

The Acceptable Year of the Lord

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, inspite 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 swear 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 every where 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.

Godwin O. Ifeacho

Chairman, Executive Board, GKS

I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE NOR FORSAKE THEE

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, on the Last and Great Day of the Christian Feast of Tabernacles in Salem City, Warri, Delta State, Nigeria on Sunday, December 23, 2012.

Dearly Beloved Brothers, Sisters and Invited Guests,

Hail Jehovah and Jesus Christ!

May the Almighty God who dwells in the heaven of heavens, by Whose Power we are all gathered under the banner of the truth to celebrate this great Feast of feasts, the Feast of Tabernacles, be glory, honour and adoration forever through His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

We cannot thank God enough for keeping us alive to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for the year 2012, despite the various troubles with which the devil had afflicted people in Nigeria and other parts of the world during the year. It was Jeremiah the Prophet who declared: "It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." – Lamentations 3:22, 23.

It is for the purpose of strengthening our faith to enable us face with fortitude and hope the perils of the times, that I have chosen as my address to celebrants this year the topic: **"I WILL NEVER LEAVE THEE NOR FORSAKE THEE"**.

His People

God Almighty will never abandon those who look to Him for sustenance and salvation by His grace. But while He will always guide, protect and care He will also not fail to hold them to account whenever they walk contrary to His laws. Referring to His chosen nation, the natural Jews, God declared: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." (Amos 3:2) This text underlines the privileged status which the natural Jews had in terms of their relationship with the Almighty God. This special relationship with God had earlier been highlighted in Exodus 19:4-6, where God Almighty spoke of His protection and care over the nation of Israel for the fact that they were a peculiar treasure unto him above all people. The "Israel of

God” today, however, is no longer limited to the natural Jews but comprises all people of goodwill in any part of the world who believe in Jesus Christ and therefore worship the Father in spirit and in truth. (Galatians 3:26-28; John 4:22-24; Matthew 18:20; etc.) It is a great blessing to be counted among God’s covenant people, hence in Psalm 33:12 it is written: “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD: and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.” See also Psalm 65:4 and 144:15.

Divine Promise

God Almighty had from time of old promised to protect, sustain and increase His people on the condition that they obeyed His commandments. It was to this end Moses the Prophet declared: “And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.” (Deuteronomy 31:8) It was important that Moses should give such exhortation to the people at that time in that he was about to leave them by way of death. He therefore made them to understand that though he would not be with them anymore, they should not harbour fears about the future because God Almighty Who is the Everlasting God will continue to be with them. He told them: “Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, ... for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.” (Deuteronomy 31:6) It is instructive that God Almighty gave a similar assurance to Joshua the successor of Moses when He charged him to carry on the work with courage. - Joshua 1:5-9.

The promise of God Almighty to always guide and care for His servants particularly, and the rest of the faithful generally, is pointedly expressed with the use of picture language in Isaiah 49:15, where the Almighty God posed the question: “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?” Then He answered in the first person, “yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.” (See also Isaiah 41:10-16) That the attention of God Almighty will always be on the faithful, to continually direct them with His holy spirit and feed them with His word is a great source of comfort and strength to His children on earth. God gives us this much assurance in Isaiah 41:17, where it is written: “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”

Examples

Since our heavenly Father has made such precious promises to His people, some may wonder what is the need for this sermon **“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee”**.

The fact is that the devil could be so hard and relentless in his persecutions that some among the faithful could be swayed or confused as to think that God had forsaken them. The devil confuses people by exposing them to hard conditions such as natural disasters, hunger, ill-health, wars, deaths, etc. He deceives or misleads people through false teachings and enticements. The ultimate aim is to destroy as many people as possible by making them to deny God or compromise their faith as a result of adversity. – John 8:44; 10:10; 2 Corinthians 4:3,4; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 2 Timothy 2:26; etc.

A ready example of a committed worshipper of God who suffered various tribulations at the instance of satan the devil was the prophet Job, whom the Bible describes as “perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil”. (Job 1:1) The devil boasted that if God Almighty would remove His protection from Job and allow him to “touch all that he hath” Job would curse God to His face. (Job 1:11) This was a direct challenge to God Almighty that despite His goodness to mankind no one will remain faithful to Him when faced with intense and sustained tribulation. God allowed satan to persecute Job to prove to him that some people will still remain faithful even in the face of the most severe trials. Job remained undaunted even after the devil had killed his 10 children, his cattle, asses, sheep and so on. Seeing that he still remained steadfast with God, the devil went further to boast that if God allowed him to afflict Job with sickness that threatened his life, he will curse God. But Job’s faith remained strong by God’s grace. Then the devil moved his wife to tempt him saying: “...Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.” (Job 2:9) Rather than abandon his faith, Job declared: “All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils; My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit... till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live. (Job 27:3-6) The Bible says: “...In all this did not Job sin with his lips...nor charged God foolishly. - Job 2:10; 1:22.

Job knew that God allowed the evils to befall him as trial of his faith so as to build him up to be a better person. The experience was also part of his work of salvation. In

course of time, God Almighty, Who can never lie, showed His faithfulness by restoring to Job even double of all that he had lost. (Job 23:10-12; 42:10-17) From the experience of Job it could be seen that the devil tries by all means to turn men against God but when the worshipper remains faithful, God will never forsake him or her.

Another instance is the case of the woman of Zarephath. At a time when there was great hunger in the land of Israel, God Almighty sent Elijah the Prophet to a widow who will feed him until the famine was over. When Elijah came to Zarephath, where the woman lodged, she was gathering sticks to make fire. The prophet then asked her to bring him water to drink. At a time when there had been no rain for months, water was of course, precious as gold. Yet she obliged him for God's sake. As she went about that, Elijah raised the bar by asking her to bring some food for him to eat. It was at this stage that she opened up, telling him that the little food available would only sustain her and her son for that day, after which they would wait for death.

However, in spite of the desperate condition of the widow Elijah told the woman, "Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth." (1 Kings 17:13-16) The Bible shows that "she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah."

The level of faith shown by this poor widow was so high that our Lord Jesus Christ recalled it during his days on earth when he told the Jews: "But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow..." – Luke 4:25, 26

As true worshippers of God, we should follow the example of faith shown by the widow of Zarephath. The fact is that God allows some of the devil's persecutions to meet us so as to try our faith and manifest His great power - all for our spiritual benefit. Faith, could as our Lord Jesus Christ said, move mountains. (Matthew 21:21, 22) We must continue

to trust Him so that He would help us to overcome in the hour of temptation. This was the attitude displayed by St. Paul in the heat of persecutions when he declared: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed." - 2 Corinthians 4:8, 9.

The story of the widow also shows that with God all things are possible and that we should trust firmly in Him even when the odds look overwhelming. David the prophet stated: "The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." - Psalm 9:9, 10. See also Psalm 55:22.

Perils of the Last Days

Brothers, sisters and our friends here gathered, this exhortation is even more pertinent in this age known as the last days, the most turbulent time in the history of mankind. In the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, the onset of the last days in 1914, when the devil was driven down to this earth was "the beginning of sorrows" for mankind. This meant that the world would be marching into harder and harder times as the last days progressed. Our Saviour Jesus Christ said that the last days would be marked by distress and perplexity and that men's hearts would be failing them for fear for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth. (Luke 21:26) Apart from the world wars which would have wiped out mankind but for God's intervention, (Matthew 24:22) there have been so many other wars through which millions of people have died. Moreover, so many groups around the world, complaining of one grudge or the other, are causing mayhem and destruction largely to innocent citizens through terrorist acts and these have put big and small nations in a permanent state of fear.

Apart from resurgence of such vices as kidnapping, there have also been revolutions in various parts of the world as well as economic crises that exposed the frailty of man and his utter helplessness in dealing with the problems of the world. The former President of Brazil, Lula Da Silva, declared in the thick of the 2009 global financial crisis, that present world problems have shown that the wise men of the world "who before seem to know everything, and now have shown that they do not know anything". (*The Guardian on Sunday*, October 14, 2012, page 53) This calls to mind the words of the Prophet

Jeremiah to wit: "The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?" - Jeremiah 8:9.

Some people feel God has forsaken them because of financial difficulties or because they have not realized their ambition to become rich overnight. This should not be, for God Almighty has assured us that He will always provide for us. He will always answer the prayer "Give us this day our daily bread". (Matthew 6:11. Compare Psalm 68:19) Indeed, David declared: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." (Psalm 37:25) We should be contented with what we have and not be in a haste to become rich. St. Paul warned: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." - Hebrews 13:5.

There have also been epidemics of various proportions as well as natural disasters such as earthquakes, wild fires, floods, hurricanes, cyclones, volcanic eruptions, famines and so on. These natural disasters, according to the American Psychological Association (APA) take a serious emotional toll on victims which range from disrupted eating and sleeping patterns, strained personal relationships to physical symptoms such as headaches, nausea or chest pain.

In October this year, at least 24 states in the United States of America (USA), were devastated by the superstorm, "Hurricane Sandy", resulting in a storm surge which flooded streets, tunnels, subway lines, and killed dozens of people up and down the U.S. East coast. For days millions were without power. The losses in property has been estimated to be from \$10 billion to \$20 billion. Here in Nigeria we have had our share of political, social and economic problems as well as natural disasters, the most recent of which have been the floods that affected no fewer than thirty states. The floods made major roads impassable, resulted in the collapse of bridges, houses and other structures and caused the deaths of hundreds of persons. In Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State, a woman and her five children were among no fewer than 38 persons who were reportedly swept away by the floods. Moreover, it was reported that four farmers in Kogi State and another in Delta State committed suicide because floods had overrun the farms in which they invested loans taken from banks. (See *Vanguard-on-line* of October 15, 2012; *Daily Sun* of Monday, October 8, 2012,

Page 9) The prospects for the future do not look bright as scientists have predicted that rains would be more intense, floods heavier and winds stronger in years to come, due to the effects of global warming.

Some people also become so frustrated as to take extreme measures due to financial difficulties, problems in getting marital partners, difficulties in the marriage union such as childlessness, etc.; joblessness, failure in examinations, and so on. Recently, two female students who failed the last WAEC exams in one of the states committed suicide, allegedly, because they had written the exams three times without passing Mathematics and English Language. That was foolishness on their part. If one studies hard and effectively he or she should be able to pass by God's grace. If one does not succeed today he could succeed tomorrow, God willing. But those who are not academically inclined could take to other professions. Many people who are well-off today were not bright in academics. However, no one should contemplate taking his life because of difficulties, as such a person would be adding sin to sin. No one created himself and no one has the right to take his own life or that of another. (Job 1:21) The belief in the providence of the Almighty God which instills in the believer the hope for a better tomorrow, is the basis of the Christian endeavour.

Sure Promises

Those who have become hopeless and depressed because of the troubles of this evil world should turn to God, our Fortress, Shield and Saviour in the day of affliction and calamity. We all should continually look to God Almighty, Who has given us sure promises of deliverance anytime we are in trouble. God declared through the prophet Isaiah, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." (Isaiah 45:22. See also Proverbs 18:10) Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd who stands for the children of God, stated: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30) He further admonished us not to be overly anxious because of the wants of this life but to make the quest for God's Kingdom our priority. - Matthew 6:31-33.

Dearly Beloved celebrants, let me emphasize that those whom God has called to serve Him must have strong faith in Him and exercise perfect patience in order to be in close fellowship with Him. St. Paul tells us that, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6) And our Saviour Jesus Christ exhorts: "In your patience possess ye your souls." (Luke 21:19) We must be determined to remain on the Lord's side no matter the situation, believing that there is no difficult situation God cannot reverse. This calls for good heart condition and the doing of righteousness at all times. Hanani the Seer told King Asa in those days: "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him..." (2 Chronicles 16:9) Our Lord Jesus Christ himself stated: "And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him." - John 8:29.

The truth is that all true Christians must go through a fiery trial but God Almighty will certainly deliver us from such situations in His own due time, by His grace, when we trust in Him. (1 Corinthians 10:13) Moreover, St. Peter, exhorting us on the importance of faith and patience in the midst of tribulations, stated: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." (1 Peter 5:6-9) Our Lord Jesus Christ drove home the point that God will always preserve us no matter what the devil may do or plans to do, when he stated: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." - John 10:27-29.

Let us therefore forge ahead without fear, without doubt and with complete assurance of God's power to save and not be dampened in spirit in any way by the troubles that may come our way. I exhort all people of God in this age to take to heart the exhortation of King David to his son Solomon to wit: "Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee". (1 Chronicles 28:20) Indeed, "The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put

their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.” - Psalm 9:9, 10.

May God Almighty, Who is a present help in time of trouble, the hope and strength of spiritual Israel, continue to help us in these perilous times as to remain faithful in Him at all times so as to enjoy His blessings in this world and everlasting life in the end by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Godwin O. Ifeacho,
Chairman, Executive Board, GKS

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OCTOBER 2012

RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION

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 on the Last and Great Day of the Christian Feast of Tabernacles in Salem City, Warri, Delta State, Nigeria on Sunday, December 22, 2013.

Dearly Beloved Brothers, Sisters and friends,

HAIL JEHOVAH AND JESUS CHRIST!

