

## **“Unleavened Bread: Freedom From Sin’s Power”**

*Exodus 12:14-20; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8*

We’re looking at Israel’s Feasts this year as they occur on the calendar. Two Sundays ago we studied Passover on Palm Sunday. The Feasts of Israel occur according to the lunar calendar so it changes from year to year. This year Passover actually fell on Palm Sunday which is quite fascinating. Because while Passover technically happens on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month called Abib in Hebrew (Abib means ‘ear’ because the grain was in the ear, getting ready to harvest), it was the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the month that you selected your lamb to slaughter. We know that the Passover Jesus held with His disciples happened on a Thursday. Four days prior, the 10<sup>th</sup> day was the same day Jesus rode into town on a colt, the foal of a donkey. And it was that day that the Jews ‘selected’ Jesus for slaughter because they were so angry that the people followed His words and not theirs.

Last week on Easter Sunday, we observed the Feast of First Fruits because Jesus rose on that day, when God raised Him from the dead presenting Him through his resurrection appearances as the First Fruits of a spiritual harvest, that happened 50 days later on Pentecost when 3000 souls were saved.

However, I waited to talk about the Feast of Unleavened which actually began the day Jesus was killed, the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month. And that day started a 7 day observance of eating unleavened bread. So to review:

- Jesus was chosen by the religious leaders to die on Palm Sunday, the same day you chose your lamb for the Passover.
- Jesus was the Passover Lamb who died for the sins of the world so that any who apply by faith His blood for their forgiveness of sins will have final judgment pass over them.
- Jesus was killed as the sinless Lamb of God on the day Israel escaped from Egypt, bringing freedom from the slavery of sin (as we’ll see in a few minutes) on the first day of Unleavened Bread
- Jesus rose on the day after the Sabbath following Passover, which is the First Fruits when you presented to god the first fruits of your harvest before you ate any yourself, as an act of faith trusting God to bring you a harvest in 7 weeks

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was a 7 day Feast to Celebrate Israel’s freedom from slavery. Each feast is a shadow of something greater available in Christ. Unleavened Bread foreshadowed Jesus’ sinless death which makes possible freedom from sin’s power. Unleavened bread was the type of bread God commanded the Israelites to eat for the whole week after Passover. Leaven is another word for yeast. Yeast/leaven is made from dough fermenting. Every time a batch of dough was made, a small piece was removed to save for leavening the next batch of dough. When God told the Israelites to leave Egypt without letting their bread rise, He was giving them a word picture to say – ‘leave the evil influences of your former life behind. You are free from them. You will start a new ‘unleavened’ life – a life untainted by the power of Egypt’s evil. So Unleavened Bread, spiritually speaking is when God’s people . . .

**Celebrate Your Freedom from Sin’s Power**  
**(Ex. 12:14)**

God said “This is a day you are to commemorate: for the generations to come you are to celebrate it as a festival to the Lord.” The Hebrew for ‘celebrate’ and ‘festival’ are the same words. It’s like saying you are to joyously celebrate a joyful celebration. While the first Passover may have been somewhat ominous as the angel of death passed over their houses, the intent was for all these holy days to be celebrated. No more Pharaoh; no more slavery. You’re free!! Commemorate this day for generations to come about how God removed you not just from physical slavery but from the oppression of a false belief system that you were inundated with. No more. From now on, God says I will be Your God and you will be my people.

The main aspect of Unleavened Bread was each day they were to eat bread made with no yeast. Yeast is an ingredient that puffs up the bread. The Bible often uses yeast as a metaphor for sin – that which puffs you up, which makes you bigger than what you really are. God says to His people, leave the yeast behind in Egypt. Flee now, otherwise the longer you stay the greater chance the temptations of what you’re leaving will hold you back. Reminding them once again that God freed them from Egypt’s power over them.

How do we get this image of Jesus’ death & burial from the unleavened bread? From Jesus Himself. At the Last Passover the night before He died, Jesus took the bread – what kind of bread? Unleavened Bread. He broke it and said,

*This is My body which is for you, do this in remembrance of Me.*

Jesus said He was the unleavened bread. No sin in Him. This bread was also called in Deut. 16:13 the bread of affliction, because it reminded the people that they lived a life of affliction before God saved them. Jesus said, I am the unleavened bread; I became afflicted for you whose body will be whipped [striped], pierced [holes] and bruised [burnt].

When God saved Israel from Egypt He removed them from the evil presence and influence of ungodly thinking. They were now free to serve and worship God. When Jesus was dying on the cross, He said “It is finished”. The payment for sin is complete. In paying the penalty for sin Jesus dealt Satan a traumatic blow. Listen to Heb. 2:14

*Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is the devil – and free those who all their life were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

Jesus gave His ‘unleavened’ body for us so that we might know freedom from sin’s power. To believe in Jesus assures us when we physically die, the penalty of sin – separation from God – no longer has power over us. We will be with the Lord forever.

But when God rescued the Israelites they experienced freedom from bondage immediately because they believed in God. Likewise our faith in Jesus isn’t just for future salvation from sin’s penalty but from sin’s power now. Paul wrote in Rom. 6:8

*Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we also live with Him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead; death no longer has mastery over Him. The death he died he died to sin once for all; but the life He lives he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.*

Salvation in Jesus means we have the power over sin’s influence through God’s Spirit. Before Christ we had no power over sin, but now we do.

This was the point in commemorating Unleavened Bread for 7 days. It's not just a past observance, but put into practise the present reality of what God has done for you in the past. God commanded the Israelites to remove all yeast from their houses. If yeast/leaven is a metaphor for sin, then we see in the foreshadowing of this feast that we must . . .

