

COUNTDOWN TO THE FEAST

Has the Feast of Tabernacles Become Personal to You Yet?

Across the nation, and around the globe God's people are rapidly moving to finalizing their plans to attend the Feast of Tabernacles this year. Unfortunately for many, in those plans comes many difficulties and painful choices they will encounter in making those plans. Every year our youth has to begin the school year having to inform their teachers that they will be away for over a week to attend a "church event" for which the teacher simply has no clue. For some youth, they will encounter painful peer pressure; for parents it's time to begin reminding their bosses that it's that time of year again. Amazingly, even when you've planned to use this time for your own vacation due you, you still receive threats and disdain.

Fortunately, for most, the time will come without too many difficulties and the pain that some will experience again this year. We must remember to be earnest in prayer for all of God's people in all of the churches for God's intervention and protection during this time of the year. It is something I am acutely aware of each year as I begin receiving letters, emails, and calls for prayers during these times. Satan hates this time of year and will do all he can to prevent God's people from keeping the Feast.

Mt. Laurel, NJ & Myrtle Beach, SC Added This Year

We've been blessed to add Mt. Laurel, NJ and Myrtle Beach, SC to our list of Feast Sites to serve God's people. It will stretch us thin, but it was needed. Fortunately, God has blessed us with the volunteers to fill the needs.

The sites we have are smaller, but leave a powerful impact upon the people who attend. I remember in my early years of the church in the early 1970's, I attended Feast sites where they had twelve to fourteen thousand people. At one site they had shuttle trains like at Disney World picking up people parked blocks and blocks away from the site. When you are in your 20's, it was quite impressionable and exciting. Looking back, I viewed it more as just a vacation rather than understanding the value of the point of the Feast and the worship, fellowship and reflection upon God's Kingdom.

Yes there were numerous sermons on how to keep the Feast. But, somewhere in the masses of people, the hustle and bustle of the thousands, rushing back to a parking lot and an hour to get out of the lot, that the intent of the sermons were all but lost. Honestly, most of my fellowship with the brethren in those years was in the passing each

other to and from services saying hello.

My routine was go to service, find a place for lunch, then make plans to see the sights. Go back to church the next morning, pass by all the brethren scurrying to find a seat, greeting the brethren again, leave services and do it all over again. Looking back I thought I had a great time each year. Or did I? The next year I would look to see where I could go that I hadn't been before. Sure enough, I would go to the new site, keep the same routine as the previous year, see all the sights, and repeat the next year. Each year I was convinced it was the best Feast ever.

Why Am I telling You All of This?

In 1978 everything changed, and so did my understanding of the Feast of Tabernacles. Through a series of events, I was led to leave the Feast Site I was at in the middle of the Feast and found my way to Jekyll Island. To say it was small and different in comparison would be an understatement. There, the brethren were like the walking wounded, but filled with hope and inspiration.

I arrived late in the evening. It was around 10:30 PM and an event was coming to a close. I didn't even have a place to stay. I had left unexpectedly and simply drove through part of the night to get there. My first experience was people literally greeting and welcoming me. No one was scurrying to find seats, or rushing to and from parked cars. I encountered many questions right from the start.

No, not like you would think, like some churches that are again screening to make sure you belong there. The questions went like this; "are you ok, did you have a safe trip, are you hungry, do you have a place to stay, how can we help."

Each day was a reinforcement of a new understanding I should have had from the beginning. Unfortunately, when there are fourteen thousand people, you can't really get to know anyone, or be a part of the program or activities.

God Has a Way of Fixing Things We Don't Even Know We Have Wrong

In Dan. 12:7, God says at the end time He was going to scatter the power of the Holy people before the end. I doubt that today, anyone can disagree that the church is "scattered." Through this scattering, there are numerous Feast Sites, that are smaller and personal. The focus in the smaller Feasts are people driven. It becomes everyone's opportunity to step up to the plate and be personally involved to do something that will make their Feast, and the Feast Site an inspiration, filled with joy and love for everyone.

Let's look at Myrtle Beach for example. In a phone meeting I was asked by the Coordinator about how many might be there, the ages, the children coming, all questions that were left open ended because I simply don't have the answers. I told him the story of Mike Gladden who was in the same boat several years back. He chose not to plan a lot of activities up front, but rather had a get together following services on the first day to see what the people there wanted to do. The Feast was a tremendous success, centering on activities that were fellowship driven that everyone had a part in deciding to do. That's just one example.

If you truly want to make this Feast "Your Best Feast Ever," then get involved. If there is an area that lacks, fill the void, if there is a need, fill the need. Spend time making friends and helping others. By the time you leave, you will be greatly enriched. You simply can't out give God.

Let me give you one more personal example. Some years after my first encounter with the CGI in Jekyll Island, GA, the PCB, FL site had out grown its size in the auditorium. They set up a tent outside to handle the overflow. To say it was hot is an understatement. Did I mention the sand fleas, let us not forget the sand fleas. They set up TV's for the overflow coming last to the tent. I noticed during the opening songs that no one had song books, but they were looking for them. I went inside and asked if I could bring some song books outside to the members. My Feast suddenly changed.

The next morning I got there early to get the song books ready; braving the heat and swatting the fleas and waited for the people to come. Sure enough, as they arrived I gave them the books. Then another opportunity arose. There were no ushers. I also began helping some of the elderly to the front where they could see the services on the televisions. Suddenly I found myself very busy. Someone came up to me and asked if I needed any help, then another and another. By the third day we had a team of volunteers who would get there early each day to help serve the members. WOW! By the Last Great Day, I was asked inside to coordinate the HDO Offering. I went to the team of volunteers and set up a plan and we took up the offering. It is hard to describe how I felt each day following services when I returned to my condo. I made new friends and there was a sense of joy to know

that I had a part of making the Feast better.

Final point: Many years later I had become a Feast Coordinator for Mr. Armstrong for the PCB, FL site. A young man came up to me following services one day to talk. He mentioned that he remembered me from many years ago when I was passing out song books in the tent. We laughed and joked about the heat and the fleas. Lets not forget the fleas. He remembered the kindness showed to his grandparents. He now wanted to help. WOW! You never know whose life you may influence, even if it is simply passing out song books or helping someone find a seat. Remember Jesus Words: *"And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."* (Matt. 10:42)

I know this newsletter is a little more personal than I usually go into, but I wanted to take this time to encourage each of you, to make this Feast more personal than you may have in the past. In so doing, you have the opportunity to make the Feast a success and one that will be remembered for years to come.

Many years ago, a friend of mine told me that if Satan isn't able to stop you from going to the Feast, he will do all he can to prevent you from enjoying yourself while you are there. Let's rejoice this year as we keep the Feast.

I've been blessed once again to be able to attend all of the sites, six in all this year, in the continental states. We've had a very successful and powerful year, and I look forward to personally thank each of you for your support during the year and to share the exciting news for the upcoming year.

Next month, we hope to put out one last shortened Quarterly with all the Feast specifics, speakers and activities at all the sites like we did last year. Be on the look out for it next month.

God's Blessings to all,

Tom
Tom Kerry

P.S. Enjoy the Feast, but don't forget, please beware, lest we forget the fleas.

Coming This Fall, Our New TV Special

We'll have more information next month. Be on the look out. This is our most important special yet



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