

# **Days of Unleavened Bread**

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How Should They Be Observed?

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# **Days of Unleavened Bread**

## **How Should They Be Observed?**

What does the Bible reveal about the Days of Unleavened Bread? Is attendance required for all seven days? Or, is Holy Day observance sufficient? What does God require to be done the full seven days? This article will show the Bible requirements for the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Long-time members of the Church of God are well aware that it was not until about 1937 that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong became convinced that the observance of all God's Holy Days was a requirement for Christians. Though the church with which he was affiliated at that time, the Church of God (Seventh Day), did not acknowledge this requirement, they did not prevent Mr. Armstrong from observing the days privately. This he did, along with Mrs. Armstrong, for several years—until a number of the brethren began to observe them also. The observance of God's Holy Days was one of the doctrinal issues which led to the split between Mr. Armstrong and the Church of God (Seventh Day).

Mr. Armstrong understood from the very beginning, with respect to the Days of Unleavened Bread, that the observance of the two High Sabbaths or Holy Days was required. For some period of time, church services were held on those days only. It was not until several years later that evening Bible studies began to be held in conjunction with the Days of Unleavened Bread, so that during the week those members who held day-time jobs could receive extra spiritual instruction. And this was the way the Days of Unleavened Bread were observed, until about 1955.

By 1956, a number of local congregations had been established across the United States. Most of these local congregations were a considerable distance from the church headquarters at Pasadena, California, and the speaking opportunities for the ministers stationed there were limited.

During the Ministerial Conference of 1957, it was decided that it would be beneficial to the headquarters ministers, as well as to the local congregations, if more speaking opportunities could be made available for these headquarters ministers. An opportune time would be during the Holy Days—especially if, for example, the Days of Unleavened Bread could be held in central locations with a number of local congregations attending for the full seven days.

According to the best information available, the first location to hold these seven-day services was probably at Lyons, Colorado, where the Dwight Webster property had been deeded to the church. This location was utilized as early as 1956. And by the spring of

1957, all-day services for seven days began to be observed in a number of locations during the Days of Unleavened Bread—not at every local church, but at central locations.

Again, the reason for this practice was to give the headquarters ministers an opportunity to speak more often, as well as to spiritually benefit the local congregations. The decision to observe seven full days during the Days of Unleavened Bread was the result of a ministerial judgment—based on what was felt to be a need for the benefit of the ministry, as well as the membership.

Major cities were selected on the basis of density of church membership for the observance of the full seven days. Thus, whenever a headquarters minister went out to another location to speak, as many of the members as possible could have the opportunity to hear him.

Although there was no strict requirement for the membership to attend the full seven days, they were urged to do so. Depending on who was their local pastor, this urging could be quite adamant. Still, though, if many of the members could not afford to take time off from work, or if the possibility of a loss of job was apparent, or if by attending the full seven days they would be likely to run short of second tithe for the fall festival, they were excused from attending the full seven days. But, they were certainly expected to be present for the two High Sabbaths.

The practice of observing the Days of Unleavened Bread for the full seven days continued for several years. Many Church of God members remember the marvelous spiritual sermons and exciting fellowship that went along with this festival. But some time during the mid-sixties, the practice was discontinued. The reason was twofold. First, many of the members were being forced to use personal savings to attend the Feast of Tabernacles because of a shortage of second tithe brought about by observing the full seven days in the spring. Second—and by far the primary reason for discontinuing the full seven-day observance—the receipt of income for the "Work" was appreciably reduced each spring because most of the members did not receive any salary or wages during the week they attended the seven Days of Unleavened Bread. Consequently, tithes and offerings dropped off alarmingly in the spring.

Again, the decision to discontinue the practice of observing the Days of Unleavened Bread for the full seven days was a ministerial judgment, based on a need at the time. While the reduced income for the "Work" was the major consideration in the decision, the financial strain placed upon the membership was also a factor. It was felt by Mr. Armstrong that if the Gospel were to continue to go forth with growth and power, the membership would have to be in a financial position to contribute heavily. The observance of the Days of Unleavened Bread for the full seven days was thwarting this effort.