I give praises and thanks to God Almighty through Jesus Christ **the** greater and more perfect Tabernacle **for** the grace I have to address you in this year **the** celebration of the Christian Feast of Tabernacles, the only Feast ordained by God Almighty for His people to celebrate in this age of the end of the world.

The topic of my address to you this year is entitled **Righteousness Exalteth A Nation** **According** to good dictionaries, "*righteousness*" means **the** quality of being morally right or justifiable **Its** synonyms include uprightness, truthfulness, plainness, purity and piety. The word "*exalt*" means **to** raise in rank, character or status; to elevate **while** "*a nation*" is **a** large body of people united by common descent, history, culture or language, inhabiting a particular state or territory

Some people, especially among the intellectuals and political leaders of the world believe that their nations could attain lasting progress, peace and happiness solely by their own efforts, without regard for God and His laws. Such people are hopelessly wrong as could be seen from the examples of kingdoms and empires since the dawn of recorded

history. Indeed, God's word is always true, Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people. - Proverbs 14:34.

Each Nation Their Habitation.

God Almighty created man in His own image and likeness to worship Him and exercise control over other creatures on the earth according to His will. (Isaiah 43:21; Psalm 100:3; Jeremiah 10:6,7,10, 12; 5:22) God placed man in the Garden of Eden, a name which means delight or pleasure in that it was a well-watered land that abounding with treasures, pleasantness and fruitfulness. But God Almighty made it clear that man would continue to enjoy these benefits only on the condition of obedience to His law. When God gave the command that man should multiply and replenish the earth (Genesis 1:28), He meant that man should fill the earth with perfect creatures so that the entire earth would in the course of time be like the Garden of Eden. However, man broke the law of God, following the vile influence of Satan the devil. As a result, man fell from his exalted position and started to toil, suffer and die. See Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-19; Romans 3:23; etc.

Man could no longer reach his full potentials because of sin. However, those who keep to the laws of God, through grace in Christ Jesus, would rise above others who reject the truth in terms of the favour of God on them. They will enjoy peace and order, unity, love and relative happiness by His grace. It is right conduct, based on the fear of God, that exalts a

nation, not merely the fact that they are endowed with natural resources, or knowledge of science and technology. Worldly knowledge does not teach man righteousness.

Nation of Israel.

God Almighty because of His love for mankind established the nation of Israel to be a model or example of right conduct among the nations. He warned them that they would stand as a nation only if they keep His laws as Moses the prophet of God stated, **8**Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.**9**(Deuteronomy 4:6) Moreover God declared: **8**Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.**9**- Exodus 19:5.

Before his death, Moses delivered a farewell address to the Jews in which he listed the blessings which the Israelite nation would receive for being faithful to God as well as the evils which would befall them should they neglect the commandments of the LORD. He stated among other things, **8**And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if

that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them. ⑨- Deuteronomy 28:1, 13.

Among the curses were that they would ⑧become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations” where they would be taken captive. They would be so reduced in status that even the strangers among them would be better esteemed than they. (Deuteronomy 28:37, 43) True to the words of the prophet of God, the people of Israel were highly respected by their neighbours when they gave themselves to righteousness but suffered humiliation when the contrary was the case.

The Jewish nation reached her peak in the days of Kings David and Solomon his son. The Bible says, ⑧David executed judgment and justice unto all his people⑨(2 Samuel 8:15); and under the rule of King Solomon, ⑧Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry. And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life... For he had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tiphshah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. ⑨- 1 Kings 4:20-25.

Unfortunately, the people did not continue in the path of righteousness, so God warned them time and again that He would give them exemplary punishment, to serve as warning to future generations, as it is written: ¶Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down.” (2 Kings 21:12, 13) In fulfillment of God’s word, Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews taken into captivity in Babylon for 70 years. ¶2 Chronicles 36:14-21. Please see also Jeremiah 52:1-34; Lamentations chapters 1 and 2; and Psalm 137:1-4; etc.

Reproachful Reputation

The Bible says that because of sin “a man is brought to a piece of bread.” (Proverbs 6:26) Indeed, sin brings people low, makes them to suffer avoidable difficulties, miseries and distresses. (See Jeremiah 2:19) One of such people who had become notorious for sinfulness were the people of Sodom and Gomorrhah. Although the land was fruitful and well nourished, the people gave themselves to gross immorality, precisely to the sin of homosexuality. The Bible says, ¶But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly. ¶- Genesis 13:13.

Unfortunately, despite the exemplary punishment God gave to the people of Sodom, homosexuality is being glamorized and idolized in several parts of the world, especially the Western world. This is the work of the devil who is instigating people to work against God's divine purpose. Those who are already in same-sex unions or who support it should repent thoroughly. (Matthew 9:12, 13; Romans 6:1-2) By concurring, defending and justifying homosexuality and lesbianism and encouraging others to do the same, the so-called liberals in the world have formed a confederacy with the devil, whether they know it or not and will certainly not escape God's punishment unless they repent. See 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; 2 Peter 2:5,6; etc.

Sin, the Bane of Present World

The devil rules the world through Politics, Religion and Commerce. It is through these elements that he troubles the nations of the earth (Luke 21:25, 26). One of the problems in several societies across the world is that a growing number of the people, have gone back to worshipping the demons that their fathers put away when they embraced Christianity. Nominal Christians, having not known the TRUTH mix their Christian beliefs with heathenish practices such as astrology, witchcraft, idolatry, occultism, membership of secret societies and so on, contrary to the Bible. Such festivals as Halloween and novels that glamorize witchcraft and institutions that make secret society membership a condition for

appointments and promotions cannot but drag the people backwards rather than forward, even if they claim to be advanced or civilized. - Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Isaiah 47:12-15; Jeremiah 10:1, 2.

Concerning Nineveh the capital of Assyria, which sold herself to the worship of the devil, God declared: **8**Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favored harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts. Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame.**9**(Nahum 3:4, 5) Any nation that refuses to embrace the truth as preached by Jesus Christ and taught by his anointed servants but prefer to follow falsehood in the name of Christianity will not enjoy the peace and progress that come only from God Almighty. **8**For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.**9**  Isaiah 60:12; See also Jeremiah 16:5; John 16:33; 14:27; etc

Other vices such as injustice, oppression, fraud, greed, corruption, human and drug trafficking, prostitution, slavery among others, encourage violence, selfishness, partiality, insincerity and other negative traits. These affect the thinking and behaviour of the people such that they are not able to rise to their full potentials. Such countries, many of them in Africa, find themselves at the bottom of the ladder economically, socially, and

politically, from year to year. Corruption, defined as dishonest or illegal behaviour, especially of people in authority⁹ is a menace that is crippling many nations today, most of them in Africa. Our dear country Nigeria is particularly vulnerable in this regard. She has been described ⁸as an unquestioning, complicit community in which a young man would, within a year of starting a job, drive a car he could not have legitimately afforded, and yet people clap for him⁹. Corruption has reportedly permeated both the public and private sectors of Nigeria⁷ economy, hampering development mostly because the public is accustomed to celebrating corrupt people. See *The Guardian* of Thursday, August 29, 2013.

A newspaper report in Nigeria recently highlighted the dangers of "Advanced Fee Fraud", commonly called "419", in the society. It was discovered that a number of undergraduates were riding state-of-the-art cars, living in posh houses, and in hotels for weeks, and spending money freely, whereas they had no visible, not to talk of legitimate sources of income. It was later found that they were obtaining money under false pretences from individuals and institutions within and outside Nigeria. While they were living flamboyantly here, the people they extorted money from were groaning for loss of their hard-earned income, until security agents arrested them. - *Saturday Punch*, September 7, 2013, pages 14,15.

When a significant percentage of the youths of a country are growing up with the belief that money obtained through fraudulent means is legitimate

business then there is cause for alarm. I hereby enjoin all those involved in shady transactions to desist from such practices if not they would be exposed and lose whatever filthy lucre or ill-gotten money they have obtained from people, in that, there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed. - Numbers 32:23; Luke 12:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:6; Jeremiah 17:11.

According to Oliver Goldsmith in his poem *Deserted Village*, "All fares the land ... where wealth accumulates and men decay" Moreover, God declared through the prophet Hosea, "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.

One of the signs of the last days is that people would be given to pleasures, chambering and wantonness as people in Noah's time and in the time of Lot did. Unfortunately, many people today are fulfilling that prophecy. The *Vanguard* of Monday September 23, 2013, page 11 reported that some residents in Lagos State spend at least N36 billion throwing one form of party or the other every year. The government in a study of nightlife

carried out between October and November last year (2012) in five Local Government Areas in the state showed that three billion naira was spent on 1,555 parties held within the period. Even though the Bible says, one of the signs of the last days is that people would be given to chambering and drinking at the expense of spiritual things, those who want to be saved by God should “walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.” They should do things with soberness, moderation and the love of God. Romans 13:11-13..

Qualities that Exalt a Nation

Indisputably, the laws of God make people wise and their nation stable. The laws of most modern societies, who are regarded as civilized and technologically advanced, are based on the Holy Bible. This accounts for the concept of human rights, the right to life, to dignity of the human person, freedom of association, and of religion, disavowal of capital punishment, the preference for reform of criminals than retribution, the principles of service, law and order, the values of hard work, temperance or sobriety, thrift, abstinence from wasteful consumption and so on. These virtues have served humanity very well over time.

For a nation to be truly great in the sight of God and men, both the leaders and the led must have the fear of God and be ready to follow the truth at all times as stated in the Holy Bible, God's guide book for man. The people should have such qualities as selflessness, fairness, diligence, love for one another, patience, endurance and so on. The Almighty God says, **80** that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea: Thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.**9**- Isaiah 48:18, 19.

One cannot know and do the righteousness of God without the knowledge of the truth. Nations that set great store by the truth or the word of God would, to a reasonable extent minimize the economic, political, religious and social barriers that severely limit the advancement of the people of other countries who are given to godlessness. The truth gives us freedom from sin, corrupt tendencies, and from false practices done in the name of Christianity. It also frees us from fears and traditional practices that are contrary to the will of God, cleanses us from sin and leads us to salvation by the grace of God. (John 15:3; 17:17; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4) Our Lord Jesus Christ stated, **81**..If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**9**- John 8:31, 32.

Leadership

Right leadership is crucial in directing the people in the path of righteousness. That is why the Bible places great emphasis on the qualities, which men should possess to be considered for leadership in God's Organization. When the leaders and the led follow the truth as stated in the Bible, they will be afraid to cheat, lie, or oppress anyone. They will not do anything that would give them a bad name. Though the devil is still alive and man is still suffering the harmful effects of sin, human beings could do a lot to improve their material conditions if they are focused in obeying the laws of God and working unitedly for their mutual benefit. The leaders however, have a sacred duty to galvanize the populace to the pursuit of righteous ends not only by word but also by example. David the prophet declared, "The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." 2 Samuel 23:2, 3. *Please see Nehemiah 5:9-15.*

It is said that justice is the first condition for a peaceful society. God Almighty commanded the prophet Moses to charged judges thus, "And I charge your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgement; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgement is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it." (Deuteronomy 1:16, 17) Nevertheless, today it is common-place to hear of judgments being "sold"

to the highest bidder and complains that the poor and weak in society are being oppressed by the rich and powerful. This is a very dangerous trend in that when people lose hope in the judiciary, they resort to self-help or jungle justice. How can a nation become great when injustice rules the land?

If the people are led by those who are not spiritually minded, but are selfish, greedy, ignorant, shortsighted, carnal or materialistic, then they would become beastly, cruel, crafty, insincere and distrustful of even those who regard themselves as their friends. If the situation persists, nothing else but disaster will follow except such leaders change their ways. King Solomon stated, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn. The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regarded not to know it". (Proverbs 29:2, 7; See also Isaiah 59:4-9, 14, 15) The same tale of woe will betide a people led by novices or people interested only in the trappings of power than in taking up the responsibilities which leadership entails.

Another quality that makes a nation to be exalted is love. The people must love their neighbours as themselves. The true disciple of Christ will not do anything to hurt his neighbour but will always seek his good or happiness. Scripture says, **8**Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.**9**(Romans 13:10) Where there is no love,

each person will be concerned with pursuing his own interests, whether it hurts others or not. Today, people have become dangerous to one another and therefore fearful of one another because of lack of love. - 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Galatians 5:14, 15; 1 John 3: 17, 18.

Fellow celebrants of the Christian Feast of Tabernacles 2013, the essence of this sermon is that if a people who are living in a certain geographical space are God-fearing, they will rise above their contemporaries because of their stand for truth and righteousness. It is God Almighty Who has the power to make a nation great, and He will raise those nations that do His will as it is written, "Thine, O LORD is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. ❶- 1Chronicles 29:11, 12.

May God Almighty, the Hope and Strength of spiritual Israel, Who is a present help in time of trouble, continue to help us as to remain faithful at all times, so as to enjoy His blessings in this world and everlasting life in the end by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Godwin O. Ifeacho,
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DECEMBER 2013

**UNBELIEVERS AND WICKED MEN
SHALL SOON KNOW THAT THERE IS GOD**

BEING THE FULL TEXT OF THE ADDRESS OF BROTHER GODWIN O. IFEACHO, CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE BOARD OF GOD'S KINGDOM SOCIETY (GKS), *the Church of the Living God*, ON THE LAST AND GREAT DAY OF THE CHRISTIAN FEAST OF TABERNACLES HELD IN SALEM CITY, WARRI, DELTA STATE, NIGERIA ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2014.

