

The Church of God

INSTRUCTIONS FOR KEEPING THE PASSOVER AT HOME

If you are eligible to take the PASSOVER, but unable to meet with one of God's congregations at the prescribed time, you should keep it in your own home alone or with other eligible members of your family. The Passover should be kept at home only when it is not possible for a member to observe it in a formal church ceremony with an ordained minister officiating. If extenuating circumstances occur, such as illness, etc., a second Passover is permitted 30 days later (see Numbers 9:11).

In advance of the Passover, purchase or prepare a small amount of unleavened bread. Jewish Matzoth, or Matzos, may be purchased at many grocery stores. Rye Krisp is unleavened and may be used (look for the word unleavened on the package), or you may make some flat cakes, made without any leavening agent (no yeast, soda, baking powder, etc.). Also have ready a small amount of natural, red wine. Grape juice was never used at Passover by Jesus, ancient Israel or the original pure New Testament Church. Be sure you obtain a natural, unfortified wine. Alcoholic content will be between 10 percent and 13 percent. Wines containing 19 percent to 20 percent are fortified with grape brandy and should not be used.

Be prepared to observe the sacred ordinance in the early evening, soon after sunset. Be sure the room is prepared very neatly, and clean. Have a small amount of the unleavened bread and very small glasses of wine (one for each person) prepared on a tray or table. Place not more than a tablespoon of wine in each small glass, and prior to the ordinance have these emblems covered with an immaculate white napkin.

When the time has arrived for the ordinance, let the family quietly, solemnly, come into the room prepared. Let the head of the family (the husband and father) conduct the brief and solemn service. No unconverted, unbaptized children should participate. There should be no visiting, talking, laughing, joking or conversation. You are meeting on the most solemn and serious occasion of the entire year. All should come into the room reverently.

The service begins without prayer. This service is a very sobering occasion because we are reflecting on the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. It is also, however, a most encouraging service because it reveals the love of God for His

people. We are given this annual reminder of the glorious victory over sin that is ours because of the sacrifice of the only begotten Son of God.

Those who participate in the service are expressing their faith in Christ's death on their behalf, and renewing their commitment to let Christ live His life in them.

Next, the following scriptures should be read:

I Corinthians 11:23-30 The Revised Standard Version translates verse 30: "That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died." They were not relying on the living Christ for their healing, and they failed to realize that Jesus Himself paid the penalty for physical transgressions of the laws governing the functions of the human body, by allowing His body to be broken open by many stripes (Psa. 22:14-15, 17).

John 6:32-58 - all. Both the eating and drinking are directly associated with eternal life.

Read John 13:1-17. Then, if two or more people are participating, wash one another's feet. (Washpans and clean towels should be provided before starting the service.) If the group consists of four or more people, two or more of each sex, then men may retire to a different room for this part of the service. In a group where there is only one male or female, that person should be included with the rest of the group in the footwashing service, so that everyone washes at least one other person's feet. If one person is observing it alone, this part of the ordinance must, of course, be omitted.

The Bread

Matthew 26:26-30

I Corinthians 10:16-17. We become one Body by all partaking of the bread of life, Jesus Christ. Christ lives His life in us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, making us part of the ONE BODY OF CHRIST - HIS CHURCH, THE BEGOTTEN FAMILY OF GOD. The small piece of unleavened bread we eat symbolizes Jesus' body broken for our sins.

Isaiah 52:14-15; 53:3-6. Notice the tremendous price God Himself, through Christ, paid in order that He might perform the miracle of healing.

The Revised Standard Version says, "As many were astonished at him - his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the sons of men - so shall he startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which has not been told them they shall see, and that which they have not heard they shall understand."

Then in Isaiah 53:3-6, from the Revised Standard Version - "He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief...Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities [transgressions of the law]; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Eternal has laid on him the iniquity of us all"

This is affirmed in the New Testament: "Who did no sin...by whose stripes ye were healed" (I Pet. 2:22,24).

Remove the napkin from the bread and pray over it, asking God to bless it as a symbol of Christ's body, broken for us. This prayer should include the fact that Christ suffered for us and we must be willing to suffer as He did for righteousness sake. Thank God for His love and all His mercies and benefits toward us and that He has promised to heal all our diseases (Psa. 103:2-3). Ask God to give us His mind and attitude of service, as members of the Body of Christ. Then break the bread into small bits. After being served, each person should quietly and solemnly eat the small piece of bread.

The Wine

Matthew 26:27-28

Hebrews 9:11-15

I John 1:7 (Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:20-22, if desired.)

These scriptures remind us of the two-part sacrifice of Christ for us. I John 3:4 (RSV) "Sin is the transgression of law", as correctly translated.

Physical sin is the transgression of physical law which operates in the human body. To pay this penalty in our stead, Jesus was scourged, chastised and beaten with stripes that tore his flesh from His body.

On the other hand, spiritual sin, which imposes the penalty of the second death - eternal death - is the transgression of the spiritual law (Rom. 7:13-14), the law summed up by the Ten Commandments.

Jesus paid the penalty for both.

Then, uncover and pray over the wine, giving thanks and asking God to bless it to this sacred use as the symbol of Christ's blood, shed for the remission of our sins. Thank God for giving us His only Son to die for us, washing us clean that we might be reconciled to God. Thank Him for Christ's willingness to submit to His Father's will, even to death. Each member should take a glass and quietly and reverently drink it. Replace the glasses on the tray or table, cover them and the unused bread again with the napkin.

Then, the leader will read aloud portions from John 13:18 on through the 17th chapter of John. Since it is rather long, the leader may, in advance of the service, mark certain portions of these chapters to be read instead of reading all of it.

After this scripture reading, sing a hymn, if possible, and dismiss, quietly leaving the room without conversation.

This service may be observed, if necessary, by one person alone (man or woman), or by two, or more. If two or more, the foot washing should be included.

After the service has ended, and the people have left the room, the one in charge should discard any portion of the bread and wine left over that was taken into the room for the service and that had been blessed. Only such wine or bread actually taken into the room for the service, and prayed over during the service, need be discarded. None of this bread or wine ought to be consumed for any other purpose after the service. Dispose of the bread and wine completely to prevent any further use.

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