

Let Them Eat..... Bread: Feasts of Unleavened Bread & Wave Sheaf/First Fruits

In life there are important truths to believe, and falsehoods not to. Like one of the most famous quotes in history falsely attributed to Queen Marie Antoinette. At some point around 1789, when being told that her French subjects had no bread, the bride of France's King Louis XVI supposedly said, in French, "Let them eat cake." While there is no historical evidence she actually said it, she still became a hated symbol of the decadent monarchy who (literally) lost her head several years later.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was one of the 3 required feasts for all Jewish males to attend every year (**Exodus 23:14-17**). **Leviticus 23:6-8** says this feast would begin on the 15th day of Abib, and continue 7 days, with an offering made each day. And the first and 7th day would be special Sabbaths - holy convocations. "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 work on it. ⁸ But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it."

1. The Feast of Unleavened Bread helped highlight and teach an attribute of God: God was their Deliverer & Provider

Exodus 13:8 "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.'

Preparation started 4 days b-4 Passover. But because God's delivery was accomplished quickly – in a night - there was no time to waste. There would be no sourdough bread this meal. They would not have been delivered if they had waited for the bread to rise. He provided a simple meal. The bread for this meal had no yeast or fermentation to make it rise.

The original instructions given to Israel for the celebration of the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread included a prohibition of eating anything leavened from the 14th day to the 21st day of Abib:

Exodus 12:17-20 "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. 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."

Perhaps an important lesson we should take is this. Jesus compared leaven to sin and man's way of doing things (**Matt 16:6-12; Mark 8:5; Luke 12:1**). Just as Scripture counsels us to be in the world but not of it, the sustenance God provide for us is not tainted with sin or man's way.

2. It portrayed a future aspect of Christ's ministry

The feast of Unleavened Bread was closely linked with the Passover and was sometimes viewed as

one. And while the Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorated the past, it also focused the people on the future Bread of Life to come.

Luke 22:1-2 says “Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover. ² And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people.”

These leaders planned to kill Jesus. But it didn't start that way. You may recall that the teachers had marveled at Jesus when as a boy He lingered and taught in the temple.

With most of the people in the days of Christ, the observance of this feast had degenerated into formalism. But what was its significance to the Son of God?

By the time of Joseph & Mary, many Jews thought the Messiah would appear and, like Moses, deliver them from Roman bondage at the time of the Passover & Unleavened Bread feast. Its no wonder it was attended at Jerusalem by more people than any of the other feasts. In the book **Desire of Ages**, (DA), the author writes: “For the first time the child Jesus looked upon the temple. He saw the white-robed priests performing their solemn ministry. He beheld the bleeding victim upon the altar of sacrifice. With the worshipers He bowed in prayer, while the cloud of incense ascended before God. He witnessed the impressive rites of the paschal service. Day by day He saw their meaning more clearly. Every act seemed to be bound up with His own life. New impulses were awakening within Him. Silent and absorbed, He seemed to be studying out a great problem. The mystery of His mission was opening to the Saviour. **DA 78.1**

“Rapt in the contemplation of these scenes, He did not remain beside His parents. He sought to be alone. When the paschal services were ended, He still lingered in the temple courts; and when the worshipers departed from Jerusalem, He was left behind. {**DA 78.2**}

Luke 2:52 says “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

As part of the triune Godhead, Jesus knew His mission when it was planned in the heavenly courts. But as a baby, and then a child, He grew, He needed to learn His mission from the same Scriptures, the same ceremonies, and feasts that should have pointed all of Israel, and mankind, to Jesus and His mission.

The feasts of Passover, Unleavened bread and Wave Sheaf or First Fruits coincided with the Barley harvest in early spring.

The 15th day started the feast of Unleavened Bread. On the 16th day a shock of Barley was waved, indicating it was time to begin the Barley harvest, which was the first grain harvested in the spring.

“On the second day of the feast, the first fruits of the year's harvest, a sheaf of barley, was presented before the Lord. All the ceremonies of the feast were types of the work of Christ. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt was an object lesson of redemption, which the Passover was intended to keep in memory. The slain lamb, the unleavened bread, the sheaf of first fruits, represented the Saviour. **DA 77.1**

Bread is used prominently in Scripture in miracles and as a symbol for Jesus: There is the manna that sustained Israel in the wilderness, the shewbread - 12 pierced cakes - that were kept on the

table in the temple and eaten by the priests, the young boy's loaves and fishes that Jesus fed to the multitude, and the Unleavened Bread, just to name a few examples.

After feeding the 5,000 men, plus women & children (+10,000), Jesus taught that He was the true Bread.

John 6:32-35 "Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven.³³ For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."³⁴ Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always."³⁵ And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

Peter said in **Acts 4:12** that "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"

If Jesus is to be our bread of life than we must feast on Him, His Word, His life, teachings and example. We must fully take Him in to our lives.

