

# **GOD'S KINGDOM SOCIETY**

*(The Church of the Living God)*

*Motto: TOWARDS GOD'S PERFECT GOVERNMENT.*

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## **THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD**

Being the full text of the address of the Chairman of the Executive Board of God's Kingdom Society (GKS), the Church of the Living God, Brother Godwin O. Ifeacho during the Last and Great Day, Holy Convocation of the Christian Feast of Tabernacles in Salem City, Warri, Delta State, Nigeria, on Sunday, December 18, 2011.

Dearly Beloved Brothers, Sisters and Friends,

### **HAIL JEHOVAH AND JESUS CHRIST!**

I give sincere thanks to JEHOVAH the Almighty God through Jesus Christ His beloved Son for His mercies by which we live from day to day and for making it possible for us to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles this year by His grace.

The main purpose of celebrating the Feast is for us to gather together to learn the Scriptures so as to fear the Lord our God by observing His commandments in sincerity and in truth. - Deuteronomy 31:10-13.

The task of dispensing the gospel to all is even more urgent in this age of the second presence of Christ. That is why I have chosen as the topic of my address on this Holy Convocation of the Christian Feast of Tabernacles the sermon: "**The Acceptable Year of the Lord**".

This sermon is drawn from the prophecy made through Isaiah the prophet in Isaiah 61:1,2, which Jesus Christ, at the beginning of his Ministry, read in the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as stated in Luke 4:16-21.

The topic "**The Acceptable Year of the Lord**" echoes the proclamation of the Jubilee, an observance in time of old that came up every 50 years. It was a time of liberty, when all debts were written off, all landed property reverted to their original owners, and all slaves were set free. (Leviticus 25:8-17).

The Acceptable Year of the Lord is not a literal year of 365 days. Rather, it is a period that started from the first advent of Jesus Christ, through whom the door of grace was opened to all mankind. It refers to the era in God's plan of salvation when He would permit His word the unadulterated truth of the gospel to be preached for His people to be reconciled to Him and for them to worship Him in spirit and in truth for their blessing and salvation by His grace. Commenting on the text of Isaiah 61:1, 2, Jesus Christ, the greatest advocate of freedom, declared that the prophecy pointed to himself and that it had fulfilled in their eyes.

How are we, as Christians living up to the demands of Christ? How diligent are we in proclaiming the truth to others? How Christ-like are we in our words and actions? These are some of the issues to which we would address ourselves in this sermon by the grace of God.

## The Preaching of Christ

God Almighty had spoken in prophecy about Jesus Christ as the one through whom the door of faith would be opened to the gentiles, as it is written: "Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages" (Isaiah 49:8). Thus, when Christ started his Ministry he declared: "...The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." - Mark 1:15.

Some Jews did not listen to Christ at that time. They called him names, made jest of him and looked for opportunities to fault him and even kill him. Things got to a point that, he cursed Jerusalem, saying: "***O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.***" (Matthew 23:37-39).

This prophecy fulfilled in AD 70 when Titus the Roman general destroyed Jerusalem, killed many of the people and sent the remaining ones into exile.

## True Pastors

In course of time the truth preached by Jesus Christ and the apostles was interfered with by Satan the devil, who used his agents to adulterate the pure doctrines of Christ with folk tales and traditions of men. This was a fulfillment of the warning of Jesus Christ to his disciples in those days thus: "***Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.***" (John 12:35).

Thus, the world entered into an era of spiritual ignorance, when darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. - Isaiah 60:2.

However, God promised that in His due time, truth shall spring out of the earth and righteousness shall look down from heaven. (Psalm 85:11).

God Almighty also promised thus: "***And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.***" (Jeremiah 3:15)

These true pastors are the saints or apostles of Christ. It is to them that the truth of God will be revealed. In the last days, the remnant will be chosen and sent out to preach the truth of God's established kingdom and to gather the sheep of God by His grace. - Matthew 24:31; 1 John 2:27.

It was in respect of this great campaign of spiritual education that John the Apostle was privileged to see in a vision an angel announcing the divine command for the truth to be made known to all peoples of the world, as it is written: "***And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.***" (Revelation 14:6,7).

Earlier, our Saviour Jesus Christ had declared: ***“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”*** - Matthew 24:14.

It could be seen therefore that Jesus Christ is speaking to us today by his word delivered through the remnants of the saints whom he is using to gather his children in this age, through the preaching of the truth. This is the period which Christ referred to in parable as “the time of the harvest” in Matthew 13:30. One of the remnants chosen in this part of the world in our age was St. Gideon Meriodere Urhobo, the founding instrument of God's Kingdom Society, GKS, the Church of the Living God. In his memoir he spelt out his commission as follows: “After three and half years' diligent and prayerful studies of the Holy Bible, Jesus Christ revealed himself to me in a vision and commanded me to go and proclaim the good news of God's Kingdom (or 'Gospel of Peace') to all nations as the only remedy for all human sufferings and woes; to expose all the false doctrines which Satan had used to deceive the people and to keep them in ignorance of God's Kingdom and purpose of creation; and to pronounce God's written judgment against all wickedness.” It is to this mission-statement that the God's Kingdom Society had committed herself since her inception by the grace of God.

