

Learn To Fear God

An Instrument of Construction or Destruction

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John Ritenbaugh asked me to speak on the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles. As I thought about it, I realized that I was going to have the first message, and I had a touch of nostalgia. While talking to my wife, I said, “You know, that ([the first message] is when Mr. Armstrong always spoke. Do you remember what he said? ‘Why are you here?’” Just as soon as I said that, my wife put up her hand, “I know! We’re here to learn to fear God!” That is exactly why we are here. This is quite nostalgic for me.

We are here to fear God. We are here to learn to rejoice. And we are also here to learn the meaning of the days—the restoration of Israel, the healing of the earth, the healing of all mankind. I was amazed! I said to myself, “Well this shouldn’t be too hard; I’ve heard all these sermons.” But I have never given one like this before.

As I was looking into scriptures—and they are everywhere!—all of a sudden, I had two hours put together. I have no idea how long we are going to go this morning.

God’s mind is filled—absolutely filled—with the thought of reclaiming Israel. He is filled to the brim with it! I can tell you, read from Genesis 1 to the end of the Book, and you would find all the way through that God reveals Himself, wanting Israel saved. This is utterly marvelous.

We know that on the 15th day of the seventh month that we are supposed to assemble—we are to keep the Feast of Tabernacles; we are to give offerings; and we are to be in temporary dwellings (which we are).

Deuteronomy 14:22-27 “You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the Lord your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your

oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always. But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place the Lord your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the Lord your God has blessed you, then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses. And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you.”

So, we see here that we are to fear God. The thought of fearing God is something special! We are very special to God. God has called us out before all the billions of the earth. He has called us out for a special purpose. He has called us out to learn to fear Him. This is so we can be used at a future time.

What does God mean to fear Him? (We heard the word “fear” mentioned already this morning.) In *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, it simply means to fear; to be afraid; to revere; to be in terror as when you see some awesome exhibition of power.

But are we to live our lives constantly in a cowering, fearful position? Or is this fear we should have designed to produce something in us? Is this fear designed to produce a response, a reaction, or a result? Yes!

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge! Why?

From *The Soncino Jewish Commentary* we find:

God is the Creator of the universe, and of life. It is consequently impossible to obtain an understanding of man’s place in the design and purpose of living without a humble approach to Him. This verse is described as, ‘The watchword of all ethical education.

He goes on to make a statement,

Where there is no fear of God, there is no wisdom.

None! This next statement is going to blow your mind!

Why is this the beginning? It is the starting point—the only point which can lead to the true goal. [And, listen to this:] If you divorce God from knowledge, it becomes an instrument of destruction instead of construction.

That is pretty heavy! Divorce God from knowledge, and it—knowledge—becomes an instrument of destruction instead of construction!

Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25 says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”

Look at the world around you! You have proof of that every day. The world has divorced God from their knowledge. Death and destruction continue to follow.

Now, when God says, “Behold,” it is like crossing a busy intersection. You are going to behold it. You are going to look to the left and to the right, beholding it. He says,

Job 28:28 “And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, . . .’”

I am sure that for all of us when we came into the church, we were so careful to try and please God. We studied a half hour each day, we prayed a half hour each day. We would examine labels while grocery shopping. And early on we even embarrassed a restaurant owner and probably half the people at our table, asking what they fried their foods in. I am still tempted to do that because God says not to eat pork (lard is from pork). We did our correspondence course. We wanted to know what we could and could not do on the Sabbath day. We did everything in our heart to please God.

But because of all we have been through, I am going to read a couple of scriptures to give a brief review of what it means to fear God. Fearing God with our whole being will enable us to participate in the culmination of God's plan for this world, and all of mankind.

Genesis 22:10-12 And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, nor do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

What did the God mean when he said, "I see now that you fear God?" What did God ask Abraham to do?

Genesis 22:1-2 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

Abraham was asked to do something by God! The angel saw that Abraham had complied with God's request and he used the term "fear" to describe Abraham's obedience. Fear equals obedience to God. We show our fear by the way we conduct ourselves in our behavior.

When Jethro was telling Moses to select the captains of tens, and hundreds, and thousands, he told him to select men who fear God, love truth, and hate covetousness. Concerning the poor, you are not to take any interest or profit from him, but rather fear your God—obey your God.