In spite of this, however, the question that needs to be answered is: Does the Word of God require attendance for the full seven days during the Feast of Unleavened Bread?

### **Today's Problem**

The specific problem, today, is that some feel the Church of God is required to return to the practice of observing the full seven days during the Days of Unleavened Bread; that the failure to do so reflects the general "watering-down" process that took place in the church after 1972; and that required attendance for the full seven days should be included in the test of fellowship.

This attitude is, to a large degree, the result of what happened within the Church of God following the prophetic failure of 1972 and the doctrinal changes. Confidence in the church and in the ministry was shattered. As a result, doctrinal confusion reigned. Many now do not know what to believe. They cannot distinguish between doctrine and administrative decisions. They do not know what the Church of God really practiced and why. And they do not trust any minister to tell them. Some have decided to be the final judges for themselves in everything they now practice—believing that their wisdom and understanding is sufficient to enable them to gain salvation. They feel they are adequate in themselves and that they do not need a ministry. Others feel there is no true ministry today; that all have gone astray; and therefore, they need not be concerned about what anyone tells them. They have forgotten Jesus' promises that He would be with His true ministers, that He would sustain His people by His true shepherds in the latter days, and that there would be a true ministry doing His work at the time of His return.

Those who now reject Jesus' promises feel they can be righteous on their own—that they do not need the spiritual help and strength which comes through fellowship. But, in the process of attempting to attain their own righteousness, there is an observable lack of common sense and judgment to go along with what they are doing. They fall back on church tradition as all-important for support of their beliefs, without regard as to when and why church practices were commenced or terminated. Above all, they fail to examine the Bible carefully to see what it really requires. In brief, they are muddled in mind and confused in heart. In the process of being "more right than right, more pure than pure, more holy than holy," they separate themselves. Without realizing what they are doing, they are individualizing. It will be a matter of time, only, before they go off into error and doctrinal perversion.

## What the Bible Teaches about Days of Unleavened Bread

The first instruction regarding the Days of Unleavened Bread is found in Exodus 12:15–17. Here we read:

Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you. And ye shall observe the feast of unleavened bread; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall ye observe this day in your generations by an ordinance for ever.

Note specifically, what is stated in this text. The command is to eat unleavened bread seven days and to observe two Holy Days—the first and last days of the seven-day period. No work is to be done on these two Holy Days. This same command is repeated in Exodus 13:6–7, except that the command to observe the first day of the seven-day period as a High Day is omitted.

Leviticus, chapter twenty-three, is even more specific. Verse four says God's feasts are holy convocations, to be proclaimed in their seasons. Then, verses six and seven state that the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the fifteenth day of the month Nisan (the first month of the sacred year); that unleavened bread is to be eaten seven days; and that the first and last days of that seven-day period are High Sabbath days, during which no servile work is to be done. The implication here is that it is on the two High Sabbath days only that no servile work is to be done.

Numbers 28:17–18, 25 says essentially the same thing.

Note the emphasis with respect to the Days of Unleavened Bread in Exodus 23:15. "Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days . . . ." The same emphasis is seen in Deuteronomy 16:3–4. Here we see that unleavened bread is to be eaten seven days, and no leavened bread is to be seen ". . . in all thy coast seven days. . . ."

By contrast, observe what is stated in Leviticus 23:34 in conjunction with Numbers 29:12, 35, about the Feast of Tabernacles. On the fifteenth day of the seventh month ". . . shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord." The first day of this seven-day period is a holy convocation; then we are told, ". . . and ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days." This statement is a direct contrast to what is said regarding the Days of

Unleavened Bread. There is no Bible injunction to observe, by attendance, the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days. What we are told repeatedly, with regard to the Days of Unleavened Bread, is to eat unleavened bread seven days.

