

Well, good morning, brethren. And here we are at the 2014 Feast of Tabernacles!

Even though this sermon is being recorded in advance of the Feast, I know that when it is played back I'm going to be sitting in my chair at the meeting hall surrounded by friends and family, and those that over the course of the Feast I will get to know better... and I'm going to be tired. I'm going to be exhausted, because even though services will begin at 10:30 in the morning, because my wife and I have travelled to the Netherlands this year for the Feast and the time zones associated with that, my body will feel like it's 4:30 in the morning. And let me tell you, I don't like early mornings! And knowing my habits, I probably stayed up way too late last night catching up with people I haven't seen in a while and developing new relationships as well. So, yes, I am tired. But mixed in with that tiredness is also a lot of excitement and a lot of joy.

We're here at the Feast of Tabernacles! We're here to rejoice before God. We're here to learn and be taught by God in the single largest outflow of God's spirit through these prepared messages for the entire year. And we're here to create memories together. And we have been waiting and looking forward to this all year! And we've been planning for this all year as well. No one has arrived here on accident, as it takes a lot of work and a lot of effort to be here, to be where you are. And I don't mean just sitting in a chair listening to these sermons for eight days, but also the fact that you are *here*, that you are striving to stay within the Temple during this crucial timeframe where we are being measured, where the Temple is being measured. And there is hard work involved in that, isn't there? It is not easy!

Attending the Feast, regardless of which site you attended, or even if circumstances required you to stay at home, the Feast itself is a destination, and it is a journey to get here. And as we know, the Feast represents that awesome 1,000-year rule of Christ and the 144,000, establishing the Government of God, the Kingdom of God here on this very earth.

And for those of us called in advance of this event during these most exciting times, that is a destination that we long for, that we want fulfilled, that we want to arrive at. And just like attending the Feast, there is a lot of preparation and a lot of hard work that goes into making that happen.

The preparation and the journey involved in all of this, that is the topic of today's split-sermon. Because your journey through life with God at the helm guiding and directing, molding and fashioning us as we strive to continually let go of our natural ways, and instead, tune into and implement God's ways, that journey, our journey through this physical life with God's spirit dwelling within us, is what prepares us for the Kingdom of God.

And so the title of today's split-sermon is, *Preparing for the Kingdom of God*. And we will focus on different aspects of preparing for the Feast and the journey it took to get here and how that physical example can help us to see spiritual aspects of preparing for the Kingdom of God.

So, one of the very first things that we have to do in our journey towards the Kingdom of God is understanding our calling, and if we are going to respond to that calling. We know that not everyone is called during this time, and not everyone is invited to attend the Feast of Tabernacles at this time either. But if we *are* called, and we *are* responding appropriately, when we understand that observing the Feast is a commandment, we are going to strive to obey God, and spiritual growth and spiritual blessings will follow as we faithfully observe these days.

So, why did you choose the particular Feast site that you chose to attend this year? One of the most common reasons is that we must "count the cost" associated with a given Feast site. We had to financially add up all the expenses associated with attending the given site, including our transportation, our lodging, and our food. Another aspect of counting the cost and how it affects where you may observe the Feast is by considering various health reasons. There are many people this year who are staying local, but they are still very much faithfully observing the Feast, because they have accurately counted the cost and realize that it's much too high of a price to pay on their health if they were to travel.

So once these costs have been calculated, you then need to see if you have enough financial means set aside in second tithe in order to attend. And this involves being faithful and setting aside that second tithe (which is 10% of your net income) that happens on an ongoing basis every time that you are paid. Now, for myself I get paid weekly by my employer, so it's easy for me to make an association of being faithful in this week by week. And I liken it to being faithful in the Sabbath week by week, seventh-day by seventh-day. And counting the costs in attending the Feast also means that you are making observing the Feast a priority. It supersedes your job. It supersedes any relationships that you are in where someone might want to hold you back and try to discourage you from attending. So we "count the cost," and we are then able to make a decision that we can commit to.

