

“A Season of Exciting Rituals”

This article is from the “Among Friends” section of the Church of God Big Sandy’s website (churchofgodbigandy.com). It was posted for the weekend of March 21, 2026.

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BIG SANDY, Texas—As we approach the spring feast days in 2026, we have the opportunity to participate with exciting rituals.

Let’s begin this article with a definition of a ritual.

■ Some people describe a ritual as the following: “A ritual is a formal, stylized and repetitive series of actions performed in a specific order, often at set times and places. These actions are deeply symbolic and can be religious (ceremonies) or secular (daily habits)—aimed at honoring traditions, fostering community or focusing on intent.”

Secular rituals

Notice a few secular rituals.

- Morning coffee routines
- Evening bedtime routines
- Family meals
- Annual vacation trips
- Reciting the Pledge of Allegiance
- At graduation—wearing a cap and gown and walking across a stage
- Exchanging rings and vows at weddings

Religious rituals

Notice a few religious rituals.

- Daily prayer
- Water baptism
- Religious ceremonies—at regular church services
- Religious celebrations at festivals
- Religious pilgrimages of visiting sacred sites

Who has more?

Which religion has more rituals, the Catholic religion or Jewish religion?

While Catholicism and Judaism are both considered highly ritualistic, they express their rituals differently. While some observers suggest Catholicism seems “more” ritualistic due to the visible and ornate ceremonies, Judaism’s daily-life-based rituals are often considered more numerous and integrated into everyday existence.

Supporting differences

- It is my perspective that the Roman Catholic Church and the Jewish religion generally have more rituals than many Church of God congregations. I don’t choose to follow many Catholic and Jewish rituals, but I support their freedom of choice to follow the rituals of their conscience.

- It is also my perspective that many branches of the Church of God have more rituals than our congregation. Here is an example. Although most people in our congregation do not wear tassels, friends in other congregations love to wear them. And I know the good reason why they do it. The tassels remind my friends of the commandments of the Lord—Numbers 15:37-41. As I said, I support an individual’s freedom of choice to follow the rituals of his conscience.

- I know that there are members in our congregation who follow different rituals.

Great. Rituals can be a wonderful reminder.

And now our congregation is entering the spring season, when many of us will be following a few rituals that are bunched together. Let’s notice them.

Suffering and death of our Savior

■ Foot-washing

The majority of the members of our congregation will be washing the feet of their friends at the commemoration of the suffering and death of our Savior (John 13:1-17)—whether it occurs at our congregational observance or in the privacy of their homes.

■ Broken bread

The majority of the members of our congregation will be partaking of a small amount of unleavened bread at the commemoration of the suffering and death of our Savior (1 Corinthians 11:24)—whether it occurs at our congregational observance or in the privacy of their homes.

■ Small amount of wine

The majority of the members of our congregation will be partaking of a small amount of wine at the commemoration of the suffering and death of our Savior (1 Corinthians 11:25)—whether it occurs at our congregational observance or in the privacy of their homes.

After the commemoration

After the commemoration of the suffering and death of our Savior, many of His followers will observe a ritual during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The ritual has to do with leaven and unleavened bread. People will be avoiding leavened food items for a week and will be including unleavened food items during that same period.

The ritual involving leaven has two distinct meanings.

First lesson—leaving in haste

During the Days of Unleavened Bread, many members in the Church of God keep leaven out of their homes—as an important reminder.

Here is the first lesson. The people of God need to be prepared to move in haste.

- Exodus 12:33—The Egyptians urged the people to leave quickly.
- Exodus 12:34—The Israelites took their dough before it was leavened.
- Exodus 12:39—The Israelites baked unleavened bread—because it was not leavened due to their being driven out of Egypt and they couldn't wait for the bread to rise.
- Matthew 24:16-18—Matthew quoted the Son of God reminding the disciples of a future time when His followers would flee quickly.
- Luke 17:31-33—Luke also quoted the Son of God reminding the disciples of a future time when His followers would flee quickly.

Second lesson—stop sinning

Here is the second lesson. The people of God should stop sinning.

(For your information, many Bible students are aware that scriptures like Matthew 13:31-33 and Luke 13:20-21 also use leaven as a description of an expanding Kingdom of God. So please recognize the context.)

Here are a few scriptures that picture leaven as sin.

- Mark 8:15—Beware of the leaven of the religious leaders and of the leaven of the secular leaders.
- 1 Corinthians 5:6—Your glorying is not good. Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

- 1 Corinthians 5:7—Therefore, purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump (since you are truly unleavened). How are we unleavened? Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.
- 1 Corinthians 5:8—Keep the Feast not with old leaven, nor with malice and wickedness—but with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
- Galatians 5:9—When the Son of God was correcting those who were promoting circumcision, he said: “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”
- Romans 6:1-2—Since we are saved by grace, should we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not. (Stop sinning.)
- Ephesians 2:8-10—Since we are saved by grace, walk in good works (and stop sinning).
- Titus 3:4-8—Since we are saved by grace, maintain good works (and stop sinning).