So, the Bible command concerning the Days of Unleavened Bread is to keep the two High Sabbath days—the first and last days of the seven-day period—and to eat unleavened bread seven days. There is no Bible command to attend the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days. This is why the decision to hold services on all seven days, beginning about 1956, was a ministerial judgment. It was understood by all, at the time the decision was made, that the Bible did not require the observance of the full seven-day period as a commanded assembly. But because of what was felt to be a need at the time, that decision or judgment was made. It was a ministerial judgment only. It was not a command from the Word of God, which would have made it a perpetual requirement! (Note, for example, Deuteronomy 17:8–13). Let us understand that fact!

The importance of eating unleavened bread for the seven-day period can be understood in the light of Jesus' statement when He said:

I am that bread of life . . . Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven. . . (John 6:48, 53–58).

Here is a clear command to partake of the bread and wine at the Passover service which immediately precedes the Days of Unleavened Bread. If God's Holy Days are to be kept (for proof of this write for our article on God's Holy Days), then Jesus' reference to partaking of unleavened bread during the Passover service includes eating unleavened bread for the seven-day period immediately following.

### **Days of Unleavened Bread According to Hebrew Calendar**

The dates for the observance of the Days of Unleavened Bread are listed according to the Hebrew Calendar. The "beginning of months," mentioned in Exodus 12:2, is Nisan or Abib and corresponds to the months of March-April. The Passover was observed at the beginning of the fourteenth day (at sunset—Deuteronomy 16:6) of the first month (Exodus 12:6–8, 11). The Feast of Unleavened Bread began on the fifteenth day of the first month (the next night after the Passover), and continued until the end of the twenty-first day (Exodus 12:15–20). Since unleavened bread is to be eaten seven full days (Exodus 13:6–7),

the statement in verse eighteen of Exodus, chapter twelve,—referring to "the fourteenth day of the month at even . . . until the one and twentieth day of the month at even" as the period to eat unleavened bread—could only mean from the end of the fourteenth day until the end of the twenty-first day. While unleavened bread is eaten at the Passover (Exodus 12:8), putting leaven out of the home had to be completed by the end of the fourteenth day, just before beginning the fifteenth day (Exodus 12:15–18). Thus unleavened bread is to be eaten seven days (Exodus 34:18). Note again the emphasis is on the eating of unleavened bread for seven days. There is no command to be in attendance seven days, but rather to eat unleavened bread seven days.

So, the seven-day period for eating unleavened bread is a seven-day period inclusive, starting at the end of the fourteenth day and continuing until the end of the twenty-first day—seven days in all (Exodus 12:18–19; Leviticus 23:6–8). Numbers, chapter twenty-eight, is very explicit, relevant to this seven-day period. It states, in verses sixteen and seventeen: "And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the Passover of the Lord. And in the fifteenth day of this month is the feast: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten." The fifteenth day of the month is on the morrow after the Passover, according to Numbers 33:3.

The law is very definite about the importance of eating unleavened bread for the seven-day period. We are told: "Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing leavened; in all your habitations shall ye eat unleavened bread" (Exodus 12:19–20). And again: "Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it [Passover]; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith. . . . And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast seven days. . ." (Deuteronomy 16:3–4).

The emphasis then, with respect to the Days of Unleavened Bread, is the eating of unleavened bread seven days and the requirement to observe the two High Sabbaths. The fact that no servile work is to be done on them (Exodus 12:16; Leviticus 23:6–8) clearly implies that work could be done on the days other than the two High Sabbath days during this seven-day period. The same implication is seen in Numbers 28:17–18, 25 and Deuteronomy 16:8. Those who assume the Bible requires the Days of Unleavened Bread to be observed like the Feast of Tabernacles—with attendance at services for the full seven days—are confusing a past, temporary, ministerial judgment with the precise, clear word of God's Law. There is no Biblical injunction requiring meetings for the full seven days during the Days of Unleavened Bread!

