March 1996

Frank W. Nelte

HOW DO YOU PERSUADE YOUR MINISTER NOT TO USE MATZOS FOR THE PASSOVER?

Having grown up with matzos in our home when I was a teenager, long before I ever heard about the Church of God, I have never felt that matzos are appropriate for use at the Passover. When I was unexpectedly confronted with matzos at the very first Passover I ever conducted as a minister, I resolved that I would do my best to never be caught unprepared again. Since that time my wife has baked the unleavened bread for use at every Passover service at which I have officiated, except for a very few occasions ... and in each of those occasions I carefully checked in advance that someone else had actually baked unleavened bread for use at the Passover service.

I was under the impression that perhaps the occasional new outlying member might be inclined to use matzos for observing the Passover in his own home. But I really did not realize that a considerable number of ministers would also use matzos as "their unleavened bread of choice" at the Passover services at which they were officiating.

Now I have received several requests which basically go like this: "I believe that what you have explained is correct. But how do I now persuade my minister not to use matzos for the Passover? If he insists on using matzos, should I then keep the Passover on my own? Please help."

This can be a delicate situation, and I would suggest that people use wisdom. Consider the following points.

Some of the ministers who now use matzos for the Passover will freely admit that until very recently they always baked their own unleavened bread for the Passover. This tells us something. It tells us that something has changed from the time when Mr. Armstrong was still alive and when these ministers always used home-made unleavened bread (except perhaps in emergencies?). At some stage they switched over to matzos. WHY?

When the doctrine of healing was changed, and when efforts were made to convince us that the broken bread at the Passover, which represents Christ's body, was supposedly broken for our SPIRITUAL healing instead of for our PHYSICAL healing, then something was taken away from the Passover. The symbolism was changed. And even some of those ministers who did not buy into this heretical teaching were still caught a little off guard. And so the repeated publication of photos, with matzos at a Passover service, had the desired effect of deceiving even some of these ministers and persuading them to also switch over to using matzos.

Why did they change over to matzos?

In most cases there is probably no particular reason at all, except perhaps convenience. It is not something they deliberately thought through. They simply changed without giving it any thought. They simply assumed that it is all the same thing.

So if you are a member in such a congregation, and you find it impossible to reconcile matzos with the broken body of Christ, then consider these things.

No minister in the Church of God is hostile to the use of home-made unleavened bread. It may simply be a bit more effort to prepare such unleavened bread, that's all.

Therefore, OFFER TO BAKE ALL THE UNLEAVENED BREAD THAT WILL BE NEEDED FOR THE WHOLE PASSOVER SERVICE IN YOUR AREA!

Keep in mind that you only need one piece of unleavened bread approximately ten inches by ten inches (i.e. 25 centimetres square) for every 50 people who will be taking the Passover. This allows over one square inch of bread per person. So even in a large congregation where perhaps 300 people take the Passover, you still only need about six to eight pieces of unleavened bread.

The above paragraph is not intended to stipulate rigidly how large the pieces of broken bread are to be. It is intended merely to illustrate that even for very large congregations (very few congregations are likely to have over 300 people taking the Passover in one venue) you really don't need to bake very much unleavened bread. So for most congregations you only need three or four pieces of unleavened bread in order to conduct the Passover service.

So if you are a member of the congregation, then offer to make all the unleavened bread your minister may require to conduct the Passover. Offer to deliver it to the venue well ahead of the time when the service is to start.

Assuming you are a member in good standing in the congregation, most ministers would not refuse such an offer unless they are already planning to bake their own bread. Your offer to help would be in the same category as if you offered to provide the one or two bottles of red wine that might be needed for the Passover service. (With about one tablespoon of wine per person, one bottle really does go a long way.)

However, if for some reason your minister refuses your offer to provide the bread, and instead tells you that he still intends to use matzos for the Passover, then try to reason with him as follows:

It is clear that 2000 years ago Jesus Christ used home-made unleavened bread and not matzos for the Passover He observed. It follows that using home-made unleavened bread will not be a problem for anyone in the Church. However, there MAY be some people for whom the use of matzos would create a problem of conscience. Mention that the use of matzos would create a problem for YOU!

Then say that you feel that under the circumstances your minister should apply the principle of 1 Corinthians 10:28-29. These verses state:

> But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, EAT NOT FOR HIS SAKE THAT SHEWED IT, and for conscience sake: for the earth [is] the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: CONSCIENCE, I SAY, NOT THINE OWN, BUT OF THE OTHER: for why is my liberty judged of another [man's] conscience? (1 Corinthians 10:28-29)

You can substitute the expression "this is offered in sacrifice unto idols" with "I am convinced matzos are totally inappropriate for use at the Passover". The principle implies that the minister, who is supposed to be spiritually more mature than you, would out of consideration for your conscience be willing to change from using matzos to using home-made unleavened bread. You are the one who "showed it to him" (i.e. brought it to his attention), and he should defer to accommodate your conscience.

