

Over the past couple of weeks you have had access to the Feast of Tabernacles website that gives information on all the international sites for this year's Feast, or this year's Feast sites, and now would be a good time for us to use this occasion to learn some important lessons concerning our preparation for this year's Feast of Tabernacles. We're going to compare the kind of focus we need for this year's preparation with the kind of focus that we need to have concerning God's soon coming Kingdom. This sermon is entitled: *Focus on God's Kingdom*.

We're going to be talking about preparation for the Feast of Tabernacles this year because there's a very strong tie in, a strong bridge that connects the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles with what is coming to pass very soon now; the Millennium that's coming to this earth, God's Government, God's Kingdom that's going to rule on the earth for 1,000 years. And so I thought I'd use this occasion since we're organizing things a little bit differently this year than what we have in the last couple of years.

There is a *special focus* that we need to have on this year's Feast of Tabernacles in our preparations for it. Just as we need to maintain a special focus on God's Kingdom that's soon to come to this earth we are, of course, speaking of the 1,000 year period when Jesus Christ *and* the 144,000 *in* the Kingdom of God will reign over mankind in God's government on this earth.

There is a phrase I love to quote at almost every Feast that Mr. Armstrong had that went something to the effect that, talking about God's Kingdom that's going to be here, that there's been this concept I think in times past in Worldwide that people have used, we used terms rather loosely at times and some began to misunderstand some things about the Kingdom of God coming to this earth. The Kingdom of God is not the Millennial period. The Kingdom of God is the Family of God, it is the Government of God that's *coming* to the earth and will reign over mankind for 1,100 years. Those who are in the Kingdom of God obviously are a part of that Government. The rest of the earth will not be *in the Kingdom of God* during the Millennium. They will, as Mr. Armstrong said, *merely be ruled over by it*. And so again, we want to use terms properly and understand what they mean. Jesus Christ and the 144,000 ruling with Him are going to rule on the earth for 1,100 years over mankind; and those ruling are *in* the Kingdom of God – spirit beings in the God Family. And that's what it means to be in the Family of God, the Kingdom of God.

So, again, a very strong bridge again between talking about the Feast of Tabernacles because we're talking about the Millennial period and when that government comes to this earth and when it reigns on the earth and we look forward to that. That's what the Feast of Tabernacles pictures in large part – that 1,000 years and then of course the Last Great Day at the end which is the 8th Day that pictures another 100 years behind that then when there's a great resurrection. That period of time reflects, pictures a specific time of salvation for mankind that lasts for 1,100 years. And there's much to learn as the Church through time has focused upon that period of time, desired it coming to the earth, the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ. We, year by year, focus on the Feast of Tabernacles. And how we focus on the Feast of Tabernacles is really awesomely, mightily important to our spiritual well being because there's a bridge, a tie in if you will, in the two; it's a spirit, it's an attitude - and the excitement we have for the Feast of Tabernacles often reflects the kind of excitement we truly have for God's Kingdom coming to this earth, the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

I'll get into some of this as we go along; but let's turn over to **Isaiah 2** first. We're going to begin by considering some basics relating to preparation for this year's Feast and then we'll begin to focus on the kinds of lessons we can learn from this process that relate to the kind of focus we should have for God's Kingdom. There are quite a few of you who have never experienced a Feast of Tabernacles. *Most of you* have only had a *partial* Feast of Tabernacles experience. You have not experienced a full 8 days with brethren at a sponsored Feast site location, although you did experience a full 8 days of sermons in that observance. And there is a big difference there. It's one thing that we're able to be fed and blessed no matter where we are on this earth, to be able to receive the spiritual meat, the spiritual food that God gives during the full 8 days. But there is a great blessing, an awesome blessing above and beyond that strengthens the Feast of Tabernacles experience when you're able to have it *together* at what we're calling a 'sponsored' Feast site. Sponsored meaning where we establish various sites where people can come together each year.

There have been times past where *this* group has only had one site year by year by year and people have had to travel long distances to be able to be a part of it. Some have travelled over from Australia; some have travelled over from Europe and so forth. Now, I'm just speaking of the United States, because they had to have a site in Europe – they began to meet together. They had to have a site in New Zealand and Australia where people could come together for a period of time. That's gone on year by year; but in the United States for many years, because this is where it all began, we only had one site; and then we began to add to that as we began to have larger numbers of people come along and having the economy as it was there was some difficulties with people being able to travel a long distance. So again, we are a unique Body in that only *some* of you, speaking of those who've been around for a long time, have had the full 8 day experience; and those are the ones who obviously have been with us for quite a few years.

I'm going to ask the question: How much do you hunger for God's Kingdom to come to this earth? How much do you *desire*? How much do you *burn inside*? It's only less than two years away; and that's a matter of faith, that's another issue, that's another story. And I marvel when I think about it – that we may or may not have another Feast of Tabernacles and God can do whatever God desires to do in bringing about an end of an age and causing things to happen in a timely fashion, in His timely fashion.

So, *my desire* would be that we have two Feast of Tabernacles. But we may only have one, we may not have one... I don't know. That hasn't been given to me. You don't know; it hasn't been given to you either. We take one day at a time in these things and wait to see what unfolds before us and ready to turn to the right hand or to the left at any moment in time when God has us do so.

So again, how much do you hunger for God's Kingdom to come to this earth? ...For the Millennial reign of God's Government over all mankind? I hope that as we're going along here and you're seeing things in government, that you're seeing things happen on this earth, that you're seeing more and more, becoming more aware of the kind of hypocrisy that's in this world, to see the kind of suffering that's in this world... that you have a greater burning desire inside of you as we go forward. This is a sick world we live in, truly a sick world. And the things governments are doing – they're sick. It's sad to see things coming together like they are. It's sad to see things in the Middle East happening the way they are. It's just starting to heat up. Attitudes are changing. Turkey, the attitude of Turkey changing toward what in that respect, in that part of the world, had been considered one of their only friends, in one respect. And now they're not acting like that whatsoever – they're totally changing; and some of that's prophesied to take place.

And you think about some of those things that are heating up in that part of the world and what's heating up in Europe. Germany. Europe is being forced into a situation. You are watching some awesome historic events in history take place. Going to talk more about that toward the end of the month here. Awesome things that are taking place in Europe. And those who understand, those who see, grasp and comprehend the awesomeness of what is taking place as you see their hand being forced to do something that they otherwise wouldn't do, at least not for a long period of time; but they're being pushed to do it quicker. Awesome what's taking place. I'm looking forward to giving that sermon.

So again, questions like this about how much we desire God's Kingdom to come to this earth, the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ is very much what the Feast of Tabernacles is all about.

Isaiah 2:2 - And it shall come to pass in the last days, that's us! That's the period of time *we live in!* 6,000 years; nearly 6,000 years have gone by. Incredible! But we live at the end of that 6,000 years. We get to see, we get to experience, as a whole, some of the greatest transitions of all human history, in time. It is awesome! We've gone through a recent series talking about Jesus Christ and what happened toward the end of His ministry – the last couple of weeks, incredible events, much written in this Bible, in the New Testament in the very beginning there about that period of time – much that He taught during that period of time. Awesome events that took place and incredible change in historic events concerning God's plan. We live at a time when greater events, far greater, far more powerful are going to take place on a worldwide basis; not just because of things to do with the Church and because of this phase of God's plan, but with the entire earth. It's so incredible! I just don't want to get off track and start talking about some of those things – will save some of that for another time.

It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Eternal's house, *the Kingdom of God*, the *Government of God* – that's the mountain. Mount *Zion*, in other places it's referred to as. ...that the Mountain of the Eternal's House shall be established in the top of the mountains**, that means in the top of *all* nations; over all peoples and all governments on this earth, **and shall be exalted above the hills**; the smaller nations; **and all nations shall flow unto it**. That's God's plan. Doesn't happen overnight. Some things happen overnight, but it's going to be a slow steady process. Not everybody's going to be excited. The Muslim world isn't going to be excited! ...when they find out the truth about Abraham and what took place at something they call the Hajj; that they have been lied to, that things have been distorted for centuries just as much as Christianity when they come to find out things that they do that have been given to them through the Catholic church; and that they've been lied to all *their* life. When they come to find out that it was Isaac that was spared death and not Ishmael. Because they teach it was Ishmael. And the Hajj, that great swarm of people going around and around in circles when they go to Mecca at least once in a lifetime to pay honour to Abraham, is about that event and what took place when Abraham did what he did and was told to offer up his only son. They believe it was Ishmael. What a horrible thing when they have to come to comprehend that no, it *was* Isaac. And what they see in that is Judaism. They see Judaism. When that's mentioned, all they're going to see is red. Judaism. That's what that means to them; and that's not a pleasant thing, that's a hard thing. That's not an easy thing to humble yourself to that degree, and yet they're going to have to humble themselves. That's why God says if Egypt doesn't come up (using Egypt as an example); if they don't come up to keep the Feast then there will be no rain; they're not going to have any crops. They're going to suffer for disobedience. And then if they still don't come up, because of the pride and because of the resistance, then He brings on plagues and people die. It's the way it is. You either accept the Government of God, the Kingdom of God, the *truth* of God, the truth of things that have happened throughout time in history and come to acknowledge your lies, the lies that have existed through time –**

or not. And if not, then you just die and hopefully you can be worked with at the last 100 years in a different world, once it's all been established and been lived for several hundred years.

