

Examine Yourself *before* Passover

Greetings friends and brethren this is Doctor Bob Theil for continuing Church of God. Do you really examine yourself before Passover? Do you know that you are supposed to do that? The Passover is an annual memorial of the death of Jesus Christ, who is the savior of the world. Before we partake, of the symbols, of his broken body and his shed blood, we are supposed to examine ourselves. It is an annual event, and it comes on the fourteenth day after sunset in the first month of the sacred calendar. A month known as either Abib or Nissan, which tends to occur in the month of April in most years. Sometimes it could be March.

Anyway, we are supposed to examine ourselves. If you have your Bibles, you might want to follow along. I'm going to start with first Corinthians chapter 11, because where did this idea that you have to examine yourself before Passover comes from? It comes from the Bible.

Starting verse 23, first Corinthians chapter 11, Paul wrote "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you." So, he learned this from Jesus. He says, "On the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this , as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."

And how often was it done? It was done once a year. Verse 27 "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason, many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged."

So, we are told we have to examine ourselves, and what we don't do we will be judged for. "But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world."

Anyway, we are supposed to examine ourselves prior to Passover. We are not supposed to be like the world. In first John chapter 2, starting verse 17, the Apostle John wrote "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."

Now as long as we live in this Satan-influenced society, there is going to be tests and temptations to break God's law. If you are in first John, go to chapter 2, to the first verse of that chapter because John wrote something about real Christians and what they do. "My

little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."

If you are not striving to keep the Ten Commandments you are not a real Christian. For more information on that we have a free booklet in English at our website at www.ccog.org.

This doesn't mean we never sin. If you are still in first John, go back to chapter one. I want to read verses 8 and 10. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Verse 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

When we are tempted through various lusts to cheat, lie in business, boast, gossip, commit adultery, or whatever we are not to sin. If we do, we can be forgiven. Now, as Christians, and yes those who are truly called and redeemed Christians, will slip occasionally in sin. As long as we are repentant and striving to overcome sin God accepts us, applying Jesus' sacrifice and God continues to lead us. We live under His grace now. No one is worthy of Christ's sacrifice, but to not take the Passover is to deny Christ.

To take the Passover in a worthy manner means we need to repent of our evil desires and ways, come to hate the sin that Jesus had to suffer and die for, and to work to set our will so we are not going to compromise with God's law.

Let's go to Matthew chapter 5 and read some things Jesus said starting in verse 43. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even tax collectors do so? Therefore, you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

We must go beyond the cultural politeness of whatever society we may be in. Now of ourselves we can't make ourselves perfect. You don't have to go there but Psalm 18 verse 32 says "It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect."

Keeping Passover and understanding what it pictures, as well as striving to keep all of God's other laws, is vital to obtain the type of perfection Jesus is speaking of. Let's go to something the Apostle Paul wrote. This is first Corinthians chapter 5 and we'll start in verse 6. "Your

glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" We examine ourselves prior to Passover. Immediately after Passover, the evening after Passover, is the beginning of the Days of Unleavened Bread. These are tied together.

Verse seven "Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

We have a booklet called Should You Keep God's Holy Days or Demonic Holidays? A lot of people don't understand about God's holy days. They don't know when they are. They don't know what they are. They don't know why they are. This particular book covers all that including a calendar that tells you what days they happen in the Roman calendar as that is the one that most people use these days. You can find this booklet, in English, on our website.

We are supposed to purge out the old leaven. Leaven is a symbol of sin and hypocrisy, and we are supposed to remove it. Physically we actually remove leaven from our houses prior to the start of the first day of unleavened bread.

Don't go around thinking you are so spiritual that you don't have any problems to overcome. Don't think you are so spiritual you don't have to go through the process of physically removing leaven from your homes and vehicles each year. There are lessons that we need to learn.

In 2nd Corinthians chapter 13 verse 5, why don't you go there. It is only one verse, but I think you should go there. The Apostle Paul wrote "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless indeed you are disqualified." So, before Passover is the time for us to examine ourselves, as Paul wrote elsewhere.

Let's go over to the book of Matthew. Right now, not everybody is being called, and people sometimes are confused about this. Matthew chapter 13, I want to start with verse 10. "And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. Therefore, I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand,
And seeing you will see and not perceive;
For the hearts of this people have grown dull.

Their ears are hard of hearing,
And their eyes they have closed,
Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears,
Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn,
So that I should heal them.”

