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KEEPING THE PASSOVER IN YOUR OWN HOME

The Passover is to be observed annually by all baptized members of God's Church. Where possible we should try to observe the Passover together with other members of God's Church. If we are not able to observe the Passover with others in a congregational setting, then we may observe it in our own homes or even with other baptized members in our area.

In normal circumstances the Passover, in addition to the reading of various Scriptures, includes three parts: first the footwashing, then the eating of the small piece of unleavened bread, then the drinking of the small amount of wine. This can all be done when two or more baptized members are keeping the Passover together. When one person is keeping the Passover on his own or on her own, then the footwashing is obviously omitted, but the other parts are carried out as they would in a group situation.

Here are some guidelines for those who may, due to circumstances, either have to keep the Passover on their own as just one person, or even keep it with a few others (as in the case of a husband and wife keeping it together, or even parents with their adult baptized children keeping the Passover together). This information is for the most part adapted from what Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong wrote in a letter on this subject many decades ago, with some sections being taken directly from Mr. Armstrong's letter.

PREPARING FOR KEEPING THE PASSOVER AT HOME

1) In advance prepare some unleavened bread. Only a small amount is needed. One round piece of from six to eight inches in diameter is easily enough for a dozen people, thus more than enough for a family group of perhaps two to four individuals. You can certainly make the piece for your observance of the Passover smaller than this, but it should be large enough to enable you to "break it into pieces". If possible, it is definitely preferable to have someone bake this unleavened bread for your Passover observance, as you will then clearly know what you will be eating. If it is not possible to have a small piece of homemade unleavened bread available for your Passover, you may have to buy some unleavened bread. Avoid buying "crackers" like the Jewish matzos that are sold at this time of year. It should really be unleavened "bread" rather than unleavened "crackers".

2) Also have available a small quantity of natural red wine. It must not be fortified wine. Examples of the correct wine would be burgundy, claret, cabernet sauvignon, etc.. Alcohol content of such natural red wines is typically in the 10% to 13% range.

3) Be prepared to observe this ordinance soon after dark, i.e. after twilight has ended and night has started. Typically around 7:30 p.m. is an appropriate time for most areas to start the Passover service.

4) The room should be neatly prepared, and should be able to be closed off from others who may be in the house or the building, who will not be participating in the Passover. Only baptized members of God's Church should be present for this service.

5) Have a table available, on which you have placed one tray with the piece of unleavened bread on it, covered neatly with a white napkin, and another tray with as many small glasses of the red wine, as the number of people who will be taking the Passover, also neatly covered with a white napkin. Each glass should contain approximately a tablespoon of red wine. I suggest you place the bread on the left side of the table, and the wine on the right side.

6) Also have prepared a few basins with water for the footwashing, one basin per person. In the event of two or more ladies plus two or more men taking the Passover together, plan to have the men and the ladies do the footwashing in separate locations (different rooms or room dividers). In the case of a husband and wife (and perhaps even one adult baptized child, or a mother and son and daughter-in-law, thus all being immediate family) the footwashing can certainly be done for someone of the opposite sex. Thus a husband may certainly wash his wife's feet or his mother's feet, and a wife may certainly wash her husband's feet or her son's feet, etc.. With such immediate family, and when there are not at least two men and two women in the group, there is no problem with washing the feet of a family member of the opposite sex. Be sure to also have available a clean towel for every person participating in the Passover. [Where one person alone will keep the Passover, this instruction does not apply.]

7) Have some clean water available (preferably running water), where the person, who will later break the bread, can wash his hands AFTER he has performed the footwashing. This is simply a matter of proper hygiene.

8) Also make provision to, after the whole Passover service has been completed, BURN any bread that remains and over which someone had prayed during the Passover. Such leftover bread should most emphatically not be "discarded" into some trash can ... it is to be burned by fire. Discarding as trash would show a lack of respect for what that bread has come to symbolize. And the principle of Exodus 12:10 demands that leftovers be "burned with fire".

9) Apart from the one piece of unleavened bread and the specific number of glasses of wine that have been poured in advance of the Passover service, there should be no other bread and no other wine in the room in which the Passover service will take place. When two specific prayers are said, the first one over the bread and later the second one over the wine, then no other bread and wine should be in that same room at the same time.

