

H0014 9-29-93 Hoeh Keystone FOT

It was eight years ago following the Festival of Tabernacles in the Philippines, and I'm glad to see some of the brethren who've been in the Philippines, lived there, whether they migrated to this country or are temporary visitors, that they are here too at this beautiful site. My wife and I came back from the Philippines in 1985, impressed with the reality of course that Mr. Armstrong's earlier taping was quite different from his presentation during the Festival occasion. It was quite apparent then that the end of his life was near. Coming back in October, we made a trip very shortly thereafter to the Kingdom of Bhutan. The reason I bring this up is that if you've ever wondered what Bhutan is like, assuming you have heard the name, this is in the eastern Himalayas, it is very much like Keystone in terms of elevation.

You fly into Paro Valley, and of course in these mountains there are valleys such as this with mountains on either side. Then from this area of about 7,000 feet to 8,000 feet, we have to climb over the mountains to Punaca, the capital. We go to 11,000 feet till we reach Punaca, which is somewhat lower than this area. But in much of Bhutan in the west, where some of us, Mr. Halford included, Mr. Leon Sexton, one is reminded again as here of the Festival of Tabernacles, most countries we visit wouldn't ever bring that to mind. But in November, and this was the year you remember that Indira Gandhi was assassinated, the leader of India, we were cut off from the world for eight days. It was not possible to leave the country because the border with India was sealed and you can only fly to India from Bhutan. We were asked to go there because Mr. Armstrong at his age was unable to fly in or travel over land at this altitude. Now I do have a suggestion for those who would like to practice getting used to altitudes such as this.

I would say my favorite solution would be to descend and to climb out of the Grand Canyon.

That's one of the most marvelous experiences that you could ever have, especially if you start going down somewhere in July around 4.30 in the morning and then you will see all the remarkable colors and what you want to do of course is up to you as to whether you stay down there for the evening or go a certain distance and come back in the earlier afternoon. Do not assume by the way that July at the Grand Canyon is hot. It's only warm to hot down below and we had a thunderstorm at the top the last time I was there and it flooded and I walked through at the top of the canyon rim water that was higher than my shoes in order to even to get to the automobile parking lot.

But back to Bhutan, there was an unusual experience. It was the occasion of the lowering of a great tonka. This is a term to define a great cloth that once every year at this season in the city of Punaka is lowered having been raised earlier prior to our arrival and on it is the whole story of the religious theme and tradition of Buddhism in Bhutan.

But in an area that made one think of the temple of Herod's Portico where he could look down, it was an area in which let's say behind me was the equivalent of Solomon's temple or Herod's temple.

Then on one side were balconies several stories high and on the other side and down in this area in very un-American fashion were the men and the women and the children all seated on the ground. Chairs are not used.

That was a remarkable experience just to see the people learning something of their background.

It is a country that has a very remarkable tradition.

It is not a country with political parties. It is a country in which the local villages expect to find the wisest man among them to be the headman of the village, the equivalent to our mayor. And in the valleys which all run north and south in a country east and west the headman of the villages in the valleys running north and south get together and they choose the wisest of them to advise His Majesty the King. I had a chance to meet people and to talk with them and I would say I have never been in a country that approximated the kingdom of God more in terms of the pursuit of wisdom and the failure to get involved with politics of this world.

A people who saw a sense of government in an entirely different way cut off from the world.

They were never tempted by some of the temptations that had been set to great nations of the world in establishing human government. And to see all the men and the women and children gathered together.

To see this story of life and death enacted on a stage in front of them. To see Soim on the remarkable Tonka that was rolled up and put away till next year. It is like hearing the sermons, hearing the musical presentations of the message of God to man, but in their way.

Here we have an opportunity in this beautiful area, the beginning of the 15th day of the seventh month of the religious year or the first month of the civil year in the Hebrew calendar.

And as my wife and I and others undoubtedly were walking from across the lake at approximately seven o'clock, the almost full moon was over the lake and in the valley between the mountains.

The further we came this way, the trees tended to obscure it. But over where the housing area is, the Argentine area and nearby, we had the most beautiful view I have ever seen in terms of the setting for a festival of the moon rising, introducing the middle of this month and the festival of tabernacles with the grand mountains of the Rockies on either side and the lake below and nothing obscuring. Undoubtedly this should call to mind something of Jerusalem because Jerusalem is about 2,500 feet in elevation and it is on a ridge. You can look east and west from the site of the Temple Mount. It is the most spectacular setting in that area of the world. And so indeed God has given to us different ways of seeing a festival experienced in the around, in the environment as Jerusalem once provided, and also in the spirit and in the truth that God has given to people who do His will, which includes observing these festivals that go back to the days when the children of Israel were called out of Egypt.