The whole world is not being called now. We have a booklet called, *Is God Calling You*, in case you wonder if you are one that is being called now. Only the elect are currently being called, and more information on that is in the book. We have other information about when others would be called. Part of that is covered in the book mentioned earlier called *Should You Keep God's Holy Days or Demonic Holidays?*

God's holy days revolve around the harvest season in Palestine area. The spring harvest, which represents the elect, shows that only some are being called now. The rest will get their opportunity after Jesus returns, which is what the fall harvest pictures. The sobering truth is that we have been called, to have a special calling in this time, to qualify ahead of the world so we can be used by God and Christ to help bring knowledge and salvation to the rest of humankind.

This is one of the reasons why God is concerned with us as we approach Passover. It is an important part of His plan, and He is concerned with our attitude. He wants to know that we are totally surrendered to him.

If this isn't your first Passover, have you overcome anything since the last one? Have you tried very hard? You may wonder what this means to discern the Lord's body, or how you can eat and drink unworthily? And how do we eat or drink condemnation to ourselves? Consider that God wants us to isolate a very basic, elementary perspective each year at Passover. He wants us to focus on an elementary concept as we begin to relive his plan of salvation for humankind. That elementary concept is His loving salvation. That is what the plan is all about; whether it relates to us or relates to the rest of the world.

Therefore, brethren, Passover is a time for us to get down the elementary precepts of our own salvation and our own relationship to God and his work. It is time to examine ourselves. Time to look at you. We can get so absorbed with our work and our daily things and life's distractions that we forget that we need to get ourselves to be right with God.

Prior to Passover is certainly not the time to focus on the sins of others. Don't think, oh I don't have to really examine myself; I'm just above all this. No. You are supposed to focus on yourself. That is what Passover preparation is all about. Because of this, it may be why some people experience more tests and trials prior to Passover, because Satan doesn't want you to examine yourself. He doesn't want you to draw closer to God. The Bible says draw closer to God and He will draw closer to you; resist the devil and he will flee from you. Satan doesn't want to flee from you; he wants to go towards you. The closer you are with God; he can't do that.

Christian life is not supposed to be static. It says in first John 5 verse 5, you don't have to go there, it says "Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" To overcome it takes effort. Let's go to the book of Revelation chapter 2. I'm going to read several verses there, starting in verse 7. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is amid the Paradise of God." Now let's go down to verse 11

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." It says that a lot in Revelation 2 and 3. "He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death." If you don't want to die the second death you are supposed to overcome. Let's go down to verse 17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." A lot of people who call themselves Christians don't want to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. They don't believe in church eras. They don't want to look at this stuff because it might apply to them. They might be Laodicean. They might have to change. Even if you are not Laodicean you need to change. None of us are perfect in this life. We are supposed to strive towards perfection.

Continuing "To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it." Now let's go to verses 26 and 27. "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations. 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star."

Revelation 3 verse 5 "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."

Revelation 3 verse 12 "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name."

And verse 21 of Revelation 3, "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." You need to examine yourself so you can overcome. Basically, you need to overcome Satan, his Society, and your own lusts.

Now let's go down to Revelation 21 verse 7 and 8. You see another reward for doing so. "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." The unbelieving are those who will not properly act on faith.

The Bible teaches that Satan is the god of this age in second Corinthians 4 verse 4 and that he deceives the whole world in Revelation 12 verse 9. As Christians we need to love the truth and not fall for Satan's deception.

We are going to go to John chapter 17 starting with verse 16, so you may want to go there. I'll read a few verses.

John 17, starting in verse 16 "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth."

Do you really love the truth? If so are you doing what Jesus said Matthew 6:33 which is to seek first the kingdom God in His righteousness? Do you really seek the kingdom of God? For those who are not sure about what that is, we have a booklet on it called The Gospel of the Kingdom of God. This booklet is in about 100 languages. If you go to the websites www.ccog.org scroll down and on the left side, you will see a listing of languages. If you click on the language you want to read, the book and any other literature we have in that language will come up.

Let's go to Romans 8 verse 20. "For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;" I prefer the Old King James version of this scripture which says "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope," Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaned and travailed in pain together until now.

And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but the hope that is seen is not hope: for if a man sees, what does he hope for? But if we hope for that which we see not, then we with patience wait for it." So, we have to be patient and wait for it.