Dearly beloved Brothers, Sisters and Friends,

HAIL JEHOVAH AND JESUS CHRIST!

Unto JEHOVAH the Almighty God, the Creator and Possessor of the universe, be adoration and thanks, for His mercies on us in sending Jesus Christ, the "greater and more perfect tabernacle", who is now with us in spirit by His grace.

Brothers, sisters and friends our appreciation of the Lord's goodness is underlined by the fact that many people could not see today due to the violent activities of terrorists, insurgents, armed robbers, kidnappers, etc.; and the effects of old age and of various diseases. However, those of us who are alive should do the will of God the more in appreciation of His goodness. - Psalm 40:5; Isaiah 38:18, 19.

By congregating to show gratitude to God and to proclaim His truth, we are doing honour to Him and to His crowned King Jesus Christ. We should do this with even greater zeal in this age so that those who are in error "may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." – 2 Timothy 2:26. See also Deuteronomy 31:10-13; Zephaniah 2:1-3; Isaiah 58:1; Daniel 12:10;

It is with this understanding that I have chosen as the address to celebrants in this great Christian festival, the Feast of Tabernacles for the

year 2014 the topic, "**Unbelievers And Wicked Men Shall Soon Know That There Is God**". The *Webster's Dictionary* defines "*unbeliever*" as one who does not believe in a particular religious faith, while the word "*wicked*" means "morally bad, evil; disposed to or marked by mischief; causing or likely to cause harm, distress, or trouble." Generally, a wicked person is seen as one who is cruel to others; who derives pleasure from showing aggression with a motive of inflicting harm or killing another individual.

The wicked described

From the Bible point of view unbelievers and wicked people are those who persist in error or wrong doing in spite of having received the knowledge of God. Ezekiel the prophet was inspired by God to describe a wicked person in these words: "a robber, a shedder of blood, ... (one who) hath eaten upon the mountains, and defiled his neighbour's wife, Hath oppressed the poor and needy, hath spoiled by violence, hath not restored the pledge, and hath lifted up his eyes to the idols, hath committed abomination." (Ezekiel 18:10-12) The degenerate state of the wicked is portrayed by St. Paul in this wise, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 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 1:28-32) The Bible says further that even "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." (Proverbs 12:10) These wicked ones are so proud that they do not believe in the judgment of God. They feel that they can do whatever they like and so do not care about the effects of their actions on their fellow men. - Psalm 10:4-11; Job 22:13, 14.

A wicked man is very crafty and cunning; he "worketh a deceitful work". They lie with confidence and with a straight face - without prick of conscience. As our Lord Jesus Christ says "they *come to you in sheep's*

clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves". (Matthew 7:15, 16) They are thus able to win many people who are not careful or alert to their side, at least temporarily. King David prayed: "Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts." - Psalm 28:3-5.

One of the wicked practices going on today is the sin of homosexuality. This is a dangerous trend in which men marry men and women marry women. It is unfortunate that a number of orthodox churches now accommodate gays and lesbians and even carry out civil marriages. On October 15, 2014, 200 Catholic bishops meeting at a synod on pastoral approaches to modern family life, issued an interim report which stated that gays and lesbians have "gifts and qualities to offer to the Christian community" and that there are "positive aspects of civil unions and cohabitation." (*The Online Edition - New York Times, October 13, 2014, The Punch Newspaper, issue of October 14, 2014*) This statement, following the lead already given earlier by Pope Francis, amounted to tacitly condoning homosexuality, no doubt, in order to please those who are criticizing some churches for being "too rigid" on these issues. The hallmark of a true church is to tell people the truth which will lead them to salvation, not to tell people what they want in order to be popular. (Isaiah 30:9, 10; Matthew 7:13, 14; 15:12-14; Luke 16:15; 2 Timothy 4:3, 4) The fact is that homosexuality is a wicked act indulged in by those who have sold themselves to carnality and had thus acquired what St. Paul called a "reprobate mind" when he stated: "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one towards another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind..." (Romans 1:26-28) Those involved in it should be told the judgment of God in plain terms, admonished to repent thoroughly, *and not to* encouraged them to continue in their evil ways.

The Last Days

The Bible shows clearly that wickedness will multiply in this age known as the "last days", or "the time of the end". St. Paul described it as "perilous times". He wrote, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) He also stated that in this age "some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron." -1 Timothy 4:1, 2.

The perversions and evils prevalent in the world today are proofs that the consciences of those who do such things are dead. Consequently, some people now despair of life while others defame the name of God. King Solomon stated, "So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter. Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, better is he than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun." -Ecclesiastes 4:1-3.

One who reflects on the miseries people are going through because of the greed and selfishness of others will certainly appreciate the words of King Solomon. There are those who collect money from hundreds, if not thousands of people with the promise of paying them high returns on their deposits or giving them jobs, but soon vanish into thin air. Some have become rich through their habit of not paying those who have worked for them, and when they pay at all, they pay in bits or only just part of the money, knowing that their victims do not have the power to get them to pay their debts. There are those who make fake drugs which cause deformities and even the deaths of so many people. There are some children, house helps and employees who connive in the kidnapping and even killing of their parents and masters so as to inherit their property. Some men kill their wives so that they could marry other women and some wives also kill their husbands to marry other men, all because of money or

some other carnal reasons. There are teachers who harass their students sexually and girls who blackmail men to extort money or other benefits from them. There are syndicates whose business is to lure young women to foreign countries, with the promise of finding jobs for them but only end up forcing them into prostitution. There have been reports of men who kept women as sex slaves for months or even years until their victims were rescued. Others just go to a school and open fire on pupils and teachers, resulting in several fatalities.

These acts of wickedness are multiplying today in every part of the world in fulfillment of the Scriptures that in this age the wicked will do wickedly. (Daniel 12:10) The fact is that the devil, "...the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:" (Ephesians 2:2), having been driven down from heaven (Revelation 12:7-12) is inducing many men and women to acts of violence and mischief, so that as many people as possible would be destroyed along with him. The devil also moves those in control of the levers of power in the society to make laws and to set up institutions that support, facilitate and dignify ungodly practices. Isaiah the prophet was inspired by God to pronounce woe on such people thus, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" - Isaiah 5:20.

Examples

God Almighty punishes the wicked for their ungodly deeds and He has caused examples of what He did in the time of old to be written down as a warning to those who would give themselves to evil. -1 Corinthians 10:6, 11; Romans 15:4

Pharaoh: In the time of the Pharaoh "who knew not Joseph" he subjected the Jews to all manner of humiliation and oppression. He made them to serve him as slaves and did not count their lives as anything of value. He even directed the Hebrew Midwives to kill every male child delivered by the Hebrew women. The midwives however, did not carry out the command because they had the fear of God for which they were blessed. (Exodus 1:15-20) Pharaoh went on to charge that every son that is born of the Jewish women should be cast into the river and every daughter saved alive.

(Exodus 1:22) This however could not stop the exponential growth in the population of the Jews, thus making the Pharaoh to feel more insecure.

It will be recalled that three months after Moses was born, his mother (Jochebed) put him in an ark of bulrushes and laid him at the river bank in that she saw that "he was a goodly child" and could not bear to have him killed. (Exodus 2:1-4) Miraculously, the daughter of Pharaoh saw the child and adopted him as her own; and without knowing it, invited the real mother to be his wet nurse. When Moses grew up he came into conflict with the Pharaoh and fled to Midian. It was from there that he was sent by God to tell the King of Egypt that he should allow the Jews to go and serve Him in the wilderness. The Bible account says, "And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go." (Exodus 5:1, 2) Instead of obeying the voice of God, he increased their burdens. Thus God Almighty declared in Exodus 7:5 "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them."

Also, in Exodus 9:16 God warned Pharaoh, "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." Even after suffering unprecedented devastation by virtue of the ten plagues which God visited on the Egyptians to compel Pharaoh to allow the Jews to go, he still pursued them to the Red Sea, in an apparent bid to compel them to return. The Jews were terrified by the approach of the Egyptian army but Moses was inspired by God to exhort them as it is written "... Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." (Exodus 14:13, 14) Eventually, Pharaoh and his host perished in the Red Sea. – Psalm 136:15

Following the act of God in vindicating His name, the Jews sang songs of praises to God, as it is written "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for

he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name." "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Exodus 15:1-3, 11) It would be recalled that Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, on hearing what God had done for the Jews, declared, "Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them." (Exodus 18:11) ***Certainly, unbelievers and wicked men at some point in time will be made to know that there is God.***

Jezebel: Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal king of Tyre and Sidon, and wife of Ahab king of Israel. (1Kings 16:31) She did all she could to establish idolatry and uproot true worship among the people of Israel. She even maintained 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the groves whom she fed from her table. (1 Kings 18:19) When the 450 prophets of Baal perished at Mount Carmel following that famous contest with Elijah she sought to avenge their death by seeking the life of Elijah. - 1 Kings 18:20-40; 19:1-3.

Jezebel added to her notoriety by killing Naboth because of his vineyard. The Bible account says that King Ahab had requested Naboth to give him his vineyard in exchange for another vineyard or for money, as it was close to the King's house. But Naboth refused on the ground that it was an inheritance from his fathers. Seeing that Ahab was in anguish because of this, Jezebel took up the matter and assured him that she would see to it that the vineyard became his. (1 Kings 21:1-7) She then proceeded to do a strange thing - which even Ahab would not have dared to do. She wrote letters in his name and got the elders of Israel to bring two men, "sons of belial" to bear false witness against Naboth, that he blasphemed God and the king. By reason of that false charge, Naboth was killed. "And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead. And it came to pass, when Ahab heard

that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it." - 1 Kings 21:15, 16.

Consequently, Elijah, at the command of God Almighty, met Ahab in the vineyard of Naboth and told him, "Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? ... In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." (1 Kings 21:17-19) "And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel." (1 Kings 21:23) God Almighty further promised to kill every son of Ahab. (2 Kings 9:8-10) The prophecies fulfilled to the letter. Ahab was killed in battle and the dogs licked up his blood. (1 Kings 22:35, 38) Jezebel died when she was thrown down from her storey building by her eunuchs at the command of Jehu, and, before the order for her to be buried was given, dogs had eaten up her body. (2 Kings 9:30-37) Ahab's sons, Ahaziah and Jehoram (or Joram) also died violent deaths. - 2 Kings 1; 3; 9:22-26.

The three faithful Jews: Another glaring example in the Scriptures where God Almighty demonstrated His Almightyness and great power was when he used the three faithful Jews, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, to defy the ungodly and arrogant decree of King Nebuchadnezzar that everybody must bow before his golden image or face death. (Daniel 3:12) He told the Jews, "Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (Verse 15) Incensed by what he thought were the impetuous and arrogant words of the three Jews, the king directed that the intensity of the fire be increased seven times. The furnace was so hot that the heat even killed the mighty men who carried the three Jews and threw them into it. However, by the miracle of JEHOVAH, the Almighty God, the furnace did no hurt on the three men "nor was an hair of their hair singed neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them". Nebuchadnezzar then was compelled to declare: "Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut

in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: **because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.**" - Daniel 3:27-29.

Herod: In the days of the early church, Herod delivered an oration to the people and they declared that it was the voice of God. He thus took the glory that belonged to God for himself as it is written, "And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." (*that is breath of life* - Acts 12:20 -23) All leaders should be careful of flatterers and sycophants so as to avoid falling into the temptation that will put them in danger of God's judgment as it happened to Herod. - Job 32:22; Proverbs 26:28; 29:5.

Recent history has also shown the end of wicked men, including wicked rulers who defied God and worked in opposition to His will. Among such wicked rulers was Adolph Hitler, who ruled Germany from January 30, 1933, to April 30, 1945. His actions led to the death of over 50 million people who died through forced labour, starvation, poisoning, lethal injections, disease, execution and medical experiments. Another evil personality was Himmler the head of the German SS and the architect of the "Final Solution", who was responsible for the death of five to six million Jews. Both Hitler and Himmler committed suicide.

The memory of Joseph Stalin, the former leader of the then Soviet Union (USSR), is today accursed and desecrated because of his thirty-year reign of terror, violence, destruction and murder, resulting in the death of millions of people.

Indeed the Bible declares, "Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." (Isaiah 3:11) Let the example of the horrific end of wicked people on earth and the evil reputation they now have serve as warning to those living today that the judgment of God is sure and that "though hand join in hand the wicked shall not be unpunished". (Proverbs 11:21) David the Psalmist also stated in Psalm 9:17-20, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. For the needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever. Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight. Put them in fear, O

LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men." See also Psalm 83:16-18.

It is for the purpose of warning the wicked so that they may turn to God that the gospel is now being preached round the world. Today, the **God's Kingdom Society (GKS)** – *the Church of the Living God* – which was established by God Almighty through Jesus Christ using St. Gideon Meriodere Urhobo as the founding instrument in October 1934, like any other true Church, is propagating the good news of the everlasting Kingdom in this part of the world and also warning the wicked to repent thoroughly and turn to righteousness for their own good. (Ezekiel 3:17-19) Scripture says, "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. See also Revelation 14:6, 7.