But our trip to Bhutan was like going back 19 centuries into the first century of the present era and getting a feeling of what it was like when the Christians essentially the Jews in Jerusalem because those who were not circumcised did not observe the Feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem but in other areas. That could be done only in terms of the immediate surrounding of the Temple by those who were Jews and Jewish Christians. There were always invited guests but they had to stay in an outer area. The brethren might have been visiting who were Greeks but would not have had the same opportunity that the Jewish brethren did.

But Jesus addressed a very important message on this festival occasion when he was there at Jerusalem. But let me go back. Having had some feeling of what it was like in those days, we recognize there are differences today. If I could feel the sense of the first century in Bhutan, feel a sense of what it must have been like on the Temple Mount where I have at least been privileged as tourists are to visit though there is no Temple there today.

It's possible to see that we live in a world far removed from that geographic setting but God gives us different ones in different areas of the world. This happens to be the 25th anniversary of the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles in the Kingdom of Tonga in the South Pacific.

And I would be remiss if I were not to speak on their behalf and the man whom we have known since 1971, and my wife and I since 1972, Isilele Tolutau Haangan, who was the leader of the group in Tonga, under the general direction of Ratu E Pele from Fiji. That's the organization under the Australian office. Tolutau Haangan lives in an island that has 100,000 people. It is one glorious coconut grove. The highest point, you can't call it a mountain in the main island of Tonga Tapu is 325 feet above sea level. It just happens to be where the king's garden is.

The sea goes way out on the reef and one can walk out in the waters of the Pacific ocean to the edge of the reef. That is at low tide and then the tide comes in and you don't do that.

This is a remarkable world in which God has given a tropical island where the brethren meet in an ancient site called Mu'a. That is the site of first fruits where the people of Tonga anciently used to present the annual harvest offerings to the Tui Tongas, the kings of Tonga, the main island in days gone by. The festival site in Tonga generally had been held. It's not always held there every year, but I want to tell you a little something about what God does in an occasion like this. The property where the festival was held for many years is the actual property of Tolutau Haangan and his family. They have their residence and then they built a place for the festival and they also built temporary booths so that anyone coming any great distance on this little island, you walk, you don't have automobiles in general, you may ride a bicycle, you may ride a bus and the buses leave according to when the bus is full and everybody is patient. It's called Tonga time.

They were on a piece of property kept by the brethren, most especially by Mr. Haangan and the king Tapu IV goes around the island to inspect and he saw this area in which the festival of tabernacles and the Haangan family live where the festival is observed. The remarkable thing he said the king did, I would like to know who the man is who keeps the finest residence in this island beside myself, which is his job to see that his estate sets the standard.

That our festival site in Tonga and the property of the leader was the most beautifully kept site in the kingdom. It's the only kingdom in the South Pacific that has survived the onslaught of Europe. It is remarkable then to recognize that here we are in the Rockies so far removed that the apostles undoubtedly never heard of this mountain chain. That was simply another world that was not traversed by Europeans in those days. Oh, there were people in this area, but here we are privileged to see the handy work of God through time, through a great period of time long before Adam until now. And to think of God's government in ages past before there were any humans and all the remarkable events that have taken place to shape this area from the Grand Canyon to the South, to the dinosaur remains to the North. And to consider that today Jesus asked us to pray something very strange, but is it? Thy kingdom come, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. One would assume that if God created the world, his government ought to be over the earth. But you see the government of God functions through humans who have independent will, freedom of choice. And the human family has chosen not to be governed by the laws of God, not to be governed by the revealed words that are in English or whatever language you may be reading in your Bible, Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek being the original tongues in which this information was presented. It is our privilege to be able to have recognized that even though the government of God directly does not rule yet over the nations, any of them, does not in fact even rule over Christianity or Judaism. For what we call Christianity or Judaism or any other religion may be appropriately defined in terms of a remarkable book published many years ago titled The Religions of Man. How human beings have

thought about the Bible or thought about other religious revelations, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Native American religions, you can name them. Our purpose here this evening is to consider the importance of the differences in Old Testament times and new. There are today many differences that we can immediately see in how we observe this festival. There is no temple to which we assemble. The church is the temple.