So, **it shall be exalted above the hills; and all the nations shall flow unto it. And many shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the Mountain of the Eternal**, the desire of mankind slowly begins to change. They want to become a part of that same Kingdom! They understand the 144,000; they look at and they come to learn and understand there are people there representing 6,000 years of history; 6,000 years of human history. And they want to be in the same Family. They come to understand, "I want to be in that Family! Let's go up to the Kingdom of God." And so it begins by going up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles; but it goes far beyond that. It's not just about keeping the Feast; it's about the Kingdom of God, the Government of God. *"I want to be in the Family of God. Let's go up to the House of God!"*

And many shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the Mountain of the Eternal; it's because of their desire to seek to become a part of the Kingdom of God; **to the House of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways**, you have to learn those ways, the way's of God, the truth of God in order to become a part of God's Family. They have to go through the same thing that every one of us who has ever been baptized and received the impregnation of God's spirit have had to go through; a process of repentance and change and learning of God's way and becoming at one with that; making choices and decisions as to whether or not we *want* to be at one with that; whether we *hunger* for that and desire that...**and we will walk in His paths:** not ours, not somebody else's, not some other church, not some other religion. I'm looking forward to that with such anticipation. I look forward so much to the fact that there isn't going to be the confusion of religion anymore on this earth; not just of some of the great false religions of the earth, but of the things that are the blindness in Judaism where they can come to understand that the lamb at Passover (that they keep at the *wrong time*) was an individual, was a being who was given life and died for all of mankind, so we could be forgiven of sin. They stop at the physical with what they've learned and they won't go on because they reject that the Messiah had to come and die first. They have other ideas about a Messiah; but they miss the first phase, the very first day that God gave in observance in Leviticus 23.

...**and we will walk in His paths:** that's a choice. It's a choice. It's been a choice for *some* in 6,000 years, not many. It's only been a choice for a *few* during the first 4,000 years – not very many. Incredible! God wasn't trying to save all mankind during the first 4,000 years; not by any stretch of the imagination! And He hasn't been trying to save all of mankind in the last 2,000 years! *Only His Kingdom and His Government that's to reign in the next 1,100 years! They're the ONLY ones He's called and moulded and fashioned.* God does the building. And He let the rest of mankind go on to set an example, to be an example of what it's like without God. All these religions, all this confusion, all the politics, all the economies, all the kind of governments that mankind has tried and failed miserably in. *Man can't govern himself!* So we have to learn the hard way as so often takes place in life.

...**for out of Zion shall go forth the law**, that's beautiful! ...out of Mount Zion, the *Mountain* of the Eternal, the *Kingdom* of God. The truth is going to go out in a very powerful way all over the earth. Can you imagine going to the Feast of Tabernacles and having members of the *God Family* who will be speaking to you? ...at different sites? ...in different places? 144,000 spread out all over the earth – going around and speaking at different Feast of Tabernacles sites. Incredible!

...**and the word of the Eternal from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people:** we're almost there – the rebuking of many people. I think of what's going to happen just on the last day alone – what God does. Staggering! 7 great Plagues in one day! Hundreds of millions of **Focus on God's Kingdom**

people who die. God doing it directly. This is a judgement that comes directly from God; not what man does to man, but what *God* does to mankind – righteously and justly so; primarily throughout Europe and all of Asia. And He says, ‘I’m going to destroy those who are destroying the earth.’ Doesn’t take very long with nuclear weapons. Doesn’t take 3½ years. Doesn’t take very long with nuclear weapons to destroy 1/3 of all mankind. That’s what it says about Russia and China – that they’re going to destroy 1/3 of the earth; 1/3 of mankind. We can’t comprehend things like that, but they’re going to happen. God says so.

And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, learn how to work the right way for the benefit of everyone else; and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, God won’t allow it. If anyone tries to do anything of any sort, God’s not going to allow it. They’ll be taken care of swiftly, powerfully. ...**neither shall they learn war any more.** They’re going to learn peace; they’re going to learn how to have peace; and the only way to have peace is under one government, one Church, one truth, one way of life. I abhor the confusion that’s in the world; I hope you do too. That’s why you can look forward to the Feast of Tabernacles, that excitement of being *with others of the same mind*; if you’re able to. We’ll talk about that as well. As much as lie within you to be with others in fellowship for 8 days, with others who are of the same mind *because that pictures 1,100 years of people who are apart, away from the world, away from their jobs...*and they come together where you can rub shoulders together with people *who think the same, who believe the same, who believe in the same government from the top down, from God Almighty through Jesus Christ... and so forth.* Awesome! Powerful! And we look forward to that.

I so look forward to Satan being put away! I so look forward to that great deceiver, that great liar, that great murderer to be put away. I’m jumping up and down about that one inside, I truly am. He deserves incredible wrath. And it’s coming toward him. He doesn’t even have any idea what’s fully coming toward him yet. He’s going to learn about the power of God and the might of God. He hasn’t experienced that yet. He’s only experienced it *partially*. God’s taken away certain powers at different time from him. God’s in full control. He allows what He allows and *nothing else* happens, not even with that being, save God allow it for a period of time. I’m looking forward to the end of that being and his influence upon mankind. I truly am! I’m looking forward to the end of millions of demonic beings who harass and hurt and torture human beings, and cause people to war and to kill each other; that stir up hatred and strife and deception and lies and confusion. That’s why we have over 500 splinter groups out here out from one Body...because of that power that exists that’s greater than us as human beings. God desires that there *be only one* and it’s about to be here on this earth – one way, one government, one truth. There aren’t two truths; and there aren’t 500 truths...there’s one. And people have to make choices in life...and they will when the Millennium comes.

What an awesome time to have the Feast of Tabernacles; when we can share time together with one another. We value, we are able to receive the value of that in an awesome way. *And most of you, again, in the Church of God have NEVER EXPERIENCED that!* You’ve only had a *partial* experience of the Feast of Tabernacles. There’s a lot more. There’s a lot more - there truly us.

...**nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.** People are taught war today. War is made to look glamorous. Fighting in Afghanistan is made to look glamorous; to fight for your country. Saw some bumper stickers on the back of a car yesterday. Felt so sorry for them. ‘The Wife of an Army Man’ (or something like that). Another one is, My Daddy is Fighting in Afghanistan to Give Me Freedom Here’ (something like that). I thought, “What a sad thing.”

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It's not a good thing! It's not a good thing that he should go over there and maybe not come back. It's not a good thing he go off and fight for *opium* and *poppy seeds*...and all that garbage over there; because that's what it's about. It's about *warlords*, and *about people*... I get so upset when I think about some of those things. It's about *opium* that's able to go into Europe in the truckloads now!! And they full well know what these warlords are doing and where their money comes from. And they play games with them rather than just going in and just destroying it. They could go in and destroy all those fields and the power of the warlords would be over. But, oh no, 'we've got to tip toe through the tulips.' Just like the one who sang the song. It's sad – it's pathetic! And yet war is made to look glamorous. Toys children have, cartoons that children have, war and fighting; and we wonder why we end up with what we do in life then. There's nothing glamorous about war! There's nothing glamorous about any war we've ever had! What's glamorous about war? "We gave freedom to other places in the world..." It's the world we live in, isn't it? Thank God it's about over.

But if we're not careful, our focus on God's Kingdom and our focus on *His* Feast of Tabernacles is not what it should be. Sometimes, if we're not careful, we can be more focused on our physical pursuits and physical well-being than we are on our spiritual pursuits and spiritual well-being. And so *this* reflects a lot about ourselves and what we're like.

We came to a time in the Worldwide Church of God where people even made the Feast of Tabernacles a very physical pursuit. It was a vacation. It wasn't about fellowship; it wasn't about spending time with each other; it wasn't with what we could learn as much. People were more excited about getting away and having the extra money that they could use because God commanded them to save a different tithe for that, for their observance of the Feast of Tabernacles. And even that began to leave and we experienced that toward the end of Worldwide and throughout Laodicea.

So what is *our* focus? What is *your* focus? Is it *first* upon God and what He has placed before you? I think, "We're only two years away from God's Kingdom being here..." and yet a bridge to that time is the Feast of Tabernacles. It's an awesome thing to understand. And sometimes these things reflect what we place first in our life. We can deceive ourselves. Human beings deceive themselves into thinking they love God; they do it all the time; the Protestant world all the time... They love God, they love Jesus Christ until you tell them, "Well, He said the law wasn't done away with and not one jot or one tittle, and what about that Sabbath commandment?" "Oh, that was nailed to the cross. It was done away with."