Can you imagine, for a second, if you didn't truly "count the cost" the right way and you realized that you only had enough financial means to travel half-way there after you already started that journey, and you ended up stranded on the side of the road? Or maybe you are able to make it to the site, but you don't even have enough money to cover your hotel bill? Or to eat? That would be a terribly awkward thing to have happen, brethren. And using that example of "counting the cost" and how it effects where you might decide to attend the Feast, we're very familiar with that phrase, "counting the cost," because it's a common admonition given to someone who is seeking baptism, someone taking that next natural step in responding to their calling. They need to "count the cost."

So, brethren, once we start the journey to attend the Feast, we need to stay at it until we arrive. We don't go halfway and then turn back around. And the same applies to our calling.

Please turn with me to **Luke 14:26-33**—**If any man comes to Me, and does not hate his father, and mother, wife, and children, brothers, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.** And again, that word "hate" is not a literal hatred; it just means that you are to "love less." That in a nutshell, God is to be your number one priority. **And whoever does not bear his stake and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has *enough* to finish *it*—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see *it* begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish? Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.**

So, did you "count the cost" when you were baptized? I know that if someone was to ask me that question my answer would be that I did to the best of my ability of what I saw at that point in time (without God's spirit), and that what I saw was very much physical. And little did I know how these words would ring true of what we have to lose (or forsake), in order to follow Christ. And there's a lot of mercy in that, brethren. There is a lot of mercy that God doesn't show us everything involved all at once, because, quite frankly we wouldn't be able to handle it. And we're still not done. There is still more time ahead of us, more of that journey ahead of us, and we don't understand fully what lies ahead. But God has made that wonderful promise to us, that as long as we continue to do our part, He will be faithful in His part. And He has given the path to follow through His Son, that we may seek forgiveness and repent when we fall short, because He *does* want you and I to succeed. And there's a lot of great comfort that can be taken from that.

So, are you here until the very end? Are you committed to finishing the journey you have started in preparing for the Kingdom of God?

Moving on, once we have "counted the cost" and we've made our commitment to attend the Feast, we then need to make changes in our lives in order to observe it faithfully. And we must make *massive* changes in our lives in order to prepare for the Kingdom of God. Some of the things that we have to plan for and change, for those of us that work for someone, is that we have to go to our employer and we have to tell them that we're going to be taking some time off from our job for a period of time so that we can come together before God, be taught, and rejoice before Him.

And the same applies in our lives, of preparing for the Kingdom of God. Because we also must set aside time for holy use in order to observe the weekly Sabbaths, as well as the annual Sabbaths.

Another physical aspect of keeping the Feast is that we have to pack for the journey. We need to take out our suitcases and fill it with useful items in order to have a successful trip and a successful stay. What is interesting is that no two people are ever going to pack the exact same items. And the reason why is that we all have different backgrounds, we have different taste, and preferences, and personalities, *but* the destination is still going to be the same for everybody. We're all attending and

observing the Feast of Tabernacles, we just happen to have packed and prepared in different ways. And that's awesome!

First and foremost, God works through His Body. He works through His Church, and there is a government in place that we are to follow. And it would be incredibly naive and foolish to think that we can somehow escape that reality and instead have a one on one special, unique relationship with God outside of His Body. Having said that, the Body is composed of individuals that are unique and distinct. And God allows for the difference between us. And what is awesome to understand is that God *wants* those differences. God *wants* those differences that are *not* in conflict with Him. They're not in conflict with His mind, or in His purpose for us.

To expand upon self, and the need of overcoming self and sacrificing self, brethren, first and foremost, whenever that is said it is talking about that which opposes God—our natural carnal thinking that has enmity against God. It is *NOT* talking about your personal preferences and what distinctly makes you, you. That is *your* personality, and it's a beautiful thing, as long as it doesn't oppose God, and as long as you are *not* trying to impose *your* preferences, *your* opinions on others all the time. There is a give and a take and a reciprocation that should occur inside healthy relationships. But having differences between us is what makes life interesting and allows us to learn from each other. So God works with us collectively in the Body, but also as individuals.