## Historical Record after Time of Moses

Nothing is said about the Days of Unleavened Bread for a considerable period of time following the days of Moses. We can assume they were kept during the time of Joshua and those who entered the Promised Land with him. The Days of Unleavened Bread may have been kept, at times, during the period of the Judges. The first concrete example we have, after the establishment of the monarchy, is found during the time of Solomon. Here we find the solemn feasts—the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles—were being observed (II Chronicles 8:13).

But after the death of Solomon, the nation of Israel split up. Solomon's son Rehoboam retained the tribe of Judah, as well as those of Benjamin and Levi—while the ten tribes formed their own government in the North, under Jeroboam. Jeroboam rejected the Law of God and the Holy Days, substituting his own form of worship and his own feasts. Israel never recovered from this idolatry; and they were finally driven from their kingdom by the Assyrians, about 720 BC.

The kingdom of Judah under Rehoboam did not fare much better. Rehoboam forsook the Law of God and the nation went into idolatry (II Chronicles 12:1; I Kings 14:20–24). The general spiritual direction of Judah was a continual downward spiral, except for periods of time when reformations were effected. It was during these periods of reformation that the Days of Unleavened Bread were kept with great zeal.

An outstanding example of one of these reformations occurred during the time of Hezekiah. Though the kingdom of Israel had long rejected God's Holy Days, there were some among them who had remained faithful to God and who attended the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread with Hezekiah and the people of Judah (II Chronicles 30:1, 11, 18). On this occasion, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was kept for seven days with great gladness (II Chronicles 30:21). This was a special occasion, for we read, ". . . for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written" (v.5). It was a time of national reformation—a time to expunge the idols and cleanse the people (vv. 13, 17). But, because of the time involved, they had to keep the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread in the second month (according to the provision of Numbers 9:10–14). So great was this occasion that a counsel was held with the people, and it was decided to keep the feast an additional seven days! (v. 23).

Here, we see several variations from the original command given by Moses. The feast was kept in the second month of the Hebrew year (v. 13). Some were allowed to partake of the Passover when they had not been ceremoniously cleansed (v. 18). The feast was kept for a full seven days (v. 21), and an additional seven days were added (v. 23). This is a clear-cut example of a "ministerial judgment"—in this case, rendered by the king with the approval

of the people. We should not assume, by this example, that the Bible requires us to do the same thing today!

And this is even more obvious when we consider the reformation which occurred later, during the time of Josiah. He removed the various abominations (II Chronicles 34:33). Judah, and the children of Israel who were present, kept the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread for seven days. There was no Passover like it (II Chronicles 35:1–18). This occasion, in the days of Josiah, was a special occasion—following the time of apostasy and abandonment of truth, under Manasseh. It is another example of a "ministerial judgment" because of a particular set of circumstances. It was not a Biblical command, but rather an example of what can be done during various times of need.

Similar examples of reformation and rededication, under special circumstances, are seen in Ezra, chapter three and six. The Feast of Tabernacles is mentioned in Ezra, chapter three, in conjunction with the return from the Babylonian captivity; and the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread are mentioned in Ezra, chapter six, in conjunction with the completion of the temple. What we must keep in mind is that there are times when it is perfectly permissible to go beyond what the law requires, but there is a difference between going beyond what the law requires and requiring what the law does not! Those who say the Bible requires Christians to attend services for seven days during the Days of Unleavened Bread are adding to the Word of God and are requiring what God Himself does not!

### **Feast of Tabernacles Command**

As stated earlier, the command concerning the Feast of Tabernacles specifically says to keep the feast seven days (Leviticus 23:34).

While there were three times in a year when all males were required to appear before the Lord (Deuteronomy 16:16), the Bible does not specifically state what was to be done during these periods—with reference to the number of days to be observed or where to observe them—except in the case of the Feast of Tabernacles. Here, we are told to keep a feast for seven days (Leviticus 23:34, 39, Numbers 29:12, 35, Deuteronomy 16:13). As already noted, Leviticus 23:39 includes the Last Great Day, to be added to the end of the Feast of Tabernacles. What is specifically stated concerning the Days of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Firstfruits, is that the High Sabbaths are to be kept.