Verse 7 - This land also is full of silver and gold, neither an end to their treasures; their land is also full of horses, great mobility, **neither is there any end of their chariots:** *personal* mobility – cars, cars, cars and more cars... 1-2-3-4 cars sometimes in families. Parent's that give the best car to their children to go to a high school parking lot; the pressures that are there amongst the youth; and the parents sacrifice in order to give more and more and more. We live in a world of plenty and sometimes we don't grasp how much we have. We really don't. We *live*, in this nation, *as kings*, as royalty. If you go back in time, 200 years and all the previous time before that, to find the kind of luxury that people were able to live in; because of technology and everything else that we have – *we live better* than royalty ever lived. They couldn't control the thermostat like we can. They couldn't push buttons to have things done automatically for them. They had people do a lot of things for them, but not with like what we have now. They couldn't turn on a faucet and have water coming out, both hot and cold and a mixture of anything in between. They didn't have those things! *Royalty* didn't have those things, but we have them. We're spoiled! We don't even understand how spoiled we are in this world. And our ability to

put priorities on things... it's been minimized because of that, our ability to judge and have soundness in judgement. And always a desire for more – ever hungering – more and more and more.

...**their land is full of silver and gold...** Yeah, we have some tough economic times we're going through right now. We have some tough times as far as jobs are concerned. The job report wasn't what they thought it would be Friday and so the Dow plunges 323 points. That's nothing. Oh, it's a bit of a plunge, but they don't know what a plunge is yet. They're about to experience the *plunger* when it all goes down the toilet, when there's nothing left in value to the dollar. Isn't that amazing? Yesterday, I heard them talk. What are they talking about? Let's go to the safety of treasury's. Nuts! The safety of the U.S. dollar? The safety of the U.S. Treasury's? It's insanity! But they don't understand. They don't understand. Sad world.

Cars, cars and more cars... I was just telling someone I hate to drive through the area around Chicago in that southern quarter if you're coming from the east and going anywhere. You come around that bottom area there and I just hate driving through there. I've been in too many 'parking lots' there because we have so many 'chariots' and we think we have it bad. We don't know what bad is, because we've gotten used to so much. We're spoiled! That's the problem with Laodicea; it became very spoiled and some of that spirit and attitude is still out there to this day; and it's still in the Church of God to this day. And sometimes we don't recognize it for what it is. And to the degree we hunger and thirst after God reflects where we are spiritually.

I mention these things because it blows my mind that we can be two years away...two years away, and we still have to learn some of the most basic lessons of life. It's an ongoing process, isn't it? Two years away and we have people who still give up and people who let down and I don't have words for it... because they can't see what I see, they don't believe what I believe. If they did, they would be so afraid, so scared to death to become lukewarm, to begin becoming weak spiritually and leaving this Body. And yet it happens. It'll happen, I'm telling you, to the end...human nature; all as a witness of what human beings are like.

So whether it was nearly 2,000 years ago after the Church began or 1,000 years ago, or today – the desire of God's people should still be the same. Our focus should be upon His Kingdom whether we're two years away, 500 years away or 1,000 – it doesn't really matter. The attitude, the spirit should always be the same: a hunger and a thirst and a desire that God is first. But what is unique to us of course is that we're almost to that time in less than two years.

And one of the most direct things God's people have ever had through time, that is a tie in, again, was this bridge in time of the Feast of Tabernacles that leads us to God's Kingdom.

Matthew 6:25 - Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought, this means 'anxious thought' in the sense of being overly concerned, excessively worried about things. Do you ever get excessively worried about things in your life? Because I'll tell you what... people do. We become, sometimes, excessively worried about certain things not working out the way we want them to; a lot of times it's about finances or occupation or whatever it might be and we become excessively worried. So again, this word having to do ...not to be filled with anxiety that works to weaken faith and take our focus off of what it should be; because that kind of worry can get you so focused on self and upon what I need, what we need; and it takes our focus away from what God says we should have our eyes on. **Therefore I say to you, Take no anxious thought for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; just the basic things; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on.** In other words your clothing. Today...tell that to a teenager. The **Focus on God's Kingdom**

pulls are so great. I'm just saying that's the way it is in the world; the pulls are so great. Sadly, sometimes clothing, the way children are in school and so forth, it becomes a great battle in how people look at each other and how they treat each other and it's a tough thing, it truly is, because of our society and because of commercialism and so forth.

So he says, **don't take anxious thought for these things. Is not the life**, in other words the life that God has given to you, **more than food, and the body**, more important, in other words, **than the clothes you put on it?** What God has given to you in your life? **Behold the birds of the air: for they do not plant, neither do they harvest, nor store in barns;** and as I read this, we're going to understand this in varying degrees in the Church. Some of us are going to see it as a story and not get the spiritual intent of what Christ is even talking about here. We're going to see it in varying levels. It's an awesome thing to understand. ...**and neither do they harvest, not store in barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Everything belongs to God;** everything! **Are you not much more than they?** Aren't you *far more important?* Do we not *grasp* who we are in God's plan? ...His desire for us, especially when we've been called, especially when He's given us His truth? Because He has a great purpose in that when *that* takes place in life.

Verse 27 - Which of you taking thought, just by worry, being overly concerned. No matter how much worry there is there...**can add a few inches to your height?** What are you going to change by all the worry? In other words, worry doesn't change anything. Worry doesn't produce anything. What does it produce if you worry? It generally produces arguments and fights and battles like that; ...on the job or in family and so forth. What does it produce that's good? And yet we do it as human beings. **And why do you take such thought for clothing? Consider the flowers of the field, how they grow; they do not work, neither do they weave and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.** A great king who had incredible wealth, who had everything done for him.

So if God so clothed the pasture of the land, which is here today and tomorrow it's cast into an oven shall He not much more clothe you, oh you of little faith? It's far more about what is spiritual than what is physical, but so often we get so hung up on physical and our focus is so physical in life that we fail to grasp what God has placed before us that's spiritual. The Feast of Tabernacles is awesomely *spiritual*. That's why I mentioned earlier that sometimes in some cases in the past family's and people begin to make a huge mistake in life when they began to look at the Feast and transferring to different places as more like a vacation; and the spiritual began to go by the wayside. Spiritual is the focus. What God has placed before us is the focus. He'll take care of the rest. *God will take care of the rest!* If we have God first in our life, *God will take care of the rest.* But so often we fight and we resist and we prolong those things that God would *desire* and does desire to do for us. Incredible.

Verse 31 - Therefore don't have anxious thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, how are we going to be clothed? Such worry, again, consumes people and lesser matters like whether or not they're able to maintain their cable, their internet, their cell phone, their ability to go out and eat, to keep up with the latest fashions, buy the latest game and on and on and on it goes. Not even the basic things in life... it goes beyond that to what I would classify as far greater selfishness and focused on that which is even more physical in life. That's not what life is about. Are those things good to have, nice to have – absolutely... some of them, not all of them.

I can't give this to you. You have to pray about this and ask God to give what I'm talking to you about to you; that He would bless you to understand and grasp the spiritual content of what He's saying and what He's giving; that we be able to put things in their proper perspective of what it means to truly put **Focus on God's Kingdom**

God first in our life. Because we become so physically focused and so physically turned inward in life that our focus isn't the way it should be on God's Family and upon God's Kingdom and on God's purpose in our life. That's everything right now. Everything we do, everything we think, everything we are motivated to do should be motivated by where we are in God's plan and what we're doing and what God's bringing, what God's giving. Everything! *Everything!* Every decision that's made; and if it's that way... I'll tell you life is far richer and far better.

So we've got to keep focused on God's Kingdom and a part of that for us is learning what it means to be focused on the Feast of Tabernacles right now. God gives us that opportunity to have something as a bridge until we're there; a bridge until we're there, until we get there. So that *all* that you do, again, is motivated by that specific focus, place God first in your life in the decisions you make. That's what we have to seek to do.

So what does all this have to do, again, with the Feast of Tabernacles? The Feast of Tabernacles is the great bridge in time that helps us to more fully be focused on God's Kingdom and that Millennial reign that's about to come. I want to ask the question... How excited are you about this year's Feast of Tabernacles? How excited? A lot of it has to do with your planning. A lot of it has to do with looking forward, just as much as you look forward to God's Kingdom being here, there is that which we have which is a little more short range, but it's a powerful spiritual tool. Sometimes we talk about fasting being a *powerful* spiritual tool. Prayer is a *powerful spiritual tool*. So is our planning as a matter of observance of honouring God and *especially* when it comes to the Feast of Tabernacles. It is a *powerful spiritual tool!* And the more you put into prayer, your personal relationship with God, the more you put into matters like fasting and dedicating time set aside to God in some of those things when you recognize there's a weakness and you have need to humble yourself before God, to ask especially in times of battle and so forth; and this area here – planning, looking ahead, and sharing when it has to do with the Feast of Tabernacles.

