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Dear Brethren:

The largest convention, festival or assembly held on earth this year will be the Worldwide Church of God Feast of Tabernacles this coming Oct. 13 to 20.

In this world of gloom, unhappiness, suffering, frustration and despair, there will be 84 Feast sites worldwide where spontaneous HAPPINESS, JOY, good fellowship with brethren and with God and with Christ will fill thankful and grateful hearts!

We live in a discouraged, sorrowful world full of evils. Oh sure, people seek entertainment, excitement -- they even seem to enjoy VIOLENCE as long as they are watching and not being hurt by it.

A few days or nights ago I was watching what appeared to be a national championship girls' basketball game between two universities. They played like men. They were "up" for it, excited -- BUT WITH SAD AND UNHAPPY EXPRESSIONS ON THEIR FACES. At the end the victors hugged and jumped up and down -- but the defeated wept and cried. It was the ecstasy of winning for one group, but they enjoyed that empty ecstasy at the cost of AGONY suffered by the girls who LOST!

But at God's Festival NO ONE WILL LOSE. None will be suffering the AGONY of defeat. But all whose hearts and minds are right with God will be spiritually refreshed, uplifted, inspired, filled with joyous anticipation, enjoying a real FEAST on the SPIRITUAL WORD OF GOD!

Think how important this Festival is! After the return of King of kings Jesus Christ, "It shall come to pass, that every one ... shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16). And there shall be plagues and severe punishments on nations that neglect or refuse to attend! People will be compelled to be happy! Of course, that is speaking of mortal people then left alive -- not of Christ's saints who then will be immortal and in the very Family of God.

But you and I are, now, still mortal -- and the above scripture shows us how very serious in God's eyes it is that we attend this wonderful Feast this year. For we may be attending it as immortal-born children of God before this present decade is out! That certainly is a likely possibility.

We have undoubtedly entered the most explosive decade in the history of man. But it is possible that God will cut short the days of great tribulation ahead and bring us into the wonderful and glorious Kingdom of God before this decade is out. Again, remember, Jesus said no man will know the day or the hour. But He did say we may know by world events when it is near -- even at the door!

This will be my 55th year of keeping the annual Fall Holy Days. We did not come to realize the meaning and need to keep the entire Feast of Tabernacles until 1945, though my wife and I began keeping the annual Sabbaths in 1927.

The Feast of Tabernacles pictures to us year after year the glorious thousand years just shortly ahead now of world peace, happiness and opportunity for eternal salvation for all not previously called! It will be a world without Satan! It will be a world with Jesus Christ ruling with love!

It is a time for us to get away from the dreary routine of daily life in Satan's world and enjoy eight wonderful days with brethren in Christ and their families! It is the only time in the year that God provides a time when we may get away and rest from our daily regular duties -- to be with brethren in Christ to worship Him and look forward to His utopia!

This year we shall have 22 Festival sites in the United States and Canada.

Brethren, as God shows us the importance of attending this Feast, it is equally important that all shall have been saving the second tithe to pay your own expenses and enjoyment at the Festival. Of course, part of that expense is rental of auditoriums or halls or convention centers and other expenses the Church must pay. So, as always, be sure to send in a tithe of your entire year's second tithe by return mail. Mark or list it separate from your regular first tithe or offering.

And please do not forget the building fund. Although we did have 100 percent financing on the Auditorium and other headquarters buildings, that came in the form of large multimillion-dollar loans from major insurance companies. Of course, much of the campus property is all paid out now, but payments are still having to be made month by month on the Auditorium, Hall of Administration, etc. So remember the special building fund, please. Remember we have been able to use and enjoy these fine buildings for a number of years before we have had to pay out these mortgages by which they were financed. And the interest we are paying is the rate that was in effect before we built -- now some years ago -- and much lower than now!

What a blessing from God that we have not had to borrow regularly at the banks during all the last two years and so far this year. Formerly we had to borrow a million dollars in January and pay back out of Passover special offerings. Then we had to borrow another million in July to be paid back from the Fall Festival offerings. Loan rates to largest bank customers have gone over 20 percent! What a blessing we have not had to pay that last year or so far this!

Nothing will be sold at the Feast sites with the exception of the Ambassador College Envoy.

There will be a special issue of The Good News for the Feast instead of the past brochures. I have never liked the commercial advertising in the Feast brochures, and we will handle it all through a special Good News for this Feast again this year. The Feast is back on the track now, as well as the Church, the college and all our activities.

Instructions for making your housing arrangements will be included in time in your Feast information material. U.S. and Canadian brethren will receive this information in a special supplement in the April 6 edition of The Worldwide News.

I wish you all the best wishes for a solemn Passover and a joyous Festival of Unleavened Bread.

With much love, in Jesus' name,

Herbert W. Armstrong