

Lessons Learned on the Journey

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

Exodus 13: 1-16

Introduction

We are continuing our study of Israel's Exodus from Egypt to Canaan. Today we will examine the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In 1 Corinthians chapter 5, Paul speaks about leaven and unleavened bread. The Apostle Paul uses leaven as an illustration of sin when he addresses the problem of discipline that existed in the church of Corinth. In verse 6 Paul says this to the Corinthians, "Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 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. [1Co 5:6-8](#))

In chapter 12, Moses detailed a description of what was to take place on the night of the Passover. Exodus 12:25 says, "The Lord had told Moses: 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt both man and beast and, against all the gods of Egypt, I will execute judgment for I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial and you shall keep it a feast of the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.'"

The Passover became the first of the feasts that Israel celebrated in the month *Aviv*, which is usually late March or early April for us. *Aviv* means Spring; Tel Aviv means Spring Hill. Nisan and Aviv are terms used interchangeably for the first month of the Jewish calendar. Nisan means "miracles." In verses 15 through 20 we learn that the second feast immediately follows the first.

"Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day *there shall be* a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but *that* which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you. So you shall observe *the Feast of Unleavened Bread*, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance. In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. 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. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.'" ([Exo 12:15-20](#))

The Passover lamb was sacrificed in the afternoon and then, as the next day began at evening, the first day of the Feast of unleavened bread was celebrate. In verse 19 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. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread." (Exo 12:19-20)

Throughout the Bible leaven is a type of sin. Leaven or what we call yeast is what causes bread to rise or be puffed up. It is used as an illustration of how the sin of pride corrupts us from being truthful to telling lies. During the Feast of Unleavened Bread, no leaven was to be eaten that whole week. The feast symbolized the life that Israel was to live. It was to be a life of honesty, truthfulness and sincerity. That is the unleavened kind of life. Notice that kind of life goes against the norm in our world today!

Chapter 13 gives us even more details about this feast. Read the first six verses: "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and beast; it is Mine." And Moses said to the people: "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this *place*. No leavened bread shall be eaten. On this day you are going out, in the month Abib. And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day *there shall be* a feast to the LORD. (Exo 13:1-6)

This feast is the second of the feasts of the nation Israel, which they are to celebrate annually. What was the first? (Passover!)

"Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters. And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, '*This is done* because of what the LORD did for me when I came up from Egypt.' It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD's law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt. You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year. "And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you, that you shall set apart to the LORD all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males *shall be* the LORD's. But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem *it*, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem." (Exo 13:7-13)

Redeem means to pay a ransom or to buy back. Every firstborn animal belonged to God. If you had a firstborn animal you wanted to keep, you could buy it back from God by paying a ransom for it.

"So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What *is* this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.' It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt." (Exo 13:14-16) Four times Moses uses this phrase, "by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt." He uses it in verse 3, 9, 14 and 16.

Israel began their journey into Egypt as a free people. But it wasn't long before they found themselves slaves to the Egyptians. The Bible uses this picture as an illustration of how easy it is to lose your freedom through sin and become a slave to Satan. Israel in the land of Egypt is a picture of how the people God created and loves become ensnared by sin and wind up in bondage to the pride and arrogance of Satan and his destructive devices. In the earlier chapters Exodus we saw the Lord laid his hand upon Moses and give him the commission to deliver the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt.

Moses becomes a type of Christ. God's Calendar of Redemption is found in the Feasts of Leviticus 23. The Passover, the feast of unleavened bread, and other feasts represent the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 2:14 explains Christ's ministry this way, 'Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Heb 2:14-15)

Pharaoh epitomized this evil and fear of death. He truly sold out to Satan. But Moses came to deliver those who, through fear of death, were, all their lifetime subject to bondage. In 1 Corinthians 10:11 the Apostle Paul reminds us that, "all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (1Co 10:11)

Augustine said, "The new is in the old contained; the old is by the new explained." Or we could say that Christ is in the Old Testament concealed but in the New Testament revealed. The fulfillment of these great prophecies confirms the ministry of Jesus and the feast days that Israel celebrates correlate to God's redemptive plan through Christ. Let's take a closer look at this Feast of Unleavened Bread.

I. Ownership

Chapter 13 begins by saying, "'Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and beast; it is Mine."

In Israel the first-born in the family has the priestly rights and responsibilities for the family and is the representative of the family. God has already called Israel his first-born and saved those who believed in Him by putting the blood on the doorposts of their homes. Those who celebrated the feast of unleavened bread represented those who were spared from the destroying angel by keeping the Passover. God speaks to Moses and says, "Set apart to me all the first-born, man and beast." The sanctifying of the first-born illustrated how Israel itself belonged to the Lord. They were to set apart the first-born, both man and beast. The Lord was claiming that the nation as a whole had been redeemed through the great Passover sacrifice.

It is a celebration of divine intervention and freedom from bondage. It is also a picture of God's divine ownership. Satan and Sin only plan for your bondage and death. Our Savior and Salvation only plan for your redemption through the sacrifice of the lamb. Those who are redeemed belong to the Lord. That is one of the great and simple truths of the word of God that we so often forget.

After the Apostle Paul talks about the Feast of Unleavened Bread in 1 Corinthians 5; in chapter 6 verse 19 he writes, "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (1Co 6:19-20) The result of the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ is that we are not our own; we belong to God. That is what God means when he tells Moses, "Sanctify unto me all of the first-born that open the womb; it is mine." It is a picture of God's divine ownership of His people. Isaiah puts it, "Fear not for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name and thou art mine."