## **Clean Our 'House' from Sin's Presence** **(Ex. 12:15-16)**

In Jewish homes before Passover and Unleavened Bread, the mother of the house does a thorough spring cleaning to make sure no leaven or leavened products are in their home. No doughs or pastries. The night of the Passover, the father leads his family through the house looking for any more leaven, usually at night with a candle. Often mom leaves a few crumbs to be found. The light in the darkness reveals the smallest crumbs of leaven and then they are removed and burned in a little ceremony with prayer.

What a great image for us who need to regularly clean our 'house'/life from sin. How do we do that?

### ***Examine your life with God's Word (Ps. 119:11, 105)***

Ps. 119:11 doesn't say, "*Your Word have I hid in my heart that I might ... know some good Bible verses.*" Its says "*Your Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee.*" Living by the Word stops sin from continuing as well as prevents sin from entering our life. God's Word lightens our way. Ps. 119:105 says

*Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*

Literally 'foot' [singular] because we take one step at a time. God's Word shows me where the right way to walk is and the wrong way to avoid. God's Word exposes our sinful thoughts and attitudes. Heb. 4:12 says,

*For the Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

Reading God's Word regularly reveals the sinful attitudes, actions and words of our hearts. When we're made aware of our sin we are to confess it, seek forgiveness and reconciliation. James said "*Do not merely listen to the Word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says*" (James 1:22). God was telling all His people through the Feast to do some internal house cleaning. Remove the sin/leaven in your life on a regular basis.

We can also work at preventing sin. How?

### ***Stop it before it starts (1 Cor. 5:6)***

Paul wrote 1 Cor. 5 to help Corinthians to discipline a person in their church who was involved in a sexually immoral relationship with his mother-in-law. To do that Paul uses Unleavened Bread and Passover language, because he knew his readers understood the spiritual principles.

*"Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?"*

Paul doesn't need to explain the metaphor because they understood it. Sin is like a yeast, it puffs us up. Even a little bit unchecked can work through your life into a far greater problem. Don't let it start. Temptation to sin is not sin. We have the power in Christ when tempted, through his Spirit to say no. Sin exaggerates. It makes something look more attractive but it's just full of empty air. Stop it before it starts. In 1 Cor. 10:13 Paul will instruct these same believers that there's always a way out when tempted. The best way to deal with temptation is to avoid it if possible.

*Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast – as you really are. For Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us keep the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.*

Paul is applying the principle about cutting off the rebellious sinner from the community of believers. If a Jew was caught eating leavened bread during the Feast he was to be "cut off" from the community. Not death, but temporal separation with the goal of restoration. Paul very clearly tells the Corinthian church to separate the sinning brother from their fellowship so that he would see the seriousness of his sin and repent. Paul is warning us to deal with sin before it takes hold of our life. So let's do all we can in

### ***Becoming who we are in Christ (1 Cor. 5:7-8)***

When we accepted Christ His Spirit came to dwell in us. He set us apart for Himself. We are a 'new batch', a believer in Christ who's sin has been paid for. But we have a responsibility to live like who we are. Don't live like you were before you were saved – full of malice and wickedness – instead live who you are now in Christ – sincere and truthful.

As yeast inflates the dough to rise so sin lifts us up over God and others. We think our way is better. We think we know more than God. God tells us in 1 Pet. 5:6-7 to

*"Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand that He may lift you up in due time, casting all your cares on Him for he cares for you"*

The Feast of Unleavened bread was also a reminder that they had to leave quickly. There was no time to let bread rise. God told them that when Pharaoh says go, then that's God's sign that He had made it possible. Therefore, the Feast also pointed to our need to . . .

## **Be Willing to Obey God When He Speaks** **(12:17-20)**

Israel was ready to leave when God said so. In 12:34 we read that Israel took their dough before the yeast was added and the bread they did have was unleavened (v.39). Unleavened Bread commemorated the freedom from sin's power [looking back] and it also pointed ahead. Where was God going to take Israel? First to worship Him in the desert and secondly to dwell in the land of Canaan.

Back here in Ex. 12:17 God repeated much of what He said earlier, but in v.17 He adds something.

*"Celebrate the feast of Unleavened Bread because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt".*

'Divisions' is a military phrase. God brought them out of slavery but was also taking them somewhere. The recurring message in the whole Old Testament is: *'If you want to get where I want you to go [the land], You must obey what I say.'*

When God brought them to Mt. Sinai in Ex. 19:5 He told them that if they obey Him fully He would lead them into the land. Israel's response (19:8):

*'We will do everything the Lord has said''.*

But good intentions are not obedience. 40 years later God prepared a new 'batch' of Israelites to bring them into the land He had promised. When exactly did God bring them into the land ready to do battle in Canaan? See Josh. 5:9-10.

*<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." So the place has been called Gilgal to this day. <sup>10</sup> On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover. <sup>11</sup> The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. <sup>12</sup> The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan.*

God was saying through the Feast of Unleavened Bread: if you obey My Words and keep sin from your life, I will provide for you and lead you in ways of blessing.

Jesus, the Passover Lamb shed His 'unleavened' blood and paid the penalty for sin "once for all". When we place our faith in Him we will not only be freed from the penalty of death – being cut off forever from God - but also have power over sin in our life.

Unleavened Bread challenges us to keep sin from entering your life. If it does, remove it. Let God's Word search your heart and see if there is any wicked way in you so he can lead us to the way everlasting. Let's stay humble before God not allowing sin to puff us up.

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