The Battle of Armageddon

The Bible shows that the wicked who are still alive at the time of the great tribulation will pay dearly for their wicked deeds before they will be destroyed along with satan the devil at the battle of the great day of God Almighty. Jesus Christ said, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor never shall be." (Matthew 24:21. See also Zephaniah 1:14-18) The punishment they will receive will be such that they will seek for death but the knowledge of how to end their lives will be taken away from them. The Bible says, "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:" "And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them." - Revelation 6:15, 16; 9:6; Amos 9:1-5; Revelation 19:17-21; 20:1-3.

Moreover, God declared through Isaiah the Prophet that when He will arise "to shake terribly the earth" "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day... And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty". God added, "... Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth. And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground." (Isaiah 2:10-22; Jeremiah 25:32, 33). ***Certainly, unbelievers and wicked men shall soon know that there is God.***

Even if one is punished by civil authorities or the government of the day for his wicked acts, and dies without repenting of his evil deeds, he will still be punished by God during the general resurrection. St. Paul stated, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10) Therefore I exhort and charge each and every one to run away from sin and all acts of wickedness and to do righteousness by obeying the voice of God Almighty. In the words of Solomon the prophet, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." - Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14; Romans 14:12; Isaiah 26:20, 21; Malachi 3:17, 18; Roman 2:6-11.

May our heavenly Father, JEHOVAH, help His children to know His judgment, and to do His righteousness, so that, when He will vent His anger on the wicked, they may, by His grace be hid through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

HAPPY FEAST OF TABERNACLES!

**Godwin O. IFEACHO,
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CAN HUMAN EFFORTS SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF MANKIND?

AN ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF GOD'S KINGDOM SOCIETY (GKS)
– *The Church of The Living God* – BROTHER GODWIN O. IFEACHO AT THE
LAST AND GREAT DAY HOLY CONVOCATION OF THE CHRISTIAN
FEAST OF TABERNACLES, IN SALEM CITY , WARRI, DELTA STATE,
NIGERIA, ON SUNDAY, THE 18th DAY OF DECEMBER, 2016.

Dearly Beloved Celebrants,

HAIL JEHOVAH AND JESUS CHRIST!

Glory, adoration and praises be to the Almighty God JEHOVAH, The Creator and Sustainer of the universe, Who has appointed His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, The Greater and more Perfect Tabernacle, to lead us in the Highway to salvation by His grace.

I thank God Almighty through Jesus Christ for the many benefits we had enjoyed during the year, including the gift of life, the opportunities for evangelism and the growth in spiritual and material blessings which have enabled the work to go on despite the hard times. That the times are getting more difficult by the day is no surprise to those who understand the Scriptures, which contains the plan of God for the salvation of mankind. The unvarnished truth is that as we proceed further into the last days of satan's existence, he is manifesting his anger in more vicious and destructive forms. (Matthew 24:7, 8; Daniel 12:10) The situation is such that while proffered solutions have so far proved ineffective in dealing with the existing problems, new ones are springing up everyday. Unfortunately, many of the scientists and philosophers of the world have failed to acknowledge their incapacity to deal with the numerous problems confronting mankind and turn to God Almighty for help. It is in order to guide the sheep of God aright that the topic of my address to celebrants at the Feast of Tabernacles 2016 is entitled ***"Can Human Efforts Solve The Problems Of Mankind"?***

According to *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*, the word *problem* in the context of this address means "an intricate unsettled question; a source of perplexity, distress, or vexation". Human beings are surrounded by various problems which God Almighty outlined through Isaiah the prophet to include the fear of not realizing one's basic needs, the fear of captivity and the fear of death. (Isaiah 51:12-14) These fears would not have arisen, but for the great tragedy at Eden, when man lost his perfect nature, and became subject to suffering and death. David the prophet declared, "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." - Psalm 90:10; Genesis 2:16,17; 3:16-19; Romans 5:12; Job 5:6, 7.

It cannot be denied that man has been on a downward slide since the fall as the problems confronting human beings have now multiplied in this age, the last days. (Matthew 24:7,8; Luke 21:25, 26; Revelation 12:12) The devil is now hyperactive, using the elements of politics, religion and commerce to rule, control and trouble the people of the world. Consequently, people sigh and cry for the injustices, oppressions, iniquities, and afflictions in the world, even as they strive to be free from fear and want. - Psalm 31:10; 116:3, 4; Ezekiel 9:4; Romans 8:22.

The struggle to be free from death has been the preoccupation of many people for thousands of years. Presently, it has been reported that "Scientists are trying to untangle the basic mechanisms that underlie aging, and the idea is catching on that growing old isn't just a fact of life but rather a disease that can be cured through medical interventions." According to the market-research firm "Global Industry Analysts", the anti-aging industry generates more than \$80 billion per year. Adam Gollner, author of *The Book of Immortality*, profiles five billionaires pouring money into longevity research. Russian multi-millionaire Dmitry Itskov, who started the "2045 Initiative" has even declared publicly that he is "100 percent certain" that humans will attain immortality by the year 2045. See <http://2045.com/news/31641.html>.

MAKESHIFTS

As stated earlier, many people are striving to solve the problems of man by creating on earth a condition of peace, abundance and continuous prosperity merely by their own efforts. A one-time President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, in a speech to the American University, Washington D. C. on June 10, 1963, stated, "Our problems are man-made, therefore they may be solved by man. And man can be as big as he wants." He added, "No problem of human destiny is beyond human beings. Man's reason and spirit have often solved the seemingly unsolvable – and we believe they can do it again"

Contrary to his claims however, man has been unable to solve his problems by his own efforts. For instance, after the First World War, (1914 – 1918) described as "the war to end all wars", the victorious powers formed the League of Nations, believing, that the remedy to future conflicts lay in the creation of an international organization that would ensure world peace through peaceful settlement of disputes. But this proved to be a futile effort and hope when the Second World War broke out in 1939 and lasted until 1945. The massive loss of lives, displacement of people and destruction of property, inflation, unemployment, famine, social disintegration, etc. were worse than the First World War. Consequently a global organization of sovereign independent states, the United Nations Organization, was established on October 24, 1945 "to save the future generations from the scourge of war by promoting International peace and security". But has the formation of the United Nations provided the solution to the problems of man? In a special article on the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, which was observed in 2015, the *Telegraph*, a British newspaper, in its on-line edition of September 15, 2015, stated that despite some successes the United Nations could be credited with, "many institutions like the Security Council are reactionary, and very easily caught up in power politics, rendering them useless at critical moments". Moreover, *The Guardian* (of London), writing on the UN in its publication of Thursday 10th March 2016, said the "disturbing truth is that the world's primary institution to deal with war (the UN) is not working." The newspaper added, "If we're not careful, the UN will collapse into irrelevance, much as the League of Nations did in its day".

The *Telegraph* also noted in its June 8, 2016 edition that, "The world is becoming a more dangerous place and there are now just 10 countries which can be considered completely free from conflict." That apart, the British newspaper, the *Daily Star* in its online edition of October 8, 2016, regretted

that instead of making progress towards peace, “the only progress we are making is inventing more and more sophisticated ways of causing more and more violence to fatten the pockets of vested interests – namely arms manufacturers”. Continuing, “About 112,000 deaths are being recorded on the battle fields a year, while the number of asylum seekers, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees is now about 65 million, the highest level ever recorded.”

Because the world’s intellectuals and statesmen still believe that they can solve the problems of the world using their intellect, not having learnt their lessons from the past, the 193 member-states of the United Nations as well as global civil society groups gathered in New York on September 25, 2015. There, they adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), by which they hoped that by 2030 they would “end poverty, end hunger, ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, ensure prosperity for all”. For the fact that these are things which only God Almighty can do and not man, it is grossly presumptuous of the world’s leaders to dare to set such lofty goals for the future. By claiming they can wipe out poverty, hunger and ensure good health for all, the League of Nations and its successor, the United Nations, have stood in the “holy place” which is God’s kingdom. (Matthew 24:15,16; Mark 13:14) They have shown outright disregard for the Most High God by claiming that they can solve the problems of the world and they would fail woefully in that they are trusting in their own power. God Almighty declared through Jeremiah the prophet, **“The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?”** (Jeremiah 8:9. See also Isaiah 24:23; 1 Corinthians 1:19-21). Every effort to solve the problems of the world without taking the word of God into account will come to ruin. The Scriptures say, “Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces ... gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand ...” - Isaiah 8:9, 10.

How can the world hope to end poverty when the leaders are motivated by greed and selfishness? How would many people not go hungry when lands are left uncultivated because of wars, pollution, laziness and so on and when some countries dump surplus food into the oceans? (See *The Guardian* of 27th

September 2016). It has been argued that if the 400 richest people in America (not to mention Asia, Europe and Africa) were to donate half of their fortunes to help the poorest people of the world, the \$600 billion they are expected to raise would go a long way in substantially improving the living conditions of poor people in the world.

OTHER EVIDENCES

Events of the recent past have provided further evidence that human efforts cannot solve the problems of mankind. When the Berlin wall collapsed in November 1989, and the Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991, many people thought the Cold War had ended and that a new World Order was in sight. But, as a contributor to the book, *Contemporary British Politics* stated at page 507, "The end of the Cold War has not resulted in a 'New World Order' as some politicians expected but to a new disorder with conflict in the former Yugoslavia, North Africa, and the Middle East as well as in West and Central Africa" (Compare 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3) The book also states, "The dispersed surplus arsenal of the old Soviet Union is a major source of the military hardware which ends up in the hands of irresponsible regimes. Western arms sales is another major source." (Page 505) Thus, while the technologically advanced countries are preaching peace, they are busy, making more weapons of mass destruction for people to use in killing themselves. How can so-called statesmen, work selflessly to solve the problems of the world when they are largely motivated by greed or selfish interests? St. Peter stated, "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage". - 2 Peter 2:19.

Also, it is a common occurrence for countries to remove one government either through the ballot box or by force only to find that their new leaders are worse than the previous ones. Besides, in a bid to reduce their economic problems, so many countries around the world have joined regional bodies only to find that they had merely replaced one set of problems with another or even added to existing ones. Hence some are opting out as Great Britain has done following the recent "Brexit" referendum. It is therefore not surprising that an academic Professor Justin Fox, in an article entitled "Do the Experts Know Anything?" spoke of "an epidemic of expert error", in which he

highlighted the failures of acclaimed experts in predicting the crises that have plagued the world and finding solutions to them, including the global financial crisis of 2008.

THE DEVIL, SOURCE OF MAN'S PROBLEMS

The devil is the one behind the troubles of the world. He is "the god of this world" the "prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience". (2 Corinthians 4:3,4; Ephesians 2:2) He was "a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him". - John 8:44.

The devil controls the resources of the earth and concentrates them in a few hands while majority of people wallow in hunger and penury. (Compare Luke 4:5,6; Matthew 4:8, 9.) He is responsible for wars and for natural disasters including forest fires, earthquakes, floods, drought, diseases, accidents in land, sea and air, hurricanes, etc., which take their toll on human lives from time to time. No human efforts can prevent natural disasters. The case of Job, proves conclusively that the devil is the one behind the spate of murders, robberies, natural disasters, diseases that abound in the world. He could even make fire to come down from the sky, to destroy people, cattle and property, to give the impression it came from God. See Job Chapters 1 and 2.

Man, being mortal cannot withstand or confront the devil, a mighty spirit being, who is at the head of so many demons and wicked men here on earth. The devil is the author of sin and confusion and therefore man's greatest enemy. No matter how brilliant a human being is, he is grossly limited in capacity and shall, after a while pass away. ***Therefore, human efforts cannot solve the problems of the world because there are spiritual forces behind them.***

A glaring example of how helpless man is to prevent disasters despite his technological advancement, is the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre Twin Towers, the symbol of America's economic might, located in New York, United States of America. The totally unexpected method of hijacking an aircraft and crashing it into buildings, caught the entire defence system off guard and resulted in the demolition of the structures that were at a time, the tallest buildings in the world. No fewer than 2,819 persons died in that incident, which reportedly led to a sudden surge of interest in Christianity

in America as people suddenly realized that it is only God, not technology that can guarantee safety. The Holy Bible says: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help..." "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" - Psalm 146:3, 4; Isaiah 2:22; Proverbs 21:31; Psalm 33:16-20.

ONLY GOD CAN SAVE

It is therefore only God Almighty we should trust to solve the world's problems, not human beings, no matter their claims. Jeremiah the Prophet stated: "Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited." (Jeremiah 17:5, 6. See also Isaiah 30:1-7) God Almighty also declares, "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD. Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together." - Isaiah 31:1-9.

It goes without saying therefore, that for the problems of the world to be removed, the source or author of evil, Satan the devil must be put out of the way. This can only be done by God Almighty through Jesus Christ at the battle of Armageddon and not by man's intellect or power. (Romans 16:20; Revelation 16:13, 14; Revelation 20:1, 7-9; Daniel 12:1) The book of Isaiah contains a graphic account of the sure and inevitable fate that is awaiting the devil and his hosts when the anger of God would descend on him. It states, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?" - Isaiah 14:12, 15-17.

