



Churches Of God Outreach Ministries
People working together to proclaim the Gospel

"The Churches of God Outreach Ministries provides leadership, information, and biblical teaching in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19-20"

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Observing The Festivals At Home

PASSOVER AND UNLEAVENED BREAD

Some Questions Answered

Who takes part in the Passover (Lord's Supper) celebration?

All Christians, baptized members of the Church, take part in the entire service. However unbaptized adherents are welcome to be present and to take part in the foot washing part of the service.

Where is the Passover celebrated?

When there are a reasonable number of participants in a locality, the leadership will arrange a suitable venue. This is the best way by far, as the Lord's Supper is by definition a fellowship assembly. If a service has been arranged you are strongly urged to make every effort to attend!

Where it is impossible to attend with other brethren, the service may be held at home, preferably with at least one other participant of the same sex - this because of the foot-washing ceremony. Husband and wife, of course, may freely wash one another's feet!

How do I celebrate at home?

First, some general considerations. The Lord's Supper is a most solemn celebration, and all that's done should reflect this. For example, part of the preparation might be to have young children either in bed or supervised. A period of quiet reading of appropriate passages of the Scriptures may also be useful (e.g. Psalm 22, Isaiah 52, 53, the Gospel accounts of the death of Jesus). And, of course, ahead of time lay out a sufficient number of glasses containing a little red wine, and a small plate of unleavened cracker. A bowl with some warm water and a towel for each

person needs to be at hand.

Open the service with prayer, and perhaps a reading of Psalm 51 followed by John 13:1-17. Then read 1 Corinthians 11:26-34. Next follows - if more than one is present - the foot-washing, which is symbolic of the attitude of service to the brethren and to the world throughout the year. Now read 1 Cor. 11:23-24, after which each takes a portion of the bread. Next read v.25 and each then takes a glass of the wine representing the blood of Jesus shed for our sin.

After introducing the disciples to this new institution in memory of His death, Jesus spoke to them at length on various matters. It's our practice to at this point read from the Gospels some portions of what He then taught the disciples (John 13:31 through ch. 17). You could select portions of this in advance.

Finally, they sang a hymn (Mark 14:26) - a practice we follow where possible.

When do we celebrate the Lord's Supper?

It is always observed at the beginning of the 14th of Nisan (i.e., just after sunset on the 13th) on the Bible calendar - the "night in which he was betrayed". This If you don't have a calendar card giving dates of all God's festivals for several years, please write to the *Churches of God Information Center*.

What is the Festival of Unleavened Bread?

In brief, this is a seven day festival which begins at sunset the day following the Lord's Supper or

Passover. The first day and the last day are annual Sabbaths. Often there is also a weekly Sabbath included. For Christians it is symbolic of the necessity to live a righteous life, pictured by our eating unleavened bread and no leavened (i.e. yeasted) bread or cakes - for the seven days.

Basic information about the Festival is in Leviticus 23. If you have further questions please contact a Church of God elder or write to your local *COG Information Center*.

What is meant by "unleavened" bread?

The expression "unleavened bread" means bread (or cakes, biscuits etc.) made without a raising agent such as yeast, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda. (Brewer's yeast, cream of tartar, yeast extracts are not raising agents.) In line with Bible practice (Ex 13:6-7) we check that all leavened products are consumed or removed from our homes in the daylight hours before the first day of Unleavened Bread begins at sunset. And, of course, be careful when eating away from home!

Incidentally, wine or beer, though fermented, is in no way prohibited. The Bible permits it, if appropriate in your situation, especially during festivals (Deut 14:26).

Must everyone in my home observe the Festival?

If observing the Festival is a new practice in your household, you are urged not to impose abstinence on disinterested members of the family. Christian practice is a personal matter. However, it is decidedly more rewarding if *all the family* can be gently persuaded to observe the days.

Observing The Festivals At Home

If, during the Festival, you find overlooked leaven don't panic! Just dispose of it, and learn the spiritual lesson that we all have sin in our lives that's been overlooked - and repent. Even long-time Christians forgetfully overlook - or eat - leavened products during the seven days! Please refer any further questions to your local minister or to your nearest church office.