"Likewise, the Spirit helps our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for, as we ought: but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." We have to recognize that we are made flesh, and we are subject to futility or vanity.

Satan succumbed to his vanity, and he wasn't even made flesh. He deceived himself. We are not supposed to succumb to our own vanity and the tendency toward self-deception. Taking the time to examine ourselves helps us. God wants us better. And for the change we have hope. The Apostle Paul in Philippians 4 verse 13 said "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

It wasn't just the Apostle Paul that includes you, as Jesus said in mark 10 verse 27. "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." The more we examine ourselves and submit to God, the more we will be moving toward perfection and develop the type of character that God wants us to have. You may be thinking but I've tried and I keep failing. I just haven't overcome this. You must keep trying.

Philippians 1 verse 6 the Apostle Paul was inspired to write, "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" It doesn't say it is all done right after you got baptized, or a couple years after, or decades after. It is going to be completed until the day of Jesus Christ, so you are going to be working at it all the time. Some things you are going to overcome better than others, but we have to do our part. We have to endure and overcome.

Let's go to first John chapter 3, starting verse 1. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." We are supposed to be purifying ourselves, which is part of the examination. We are called to be God's children to be pure.

Now I want to go to the book of James in chapter 1. I want to spend a fair amount of time in James so I would suggest that you go over there. Starting verse 21

"Therefore, lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls." So, James is telling Christians, people are supposed to be Christians, to set aside all filthiness and wickedness. "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." A lot of people are hearers and deceive themselves. "For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was." So, he didn't see the problems that he had or didn't care about them. "But he who investigates the perfect law of liberty and continues in it and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. If anyone among you thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." We try to help widows and orphans. We get criticized for that by various ones, which is bizarre.

Moving down to chapter 2 verse 1, "My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes,

and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool,"

We see this sometimes with people's attitudes toward various Gentile peoples, particularly Africans and others. And by the way I am predominately Gentile, but I'm not African at least not according to what I can determine. We are not supposed to show partiality.

Continuing it says, "My beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?" Hasn't God done that? He has. So don't dishonor the poor man and honor the rich. In verse 8 "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

For whoever shall keep the whole law and yet stumble in one point; he is guilty of all. For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So, speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."

There are many people who go to our website, and they read our stuff and they don't do anything about it. Some people watch our videos; they think they're doing enough. They don't try to do it God's Way.

"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?" If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus, also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." Again, this is one of the reasons why we support widows, orphans, and the poor.

Verse 18 "But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."

This is one of the reasons why Martin Luther didn't like this particular book of the Bible. It went against some of the things he taught. "Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified

by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”

So don't deceive yourself. Practice mercy, keep God's Royal law, and remember that faith without works is dead. This is a good time of year as you examine yourself to recognize that all of us, including you, including me, have a type of nature that is subject to vanity. Most people don't think vanity is a danger, or self-deception is. I mentioned before that Lucifer fell for vanity and self-deception. You can read about that in Ezekiel 28, verses 12, 13, and 17.

Humankind, even most who claim Christianity, don't know that this world is not God's world yet. God is allowing Satan to rule this world for a time. He is allowing Satan to seduce humans through their own lusts. Let's go to second Corinthians chapter 4. Satan is the ruler of this world at present, and he is blinding humans to the truth that you have been given the privilege to understand.

Starting in verse 3, “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”

So, in our examination, let's realize what kind of nature we have and what kind of an age we live in. But, brethren, for us who are the Elect, light and understanding has come by the calling of God's Holy Spirit. Through God's infinite mercy YOU were called as one of His Elect to see yourself and your environment as THEY REALLY ARE! You realized that you were a sinner and cannot save yourself.

Now, let's go to Romans chapter 6. I've seen various people, including people who were formerly part of various Church of God groups, pull certain scriptures out of context and misunderstand what they say, They are trying to tell you that you don't have to keep Ten Commandments, and various things like these things don't apply because you are under grace but in Romans 6 verse 1 the Apostle Paul wrote,

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus was baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Yes, even after baptism we are still not perfect. We make mistakes. Since we are in Romans 6, let's go to Romans 7 starting in verse 15. The Apostle Paul wrote, “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice” So Paul is saying I'm not as good as I should be, or I want to be. “But what I hate is that I do. If then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.” So, if you have some kind of problem that you keep trying to overcome and you keep failing, realize that Paul had the same thing. Just keep trying.

