

Here we are, observing God's holy Feast of Tabernacles. I sincerely hope and pray that it is a time of great rejoicing for each and every one of you.

The title of this sermon is *Our Incredible Journey*.

The dictionary definition for the word 'journey' is as follows: 'The act of travelling from one place or location to another.' The second definition is this: 'A distance to be travelled or the *time* required for a trip.' We'll come back to this one a little bit later.

It is said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. For God's people our journey begins when God, in His perfect timing, extends an invitation, a calling, to each person on an individual basis. How He does that is by giving that individual the ability to understand His word, His truth, in their mind.

Now, before we can take that first step we have to make a choice, a decision which is a crucial part of that very first step. When God begins working with an individual, the first truth He allows them to see is His weekly Sabbath, which is also a test commandment. The knowledge that God's Sabbath is to be observed from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset is of vital importance. Until we start to observe God's Sabbath properly, our incredible journey will never begin.

The other test commandment that God sets before us at the very beginning is Tithing. Right from the start, before God begins to lead us through the spiritual wilderness, the spiritual wasteland of this world, we are tested to see if we will obey Him, if we will follow His instructions, His commandments. It isn't optional, it is absolutely essential if we are ever going to make any forward progress at all.

At this point we will take a look at a couple of scriptures that make the point that it *is* a journey that we are on. Beginning in **Genesis 5** and **verse 21** we read, **Enoch lived sixty-five years and begot Methuselah.**

Verse 22 – After he begot Methuselah Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and begot sons and daughters.

The next scripture that we are going to take a quick look at is in the very next chapter; **Genesis 6:9** it states, **These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.** Now we will build upon these two examples but let's back up to **verse 8** where we read, **But Noah found grace,** that is to say, 'favour' **in the sight of the Eternal.**

Verse 9 again, **These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.**

So how do they walk with God? What does this expression mean? Well, let's read a little further in this chapter; in **verse 13** we find that it says, **And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence through them;** mankind, that is, **and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.**

Verse 14 God tells Noah, **Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shall thou make in the ark, and shall seal it within and without with pitch.**

Verse 22 – Thus did Noah; according to all God commanded him, so he did.

Now turn to **Hebrews 11**, please. There you will find beginning in **verse 7** it states, (by the way, this is also known as the faith chapter) - **By faith, Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.** Now, talk about an incredible journey! It took Noah and his family 120 years to build the ark – the sheer volume of work to be done would have been a truly daunting task, but as God's end-time apostle has pointed out to us on many occasions, Noah was instructed to build the ark on dry ground with no body of water in sight. We cannot begin to even imagine the level of mocking and ridicule that Noah and his family endured for *12 decades*.

One of the first thoughts that comes to mind in this situation is that of perseverance. Have you noticed something, brethren? We are beginning to be shown what some of the absolute necessities are for our journey starting with obedience, coupled with faith, add to that perseverance, that willingness to continue following God's lead no matter what. We know from reading in **verse 6 of Hebrews 11** **...without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.**

Let's take a look at another beautiful example of obedience found in **Genesis 12** beginning in **verse 1 – Genesis 12:1 - Now the Eternal said to Abram, Get thee out of thy country, out from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee:**

Verse 2 – And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.

Verse 3 – And I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curses thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Verse 4 – So Abram departed, as the Eternal had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed out of Haran. So we can clearly see that Abram simply obeyed God's instruction. He didn't question or challenge it, or rely on His own understanding, He simply obeyed, and God accounted it as righteousness to him because it is the right thing for each and every one that God is working with to do.

Another way to describe our journey is that of travelling through a spiritual maze, one that is filled with many challenging obstacles. Jesus Christ stated in **Matthew 7** beginning in **verse 13** that we **Enter by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.**

Verse 14 – Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

At this point we are going to return to the second definition of the word 'journey', which is as follows: 'A distance to be travelled *or* the time required for a trip.' We know that our journey is far more about time

than it is about distance, in many respects. Our journey through life *to life* truly takes a lifetime. It's probably safe to say that at some point in our past experiences we've all encountered that person or family that 'packs everything but the kitchen sink' when they are planning to take a trip. Either our paths will cross at the airport or they will definitely be in front of us at a hotel check-in counter. Well brethren, at the start of our journey to life, that's us. Spiritually speaking we show up and we respond to God's calling with *all* of our baggage, we truly do. Is it any wonder why it takes a lifetime of moulding and fashioning by God Almighty and Jesus Christ to relieve us of some of that baggage? Of course we don't see it as such, but eventually God is able to convince us that that is exactly what it is.