The record of Ezekiel the prophet also speaks of the impending doom awaiting the devil. The Prophet said: "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee. Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more." (Ezekiel 28:17-19) When the devil is no more then the inequalities, injustices, diseases, wars, natural disasters in the world will be a thing of the past, and man shall be ushered into a new world, devoid of sorrow and pains.

- Please see Isaiah 11:6-9; 33:24; 35:5-10.

God declared through Haggai the prophet, "For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts." (Haggai 2:6, 7). Truly, it is only God Almighty through His Son Jesus Christ, Who can bring about peace on this earth by making wars to cease to the ends of the earth and ensure that the faithful "might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly". (Psalm 29:11; 46:9; John 10:10; 16:33) At that time the faithful "shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it". - Micah 4:4.

Giving more details about the conditions that would prevail in the Kingdom of God, the New Jerusalem, the Bible says , "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." (Isaiah 65:17-19) The vision of Apostle John in the Island of Patmos, sheds some more light on the matter. It says, "...And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." - Revelation 21:1-4. See also Isaiah 33:18-20,24.

As I end this address I exhort you all dear celebrants of the Christian Feast of Tabernacles 2016, to exercise hope in the Kingdom of God and let it be the joy and anchor of our souls (Hebrews 6:18,19). We should be strong in our faith in the providence of God Almighty in these perilous times, be patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer.

I pray that God Almighty Who is reconciling His children to Himself through His only begotten Son, to guide and protect us in this world of sin and strengthen us to continue till the end so that we could enjoy fully the riches of His grace in His Kingdom when fully established, all by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

Brother Godwin O. Ifeacho,
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TRUST IN POWER AND WEALTH RATHER THAN IN GOD IS VANITY

BEING THE FULL TEXT OF THE ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT,
GOD'S KINGDOM SOCIETY (GKS) *of The Church of The Living God*
BROTHER GODWIN O. IFEACHO AT THE LAST AND GREAT DAY
HOLY CONVOCATION OF THE CHRISTIAN FEAST OF TABERNACLES,
IN SALEM CITY, WARRI, DELTA STATE, NIGERIA, ON SUNDAY,
DECEMBER 17, 2017

Dearly Beloved Celebrants,

HAIL JEHOVAH AND JESUS CHRIST!

To the Almighty God to Whom belongs all greatness, power, and majesty and with Whom nothing is impossible, be thanks and adoration for His loving care over us and for sustaining His Church to continue to serve as a place of refuge for His people in this part of the world by His grace.

In keeping with my duty in the Lord by His grace, my address to celebrants of the Christian Feast of Tabernacles this year is entitled "**TRUST IN POWER AND WEALTH RATHER THAN IN GOD IS VANITY**". The word "*Trust*" means "*belief that someone or something is reliable, good, honest or will not do anything bad or wrong*". "*Assured reliance on the character, ability, strength or truth of someone or something*". "*Power*" means "*the ability or right to control people or events*". "*the ability to influence people...*". "*a natural or special ability to do something*" and so on. "*Wealth*" is "*a large amount of money, property etc that a person or country owns*". "*Vanity*" is "*the state or fact of being futile, worthless, or empty of significance*".

God is Almighty

JEHOVAH, the Almighty God has put it in the minds of men and women of goodwill the knowledge that He is the One they should trust and worship because, He has all power, and, as Their Creator, He loves them and will not do them harm but good. Scripture says, "*Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.*" (Jeremiah 32:17; See also Jeremiah 10:6,7,10-12; 29:11; Revelation 4:11; John 3:16; 1 John 4:9,10)

Because it is impossible for God to lie, He will always keep His promises. - Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Titus 1:2; Psalm 20:7; Hebrews 6:18.

Unfortunately, many people place their trust not in God Almighty and His son Jesus Christ but in their fellow men, in their power and wealth. They thus go all out to accumulate wealth and acquire power, to serve as a hedge against unpredictable events that may come, without regard for God. With lots of money they expect to be freed from fear and want and to be able to acquire expensive cars and homes and clothes and to have lots of free time to travel where they want. Scripture says, **8**Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle**9****8**He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.**9****9**Proverbs 23:5; 11:28. See also Psalm 146:3,4; Jeremiah 17:5-7.

Many people struggle for power because they believe it enables them to do what they want in life, to live their lives on their own terms, to influence or outrightly control the behaviour of people. When people have power they feel they have the prerogative to **8**make and break the rules**9**and violate norms, without as much penalty as powerless people. But, as many have found out, power and money, on their own, do not bring lasting happiness. There are many rich people and celebrities who are lonely, distressed, and who had even committed suicide. All power belongs to God and it is those who exercise power legitimately, in the fear of God, that will ultimately prevail. The Bible exhorts us thus, **8**Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them. God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.**9**- Psalm 62:10, 11; Proverbs 3:5, 6; Psalm 147:10,11.

There are examples of people in the Bible who trusted in their power and wealth and came to nothing, we shall highlight a few examples.

The case of Pharaoh

A leader who trusted in his ability to control people and events due to his power and wealth was the Pharaoh of Egypt, the One who knew not Joseph. When Moses and Aaron presented him with JEHOVAH**76**

command that the people of Israel should be allowed to go to the wilderness to make sacrifices to Him, he arrogantly declared, ⑧Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.⑨(Exodus 5:1, 2) God Almighty then told Moses, ③..Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.⑨-Exodus 6:5-7; 7:4, 5.

Though the magicians of Pharaoh tried to replicate the initial miracles done by Moses those of turning his rod into a serpent, turning the river into blood and of causing frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt - they could not repeat the fourth miracle, that of bringing up lice over man and beast. The so-called “wise men⑨of Egypt then told Pharaoh, ③..This is the finger of God”. (Exodus 8:19) Yet, Pharaoh would not let the Israelites to go until he and his people were forced to bow to the will of God when the angel of God at midnight ③..smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle⑨ resulting in ③..a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead⑨ (Exodus 12:29, 30) ③And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men.⑨(Exodus 12:33) All the boast of Pharaoh and his hosts ended in humiliation and utter destruction when they were all drowned in the Red Sea. (Exodus 14; 15:1-21; Psalm 136:15) God brought the Israelites out of Egypt in so signal a manner, that it was clear that He is Almighty. ③Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.⑨-Exodus 15:1-3.

Those who because of their power and wealth oppose righteousness as Pharaoh did would suffer similar fate as the Egyptians in time of old. St.

Paul stated, **8**Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was. **9**- 2 Timothy 3:8, 9.

Nebuchadnezzar and the Three Faithful Jews

In the days of King Nebuchadnezzar, he made a golden statue 90 feet high and 9 feet wide and commanded his officers ~~o~~princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counsellors and sheriffs, rulers of the provinces - to worship it. Shortly after, reports came to him that certain Jews whom he had set over the affairs of the province of Babylon had refused to worship the image he set up. He then invited these officers and dared them to disobey his order, declaring impetuously, **8**...and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (Daniel 3:15) However, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, refused to be frightened into compromising the integrity of their faith and of their personal convictions. Not used to having his will opposed, the king in fury ordered that the fire be heated seven more times and that the mightiest men in the army should throw the three Jews into the furnace, which had become so hot that even the soldiers were killed by it. However, God Almighty did a miracle in that the fire did no harm to the three faithful Jews. Besides that, an angel was found to be in the fire with them. **89**Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. **9**(Daniel 3:25). The king was forced to eat his words. The Bible account states, "Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort." - Daniel 3:28, 29.

Unfortunately, Nebuchadnezzar did not learn from this humbling experience, as he was in course of time overtaken by pride such that he came to believe, in spite of clear admonitions by Daniel the prophet, that he

built Babylon by the might of his power and for the honour of his majesty. (Daniel 4:4-32). Consequently, ⑧..he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws⑨ (Daniel 4:33) It was at the end of the “seven times” as foretold in the dream shown him, that the reasoning faculties of Nebuchadnezzar returned to him as he stated, ⑧And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Daniel 4:34, 35) He added: ⑧Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.” - Daniel 4:37.

David and Goliath

It is well known that people use a variety of power tactics to push or prompt people into the direction they want. These include bullying, demanding, threat, negotiating and so on. While Saul was king of Israel, Goliath the giant from Gath, intimidated the people of Israel with his monstrous stature, for he was "six cubits and a span," which according to the *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, is about $10\frac{1}{2}$ feet high. He was therefore a formidable foe. He was defiant of the armies of Israel being much taller and stronger, and therefore looked with disdain on all those around him. ❧ Samuel 17:4-7.

He created a climate of fear among the Israelites in order to disorientate them. He barked, "...I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.⑨ (1 Samuel 17:10) The Bible says that for forty days, twice a day, morning and evening, the Philistine giant strutted before the armies of Israel. ❧ Samuel 17:16.

When David a mere shepherd boy volunteered to fight the giant, King Saul was quick in dismissing his offer saying, ⑧..Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war

from his youth. ❶(1 Samuel 17:33) But David related to the king how God had given him strength to kill a lion and a bear, saying, ❷..this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God ❸ He added, ❹..The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine... ❺(1 Samuel 17:36, 37) When he was fitted with war armour, David could not move, not having been trained in their use. He had to fall back to the sling and stones which he was familiar with. ❻Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands. ❽(1 Samuel 17:45-47) When David slung the stone at the giant, it sank into his forehead and he fell. ❾So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David. ❿(1 Samuel 17:50) It could be seen how frail and uncertain life is, and that trust in power and strength rather than in God is vanity. See Jeremiah 9:23,24; Psalm 62:6-8.

Truly the Bible says, ❶There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. ❷- Psalms 33:16-19

Rabshakeh

When Sennacherib, king of Assyria besieged Jerusalem, he through his officers, inflicted psychological punishment on the king and people of Judah, including threats, intimidation, verbal abuse and rage. Like the ass that likes to hear himself bray, Rabshakeh, one of the king's ❷ officers, talked audaciously and insolently against God and the people saying, ❸..Let not

Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand: Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria...Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand? ❸- 2 Kings 18:28-30, 33-35. See also Isaiah 37:1-38.

However, following fervent prayers made by the king and the people, God told the people through Isaiah the prophet thus, ❸And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land. ❹(2 Kings 19:6, 7) Consequently, the angel of God slew in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000 men. Sennacherib had to return to Nineveh in humiliation and while worshipping in the house of his god, he was assassinated by two of his sons. (2 Kings 19:35-37) Despite all their boasts, the Assyrians were shamefully defeated while their great king so-called was killed like a common criminal by his own children. He could not open his mouth wide against God any more.

False Sense of Security

All too often people who are carnally minded think that all that is valuable in life is to eat, and drink, and be cheerful or merry and that length of days depend on one's ❷ affluence or wealth. Hence their chief anxiety is to be distinguished for magnificent style of living. They feel they have no need of God as the riches give them a false sense of security. The danger in this way of reasoning was highlighted by our Lord Jesus Christ in the parable of the Rich Fool in which he told his disciples ❸..Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow

my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. ⑨But the very night he thought he had finally settled all his problems, his life was taken from him by God Who said unto him, "...Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? ⑩Our Saviour then added, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. ⑪-Luke 12:15-21.

It could be seen that it is a fatal error for one NOT to make God his strength; but to trust in the abundance of his riches, and strengthen himself in his wickedness. We should carefully mark the words of David the Psalmist, to wit, ⑧Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." Continuing, the Psalmist declared: ⑧I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. ⑨Psalm 37:3-6,35-37. Please look up also Psalm 52:6, 7 - Matthew 13:22; Luke 8:14; Deuteronomy 8:11-14; Job 31:24-31; Mark 8:36, 37; Luke 18:18-25.

Day of Decision

What many people lose sight of is that God Almighty will destroy this world some day. It is only those who trust in Him that will be delivered. Position, power, wealth, influence would be meaningless at that time, and indeed, as far as salvation is concerned. ⑧Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death." - Proverbs 11:4; Psalm 20:7; Proverbs 27:24; Matthew 6:19-21.

The Bible says, ⑧The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. ... And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood

shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. **Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath**; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.” - Zephaniah 1:14-18.

In the light of all that I have stated so far, I charge those who are privileged to have power and wealth and those who aspire to do so, not to trust in them because they are temporal. They should exercise faith in God Almighty and do His will at all times. They should bear in mind the exhortation of St. Paul to wit: **Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.**” - 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

I pray JEHOVAH, the Almighty God Who is reconciling the world to Himself through His Son Jesus Christ to purge us of our various errors and sins so that we would be holy, unblameable and unproveable in his sight as to continue till the end in order to enjoy the riches He has promised His people in the world to come, all by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Godwin O. Ifeacho,
President, GKS

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**HEAL ME, O LORD, AND I SHALL BE HEALED;
SAVE ME, AND I SHALL BE SAVED**

*BEING THE FULL TEXT OF THE ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF
GOD'S KINGDOM SOCIETY (GKS) - The Church of The Living God -
BROTHER GODWIN O. IFEACHO ON THE LAST AND GREAT DAY
HOLY CONVOCATION OF THE CHRISTIAN FEAST OF TABERNACLES
IN SALEM CITY, WARRI, DELTA STATE, NIGERIA ON SUNDAY,
DECEMBER 23, 2018.*

Dearly Beloved Celebrants,

HAIL JEHOVAH AND JESUS CHRIST!