“But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.” Paul delighted in the law of God he didn't say it was done away. “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”

So, did he give up? No! The next verse says, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. “Paul said he makes mistakes, but Paul also said you must examine yourself. It is not like you think to yourself, okay, I have these problems, so it is okay, I am not going to ever get over it. No, he said, you keep working on this. You examine yourself. Paul could see the depth and sin that he had to deal with.

In first John 1 verse 9, John wrote, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” We've sinned, but we have not disagreed with Him. We don't mean to sin, but we slip up and make mistakes. We forget, or maybe we got careless. Maybe we hadn't continued in prayer as often as we should have. Maybe we slipped up a little while. But if we confess those sins, He's faithful and just to forgive us for our sins.

If we examine ourselves, we see what sins we have, confess them to God, and ask Him to forgive us. He will. Some people have worried that they have committed sins that are so bad that God won't forgive them. I've brought this up before. What sin would be worse than figuring out how to kill Christians and going into other communities to kill Christians, when it is not your job? You might think of some other sins that are worse, but I will use this one. The Apostle Paul did that. When he was Saul, he didn't have to go out and do it; he wanted to do it. So, do you think what you have done is worse? I don't think so. As long as you are willing to confess your sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and to cleanse us.

Now let's go to first Peter chapter 2 starting in verse 1. “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.” We are supposed to grow. You know babies are born and they grow. We are supposed to grow.

“Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious.” People rejected Christ and people rejected of all his prophets, Peter says people

rejected him, but don't reject him. "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a royal priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is also contained in the Scripture,

"Behold, I lay in Zion

A chief cornerstone, elect, precious,

And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame."

Are you ashamed of Jesus and this church? Have you cast "aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking"? Do you realize that you are 'living stones' being built as a spiritual house? Are you a stronger stone, spiritually, than you were last year?

Let's go to second Peter this time, chapter 3 starting verse 14. "Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation." And yes, you have to suffer, and we'll find out why a little bit later in this message.

"As also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures." So yes, there are people who twist Paul's writings and they don't understand that Christians are supposed to strive to keep Ten Commandments.

"You, therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked." And with the falling away, from the apostasy that hit the old Worldwide Church of God in the late twentieth century, people were warned about this, but they fell for this. So, what are we supposed to do? Verse 18, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever."

God has us keeping his holy days, which help us picture His plan of salvation. We don't want to have a dull approach toward them. I have probably said this before, but I'll say it again, I remember years ago before the apostasy hit the old Worldwide Church of God, I was driving somewhere to go to either the first or the last day of unleavened bread services. I was probably a little routine about it like we are going to hear the same thing and do the same thing, and we all know this. It wasn't too long after that that the apostasy came and people who used to believe that they supposed to keep God's holy days and keep the Days of Unleavened Bread didn't believe it anymore. They apparently pay attention to the messages. I actually did pay attention to messages but like I said, it was a little routine. And today was probably somewhat routine. I used this first part of these notes in previous sermons. But today I might also talk about some other things to consider that I have not spoken about in the past. So, I don't think you've heard it all before.

No one is really worthy of Passover. We are supposed to examine ourselves because we all fall short, the Bible says. We need to have the right attitude. Or do we have the wrong attitude. Let's go to Haggai chapter 1. It is in the Old Testament. I am going to read quite a few verses, starting with verse 2.

Haggai chapter 1 starting in verse 2, "Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, saying: 'This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.'"" Now some people think the time to do the work is over. It was done a long time ago. Some people think their life is just fine and they don't have to do anything else. Some say unless there's a big, fancy building, like the auditorium of the old Worldwide Church, that this isn't the time to do anything, but notice what says verse 3 "Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" 5 Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways!" Examine yourself. That comes directly from the Old Testament.

6 "You have sown much, and bring in little;
You eat, but do not have enough;
You drink, but you are not filled with drink;
You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm;
And he who earns wages,
Earns wages to put into a bag with holes."

Now you might think wait a second, particularly if you are in one of the wealthier nations. I have enough, physically, therefore God has blessed me. That is the attitude that the Laodiceans have in the book of Revelation chapter 3 verses 14 through 21. Haggai was talking about physical things are happening to these people. The same thing happens spiritually today.