So again, how focused are you upon the *blessing* it will be in your life in just a few months from now? It's powerful! I love it! I love it with all my being. I love what God begins to give in sermons ahead of time. That's why I tell people each year, pray about the inspiration given in the preparation of those sermons, because the degree that you pray about it is to the degree you will be fed. God's going to give a message for every High Day, for every Holy Day, but He wants to know about your involvement. It's about you, each individual personally – how much are *you* involved in that process? What are your petitions in your prayer, because God then blesses you according to your spirit, your desire, your hunger and will nourish you and feed you accordingly. I'm going to be giving what God's going to give to me; but your prayers are powerful in what He's going to give to you, (and what He gives to me); but it's far more important individually in reality what He's going to be giving to you...what you're going to gain from it, what you're going to grow in from it.

So consider this... think about this when you think about the Feast of Tabernacles and putting it first in your life right now as far as planning and what you're planning ahead for. In two short years from now there are brethren around you who will be a part of the 144,000 in the Kingdom. Have you thought about things like that? How much do you consider the *awesomeness* of that? Sometimes we go and we fellowship with each other and I don't know if those things enter your mind; especially those of you who are new...that you have opportunity today to be with individuals, to pass time with and get to know individuals who are going to be a part of the 144,000. I'll just tell you right now, that's far beyond what you can comprehend; but the more you come to appreciate that and grasp that and treasure that time...the greater impact that will be in your life. It's not that you raise people up; God's going to do

that. But again, it's how important is it to us, the fellowship that we have within the Body? And that reflects a lot then in our fellowship toward each other. A lot of it has to do with whether or not we see God in each other. That's why I've made comments about 1 John 4 and the beginning of chapter 5 about love and caring for each other. And we've had so many sermons that talk about how we think about each other and how we treat each other and how we talk to each other; whether it be the one sitting next to you in your own family, or whether it be others in the Family in congregations as your sitting next to one another in a congregation. That's where it all starts: and whether or not we are utilizing God's spirit and treasure what God's doing in each person. Spiritual thing!

So in two short years... right now some of you today here, my wife today, she didn't know I was going to talk about this, but she talked about last night... She said how awesome it was last night. We were able to have a meeting with some elders and to think about the fact that in a short time we're all going to be a part of 144,000. Now it's not a matter of going around because of things that we see and understand and have together that we share... it's not a matter that we go around trying to figure out who's going to be a part of 144,000 because God has only shown and made clear that there are two specifically; but there are going to be a lot more. So it's not a matter of trying to say or talk to individuals about, "Oh I know you're going to be a part of that." You don't want to do that – that's not health to do spiritually. But just a personal self appreciation of something you recognize, that God has given you that opportunity; because it's going to have an impact on your life in the future. People you know now... you think that's not going to have an impact on *your* life in a very special way in the future? ...when you've been able to fellowship and be with and get to know and rub shoulders with individuals who are part of the God Family who know you? You think that's not going to come back to you in favour? ...in blessings in the future? You have something that so many others don't have. You have things... We all have things, if we can grasp that, that no one else has in the world. That's why it comes down to: Do we grasp and appreciate what we have? Not a matter of pride, or haughtiness, just a matter of gratitude before God of what He's given to us. It is what it is; and we don't take it as a matter of pride. It's a matter of awesome sharing. So there are things that are healthy in that and some things that aren't. But I'm just using that as one example of something at the Feast of Tabernacles that you have this year.

Wherever you go together at the Feast of Tabernacles there are going to be individuals there who are going to be a part of that Government, the 144,000. Now I don't know about you...but to me, that's an awesome thing! To me, that's a dumbfounding thing. *It doesn't get much greater than that* in this physical life... God's plan and God's purpose in what He's unveiling. Because all the rest of those, however many there are, 143,000 and whatever it is, that have come out of the previous... let's say, Philadelphia, that you have never known, all the way back to the beginning of time – you don't know them and they don't know you. They're going to work on the earth, they're going to serve everybody on the earth – but what a unique thing to have a personal relationship with those that you have known. I don't know about you, but to me that's an awesome thing! How much do you treasure what God has placed before you? And it's not about that... How much do we treasure what God has just given to us, period, about His way of life, His word, His truth that others don't have? ...that this world is ignorant of? Those are things we have to examine ourselves and see whether or not in our own hearts and minds that we're putting God first in everything we do, because there are people listening to me today who are far...still far away from putting God first in everything in their life. Choices...

So again, this may be our last sponsored Feast until the Millennium. We may not be able to have a sponsored Feast next year. We may not have a sponsored Feast this year. We may not have a sponsored Feast in all areas this year. I don't know! But what's in your heart and what's your desire? You have the opportunity to begin planning for those things and we'll see where it leads.

Want to look at some of the sites that are available this year just as a part of this, because different people that are going to different sites perhaps, or to a local site, a site that's close to you and there's so much contained in sharing. Think about when a family gets together, think about as you grew up or whatever, if your family was going someplace and planning on just a physical vacation, a getting away, or some physical activity that was special above and beyond what you might normally do; and if you grasp and understand that the more that was put into that planning and the more that it's talked about, the more things you did together as a family, the more you enjoyed it, the more meaningful it was to you, the more you received out of it because you put more into it. If it's just a matter that you're going to a certain place and nothing is said in the family, then the family doesn't profit as much. What about all that time in between? ...the anticipation, the excitement of building it up? And there's much to be learned in that that we can do ourselves.

And so I think of different ones right now that I know that are talking about some of the things about the Feast and they're getting more and more excited about the time they're going to be able to spend together at the Feast in fellowship and doing activities together. Those are the things that draw you closer together; the time you spend together. What about family? It's a time you spend together. I think of the song, 'Cats in the Cradle', by Harry Chapin, 'Cat's in the cradle and the silver spoon...' and you think about this process that this individual goes through in life and talks about how the father didn't spend time with the son and later on the son grew up just like the father. And the world is like that. We're not to be like that. It's about *spending time together* and *planning things together* and you are blessed immensely when you do that and especially in a spiritual Family. The more you pray to God about His Feast and ask for excitement about His Feast; ask for blessings to be focused on Him first – the more He'll give to you on a spiritual plane. It's an awesome thing to experience.

The Feast of Tabernacles is the most spiritual blessed time of a year that you can experience in human life. You can't experience anything like the Feast of Tabernacles and what you're able to receive at any other time like you do during that eight days, you really can't. There are times in your life like last week. I think of Pentecost weekend in The Netherlands. Everyone was able to come together. We had everybody together in Europe as a whole; some weren't able to make it; from all over, the uniqueness of different nationalities and different peoples and yet the *same* mind, the *same* convictions and the rubbing of shoulders together, the sharing of stories, the sharing of things together that you can't share with the world. And I am much closer to them now as a result of that than I was before I went – even to some I've known for a long time. You draw closer together in unity and oneness as time goes along. You become a stronger Family because of the things you share. But those two days shared are *nothing* compared to eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles. It's a very powerful thing, it truly is.

So I think of different places like the site in Idaho... I'm just going to go through these and mentioning and talking about some of these because I'm excited about the variety we have this year that God has given to us in different areas; and just the ability of people coming together in those areas to share time, special activities together, *God's creation* together...and you're able to share it together!

So, again, the meeting location in a place in Idaho (I'm not going to give every place because we have crackpots and weirdo's and people from our past that hate; they hated Mr. Armstrong, hate us...who like to do crazy things with what we have, and let them work for it a little bit more. Anyway, drive yourself nuts out there.) In Idaho, great location – great, great price for the place there. Beautiful, beautiful area; been there, seen it. Awesome! Beautiful! What I like about it in this particular sign up for that particular area it mentions a couple of other hotels there – one of them that's about half price of the one which is still a reasonable price at this particular hotel where the meetings are – some other

hotels in the area. You don't have to go to stay in the exact same hotel location in order to be at the Feast. If you can find something less expensive on the Internet – there are some deals out there sometimes. Do some shopping around, talk to other about it. I've known of people who've come up with all kinds of things in order to be able to be there and share together in those things.

Hawaii – that's a toughie! It is a toughie because it's so expensive to get there, it's so expensive to be there, it's a very expensive place; but if you've been so blessed through the year and you have the ability to go and spend that with other people, there's going to be... you know in every site; a unique fellowship with God's people – not matter where you go, it's a unique fellowship that you have together. And so again, information on that particular site, on the big island; some misunderstood me, they thought that it was changed to a different island... no, it's the big island. And by the way, I just thought I'd throw out a couple things – anyone going to that particular area and you find other locations – perhaps are less expensive to stay in; make sure you look at the mileage. You don't want to be on the opposite side of the island and expect to drive to services every day, you'll be really sorry if you do. So again, check the mileage and see how far things are from each other. Sometimes traffic over there is a bit of a bear.

