

FIRST DAY OF ULB

WHAT DO WE LEARN FROM UNLEAVENED BREAD?

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Today is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread ... 15TH Nisan.

Most people that you and I know are completely unaware of this day. Very few have even heard of the Feast of Unleavened Bread ... so we're very much in a minority.

So. Why do we keep this day at all? Quite a number of people have to take the day off work ... or out of school. So why?

The simple answer is that God commands it. Does He have a reason? God doesn't do things without a reason. Is there an important purpose to keeping this Feast day?

Of course. God doesn't do things at random. There is a purpose. God gives us Holy Days to teach us important lessons ... it's part of His plan for you and I for our eternal life.

This Feast gives us important understanding.

Leviticus 23:1-2 (NKJV)

1 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, *(God speaking)*

2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.

What if the entire world believed just that one verse?

These aren't the Jews' Feasts. These aren't mankind's Feasts. They are God's Feast Days. (A better translation for Feasts is "appointed times").

Leviticus 23:4-8 (NKJV)

4 "These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times.

5 On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Lord's Passover. *(THE LORD'S PASSOVER ... NOT THE JEWS!!)*

6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; **seven days you must eat unleavened bread.**

7 On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary (*occupational*) work on it.

8 But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord for seven days. *(We can't do this because there is no temple and no Levitical priesthood... but ... that doesn't mean that these days were "done away with". The Holy Days came before the priests and the temple)* **The seventh day shall be a holy convocation;** you shall do no customary work on it.' "

We find the first mention in:

Exodus 12:14-20 (NKJV)

14 'So this day shall be to you a memorial; *(today ... the 15th)* and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.

15 **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.** *(Put to death ... for eating leavened products!!)*

16 **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. (*No work today ... no school today*)

17 **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. (*The 15th*) Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance.

18 **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.**

19 **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.

20 **You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.**' " (*these days were kept nearly 2 months before the Old Covenant was entered into ... a long time before the sacrifices were set up*)

And some very specific instructions.

Exodus 13:3 (NKJV)

3 And Moses said to the people: "**Remember this day (the 15th) in which you went out of Egypt**, out of the house of bondage; (*out of the slave house*) for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place. **No leavened bread shall be eaten.**

Exodus 13:6-7 (NKJV)

6 **Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread**, and on **the seventh day** there shall be a feast to the Lord.

7 **Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days.** And **no leavened bread** (*Hebrew: Chamets ... no leavened thing*) shall be seen among you, **nor shall leaven** (*Hebrew: Seor*) be seen among you in all your quarters. (*Two parts mentioned here ... Put away the*

leaven and leavened products ... and bring in the unleavened bread)

I would recommend actually eating at least some Unleavened Bread on each day ... like God says.

Teaching us in 2 parts ... PUT OUT AND AVOID THE LEAVEN!! AND ... EAT THE UNLEAVENED!! (Just like 2 parts to Passover)

It reminds us that there are 2 parts involved in changing our lives and walking with God.

Ephesians 4:20-22 (NKJV)

20 But you have not so learned Christ,

21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 that you **put off, concerning your former conduct,** the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, **(Put off your old habits - the old way of life ... GET rid of it!!)**

Ephesians 4:23-24 (NKJV)

23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

24 and that you **put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.** **(Put on the new nature ... of living righteously)**

25 Therefore, **putting away lying,** "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbour," for we are members of one another.

26 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,

27 nor give place to the devil.

Ephesians 4:28 (NKJV)

28 Let him who stole steal no longer, (**put off**) but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, (**put on**) that he may have something to give him who has need.

Does God Himself need the Feast of Unleavened Bread? The answer is No! It is given by God for us ... for our benefit ... to help us to grow to maturity ... to look forward to living forever in God's family.

It's important to de-leaven our homes ... and that we eat unleavened bread for 7 days. But if that's all that happens ... just purely physical ... that's really a wasted opportunity because there is much more to the Feast than that.

There are important spiritual lessons. Leaven is a symbol that God uses to picture key truths (just like the bread and wine are symbols of important truth).

And God gives us this annual reminder.

So ... we need to look at how God uses the symbol of leaven in the scriptures. I think that God uses leaven in 2 distinct ways.