Deuteronomy 5:29 'Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!'

Here we see the result of fearing God that He wants us to have. Hold Him up with such reverence, awe, and respect that we will voluntarily measure every action, attitude, feeling, and thought against His law and His teaching. This is what fear is.

Now, the Feast of Tabernacles is a wonderful place to be able to put fear into practice. Most of us have been separated this past year, and now we are here together again. We can take the time to exhibit the fear of God by showing forgiveness, love, kindness, consideration, and thoughtfulness of each other that have come so far to be together. We can also exhibit these things also to the people and employees of Seven Oaks, and the local community that we are in for the Feast of Tabernacles.

As we choose to fear God, He in turn chooses us to help Him in the most awesome responsibility ever given to His people: The responsibility to actively participate with God the Father and Jesus Christ in rebuilding the earth and the salvation of mankind.

This season we celebrate pictures the time when we will see firsthand and participate in the remaking of the earth. This is not a fairytale. This is for real! Six thousand years of man's misrule will be erased, and a fresh new earth will be formed right in front of your eyes. It is going to be awesome!

And more awesome, each one of us will be helping God to deal with mankind. It will be their time to learn to fear God. Now is our time.

Now every presidential candidate has their slogans: A chicken in every pot; The New Deal; the New World Order; peace in our time. And yet, every year the world gets worse and worse. We heard about that last night. They cry peace, peace, when there is no peace.

To quote the old Correspondence Course,

People can view the past, and the present, and plainly see that men have utterly failed to bring about utopia on the earth. The diseases, fears, worries, uncertainties, lack of necessities, poverty, hate, oppression, and injustice are taken for granted in the wretched

world, and that is a sad thing to say, but it true. It is taken for granted.

We take all those things for granted. Soon, it will be taken for granted what John Ritenbaugh spoke about last night—the world is going to pieces. And because of this, man is going to bring the world to the brink of destruction. We know what it says in Matthew 24, “For then there will great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except that those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved.” It is going to be the worst time ever.

What will it be like to live through those last days?

I am going to encapsulate Lamentations. Jeremiah was the one man who went through a tribulation, and yet it was not as bad as the one just ahead in this end time. I suggest that you read Lamentations on your own before the end of the Feast.

Judah was a great nation, and she lost everything. She became nothing. She had relationships and allies of the nations around her, but no relationship with God. And when her fall came from the Chaldeans, her allies did not help her, and God did not either.

The enemy had become chief, and Judah became the heel.

God did not come to her rescue. The Jews tried to flee, but they were corralled into box canyons where they could not get away. They were captured. Their young children were driven away into slavery. People remembered what they had before the calamity, and they could not believe what happened to them. The enemy laughed at their attempts to keep the Sabbath, and their professed religion.

The people sinned. They did not just make mistakes, but they sinned continuously, as was discussed. They became an abomination. And then Jerusalem became a horror, so much so the people just turned their backs they were so ashamed.

After a year and a half of siege, everyone who had saved every bit of their gold, silver, and jewels spent it on the last bits of food. And then, all their remaining wealth was useless.

The leadership was in the hands of the enemies. Every day the little children would ask their mothers, “Where is the wine and the grain?” Every street corner had death and destruction. Tears ran down their cheeks continually.

The people of God who were so precious to God and who were considered to be gold or precious metals now became a broken vessel. And though the wild animals could nurse their young, there was no milk in the breasts of the women of Judah to nurse their children.

Those who were brought up in wealth embraced manure piles, and they were glad to have it.

The Nazarites, who were considered the most beautiful of the Israelites, were now withered, black, and gaunt. Their ribs showed. They were black from the sun. The hands of pitiful women took their own offspring, killed, and cooked them.

And so, God accomplished His fury upon them. The people could not believe what had taken place. In fact, in Lamentations 5:22, the statement is just incredulous. How can this be? How could God have done this to us? They could not believe it. It seemed impossible.

But still, there was a little bit of hope.

This will all happen again. Israel is going to go into captivity. But then will come the restoration of all things. God has waited for 6,000 years for Israel and mankind to learn that by divorcing Him from their knowledge and from their lives, all they do will fail. Their total destruction will follow.