Once we have made the commitment to observe God's Sabbath in the way that is pleasing in His sight, and faithfully send in our 1st Tithes to God's Church, God is able to bring us to the next step in our journey, that of baptism for the forgiveness of our past sins and the receiving of God's holy spirit through the laying on of hands by His ministry.

This is when we start to make real progress on our journey. After we have been placed into the Body of Christ by God the Father our journey develops some very special qualities that are unique to only God's people. With God the Father and Jesus Christ dwelling in us through the power of God's holy spirit not only are we led in our relationships developing on an individual basis but we are now travelling, moving forward as a group, as fellow members of the Body of Christ. Before this time God was leading us through the power of His holy spirit but our ability to obey Him was limited to physical matters in a very limited way. With both the Father and Jesus Christ coming into our lives on an ongoing continual basis we are able to move forward, powerfully so.

There is another major concern for our journey: What are we going to eat? What is it that is going to sustain us along the way? This is a very special concern for God's people as we know, or as I should say, we come to learn that there is only one source of truth that is given to God's people in a very specific way. God satisfies our need for nourishment along the way with an abundance of knowledge and precious truth that can only come from Him through Jesus Christ by the power of His holy spirit, through His end-time apostle, His end-time prophet. This is the *only* way we can receive the knowledge and truth that comes from God to His Church.

As we read in **John** beginning in **verse 32...John verse 32** [John 6:32] – **Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, Verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not the bread from heaven; but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.**

Verse 33 – For the bread of God is He which comes down from heaven and gives life unto the world. It is the hidden manna and living waters from God Almighty that sustain us throughout our entire journey. God provides His people with that spiritual meat and drink from Sabbath to Sabbath and from Holy Day to Holy Day...and not only that but also at this time as an added boost, as He desires to give it, we are blessed to have a posting from His end-time apostle, usually on a weekly basis.

By now I truly hope that we have come to realize that our heavenly Father always pours out in phenomenal abundance exactly what we need, exactly when we need it, He truly does. So there is no need to be concerned about whether or not God will provide for His people.

Our main concern is that we strive to remain a part of the Body in order to be able to receive the spiritual nourishment we desperately need. When we cut ourselves off from that continual supply of strength, as a result of our sins, our forward progress is stopped immediately and *will not*, cannot

resume until we repent and ask for forgiveness. We actually begin to go in the opposite direction, back towards the darkness and away from the light of God's truth, which is why it is so *extremely dangerous* when we fail to repent of our sinful actions and attitudes quickly. When we are able to be brought back into fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ the journey resumes immediately.

We are taken through wide variety of terrain in the forms of tests and trials which have been specially designed by God to mould and fashion each individual so they will fit perfectly into the place that God desires for them to dwell, where they will be the most fulfilled on into life evermore. There are spiritual mountains to be climbed which seem to be as tall as Mount Everest that are designed to bring us to the conclusion that this would be a really good time to drop some of that baggage that we all start out with on our journey. The problem is that we usually do not come to that conclusion until we are almost at the peak of that mountain, to the point where what is stated in Isaiah chapter 58... **Isaiah 58:6** can be seen for the spiritual burdens in the form of attitudes that they truly are. Where we read... **Is not this the fast that I have chosen? ...to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, that we place upon others, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?** At other times along our journey as God leads us through spiritual wasteland of this world, there are places that feel as hot to us as Death Valley in California, known to be the hottest place on the planet, where the sun beating down on us and the heat of our fiery trials helps to bring to the surface the spiritual impurities that must be removed from our lives. Things in our nature that we would not be able to see if God did not reveal them to us in the midst of those trials. All these trials are designed by God, our heavenly Father, to make us stronger, not to destroy us, designed to purify us and cleanse us of all our unrighteousness.

Turning now to **Matthew 13**, beginning in **verse 3** we read about the parable of the sower and the seed. **And He, Jesus Christ, spoke many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow...And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up because they had no depth, deepness of the earth.**

Verse 6 – And when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.