1 Corinthians 5:6-8 (NKJV)

6 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that **a little leaven leavens the whole lump?** (*Don't you recognise the danger!!?*)

7 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.** (*In passing. Paul is writing to a largely Gentile congregation. Which Feast comes after Passover ... presumably Unleavened Bread ... even if you are a Gentile ... you still have to keep it*)

8 Therefore let us keep the feast, **not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness,** (*evil conduct ... evil motives*) **but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.** (*Clearly*

we can see that Paul is teaching the Gentiles about the Holy Days)

1 Corinthians 5:7 (NET)

7 Clean out the old "yeast" so that you may be a new batch of dough - you are, in fact, without "yeast". For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

- Leaven is malice (evil motives) and wickedness (evil actions).
- Unleavened ... honest, sincere, truthful ... good.

Put away the leaven of sinful behaviour and sinful conduct and put sin away (Corinth had become comfortable with serious sin in their midst). These people had become comfortable with sin around them. Not wanting to offend anyone.

And a second use of the word leaven in scripture ... False teaching ... False doctrine).

Matthew 16:5-12 (NKJV)

5 Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

6 Then Jesus said to them, **"Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."**

7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread."

8 But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?"

9 Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?

10 Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?

11 How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to **beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**" (*False teaching*)

12 Then they understood that He did not tell them to **beware** of the leaven of bread, but **of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.** (*False teaching, false doctrine*)

First of all let's look at leaven representing sin in our life.

Putting leaven out pictures our putting sin out. But we have to take action. It may require changes in our lives ... the things that we do ... who we spend 'our time' with ... what our priorities are.

It is easy to become casual ...lukewarm ... we come to tolerate lots of poor behaviour in our lives.

Unleavened Bread is a reminder to us. **GET THE SIN OUT ... LEAVE IT BEHIND!**

The days of Unleavened Bread are to teach us that even after we accept Jesus as our Passover Lamb ... there is action we need to be taking. It's not all finished when we accept Jesus.

Think about Israel at that first Passover:

- they'd kept Passover with blood and a roast lamb
- God had passed over
- so now ... did they just stop there?

Do we stop once we're covered by Jesus' blood?

No! Israel was set free ... but now they had to get out of where they were ... leave slavery ... leave Pharaoh ... they had to move away from their old lives. It is a picture for us.

We've got to leave spiritual Egypt ... slavery to sin ... move to freedom ... head towards The Promised Land ... walk on ... head to the Kingdom of God.

Romans 6:1-14 (NKJV)

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

2 Certainly not! *(Certainly not! God forbid! The Greek implies ... Have you fallen off your donkey and knocked your head on a rock?)* How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? *(We are to stop sinning!)*

3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised 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. *(If we have been baptised ... Our old man died in the watery grave. We should have left sin ... bondage ... Pharaoh ... Satan)*

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. *(If you are living in sin ... you are living in slavery)*

7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

12 **Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.**

13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but **present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.**

14 **For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.** (*We start walking in newness of life!*)

Romans 6:16-22 (NKJV)

16 **Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?**

17 But God be thanked that though you were (*past tense*) slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

18 And **having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.**

19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you (*once upon a time*) presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

22 **But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.**

We all used to live in bondage as slaves to sin. We shouldn't be hanging about in "spiritual Egypt" ... we don't want to live there any longer.

There is some corresponding action required after we have taken The Passover.

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV)

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you **present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.** *(Our lives should be sacrificed to God. That should cost us something)*

2 And **do not be conformed to this world,** *(to the society that we live in)* **but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.** *(We renew our minds feeding on God's word ... we should be totally different)*

Romans 12:1 (Message)

1 So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: **Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering.** Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him.

Romans 12:2 (NLT)

2 **Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.** Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

The world is comfortable with sin ... a type of spiritual Egypt. It is not good for us to be comfortable with this world. We grew up in it ... it still influences us. But ... we need to be changed ... live differently.

We are on a journey. It takes time to change ... to grow ... to mature.

Watch out for complacency ... being lukewarm ... too cosy with the world. Be alert for the leaven of the world.

1 John 2:1-6 (NKJV)

1 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.

2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. (*He became our propitiation by becoming our Passover*)

3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. (*Put out the leaven ... bring in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*)

4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.

6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (*Walking is a way of life. Walk according to God's ways ... His truth. Live like Jesus did!!*)

1 John 5:1-3 (NKJV)

1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. (*In the Greek ... continuous present tense: "keep on keeping"*) And His commandments are not burdensome. (*They picture an*

unleavened life ... free from sin ... from leaven. The malice and wickedness is gone!

Hebrews 12:1-4 (NKJV)

1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, *(the heroes of faith of the previous chapter)* **let us lay aside (put away) every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (to the finishing line ... towards the Kingdom)**

2 **looking unto Jesus, (our example) the author and finisher of our faith,** who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 **For consider Him (think about Jesus) who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.**

4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

We are to run the race with endurance ... run ... action! Because we want to get to the finish line. We need to keep going ... not like Israel ... they left but didn't endure! Only Joshua and Caleb made it.