Verse 7, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," Well what does the New Testament say about the temple? It has to do with the church. Christians are the temple of God. We are to be working together; not just for our own individual salvation but for others. Remember we are supposed to be living stones building something. A building has more than one stone. If it has just one stone, it is not really a building; it is just a stone. It is an unproductive stone. You are supposed to be productive. Be part of the work.

The Lord says. "You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home." The Laodiceans think they have enough. "I blew it away. Why?" says the Lord of hosts. "Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house." You don't have the proper priority to get the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world as a witness. You have the wrong work. "Therefore, the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. Actually, what happens to the Laodiceans is they do not get protected from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world, to try the

world. Jesus promised that type of protection to the Philadelphians in Revelation 3 verse 10. A lot of people don't think the priority of doing the work is just important to them.

I mentioned Revelation 3 and the Laodiceans. In verse 15 God says, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'" Such as, I made it out of the apostasy, I'm still faithful, I keep the Sabbath, I keep the holy days, all of that so I'm fine. I've been misled by other people; I don't really have to support the true Philadelphian work. We'll go out and support some kind of work, or maybe a little work, or even no work at all if you want to be totally independent.

But Jesus says, "and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." In verse 19 Jesus says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent." He means to examine yourselves and change.

Prior to the Days of Unleavened Bread various people will start to deleaven their house. When my wife and I first got married, we started several months beforehand. And there was nothing wrong with that, but just physically deleavening is definitely not enough. Spiritual deleavening is what we need. You have probably gone through and said well I try to keep the Ten Commandments, I try to keep the holy days, I tithe, I have tattoos, I don't follow astrology or various other things, and that is good. We hope you do everything that a Christian is told to do.

You might also think I have been a Christian for a long time, maybe you don't think you have any sins or maybe they're not obvious to you, but there could be things that you really don't understand. For example, are you a complainer? What?

Let's go to the Book of Lamentations chapter 3. Starting in verse 31.

"For the Lord will not cast off forever. Though He causes grief, Yet He will show compassion According to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.

God doesn't want us to be afflicted but it happens; and you may not like one of the reasons that it happens. Let's go down to verse 39, "Why should a living man complain, A man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search out and examine our ways and turn back to the Lord." The Old Testament is teaching that you shouldn't complain about what you are going through. Basically, you are getting punished for your sins. Now some of those times you have complaints, it is not because of something you directly did. It is the sins of others, and it has affected you, but there's something you need to learn from it. Perhaps you did some type of sin, and you didn't get a direct punishment for it, but God in His wisdom concluded that the way someone else is going to affect you will punish you for your sins.

Notice it said why should a living man complain for punishment of sin let us search out and examine our ways and turn back to the Lord. So, what Lamentation is saying is to examine yourself, get closer to God, and you will end up with less complaints.

Now do you have faith to believe God and truly examine yourself? A lot of people don't really have faith. They think all the problems that happen have nothing to do with what they have done and are not directly related to their sins. That is not the case. God allows certain things to happen and if we will examine ourselves and draw closer to him, certain problems will clear up, either in this age, or the age to come.

Let's go to the New Testament 1st Peter chapter 4 starting in verse 17.

"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Therefore, let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator."

So as Christians we are facing correcting judgments more than others that are not Christian now. This seems consistent with something the Apostle Paul wrote in first Corinthians 15 verse 19. He said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable." But in verse 28 of Romans 8 Paul was inspired to write, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Now Jude verse 16 warned about those who were grumblers or complainers, walking according to their own lusts. This was basically a reference to those who act like they're real Christians. The ones who are intentionally difficult or trying to make things difficult. I'd like to go to something else that Apostle Paul wrote. This is in first Corinthians. Why don't you go over there. Starting in chapter 10 verse 1.

"Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." This is talking about the children of Israel all going through the Red Sea in the book of Exodus. "All ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased." Hopefully with you God will be well pleased. "For their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

Now these things have become our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lust. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as

some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer." So, you are not supposed to complain like they did. "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." So, he is saying the Old Testament was written for Christians, upon whom the end of the ages has come. Then his next statement is "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

He is saying these are examples, you are to be careful. Those people thought they were God's people. They complained and God wasn't pleased with them. Many types of complaints point to the lack of faith. Let's go to the book of Job, chapter 2. Starting in verse 7.

"So, Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head." Now that would be just terrible. "And he took for himself a potsherd" that is a piece of broken pottery "with which to scrape himself while he sat amid the ashes. Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!" But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" So, we accept God's blessings, we should also accept the corrections. "In all this Job did not sin with his lips."

