

CHURCH OF THE
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“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

February 13, 2006

Dear Brethren, Co-Workers and Friends,

In about eight weeks, baptized members of the Church of God will be taking the Passover which is an annual celebration of the death of Christ. It is a somber reminder of the sacrifice that our Lord and Savior endured on our behalf. Although not a Holy Day in itself, this will be the beginning of the Holy Day season when the first day of Unleavened Bread starts at sunset some twenty four hours later. How blessed we are to have been given the precious knowledge of God's Master Plan of salvation for all of mankind, as revealed through His Holy Days (Please read our free booklet, “*God's Commanded Holy Days*.”).

As Passover is almost two months away, why am I raising the matter at this particular time? Here is the reason: We are to prepare diligently for each Holy Day season and we are particularly admonished regarding the Passover, to examine ourselves so that we may take it in a worthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:28). When should this self-examination begin?

Members of the Church of God have long recognized that God's calling is to a life of obedience to His will, and that we are to keep His Commandments. This responsibility must never be taken lightly. It is a full time, twenty four hours a day commitment in a Christian life that must continue for the rest of our lives. We cannot give up part way through our lives, and we must endure to the end (Matthew 24:13); otherwise, we will not make it into the Kingdom of God. In this context I am reminded of that phrase “Quitting lasts forever,” and it must never apply to our calling.

Therefore, we must always be in a state of self-examination, but this intensifies as we approach the annual celebration of Passover. But how do we examine ourselves at this time? Everyone has to decide for themselves the “how,” but several suggestions, as noted below, may be helpful in focusing our minds on what needs to be done.

(1) First of all, an analysis of our strengths and weaknesses may initially be helpful. We can then see how well we have done, and are doing, in growing and overcoming as we are exhorted to do in 2 Peter 3:18. We could map out a personal program over the period leading up to Passover—and beyond!

(2) It may be helpful to review our booklet, “*God's Commanded Holy Days*.” The holiness of God's annual Feast days is covered on pages 28-40.

(3) Previous articles that have been written about the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread may also be helpful in concentrating our minds at this time on self-examination. We recommend the review of the following articles: Update 224 on 1 Corinthians 11:29; Update 137 on Exodus 12:14; Update 141 on the Jewish Passover; and Update 88 on the Lord's Supper.

(4) Live or audio sermons leading up to the Spring Holy Day season should also be an aid, and previous sermons covering this subject are available on our websites (www.eternalgod.org or www.globalchurchofgod.co.uk or www.churchofgodacf.ca). For anyone without Internet access who would like specific sermon tapes to other supplemental material, please contact our nearest office and we will be pleased to respond to your request.

(5) Specific reading of, and meditation on relevant passages of Scripture pertaining to this time of the year would also be helpful. You may want to review passages such as Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; Numbers 9; Exodus 12; Leviticus 23; Deuteronomy 16; 1 Corinthians 5; and 1 Corinthians 11.

(6) You may want to allocate specific time for meditation. In our busy schedules, we can become so absorbed in our everyday activities with our family, friends, job, personal interests and health concerns, amongst other things, such that meditating on the tremendous and vitally important sacrifice of Christ can be forgotten and/or neglected until the last minute. However, the righteous person delights in meditation (see Psalm 1:2; 63:6; 77:12; 119:15; 119:99; 119:48; and 143:5).

(7) Fasting is another tool we can use. Humanly speaking, this does not come naturally to us, but is something that Christ said His disciples would do in His absence (Matthew 9:15). Christ fasted for forty days and forty nights (Matthew 4:2) and was able to overcome the wiles of the devil. Although we should not try today to fast for such a lengthy period of time, it would be good to set aside a day or two to fast, prior to Passover.

These are just some ideas, but the key is to get prepared. Developing our own plan of action for our Passover preparation can help us to approach this solemn time of the year in an appropriate and organized way that will surely be pleasing to God. It can help us to concentrate our minds in a way that might otherwise pass us by. It can also be used as a basis throughout the year as we strive to grow and overcome.

I asked earlier in this letter how we should examine ourselves. This has been addressed by the seven points listed above. While they are not exhaustive, they should, nevertheless, provide us with a good basis for our preparation. I also asked when we should start this process and the answer is: Immediately! By starting now, it gives us all a good lead in time to make better preparation for taking the Passover.

This is a time for introspection, self-examination and relying on God to help us in our puny efforts to overcome our human nature, the society which takes its toll on all of us and Satan, our adversary, who would love to take advantage of us (2 Corinthians 2:11).

We have the priceless privilege of being called into the true Church of God during this day and age, and we must do everything in our power to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). By planning well in advance to take the Passover in a worthy manner, surely God will be well pleased with our efforts. That should, and must be, our aim.

With brotherly love,


Brian Gale