I give thanks to God Almighty through His Son Jesus Christ for keeping us all alive to participate in the Feast of Tabernacles of this year. I am also profoundly grateful to God for giving me the grace to deliver this address to this distinguished audience at the Holy Convocation of the Last and Great Day of the Feast of Feasts for the year 2018.

My address is drawn from the prayer of Jeremiah the prophet during one of the dark periods of his country's history, in the period between the last Jewish monarchy and the imminence of, and actual conquest of Judah by the Babylonians. It was a time when public order and private morality were at low ebb. Expectedly, Jeremiah, a priest who was raised in the priestly village of Anathoth, four miles north-east of Jerusalem, was outspoken in his denunciation of the sins of the people. Consequently, he suffered several indignities, abuses, misrepresentations, imprisonments, starvation

and threats to his life. He was even thrown into a well twice but God used people of goodwill to save him from death. In the midst of his travails he prayed, **⑧Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise. ⑨**(Jeremiah 17:14) His prayer for deliverance and healing, from where this sermon is taken, was thus emblematic of the need of the Israelite nation for protection and safety. It is instructive that just as the people of Judah suffered while under siege by foreign powers and were eventually subjected to humiliation, enslavement, desolation and death, due to sin, so the present world is in misery and distress and in danger of certain destruction from God Almighty because of ungodliness. People of goodwill must therefore take advantage of the opportunities God Almighty has provided for them to be delivered from this present evil world by demonstrating in words and actions that they have faith in the prayer, **⑧Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved ⑨**

To heal means to cure somebody or something from an ailment: to restore a person, body part, or injury to health. Salvation means complete deliverance from sin and its consequences including death.

Present Distress

The Bible shows clearly that sin is responsible for the troubles mankind is facing today, including death. (Genesis 3:19; Romans 3:23; 5:12; Job 5:6,7; 14:1) However, the troubles of mankind have multiplied several folds due to the influence of the devil in these last days. Hence, our Lord Jesus Christ prophesied during his days on earth that many people in the last days would not have regard for God Almighty and His word but would have

markedly worldly interests. (Luke 17:26-30) In the words of Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1-5, the last days would be perilous or dangerous in that people would be selfish, materialistic, ungrateful, lacking in natural affection and untruthful, etc. As a result, for many, life remains a struggle.

Ironically, efforts by scientists, statesmen and philosophers to improve human well-being are creating other problems in the world. Take for instance the concept of *globalization*, the flow of information, goods, capital, and people across political and geographic boundaries. While this is said to help in the alleviation of hunger and poverty, which are key determinants of global health, the negative side of it include the fact that it has increased the spread of infectious diseases from South to North, as well as increased the risk of non-communicable diseases by transmission of culture and behaviour from North to South. A British newspaper, *Daily Telegraph* online of 2 February 2018, quoting data from the World Health Organisation (WHO), stated that the world's biggest killers in the last 15 years were heart disease and stroke, as they accounted for more than a quarter of the 56.4 million deaths worldwide in 2015. Diseases that now ravage the world claiming millions of lives yearly include Bubonic plague, Measles, Syphilis, Leprosy, Malaria, Cancer, Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, Ebola, Diabetes, Leptospirosis, Cholera, Diphtheria, Meningitis, Yellow Fever, Lassa Fever, etc.

As bad as things are, the *Wikipedia* an online Encyclopaedia paints a more troubling scenario, stating that though many vaccines and cures have been developed for some of the worst diseases which people suffer, ... But,

because the evolution of disease organisms is very rapid, even with vaccines, there is difficulty providing full immunity to many diseases. Experts warn that another influenza pandemic is inevitable, saying, "In this interconnected world, the next global flu outbreak is a matter of when not if" - with far reaching consequences. A severe pandemic could result in millions of deaths.

Need For Healing

Because there are several diseases that afflict mankind it is a matter of utmost priority for people to get the right treatment in order to be healed of their ailments. It is God Almighty Who can save mankind from the deadly situation they have found themselves in. Apostle John wrote: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." (3 John 2) And King David stated that it is God Almighty Who heals all our diseases. (Psalm 103:3) Thus, when people repent of their sins by doing the righteousness of God, He would have mercy on them and heal the land. Our Redeemer told the impotent man: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." - John 5:14.

There was a time in the reign of King Hezekiah when he became proud and began to feel that his success was due to his own wisdom and strength. He thus incurred the anger of God. (2 Chronicles 32:24-26) He was sick unto death and Isaiah the prophet was directed by God to tell him to put his house in order as his death was imminent. (2 Kings 20:1; Isaiah 38:1) The king thus prayed to God for mercy as a result of which the prophet Isaiah

was sent to tell him that 15 more years had been added to his life. The prophet, on the instruction of God Almighty directed that his medical team should **8**ake a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaister upon the boil, and he shall recover**9** (Isaiah 38:21. See also 2 Kings 20:1-8) What was given to Hezekiah was medicine. It worked because the healing hand of God was on it.

During his days on earth, our Lord Jesus Christ, treated with consideration and mercy all those who came to him for healing knowing that they were largely victims of circumstances, occasioned by the devil. The Gospels contain several miracles performed by our Lord Jesus Christ which included restoring to health the blind, the dumb, the deaf, the lame, and lepers, demoniacs (mad men), among others. The record of St. Matthew states, **8**And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.**9**- Matthew 4:23, 24. Compare Matthew 11:4, 5; 15:30, 31.

Some intellectuals who are under the domination of the scientific method do not believe in miracles. But through our Lord Jesus Christ, God Almighty intervened in human affairs, by way of miracles, to demonstrate the power of God to give perfect cures to those visited by the devil by way of sickness. The miracles were proofs that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and the King of

God's Kingdom. They also showed in a small way, what God would do in His Kingdom, when fully established. Compare Luke 11:20; 17:20, 21, (*Revised Standard Version*); Luke 10:9; Isaiah 33:24.

From what I have stated so far, it should be understood that worshippers of God are enjoined in the Scriptures to pray to Him to direct them to the right medication for their ailments and for the medication to have the desired effect. (James 5:13-16) But for conditions where medicines are of no avail, they should seek the face of God to heal them directly in His due time. As true worshippers, we must have the faith that there is nothing impossible for God to do and be ready to take our problems to Him in prayer while waiting patiently for His intervention. We must however avoid any mode of healing that involves fetish practices or any taint of sin. Matthew 7:7; Jeremiah 32:27,17; Luke 1:37; 18:1-8; 21:19; 2 Kings 1; 1 Samuel 28; 1 Corinthians 10:20-22.

It must be emphasized that for God to hear one's prayers to be healed, one must be given to doing His will. God used Moses to tell the Israelites in those days: "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee." - Exodus 15:26; See also Deuteronomy 7:11,12,15. Proverbs 4:20-22; John 9:31.

In this age of Christ's second presence the promise of God is that He would gradually be giving effect to His promise to heal His people. As it is

written, **9**But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.**9** (Malachi 4:2) We should therefore exercise faith in God Almighty and be patient and continue to be prayerful so as to be healed by God if He so pleases. A publication in the BBC website acknowledged that there had been cases of miraculous recoveries from illnesses which medical doctors thought were beyond cure. **8**A few patients have made rare and unexpected recoveries leaving doctors scratching their heads ...**9** the report said while quoting Armin Rashidi of Washington University in St Louis who stated that he had found 46 cases in which acute myeloid leukaemia regressed of its own accord! King David the prophet says, **8**The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” (Psalm 147:2, 3); and the prophet Jeremiah added, **8**For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD ...**9**- Jeremiah 30:17.

God Of Salvation

The Bible says unequivocally that **8**Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people**9**and that **8**He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto GOD the Lord belong the issues from death.**9**- Psalm 3:8; 68:20.

Despite their sophisticated equipment for making predictions, meteorologists and seismologists are sometimes completely baffled when killer storms, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, typhoons strike without warning. Even when commercial airliners are equipped with flight data recorders - specifically designed to reveal the cause of any accident -

skilled investigators sometimes struggle for months or years to ascertain the details of why a plane actually crashed. The fact is that the world's greatest scientists, armed with the latest equipment have found that they are helpless in the face of natural disasters. They could not even foresee them sometimes. A ready example is the September 28, 2018 earthquake that triggered a *tsunami* in Indonesia in which waves of up to 20 feet crashed on to the shore, killing nearly 1,800 people, with more than 5,000 feared missing. (See the *Washington Post* of October 7, 2018) So many people died in that none of the precautionary measures put in place worked.

Though man can fail due to his imperfection, God Almighty does not fail His people. He is a **8**very present help in trouble. **9**(Psalm 46:1-3) There are several examples in the Bible to buttress the fact that God Almighty can save anyone in any circumstance. The book of 1 Kings Chapter 20 states that when Benhadad the king of Syria gathered 32 other kings to invade the land of Israel, God sent a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, **8**Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD. **9**The outcome of the war was that the people of Israel defeated their enemies such that the Syrians fled, with Benhadad escaping on an horse with his horsemen. However, the servants of the king of Syria deceived him into believing that the Israelites were victorious because **8**..Their gods are gods of the hills**9**They advised him that if they fought the Israelites on the plains they would defeat them. Thus, the Assyrians came the following year. Again they were roundly defeated by the Israelites who were even far fewer in number. **1** Kings 20:1-30.

The Three Faithful Jews

Another striking case that illustrates the fact that JEHOVAH, the Almighty God is mighty to save was when King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, and ordered his subjects of whatever status to worship it, or be thrown into a fiery furnace. Three faithful Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were officers of the king, refused to worship the golden image. This was reported to the king who invited them and dared them to refuse his command in his presence. But they told him to his face that they would not obey the order. (Daniel 3:16-18) Consequently, the three men were thrown into the furnace that had been heated seven times more, such that the fire even killed those who carried them. But God Almighty wonderfully manifested His saving power in that none of the men were hurt in any way ❶...nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them❷ (Daniel 3:27) ❸Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.❹He declared further, ❺Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.❻(Daniel 3:23-29) Instead of the punishment by the king, the three Jews were promoted in the province of Babylon.

Miracle Workers

While there is no denying the fact that God Almighty heals and saves His people, it is certainly not through the myriad of false prophets or miracle workers that abound today. The gift of effecting miraculous cures through human agents was given to servants of God in the early Church to establish the Church in its infancy. That purpose having been served, the gifts have ceased. The claims of the itinerant healers that seek to arrest the public gaze, especially in developing countries, that they possess the gift of miraculous healing is therefore not true. (Matthew 7:21-23; 24:11, 24; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 16:13, 14) It is unfortunate that these false prophets, who promote short term materialist philosophies, now described as prosperity preaching, have influenced so-called orthodox Churches to also introduce healing as part of their ministries, in order not to lose their members. (Please see Luke 16:15) The truth is that God cures His people either through treatments He has revealed to mankind as part of the increase of knowledge in this age or directly by Himself. (Daniel 12:4; Isaiah 35:1-10; Jeremiah 33:6; Malachi 4:2) He does not empower anyone today to do miraculous cures.

Mercifully, in the Kingdom of God fully established, there would be no sickness or troubles of any sort. (Isaiah 33:24; 35:5, 6; Isaiah 57:18, 19; Revelation 21:1-5; 22:2) What is required is for those who want the salvation of God to be strong in faith so as to enjoy His favour. Our Redeemer Jesus Christ declared: ⑧..Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. ⑨(Matthew 21:21, 22) That was the faith

St. Paul and his colleagues had for which he wrote that God Almighty delivered them **8** from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us **9** He also expressed the belief that the Lord shall deliver him from every evil work, and preserve him to inherit His kingdom. - 2 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:18. Please see also Psalm 34:17,18.

It is noteworthy that long before Jeremiah had cause to pray to God to heal and save him, as stated in Jeremiah 17:14, God Almighty had already assured him even at the beginning of his ministry that **8**..they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee. **9**- Jeremiah 1:17-19.

May God Almighty Who sustains the entire universe continue to give us the knowledge, understanding and faith to look to Him at all times so as to be healed of our ailments and be delivered from the troubles of this world and be saved in His kingdom when fully established by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

HAPPY FEAST OF TABERNACLES!

Godwin O. Ifeacho,
President, GKS

December 2018

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SINCE GOD SEES OUR HEARTS IN ALL WE DO, WE SHOULD BEWARE

AN ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT, GOD'S KINGDOM SOCIETY (GKS) *∞The Church Of The Living God ∞* BROTHER GODWIN ONUKWULUNJO IFEACHO AT THE LAST AND GREAT DAY HOLY CONVOCATION OF THE CHRISTIAN FEAST OF TABERNACLES, IN SALEM CITY, WARRI, DELTA STATE, NIGERIA, ON SUNDAY, THE 22ND DAY OF DECEMBER, 2019.

Dearly Beloved Celebrants,

HAIL JEHOVAH AND JESUS CHRIST!

Unto the only wise God, Who dwellest in the heaven of heavens, Whom no man hath seen nor can see, be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and forever through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

I thank God Almighty, the Owner of God's Kingdom Society, (GKS) *The Church of the Living God*, for making possible the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles for this year and for the protection and guidance given the members to attend the Feast from far and near by His grace. As members very well know, the most important aspect of the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles is the preaching of the word of God to the people, "...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...^⑨ as stated in Deuteronomy 31:10-13.