Jacksonville, Florida... again, hopefully the tar balls don't make it around that side of Florida by that time because they're talking about them going around the entire part, in time here, if it keeps spewing out the oil. The flow of the current goes all the way around The Keys, all the way upside the east coast and then right over there toward Great Britain, our brother, Ephraim. They're happy about that I'm sure.

Nashville, Tennessee...thankfully not in the flooded areas, but in a high ground area. So different places. People are familiar with some of the locations, some of the regions and so forth.

The Ozarks... We have some today from Missouri here. You want to find out about The Ozarks, just ask them. Sam is sitting up here in the front row, got the site here, Shawn as well, both of them working that particular area and it is beautiful, beautiful. You look at that setting there and it's really appealing.

Over in Rhode Island. Don't want to mention the exact area again here, but Rhode Island, the Feast site over there for the New England states and New York, some of those areas up through there. Again, all the information here for that.

California... it's on the east side of going out of Los Angeles. Matter of fact, it's about half way between the airport and Palm Springs if you looked at a map. Great area; we've been there many a time.

Winnipeg, Manitoba...and again, all the information needed on that site.

Niagara Falls area, again, not going to get specific in some of these, but beautiful areas up there... Now of course their dollars more than ours, more valuable than ours at this point. Canadian dollar, I saw it the other day, it was like \$1.05 or something like that, \$1.08 at one point. Used to be we could go up there and it was about 80 cents, sometimes even less than that. Boy did we have a bargain going up there in hotels. Now a day's though... it's more of a bargain for them coming down to the States.

The Netherlands... of course, again this year.

Scotland this year rather than being down around the London area. So different ones I know talking about going up to Scotland. Again, if you have those opportunities to be with people in different areas

of the world – that’s always broadens your horizons, it broadens your view of things in the sense of what God is doing and how God is doing it. It’s awesome!

Rotorua, NZ...

Then of course the Gold Coast area of Australia... heading up toward the Brisbane area.

A lot of opportunities through the variety of sites are available this year; but again, it’s the fellowship and in sharing this with other people. If you’re able to attend the Feast of Tabernacles site, throw yourself into that and to look forward to those things and strive for them with all your being.

I want to discuss a little bit of this in the sense of focus, in the sense of opportunities that we have this year before us and again, because of some of the planning – some of you have never attended a Feast of Tabernacles site and so all this information is needful for you in advance, not just at the last minute. Wouldn’t do a whole lot of good to do this a month before the Feast.

What is some of your planning? There’s a balance and sound mindedness that goes into all this and you have to be careful because we’re all in different situations, we do live in a time when the economy is not good. We do live in a time when people are being cut back in hours, some people losing jobs and not being able to find others; and those present their own problems. So everyone is different and no one should expect different things from others. We’re all unique in what we have before us and how we can do what we can accomplish. But I wanted to consider some of the planning here. I want to go through some of this.

First – there are those who are of an age; or in a condition of health where long travel is not wise. I think of times past in the Church. I always used to find it difficult, because of the Feast sites we used to have all over the United States and all over the world in different places, especially in the United States here and having to council with some people to tell them you really shouldn’t travel. It’s a hard thing when somebody has attended the Feast for 20-30 years and then they’re told you really shouldn’t travel, you really shouldn’t push yourself to be at the Feast this year; and I mean in some cases some people that wanted to go...the attitude of mind being if I die, I’d rather die there! Well, that’s not good for the Church. I’m serious! That’s happened! And that’s not good for the sake of the Church and the name of the Church because there are people out there that try to find fault with and say, “Look how dumb you people are...and you took my family member and you talked them into coming here and they died...” And so we have to use wisdom in what we do. In other words, don’t feel guilty about the fact that you are in a health situation, or of age, or whatever, that you’re not able to do the kind of travelling you did before. It’s a part of life and sometimes people go through this. Ask God for balance and soundness and as you make your plans.

I think of the area of Lubbock, Texas. I’m so thankful there are a lot of members out there, *a lot of them in that area* who represent a good portion of individuals in the God Family that are going to be able to have fellowship together with each other there and just stay in their own area. They are long time members. One of them has known me longer than anyone in the Church of God except for my mom and one of the first ones I ever met in Kansas; and I’m really thankful she’s out there in that particular area, she’s able to be with us to the end here. Knew her and her husband, son and daughter very, very well and she’s holding fast, and to me that’s a personally important thing, an exciting thing for me to see and share in life. One of the first areas we were sent to – Lubbock, Texas – when we were sent out in the ministry to begin learning, to begin to be moulded and fashioned in the ministry. People in that area

Focus on God’s Kingdom

that we've known a long, long time and I'm very thankful they're able to share this together by themselves there and not have to worry about travelling someplace else because they've been in the Church for a long time and some of them are not in the health that they can travel like that.

And some of you are going to be alone in some of your regions, in some of your areas; but you have access to the internet. God's going to feed you mightily, spiritually, in those situations. But where we're able to get together, if you have the ability to, you should strive to with all your being. So there's a balance in there and everyone has to look at this individually between them and God, just like prayer. Prayer is an individual thing between you and God; and so is your planning for the Feast and how you do it and how you go about it and the decisions and choices you make – and some of them sometimes are difficult. Sometimes it's a much more difficult to make the choice, 'I can't go!' ...for some who have these situations that I've just mentioned.

Some areas, if you know of someone else that's close by that you might be able to be with and you're of a health condition or age that you can't do the same kind of travelling, and you know of some others in the area, strive to get together for maybe certain days of the Feast, or whatever.

Another one... Finances will be a battle for some due to job situations that may involve being out of work, cut back in hours, or even working for lower wages. Obviously these affect your planning. And we have a lot of young people being called today and sometimes because some are in college or some are just now getting into a workforce and wages always start out lower when you're younger like that until you work your way up in life; that's just the way life is. And so you don't start out on a top rung, or a higher rung – you start out on the bottom rung and you work your way up in life. And so we have a lot of young people in different situations out there as well that God is calling in larger numbers. I've never seen a time in the Church of God where God is calling such large numbers of young people in their early 20's and on up. It's an awesome thing. I think of Jesus Christ when He went around and picked the disciples. They were *young men*! ...young, young men that He picked. He didn't go around picking 30-40-50 and 60 year olds. He picked out *young men* who became disciples, that God had picked, that were going to do a great work in the future; and He moulded and fashioned them for those jobs. Awesome what God did, and awesome what God is planning now for some of the things in the future here.

So again, perhaps you can't attend a sponsored Feast site, perhaps you can only attend a couple of days, or even just half the Feast...which some of you that's all you've experienced as far as fellowship with everyone. But in these situations *seek to attend for as much as you can!* It may require sacrifice; but in some of those situations, if you can, strive to do it as much as it lies within you...and you will be blessed mightily in it in the process. So again, yes, there may be sacrifice, but we always learn through sacrifice. But don't be foolish either. Again, there's balance. Please ask God for wisdom in these matters.

We have kept the last couple of Feasts uniquely so because of only four days at a sponsored location; not knowing the timing of how God was doing various things and because of our focus and what we were doing and God teaching us things through this entire process – because it has. It has taught us in a mighty way what it means about 'booths' and so forth, and we learned a lot in that process that we wouldn't have learned any other way. And on and on it goes. God uses different things to mould and fashion us and to teach us. But again, if you're able to, the more you can attend the better that's going to be for you.

So because of the uniqueness of what we have done over the past couple of years, some may feel that normal activity for the week in their home areas is fine; to go about your normal routine at home. I

want to give some warnings here that *it's not okay!* That isn't what is best; that isn't what God wants. If you *are* confined to your home area –normal activities as a whole isn't what God desires for the Feast of Tabernacles. That isn't what is best. He has allowed some of that to exist over the last couple of years because of the large numbers of individuals being called in different situations but now we are of a maturity that we have to address something here; and that is to understand that if you are confined because of finances and you can't travel, that it isn't a matter of going back and forth from work every day. That isn't what is best! How can you leave the world and be in a Millennial setting, in a Millennial age if you're going back and forth and involving yourself with day to day working...? ...and maybe listening to a sermon everyday – Great! Wonderful! That's a *minimal thing* of observing the Feast of Tabernacles to be fed day by day, to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, the observance of the Feast. But God's *intent* in this is not that we should be in our home areas and because we're there that it's okay to go to work every day. *Every one else* has asked off for the full eight days and *so should you!* You say, "Well, what am I going to do all day long? I might as well be at work." No you shouldn't. You hurt yourself - you'll hurt yourself if you do. You truly will! Rubbing shoulders with the world you won't be able to receive as much from the sermons. Rubbing shoulders in the world and not leaving the world, getting out of the world... that's what a lot of the Feast of Tabernacles is about. It's about leaving this world and going into a new age and focusing more on the Kingdom of God, on God's Government and God's way of life and what God has placed before us.