II. Identification

Another truth pictured here is one of identification. It's found in the statement in verse 2. "Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and beast; it is Mine." (Exo 13:2) That is the Divine proclamation of creation and the destiny of mankind. It is the story of our identity. Sin has marred and enslaved mankind. Pride has caused us to turn away from God as the source of our identity. The result has been the spread of evil and bondage around the world. But God wants to rescue us from this bondage and restore His image and identity within us! That is what these feast days illustrate.

The feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the night the Passover Lamb (Jesus) was sacrificed and it lasts for seven days. There is a holy convocation on the first day of the feast, and then there is a holy convocation or gathering on the last day of the feast and the feast lasts for seven days. During this time they were to have no leaven in their homes or eat any leaven that whole week.

Paul wrote, "a little leaven leavens the whole lump." At the beginning of the week they were to go through the house and purge the house of all leaven. In fact, the

Jews have a ceremony which was called the *bedikat hamez*; *hamez* is the word for leaven in Hebrew. It is a ceremony of searching for the leaven.

David Baron, a Christian Jewish writer says he remembers as a boy he used to follow his father around the house on the afternoon before the fourteenth of Nisan with a lighted wax candle in hand looking for leaven after uttering the Jewish prayer, "Blessed art Thou, Jehovah our God, king of the universe to have sanctified us by thy commandment and commanded us to remove the leaven." (They would find crumbs put there by his mother.) They would sweep up the leaven and take it outside and then say to the Lord, "All the leaven in my possession, that which I have seen and that which I have not seen be it null, be it accounted as the dust of the earth." In other words, if I have missed anything in my search for the leaven, don't count it against me, Lord.

The Apostle Paul says, "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened for even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast." Christ is the Passover lamb who has been sacrificed for us. That's a past tense in the original text. 'Therefore, let us go forward keeping the feast.' Paul tells the Corinthians that they have allowed sin in the congregation at Corinth and he reminds them that Christ, the Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed at Calvary. The feast of Passover has taken place, and now they are to celebrate the feast of unleavened bread. They are to live without leaven.

III. Dedication

Those who believe in Jesus Christ and have received the redemption that comes from the Passover sacrifice. Going forward we are to live our lives without partaking of leaven. We are to live in holiness and in righteousness and in truth. This applies to us all. Christ is our Passover. He has been sacrificed for our sins.

We observe the feast of unleavened bread because we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are devoted to living a life of honesty and truthfulness. No leaven. We cannot allow sinful habits to creep back into our lives. We must continually purge our lives of sinful desires and behaviors. This is our work in Christ. "Let us go forward keeping the feast."

We see Christ at work in the Passover. We see Christ at work as the Unleavened Bread of Life. But we also see ourselves at work believing in God's deliverance at salvation and allowing the Holy Spirit to purge our life of destructive and sinful habits. We cannot keep the feast and hold on to the old leaven. You've got to get rid of it! You can't live the Christian life with leaven in the house. We receive the joy of forgiveness of sins instantaneously through the work of Christ on the cross. But we experience it progressively as we observe the feast of unleavened bread; allowing the Holy Spirit to continually cleanse our life of sin for the rest of our lives. That is the work that makes us a holy people before the Lord. It is our joy and responsibility to live in obedience to Christ. Unfortunately, there are too many

opportunities and temptations to sin. Thank God, He is committed to our deliverance and spiritual growth.

Observing the feast of unleavened bread not only includes the necessity of conducting a self-evaluation but it also promotes the walk of fellowship. The feast was observed by eating bread and by offering sacrifices. They ate unleavened bread and offered sacrifices in the morning, they ate unleavened bread and offered sacrifices at noontime, and they ate unleavened bread and offered sacrifices at night. All of that was meant to be an example for us. How often do you break bread and offer thanks to God? How often do you make sacrifices to God?

This feast was designed to represent the kind of life we live as believers and how we should offer ourselves to the Lord. Our attitudes and behaviors; our acts of worship and praise should always reflect that we belong to the Lord. What leaven in your life needs to be purged? Paul says, "Let us keep the feast not with the old leaven neither with the leaven malice and wickedness." Those things that characterize our old life have to go. Why? - Because our walk with God is a walk in freedom.

Conclusion

In the Book of Numbers it says that no servile work was to be done that week. It was a week of freedom from bondage. Paul says in Galatians 5:1, "Stand fast in the liberty with which Christ has set you free." We have been freed from bondage. And we experience liberty in the Christian life. We are to submit ourselves to the Word of God and to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as the standard for Christian living. Our activity is to be directed by the Holy Spirit. Our life is a life filled with devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what the feast of unleavened bread is all about.

What does God through the Holy Spirit desire to do through me? The picture here is of continued purity. This feast went on for seven days. It was a feast designed to illustrate the whole circle of life. But we are to celebrate with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, according to Paul." The Passover relates to the past when Christ suffered once and for all for our salvation, but the keeping of the feast of unleavened bread relates to the present. We are to go forward keeping the feast!

The Feast of Unleavened Bread represents our whole Christian life. God's calendar of Redemption was designed to prepare Israel and us for the coming of the Lord. Our response to what God has done for us ought to be one of gratitude and thanksgiving. We must never forget the source of our deliverance. It comes by the strength of the hand of the Lord. We rejoice because we have been redeemed with the price of the precious shed blood of Jesus. That's why it is called a feast. It is meant to be a joyous occasion. It is our joy to make Christ known to those who haven't had the opportunity to know Jesus as Lord and Savior and to be set free from the sin and bondage of this world. You can't love the world and love God at the same time. You have to make a choice. Israel chose God. They kept the Passover and rid themselves of the leaven. What will you do?