The account recorded in Nehemiah, chapter eight, concerning the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles, again demonstrates the zeal of the people in their attempt to obey God, upon rediscovering lost truth (Neh. 8:14). The same thing is true of II Chronicles 5:2–5.

The emphasis, with respect to keeping a feast (convoking before God) for seven days, clearly belongs to the Feast of Tabernacles. Deuteronomy, chapter fourteen, proves the fall festival is the feast to attend for seven days. This is when the second tithe is to be applied and a journey to be made. This is the time of rejoicing and fellowship—the time to share one's blessings with others (Deuteronomy 14:22–27).

Specifically, God commanded the saving of a second tithe for the keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles. Only by extension of the command should the second tithe be used for any of the other Holy Days. Why? Obviously, they were observed locally and on High Days only.

Some say that all three Holy Day seasons should be observed at a designated location (Exodus 34). The command given here is: "Thrice in the year shall all your menchildren appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel. For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year" (vv. 23–24). During the Old Testament period, this location was Jerusalem. If this command, to go to a specific location three times in a year, applies today, then we must go to Jerusalem.

But, the New Testament example of how this command was applied demonstrates this was not the case. Paul kept the Holy Days (Acts 18:4; 20:16)—yet, for years at a time, did not go to Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1). Therefore, the New Testament demonstrates that the designated place can vary. The Worldwide Church of God recognized this fact and generally designated the local church areas as the places to observe the two High Sabbath days during the Days of Unleavened Bread and the Day of Pentecost. The Feast of Tabernacles was then observed in major designated areas.

As demonstrated earlier, the Bible does not command a convoking of the people for the entire seven days of Unleavened Bread. The convocations occurred on the two High Sabbaths—probably in Jerusalem, in Old Testament times, but in many other areas during the times of the New Testament.

While the Bible does not prohibit meeting together for seven days during the Days of Unleavened Bread, neither does it command it. And, what the Bible does not specifically command should not be made obligatory.

The Bible commands us to observe the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days. There can be no question about that. But there is not one text in the entire Bible that requires Christians to keep, by convocation, the Days of Unleavened Bread for seven days. God pronounces curses upon those who add to His Word (Revelation 22:18, Deuteronomy 4:1–2). Let us not be guilty of such!

## What Did Christ Do?

Jesus Christ was the God of the Old Testament (I Corinthians 10:4). As such, He was the one who gave to Moses and the children of Israel the commandments concerning the Holy Days (John 5:45–47, Hebrews 4:2).

As a young lad, Jesus attended the spring festival with His parents (Luke 2:41–43). The account given in Luke states that after the days had been fulfilled, the parents of Jesus started on their journey home, but Jesus tarried. There is nothing specific here concerning the meaning of the phrase "when they had fulfilled the days." Most commentators take it to mean the entire seven-day period. This may be true. But, again, nothing concrete can be concluded with regard to what took place during this seven-day period. The Jews did not observe the seven days as holy convocations (*The Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Holy Days"). Perhaps there were daily instruction periods. The Bible does not prohibit this—but, as demonstrated earlier, neither does it require it. Apart from this incident mentioned in Luke, there is no further evidence from the New Testament that Jesus or His disciples observed by convocation the full seven days in the spring festival. The accounts of Matthew, chapters twenty-six through twenty-eight; Mark, chapters fourteen through sixteen, Luke, chapters twenty-two through twenty-four, and John, chapters twenty through twenty-two, show no evidence of the observance of a seven-day feast. In fact, if anything, the opposite is the case. During the Days of Unleavened Bread, the disciples gathered together at some undisclosed location "for fear of the Jews" (John 20:19)—not for the holding of a religious convocation. And Jesus appeared to two of the disciples on the road to Emmaus on the day following His resurrection. The order of events here is sufficient to exclude the possibility of His having attended all-day services.

Much earlier, John states Jesus was ". . . at the passover, in the feast day . . ." (John 2:23). While the word "day" is italicized and not found in the original, the entire passage is too vague to determine what was done during the seven-day period. The same is true with reference to John 4:45.