Pray about these things – ask God for help in these things and to realize that things as normal is not a good thing. It's not what's *best*, and it's not the goal to keep in mind for observing the Feast. So this is not a time to worry about work or your job. When we come into the Church of God, we determine we are *not going to work on the Sabbath*; we're not going to work from Friday sunset – just like *everybody else* whom God has called through time – we're *not going to disobey God!* And I have known... I probably have visited with hundreds of people through time; pm's¹ and different ones through time. Countless people that we've talked and known of through time, who came to a point in time who couldn't continue on in this way of life. God opened up their mind but they couldn't leave, they couldn't make that choice of obeying God and not working on the Sabbath. Well, if we're not willing to take that first step God can't work with us! If we're not willing to obey Him in the most basic truth, we can't grow. He can't work with us at all if we're not willing to obey.

There are choices and decisions. And so it is with the Feast of Tabernacles. If you want to receive the blessings of the Feast of Tabernacles and what God intends – it *is* not to work during those eight days. Now see... three days of that you're not supposed to work anyway. Two are high days, Thursday and Thursday, the first day and the Last Great Day – they're High Days – you're not to work on them. And the Sabbath – you're not to work on that day. So what does that leave? 5 other days in there that possibly one could work? Sometimes people are afraid, "Well, what about my job? And what about my family?" God is first; just like the Sabbath. That's why a lot of people couldn't make changes about the Sabbath – because it was a matter of finances – of not working on the Sabbath and therefore they couldn't make that change because they couldn't see themselves losing that amount of finances and not only that but we're going to begin tithing... oh, and second... and so all this money and so forth, "I can't make it. We can't make it. We can't have food on the table and clothing..." Just the thing we read earlier. *Don't we grasp God's calling? Don't we grasp what God has placed before us?* Are you going to suffer for a while? Perhaps; to test you, to see what you're going to do, to see what your choices are. But when God knows, just like He did with Abraham; when He knows what you're going to do, when He knows what you have done, when He knows your determination to obey Him and yield to Him... He'll

¹ prospective members

bless you. He'll bless you! He'll work with you! He'll mould and fashion you! He gives you things that are far more valuable than anything you could ever receive physically, but we don't grasp that in the beginning. It's hard in the beginning because it's very spiritual. And so we grow through time.

So again, this is not a time to worry about work or job. It's a matter of faith. You step out in faith. How many of you have had to ask time off for the Feast of Tabernacles? Okay? I made a job change just before the Feast of Tabernacles one time... twice just before the Feast. Well, the one was biggie... Anyway, going to work for this corporation and just told them right up front because no sense in beating around the bush...told them this time of year here, next month, I need to have these days off and this is the period of time. Got back, dumbfounded – they not only took that into consideration, they paid me for the whole time I was gone, as a vacation. I wasn't expecting that one at all. So things happen sometimes you don't even count on that God blesses you and helps you in things you don't even consider. And the point is you *put God first*, no matter what it is; jobs and so forth. And you go out looking for work... it's one of the first things that come up. Does it require Saturday work? We can offer though, "You're having a hard time finding people to work on the first day of the week? I will. I'll work on the first day of the week. Never a problem, but I can't work on this day of the week; but you can count on me the rest of the time. You can count on me being here during Easter and Christmas as well...if you're having trouble getting your employees to work on that time. I'll be here." Sometimes that has an impact on people, sometimes it doesn't. A lot of prejudice out there in this world; but it's a matter of *putting God first*. You realize the value of that and what that means to God in your relationship with Him when you put Him first? When He knows in your heart and your mind and your spirit.... What does God *want* from you? What does God *desire* from you? It's what's in your heart! It's what's in your mind! It's your desire, of your surrender toward Him, that *you want Him!* ...that you want His way of life above everything else; that that is what's most important to you – *putting God first*. And when we don't do that we hold back and there are certain things we hold back on life because we don't want to *give that* to God. I don't want to give this time to God, the Sabbath time! I don't want to give the whole Feast to God... I want to keep a part for me so I can go to work and make money. This is not a time for that this year. This is the time to step up to the plate and *put God first!* How much do you want the Kingdom of God? How much are you willing to go through in order to be there?

Those are things you have to ask and those are the things that are between you and God; because God knows exactly what's in your heart. He knows whether you're resisting Him, or whether you *want Him*, whether you *desire Him*, whether you *love Him*. I've prayed many a prayer to God to ask for the heart and the mind of David...that attitude; to do those things that are pleasing inside, a man after His own heart, after God. That's what we should desire with all of our being.

Every Feast of Tabernacles is by far the *best* time to get *away* from your job and your work; and *focus* on the Kingdom of God, *focus* on the Millennial period, *focus* on what God is bringing to this earth very soon now. And you're going to be hindered in that if you're working your job for 5 of those 8 days. You're going to rob yourself spiritually – truly are! Can't help it.

Another point here - If you're unable to attend a sponsored site for the full time due to finances and you must remain in your home area; rather than focusing on your work at that time, consider some things you might be able to do that are *free* from the *stresses* of this *world* and *it's ways*. I can't tell you what to do. I can think of a lot of things I could do if I were by myself in my own area and I couldn't go anywhere else. But you have to think about those things. What can you do? Just sit at home? "It's a looong Sabbath... 8 daaays..... what am I going to do? When's the sun going down? When is the 8 days

over?” That’s the way human nature is sometimes – that’s what people sometimes have to fight and go through.

Can you drive a short distance perhaps and be with someone else, or do you know of someone else that you can invite over or whatever at some point in the Feast there? ...maybe it’s not something to be done every day because of the distance; maybe it’s a two hour drive or whatever... maybe you can do it a few times and that enhances it, makes it better. Just a little bit of fellowship; if you can add that to your life – then plan it! Work for it! And the more you plan it, the more exciting and fulfilling it’s going to be.

So although, again, all days are not High Days or the weekly Sabbath – *ALL days are set aside in order to keep a strong focus on the messages that we will receive*; and to have the kind of focus God desires that we have for His Kingdom, for His Plan, for His purpose for us. And of course, after that then comes fellowship together with others in the Body of Christ if we’re able to have it. And if we’re not... God understands that. God understands everyone’s predicament, everyone’s situation; and we’re not all the same!

Regardless of where you attend, consider or focus on the kind of special fellowship you can have with others at that time. We are a Family so help build that Family and make it stronger. Be in contact with different ones, talk about it amongst yourselves. If you know you’re going to a certain site, maybe think about certain things or plan certain things you might be able to do together; or just a conversation about it alone – to have that excitement in families and so forth whether you be adults or children and everything else. We are a Family; help build that Family and make it stronger. But you have to think about those things, you have to plan those things. They don’t just happen! They *don’t* just happen. You’ve got to think about them to make them happen. So plan special time together with others. This isn’t a time just for us to get away; it’s *a time to be with God’s people* as much as we possibly can.

I thought I’d mention too that only a small portion of people have already registered for the Feast and that’s fine, because it just came out. But within the next couple of weeks make it a priority, focus on getting this accomplished because it aids greatly in our planning and the sooner we have the numbers the better it’s going to be for everyone. It helps really, the entire Body in the Church.

Let’s consider **Leviticus 23** and some of the things it has to say about the Feast of Tabernacles. Some of you are new and don’t know about some of these things and you hear some others talk about the Feast and going to the Feast and how excited sometimes people become and it’s hard to grasp that because you’ve never been there yet. It’s hard to grasp and understand what it’s all about. Talk to some of the elders in the area and ask, if you desire advice on some of the most basic of things, because you don’t know. **Leviticus 23:34 - Speak to the children of Israel, and say, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days unto the Eternal.** So again, picturing that part of God’s plan into the Millennial period when the Kingdom of God will reign on the earth. This means that we need to plan, obviously, when it gives something like this, when it says this is a specific time of the year. It means we need to *plan for the Feast* because it is to be **for seven days unto the Eternal...unto the Eternal.** It’s time that we set aside, **unto the Eternal.** It’s not for us selfishly, it’s something we observe unto God; a thankfulness and a gratitude that we have toward God. That affects mightily the joy that you’re able to have when there at the Feast or listening to sermons or whatever it might be; because that’s how God blesses us, and He commands us to rejoice during this time. So it doesn’t just happen. Again, please get that in here, in all your minds. Every one of us can improve on that. Things don’t just happen, you have to plan. They have to be *planned* if we’re to have a festive

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occasion unto God, because that's what He wants us to have; a festive occasion dedicated unto Him in observance and you have to ask yourself – What can you do to make it festive? ...dedicated to God. Can't by being at work. All's you can do is dedicate something to the corporation or the business or whatever it is – it's not to God. It doesn't have anything to do with God.

So again, the Feast is the time to focus on what God has placed before us and we don't want to get involved where we just focus on our own interests, what we can do at the Feast and so forth, rather on what we're going to be able to do with others. So again, it's for seven days foreshadowing the 7,000 years.