Let's turn to **1 Corinthians 12:4**. Paul states—**There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.**

And let's skip down to **verse 12**—**For as the body is one and has many members, but all members are still of that one body, so also is Christ. For by one spirit we were all baptized into one Body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one spirit. For in fact the Body is not one member but many.**

Let's please go to **verse 27** where it states—**Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.**

Well, being here at the Feast is a great time to enjoy the differences between all of us. But we all share a common bond and a unity of faith as well. It's awesome to experience. No two people will pack the same and prepare exactly the same way to be here, but there is going to be a number of common items that all of us are going to pack and we're all going to prepare the Feast for. We're all going to bring our Bibles. We're hopefully all going to bring a teachable attitude and a teachable spirit. We should all have brought an eagerness to fellowship with others of like mind. And we should all have an attitude of extending ourselves and a willingness to go outside of our comfort zone in order to make this Feast a Feast that includes everyone, so that no one feels left out.

So, brethren, we've "counted the cost" to be here, and we've prepared for the journey by packing and having those right attitudes with us, but now comes the time that we need to actually commence on that journey. It's time to travel, and that travel involved in getting to the Feast. So we're going to focus on examples of flying to the Feast.

The airplane can be a metaphor for both the Church as a whole and a plane could be a metaphor as an individual within the Church. So, we need to head to the airport in order to catch our flight. And for those that have flown before, you know, it always seems to be a case of "hurry up and wait." Hurry up and wait, rush, rush, rush, wait around. You have to make it to the airport in so much time before the plane boards, and you have to travel from your home to the airport, and depending upon the time of day, or if there is construction going on, you know, rush hour, you have to give yourself plenty of time because you do not want to miss your flight, do you? You then have to find parking at the airport, perhaps take a parking shuttle to the terminal, and then you need to wait in a long line so you can check in your luggage, and then you usually get in another long line to go through security. Once past security you have to find your way to the right gate—and in some of these airports that are really huge, that can take a long time to even get to your gate. And once at your gate you have to wait until they actually commence boarding the plane. And when they do start to board, depending upon what row you're in, you might have to stand in the jail-way for a long time, and you're waiting for everyone in front of you to find their seat. And then once you're on board, you need to hopefully find enough space in the overhead compartments so that you can store your carry-on luggage. And then you have to sit in your seat and you have to wait until the entire plane is full of people that have gone through the exact same thing that you've just gone through. There's a huge sense of urgency and there is a pressure associated with that. But often after the hurry of each one of these separate actions there is a period of waiting in between. And that requires a lot of patience on our part.

These feelings that I'm talking about might occur within the Church as well as we consider these end-times, you now, where we thought we were and the overwhelming sense of urgency that's associated with that. And so we made certain decisions and actions based upon beliefs and faith, you know, where we were in time. And after some of those actions were taken, it was then just a matter of waiting, of waiting on God to make clear the path before us. And God has continued to do just that, but it's always in His timing and not ours.

So, brethren, we have grown as a Body collectively through this, and we have grown as individuals as well, having experienced these changes, always striving to have that sense of urgency in our lives though, especially in our spiritual lives, of rapidly changing when we need to as God continues to reveal truth to His Church, and we wait on God.

I love this next analogy. I love it because it's just so fitting about air travel. Brethren, we all have baggage. We all have different biases and out-of-balance opinions and ideas, and we can be rough around the edges in how we treat people at times. And so often that's because of past experiences and situations and how we react to similar future situations and experiences.