As antitypical Israelites, who have assembled before the Lord on this glorious occasion, it is my duty in the Lord to exhort you from the book of the law, the Holy Bible and my address for this year is entitled: ***"Since God Sees Our Hearts In All We Do, We Should Beware"***^⑨ The *heart* in the context of this sermon is not the hollow muscular organ in humans situated in the centre of the chest, that pumps blood around the body, but ^③he totality of one's^⑦ intellect, emotion and volition;" ^⑧ne's innermost character, feelings, or inclinations; the locus of feelings and intuitions^⑨

Because God created man a perfect, free moral agent, human beings are able to make moral judgments because they know what is right and what is wrong and can therefore be held accountable for their actions or decisions. (Compare Genesis 2:16, 17; Joshua 24:15; Amos 5:14) However, because of imperfection, inherited from Adam, human beings harbour the tendency or inclination to sin through ③the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life⑨ (1 John 2:15-17; Genesis 3:1-6; Job 15:16; Romans 7:13-23) The devil, "...the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience⑨ (Ephesians 2:1, 2) exploits this sinful nature of man by way of creating sinful thoughts in man⑦ heart. (Matthew 15:18-20; Mark 7:21-23) No wonder God Almighty declares through Jeremiah the prophet ③The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?⑨- Jeremiah 17:9.

Man Does Not See The Heart

Because man does not see the heart, many people tend to deceive their neighbours or colleagues. Such deceivers present themselves as saints who love their neighbours as themselves whereas they are playing the devil⑦ script. It is commonly said that ③many kiss the hands they wish to cut off⑨ King David declared: ③The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.⑨(Psalm 55:21) He also said: ③Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.⑨- Psalm 28:3.

It is because human beings do not see the heart that some wicked people are able to deprive their neighbours of their hard-earned money through deceit and trickery. Some engage in human trafficking by deceiving men, women, boys and girls into believing they would help them to get good jobs overseas whereas their intention is to turn them into slaves and prostitutes abroad. (See Deuteronomy 24:7; 1 Timothy 1:9, 10) Many politicians, while on the hustings or electioneering circuits, make several

mouth-watering promises to the people which they have no intention of fulfilling. Some men promise several girls that they would marry them whereas they have no such plans. Same thing goes for some women. Those who deceive others should know that no matter how many times a swindler, trickster or thief succeeds, he will finally get caught in his own web, as long continued impunity ends at length in disaster. But the punishment from human beings cannot be compared to that of God Who knowest the hearts of all the children of men. See Ecclesiastes 8:11-13; Romans 2:6-11; Isaiah 3:10, 11; 1 Kings 8:39. St. Paul asserts: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." - Hebrews 4:13.

Instances

There are a number of striking instances in the Bible that show that it is grossly misleading to judge a person's true character by outward appearance alone just as one cannot judge a merely book by its cover. Rather, it is God Almighty Who knows the hearts of men and relates with them in that wise.

An example that readily comes to mind is what happened when Samuel the prophet was sent to anoint David, a young shepherd boy imbued with strong faith, to replace Saul. Samuel made the mistake of prejudging the person God would choose from mere physical features. After he had invited Jesse and his sons, ⑧..it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD'S anointed is before him. ⑨ However, ⑧he LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: **for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.** ⑨(1 Samuel 16:6, 7) It is noteworthy that David, the youngest of the sons of Jesse, was eventually chosen by God to lead the nation of Israel because of his heart condition, whereas he was not even regarded by the father as eligible for such an honour as he was left to tend sheep in the fields! (1 Samuel 16:8-

13) Because of his heart condition, David, who is referred to in the Bible as a man after God's heart, was the one chosen as king to replace Saul. - 1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22.

A story in the Bible that shows how people could be deceived for the fact that they cannot read one's heart is what Absalom did at the time his father David was on the throne. After killing Amnon, his half-brother for raping Tamar his sister, Absalom fled to Geshur, the land of his mother, Maachah, where he sojourned for three years. (2 Samuel 13:24-38) Two years after King David allowed Absalom to return, he started executing a wicked plan meant to steal the hearts of the people and overthrow his father, who out of love for his son was speedily granting his requests, without knowing his real intentions. Absalom would rise up early, proceed to the city gate, and there he would be showing the petitioners unusual kindness and politeness. He would listen to their cases and then ensure he told them what they would like to hear – an opinion or a verdict which was favorable. He would then say that he would more readily and speedily hear their petitions if he were the king. He thus created dissatisfaction or disgruntlement among the common people who never knew that all those civilities were merely a cover for his evil intentions. After doing this for some years, Absalom deceived his father into believing that he had a vow to fulfill at Hebron. He gave him permission to go. Unknown to the king, Absalom had sent spies all over the land of Israel to recognize him as king as soon as they heard the sound of the trumpet. Even 200 men left Jerusalem to meet him in Hebron not knowing that they had been invited to what amounted to a coronation! Seeing that the hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom, David had to flee for his dear life. A full scale war had to be fought before Absalom was killed and the mutiny suppressed. See 2 Samuel chapters 14-19. David the king prayed: Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man; Which imagine mischiefs in their heart. Psalm 140:1, 2.

One should also recall the trickery with which Jeroboam, the king of Israel and his wife wanted to deceive Ahijah the servant of God. It happened that Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick. Anxious for the life of his son, the king sent his wife to find out from Ahijah the prophet whether his son would recover from the illness or not. But because Jeroboam was so deep into idolatry, he knew that the prophet, who was already blind because of age, would not give her the desired attention. The king therefore instructed her to disguise herself as a commoner and not as a queen. But God Almighty who sees the secrets of men revealed the plot to Ahijah the prophet as it is written: ③And the LORD said unto Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son; for he is sick: thus and thus shalt thou say unto her: for it shall be, when she cometh in, that she shall feign herself to be another woman." The Bible record adds: ③And it was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings.④(1 Kings 14:5, 6) The prophet went on to pronounce woe on the house of Jeroboam and the nation of Israel because of their idolatry. As for the child, he told her that he will die as soon as her feet entered the city. All these fulfilled to the letter. (1 Kings 14:7-18) Indeed, ③..all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do④ - Hebrews 4:13.

I will also cite the case of Ananias and his wife Saphira. Seeing that many who had lands and houses sold them and gave the money to the apostles, (Acts 4:34, 35), Ananias and his wife, Saphira, also sold their possession, but brought only a part of the money. God revealed their deceitful conduct to St. Peter who said: "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? "While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. The same fate befell Saphira the wife three hours later. (Acts 5:1-11, *New King James Version*) Those who have known

God have a greater responsibility of serving Him with a perfect heart. ☞
Luke 12:47,48

Why We Should Beware

The knowledge or understanding that God sees our hearts and knows what we are planning or thinking should make us to avoid having evil thoughts, much more to carry them out. The word of God also warns mankind of the consequences of sin, which are restlessness, shame, anguish, degradation, desolation and death. God says: ❸ the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.❹- Jeremiah 17:10.

King Solomon, in his prayer at the dedication of the temple, among other things, said that God gives to every man according to his ways, ❸..whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;)" (1 Kings 8:39) The religious leaders of the Jews in the time of Christ pretended to be serious with the work of God but their heart condition showed them to be hypocrites. He told the Pharisees: "... Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." (Luke 16:15) He even called the religious leaders ❹whited sepulchres❹ when he declared: ❸Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.❹- Matthew 23:27, 28.

Antonio, a character in William Shakespeare❷ play *The Merchant of Venice* states:

⑧The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.
An evil soul producing holy witness
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the heart.
Oh, what a goodly outside falsehood hath!⑨

Such a ⑧goodly outside⑨was exhibited by Amaziah king of Judah. The Bible says that ⑧..he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a perfect heart". (2 Chronicles 25:2) While outwardly giving people the impression that he loved to serve God, the truth was that he was merely going through the motions or routines involved in true worship but did not have faith in what he was doing. Regarding hypocrites the Bible says God is "near in their mouth, and far from their reins.⑨(Jeremiah 12:2) Amaziah⑦ insincerity became manifest when he descended into idolatry and brought the gods of the children of Mount Seir and descendants of Esau - (whom he had defeated in battle) ⑧..and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burned incense unto them.⑨God Almighty was of course angry with him and sent him a prophet, to warn him saying: ⑧Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand?⑨Being proud in heart, the king became angry and said unto the prophet, "Art thou made of the king's counsel? forbear; why shouldest thou be smitten? Then the prophet forbore, and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel.⑨(2 Chronicles 25:14-16) It did not end well with Amaziah. He went into an unnecessary war with Joash king of Israel and was defeated heavily. The final words on him go thus: ⑧Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the LORD they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem; and he fled to Lachish: but they sent to Lachish after him, and slew him there. And they brought him upon horses, and buried him with his fathers in the city of Judah.⑨- 2 Chronicles 25:27, 28.

Any wise or reasonable person who knows that God sees the heart will therefore beware and refrain from serving God with craftiness and run away from evil in order to live, as no one can deceive God. (Proverbs 7:2;

9:6; Ezekiel 18:23, 32; Hebrews 12:9; Joshua 24:14, 15; Jeremiah 48:10) Apostle Jude warned: ❸For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.❹- Jude 4-7.

Cultivating A Good Heart Condition

In view of all that had been said, the importance of praying for God to give us a good heart condition with which to serve Him acceptably cannot be over-emphasized. This has been given more importance in view of the fact that in the Christian era, sinful thoughts tantamount to the deed. In other words, one does not have to physically commit sin before being counted as guilty before God. The strong inclination of the heart towards evil makes one guilty already. The offences of murder and adultery are spotlighted by our Lord Jesus Christ as instances of lustful thoughts which are regarded as the actual sins even though one is only harbouring such thoughts in one❷ heart. (Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, 28) King David stated: ❸Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.❹(Psalm 51:6-11) We should therefore appreciate why Solomon the prophet exhorted: ❹Keep thy heart with all

diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.❶(Proverbs 4:23) The Bible says: ❷For as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he❸ (Proverbs 23:7) We should avoid evil thoughts so as to be children of God indeed. Our Saviour stated: ❹That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.❺- Mark 7:20-23.

There is great blessing in serving God with a perfect heart. It makes God to be with one, so that one would not be anxious or afraid in any of life❻ circumstances. ❷Truly God is good to Israel❸ remarked King David, ❹even to such as are of a clean heart.❺(Psalm 73:1) Hanani the seer told King Asa: ❶For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him..." (2 Chronicles 16:9) And what is more, David the prophet charged his son Solomon thus: ❷And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.❸- 1 Chronicles 28:9.

I pray God Almighty Who is able to keep us from falling, to continue to cleanse us with His word so that we may in the end be ushered into abundant life in His Kingdom fully established, all by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

HAPPY FEAST OF TABERNACLES!

Godwin O. Ifeacho,
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December 2019

LOOK UP AND LIFT UP YOUR HEADS FOR YOUR REDEMPTION DRAWETH NIGH

An Address By The President, God's Kingdom Society (GKS) of The Church Of The Living God of Brother Godwin O. Ifeacho at the Last And Great Day Holy Convocation of The Christian Feast Of Tabernacles, in Salem City, Warri, Delta State, Nigeria, on Sunday the 20th day of December, 2020.

Dearly Beloved Celebrants,

HAIL JEHOVAH AND JESUS CHRIST!

We give sincere thanks, adoration and honour to God Almighty Who ruleth in the kingdom of men and Whose dominion is from everlasting to everlasting, for graciously sustaining us in His glorious Kingdom even in the face of the difficulties people are experiencing as a result of the manifold and relentless onslaughts of the devil.

For the fact that these troubles are caused by the prince of the power of the air and because they will be increasing in intensity, Solomon the prophet advised us not to ask: "What is the cause that the former days were better than these?" saying those who do so do not enquire wisely concerning this (Ecclesiastes 7:10) It should be recalled that in her annual address to the nation in 1992, the Queen of England, Elizabeth the 11, stated that the year was not one she would look back on with undiluted pleasure. Using the words of one of her "more sympathetic correspondents", she said the year had turned out to be an *annus horribilis* - a disastrous or unfortunate year. If she could describe 1992 as horrendous, because of untoward events in her family, what would she say of the year 2020 which has manifestly been far more horrifying and awful, even on a global scale?

The Last Days

The fact that things are getting worse is proof that we are in the last days when there would be upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth (Luke 21:25, 26) The truth is that the devil is fully using the political, the religious and the commercial factors or elements in the world to nurture, foster and implement ungodly schemes that worsen the living conditions of people in the earth, knowing that, anytime within this age, the last days, he and his hosts would be destroyed. (See Daniel 12:10; Matthew 24:7,8; Revelation 16:13,14; 12:12) It is because of the injustices and oppressions in the world that the rulers and the ruled are constantly at logger heads or in disagreement as could be seen in the protests in various parts of the world, including the United States of America, Nigeria, Thailand, Israel, Sydney, Hong Kong, Rio de Janeiro, London, Seoul, Belarus, etc. Protests have been so rampant that the year 2020 has been dubbed the year of activism See Luke 21:25, 26.

