

October 15, 2021

Dear Members and Friends,

We have just returned from celebrating what Church of God members have been looking forward to the whole year—when we could put our everyday lives on hold and when we could worship together in peace and harmony; exactly, what the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day picture. But being able to observe these days didn't come without its challenges, for we couldn't celebrate them in a way we used to in times past, without restrictions and other complications we hadn't faced before. This already started to become evident last Feast. The world as we once knew it has changed and it doesn't appear that it will get any better or return back "to normal."

In my message on the Last Great Day, titled "Right Now," I mentioned that we have all witnessed a miracle this Feast. By being able to observe God's Holy Days like we did, under various circumstances and challenges that we had to go through to even make it to the Feast, and still having had the privilege to meet together is considered a miracle. And yet there were brethren among us who weren't able to attend the Feast due to illness.

We have heard many examples and have had many prayer requests about the trials that many of the brethren in virtually every Church organization within the Body of Christ had to go through in order to keep the Feast, like the need for vaccinations in order to travel, Covid tests, and persistent problems with requesting time off from school and work, which is still an issue for some every single year. And now, throwing the pandemic in the mix has added to the challenges in ways we probably would have never thought possible. This is where we really needed and need to place everything into God's hands.

Now we have returned and the challenges continue, especially for the brethren in the United States, Canada, Australia and other countries in Europe. Many have come back with the Covid virus and other complications. God's people are suffering. But God is very aware of it all, and He continues to test us in various ways to see how we respond. This mirrors the way His chosen ones were tested in the examples we read about in the Bible. Jesus Christ also suffered just as we do, and He knows exactly what we go through. Peter states it this way: "But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you" (1 Peter 5:10). The sufferings we go through are only temporary but they are a necessary step to achieve what we have been destined for.

We may ask ourselves why these things are taking place, why so many in God's Church have been affected beyond and above the sacrifices we have already had to make so we could attend the Feast, and now we continue to suffer after we have returned. The answer should be quite clear. Satan doesn't rest until he has done all he can to dissuade us, to the point where we could lose our drive to continue on. But Satan can only do what God allows. And while Satan tries to influence us to sin, God allows that we go through trials and tests to show ourselves approved—by resisting and overcoming sin. That is where we have a choice to make, and God wants to see us make the right choice, looking to Him and putting our faith and confidence in Him to provide for our every need. John gives us this assurance: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14). So, we must continue to pray for His intervention.

I ended my message on the Last Great Day by stating that this was NO time to sleep, NO time to sit back and relax when it comes to our spiritual lives. What is going on in the world right now is just

the beginning and it is frustrating. It will get more frustrating, and this is exactly what Satan wants. He wants to break us apart. He wants to discourage us and wear us down, and he may be using political and religious leaders of this world to do so. We read in Daniel 7:25 that the "little horn" shall "persecute the saints of the Most High." The word for "persecute" literally means, "to wear out." It describes wearing out by degrees, like a garment is worn out. That is Satan's strategy by confronting us with constant harassment and ongoing persecution in one way or another. We cannot let Satan win! We are stronger than he because we have God on our side. God assures us that we can resist Satan and that we can live through every problem—with God's help. We should be praying for Christ's speedy return to finally put an end to all this madness. But would we be ready for His return? That is a question we each must ask and answer for ourselves, for God is also waiting on us to act right now, as Paul states in Romans 13:11 "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed."

The times we are in now should be a wake-up call for what we know is coming in the not-too-distant future, as prophecy unfolds before our eyes. We don't know for sure what next year will bring, where or IF we will be able to observe God's Feast days together as a Church as we have been doing every year up to this point. With this uncertainty, we can be certain that God is well aware of this situation, and He is with us, guiding, leading and directing us, as long as we remain faithful, diligent and trustworthy, and as long as we fully embrace His plan for us and His Church. May God be with all of US!

In God's service and with Christian love,



Michael Link