This is not the case with the Feast of Tabernacles. John, chapter seven, shows that Jesus did attend for a period beyond one or two days (compare 7:9 and 7:14). He remained for the length of the feast and was there preaching on the Last Great Day (John 7:37). These texts reveal the fact that what was taught during the Old Testament period regarding the Feast of Tabernacles, was applicable to Christians of the New Testament period. What was taught during the Old Testament period was that the Feast of Tabernacles was to be observed by convoking together for seven days, followed by the Last Great Day.

The fact no command was given in the Old Testament that required the observance of commanded assemblies for seven days during the Days of Unleavened Bread, is clearly revealed by the lack of any New Testament example demonstrating this was done. As

illustrated by the New Testament, neither Christ nor His disciples kept the Days of Unleavened Bread for seven days by congregating for daily meetings.

Christ is our example. He is the One we are to follow. He did not command or observe the Days of Unleavened Bread by holding daily meetings in some central location. While the Bible examples from the Old Testament permit us to do so—and there may be some future time when this would be desirable—there is no command requiring it on a regular basis. And, there is no valid Bible argument to demonstrate anything in opposition to this.

### **The Apostolic Church**

What is seen in Christ and His disciples—the noticeable lack of evidence demonstrating daily meetings during the Days of Unleavened Bread—is seen also in the apostolic church. Little is said in the book of Acts or in the epistles concerning the Days of Unleavened Bread. Acts 12:3 implies they were being observed, but the text is too vague to indicate by whom and how. Acts 20:6 is another indication that the Days of Unleavened Bread were being observed—but, again, only an indication. This text is too vague to conclusively prove how or by whom.

The limited evidence of Holy Day observance in New Testament times is amplified by historical records following the close of the book of Acts. The vast majority of church historians acknowledge the fact that the early New Testament church kept the Holy Days. The historical evidence is overwhelming. (For proof, write for our articles on the Holy Days and church history.) Only an utter fool would deny these historical records and the obvious conclusions.

The fact that Paul made every possible effort to keep the annual feasts is seen in Acts 20:16 and 18:21. This is not to say that Paul attended the festivals every year in Jerusalem. The Book of Acts demonstrates that, for years at a time, Paul did not go near Jerusalem. Yet, we see in the Book of Acts the fact that Paul kept the feasts. He obviously kept them in locations other than Jerusalem, for he did not both keep them and not keep them. For a more detailed explanation of Paul and the Holy Days, write for our article on God's Holy Days.

What is made plain in the Book of Acts is that, while the Holy Days were kept by the New Testament church, there is no evidence that the Days of Unleavened Bread were kept as commanded assemblies for the full seven days. Anyone who can read this into the Book of Acts is merely second-guessing.

## Feast of Tabernacles in Millennium

The importance of the Feast of Tabernacles is seen again in the book of Zechariah. Since the Bible command is to keep the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, followed by the Last Great Day, it is obvious why the Feast of Tabernacles is made a test of obedience for the heathen nations. Zechariah says:

And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles (Zech. 14:16–19).

What is said concerning the Feast of Tabernacles is not said about the Days of Unleavened Bread. This is because there was never a command to observe the Days of Unleavened Bread in this manner. It is the Feast of Tabernacles, only, which requires a seven-day gathering for the purpose of daily instruction.

Some have taken Ezekiel 45:21 to prove that Christians today must keep the Days of Unleavened Bread in the same manner as the Feast of Tabernacles. But there are two factors to consider here. The first is that the emphasis, again, is on eating unleavened bread for seven days without any instruction as to how the seven days are to be observed. This implies that, by the lack of specific instruction, there is no demand to hold meetings for seven days. The second factor is that the Book of Ezekiel is a prophetic book. Unless God chooses to reveal a specific prophecy in advance, one must generally wait until the prophecy is fulfilled before the meaning is understood. While the prophecy in Ezekiel says the Days of Unleavened Bread will be observed in the future, there is no way this text can be used to demonstrate how this will be done. Those who attempt to use prophecy from the Book of Ezekiel to prove how the Days of Unleavened Bread should be observed, obviously have not learned one of the most fundamental principles of understanding Bible prophecy. Unless God specifically reveals the meaning of a prophecy in advance, the meaning can be understood only after the event occurs. The failure to grasp the significance of this concept led to the prophetic failure of the Worldwide Church of God, in 1972.