God loves Israel with every bit of His being. And He has waited all these years to get to this point to where He can save the people.

Now, this is where God gathers all the armies against Jerusalem.

Zechariah 14:1-2 Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

They are going to become slaves. The victory against Jerusalem was so sure and so complete that they divided the spoil right in the middle of the city. They did not worry about going outside. There was going to be no retaliation. Everything was crushed. It was finished. But then,

Zechariah 14:3 Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle.

God steps in and begins to save His people.

When the fruit of the way Israel and this world has lived is totally eaten, and when the day of the Lord is completed, something wonderful begins to happen. That is what this feast time pictures.

Zechariah 14:4-5 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with You.

That is us! He will bring us with Him.

The Mount of Olives is the central high mountain—though it is not really all that high, maybe 450 feet. It is not that big. It is about a mile long, and it stood before Jerusalem on the east. It blocked their escape. God will cause a tremendous earthquake to cause the mountain to split in two. So now, this

barrier to their escape was split wide open so the people could flee. And they will. They people will be awestruck.

Jesus Christ comes with all His saints—us if we learn to fear God. All of those who have loved and learned to fear God will be there. As it says in Revelation 1:7, “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him.” Every eye will see Jesus Christ coming, and they will be afraid, for the most part.

This is the event we have waited for—for generations. It *is* going to come to pass! You will be there too.

Zechariah 14:8 And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and winter it shall occur.

This living water shall flow forever! It becomes a mighty river. Ezekiel personally measured it. He went down about a third of a mile, and the water covered his ankles. It originates from under the porch of God’s house. As he went further along, it was then up to his knees; then up to his waist; then a deep river that could not be forded.

Water is emblematic God’s Holy Spirit. Here we see both physical and spiritual healing.

This war-torn world with its bacterial warfare and atomic blasts, will begin to heal. The eastern channel of the river will flow into the Dead Sea, which is 1,286 feet below sea level, the lowest spot on the face of the earth. It is dead because the water there tends to evaporate as fast as it comes in. Nothing can really live there.

Though it is indeed a dead sea, this is where the healing will begin to take place. The sea will rise up and overflow, travelling through the desert. Every place that water flows, new plant life will begin to grow. Marshes will form, salt will be diluted; it will be a wonderful time.

In today's world there is a tremendous shortage of fish. I read an article some time back that codfish is almost extinct because of overfishing. When you buy fish and chips, you often get Pollock instead of codfish. Yet, processors dump 20 million pounds of unwanted fish every year in the pursuit of codfish. The world is starving, the ocean is being depleted.

God is going to repair all this. The fish will become large and healthy, and they will be common. The oceans will be filled with fish for man's use—a great abundance of fish.

Now, wherever this river goes, marvelous vegetation will spring up and bear fruit. Trees will bear fruit each in their season. Their leaves will be used for healing.

It is going to be a wonderful time as the earth starts to heal from all the abuse that mankind has heaped upon it.

When Jesus Christ returns, He is going to establish His throne right away! I am not sure I will have everything in the right time sequence, because it is so hard and is so much.

Isaiah 2:1-2 The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.

The house of the Lord is going to be a marvelous structure; the most impressive awesome thing this earth has ever seen—the most elegant and prestigious. It is going to be exalted above the surrounding countryside. It is also going to be exalted above all other governments, and the nations shall flow to it. This indicates they are going to flow like a river to Jerusalem. It is not going to be a trickle out of curiosity. They are going to flow, not just to see it, but to embrace the teachings that will also flow from it.

It is a time of change, brethren. It is an axial period. It is going to be wonderful too.

Then, God begins to redeem His people. Out of this shattered world, His people will start to come.

Jeremiah 30:3 'For behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,' says the LORD.' And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.'

Jeremiah 30:7-10 'Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day,' says the LORD of hosts, 'that I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them. But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob, says the LORD, nor be dismayed, O Israel; for behold, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return, have rest and be quiet, and no one shall make him afraid.'

Jeremiah 31:8-10 "Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the ends of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and the one who labors with child, together; a great throng shall return there. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn. Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock.'"

So, a great company is going to come as in the Exodus. There will be weeping for joy for a change, not for grief. The relief from their situation will cause their emotions to let go, because it has been so much pressure on them. And the people, as we see, will moan for their children.