Verse 7 – And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them. But others fell in good ground and brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, and some thirtyfold. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. It becomes quite obvious as we read through these verses that there are many obstacles, many perils along the way, many of which appear at the very beginning of our journey. Satan is ever seeking an opportunity to stop us from beginning or ever completing our incredible journey.

Despite all these dangers that confront us as we travel towards our final destination, which is the Kingdom, the Family of God, God is more than able to deliver us. In fact, brethren, our heavenly Father has seen to it that there are some in our very midst celebrating this Feast of Tabernacles that have completed their incredible journey, that were a part of the final sealing that took place during the 1335 day period spoken of by Daniel, which occurred between Trumpets of 2008 and Pentecost of 2012. They are a part of the 144,000 that will be resurrected or changed at the glorious return of Jesus Christ on a Pentecost. They will be serving God Almighty and Jesus Christ in the administration of God's government during Christ's Millennial reign, which is pictured by this Feast of Tabernacles that we are currently celebrating - a time of great rejoicing and tremendous excitement, truly.

I find this knowledge to be *immensely* exciting and very encouraging and a tremendous source of inspiration. They are living proof that God is able to bring us safely to our ultimate destination.

And as it says in **2 Timothy** beginning in **chapter 4, verse 7, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.**

Verse 8 – Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the Righteous Judge, will give to me on that day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearance. These verses can now be applied to them.

To help keep us focused throughout the time of our travel from darkness to light, as God's end-time apostle says, we observe each and every one of God's annual Holy Days that picture His glorious plan of salvation for mankind. But first we begin by observing the Passover ceremony, which is followed immediately by the Days of Unleavened Bread, then Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, this Feast of Tabernacles, and finally the Last Great Day. These appointed times that God has appointed we are reminded of the meaning of each and every one of God's Holy Days and what they picture for God's people, are opportunities for us to receive an incredible boost like no other – *especially* at this Feast of Tabernacles where we receive the *highest* concentration of correction, encouragement, and inspiration from God, far beyond what we are able to take in at the time but we are to take it with us and use it to sustain us until the spring Holy Day season is upon us once again.

To be offered such an incredible calling at this time in the history of the human race, at this time in the history of mankind, a time of transition from man's self-rule to the rule of Jesus Christ and the 144,000 at the very pinnacle of all human history, is such a phenomenal blessing, it truly is. In these end-times we have witnessed the most amazing advancements in technologies that God has ever given to mankind. To see how He has inspired His end-time apostle and prophets to make use of that technology for His great purpose is so incredibly remarkable.

There is an added excitement for God's people at this time, one that we have desired for so long...that of sharing our bread with the hungry. That time is *rapidly* approaching, brethren, it's staring us *right* in the face. God is preparing the minds of millions of people to be able to begin to see what we are blessed to see. ...millions of people that are starving spiritually that need the bread of life that comes from God.

Let's take another look at **Isaiah 58**; this time we will read from **verse 6** through **9. Is this not the fast that I have chosen, to loosen the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yolk.**

Verse 7 – Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou sees the naked, that thou cover him; that thou hid thyself not from thine own flesh.

Verse 8 – Then shall thy light break forth as the morning and thy health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; glory of the Eternal shall be thy reward guard.

We find many of the same concerns addressed in **Matthew 25** beginning in **verse 31**. We read, **When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory. And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats:**

Verse 33 – And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Verse 35 - For I was hungry and you gave Me meat, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in, naked and you clothed Me. I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came unto Me.

Verse 37 - Then shall the righteous answer Him saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You a drink? When did we see you as a stranger and took You in, or naked and clothed You? ...or when did we see You sick or in prison and come to You?

Verse 40 - And the King shall answer and say unto them, Truly I say unto you, inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these, My brethren, you have done it unto Me. Then He shall say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepare for the devil and his angels: For I was hungry and you gave Me no meat: I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink: I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you clothed Me not, sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me. Then shall they also answer Him saying, Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison and did not minister unto you? Then He shall answer them saying, Truly I say unto you, inasmuch as you did it not to one of the least of these you did *it* not to Me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Each and every one that God has called, has invited to begin this journey, knows the sequence of events that unfolds in their life. God starts to open your mind to His knowledge, His truth, and the hunger for His word begins to grow rapidly. At the same time, your relationships begin to change, you are no longer a part of this world and it's ways, you *are* cut off from it. That is about to happen to millions of people that will need to be given what God has given freely to us.