Verse 39 - Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month when you have gathered in the produce of the land you shall keep a Feast unto the Eternal seven days. Again, we keep it unto God for seven days...and when we've gathered in all the produce of the land. It's a beautiful picture of God's later harvest, and it's the great harvest as we go toward the end of time here when the greater harvest that God is bringing in of the Millennial period and especially in the Great White Throne even more. But during that 1,000 years – incredible harvest when God's going to bring so many millions and billions into His Family; even before the 100 years, so many more that are going to be added to the Family that are able to be a part of that Millennial period. God is talking about a time when all the harvests, the produce has been brought in and He gives us a time then to take off – that we're to observe the Feast unto Him for seven days. It says, **the first day shall be a Sabbath, and the eighth day shall be a Sabbath**, again, the Last Great Day.

Verse 40 - And on the first day you shall take the boughs, it's the word for 'fruit'. It's not the word for boughs in this case as we've talked about in a past sermon at the Feast of Tabernacles. **...the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of thick trees, and the willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Eternal your God for seven days.** God commands us to rejoice before Him for seven days; and that doesn't just happen. You've got to plan for it! And the more you plan for it, the more you can rejoice. It's an awesome thing. The more you plan the more you can rejoice as you fulfill, as you live those plans, as you live them together with others, as you're able to experience those things together with others the more you're able to rejoice before God for what He's granted you and what He's placed before you and what He's given you the opportunity of. So again, it must be planned and through our plans in sharing in the fulfillment of it all we're able then to more truly rejoice and more fully rejoice.

So again, they were told here in the Old Testament to make this little thing out back so they could sit in it. It wasn't a thing to *live in*, to *dwell in* as some misconstrue this to mean, that they lived in something *all* this period of time. That isn't what they built. It was something they could meditate in, they could go and sit in it and meditate on God's purpose and God's plan and why He did this – even in a very physical way for them – why they were keeping and what some of this was to picture. They were to go there and it was a place that they could do some of their prayers and think about what God had given them to do.

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. You shall dwell in, word means 'to sit' in **booths seven days**; in this particular case. Some had this concept in the past that this is where they lived; this is where they bathed; this is where they kept their clothes. No, no, no it wasn't. It was something they pitched all over the area there that they were to spend some time in and the fruit... they were to have fruit there, there was something they could eat on and learn from these things as well

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while they were in some of that. You can go back and listen to some of those sermons of the past if you want; we may talk about it at this Feast. **You shall dwell in/sit in booths seven days. All that are Israelite born shall dwell in booths: That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths,** so they were to pitch something temporary; that was very temporary in nature; not a home, not a dwelling place that has greater permanence; this was something that was just thrown together for a short period of time that they did go and sit in. And they meditated upon, they thought about God's plan and God's purpose (to what they understood at that point in time). ...**that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths.** And so that was very physical for them. They did think about that; that's what they were told to do: "Think about what I did with the children of Israel." They were made to dwell in booths, temporary dwellings for 40 years *until* He brought them into the Promised Land. And then God for the Church reveals something far greater for us – that we live in temporary dwellings until we're able to be in a Promised Land that we're getting ready to enter into. The 144,000 are getting ready to enter into the Kingdom of God – that's what it's all about. For them it was a very physical thing of what they pictured and they were to remember back what God did with them in bringing them out of Egypt and bringing them into the Promised Land. Ours is spiritual; there's was physical. It's powerful!

And so for us God has given us that in understanding. This is our temporary dwelling where we dwell in this life. Thankfully it's temporary until we have something that's permanent. I look forward with great anticipation to that which is permanent. Very thankful to know *exactly* when it's going to be. Very thankful to know it won't be long so that when I get up I won't be hurting and cracking and creaking and everything else. I look forward to that. I look forward to that for many of you who are older than me that tell me more about some of your cracks and creaks and pains and some of the things you're going through because your suffering is... some of you, I'll tell you, some of the battles you go through... that's why I'm thankful I don't have to go through that because I know your stories and I believe them with all my being; because I've just tasted a little bit of it and I don't like the taste of what it means to grow older in a body. But God has given it to us as a temporary dwelling. He's given it to *all* human beings. This is what we have to dwell in until we can come into great permanence into Eternal life. It's an awesome thing to understand.

So again here, to them it was physical, to us it's spiritual. So to this end, since we do want to make this a very special Feast for all, there is going to be a bit of a change in part of what we're planning on for this year. And again, going through some of this sermon here; little bit more difficult sermon to cover for me in one respect, but something that God wanted to give to everyone because this is a special Feast; or at least the planning of it is. Okay? We don't know what's going to happen. You don't know when it's going to happen. But God wants us to begin thinking now and have a focus that thinks about some of these things and to especially think about the spiritual implication of these things, of what it means to *put God first* in our life, to be focused on God's Kingdom, to be focused on what is about to come and part of that short range for us at this moment in time – at least for the next couple of weeks – is to look forward to the Feast of Tabernacles and do what we can in preparing for that... whether we're able to observe it or not is immaterial. You plan for it. It's in your heart. It's in your mind. It's in your relationship between you and God.

So as a part of that as everyone plans their Feast; the first thing that needs to be focused upon is *how* it can become a reality and the biggest phase of that concerns finances, doesn't it? When you're planning you'll be examining the complete cost to attend. That's the way it is. When people come into God's Church you know what they have to examine? ...what God forces them to examine? The cost; in every fashion, but usually the biggest one and the first one that people look at is the financial because that's

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the way we are as human beings. It's how God works with us because that's what gets in here real quick like because it either resists God or it accepts and receives and wants it. And so it always starts with this. And God works with us that way, and it's like He tells us, "I give you everything; you give Me a tithe, you give Me a tenth." It starts there. It begins with things like the Sabbath and we have to make choices then about how that affects us. We have to count the cost. People have to count the cost in other ways as well, in family. Are they willing to leave family and step out regardless of what family says. Some people threaten people and say, "You know if you do this or you do that, this or that's going to happen." Fine. You know, that's what you come to in time? "God comes first. I'm sorry. I love you, but *God comes first.*" You know it really is as simple as that and we all have to come through that in time, or we have to address that in some phase of our life. A lot of new people, when you come along, that's what you have to address, that's what you have to do – above and beyond anybody else. I don't care who it is.

You know the greatest things that happened in the Church of God? One of the greatest things that happened in the Church of God when the apostasy took place in 1994? ...what God showed? ...what God revealed? That people didn't have Him first. You know who was first? Father, mother, sister, brother... on and on it went because people made choices *based on* friendships and family – *not* on God and *not* because it was right. They made choices of going with various organizations because some other member of their family went to a different organization and so other went along as well. It wasn't because of their conviction that this was of God. Over and over again the vast majority of decisions were made out of relationships and friendships, *not* because of spiritual conviction. Awesome! And God tries us in those things throughout our life. He did it with Abraham. Don't ever forget the example of Abraham. God *knows* your mind. He knows whether you're willing to put Him first. He *knows it from the GET GO of your life of what the battles going to be for you!* He knows *exactly* how you think and He *knows* under various kinds of conditions whether you're going to put Him first. And we're tried in those things over and over again; and that's a part of a growing and a maturing in our minds – it truly is. And the blessing is that we can repent when we see the things that are wrong and get rid of those and seek Him more.

And so that's why God told Abraham when he was willing to offer up his own son *ISAAC*, not Ishmael. See, as we get a little closer to the end here, some of this stuff is going to get a little stronger. There are some who are not going to like too much what they hear. But again, it was *Isaac*, not Ishmael; and God told him after he was willing to do what he did...because God knew he could resurrect him. Abraham believed what God said when it was a matter of, "This is going to happen to your family. This is going to happen in your son. I'm going to raise..." All the promises that God gave about a seed and the blessings of nations and so forth that was going to come out of him: Abraham believed it and so he's willing to offer up his own son and obey God. We can't comprehend that because we understand how atrocious, in that respect, killing someone would be; or putting someone to death in our own family, or whatever. We can't conceive of a sacrifice like that. They *lived* in a different time. They *lived* in a different world. They *lived* with different understanding. They weren't given things about God's plan and about God like what was given a thousand years later, or 2,000 years later. They didn't have that. He didn't have that. He was judged by what he was told and what he was given at that point in time. And He obeyed God. And God said, "Abraham, don't do it! I know you. Abraham, *I know you!*" What an awesome thing. So we have choices to make and God knows our spirit and our heart and He brings us to repentance if we'll listen, if we'll hear – striving to teach us, striving to show us that heart and that desire should be and should grow in a desire to want God first in everything we do and a willingness to stand.

And so if mate, if children, if parents, if someone comes along and says, “No, you don’t do that. If you do I’m going to do this...”

You say, “I’m sorry; I love you, but God is first and I’ve got to do what I’ve got to do.”

Whether your boss or anyone tells you, “No, you can’t go do that at that time or you’re going to lose your job.”

“Sorry, but I have to do this! I love this job; I want to keep this job...” And like one person told me, they kept coming back when they were told they were fired if they didn’t come back... he’d come back on Monday and he still had his job and they didn’t make him leave. See, takes some tenacity, some trust here, some faith to keep plodding forward. And we’re tried in those things – whether God is first. God must be first! And if we’re not willing to do that *He will not bless us...* He will not bless us.