The spirit of God dwells in the church as the Shechina dwelt in the temple built by Solomon later by Herod. God's presence in the temple is not an issue with respect to a building, but it is an issue with respect to whether the spirit of God is in the church and since the spirit of God is in the church reflected by the fact that you have all in one manner or another been willing to obey to be able to come here to finance your arrival here.

That is a reflection of the degree to which you have submitted to the government and the revelation of God, the degree to which the spirit of God is in you, the degree to which no one should ever be justified to depart from the church unless he has decided to depart from the government of God and the authority of God and His revelation. Jesus prayed that the church should be one, united, not divided, recognizing the limitations of human beings.

Mr. Tkach and Mr. Armstrong and others before, A. N. Duggar, going back to the Middle Ages, going back to the second century, Polycrates and Polycarp or John, none of them, as individuals, not one was perfect. Nevertheless, they and the people around them represented the church that was forgiven of its sin because Jesus Christ gave his life to pay for sin. And if Christ has chosen not to have everybody in the church be free from all sin, never to commit sin, then you have to recognize that in fact, as individuals empowered with the spirit of God, but wrestling with human nature and the influence of the world around us, that we are all, in one way or another, imperfect yet.

The perfection that Jesus asked us to achieve is a goal. Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect. That will be in the resurrection. But we must learn to be patient with one another as we learn how God is patient with each of us. And when anyone assumes that if Jesus Christ does not change the mind of the leader of the church on any one point, that you need to leave in order to start a competition, and I'm speaking plainly where Christ, who can't correct will discover that some man will make the correction that certainly is to fail to see that the church is not made of perfect individuals. And we have to be patient with one another.

They had to be patient with the kings of Judah. They had to be patient with the high priests and the prophets. Jesus had to be patient with the disciples.

And sometimes we have to be patient with Christ because he hasn't always taken the kind of action that we might think was necessary. So let's understand that at the beginning of this occasion, how important is this festival in God's sight? Let us go back to the story. The first congregation or church was called out of Egypt.

The first time a congregation is mentioned is in Exodus 12. In Exodus 12, the congregation was introduced to the Hebrew calendar in a new form with a religious year beginning with the spring, culminating in the harvest festival in the seventh month. The first observation of the Feast of Tabernacles was the autumn of the year in the northern hemisphere after this congregation was called out of slavery. In that sense, the slavery of Egypt is like the slavery of sin. And we have been called out in order that we may celebrate a festival that brings to our attention the harvest ultimately of the human family as a whole, of which we are only the first fruits. So one of the great festivals described in Exodus 23, the festival of ingathering in the seventh month, was given as a part of the covenant made at Sinai.

In the Book of the Covenant, Exodus 21, 22, and 23. Next year in the spring, it was again repeated in the instruction given to the Levites. Second year of the Exodus, the second year after they had come out of Egypt. And in Leviticus 23, the presentation there is summarized that this festival should be observed with booths that the people in those days should remember as a nation that when they had been called out of sin, called out of Egypt, they did not suddenly live in residences in the great cities of Canaan. That in fact, they went through a lifetime of wandering without receiving their inheritance, just as the Christian church is made also up of generations, and long before the patriarchs too, that have come and gone and not received their reward. Abraham died in faith. Moses died in faith. The patriarchs and prophets and apostles, the faithful at all levels in the congregation of Israel and in the churches of God over the centuries, are like those who wandered in the wilderness for 40 years and did not receive their inheritance all that time. Because you see the festival of tabernacles in that sense is meant to be observed in temporary dwellings. That is, in a sense that you go to a site, go to an area, and recognize that even the millennium, which is a type of this occasion, and the great day that follows the feast of tabernacles and the great events of Revelation 20, following the millennium, that all the experience of human beings under the government of God for a thousand years and a hundred years thereafter is still an experience in the flesh, and it is temporary.

The millennium is not the end. It's only the beginning of the conversion of multitudes.

And not until all those events have transpired will everyone be in a place we call the kingdom of God in a world free of sin, in a new heavens and a new earth.

The millennium will not be free of sin. We will judge the nations, have to protect the fatherless, the widow, the poor. All that is laid out and will be laid out during this festival occasion.