Well, we all bring that baggage into the airplane when we board it, and we bring our baggage with us when we enter into the Church as well. Not a single one of us is even remotely perfect, and so we drag our baggage with us throughout our entire life. Now, hopefully, the size of that baggage continues to get smaller and smaller over time as God reveals to us what we really are and where we can change, so that we can emulate more of His mind. But just like baggage on an airplane, it usually doesn't cause much of a problem when it's checked in, when we check our baggage and it's stowed away under the plane out of site and not near others. But the problems can really start to rise though when you take your baggage into the seating area of the plane and you try to cram it over people's heads. You're taking *your* baggage and you're putting it *over* people's heads...or perhaps you try to cram it under the seat in front of you. It's when *your* baggage is affecting other people's personal space (when it affects them personally), that the problems can really start to rise.

I've seen a couple of cases where someone was lifting up a very heavy piece of luggage to put into the overhead compartment, and while they were lifting it up, their strength gave out and the luggage became too heavy for them. Gravity took over and that baggage dropped right down on somebody's head that was sitting below where they wanted to put it. And when that happens, that person wasn't expecting it and they weren't too happy about it. And, if there is too much baggage inside the seating area of an airplane very often a flight attendant will tell you your baggage needs to be checked, that it needs to be checked in, taken out of the seating area and stowed under the plane.

So, are we conscious and aware of the baggage that we bring with us into the Body and how it affects our relationships with others? Do we try to check our baggage—our attitudes and our motives—before it becomes a problem? The plane will not leave—you will not be able to complete your journey—until your baggage is checked properly. And sometimes just one individual can affect everyone else on the plane, by holding it back, because they won't follow the guidance that's been given. And in those cases, when they will not comply or are not in agreement with what they must do, they are removed and taken off of the plane, exactly as to what happens with the Body when someone is disfellowshipped. They are removed from God's Church out of love and the long-term well being for both the individual and the Body as a whole.

This is just using a modern physical analogy to show spiritual lessons regarding how we can affect others.

In regards to some being disfellowshipped, or being removed from the plane, it's important to remember that just because somebody has boarded the plane doesn't necessarily mean that they want to go where the plane is going. People go on journeys for a lot of different reasons, and not all of them are good or sincere. And once someone starts the journey for the wrong reason, but they still give an outward appearance so that they're not kicked off the plane. They're not kicked off the flight. They are not going to get out of that plane until it lands.

We are in a very crucial period right now. We're in a very crucial period right now where the Temple is being measured. And just because we sit in a chair Sabbath by Sabbath does not mean that we're in the Temple. What really defines whether or not we are in God's Temple or not in God's Temple is if God's

spirit is dwelling within us. And God's spirit will not dwell around unrepentant sin. I think the admonition that was given by Paul (no need to turn there, but it is in Ephesians 5:15), where he says, "See that you walk," and your "walk" is your conduct, your choices, and your actions, and your attitudes, and your motives behind the way that you live. "See that you walk circumspectly," and "circumspectly" means "with diligence and very exacting." "See that you walk circumspectly, that your walk," the way that you live your life, "is not random, that it does not reflect that raw, natural, carnal human response to situations, but rather that you are tempered," that your life is filtered, "by incorporating God's way of life into your life."

Please *do* turn with me to **Matthew 13:24-30**, and this is the parable of the wheat and the tares—**Another parable He put forth to them, saying: The Kingdom of heaven is like a man who has sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares? He said to them, An enemy has done this. And his servant said to him, Do you want us then to go and gather them up? But he said, No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.**

So, brethren, let's seize the time available to us to maximize a change in ourselves towards God. It is a blessing that we still have a bit of time to work on ourselves in a world environment, that even though it's rapidly declining, it's nothing compared to how it will be. Once events happen it will forever change the rest of this end-time age.

