

“Let Us Celebrate the Feast”

Intro: Last week in our lesson we talked about the Passover and how that in it God was giving clues to what He would do through His Son, that He would be a lamb offered for the sins of the world. However, the Passover lamb was to be eaten in the context of another simultaneous feast, the Feast unleavened bread, which Israel would observe each year.

And just as the Passover is a picture of Christ; the Feast of Unleavened Bread is a picture of the life of the Church of Christ. Listen to Paul's words:

For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

What does Paul mean "celebrate the feast?" The OT provides the information to help us understand Paul's command:

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

The Jews referred to it as מַצּוֹת (Mazzot)

In Hebrew a single piece is "mazzah." And you can see that word sometimes on a box of communion bread, since it is unleavened bread. "Mazzot" is the plural form of the unleavened wafers that are eaten.

The word feast is from the Hebrew "chag" probably referring to a pilgrimage feast.

This feast was one of three times each year when all the males in Israel were to appear at the tabernacle/temple.

It was a time of worship and rejoicing for God's blessings.

This feast had several essential features:

A search made & leaven removed

... on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses (Exodus 12:15)

In later Jewish ritual, this was a deliberate act. All leaven found in the house was taken to the temple and burned in connection with the slaying of the Passover lamb.

Each day only unleavened bread was eaten, though it would not have been the preferred bread of most people.

You shall not eat anything leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread. (Exodus 12:20)

The Feast was to last seven days.

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. (Exodus 12:15)

On the first and last day there were "holy convocations," i.e. assemblies of the whole nation before the tabernacle/temple.

On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. But for seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; (Lev. 23:6-8)

The Israelites would refrain from their ordinary activities; but they would allow the activity necessary for preparing for the feast. The priests would offer an "offering by fire." In addition, each day the priests would offer in behalf of the whole nation as burnt offerings two bulls, one ram, seven lambs each of which would also include an accompanying grain offering. In addition a sin offering of one goat was to be made each day as well. (Num. 28:17-25) But also each person was also required to bring something to give to the Lord "according to the blessing of the Lord" which they had received from Him.

The Meaning and Significance for Israel

Signified the urgent preparations for leaving Egypt

And the Egyptians urged the people, to send them out of the land in haste, for they said, "We shall all be dead." So the people took their dough before it was leavened, with their kneading bowls bound up in the clothes on their shoulders. (Exodus 12:33-34)

Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste—it is the Lord's Passover. (Exodus 12:11)

It was a reminder of the hardship they had endured as slaves even to the point of the exodus itself.

You shall not eat leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat with it unleavened bread, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), in order that you may remember all the days of your life the day when you came out of the land of Egypt. (Deut. 16:3)

It would remind them of God's deliverance which they would communicate with their children.

"And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.' And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the Lord brought you out of Egypt. Therefore, you shall keep this ordinance at its appointed time from year to year. (Ex. 13:8-10) It would symbolize the new life they had entered.

Keil suggests that just as bread could be a symbol of life, so unleavened bread would symbolize the new life of God's people as they set aside the corrupting influence of life in Egypt and began a new pure life in fellowship with God alone.

All of this then serves as a backdrop for Paul's exhortation to the Corinthian church.

Just as the Passover is a type of Christ, the Feast of Unleavened Bread is a type of the church of Christ, especially the holy life of God's people.

Listen to Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians

Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)

In view of Christ's sacrifice we need to remove the "leaven" of sin personally.

Throughout the NT "leaven" is portrayed as a corrupting influence and a symbol of sin. If the church is to benefit from the Passover Lamb, it must also remove sin from its midst. There must be repentance!

We must remove malice and wickedness in our personal lives
And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

In view of Christ's sacrifice we need to remove the "leaven" of sin congregationally.

Not only must we strive for personal repentance; but we must also make effort to encourage repentance in the whole body. We must refuse association with those who revert to the old way of life.

But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. (1 Corinthians 5:11)

Paul taught the Corinthians that their continued association with brethren who lived in sin would have a corrupting influence on the church and at the same time would not save the sinner.

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? (1 Corinthians 5:6)

Why the Corinthians were proud of themselves, I'm not sure; were they proud of their tolerance? There was nothing to be proud of; their indifference to an incestuous man in their midst was deplorable and needed action.

In view of the sacrifice of Christ, we must celebrate the feast of a holy living...

Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:8)

We must eat the "unleavened bread" of sincerity and truth. This is Paul's way of saying two things about the church of Christ.

We must be sincere people.

We must practice the truth revealed by Christ and His apostles.

We must do so with integrity.

It is the constant call of the NT

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Corinthians 7:1)

We must have something to sacrifice!

Though Jesus has provide a once for all sacrifice for sin, there are sacrifices that we make as God's NT priests.

“Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.” (Hebrews 13:15, NASB)

Like the Jews at the Feast of Unleavened bread, we too must give "as we have been prospered." (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

We must celebrate every day of the week!

Just as the feast of unleavened bread lasted seven days, or a whole week, so God's people must celebrate every day of the week.

Christians is not merely a Sunday religion. Our whole life, our daily existence is a manifestation of the appreciation we owe Jesus for being our Passover lamb.

By His sacrifice, we are delivered from sin.

By our good works, we display our love and appreciation for His deliverance.

But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Hebrews 3:13)

Conclusion: Every day let us put aside the leavened bread of malice and wickedness and “celebrate the feast” with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.