

Church of God, The Eternal

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The late Raymond C. Cole
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Announcement Letter April 2005

Dear Brethren:

In the words of the Apostle Paul, ". . . Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God" (1 Thessalonians 1:1–4). And so there are no more fitting words to describe our feelings for all of you, dear brethren, who are holding fast to that faith once delivered in these difficult days. What an honor and privilege it is to serve you.

We are now on the doorstep of another Passover season, and what a glorious opportunity it provides to renew ourselves in a recommitment to those vows we made at baptism. The repetition of the Passover service and Days of Unleavened Bread reminds us to walk in the newness of Jesus Christ's example, crucifying daily our carnal inclinations and working through His Spirit to develop the very character of God. May your final preparations to fulfill those commands provide the basis for your inspiration and edification in God's loving care.

One of those commands we will be obeying again this year is a celebration on the opening night of the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

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* (Exodus 12:42) [emphasis mine].

This night symbolized the moment God began to fulfill His promise literally to deliver Israel from the bondage of slavery. He therefore commanded spiritual Israel as well to celebrate our own freedom from the bondage of sin through His precious calling.

With that in mind, it seems we might be able to help alleviate some questions by clarifying the proper format for keeping the Night to Be Much Observed.

Over the decades in God's church of this age, we have seen some differences in the way this special night was celebrated. In the earlier years, when the church was smaller, the entire local congregation would gather together for a special meal. As some of those congregations grew to be so large in later years, it became very difficult to facilitate a single gathering, and brethren were instructed to get together in smaller groups. This was not a problem in and of itself until brethren were later advised it was OK to gather at a restaurant for the evening meal. This is not acceptable. We should take the time to prepare for this evening as we would for any other Holy Day gathering. While it is permissible to eat out on the Sabbath or Holy Day when we are away from home for an extended trip and unable to prepare as we normally would (like at the Feast of Tabernacles), we should go out of our way to make the Night to Be Much Observed a gathering outside the world. Since we have been a small and scattered remnant for over three decades, we have always gathered everyone living in a particular local area into a single assembly for the occasion. And we have done so in private homes or meeting halls with potluck meals. That is always the preferred arrangement.

Mr. Raymond Cole also began the tradition with this group of providing a short sermonette for that night to help remind us of the purpose of our gathering. That is something we continue to do, and why you receive a prerecorded sermonette to play on this evening. But with that in mind, what is the proper format to use for those gatherings? Should it be like a normal Sabbath service, with opening and closing prayers, hymn singing, etc?

The answer to that question is no. Mr. Armstrong never treated this gathering as the place for a formal church service. Having kept the Night to Be Much Observed many times with Mr. Raymond Cole over the years in those places that he traveled, I can attest to the fact he did not treat it as such either. But then what format should we use for that evening?

The primary requirement is to begin the evening by gathering everyone together to listen to the sermonette. After this, someone should be called upon to offer a prayer of thanks and request for God's blessing on the meal. There is no technical requirement for an opening prayer, or for hymn singing. However, singing at least one hymn has certainly been done in a number of areas. Especially for larger groups, it is often convenient to use a hymn as a way to get everyone together and settled down to listen to the sermonette message. Therefore, here is the suggested format we will recommend so that we can avoid confusion and establish some consistency for our brethren in all areas:

- As with the Passover service, the Night to Be Much Observed celebration should not begin until the sun goes down and the first day of Unleavened Bread actually begins.
- An opening hymn can be sung to begin the evening (select one appropriate for the meaning of the occasion).
- The sermonette—either by an authorized Elder or by prerecorded message—should then be given to explain the meaning of the night. As with the Passover service, no opening prayer is required beforehand.
- A prayer should then be offered to thank God and ask His blessing on the meal and the evening gathering.
- The group is then free to begin the celebration.

Hopefully this guideline will help answer most questions that have arisen. May all of you have a very marvelous and rewarding Festival.

Holy Days

Passover.	Friday evening, April 22
Night to Be Much Observed.	Sabbath evening, April 23
First Holy Day of Unleavened Bread.	Sunday, April 24
Last Holy Day of Unleavened Bread.	Sabbath, April 30

Trip Schedule

April 22, 23, 24	Albertinia, South Africa
April 30	Migori, Kenya
June 18	Lausanne, Switzerland
June 20	Grenoble, France
June 25	Penrith, England

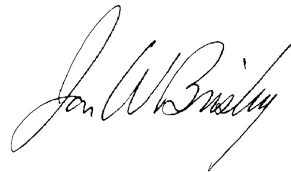
Prayer Request

[Omitted for confidentiality]

Tape Schedule

<u>Tape #</u>	<u>Mailed</u>	<u>Played</u>	<u>Title</u>
WSE-JB 73	03-03-05	04-02-05	How Long Can You Wait?
WSE-JB 22-73-23A	03-17-05	04-09-05	Fund. of Belief #23A, Prophecy
WSE-RC I-5	03-17-05	04-16-05	The Three Minds #5
WSE-RC 22-74-23B	03-31-05	04-23-05	Fund. of Belief #23B, Prophecy
WSE-RC I-6	03-31-05	04-30-05	The Three Minds #6
WSE-RC I-7	04-14-05	05-07-05	The Three Minds #7
WSE-JB 22-75-23C	04-14-05	05-14-05	Fund. of Belief #23C, Prophecy

In Christ's service,



Jon W. Brisby