FASTS AND FEASTS

The autumn/fall is a season of "fast and feast" These are not unique, of course, to the Churches of God. Nearly all religions have them in some form. The Muslims, indeed, have a whole month of fasting each year - though not uninterrupted!

God, however, has given the Church a program of fasts and feasts which reflect His plan for mankind.

This isn't the place to expound the festival meanings - most of us have a good grasp of their significance. If you still have queries write to the Information Center for further explanation.

Let's focus on the how of their observance.

In general they are annual Sabbaths. The Festival of **Trumpets**, the Day of **Atonement**, the first day of **Tabernacles** and the **Last Great Day** are "holy days" special days when we don't go about our normal business pursuits, just like the weekly Sabbaths. Each has its own significance relating to God's grand design. Part of the difference lies in the stomach!

Atonement is a day when for the entire 24-hr period we neither eat nor drink This can literally be a pain! After observing it for thirty-two years I still approach it with some concern! It is perhaps a bit easier if we have had at least some partial fasts during the year. A couple of tips. Don't load your stomach just prior to the beginning of the fast at sunset. And when

Atonement ends break your fast gently - perhaps some grapes or other soft fruit, as your throat may be tender.

In general, heed Jesus' instruction not to appear to man to fast. Hide your breath by brushing your teeth, or use a mouthwash! Dress for Sabbath. And by study, and meditating on the joyful meaning of the Day you can probably avoid a long face. The absence of food preparation and mealtimes gives us extra time to pray about the state of the world with its spiritual bondage. Where possible *attend service* with the brethren.

The observance of Atonement is part of the "contract of submission" we made with God at our baptism. God blesses us for our willing service in it. However, where there is illness (diabetes, for example), where you are on medication etc don't neglect necessary fluid intake or drugs. Simply commit your situation to God and do your best. For the fit and healthy there is no excuse!

Of all the Holy Days, Atonement may attract opposition from an unconverted family. Be strong, and remember that it is partially on their behalf the need arises to observe Atonement.

The **Festival of Trumpets** is different. It is a gladsome festival physically as well as spiritually. Of all the Holy Days it is a "family day". Tabernacles is spent away from home, Trumpets we observe, apart from services, in our homes. It is a time for special meals, a time for the giving of gifts and sharing with the needy. Read *Nehemiah 8* for an insight on observing Trumpets.

Where possible make it a "family day" - even including those not "in the church"! Give gifts to your children and others. Invite a needy neighbour. Give your home a festive atmosphere. This is a good time to use a portion of your "second tithe" for material enjoyment.

Finally there's the **Festival of**

Tabernacles. It's the highlight of the year for us, with its opportunities for prolonged fellowship with the brethren, to share our experience, to catch up with news, to renew friendships and make new ones, to be instructed for a whole week from the Word of God. It's a time to spiritually recharge our spirits through all of these activities! A necessary preparation for the wintry days ahead till next year.

Prepare well for Tabernacles. If you don't have sufficient funds to go every year then save until you can. [If you can't afford it your local fellowship group may have limited funds to assist you. Don't be embarrassed to make known your needs - your brethren want you to be there!]

Prepare also for the journey - get the car in order, plan your route, check on train and coach times, arrange a lift etc. And, of course, be sure you have accommodation reserved at the Festival site.

Try to build up your health before Tabernacles, as it can be physically demanding. And during the Festival eat and drink sensibly, get sufficient rest and sleep, keep warm. Nor, of course, should we neglect prayer and private meditation and study. And don't hesitate to make known to the brethren any needs you may have while there.

Tabernacles is a time to be with other brethren. However, circumstances may hinder your presence every year - financial, health, family etc. If you can't attend a Festival site, plan a home observance. Make the eight days special. The first day and the Last Great Day are annual Sabbaths - even if mid-week. Treat them as such. And on the other days give extra time to study, to listening to taped sermons (lay by a store of tapes you have found especially helpful), to uplifting literature. Focus on the wonderful meaning of the Festival.

Hope you have wonderful Festival Seasons!

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