### **Other Sheep**

Apart from the Saints, there are others, of the “other sheep” class, who, though not anointed, God is also using as Ministers, study leaders and elders to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”. (Jude 3). These are those who are in the front-line of the evangelism work. But, by and large, all the children of God who have come to the truth are involved in one way or the other as part of the great company of those publishing the gospel. (Psalm 68:11). The Bible says: “And the Spirit (Jesus Christ) and the bride (the Saints) say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” - Revelation 22:17.

Those privileged to labour in the word and doctrine of Christ must do so with courage and be diligent in the Lord's business as Apostle Paul charged Timothy to wit: ***“Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”*** (2 Timothy 2:1,2) And he himself asserted “woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” - 1 Corinthians 9:16.

Certainly, it is those who respond to the call of God, who do what they hear and who play their part in spreading the word that God will be with and bless. Their services will be acceptable because they are doing it in light of the accurate knowledge of God.

The Bible says: ***“The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.”*** - Psalm 145:18,19.

Where such sincere, humble and faithful disciples are gathered together in truth Jesus Christ will be in their midst - in other words, his attention will be focused on what they are doing. - Matthew 18:20; John 4:23,24; Ezekiel 20:40.

## **The Deceitfulness of Sin**

Those called into God's organization must run away from false prophets. They must serve God with humility and fear, endeavouring to practice righteousness at all times. To this end, God Almighty through His servant Isaiah declared: ***“And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.”*** - Isaiah 35:8. See also Psalm 106:3.

It is unfortunate that some of those who have come to the light of Christ take things for granted and are not careful to serve God in the way acceptable to Him. Yet His commandments are not grievous. In other words, they are not difficult for the honest man or woman to keep. (See 1 John 5:3). We must pay heed to the clear warning of St. Paul to wit: ***“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind (Homosexuals and Lesbians), Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”*** - 1 Corinthians 6:9,10.

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul listed other sins which include fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit and malignity. He lamented that many people today are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable and unmerciful. He added: ***“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”*** - Romans 1:29-32.

We have noticed that with each passing day, Nigeria and other parts of the world are sinking more and more into the abyss of corruption, intolerance, injustice, greed, oppression, insincerity, lie-telling, sexual immorality, violence, looting of the treasury, abuse of power, etc. It is unfortunate that these sins are rife today in Nigeria and other parts of the world, in spite of the spread of the gospel.

There can be no peace and security in the world in the face of such flagrant violations of the laws of God.

The Bible says: ***“Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.”*** - Hosea 4:1-3.

It is for us to avoid the dire consequences of persisting in sin that St. Paul exhorted us thus: ***“We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)”*** - 2 Corinthians 6:1,2.

Whatever may be the sin anyone is committing now he should repent and turn a new creature by the grace of God so as not to be like the natural Jews who were disobedient to the truth, as the Bible warns: “**...To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.**” - Psalm 95:7-11. See also Hebrews 3:7-19.

Nobody should mistake the longsuffering of God for slackness or weakness as to be emboldened to continue in sin without any prick of conscience. The fact is that God will act in His due time and there will be none to deliver the wicked. (Psalm 50:22,23; Ecclesiastes 2:11-13; Zephaniah 1:14-18; Revelation 6:15-17; 9:6; 2 Peter 3:9).

For us to avoid the tragic consequences of sin, we are warned in the following text: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” - Hebrews 3:12-14; See also Romans 2:4,5.

### **Time to seek the Lord**

The Bible shows that the opportunity God has given for people of goodwill to hear the truth and be converted will not remain open forever.

Time will come when the door will be closed. We therefore enjoin one and all to seek the Lord now, making full use of the time because these are evil days. (Ephesians 5:16). The Bible says: “**Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near...**” - Isaiah 55:6,7. See also Zephaniah 2:1-3.

This exhortation is very vital now because time will come when the preaching work will cease and those who seek for the truth then will not find it. The Bible says, “**Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.**” - Amos 8:11,12.

In addition, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ stated: “When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.” - Luke 13:25-27.

This stern warning by our Lord Jesus Christ is a clarion call on us all to make the most of the opportunity we now have by sowing in righteousness so as to reap in mercy, knowing that “**it is time to seek the Lord**” (Hosea 10:12).

Moreover, St. Paul declared that now that the judgements of God have been made manifest people have no excuse for continuing in the works of darkness.

He stated: ***“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”*** (Acts 17:30,31).

The learned Apostle further charged us thus: ***“Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.”*** - Hebrews 12:28.

May God Almighty Who dwells in the heaven of heavens give us more of His holy spirit so that we might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that we might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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