That was the Old Testament. Let's go to the New Testament, the book of Matthew. In Matthew chapter 12 Jesus talks about what we say, the sins of our lips. Matthew 12, starting verse 35 "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. 36 But I say to you that for every idle word man may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Every idle word Jesus said. For Christians that means we have judgment in this age.

Now let's go to something the Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians chapter 4. We are going to go to verse 26.

Paul wrote "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need." You are not supposed to steal you are also supposed to be productive and give to those who have need.

“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”

That same principle applies to what you might write, or in modern times, what you might text. Yes, the words you text should not be corrupt. This should be what's necessary for edification or whatever other purpose, to impart grace to the hearers.

Let's go to Matthew 6. I said part of this earlier, just part of one verse, but we are going to start in verse 25 and read a lot of verses here. Matthew 6 verse 25.

"Therefore, I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is life not more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than them? Which of you in worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

"So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Therefore, do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Yes, you can have trouble. Try not to worry and try not to complain. In John 16 verse 33, you don't have to go there, Jesus said “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Are you of good cheer?

Let's go to first Thessalonians 4, verse 15.

“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, comfort one another with these words.” Take comfort in the word of God.

We know the Apostle Paul and the people around him, in his day are not alive now. They are dead. But we have a chance in the twenty first century to be among those who would be alive and changed when Jesus comes. You might think, yes but Jesus is not coming for a

while. Let's go to Philippians 4 and let me say here that Jesus is not returning before 2032. He is not coming for the next several years anyway, so in the meantime what else can we do or what else should we do?

Philippians 4 verse 8 “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”

Deleavening. One of the things for preparing for Passover is to deleaven. Symbolically leaven pictures hypocrisy and sin. One of the ways that you can show that you repented at this time, and you are willing to do things God's way, is the process of deleavening. It is not a natural thing that people really do. The Bible says to have no leaven in our houses during the seven days of unleavened bread.

I'm going to read that from Exodus 12 nineteen. You don't have to go there. It says, “For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether *he is* a stranger or a native of the land.” Not only did the children of Israel do this, but early Christians also observed the same time.

I'm going to read something from Polycrates of Ephesus, who was the Church of God leader who kept Passover on the fourteenth. He said in his letter to the Bishop of Rome at the time, who didn't want to do it, he says, “And I also, Polycrates, the least of you all, do according to the tradition of my relatives, some of whom I have closely followed. For seven of my relatives were bishops; and I am the eighth. And my relatives always observed the day when the people put away the leaven.”

One way we examine ourselves this time of year is to stop and deleaven our homes and vehicles. This gets us to pause and consider that just like leaven is all around us, so is sin. And just like leaven needs diligence to remove, so does sin. It also shows us that because we may find leaven in places that we did not think could have it, we may have sins in places we think are not possible.

Let's talk about leaven for a moment. Leavened items are things that would tend to have yeast or baking soda in it. Leaven puffs things up, makes them bigger. Leavened bread, for example, crumbles. So, you may think you've got rid of leaven, but it'll end up all over the place in your vehicle or your house.

Decades ago, my wife Joyce and I had done a thorough job of deleavening and we thought we had removed all the leaven. We opened all the drawers and looked everywhere and everything. For some reason in one of our son's rooms, a room we had already deleavened, there was a small package. I don't remember if it was a cookie of some type or a little cake

or something. I don't remember precisely. We couldn't believe that it was there. We thought we had removed all of it. Leaven is a symbol of sin. Sometimes sin enters in ways, and we are not sure how. It just happens.

Another thing I should comment on is that we don't put the leaven somewhere else and bring it back after the days of unleavened bread. What I mean by that is we don't take our old leaven and keep it and then get it back. We want to get rid of our old sins.

I am going to read something from Romans that 8 verse 5.

The Apostle Paul wrote “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Why mention that here? Because I mentioned earlier that some people spend a lot of time focusing on the physical de-leavening and not enough time looking at their own lives. One thing that I personally do, and think everybody who is de-leavening should be doing, is when you are de-leavening also thinking about your own sins. Particularly we find physical leaven in places you didn't expect it. Sin in your life is the same way. Hopefully that makes you think correctly and have the right focus.

Now if you are still in Romans 8 let's go down to verse 9.