10) In the event that one or more glasses of wine were not used during the service, then such leftover wine should be poured out and not used by anyone. It is fine to wash such excess wine down the drain with plenty of water to wash it away, because that will prevent it being used by anyone in any way. Or it can be poured on the ground outside.

Having taken care of all these preparations, you are then ready to have the Passover.

<u>THE PASSOVER SERVICE</u>

1) When the time for the Passover service has arrived, all those who will partake of the Passover should quietly and respectfully enter the room and take their seats. No unbaptized

persons should be present. It is a solemn occasion and thus not the time for casual fellowshipping or visiting. Close the door to be totally private from any others in the house. Remind those present that this is the most solemn and sacred occasion of the year -- the anniversary of the death of our Lord and Saviour, and a service observed IN MEMORY of His death.

2) Do not open the Passover service with prayer.

The following is a suggestion of the Scriptures that the one who is conducting the service should read. It is certainly acceptable to omit some of these passages and to include other Scriptures that you feel are also appropriate. These Scriptures here provide a guideline without being a hard-and-fast rule. A person taking the Passover on his own would read all of these Scriptures silently to himself or to herself.

3) Let the one who conducts the service open the Bible and read Luke 22:7-8 and 14-15; then Matt.

26:17, and 26-30; then Paul's instruction in I Cor. 11:23-30. Next, read John 6:53-54, noticing that this ordinance is commanded as necessary for all Christians. Then read John 13:1-17.

4) After reading John 13:1-17 the one conducting the service should explain how the footwashing will be done, and then proceed with having the footwashing. Where one person is keeping the Passover alone, this part of the service is omitted.

5) Once the footwashing has been completed, if it was done in the same room in which the service is being conducted, then the basins are removed out of sight so that the room will again be neat and orderly.

6) Read again Matthew 26:26 and also Mark 14:22 and Luke 22:19, and perhaps also such Scriptures as 1.Peter 2:21-24, Psalm 103:2-3, Isaiah 52:13-14 and Isaiah 53:2-5. Then remove the napkin from over the piece of unleavened bread. Stand in front of the bread and then pray over the bread, asking God to bless the BREAD, as a symbol of Christ's body, broken for us (for our physical healing). Then break the bread into small pieces and pass the tray around, and each one quietly and solemnly eats one of the pieces of the bread.

7) Then again cover the tray with the napkin, so that any pieces of the bread that will be left will not be visible for the remainder of the service.

8) Then read again Matthew 26:27-29 and also Mark 14:23-25 and Luke 22:20, and perhaps also such Scriptures as Romans 3:23-25, Romans 5:8-9 and Colossians 1:13-14. Then remove the napkin from over the wine. Stand in front of the wine and then pray, giving thanks and asking God to bless the WINE to this sacred use as the symbol of Christ's blood shed for the remission of our sins. Then pass the tray with the wine around, each one taking a glass, and quietly, respectfully drinking it as a renewal of our acceptance of the blood of Jesus Christ for the remission of our sins. Replace the glasses on the tray and cover them again with the napkin.

9) Then the one conducting the service will read aloud portions from John 13:18 on through the 17th chapter of John. These are the words Jesus spoke to His disciples after His last Passover with them, just before He was seized to be taken and crucified. Since it is rather long, the one conducting the service may plan to only read certain portions of these chapters, instead of reading all of it. Conclude with reading John 18:1.

10) After this Scripture reading, sing a hymn if possible. My personal favourite here is #25 in the old hymnal, which is Psalm 32 put to music. The title is "THEY ARE BLESSED WHO ARE FORGIVEN". But any of the church hymns will do. One person keeping the Passover alone would usually also omit this part.

11) Then dismiss, quietly leaving the room without conversation. It is not recommended to close the service with a prayer, as there is no indication of this in the gospel records. Everyone should in advance be aware of the plans for the following evening, the Night-to-be-Observed. So there should be no need at this stage for making plans for the following days.

12) Then the one responsible for the service sees to it that any wine that is left is poured out. The remaining unleavened bread is to be burned, something one of those who participated in the Passover should take care of doing.

That concludes the Passover and the instructions pertaining to it.

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