Jeremiah 31:15-17 Thus says the LORD: "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are no more." Thus says the LORD: "Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded, says the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope in your future, says the LORD, that your children shall come back to their own border."

God is going to bring His people back.

Isaiah 11:11-12 It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea. He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

God is going to call His people from the four corners of the earth.

Isaiah 11:15-16 The LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt; with His mighty wind He will shake His fist over the river, and strike it in the seven streams, and make men cross over dry-shod. There will be a highway for the remnant of His people who will be left from Assyria, as it was for Israel in the day that he came up from the land of Egypt.

God is going to recover His people a second time from the four corners of the earth—wherever they have been taken. They are not lost to God. He will pull them in.

Judah and Israel will have been beaten down in size. They will have been the most despicable people on the face of the earth. But with God in charge of their redemption, nothing is going to stop them. Nothing is going to detain them. They are going to be free.

The first time God saved His people, He dried up the Red Sea, and He is going to do it again. Then there is the highway for the remnant talked about.

Isaiah 35:8-10 A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it; it shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there, and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

This highway shall be known all over the world by what it signifies. Its name represents man's destination—Highway of Holiness. Just as we came to the Feast of Tabernacles here in San Antonio, we drove. The road signs told us where we were going. That is the same idea here. It informs all mankind the way they should be living their lives in order to arrive at their destination—holiness. That is man's destination, or destiny.

These people have seen it all. They have been taken from their homes, thrown into slavery or concentration camps; they have lost every physical possession they owned. They have lost loved ones and family members. And as the old adage says, "It was darkest before dawn."

These people may have had some sort of glimmer that something was about to take place, because even in camps rumors travel, people and guards talk, people and guards listen. Perhaps there were certain signs in the actions and body language of the guards or other people—skittishness and fear. But even so, they never had any real sure hope, though they could tell something was afoot.

Now as they walk, or they are brought to Jerusalem, hope and joy overflow. All the starkness and despair of the camps begin to fade away as they discuss while they walk. They will discuss what they know about the plan of God, or perhaps what they heard about or from the Two Witnesses.

For the first time, there is real hope for God's people. They do not know just what will be required, or what changes they will have to make, but they do know is that they have a loving God who has redeemed them and set a wonderful future before them.

Where will the captives go?

Isaiah 66:10-14 "Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you who love her; rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her; that you may feed and be satisfied with the consolation of her bosom, that you may drink deeply and be delighted with the abundance of her glory." For thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream. Then you shall feed; on her sides shall you be carried, and be dandled on her knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem." When you see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like grass; the hand of the LORD shall be known to His servants, and His indignation to His enemies.

Isaiah 66:19-21 "I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the LORD out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the LORD, "as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. And I will also take some of them for priests and Levites," says the LORD.

Israel will return, and it is going to be a wonderful time. God is going to make a way for it to happen. Judah and Israel are going to be a family once again.

Though we will not turn to it, Isaiah 49 talks about the fact that God is going to see that the kings and queens bring Israel from their captivity. The leaders of the world are going to be “nursing mothers, and nursing fathers” to God’s people.

He said, “I will lift up my hand in an oath to the nations, and set up My standard for the peoples; they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders. . .”

You see? The utter awesomeness of God will be evident and bring profound change in the powerful people of this world to the effect they will bow down to God’s people.

If you have seen of pictures from WWII, of Auschwitz and Dachau, you have seen the stick-like figures of the survivors when the allies arrived, you have a picture of what Israel might be like. The powerful of the world, the rulers who ruled over them, are going to bow down to them as their servants.

I remember seeing a picture called, *The Bear*, where a momma bear lost a cub, and the cub wandered around, and somehow the papa bear found it and took care of it. But in one of the last scenes of the movie, there had been a large mountain lion that had been tracking this bear cub. The cub was drinking from a small stream. The mountain lion was sneaking up on him and was about to pounce! And the bear cub stood up and squealed, and the mountain lion turned tail and ran off. The little bear thought, “Wow. That was great!” Then the camera pans around to behind the bear cub and here is the 1,200 pound papa bear standing up behind him.