“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

Now does that mean we should not de-leaven? No, we still should. Let's also go to Matthew chapter 23 for some words from Jesus. Matthew 23 starting at verse 23.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!" This is a concern we have during the Days of Unleavened Bread. We want you to of course get rid of the leaven but also examine yourselves.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

We need to do the physical, but don't just focus on the leaven so you are righteous to yourself on the outside. Don't neglect the bigger picture. The Pharisees did the physical but neglected the bigger picture. They did a lot for the show. We are not to imitate them, we are to imitate Christ and do the physical and spiritual as Jesus also did. Although Jesus didn't sin, we have. We need to repent.

This time of year, should persuade us to spend more time doing so. We need to heed the admonitions of the Apostle Paul and examine ourselves. I mentioned Lamentations basically said the same thing, and other parts of the Bible do as well.

Some people get confused about leaven, so let's talk about the physical aspects of leaven. I will list some leavening agents. This is a partial list

Active Dried Yeast

Ammonium Carbonate - also known as "Hartshorn"

Ammonium Bicarbonate

Baker's Ammonia

Baker's Yeast

Baking Powder

Baking Soda

Bicarbonate of Soda

Dipotassium Carbonate

Potassium Bicarbonate - also known as "Potash" or "Pearlash")

Potassium Carbonate

Sodium Aluminum Phosphate

Sodium Bicarbonate

Sourdough Starter Yeast

You might see some of these things listed on labels when you are de-leavening. In modern times a lot of packaged foods have ingredients listed on them.

Here are a few things that are not leavening agents, and this is important unless you want to throw away things that you don't have to throw away.

Autolyzed Yeast

Brewer's Yeast

Corn Starch

Egg Whites

Polysorbate 60

Potassium Bitartrate (Cream of Tartar)

Sorbitan Monosterate

Tartrate powder

Torula Yeast

Yeast Extract

Back in 1982 in a sermon the old Worldwide of Church of God titled Passover Examination. Herbert Armstrong went through some things and said look brethren you are supposed to repent and have been baptized. You don't have to worry about your past sins. A lot of people still do, but he said you better worry about whether you sin anymore in the future from now on. Because if you do, he says you bring the penalty back on you. Did you go on sinning? And of course you are supposed to repent.

He quoted Acts 2 verse 38 about repent and be baptized. Then he said but some haven't changed their direction. There's not a promise in the Bible that you are going to get the Holy Spirit unless you have repented and were baptized. Then he said that some of you aren't changing. You are still the same. You accepted some doctrine or some instructions that you heard. You say you want to be good, and you think this is true and that is right, so I'm just going to accept it as opposed to changing. That is wrong. It won't save you and won't get you the Holy Spirit.

To repent, you are supposed to repent, to change. To admit that you are wrong, that you have lived wrongly, and to change it. That is what we should do and that is what Christians should do.

There is an example in the in the Bible about Simon Magus. It is in Acts, Chapter 8. I am not going to read the passage, but basically, he heard people preaching, he got baptized, but he really didn't repent. Throughout history, people believe that he was one who started an apostate movement that ultimately affected what we now call mainstream Christianity, or what they call themselves. Simon Magus hadn't repented, even though he said he believed it and was baptized. What about you? You must repent of your old way of life or anything that is contrary to God's way of life.

Paul said he was weak, but he told us to examine ourselves. We have to examine ourselves. One of the reasons why we only take Passover once a year, and not every day like what happen at a Catholic mass, or every week or every month or every quarter like certain Protestant groups or Adventists or whatever, is because God wants us to spend extra time examining ourselves and looking at ourselves.

You say you look at yourself every day. Well, it kind of gets to be a routine. So having to go through the process of deleavening changes our physical routine, to some degree. And those that take communion, which is supposed to be Passover, daily probably don't deleaven their houses every day. They don't observe the Days of Unleavened Bread and those kinds of

things. God has these annual instructions and annual reminders for us to stop, pause, look at our life differently, so we can be better.

We are to go on, to perfection. We are supposed to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Truly and really examine yourself before Passover this year, and if you watch this in later years, next Passover. Examine yourself prior to Passover. This is one of the reasons why God has an annual plan. I want you to look at yourself differently than you may throughout the rest of the year, grow, move toward perfection, and overcome because that is what the Bible tells Christians they should do. We should all do this. This is Doctor Bob Thiel for the Continuing Church of God.