So again here, it starts out with finances. We have to plan accordingly. That’s a biggie! So there are quite a few of you who will be facing the struggle in all this. First of all, count your cost first – literally; especially those of you who are facing strong financial decisions as to whether or not you can attend at all, a sponsored site; or that you may be able to attend, or afford one or two nights. If that’s what you can afford, if that’s what you can add up and you can figure that out – then great! Strive for that, work for that, strive... If it’s one night – *strive* for two if you can. You may be striving just to get one. Fine! Strive to do all that you can within your means...even with sacrifice.

I stated previously that we would not be giving out financial assistance as a whole, but that there might be a few who would receive some help; but now we’re going to try to help more of you to attend a little bit more than you might be able to normally attend. So again here, we want to give out assistance but in a different way than what we have in times past in Worldwide Church of God, in our history, in our past – some of you are familiar with that.

So first of all, count the cost; the travel to and from the site, the lodging, the food and other related incidentals. That’s your responsibility; that’s the only way whether or not you’re going to know whether or not you’re going to logically be able to do it. You don’t want to do it with poor planning. You don’t want to do it with something unsound that will hurt you or the Church. You want to do it in a wise way between you and God and plan it out.

So when you’re all done with that: do you have enough for one day? ...where you’re going; in the distance it costs to travel there and back? Do you have, if it’s for one day, do you have enough for four days, or perhaps six? That’s what you have to ask; that’s what you have to go through in your own finances to see what you can do. Then we’ll try to help as many as we can with extra. Okay? With extra. Not the whole time. If you can afford one or two days, that doesn’t mean we’re going to help you to go the entire time. We’re going to help you with extra. That’s our desire and our goal. And one who could only come for one day may be able to be helped to come to two. One who is able to come to four or six, may be able to be helped to come to five or seven, perhaps all eight days. It depends; and a lot of it depends on each one of you and how you do some of this. But everyone is expected to do something.

I’ve known of widows who had nothing. I’ve known of an individual... I don’t know how they lived on what they had in some cases but they scraped together and they saved and they did things that I was so awesomely impressed with as I saw them fight, because their goal, their *desire was to be at the Feast of Tabernacles for all eight days!* Awesome! And to this day I think of different individuals flashing in my mind right now that I think about that I know I’ll see one day soon in a couple years from now in God’s Kingdom. Exciting examples of individuals and what they did and how they did it. Others flash in my

mind that took advantage of the Church – they wanted the Church to do it all for them. They flash in my mind and I won't see them in two years. A difference in thinking.

So you may not be able to attain to observing the Feast for all eight days or even half in fellowship with other brethren in a sponsored Feast site location but you should strive to do all that you can, all that you're able to do and that may mean sacrifice as I said. Sacrifice! Isn't that what this way of life... I think... as I was going through and reading this about the Feast of Tabernacles, every time I do about all the Holy Days... you know what it says in there? We offer up an offering before God – sacrifice by fire. Our life is supposed to be a sacrifice. We learn to sacrifice. We learn through hard work and fighting for what we want when it's God's way of life; a willingness to sacrifice, whatever that sacrifice might be. Strive! Sacrifice! Whatever it is...!

So once you've totalled the cost and you come short, then you can present it to the Church for Feast assistance and we'll try to help you, as many of you as we can with at least *some* extra. Okay? I would love to be able to help everyone go to the Feast of Tabernacles; but we're not going to do it that way because that's not what's coming from God's spirit – okay? I rely on God. I don't rely on my own choice and decision in these matters and that's why things vary from time to time in different ways in different forms... because I know how God works with me and what God gives me and I can't tell you how that works, it's just something I've experienced it in my life over and over and over again.

So, a part of this is a matter of how God's working with us in this. He wants us to have more, but we learn from that don't we? It's a matter of how He's moulding and fashioning and working with us. So much will depend on what you have saved aside and how you have planned. I'll get into some of the things here we need to do.

First of all, send to the Church address or to the Church email a breakdown of:

1. What amount you have saved aside or will have by Feast time; to see that indeed you are planning.

This is how much you've saved aside; and it'll show then that you realize how many days you can stay and show what your plan is; a complete breakdown of planned expenses, in other words.

2. Show what you've planned, because if you haven't planned it out – you're not going to get help.

If you haven't planned out and told us what you think it's going to cost you to get you to the Feast site and back; what it's going to cost you to stay there and what you have planned aside for food... if you're not doing that planning then we can't help you. You've got to plan; you've got to do this because otherwise it's not going to be a good deal. So make it a complete breakdown of planned expenses that you have for being able to attend.

3. Run it by an elder in your area if you're able to because they have experiences in going to the Feast of Tabernacles year after year after year and they can look at it and tell you, "No, you forgot to put down how much you have saved aside, how much you have saved for the Feast of Tabernacles. You need to put that in there."

I'm giving you things that have happened in times past that people didn't fill out completely in the forms when they requested assistance; or you didn't put down how much you thought food was going to cost. You need to put that in there and add it all together.

4. And then present the amount of time you believe that that gives you to observe the Feast. Put those things in there, write it up. Doesn't need to be long and tedious, it just needs to be to the point and have those things contained in it.

And then after you've done that...

5. Send it in.

And do it as quickly as you can because we need to be able to plan for this so we can plan ahead how much we're going to be able to help people and how much we have then to help people with and that's God's desire – to help people to have *more* than what they might normally have for this year's Feast of Tabernacles.

So once it's been presented we'll go through the requests and make decisions based on a variety of criteria obviously, different things and so forth that we'll be looking at in each individual's circumstance. Every one is different; everyone's situations are going to be different. Some of you have different situations with family members and children and so forth and all those things to take into consideration.

So if we are so blessed to observe a Feast in all the sponsored locations this year, then indeed we'll be awesomely blessed, won't we? ...and have much more to rejoice in before God. And I'm thankful that we're going to now be giving more help to individuals, or adding to what you're able to do. If you're able to attend two days, we want you to hopefully be able to attend four. That's a blessing. If you're able to attend four, maybe six or eight... I don't know. I don't know yet how much we're going to have to work with in this area.

Another matter is if we don't have a Feast of Tabernacles, all that you have saved aside – we'll be asking you to turn it in, send it in, just like we have with portions in the past because *when* the 2nd Trumpet, 3rd Trumpet... when those things happen out here, we have money saved aside – we're going to hit advertising and some other things as powerfully as we can because we have a short work and a short time to do it in. I know you understand all these things that we've talked about in times past.

Some of you who have been blessed to have excess 2nd Tithe, if you know how much you have, after you've figured out your plans and you want to help out others – send it and mark it accordingly as '2T Assistance' – okay? And that way we're going to be able to help more as well.

But again, a balance in all these things. There's a balance in how we're to work in some of this and so forth.

Plan for the Feast. All the planning you put into it, indeed, I've been through many Feasts since I didn't get to go in 1969. I was baptized September 9th, 1969 and didn't know a whole lot at that point in time – didn't know about the Feast of Tabernacles and everybody went off to a Feast of Tabernacles and people were talking about different things like that and then when it came I began to understand more the beauty of it. And then when it was over with, I regretted not being able to attend even more... but the next Feast and from then on I was always there, because we learned about... oh, that's right, Audra;

our daughter was born during the Feast of Tabernacles. I went for one day and my wife was back by herself and I went back and kept the Feast with her and our daughter was born *during* the Feast of Tabernacles. Really poor planning for the Feast... ☺ That's why I say it's good to plan ahead in everything in life. Some things don't always work out with your planning. Great Feast! Every Feast has been great, including that one.

So again, what we put into it is what we receive out of it and that's what this sermon is about – to encourage you to plan, to put God first in everything you do toward the Feast and to share this with other brethren. It's so important to share it, not just at the Feast, but in planning stages and as you prepare for some of this.

We've been talking to different people in Europe about their keeping of the Feast over there and different things they're going to be doing and different ones that we know are going to be going to different sites and I'll tell you it's been exciting, it's been inspiring. There's just something that God gives extra, just like He does in prayer life, just like He does in your Bible study life, just like He does when you're fasting... there's that extra portion of strength and power that God gives *in* those things that's a spiritual encouragement, of help; and so there is also in the sharing. We get that from fellowship with one another as well; but especially in fellowship in that kind of planning... it becomes awesomely exciting.

If you haven't attended a Feast and you don't know much about it – ask others, ask the elders about it, ask *how* you go about it, ask what can I do and how do I do this. And if you don't know how to put some of these things together, ask them and they'll be glad to help you and that will enhance *their* Feast – to be able to help *you* to have a Feast, a better Feast because they're going to be a part of helping you to attend longer at the Feast and have *more* fellowship at the Feast during that period of time.

We're going to always keep focused on God's Kingdom; to seek it first. That's what we should strive to do and that's a part of this part as well for the Feast of Tabernacles that's coming up.

~~~end