Referring to these days our Lord Jesus Christ stated: **¶**And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.**¶** (Luke 21:28) This is the topic of my sermon for this year by God's grace.

Failure of human efforts

It should be noted that conditions on the earth are worsening not because some of the leaders in the world have not been trying to improve public welfare. But things are getting harder in spite of human efforts. These the unlearned in the Scriptures find utterly perplexing. For instance, as everyone can see, despite the adoption of democracy as a system of government in many countries of the world, many people have found to their chagrin that it does not necessarily promote fairness, equity or justice. Is it not surprising that racism and slave trade are still with us when people thought they had become things of the past? Even in the technologically advanced countries of the world, there are widening gaps between the rich and the poor. Millions are being thrown out into the streets because they cannot pay for their rents, millions are dying every day because of hunger, many are languishing in pain because they cannot afford medical care. Unfortunately, those the masses look to for help in the public and private sectors, have, because of their greed, been found to be part of the problem, rather than the solution. St. Peter states: **¶**While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.**¶** - 2 Peter 2:19.

The fig Tree

Mankind fell into bondage to sin and death today because of inherited sin. Having been taught a hard lesson under satan's rule, no one should hesitate to take advantage of the door of salvation that has been opened through the sacrifice of His only begotten son. They should look to no one else but to God Almighty Who has since given notice that He would soon bring this evil world to an end under the reign of His appointed King, Jesus Christ. (Ezekiel 21:25,26; Isaiah 9:6,7) In Matthew 24,32, 33, our Saviour stated: **¶**Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.**¶**(Matthew 24:32, 33) In other words, as we see the signs of the last days, we should know that the time is imminent when God will destroy the world and save His people. The Saviour charged us thus: **¶**Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.**¶**(Luke 21:36) To **¶**watch**¶** means to stay awake and keep alert, earnestly studying the Scriptures, keenly observing the unfolding of events to enable us keep track of the fulfillment of Bible prophecies, doing righteousness so that our prayers would be heard, knowing that **¶**of that day and hour knoweth no man**¶** - Matthew 24:36; Luke 21:34-36.

Since the signs show we are now in that age, we should be filled with joyful expectations of the Kingdom. Hence the admonition, **¶**look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh". (Luke 21:28) Such ones who desire the help of God

should look out for His **8** true pastors **9** He would anoint in this age who will feed His people with knowledge and understanding or His true Church organization on earth where they would learn righteousness and be saved by God. **10** Matthew 24:31, 14; 1 John 2:27; Isaiah 2:2.

Having been well enlightened on the signs of the last days, it is not expected of people of God to be caught unprepared or unawares. St. Paul stated: **8** But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. **9** (1 Thessalonians 5:1-4) This statement by St. Paul fulfilled to the letter in the significant events of the last days such as the First World War. We also saw this play itself out in the Corona Virus pandemic which leapt suddenly upon the world. A keen observer in a recent piece stated: **6** January 1, 2020 marked the beginning of a brand new decade that many looked at with optimism and as a chance at a new lease on life. But as summer 2020 progresses, many are wondering if this year can get any worse, following a string of world fires, airplane crashes **5** social unrest over the killing of George Floyd, the deadly explosion in Beirut and various natural disasters **4** all under the cloud of COVID 19 Corona Virus pandemic."

Be strong, fear not

Right now, many people are under siege, their perspectives are narrowed down by worldly philosophies, the rhetoric of politicians, religious charlatans and the endless search for money. They must be told in clear terms that it is only through faith in God and prayer that people of the world can overcome the adversities and catastrophes of the last days and be saved in God **7** Kingdom. God Almighty declared through the prophet Isaiah: **6** Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. **9** (Isaiah 35:3, 4) Instead of allowing oneself to be spiritually careless and delinquent being **8** overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life **9** (Luke 21:34), People of God must conduct themselves as children of light, who are not in darkness, (and therefore asleep spiritually), being those who watch and are sober. (1 Thessalonians 5:5-7) To these agree the words of St. Paul, as follows: **8** And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. **9** - Romans 13:11-14.

We must therefore flee from sin always and be determined to be on the Lord **7** side always, no matter the odds, by His grace. **8** Wherefore lift up the hands which hang

down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. ⑨(Hebrews 12:12, 13) Those who look to God will have strong faith in Him and will not compromise their faith. They will not lean to their own understanding but would subject themselves to the will of God. They will not be busybodies, causing confusion, scandalizing people and making people to have a low opinion of the work of God. ☞Isaiah 45:22; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Hebrews 11:1,6; John 6:38; Romans 2:20-23; 2 Thessalonians 3:11.

Let me reiterate the essence of this sermon, which is that we must always look up to God as our source of help in this perilous times by having strong faith in Him through His son Jesus Christ so as to continually receive strength, protection, care and eventual salvation by His grace. David the prophet stated: ⑧ will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore. ⑨- Psalm 121:1-8.

May all those who love truth and righteousness, who ⑧rust in the living God⑨ continue to be revived by Him so that they may overcome the difficulties of the times and be saved in His glorious Kingdom fully established on earth by His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Godwin O. Ifeacho,

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FEAST OF TABERNACLES ADDRESS 2021

Dearly Beloved Celebrants,

HAIL JEHOVAH AND JESUS CHRIST!

I thank God Almighty, the Rock of our salvation, for the grace we have to be alive to once again, “draw water out of the wells of salvation” and to “buy wine and milk without money and without price” at this Feast of Tabernacles for the year 2021.

To show appreciation to God for sustaining us in His way, we must be “Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, ... abounding therein with thanksgiving”. (Colossians 2:7) St. Paul gave this exhortation because he knew that the devil uses the world's ideas in politics, religion and commerce to drag people away from God. Thus, we have to be very careful to avoid those elements in science, education, music, fashion, entertainment, the mass media, sports, etc. that do not promote godliness but serve to undermine belief in God and Biblical moral standards and values.

The natural Israelites faced such challenges in time of old. Several times they relapsed into their old ways because they yielded to the low moral standards, debased practices and devilish philosophies of rival nations. One of such instances was when Moses had to stay on Mount Sinai for 40 days and nights, receiving the commandments of God. “And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.” - Exodus 32:1.

The Israelites were so urgent in their demands that they promptly acceded to the request of Aaron that they should bring their items of gold for him to make a calf for them. While he mockingly proclaimed before them that this was the god that brought them from Egypt, they bowed down in worship to an idol made before their very eyes by Aaron and indulged in immoral practices and dances which involved nakedness and prostitution. This was a clear case of rebellion against their Creator.

When Moses came down and saw this, he, in a burst of righteous indignation, immediately took stern measures to restore order and discipline in the camp. “And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.” - Exodus 32:25-28.

It is from the challenge given by Moses to the faithful at that time that this sermon, “Who Is On The Lord's Side?” is drawn. The 3000 men killed that day were clearly not on the Lord's side - though they claim to be among the people of God - because they abandoned the true faith to indulge in sexual immorality, and to commit idolatry. Truly, “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel”. (Romans 9:6) Evidently, those not on the side of God have a self-conceited, immoral and presumptuous lifestyle. They have “eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin”, “Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity;

whisperers..." (2 Peter 2:14; Romans 1:29-31) But those on the Lord's side deny ungodliness and worldly lusts in every shape or form. They live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, thus showing themselves to be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works". - Titus 2:12-14; John 7:7; Ephesians 5:1-20.

That Moses and the faithful Levites took action to deal with idolatry at that time is an important lesson for the children of God. St. Paul warns us thus: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?..." - 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

However, in spite of the exemplary punishments given them on that occasion, the Israelites still resorted to idolatry several times. During the reign of King Ahab and Jezebel his wife, many of the Jews indulged in mixed worship. They served the true God, and, in order to please Jezebel, also worshipped Baal. Outraged by what was going on, Elijah the prophet asked the people an important question. "...How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him..." - 1 Kings 18:21.

He then proposed a contest, to the end that the God that answers by fire, should be acclaimed as the true God. Baal was a god of fire and therefore should be in his elements as far as this contest was concerned. The Baal worshippers prayed from morning until evening and yet nothing happened. But the short prayer made by Elijah produced an instantaneous result. He said: "Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God." Consequently, the 450 prophets of Baal, suffered the fate that will eventually meet all those who are on the devil's side: they were all killed. - 1 Kings 18:37-40.

Again, Ahab and Jezebel committed a grievous sin by killing Naboth for refusing to part with his vineyard as it was the family inheritance. Sequel to their dastardly act, God Almighty decreed that Ahab and Jezebel would die ignominiously and violently: Jezebel would die in such a gruesome manner that her body would be eaten up by dogs and no one would see her carcase and say "this is Jezebel". The person chosen by God to carry out this mission was Jehu. As he rode into Jezreel to execute the LORD'S assignment, he posed the question: "Who is on my side? who?" There looked out to him two or three eunuchs. "And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot."

When Jehu posed the question "Who is on my side?", he was in effect asking who among the domestic staff of Jezebel was on the side of God Almighty and therefore in full support of the cleansing work God had asked him to carry out. Two or three eunuchs attending to her showed faith and courage by promptly identifying themselves with the cause of righteousness. They therefore obeyed Ahab and threw her down. - 1 Kings 21:21-24; 2 Kings 9:30-37.

Ahab and Jezebel died because they worshipped the devil and committed murder due to their spirit of covetousness which St. Paul says is idolatry. - Colossians 3:5. Please see also Hebrews 13:5,6; Ezekiel 33:30-33; Luke 12:15-21.

Continuing his mission of cleansing the land of Baal worship, Jehu went on to assemble all the Baal worshippers so as to clearly identify those on the side of God and those on the devil's side. On the way, "he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him: and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is." Jehu then told him that if that was the case, he should give him his hand. "And he gave him his hand; and he took him up to him into the chariot. And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD. So they made him ride in his chariot." - 2 Kings 10:15, 16.

By giving Jehu his hand, Jehonadab was firmly and positively declaring his support for the mission of Jehu. In other words, he was on the Lord's side. With a shared determination to do the work of God, Jehu and Jehonadab went to the house of Baal together. Jehu used wisdom by making all the Baal worshippers to assemble in their temple, believing he would join them to serve their god. They wore their special garments, attires or vestments, thus clearly showing which side they belonged. Thereafter, Jehu commanded the soldiers to kill all the Baal worshippers. - 2 Kings 10: 21-25.

Jehu stands for the anointed Christians while Jehonadab represents the Other Sheep. The hand that Jehonadab gave Jehu shows the support the Other Sheep give to the Lord's anointed in doing the work of God. The chariot stands for God's organization. The Saints and the Other Sheep work together to carry on the work of God. – Luke 12:32; John 10:16; Ephesians 2:19-21; 1 Corinthians 3:5-10; 12:28-31.

A lesson to be drawn from what Jehu did was that those who claim to be serving God must show themselves to be firmly and irrevocably committed to Him. They must not indulge in interfaith practices. God Almighty does not tolerate shiftless and indecisive persons - people who are unwilling or unable to choose which side to belong to; people who lack the courage of their convictions. Hence in Matthew 6:24, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, declared: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Please see also Luke 11:23; John 14:30,31) And St. Paul was categorical on this issue in his letter to the Christians at Corinth, when he said: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?" - 1 Corinthians 10:20-22. See also Isaiah 8:19; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

Moreover, in his letter to the Church at Laodicea, our Lord Jesus Christ rebuked them sharply for being neither cold nor hot. He added: "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." - Revelation 3:14-16

Sheep or Goat?

Brothers and Sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ is now sitting on his heavenly throne and all mankind are before him. As the truth is being preached round the world through various media, those who accept it and support the Kingdom work clearly show themselves as the sheep of God. Those who oppose the truth and refuse to support the saints and their helpers identify themselves as goats. The sheep are humble, teachable, kind and godly. But the goats are proud, stubborn, sly, crafty, hypocritical and wicked. They oppose God and His righteous ways. In this age of the second presence of Christ each person will be rewarded for what he has done, whether good or bad. (Matthew 25:31-46) "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." - Matthew 16:27

Each person should judge himself which side he is on. The side of God or the side of the devil? No one is being forced to make a decision: But everyone must bear responsibility for his actions. - Deuteronomy 30:15-20; 11:26-28; Jeremiah 21:8; Revelation 22:11,12.

Affirming that he and his house would remain exclusively devoted to the worship of JEHOVAH, Joshua the prophet, shortly before his death, asked the Israelites to choose whom they would serve, the gods their fathers served or God Almighty. The people said unto Joshua, "The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey..." (Joshua 24:14,15,24) This should be our vow by the grace of God.

It is those who patiently continue in well doing that God will accept as His own and save. (Romans 2:6-11) It is such ones He will continue to help and bless. In one of the psalms of King David he said: "If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say; If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: Then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth." - Psalm 124:1-8.

Like King David we are also sincerely and profoundly grateful to God Almighty for bringing us to His side of favour where we are assured of His protection, blessings and salvation by His grace. – Psalm 3:8.

Brothers and Sisters, while I thank you for your kind attention, I pray God to give us the faith to be guided by His word always unto His praise and glory through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

HAPPY FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Brother Felix Ekundayo Adedokun,
Acting President, GKS

December, 2021