Okay! I've got some good news for you. I've got some *very* good news for all of you. What I'm going to say is absolutely nothing new, and it's really something that we already know when we consider it, but I find it encouraging all the same when I phrase it the way that I'm going to phrase this. Brethren, we don't have to know how to fly a plane! None of us have to know those intricate workings of how a plane actually works and how we're supposed to fly it. It's *not our job*! It's not our job! I'm very happy about that! On the way over here, not once did I think about what the best flight path would be, or to think about going up to the pilot and arguing with him that I know a better route to get here. That would be stupid! What we have to know, what our part in all of this is to make sure that we're on the right plane. Is this God's one true Church? Do you believe that? And if you do, then you're on that plane! And then we have to be in our seats for the journey and make sure that we conduct ourselves in a way on the plane that is appropriate and fitting, and that we heed the instruction given to us by the pilot and the attendants.

See, it's God's job to lead and guide His Church, and to mold and fashion each one of us through an entire lifetime of conversion. God is the pilot, Jesus Christ is the co-pilot, and they know exactly and absolutely the best and appropriate flight plan in order to complete the journey and to bring us to our

destination, into Elohim, into the Family of God. And I want to further that analogy a little bit because there's flight attendants on the plane as well, and they're there to follow the pilot's orders and to serve you. They're there to pass on the pilot's instructions that apply to everyone and then implement whatever those instructions are, and to help others along with the journey in preparing for the Kingdom of God.

Those flight attendants are the ones that are interacting with the passengers face to face. And it's about the ministry and what the purpose of the ministry is. The ministry does not pilot the plane. That's the job of God and His Son, Jesus Christ, but *they* do it through the ministry and through the Church.

So, brethren, we don't decide or control or have *any* say whatsoever in all the variables of when the plane takes off. And when the plane takes off we can liken that to when we're called. And we don't have any control over when the plane lands, its final landing, which can be likened to when we're sealed, when God can say, "Now I know you." But we have to be ready to board the plane and take that journey when it's ready to be taken. Don't board the wrong plane. It's going to take you somewhere else. It's going to take you to a place different than where you want to go. And what about turning to the left or turning to the right? Do we decide for ourselves when to do that? We sure better not! It's not our job. It is our job, though, to respond with the right attitude and with the right action when we do need to make what we think are perhaps sudden or unexpected changes in our journey.\*\*\*

I want to share with you a personal story that happened to me that... Well, it really helps me to relate to this. Back in February of 2006, I needed to take a flight to Washington, D.C., for my job. I usually tried to find the cheapest airfare that I could for my employer, and because of where we were meeting on this particular Sabbath I saw that there was a cheap evening flight from Toledo, Ohio that went to D.C., but it had a layover in Detroit first, which is only about 60 miles (which is about 96km) away from Toledo. So it's a very, very short flight. I usually flew out of Detroit directly to Washington because Detroit was closer for me, but in this particular case, and as often happens, taking a flight from another city that has a layover and the city that you really want to leave from is somehow cheaper. It never made any sense to me. But this was the situation there. So it is a Saturday night in winter and I'm sitting at my gate area of a Toledo airport waiting for my flight to Detroit to depart. Toledo is a really small airport and it was dead. There was hardly anybody there, whatsoever. And I was sitting in the gate area and an announcement came over the speakers asking all passengers on this flight to Detroit to go downstairs to the ticketing area. I had no idea what was going on, so I gathered my belongings, I go downstairs, and the woman behind the counter informs me that the airline has cancelled my flight because I was the only passenger on the airplane, and that instead, the airline had arranged a limousine to take me to Detroit where I could still make my connecting flight to Washington. That was completely unexpected, but I knew if I wanted to reach my destination I knew I had to change my plans in how I thought my journey was going to take, and I had to "go with the flow," (so to speak).

