

Lessons from the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day.

Sermonette by Robert Schmid

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I suppose everybody is back from the feast by now, back to work, back to school, back to the daily routine of our individual lives.

My family and I had the good fortune to keep the feast in Vail, Colorado which surely must be one of the most beautiful feast sites we have in the United States. From wonderful sunny days, where we could sit in out-door restaurants for lunch, to a snowstorm that dumped 6" of snow, to the aspen in full color. It's all very spectacular and obviously very popular.

We were there 2 years ago when they packed about 2400 brethren into the Dobson Ice Arena. This year there were close to 2800, and the ballroom at the Marriott, which is about a 1/4 mile away, was used to hold about 500 brethren, connected via microwave and a big screen. A first for the Worldwide Church of God.

For those of you who are into advance planning I can tell you that the Worldwide Church of God just signed a new 5 year lease for the Vail Feast Site. Additionally, because of popular demand, another feast site in Colorado not far from the present one is under consideration. Remember the name Keystone? Another famous ski resort that may be available for next year.

In any case, wherever you will go, make your planes early, don't wait to the last minute. God has shown us that, as a minimum, He works after a 7000 year plan. The Church has a 5 year plan and you and I ought to be able to work out a 1 year plan. So begin your planning now.

I am sure that all of you are aware of the significance of numbers in the Bible. Does anybody know the significance of the number 168? That's 168 days, or 5 month and 18 days. Well, it is the time period between the Last Great Day and Passover. It is the longest period of time we have without a Holy Day. Fortunately, God gave us the weekly Sabbath to help sustain us spiritually, but there will be no Holy Day now for another 152 days or 38 weeks.

Now, one could ask why God didn't distribute His Holy Days more evenly so that we wouldn't be without one for such a long time. Well, I am not sure, but I know one thing and that is that God knew exactly that it would be tough and difficult, and yes, even dangerous to be without a Holy Day for such a long time, and so He gave us the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day, a eight day festival to prepare us for the 168 days of constant, uninterrupted exposure to Satan's world without a reminder of His great overall plan of salvation.

Let's look at some of the ways in which this eight day festival helps us to overcome the long, dry period until the Passover in the spring.

First of all, the feast, picturing the millennium, and the Last Great Day picturing the 2nd resurrection and the culmination of all things, are such incredible events that are not easily forgotten. Hearing, thinking, and talking about these events, and to some degree even living them

for eight days, leaves us with memories and lasting impressions as no other event is capable of doing.

Just consider what God has provided us with: During this time period of just 8 days we attended 12 worship services. 12 times we came before God to acknowledge Him to worship Him, to listen to Him, to speak to Him. 12 times we separated ourselves from the world to stand before God as His people, His called-out ones, united as one family.

As it says in the 133rd Psalm *"How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity"*. Yes, that is very pleasing to God and very good to help us over these long five months ahead of us. In these 12 services we listened to 2 Offertories, 8 Sermonettes, 10 Sermons and 1 Film. We spoke to God in prayer at least 24 times and worshipped him with 56 Hymns in addition to Special Music. That's 24 hrs. of solid teaching and being in the presence of God. That is very intensive training. That should have created enough notes to last us for years. Certainly it should provide us with enough food for thought for the 168 days ahead of us.

Now, considering all that has been given to us during the feast, let's look at five specific ways that can help us and carry us through to the Passover and a new Holy Day Season.

FIRST: Continue to remember and meditate on the meaning and purpose of the FOT and LGD. This, first of all involves the keeping of one of God's commandments, the 4th, to *"Remember the Sabbath day"*. Yes, God commands us to remember the Sabbath day and as Mr. Armstrong always said; this commandment includes the annual Sabbaths as much as the weekly. So during this five months period without an annual Sabbath, we are commanded to remember God's annual Sabbaths, and of course to meditate on the meaning of these days.

SECOND: Review your (sermonette & sermon) notes and use them for your own Bible studies.

I like to turn to another commandment of God. This one is found in II Tim. 2:15. Here God commands us to *"Study and to show ourselves approved as one of His workman that need not be ashamed, rightly (or correctly) dividing (or handling) the word of truth."*

God commands us to study His Word. You know, year after year, one of the subjects that really gets me excited is the anticipation and the descriptions given about what it will be like during the millennium. God has given us just enough, here a little, there a little, requiring diligent study to put together a picture of the World Tomorrow. And, what a picture it is! So keep this picture alive in the next five months by studying the Word of God with the help of your notes.

THIRD: Maintain friendships established during the feast.

This year was our 15th feast and each year now adds to the pleasure of meeting friends from previous feasts. This really adds to the feeling that we are truly part of a worldwide family.

We try to make a conscious effort each year to meet at least one or two new people or families on a more personal basis. You know what I mean. You have dinner or some other activity together and you end up exchanging addresses and telephone numbers and so on. Maybe you had a particularly stimulating discussion with someone but you never got your point across. Do it now. Call, or write a letter. Keep the communication alive. But, whatever you do, let me encourage you not to let these new friendships die. In the next few weeks send a letter or postcard or make a phone call. Exchange some of the pictures you took of each other. God, through James cautions us that friendship with

the world is enmity, that is, it is in conflict with God. That means we need all the friends we can get from within and through the Church, the family of God.

FOURTH: Learn from the lessons of the second tithe.

The second tithe is a wonderful gift from God. It allows us to lay aside our financial problems for eight days and live like kings. That's the way it should be. If the Feast is a time for **spending**, then NOW is the time for **saving**. NOW is the time for saving that second tithe. NOW is the time to plan and save for that special offering for the next Holy Day in the spring. God through Salomon told us that *"for everything there is a season"* This is a time to plant and sow so we can reap the fruits at the next feast and especially to reap the fruits in the fulfillment of the feast, in God's Kingdom.

FIFTH: Build on the educational values that can be derived from the feast.

There are 30 feast sites in the United States. Over 100 feast sites worldwide. What an opportunity to get to know different parts of the world and to educate ourselves about a world full with different people and customs that we will someday have to rule over.

Just in this congregation alone we attended 20 of the 30 US feast sites. We had someone go to Norway, Italy, Germany, England, Holland, Denmark, France, that's just about all of Europe. We had people go to Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, South Africa, Argentina, the Philippines, Hawaii, the Mediterranean Cruise and the Pacific Coast Cruise. That's incredible! What an educational opportunity God is providing us with.

What's important now is that we continue to build on and share this knowledge and the experiences of other places and other people within our own families, and with those who were not able to go.

As you can see, God through the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day is providing more than enough material to keep us busy during these next five months until a new cycle of Holy Days begins.

You know what I believe? I believe that we are a very special, a very privileged generation in the history of God's Church. I doubt if any other generation in all of history has ever been as blessed as we are, with the opportunity to freely worship God without government interference and to learn of God's ways.

The Prophet Mica tells us that someday all people will go up to the mountain, go up to Jerusalem, to learn of God's ways. We have that opportunity and privilege today. All we have to do is take full advantage of the opportunities that are given to us.