That is the same thing we have here. These survivors maybe be skinny and wretched, but behind them stands God Almighty.

God asks a question through Isaiah, "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty?" You bet! All the oppressed people of God will come to know with all the world the Lord God the Savior of Israel.

Turn to Isaiah 35, and we will see where God begins to heal His people.

Isaiah 35:1 The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.

We drove here over many miles of rock and cactus. I wish I could say something more exciting about it. One year we drove from California to Denver, and it was even more rock and cactus on that trip. I think only 10% of our earth can be cultivated (not quite half of the land not under the sea), and 15% of our earth is habitable. This will all be changed.

Isaiah 35:2-7 It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the excellency of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of jackals, where each lay, there shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

At last, individuals who have infirmities of any sort will be put into perfect condition. All sickness of mind and body will be healed. It will be a wonderful time! But the world around us makes fun of people with problems. They might call them gimpy, four-eyes, and a host of other things.

Leviticus 19 tells us that God greatly is against putting any stumbling block against anyone who has an infirmity. We do not think this way in this world.

But we are going to think that way. Can we begin to picture what it will be like for those who have had infirmities all their life? Maybe they have lost limbs in the wars; loss of hearing; loss of sight. They cannot hear a bird chirp, or a symphony. There are those you have to describe the color red to. They cannot fathom it. They cannot see the beauty of God, therefore, in the whole creation.

When I was overseas, I was in the amputee ward for a while to see someone, and there was a man there who had lost all four extremities removed. No arms, no legs. What is it going to mean to him? What is it like not to be able to wipe your nose, or to wipe your bottom? You cannot feed yourself, you have to rely on everybody else just to take care of your needs. What will it mean to him?

When I first started selling, I used to call on a place called The Good Shepherd Home, a place for retarded persons. This was the day and age before disposable diapers, using cloth diapers. As you drive up to the property, you would see hanging on the fences and clothesline huge diapers for adults. And I would go into the kitchen and try to teach these people how to cook. I would make Danish and puff pastry dough for them. I would work with some of the kids. I also wondered if some of the kids should be handling a knife, but still these kids were the most innocent, sweet, loving kids you would ever want to meet. It was that they were just not altogether [there]. God is going to correct that.

Also, the nature of all wildlife is going to be changed.

This last year, we had the blessing to be able to visit brethren in Soldotna, Alaska. We had some extra travel credits, and two days before we arrived, there was a grandmother of 75, with a son of 45, his son of 17 all jogging in Denali Park near Anchorage, Alaska. The grandmother was actually training for a marathon! She was in the lead on the path, with the son and grandson some distance behind her. All of a sudden, they heard this tremendous roar of a bear, and a scream. And the father told his son to climb the tree, while he went to help his mother. When help finally got there, the mother was dead, and the father was near death. What had happened was they ran upon a bear that had a kill. The son reported just before he died that it was a “bear that attacked us.”

In southern California some years back a mother looked out of her kitchen window and she spied her little baby girl reaching into a bush. It had a rattlesnake in it. The snake bit her. The baby lived, but it was quite a trial and ordeal. But according to Isaiah, these things will become things of the past.

Isaiah 11:6 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them."

Have your children ever said, "I want a pet tiger? Or a lion?" I always thought big! I wanted a pet elephant! But then I watched them cleaning up after the pet elephant, and I figured that my dream was not worth the effort, so I gave that up. I watched too many jungle stories when I was a kid at the movies.

But you know, it is entirely possible that a tiger or a lion that eats grass would make a fine pet. Even these big mean bears will become real teddy bears.

Isaiah 11:7-9 "The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."

Disease carrying insects, that cause malaria, dengue fever, ebola, and other illnesses that often wipe out whole populations, will be done away with. They will not hurt or destroy at all in God's holy mountain. And for mankind, swords will be beaten into plow shares. It will be a tremendous time.

When the land has made productive and safe, and the body healed, then education and understanding must be given. And you and I who have participated in the wonderful things up to this point—seeing the earth healed, and lands seas made healthy—will now be able to see and participate in something truly wonderful: the opening of a mind, the making of a member

of the God Family. I will show you in a moment that it is going to be your and my responsibility—if we learn to fear God! God’s time for His people to understand how to life is here at last!