I'm going to wrap this up real quick because there is just a small bit of humor in how this particular segment of the journey ended. Where I am from the word "limousine" is sometimes a bit overused, so



that it can mean not just the traditional stretched luxury car, it can also mean like a small bus that people can rent, or even like a small shuttle. It's basically like a bus; it can also mean that. And so I thought for sure that's what it was going to be, that I was going to be on this tiny little bus to go to Detroit. And when I went out to the curb there is this fantastic black stretch limousine with a chauffeur waiting to take me away. Now, this particular weekend that I was travelling on was not an ordinary weekend at all for Detroit, because it happened to be Super Bowl Sunday, which is (for those of you not from America), which is a championship game of American football between the two best teams to see who is "the best." And this particular year the Super Bowl was being held in Detroit. For months the local news on the TV and the radio stations were discussing this event and how all of these famous movie stars and musicians and VIP's were flying into town for all of these parties on Friday night and Saturday night. And so this Saturday night is when I was travelling out to Washington.

So to make a long story, short, the limo arrives in Detroit in the airport and it is packed. It's one of the busiest times I've ever seen it. And when my limo pulled up to the curb, literally, a bunch of people gathered around the limo probably hoping to see what kind of famous person was going to pop out of the limo. Well, when the door opened and those around saw that it was me, let's just say that there was like a visible look of disgust on their face. They were *clearly* disappointed and they just kind of walked away shaking their heads like, "Oh, a waste of time!" I just thought that was kind of funny to see that, to experience that.

Anyway, brethren, we don't map out the paths that our journey will take. That's not our job. But in order to arrive at the goal and at destination we follow the path regardless.

I want to change the analogy of the plane being the Church for a brief moment, and instead I want you to think of all the individual planes in the sky as individuals in this earth, some (but a very small some) of whom are members of God's Church. There's a lot of planes in the sky, a lot of people that are going about their business and their lives, and they're going all over the place. Whatever Feast site you have attended this year, for those of us who travelled by air, we all didn't get there on the same plane together. We all started from different locations and we flew into a number of different airports around this area, and they all departed and arrived at different times. And we all had different experiences on our way here. But the destination was still the same. The destination was still about being here at the Feast. And we have a short-term destination ahead of us, which is the Millennium, and we have long-term destination ahead of us, which is to make that change into becoming members of the God Family. And for some, for the 144,000, that will happen at the beginning of the Millennium.

So when each and every one of us was in route here, did any of us have to worry about crashing into another plane? The sky is full of them! Did any of us have to worry about the specifics of the route of another member's journey here? No. We didn't. And I sure hope no one puts that on themselves, because that would be an incredibly presumptuous thing to do.

As members of the Church, God is not guiding and directing just one airplane... not just our individual airplane. He isn't working with just me. He is working with hundreds and hundreds of other "planes,"

other *thousands* of individuals, coordinating the speed and the altitude and the flight path and all the variables that ensure that everyone is able to reach their destination. As long as they follow the flight path provided they'll get to their destination successfully. That's what an air traffic controller does, and it all happens behind the scenes, and it is God's job to do that. And really, it's a matter of faith in believing that God *can* perform that to all that He wills to do so.

No one knows how God has so exactly and precisely molded and fashioned unique things into us that can be used now and in the future for the benefit of others, and He is doing it for His entire creation that He is working with all at the same time. And we can't even begin to understand and grasp the awesome ability needed to do such a thing.

Brethren, I hate to state the obvious, but under even the best of circumstances travelling via any mode has a certain degree of uncomfortableness to it. Well, guess what? No one ever said that our journey was going to be a smooth or a comfortable ride. Our lives, our preparing for the Kingdom of God is not comfortable, and there is a lot of turbulence along the way. You may sit next to people on the plane you would prefer not to. There may be members in the Body that you would prefer not to have around you. And brethren, if that is the case, you better strive for a change in yourself very quickly, because no one is better than anyone else. And a bit of insight and understanding into how we should all be striving for that same destination, but that we are all having different starting points, different backgrounds, and we're all at different phases of our journey and we all have that different baggage that we carry. You know, appreciating that can go a long way in having compassion, and mercy, and love for each other. And ask yourself, do you sometimes act like a person that others might not want to sit next to?