Look to Jesus ... not just as our Passover Lamb ... but also as our High Priest and our Commander-In-Chief.

Don't get weary! Let our guard down ... a little leaven ... a little compromising with sin ... which can lead to destruction. Resist! Strive against sin!

Let's turn now to the second way that leaven is used in scripture and see what lessons we can learn.

You can recollect that Jesus had warned His disciples about the leaven of false doctrine ... false teaching ... and not to be deceived.

Most of us are unlikely to be deceived by Catholics or Jews or Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons etc.

But we are potentially at risk from some among the Church of God. If someone says they're Church of God ... we might tend to relax with them ... give credibility to what they say and what they teach.

Most of the time we may be okay ... but we none the less ... need to be alert for the leaven of deception from time to time ... false teaching.

There are lots of strange ideas "out there":

- Calendar
- Passover ... 14th or 15th ?
- Pentecost ... Sunday/Monday/Sivan 6?
- Jesus crucified on Friday ... resurrected on Sunday?
- Sabbath to be kept from sunrise to sunset
- Sacred names
- Exclusive one and only true groups with a variety of Apostles and Prophets ... and tickets to the Place of safety

Often wrong teaching leads to ... wrong believing ... which leads to ... wrong actions ... which leads to ... HARM AND DEATH.

- In the PCG ... many families have been broken up
- In the RCG ... liquidate your financial assets and send it to Dave Pack

We need to be alert ... especially teaching from "religious leaders and teachers".

Galatians 5:1-4 (NKJV)

1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

2 Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.

3 And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. (*False teachers were turning up with false teaching*)

4 You have become estranged (severed) from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Galatians 5:7-9

7 You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

8 This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you.

9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump. (*A little leaven ... a little false teaching ... can cause huge damage!*)

Galatians 1:6-7 (NKJV)

6 I marvel (astonished) that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,

7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

WATCH OUT FOR FALSE TEACHING!!

Let's look at a parable that appears to show the harmful effects of leaven. But before that ... let's look at another parable and get the context.

Matthew 13:24-30 (NKJV)

24 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field;

25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.

26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.

27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'

29 But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." ' " (NB: *the wheat and tares are growing together ... until the end time*)

So ... even now ... perhaps especially now ... tares ... false brethren ... false ministers too ... are among the believers. We should be alert!

Matthew 13:33 (NKJV)

33 Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid (concealed surreptitiously ... secretly introduces) in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." (A false church hiding/teaching false doctrines)

A popular explanation: this is the Gospel growing worldwide. I don't think so. But ... in context of Jesus' use of leaven: false teaching. This more likely represents false doctrine surreptitiously introduced among God's people. This is what the tares would be doing? Then ... it permeates and corrupts the whole Church.

If we're not vigilant ... don't spot it ... then little by little ... the truth gets changed ... fades away. (Turning the wine of God's Word into water).

Peter prophesied false teaching would come into the Church.

2 Peter 2:1-3 (NKJV)

1 But ***there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, (leaven like the parable says) even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.***

2 And ***many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.***

3 ***By covetousness (money or status) they will exploit you with deceptive words; (leaven) for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.***

So we need to remain alert ... particularly around religious teachers ... but could include other brethren. WATCH OUT FOR LEAVEN!

When we find false teaching ... maybe false traditions of our own ... PUT THEM OUT!

And ... REMEMBER THE IMPORTANCE OF HOLDING FAST TO THE TRUTH!

2 Timothy 1:13-15 (NKJV)

13 ***Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.***

14 That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us.

15 This you know, that ***all those in Asia have turned away*** from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. *(They turned away ... little by little ... from Paul ... who was personally chosen by God*

... who wrote half of the New Testament. How did it start? ... a "little" leaven was leavening the whole lump)

2 Timothy 3:13-15 (NKJV)

13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. (Probably among us)

14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, (The Holy Scriptures ... referring to the Old Testament)

15 and that from childhood you have known *the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

So ... the antidote to deception is the scriptures ...THE TRUTH.

So ... here we are today ... seven days of Unleavened Bread stretching ahead of us. We'll no doubt all remain vigilant about eating leavened products ... try to avoid mistakes. But more important are the lessons of these days which are spiritual.

Watch out for sin ... and the tendency to compromise. Secondly ... watch out for false doctrine.

That's the key lessons of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.