What has stopped God’s people from understanding?

Isaiah 25:6-7 And in this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of well-refined wines on the lees. And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.

I used to have a friend that I used to call on, he told me that as a boy in Los Angeles—by the way, for those of you who have not been to LA, one side is ocean, then a valley, and mountains around the edge—he said when he was young man, he thought that everything around him being 25 feet away was normal. And then one day, he got glasses.

And he said, “What are those?” These were the mountains. He had never seen them. And to him it was a big revelation! That same sort of thing is going to happen spiritually here with God’s people.

God will destroy the covering cast over all people; the veil over all nations. God is going to make a wonderful feast. He will open up salvation for all mankind. It will be a time of joy and good things. He will take away the covering that kept the people from seeing.

In Hebrews 8 He says, I will put my laws in their mind, and write them on their heart, meaning that law keeping will not be external, but would affect the conscience and heart, therefore every action. This is what is coming for all mankind.

At last, they will be taught God’s principles of right living, they will be changed into a new people, who now understand what is expected of them, and because of God’s Spirit, they will be able to perform it. With this comes the most awesome repentance you have ever seen.

God talks about it in Zechariah 12, where He says He will reveal Himself to His people, and they will at last understand what they have done. As we discussed last night, all the horrible abominable things Israel has degenerated into, they will mourn as if they had lost their firstborn son. Each family will go off by themselves and break down before God and just mourn.

Sorrow is universal. And it is individual. And everyone is going to repent.

Now, here is where you come in!

Ephesians 4:11-12 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

You know that! You have heard that forever. What is being said, though? Jesus Christ gave us ministers for the perfecting and preparing of the saints. The New King James Version says equipping the saints. Really get this! This is a medical term that is used for the setting of a broken bone. It indicates putting something into the condition it should be. The ministry has been given to you and to me, and all of us for our perfecting to put us into the condition we should be in. Why? For the preparing of the saints for the office of ministering in divine things. That is an absolute. You are being prepared, whether you know it or not, whether you feel capable or not, for the preparing of the saints for the office of ministering in divine things. That will be what you will be doing.

God has given the ministry to all of us that we might be prepared, set straight, and made ready for service in the Kingdom of God. I Corinthians 6 is where we find we will judge angels. How about that!

To prepare is used in the absolute sense as of those things ordained by God for future positions of authority, you are being prepared for that function; for the edifying spiritual profit, spiritual advancement of God's people. The word edifice also comes from that, it is something constructive. You are going to help build up God's people.

How will this be done?

Zephaniah 3:9-13 "For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, the daughter of My dispersed ones, shall bring My offering. In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds in which you transgress against Me; for then I will take away from your midst those who rejoice in your pride, and you shall no longer be haughty in My holy mountain. I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD. The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid."

This has two aspects to it. Ever since the tower of Babel, when God confused the languages to stop the people from having one mind and obtaining too much knowledge. Now, God is going to reverse that. He is going to give the people one language so that they can all learn together, so that no one will be left out in the cold. They will learn to read and write. They will be literate.

But the second aspect of this is it reflects on the type of language coming out of their mouth, not just the words, but what say.

The term rendered pure language means *a pure lip*. God will give them a pure lip. Thus, what will be proceeding to those God is teaching will be right speaking, a right and good use of language. Cursing and wrong jokes and stories will be stopped. Uplifting and joyous positive constructive things is what will be heard from God's people.

Isaiah 30:20-21 And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.

Did you ever wish that God had done that for you? Did you ever just wish in the past that when you started to something really stupid, that you heard a voice that told you, "John? Are you outta your mind? You have the Kingdom of God in front of you. What are you doing that for? Cut it out!" Wow, that maybe could have helped me! But I did not have that. And you did not either. God is working with us differently because we are a special group to God.

What will be taught? We will teach the people how to approach God, how to live successfully and happily with each other. We will teach the people that God's laws reach into every aspect of a man's life for his happiness and his good, and for the good of others. We will become the nation's wisdom. As a result, it will produce health, happiness, and great prosperity for all to see.

So now, God can bless His people because the one thing this present world lacks is security from want; for a place to live; income and food. They do not have it. As soon as possible, God is going to see that His people return to their own land from the captivity, when they return from the camps where the only space they had was their bunk.