But you see, when God introduced the booze of that day, that was an environment of the great arid temperate zone, the desert region. We are in another region. This is an age in which there is no tabernacle, an age in which there is no temple, an age in which not everyone has access to the environment of that day. But we come to those temporary dwellings now to remind us of the fact that even the festival that let's say gives us foresight into the world tomorrow means that the people who sojourn in the church, ruling, being ruled by the kingdom of God, that even their life in the millennium is still temporary. And not until the resurrection or the change to immortality does it become absolute and permanent. But this great festive occasion was given not only in the days of Moses. It was in fact one of the most remarkable things recorded and most of you would have some memory of that from the book of Nehemiah chapter eight. In the book of Nehemiah chapter eight, after the congregation of Israel, not only was shorn of 10 tribes as a whole, but had gone into Babylonian captivity, returned under the Persians. One of the first things they got back to was to remember this festive season. There will be messages on this, and I am not trying to precede any of those, but I'm laying a foundation so that you can analyze the meaning of these festivals in much greater detail in reading in advance. So not only do we have the people obeying God in the days of Moses, we have them getting back to the disobedience in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. This was the fifth century before the present era. Jesus in chapters beyond, but beginning in the account in John, you remember that the autumn, late summer, early autumn before Jesus died, the next spring it passed over. We are introduced beginning chapter seven, but going on into the eighth chapter, this festive season in the last day, the eighth day that followed, Jesus himself was at this festival and explained its meaning. Now that meaning will be analyzed in much greater detail later during this festive occasion, but I draw to your attention that the son of God, the Messiah, the anointed one who was sent from heaven to talk to Nicodemus, who defined the fact that human beings must be produced once more, not from mortal parents, but from an immortal parent. That one who came

with a message from heaven also observed this festival and defined what it meant and looked forward into the future, not merely defining things as he might have about the past, but define the future as the meaning of this occasion for this, for shadows. Yes, this is a shadow of things to come. It is not merely a memorial of things in the past. The apostles also observed this festival, though I will tell you that you will not find it in every one of the translations. All modern translations have gone back to manuscripts that long ago in the last century were rediscovered, shall we say, by the scholars of Europe that had been set aside in the Greek world as having some fundamental flaws. They had become the basis just because they were old. The scholars have failed to realize they were also set aside, but there were also old manuscripts in the living tradition of the preservation of the Greek New Testament, and the Greek New Testament in Acts chapter 18 has a verse, number 21, in which a festival that clearly is the festival of Tabernacles in its sequence is an autumn occasion. Here Paul said, I must by all means keep this feast that comes in Jerusalem, but I will again return to you. You will find that in the authorized version.

You will find that in the New King James version. You will not find it as other than a footnote in a few versions or lost altogether, yet in the official Greek text of the Greek Orthodox Church, that is where the custody of the Greek manuscripts resides as it does in the Jewish orthodoxy in terms of the Hebrew manuscripts.

The New Testament observed this festival. We read, of course, then of the most remarkable thing, Revelation describes the millennium, but the details are not given always in Revelation.

You have to go back to the last verses of Zechariah, and you will discover when Messiah comes back and his feet are upon the Mount of Olives once more, and he is seen on earth in a manifestation or a theophany. He is not then spirit. He can be seen. His feet are on the Mount of Olives.

This will be on television. This will be in the newspapers. This is not some religious fantasy.

This is going to be the news, and the most remarkable thing that happens in connection with that event, which will be discussed later, is that all nations will be asked to send representatives and to begin to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

Now, I know that there are some who even are Sabbath keepers who long ago in the last century separated from the Church of God's seventh day, or you could consider the Church of God's seventh day simply had to separate from that group. Among that group are those today who say that that Zechariah 14 will never be fulfilled. In the first place, they say Messiah is coming to gather the saints, and then they're going to heaven again for a thousand years, and the devil will have free reign over the earth in this great uninhabited imprisonment.

Well, no, we don't accept that at all. That is a rejection of the Gospel. That's why the Church could have nothing to do with such a teaching. The Church of God cannot reject, cannot accept that rejection. But why do people who read Zechariah, I know an elder who reads Zechariah 14, his view is that because the Jews in Israel before failed to do God's will, that all these prophecies about the world tomorrow will never happen because they were dependent on Israel's obedience. And so God devised another plan, and that is to call people from out of all the nations called the Church. Now let me tell you that isn't so. God's plan does not succeed because of Israel, it succeeds because of God and Jesus Christ. And if Israel failed, God intends to straighten them out.

