



May 21, 2021

It's a Holy Convocation to You

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God, from our offices here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you all doing well, and that again your week too has been blessed.

With the celebration of back to back Feast Days (the weekly Sabbath, and Pentecost this past Sunday), the week seemed to go a little faster, and be a little shorter...maybe it is just that I am getting older...

We celebrated our annual back to back Sabbaths - one weekly and one annual. I realize that the celebrations involved extra travel, preparation, and time for many. But it is God who has set the timing and instructions, and we follow His instructions in faith that we will be blessed for making the effort to come before Him on these double convocations.

Some may not be able to travel or have other spiritual family members to meet with in person. I well remember many of the congregations my wife and I served, only being able to meet with other brethren in person when they attended the Feast of Tabernacles.

Many connect online these days, and the fruits there are also blessed. Some have expressed frustration because their only option is to worship with others online. Some have even suggested "that one should only meet together in person". I'm not convinced that's true.

I had examined the subject and the admonition "Don't Despise His Chastening" last time in my Friday evening message. As we had observed, chastening can include giving instruction, accepting challenges, and even hardships that are allowed to come along. We are also told to not "be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him."

One person mentioned "these double Sabbaths are just too much!" I certainly hope that none of us look upon following God's instructions concerning His holy convocations as a burden or hardship.

The Feast of weeks is described in Leviticus 23:21: "*And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you.*" It is the great ruler of the Universe who commands His called out children to come before Him on these special days referred to as the Feasts of the Lord in Leviticus 23.

We are encouraged and admonished by the apostle Paul, "*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some. . .*" (Hebrews 10:24-25) That "assembling" can mean in person, or electronically with others. Terms none of us might have thought about not too long ago. The challenges this "virus" created were considered as "all bad" by many. From "bad" things often comes good.

We are also to come before our God with a positive mindset and with gladness. "*Serve the Lord with gladness; Come before His presence with singing.*" (Psalm 100:2)

David wrote, "*I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'*" (Ps 122:1) Singing praises to God together is an inspiring and encouraging experience. Psalm 92:1 describes the words of a song for the Sabbath day. Music, including singing, was important in the temple worship. (1 Chronicles 6, 15; 2 Chronicles 29) Singing together during services on the Sabbath is unifying, inspirational, and uplifting! I have fond memories of when my wife and I travel within Colombia, and other international areas, the Sabbath's are a special blessing, partly because we enjoy the energetic singing during Sabbath services!

Each week many also join with their voices online in unison to God.

God's holy convocations also offer opportunities to hear the word of God read, expounded, and then discussed. As a result we can grow in faith and confidence in knowing and living by God's way of life. "*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" (Romans 10:17)

Paul's instructions to Timothy reinforce this concept. "*...and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*" (2 Timothy 3:15-16).

Jesus also exclaimed "*blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!*" (Luke 11:27) You and I should positively anticipate hearing God's Word and being encouraged to live by it through God's Sabbath worship services.

Coming together on these holy convocations, whether in person, or online, provides an opportunity to interact with others, to encourage one another, and share our lives and calling. Fellowship is an important part of our Sabbath celebrations and our walk in God's ways. ". . . *that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*" (1 John 1:3) "*But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another . . .*" (1 John 1:7)

Making the effort to attend and participate in God's holy convocations is an act of faith, love,

and obedience. *"Therefore you shall love the Lord your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always."* (Deuteronomy 11:1) This includes the Fourth commandment concerning keeping the Sabbath and the statutes that instruct us about celebrating His annual Sabbaths.

Jesus taught, *"If you love Me, keep My commandments."* (John 14:15) The apostle John taught the same thing. *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."* (1 John 5:3)

None of us know exactly what the coming months or years ahead of us will bring. This last year has been one of change, and things we never expected have given us opportunity to grow.

Do you and I really love God? Do we really have faith? Do we anticipate each Sabbath as it comes? We act by faith with works to show God that we do love Him and respect and honor Him. *"But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?"* (James 2:20).

So, with the blessing of two Feast Days back to back...and yet another Feast Day here in a few hours, may we reflect and prepare mentally, physically, and spiritually to worship our great God.

May God bless you for the sacrifices you make to travel to God's holy convocations, or to connect online for that special time, and to come before Him to worship and praise Him and to be taught by Him on a weekly basis.

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

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