Do you realize that inmates in the concentration camps were three to a bunk? You do not have any privacy. You do not have any place. Your bunk you are sharing with two other people. In cold weather you may have hoped you were in the middle. You shared the lice and everything else with them too.

As soon as possible, God will see that His people have their own land. They did not have any hope, but one of the first signs of permanent physical blessings will be for God to give them their own acreage where they and their families can at last rest and feel safe and secure. And for many, it will be first land they have ever owned.

Amos 9:13-15 "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their

land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them," says the LORD your God.

God is going to bless Israel not only with land but with wonderful crops too.

And God will instruct them to build their barn first, because that is how God does things. They are going to thresh the hills, and get the land ready, and they are going to grow. There will be no more homeless starving people, no more people being released at 55 or 58 being told they are not needed anymore. They will have their property, and a chance to have their crops; they are going to be safe and secure and will not be losing their homes. No more will thousands die daily, and live their lives in malnutrition as a constant threat. There will not be anymore skinny, gaunt babies in posters that are starving death. Rather, they will become joyful, healthy, happy, roly-poly children from all the abundance that God will provide.

Then the great construction starts. Homes must be built, cities restored, roads constructed. And whereas one of the world's biggest problems is unemployment, it is not going to be that way in the World Tomorrow. An old comedian once said, "I just read a book. There are only six people left alive, and four of them were unemployed." That will not happen in the Kingdom of God. Everyone will be employed at something.

The questions that always come up about the World Tomorrow is, "Well, are they going to have automobiles? Will they all live on the farm? Are they going to have computers? (people hope not) Will they have airplanes? Will we have solar power? What is it going to be like?"

I am going to answer that. I do not know.

What I do know is true and awesome! For the first time, Israel is going to listen to their God. And God is going to listen to Israel.

Look at what mankind has built without God. It is quite spectacular. First thing I thought of was the Golden Gate Bridge. Mankind has done awesome things. They have creativity that God has given them. But what is man going to build in the World Tomorrow when he listens to God, and when God listens to mankind? I can tell you, without a doubt, it is going to be the

greatest civilization ever seen on the face of the earth. It is going to be absolutely awesome. It will far surpass anything that we can think of—because man will *finally* listen to God. And God will bless man.

Jerusalem is going to be the financial capital of the earth! I read this last year, and I will share that with you again this year. Mr. Armstrong wrote this:

God chose Jerusalem to become the financial capital of the earth. The Creator said of the newly built city, ‘You shall see, and flow together. And your heart shall fear and be enlarged because of the abundance of the sea.’ According to Dow Chemical, ‘One cubic mile of seawater is worth \$5 billion dollars.’ [just to get to the point] The total value estimated in the oceans would amount to 1 quintillion 5 hundred quadrillion dollars: Gold, silver, various elements and chemical compounds, all of it. God is going to reclaim that for man’s use.’

Now just so you can be just as smart as I am, one quadrillion dollars mean one thousand trillion; one trillion is one thousand billion, and one billion is one thousand million, one million is one thousand thousand, thus one quintillion is one thousand quadrillion dollars—which is even bigger than our national debt!

Haggai 2:6-9 (NEB) One thing more, I will shake the heaven, and the earth and sea and land, and I will shake all nations. The treasure of all nations shall come hither, and I will fill the house with glory, so says the Lord of hosts. Mine is the silver, mine is the gold, says the Lord of hosts, and the glory of this later house shall surpass the glory of the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will grant prosperity, and peace.

The world is going to want what God has to offer because Jerusalem and God’s people are going to be so blessed.

As word of all that God’s is doing goes out, the people of every nation will be filled excitement at the brilliance of what God is doing.

And just like the old story up in Alaska that there is gold in them thar hills, you just have to go up there and pick it up, and California has its streets paved with gold. This time the stories will be about the Kingdom of God, they will be true, and beyond the most vivid imagination.

Zechariah 8:20-23 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Peoples shall yet come, inhabitants of many cities; the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, "Let us continue to go and pray before the LORD, and seek the LORD of hosts. I myself will go also." Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.' "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'"

It is going to be wonderful.

