

# Church of God, The Eternal

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September 2000

Dear Brethren:

Greetings to our brothers and sisters in faith from all of us here on the island of Mindanao, Philippines:

I firmly believe that this moment as you are reading this letter you are already prepared for the fall festival at hand. Are you? The Feast is just around the corner. This is the event that God's people are anticipating from year to year. We talk about it and make plans for it in advance. For many, it is an opportunity to get together with friends and family members whom they don't see very often. The Feast also offers a week vacation and relaxation from the burden of works everyday. But while these are valid reasons to anticipate the Feast, is that all there is?

Why is such importance attached to this festival? Is it simply a vacation? How necessary is it for God's people today to observe this upcoming Feast of Tabernacles?

There are two reasons why God wants us to appear before Him at the Feast each year.

Deuteronomy, chapter fourteen, gives the two primary reasons. First and foremost, we attend the Feast so that we might learn to fear God more deeply. Second, we are told to bestow our second tithe for whatever we desire during the festival, for God wants His people to rejoice during this holy season (vv.23–26).

Why does God want us to fear Him? What kind of fear does God want us to feel towards Him? Is it the way most people fear God—as an angry tyrant? An oppressor? That once man commits mistakes against His Laws, he will be subject to hellfire and brimstone, as most preachers are shouting every Sunday in their pulpit?

The kind of fear the Almighty looks for is in reality a deep awe and reverence for who He is and the infinite power He wields—not stark-raving terror because He frightens

us out of our wits. Because God is not real enough to most people, they become prisoners of their own fears and problems. All Israel lay paralyzed with fear because of the taunting challenges of the Philistine giant, Goliath.

"And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together. When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid" (1 Samuel 17:8–11).

Proverbs 29:25 teaches that, "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." This was exactly David's approach. God was far more real to him than this mere man, no matter how physically imposing he was. So David asked, "who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Samuel 17:26).

To fear God means to be more deeply impressed with Him than with anyone or anything else. The fear of God is a process by which to depart from evil (Proverbs 16:6). The fear of God is required for real wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). No one can be truly wise if ignorant of the very source of life and the laws that were set in motion to govern all aspects of life. When God is truly real to us, we don't just go through the motions to impress other people. But we live our lives to serve and please our Creator.

The Feast then is the time to stand before God in awe of His plan and purpose more than ever before. It is the time to receive spiritual instructions. God through Moses instructed that the law be read every seventh Feast of Tabernacles when very few had access to a personal copy of the Scripture at that time.

"And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within

thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 31:10–12).

The Feast is not only the time for adults to be taught, but children were to listen also (v.12).

The Feast of Tabernacles pictures the time when the Eternal will make a feast of fat things for the whole world (Isaiah 25:6–8). During that time, knowledge of God's ways will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9). We must look forward with all our hearts to the time when the saints will rule under Jesus Christ. We will then teach all humanity to reject pagan customs and to embrace the Law of God.

Yet we ought to learn ourselves. The Feast is a time to come out of the world and to learn more lessons of obedience to God. If we are ready to stand in greater awe of the Eternal God, a deeply meaningful festival lies ahead of us.

We are not only told that we attend the Feast to learn to fear God more completely, but also that we and our household are to rejoice before Him. A very important aspect of rejoicing before God should be noted here. He says it is to include you and your household (Deuteronomy 14:26).

Today, the last thing many families would consider enjoyable is going away for eight days and doing everything as a group. But the Feast of Tabernacles pictures the world tomorrow when both young and old will rejoice together.

"Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow" (Jeremiah 31:13).

Music and entertainment these days are mostly unwholesome. During the Feast of Tabernacles thought should be given to providing music and entertainment that is positive and uplifting, and that will contribute to the whole family rejoicing together.

God gave us this rare privilege to be called now, the privilege to be one with Christ, to restore the earth to its original beauty. And we will have that fullness of joy in the presence of God and pleasures forevermore (Psalms 16:11).

The joy that God wants us to feel is a godly joy like that of the joy of the angels when God created the earth (Job 38:7).

Finally, the Feast is to be celebrated both physically and more importantly, spiritually. It is high time for remembering what God is doing in our lives and for remembering His blessings and the wonderful calling He has given to us.

Brethren, are you now prepared to rejoice before our Creator for eight days? Then, happy Feast of Tabernacles 2000.

Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mario Y. Roque', with a stylized, cursive script.

Mario Y. Roque