That's plain and simple. So the world tomorrow is our message, not an uninhabited earth, and it's going to be in the news. And Muslims and representatives from Bhutan are going to be there.

Friends from Nepal, the only country in the world whose rest day is not Muslim Friday and not the Christian Sunday, but the neighborlies Saturday. See, there were no Jews there.

And so when the king of Bhutan, the king of Nepal and the Himalayas near Bhutan said, let's have a day off, he didn't want it the Christian day and he didn't want it the Muslim day. So and there were no Jews. So he said, well, that's fine. We'll do one right in the middle.

They already are in a sense resting on the Sabbath and don't know it.

There are those, of course, who are resting on Sunday and think they're observing the Sabbath.

So the world is confused, but the world is going to have all this straightened out.

But I draw to your attention, you see, you can't escape the fact that the law of God, the teaching of God was in the letter of the law in the days of Moses. It was in the letter of the law in Ezra and Nehemiah. It was lived in the person of Jesus Christ, magnified, and he said, the time will come when we will not observe this festival in Jerusalem or in Samaria.

But wherever God's people are, as he told us, Samaritan woman, in spirit and in truth.

But we are to get together because the law says the church should assemble.

And we have now an administration in the church from the days of Jesus Christ and the apostles that has led to define how to administer the law. And their best simple illustration is to read Matthew 5. Jesus said, look at the Ten Commandments and see how I'm explaining them today and how I'm living it. I say to you, look at the book of the law, Deuteronomy. Look at the book of the covenant, Exodus 21, 22, 23. And now with the message of Christ, with the life of Christ, the teaching of the apostles, the prophecies of the prophets, look at that and then see how the church has, in fact, in our society made fundamental decisions in the manner in which this festival should be observed.

And we do it in a way different from the Jews who are limited to the understanding of the revelation of God for an earlier period. But they will come as many Jews individually are in the church today and observe it here as we do or wherever they may be.

And then we have the remarkable experience in the vision of Zachariah that the same occasion is going to be observed by all nations in the millennium. To say that that was done away would make no sense. In fact, let me tell you, the prophetess who wrote elaborately for those people who did not go along with the church of God in the last century. Most of you know what group I'm referring to. They observed the Sabbath. They believe the millennium is going to be barren except for the devil and his angels. That woman's revelation to their church said that their own people should observe the feast of tabernacles. And those who are learned in her writings know it, and the church has not done it. The church of God that did not accept many of her revelations in the last century, the church of God that has a living prophet, Jesus Christ, not a dead prophet, as all the prophets are dead who've gone before.

We do observe this festival. We believe that God is going to gather Israel and gather Judah and bring the Gentiles and bring peace. And that's what we're here to celebrate in this seven days followed by the last great day. Please be careful as you move about.

Traffic may seem slow, but let's make no mistake and have no accidents and have a wonderful occasion.

The final hymn tonight then. Turn to number 140 and rise please. Number 140 to the hills, I'll lift my eyes. And after this we lead in a closing prayer by the pastor of the Trenton, New Jersey church, Mr. Jim Rosenthal. Number 140.

To the hills I'll lift my eyes.

Off and man shall come my head.

All my head shall come the moon.

Who hath made the heaven and earth.

He will lift my gun and I butch I'll never show you.

Keepeth Israel, ever slumber's never seen.

God thy keepers till she'lls come as a shade on their head.

Neither song shall they she'lls come, nor the song that moon might come.

From all, keep thy soul in safety still.

Both without an end, he will keep thee ever known.

Mr. Rosenthal.

Almighty Heavenly Father, we pause before you on this very special evening as the Festival of Tabernacles begins and we give you thanks for giving us this special place to meet in this special festival that pictures a wonderful time in the future we've just heard about.

Thank you very much for the knowledge that is special and thank you that we can come together to rejoice and indeed we are to rejoice before you with our children, with our families, with one another, our brethren and friends and most of all we rejoice with you.

We rejoice because of the great hope that you set before us of a peaceful world, any world without end really, a world that will go on forever and ever, a peaceful kingdom.

We pray that day will come soon, thank you for the knowledge, thank you for the understanding and thank you for this wonderful time we have to observe together.

We ask your blessing upon all we do, upon our fellowship, upon our singing, especially the new book to sing from and especially as we worship with you each and every day.

Thank you for assembling us here in Christ's name we pray. Amen.