling for us and that should be something that we don't forget and something that makes us more thankful to God and for His plan for mankind.

Let's go to **verse 5—For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; and have put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passes through the paths of the sea.** Here David is referring to the scripture in Genesis that we just read. This is the dominion that he knew about. He only knew so much about the physical earth and only so far into God's plan. We have dominion over the earth and over the works of God's hands. This is already a huge gift. If we could only live up to our potential in this aspect alone then what a difference that would make. We're about to do that in the Millennium. However, it doesn't stop there. The New Testament reveals much more about what God's plan for us is.

Let's turn to Hebrews 2. We're going to go to **Hebrews 2:5.** It says, **For unto the angels has He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.** So speaking of the world to come, the angels will not have the dominion. We have been made a little bit lower than the angels, but that will soon change.

Verse 6—But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man that You are mindful of him? and the son of man, that You do visit him? You made him a little lower than the angels, and You crowned him with glory and honor, You did set him over the works of your hands. So this is the quote that we just read in Psalms.

Verse 8—You have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that He put all things in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. Here is it revealing that in the world to come all things, the entire universe, will be put under man's feet. This is not speaking of all of mankind that is living in the Millennium, but instead of those that have already become a member of Elohim

It goes on to say, **But now we see not yet all things put under him.** So it hasn't happened yet, but there will come a time when all things will be under our feet. David could only see a little bit into the earth's atmosphere, to see the moon and the stars, but today with telescopes and by sending vehicles into space we can physically see much, much more than what David saw. We see how much bigger the universe really is, and still we only see a small fraction of it. You think David had ever heard of a light year before, for example? He would surely be even more impressed to know what we know today about our physical universe. To think that there are stars and galaxies that are millions and billions of light years away? This is what awaits us and it's difficult to comprehend, but that is what the scripture says.

Verse 9—But we see Joshua, who was made a little lower, or for a little while lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom all things, and by whom all things, in bringing many sons into glory to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. So we already know that Christ has made the way for us to become a part of Elohim.

Go with me, if you will, over to **Romans 8:14**, and it says, **For as many are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.**

Let's skip to **verse 16—The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together.** So we already know that we are to be joint-heirs with Christ, and in **verse 29** it says that Christ is also "the firstborn among many brethren." So it's pretty amazing that we will be able to attain anything like that.

Let's go to **verse 22—For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.** That is how it is now. The creation has suffered. There has been a lot of suffering in this world and there has been a lot of destruction. Long before humans were on the earth, there was suffering and pain. We don't know why the other planets are empty and why there is no life beyond the earth, but we do know that God's creations are perfect and full of life. And what we do know, too, is that our earth was in tohu and bohu, empty and void. That's not how it was originally created. So think of all that must have happened before we came around. It must have been a really long and painful time but a necessary one. God gave up peace in order to make His most important creation, and that's hard to really grasp. It's kind of like vapor. But once the

creation can be fully born then it will be worth it. All of the suffering and the pain have not been for nothing.

I want to read a small paragraph here from Mr. Armstrong's book, *The Incredible Human Potential*, because I think he sums up very well what God's plan is for us after the Millennium. He says, "What are we going to do then? These scriptures indicate we shall impart life to billions and billions of dead planets, as life has been imparted to the Earth. We shall create, as God directs and instructs. We shall rule through all eternity! Revelation 21 and 22 show that there will be no pain, no suffering, no evil, because we shall have learned to choose God's way of good."

So listen closely to this next part: "It will be an eternal life of accomplishment, constantly looking forward in super-joyous anticipation to new creative projects, and still looking back also on accomplishments with happiness and joy over what we shall have already accomplished. We shall never grow tired and weary. Always alive—full of joyous energy, vitality, exuberant life and strength and power! What a potential!"

So this earth, if you will, is kind of like our Fisher Price Kitchen. So we play with it and we learn and then in the future, when we have been prepared and we're ready, then God can give us a grown up kitchens. But just because we have this knowledge from the New Testament about God's plan and we have the ability to have God's spirit living in us, that still does not negate the fact that we are physical and that we learn in this physical world. God made us physical for a reason, and we first have to master this physical stuff before we can get to the spiritual. So far, we have only had just a small taste of it.

In closing here, let's turn back over to Ecclesiastes, and we're going to go to **Ecclesiastes 9:7—Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God now accepts your works.** So this is what we should do at the Feast. This is our time to rejoice in what we have worked for this past year. A time for us to come together and to be with those of like minds, to share our experiences and be thankful that we have indeed completed another year in this journey. We are all a year closer to becoming a part of Elohim.

Let's go to **verse 10—Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you are going.** Take advantage of your time now. We have a head start over the rest of the world that will live into the Millennium, and most of the world have little or no clue about our true Creator—but you do—and look at everything else you have.

So rejoice in what you have physically worked for in this past year and rejoice in all of the spiritual battles you have had to overcome to make it here. Be glad that you have made it here where God has placed His name and where you can have a little bit of reprieve from the world and from your job.

But let's not forget that we have lifelong goals of becoming part of the God Family. That should be our vision and our ultimate goal. Let's think of ways that we can be productive in this next year and continue in that overall goal. Let's set up the structure that we need so that we can keep overcoming.

God's purpose for us is that we become creators and can share in everything that we produce together. It's through this work that we can attain everlasting joy. We are to do, to work, to produce. Right now God has only given for us to dress and keep His creation, but in the future we will most definitely have more responsibility and the possibility to do so much with God, His Son and the rest of the God Family.