We are not going to turn to Isaiah 60:1-14, but I would suggest you read it. Not only will they come to bring wealth, and our children, and the people of God, but they are going to bring themselves to become the servants of Israel, God's people.

Israel prospers, and their numbers grow. And of the two age groups that always seem to suffer, the very young, and the very old, something wonderful is going to happen.

Zechariah 8:1-8 Again the word of the LORD of hosts came, saying, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; with great fervor I am zealous for her.' "Thus says the LORD: 'I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the LORD of hosts, the Holy Mountain.' "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.' "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, will it also be marvelous in My eyes?' says the LORD

of hosts. "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Behold, I will save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; I will bring them back, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people and I will be their God, in truth and righteousness.'

The old people are going to come out at night, and sit in the town square with their cane being of great age, and talk about the wonders of God, and the wonderful life that God has given them. And the little children will be safe, playing out in the streets. It will be a wonderful time.

Something is starting to take place. Jerusalem is starting to overflow! The population builds. You can read about that in Isaiah 49:18-21. The population will become so great that the people are going to shout, "Make room for us! We don't have room here. It's too small. Where can we go?"

What has happened to the land that Israel used to occupy?

It is lying empty. I cannot read the whole thing now, but in Leviticus 26:32-35, it reads that the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate. And you are in your enemy's land. How long will the current scattered Israelite's lands lay fallow? How long before it is re-forested? It will become a virgin land once again.

And as Israel grows and overflows Jerusalem, they will again branch out to their former parts of the earth and rebuild just like the pioneers. Because this is part of God's plan too: God is preparing the whole world for the Great White Throne Judgment. No one is going to be idle in Israel. It is full of adventure, excitement, and a wonderful time. But the earth has to be made ready to receive the billions that will be coming along later.

These days picture the most wonderful of times—beauty, peace, joy, and great accomplishment, when the former enemies will be brothers and love one another.

This next passage seems a great summary. At this time Israel and the entire world will have learned to fear and obey God. It will be a wonderful time.

Hosea 2:18-23 “In that day I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, with the birds of the air, and with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, to make them lie down safely. I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness and mercy; I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD. It shall come to pass in that day that I will answer," says the LORD; "I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth. The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil; they shall answer Jezreel. Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, and I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; then I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they shall say, 'You are my God!'"

This will be a marvelous time for God. The gift that God has wanted for all these 6,000 years is for His people to fear Him. Finally, that gift will be there.

And you and I, with God the Father, and Jesus Christ will have had a part to bring this all to pass.

The Millennium is the time for the world to learn to fear God, but now is the only time for us.

As God has told us in Deuteronomy 14, this Feast of Tabernacles is for that. We are to take the messages we hear, the experiences we go through, the lessons we learn, to heart—the innermost part of our being—so that we can make the needed changes to become the kings and priests of God for us to be able to help our people, our brethren, God’s people.

I would like to close by mentioning those passages that set a standard for us to work toward in achieving the office of a king or priest. These are the last words of David, a man after God’s own heart. He was a remarkable man. God spoke through him. And at the end of his life, he said:

II Samuel 23:1-4 Now these are the last words of David. Thus says David the son of Jesse; thus says the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel: "The

Spirit of the LORD spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me: 'He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.'

That is how pure the king is that rules in the fear of God. He rules justly.

What about our job as priests?

Malachi 2:4-7 Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, that My covenant with Levi may continue," says the LORD of hosts. "My covenant was with him, one of life and peace, and I gave them to him that he might fear Me; so he feared Me and was reverent before My name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity. "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts."

That is what the priest is! He is a messenger of the Lord. And Levi turned many away from iniquity by his godly example.

What did David and Levi have in common? They lived their lives as if they were continually in the presence of God. That is the true fear of God. That is the way we should live our lives too.

This is how God wants us to live, and with this comes right decisions, proper relationships, and many blessings.

Malachi 4:1-4 "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," says the LORD of hosts, "that will leave them neither root nor branch. But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the

soles of your feet on the day that I do this," says the LORD of hosts.
"Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments."

This is one of the most wonderful and encouraging festival seasons of all the year. So, please rejoice and have a wonderful Feast of Tabernacles. And in doing so, set your heart to learn to fear God that we may participate in the restoration that is on the horizon!