

The Night to Be Much Observed **Church of God, a Worldwide Association**

The evening that ushers in the first holy day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is a unique occasion in the Church of God. In Exodus 12:42 we read, “It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations” (King James Version). Other translations say it is a “night of watching” or “to keep vigil.” On this evening we remember and celebrate the long-ago events when God miraculously began to lead the children of Israel out of their long slavery in Egypt.

For Christians today the events that happened to physical Israel have striking parallels to spiritual Israel, the Church. The symbolism of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is deeply spiritual and meaningful. Just as the enslaved Israelites departed from Egypt, we repent and depart from sin. Just as they observed the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, we do as well, picturing our repentance and departure from sin, our acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice for us and our faith that through His shed blood He removes our sins.

And as Israel followed the Passover and began the Feast with the Night to Be Much Observed, we also keep it as a joyous reminder of the wonderful works of our great God. While the Night to Be Much Observed is not itself a commanded assembly, in the absence of any biblical instruction telling us what to do on this evening, the Church of God has traditionally encouraged its members for decades to make it a very special evening of food, fellowship and reflection to begin the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In the Church of God, a Worldwide Association, we continue the tradition of celebrating the evening in acknowledgement of how God miraculously called us out of the slavery of this world.

In earlier years of the Church’s recent history, entire congregations would often meet together for the evening to enjoy a wonderful meal and fellowship. Today we most often meet in smaller groups in homes, where Church families host other members. Sometimes others meet in private rooms at restaurants and, on occasion, smaller congregations still convene at church halls with everyone contributing special dishes.

For those who want to commemorate this evening in a restaurant or other public place, it’s wise to make advance plans for a private room. It is important to enjoy the fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ in an atmosphere that allows us to truly put our minds and conversation on the meaning of the evening. In areas where the sun sets quite late, a portion of the evening’s festivities and meal may begin in advance of sundown, but we must not forget that the purpose is to celebrate the “*Night to Be Much Observed.*” Therefore, the meal and any related activities should not conclude prior to sunset.