I want to share with you another personal story that I'll never forget. I learned a lot from it. And this occurred to me during a timeframe when I was being re-awakened. I was asleep and I was being re-awakened and God had mercy on me. I was on a red-eye flight, which is an early morning flight, and I'm not a morning person at all, so I was very tired and I just didn't want to be on this particular flight. I was stuck in a middle seat so I was scrunched in between people on either side of me, and it was a domestic flight so the spacing between the seats (the rows) was very small, and I was physically uncomfortable. And as I sat in my seat people were still boarding the plane and streaming past me, and I saw one particular individual board the plane that stood out in my mind. Now, I didn't know who this person was, but because of their appearance and their demeanor I instantly had made some judgements as to what this person would be like. And sure enough, the person sits directly in front of me, directly in front of my seat. And as soon as they sit down they push the button in the armrest and the seat goes all the way back. We haven't even taken off yet, right, we're still boarding, and he's already pushed his seat all the way back!

Now, I'm not exactly a small guy, and I was sitting kind of slouched down in my chair a little bit as it was, so when he pushed his chair back it went right into my knees. And brethren, instantly I lifted my knee up and I pushed it hard into the back of his chair, hard enough that he lurched forward and he instantly got out of his seat. And he turned around and he says to me, "What are you doing?" And I said to him, "You're

crushing my knees." And I will never forget what he said next to me, because it shamed me greatly that I had already done what I had done. He didn't say it as nicely as I'm going to say it, but the words that he said, he really meant. He said to me, "Why didn't you tell me?" As soon as I heard him say that I instantly knew the reason why I didn't tell him. I didn't tell him because I had already judged him. I *knew* he wouldn't care. I *knew* that he was just selfish and he was only thinking of himself and he could care less about anybody. And I was absolutely wrong and presumptuous in judging him like that and in doing that. So he sat back down in his chair and he put his chair all the way back up so I had my little leg room back. And I'm sure he probably sat there and thought to himself, "That guy is a total jerk!" And I know for myself, I sat in my chair and I thought, "I *am* a total jerk!" and I had to repent. And after the plane landed I went up to him and I apologized.

So, I want to contrast that story with a positive experience that I had on an airplane. There was another time that I was flying with my family, and my children were still very small (they were about one and two years old) and I was sitting next to a business man who had on a very nice and expensive looking suit. And during the course of the flight the stewardess came down the aisle and gave everybody drinks, and at that point in time my son, who was sitting on my lap because he didn't have his own seat yet (the airline didn't force him to have a seat at that age), he decided that would be a great time to kick. And his feet connected with the man's orange juice and the orange juice spilled all over the man's (what looked like), a very expensive suit. I was embarrassed and I apologized profusely to him. And the man's response to what had just happened was so calm and so kind-hearted that I really appreciated sitting next to him. He was an older gentleman and he mentioned how he had young kids himself and that, he told me, if I thought that this was bad, that I should wait until they're teenagers. And during the course of the trip we had a nice conversation about childrearing and the like.

So who would I rather sit next to on the plane? The person that had orange juice spilled on them, or the person that had the back of a seat that was in front of them reclined, so that they lashed out? And brethren, that's the goal. That's the whole point. To recognize when we can do better, to recognize when we need to change, and then strive to get out that ugly, natural response, and instead, exercise patience and love towards each other, towards others on the plane, towards others in the Body, and others that you come into contact with, whoever they may be, whoever is sitting next to you, in front of you, or behind you.

Well, on this particular journey that we've been discussing, we've had a flight cancelled, we've had knees crushed, we've had orange juice spilled, and we've been learning and growing, preparing for the Kingdom of God all along the way, taking every experience, good and bad, and trying to implement what we have learned and put it into practice, implementing Godly wisdom as He gives it to us.

And then that moment arrives that we long for, the plane's wheels have touched down on the ground and we hear the pilot or the attendant say over the plane's speaker, "We have arrived at our destination." We've made it! We're here at the Feast. So the question is: Does that mean that the journey is now over? Is the hard work now behind us? The work continues on, doesn't it, brethren? It does

not end. The Feast is not a vacation, and the Millennium is not going to be a perpetual vacation either, where it's time to kick-back and relax.