## Seven Days of Instruction—A Ministerial Judgment

It has been clearly demonstrated that there is no Bible requirement or command to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread by holding meetings for seven days. The examples given in the Old Testament, apart from the instruction of the law, show this to be a matter of judgment. One example, not previously mentioned, is found in II Chronicles 7:8–9. Here we read: "Also at the same time Solomon kept the feast seven days [Feast of Tabernacles], and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt. And in the eighth day they made a solemn assembly: for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days." There is no requirement in the law to observe a dedication of the altar seven days, yet this was done. Why? Because Solomon, as the one responsible before God, was permitted to make such a decision. It was not contrary to the Law of God, but it was not a perpetual requirement thereafter.

One can always go beyond what God commands, but he must be careful to differentiate between what is commanded and what is permitted. The failure to recognize this fact has confused some today, who would make the Days of Unleavened Bread into the same kind of festival as the Feast of Tabernacles. The law concerning usage of the second tithe (Deuteronomy 14) clearly shows there is a difference. Biblical law requires seven-day convocational observance in the fall of the year, but not in the spring.

And keep in mind that when the Days of Unleavened Bread were observed for fourteen days, as recorded in II Chronicles 30:23, the approval of the people was first sought. The text says, "And the whole assembly took counsel to keep other seven days: and they kept other seven days with gladness."

What was decided by the Church of God in 1956 with respect to observing the Days of Unleavened Bread—congregating for seven days—was a ministerial judgment. It was not a perpetual law to be continued forever. It is by the commandments of God that authority is established for the observance of God's festivals, as well as how they should be observed. The Bible demonstrates that God's representatives have the authority to make judgments in certain circumstances, as long as those judgments are not contrary to the Law of God. It is true that in 1956, when the Church of God began to keep the Days of Unleavened Bread in the same manner as the Feast of Tabernacles, heavy emphasis was placed upon attending. In some cases, entirely too much. But this was the result of a faulty form of administration and too much reliance placed on church government rather than on the plain Bible instruction. It was later seen, as a result of what occurred over a period of several years, that an economic hardship was being placed upon the people—and this, in turn, was affecting the growth and development of the preaching of the Gospel. For this reason, the judgment was made to discontinue the practice.

In brief, the observance of the Days of Unleavened Bread from 1956–1966 was a tradition of the church which, from a Biblical viewpoint, the church was free to continue or to discontinue. It chose to discontinue it, and there is no Bible precedent to continue observing it in the same manner today. The observance of the Days of Unleavened Bread from 1956–1966 was the result of a ministerial judgment only. There is no Bible requirement in the law which demands our observing it in comparable fashion today.

Those who advocate the observance of the Days of Unleavened Bread, as was practiced by the Church of God from 1956–1966, have no Bible authority for what they advocate. They are falling back on a church tradition without understanding its basis or the reasons for it. Could the reason for their insistence on its observance be that of individualization—trusting their own minds? As lay members, they have no Bible authority for attempting to inculcate such a practice into their Christianity. The Bible commands us to avoid doctrines which have, as their basis, tradition that becomes law (Titus 1:14–16).

To summarize, there is no requirement in the law to observe the Days of Unleavened Bread in the same manner as the Feast of Tabernacles. The historical examples of its observance, as given in the Old Testament, demonstrate the result of judgments made by those responsible to God. As such, they were temporary in nature. The same is true with respect to how the Days of Unleavened Bread were observed by the Church of God from 1956–1966. As such, this kind of observance was also temporary in nature. One can always go beyond what the Bible commands, with respect to obedience, but one must be careful not to bind upon the people of God what God himself does not bind!