In the Spring of 31 AD, Jesus was crucified on Passover, the 14th of Abib, what many now call "Good Friday". On the next day, the 15th of Abib or Nisan, or the day of unleavened bread (a ritual/ceremonial/feast sabbath) Jesus rested in the tomb.

In this particular year the day of unleavened bread – the festival/ceremonial sabbath fell on the seventh day Sabbath making it a high Sabbath. On the 2nd day of the festival day was the wave sheaf or first fruits offering, This would have been on Sunday that particular year, and Jesus rose so He could present himself to His Father in heaven as the firstfruits offering. **Luke 23:54-56** tells us that Jesus was crucified on the preparation day. What we call Friday. Some of those who dearly loved Him took His body to give Him a proper burial, but as important as Jesus Christ was to them they simply placed His body in the tomb, and got their embalming spices ready, and rested or observed God's Sabbath (that day was both the ritual feast Sabbath as well as the seventh day Sabbath, making it a high Sabbath). They didn't rest because the 7th day Sabbath was their "tradition, but because it was, and still is, the 4th commandment of God's 10 commandment.

Even in death we are given the example of Jesus resting on His Sabbath day, because the bread had no leaven. There was no working, no leavening process. Jesus, the Bread of Life was perfect. His sacrifice was perfect. He would wait until the next day to rise and return to heaven to make sure His sacrifice was acceptable to the Father.

The 2nd day of the festival day, the wave sheaf or first fruits offering which would have been the first day of the week (**Luke 24:1**) or what we call Sunday, Jesus rose so He could present himself to His Father in heaven as the first fruits offering. The first of God's children, in importance not chronologically, to be raised from the dead and taken to heaven.

After His crucifixion, on resurrection morning, Jesus said to Mary "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" **John 20:17**

As much as He wanted to comfort and instruct her, Jesus reminded Mary that He still needed to

present Himself to His Heavenly Father, to be assured that His life and sacrifice were perfect and perfectly accepted. **That the debt for all sin was paid in full. Because of Jesus, our debt has been paid!**

3. It motivated/inspired/taught Israel to live holy lives before a Holy God.

If they ate any leavened bread they would be cut off. To avoid that risk they were to get it all out of their house.

The Hebrew word for Unleavened Bread, “**Matzo**”, means “sweet, without sourness”. Jesus and His grace, the good news of the gospel, is the sweetest news to a sinner. It is salvation to those who accept!

Israel was to prepare to leave Egypt and their bondage quickly. To wait for leavened bread would have required a delay.

It would have shown a hesitancy or unwillingness to escape bondage and demonstrated disobedience to God’s instructions to leave.

What do our lives reveal? We understand the leaven is also a symbol for sin (**Matt 16:5-6,12; Mark 18:13,151 Cor 5:8**). I believe we can, in fairness, say that God still wants us to be free from sin, to get it out of our homes and our lives.

Wouldn’t leaving/accepting it in our lives once we find freedom in Jesus indicate that we do not really want to be delivered, maybe not completely?

How much cherished sin is tolerable to God? In **Matthew 23** Jesus describes the leaven, the sourness, the sins of the scribes & Pharisees, I think it would fair be to include the Saducees as well, it included:

- Hypocrisy (**vs 3**)
- Legalistic Burdens (**vs 4-5**)
- Aggrandizement (**vs 5-7**)
- Greed (**vs 14**)
- False Misguided Zeal (**vs 15**)
- Spiritual Blindness & Skepticism (**vs 16-22**)
- Neglect of Mercy & faith (**vs 23-24**)
- Extortion & Self Indulgence (**vs 25**)
- Spiritually Bankrupt & Lawless (**vs 28**)
- Pride (**vs 29-30**)
- Cruel Rejecters of Truth and God’s messengers (**vs 31-35**)

Do we recognize any of these in our lives?

Its easy to say we don’t cherish our sins. I think a more important question is: do we abhor them? Do we choose to be rid of them? Do our actions, enabled by the Holy Spirit, correspond to our stated desires? If we are truly living in the last days, the time of judgement, how should we live? Do we really want to be free? Are we purging the leaven from our lives?

In **Romans 8:37** Paul says “yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

There really is only one way to be overcomers; that is to let Jesus have full control of our lives. To surrender to and connect with the One who overcame all, for us.

We don't need to keep an abolished feast, but we do need to remember its lessons and feast upon (take in) Jesus, our Bread of life.

So dear friend, I ask, will you make Jesus your Bread of Life and accept His gift of salvation (**Rom 5:8; 1 John 5:11-13**)?

And as my benediction for you, please allow me to paraphrase **1 Corinthians 5:8** (which says “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.”)

Benediction

Because Christ is our sacrifice, let us keep the lessons of the feasts, not with our old ways, motives, and nature, and not with the sins of malice and wickedness, but with our new nature, the Nature of Christ, a nature of sincerity and truth.