Being here at the Feast takes a lot of work, a lot of preparation to make it happen. And once we're here more effort is required. We need to focus and concentrate on the spiritual food that God has prepared for us, and we need to focus on our attitudes and conduct so that we can be in unity and harmony with everyone here, being able to sincerely and truthfully rejoice as God commands us to.

When Christ returns on Pentecost, at the start of that 1,000-years, the 144,000 that God has molded and fashioned so that they are fully prepared for the Kingdom of God will be changed, most resurrected because they died over the previous 6,000 years, and a very few that will be changed from mortal to immortal, that are still alive at that moment in time. The 144,000 do not fully grasp the work or the path ahead of them, but there is still work for them to do nonetheless. But the type of work changes for them as well.

Let's please turn over to **1 Corinthians 13:12**. Paul states, **For now we see in a mirror, dimly**; at this present time, we only know so much. Everything is not clear to us. The exact route of the path ahead of us is not fully revealed yet. **Now I know in part**, in bits and pieces, **but then**, and that "then" Paul is talking about after he is changed and enters Elohim, **but then I shall know just as I also am known**. And he is saying that God will reveal much more, and that he will understand much more when that great change occurs, much more than he understand or "sees" now. And so as members of God's Government, they will work hard in their destination, in their role that they have been prepared for. And for those of us that live on physically into that thousand years, we have been called now in advance for a reason, and there will be much work to do.

We are here at the Feast to learn. In the Millennium, will be about the entire world now having the same opportunity and ability to learn God's ways as well.

Well, brethren, I'd like to take just a few moments here to talk about enjoying and maximizing the time at the Feast. You get out of the Feast what you put into it. The priority should be on learning, on being taught what God has given to us. And even though the same sermons may be listened to all across the various sites, they will be heard and received differently for many reasons. Did you pray for inspiration on this year's Feast sermons? In the past, Mr. Weinland has requested that prayers be made regarding the preparation of Feast sermons, when He would handle almost all of them. And that's a tremendous amount of work to do. Those prayers are still very much needed and appreciated, and they can certainly affect what you are able to drink in and receive from these sermons. And if you didn't pray this year, please do so next year.

Another item to consider and to do is to please not let anyone feel left out. And don't leave yourself out either. We really are family here, and everyone should feel that they are a part. We all have different personalities with different strengths and weaknesses. Let's strive to share in our conversations that we have. Some of us have a tendency to dominate a conversation and monopolize that speaking time, and

others of us can be very quiet and withdrawn and we might tend to avoid a lot of social interaction for whatever reason. Just because we have a natural proclivity towards one versus the other, doesn't mean that it's a good thing. Some talk too much, cutting others off and interrupting when someone else is trying to speak, while the opposite extreme might contribute very little to a conversation or perhaps try to avoid it altogether. We are here to have a spirit of sharing, and this includes sharing time with others and in our conversations. So let's listen *and* speak. And I haven't met a group of nicer people who do just that anywhere in the world!

So, brethren, the Feast of Tabernacles pictures a destination that we all long to arrive at. For the 144,000 it is a fulfillment of a great gift promised by God for their hard lifelong journey that they undertook in preparing for the Kingdom of God. And for those that live on physically, it is a continuation of that lifelong journey made more comfortable by having God's Government here on earth. We're not quite there yet, but just like a pilot or a flight attendant states over the airplane's intercom as it starts to make its final descent towards its destination, "Ladies and Gentleman, at this time, please place your seats in their upright position, store any carry-on baggage that you may have taken out during the flight, and fasten your seatbelts, as we will be landing shortly."

And we *will* be landing shortly to our destination, and there's going to be a lot of turbulence between now and when we arrive. So indeed, stay in your seat, remain faithful to God and how God is working through His Church and with you, and let God carry us and deliver us to our destination.□