It is fairly easy to make unleavened bread, which will be suitable for use at the Passover. Here is a recipe my wife wrote out for me:

<u>Basic Unleavened Bread</u>

Ingredients:

- 4 cups flour;

- 3 to 6 Tablespoons oil;

- half a teaspoon salt;

- approximately 2/3 cup water;

extra flour for rolling out.

Method:

Mix flour and salt together. Make a well in the flour and pour in the oil and water. Mix until flour is moistened and a soft dough is formed (about one-half minute). If the dough is sticky add a little more flour; if too stiff add a little more water. Divide the dough into several lumps for easier rolling out. Roll out the dough on a floured surface, also using a little flour on the rolling pin to prevent the dough sticking, if you want relatively thin flat bread. The dough can also be shaped into buns or loaves if you prefer a thicker bread or get tired of rolling out. Keep in mind that the bread will have a rather dense texture and it is best not to make the buns or loaves too thick. 1/4 to 1/2 inch thick is probably fine. Bake thin bread at 350 F (180 C) for 10 to 15 minutes. Bake thicker bread at 300 or 325 F (160 C) for 20 to 30 minutes.

Comments:

Flour varies considerably in the amount of moisture it contains, as well as in how finely it is milled. This affects how much water it will absorb. That is why it is not possible to give exact quantities of flour and water, but usually it is not difficult to see if the dough has the right amount of water.

I would suggest using whole grain flour, but you can use any grain or combination of grains you like. Why the variable amount of oil? I use the larger amount of oil for the bread for the Passover service and for meals when we have "company". It is more pleasant, but may be somewhat rich if you eat more than a little. If your family has a very active lifestyle, you will possibly be eating quite a lot of bread and will be more comfortable with the less rich version. For the Passover service I suggest you roll out the dough to make the somewhat flat type of unleavened bread.

That's it.

I would think this description is detailed enough for even most of us men to be able to follow, should we need to or want to bake some unleavened bread ourselves. It is really quite basic.

If you have a conscience problem about using matzos at the Passover, then you obviously are in a difficult situation if your minister simply refuses your offer to provide the bread for the service, and insists on using matzos. You should be aware of the principles that apply in your circumstances.

First of all, sin is not only an objective matter where "sin is sin is sin". Yes, the objective definition of sin is that it is the transgression of God's laws. But above and beyond that, sin also depends on how much you understand. The more you understand, the more accountable you are. As James explained:

> Therefore TO HIM THAT KNOWETH TO DO GOOD, and doeth [it] not, TO HIM IT IS SIN. (James 4:17)

The Apostle Paul explained the same point in slightly different words. Paul said:

> And THE TIMES OF THIS IGNORANCE GOD WINKED AT; BUT NOW COMMANDETH ALL MEN EVERY WHERE TO REPENT: (Acts 17:30)

So if your minister has made clear that he will use matzos, then you need to ask yourself this question:

ARE YOU REALLY CONVINCED THAT MATZOS ARE WRONG FOR THE PASSOVER? If you really are convinced of this, then you simply have no choice. How can you possibly compromise your conscience when you "KNOW" to do what is right?

Can you be like the leper Naaman, who, when he was healed, acknowledged that the God of Israel is the only true God and that "there is no (other) God in all the earth" (see 2 Kings 5:15), yet who asked for the concession that he might still compromise in continuing to go to the pagan temple of "Rimmon" with his king (see 2 Kings 5:18)? Naaman knew in advance he was going to do something that wasn't really appropriate to do based on the understanding he had come to. He knew he was going to compromise his understanding.

Such compromise may be acceptable for someone who was not about to be called into the Church of God, and who would continue to live in a society cut off from the true God; he was not being judged by the standard of James 4:17. But for you such compromise is really a different matter. Judgment is NOW on the Church of God (see 1 Peter 4:17), and that includes you and me.

For those who would like to have it, I do have a copy of the letter Mr. Armstrong wrote, explaining how to observe the Passover in your own home. That has been an option since Mr. Armstrong's time (though it is preferable to attend with a congregation if we have the opportunity to do so), and even the instructions WCG sent out a year ago made allowance for this option, though very few, if any, WCG ministers would have bothered to point out to the people in their congregations their "rights" in this regard.

Anyway, I expect that in most cases the ministers will be quite agreeable to listening to reasoning and to your offer to provide all the unleavened bread required for his service. So be open, respectful and polite in making your request known. There is a good chance that your minister, who is just as sincere in his beliefs as you are, will respond with something like: "Oh, I never thought about that. No problem, we can use home-made unleavened bread; and yes, thank you for your offer to bake it for us. We will need ... pieces of bread."

So be confident and have a meaningful Passover.

Frank W. Nelte

geovisit();