When we take the time and we make the effort to go back and look at all the spiritual knowledge, and especially the 57 Truths that God has given to His Church to strengthen it, we should be in absolute awe, filled with a profound thankfulness to our heavenly Father. They are the pearls of great price that we are to carry with us throughout the entire length of our journey, that we are to share freely with those that God calls in the time directly ahead of us.

For those of us that *hope* to be among those that are so richly blessed to live on into that start of the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ and the 144,000 – because God does not owe it to any of us – there is that added urgency to clearly demonstrate to God the Father that we truly want what He is offering to us at this time, to fight for His way of life no matter what we encounter along our journey.

By now we have come to realize for the overwhelming majority of the time that it takes to complete this journey we are standing or sitting still, physically speaking. Our travelling, for the most part, takes place in our mind where we are being brought out of the chaos and confusion, the fear and superstitions of this world and it's ways, into the peacefulness and order of a sound mind where God's truth shatters all that is false and full of superstition and replaces all fear and doubt with His Godly boldness and confidence in His ability to bring us into His Family.

There is one final analogy that will help bring out some important aspects of this journey that we are on. In China there is a spectacular hiking trail that clearly illustrates so many of those aspects that we encounter along the way, it is located on Mount Hua Shan, which is located about 75 miles east of the city of Xian. It is considered to be one of the steepest mountain ranges on the planet and is ranked amongst the most dangerous when it comes to mountain hiking trails. The south peak of Mount Hua Shan is over 7,000 ft in elevation. In order to comprehend the challenges that are associated with Mount Hua Shan, allow me to give you a few examples: on one particular section of this trail you will encounter an area covering approximately 15 km (close to 10 miles) of steps that lead almost straight up. That's a lot of steps! If we consider that each one would cover approximately 1 ft there is over 5,000 per mile – times that by 10, that's over 50,000 steps. That's going to take some time. And though the steps are secure there is only a small chain to hold onto as far as a railing goes, and that flight of stairs is so long and so steep that only physically conditioned hikers should even attempt this ascent. Translation – we do not have the strength of and by ourselves to complete this journey, we must rely on God to deliver us. We need to remain, to endure until the end the training that only He can provide us with in order to finish.

Looking at a couple more features of this phenomenal trail: In another section one must scale the side of the mountain peak by walking on ridges that are less than a foot wide while holding on to a chain that has been attached to the side of the mountain...while at the same time pressing your body as close as possible to the mountain... and holding on to that chain for dear life is highly recommended. There is no way to save yourself if you were to fall from these paths. In other words, as mentioned earlier, '...narrow and difficult is the way that leads to life'. We have read on many occasions that we are the branches. We must cling to the vine for dear life knowing full well that God is our Rock, our High Tower, our strength. Indeed, it is truly impossible for any one of us to save ourselves.

So to summarize what we've covered: It has been determined that in order to begin this journey there are certain requirements that must be in place before a simple step can be taken. Obedience - God needs to see a sincere, genuine desire, a willingness to follow His commandments, His instructions. He cannot, He will not work with a mind that is full of selfish pride, one that relies on its own understanding. Faith, like obedience, must be clearly demonstrated, even though we are very limited in our ability to exercise it until we reach the point where we receive the gift of God's holy spirit. After that occurs, God gives us the ability to truly believe and obey Him in spirit and in truth; likewise, when it comes to perseverance all these necessities are supplied by our heavenly Father after we have responded to His invitation and have reached the point where we can be placed by Him into the Body of Christ. God sustains us with the spiritual food and water we need to complete this journey, pouring out more knowledge and truth upon His people at this time than any other time in all human history as we draw ever closer to the end of this age, this *miserable* age of man's self rule.

We, for our part, are to stand guard, watching constantly for anything that might lead us astray from the straight and narrow path that leads us to life evermore in the Family of God.

You know that at some point along the way, *that* question is going to be raised: Are we there yet? Well, brethren, for the 144,000 the answer is a resounding, "YES!" Their journey has been successfully completed. The only thing that remains for them is to receive the crown of glory when God will give them a body composed of spirit, which is incorruptible.

How incredible is that?

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