

The Feast Of Unleavened Bread

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[0 : 00] So I'm glad to see up here we have people near the front, but it's this orc around me. Our kids sometimes joke that it's like SeaWorld, you know, you have the splash zone. I'm like, I don't spit that far, but you know, the orcas are splashing people in the front row and everyone's scared to get that close.

But at a recent conference, I think it was Pastor Harry Reader, who's in Alabama, said that he heard, I mean, a joke, but the deacons were going to remodel the church. And the pastor really didn't know what was going on. And when it was all done, they brought the pastor in and he gets here and there's only one pew in the whole church. And the pew's the very back row in the center. And the pastor said, but there's only one pew.

What's going on here? He said, well, just wait and watch. And so the people in the church started coming in and they filled up the one pew. And all of a sudden, it moved all the way up to the front pew in the middle. And then a new one popped up and they filled it up, moved to the second row. And the pastor said, oh, I love this. We're going to have everybody up front close to me. He said, you think that's great. Wait till you see what happens to the pulpit at the 45th minute. So there.

[1 : 08] I don't normally tell jokes. That's it. You know, we're going to get focused. I don't want to take away from God's word. But just I was reminded this. Part of it is we're missing the dear Thompson's who aren't scared to sit in the splash zone.

But I want to encourage the rest of you. It's nothing wrong with coming a little closer. And as we go to God's word, I apologize.

But I made a mistake in what I sent to Jen this week. I got a week ahead of myself. The sermon text that's listed in your bulletin and the closing hymn are, Lord willing, next week's text in closing hymn. So it's good that I'm actually thinking that far ahead and planning that. But our text is different. We're in Exodus chapter 12. We're continuing our study through the book of Exodus. Exodus. Today we're looking at verses 14 through 20 of chapter 12.

And we'll read also part of chapter 13, verses 3 through 10. And our closing hymn will be Holy, Holy, Holy. Instead of what's listed, Greatest Life Faithfulness, in the bulletin.

[2 : 07] So let's read there together again, 12, 14 through 20. And chapter 13, 3 through 10. Amen. This day shall be for you a memorial day.

And you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. As a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.

On the first day you shall remove leaven out of your houses. For if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.

On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly. And on the seventh day, a holy assembly. No work shall be done on those days.

But what everyone needs to eat, that alone may be prepared by you. And you shall observe the feast of unleavened bread. For on this very day I brought your host out of the land of Egypt.

[3 : 07] Therefore, you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a statute forever. In the first month, from the 14th day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the 21st day of the month at evening.

For seven days no leaven is to be found in your houses. If anyone eats what is leavened, that person will be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a sojourner or a native of the land.

You shall eat nothing leavened in all your dwelling places. You shall eat unleavened bread. And now if you'll look down chapter 13, verses 3 through 10.

Then Moses said to the people, remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery. For by a strong hand the Lord brought you out from this place.

No leavened bread shall be eaten. Today in the month of Abib, you are going out. And when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall keep this service in this month.

[4 : 21] Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. And on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days. No leavened bread shall be seen with you.

And no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory. You shall tell your son on that day, it is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.

And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt.

You shall therefore keep this statute at its appointed time from year to year. Let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we ask again for your Spirit's help as your word is open for our understanding, who are a people thousands of years removed from this observance.

It's difficult for us to understand and comprehend, but we pray that you would help us to, not just to understand the physical practice but the spiritual meaning behind it, that we might worship you as you so rightly deserve.

[5 : 31] Be with us in the preaching of your word. Be glorified in it, we ask in Christ's name. Amen. So as we've studied through the book of Exodus, we've now reached the point of the Exodus.

We're almost there. We're so almost there that I skipped a week and was already ready to preach on the Exodus. So it's coming up, Lord willing, next week when they're actually leaving. And here we see a practice that's tied to that.

Last time we considered the institution of the Passover. And so that was one of the celebrations, well it was one of the activities that happened there, but an ongoing annual celebration of what the Lord did in passing over the Israelites, but taking the firstborn of all those in Egypt.

And so today we're going to look at something similar with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And I want to look today at its observance, and then go to its meaning, and then its application today, much along the lines that I just prayed.

How did they observe it? What was the meaning of it to them? And then ultimately, how does that apply to us then today? So first let's look at the observance of the Feast, what it says about how they were to observe it.

[6 : 43] First, as I just stated, it's connected to the Passover. These two are very closely connected, both historically, we know that the time of eating unleavened bread led right up to the time of the Passover in the historical observance or the experience of it there in Egypt, but also in the continued observance of the festival or the feast in the years to come.

They would be celebrated together. In Leviticus 23, 5 through 6, we read, in the first month, on the 14th day of the month at twilight, is the Lord's Passover.

Then on the 15th day of the same month, there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord. For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. And so you see the Passover then leading to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and they'd be celebrated together.

And so really you'd have eight days of this remembrance going on. And in verse 14 it says, it will be a memorial day. And that same phrase memorial is repeated in chapter 13 that I read.

We have Memorial Day that's coming up for us here in the United States. And so we have a sense of what that means. But memorial just means memory, to be remembered. And so it is a day of remembrance, we might say.

[7 : 58] A day to remember what has taken place. And this day lasted seven days. We see it repeated in chapter 13, verses 6 through 7.

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days. No leavened bread shall be seen with you. And no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory.

So, seven days. Now, there's probably a couple reasons for that, but seven symbolizes completeness, like the seven days of creation. And so there's probably a completeness to this.

There's an importance that it's done in such a way that they understand it's a complete observance of it. But also, a week gives you more time to remember.

You do this for a week, especially when it changes your diet for an entire week. It gives you time to reflect on what's happened, what's taken place, even more so than one day.

[8 : 59] And maybe our hamburgers and hot dogs don't do the same effect for us on Memorial Day that this would do. But a week of an altered diet, thinking about this. This isn't just a brief moment of silence.

I've said already, our Memorial Day is one day, but maybe if you watch sports or maybe in the school system you've seen, sometimes there's a moment of silence. And you may get 10 seconds, 30 seconds, sometimes even 60 seconds to take a moment and remember what's happened, maybe to pray to God.

But this was a whole week, even eight days, including the Passover, but a week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And it was to be a lesson to future generations.

Chapter 13, verse 9. And it shall be to you. I could even start at verse 8. You shall tell your son on that day, it is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.

And it shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand, the Lord has brought you out of Egypt. And so just as we saw at the Passover, this isn't just to be remembered, but it's to be taught.

[10 : 07] But you're to tell the next generation, here's what happened. Here's why we're observing that. In the Passover, we saw specifically when your children ask, because they're going to ask, why are we doing this?

Then you have the opportunity to explain to them what happened at the Passover. So too, such a practice would, even though not stated here, obviously elicit questions by the children.

Why are we only eating unleavened bread? Maybe they want some other food. Kids aren't usually particular and cry out for certain foods, are they? Seven days of unleavened bread might get old. And they might begin asking, you know, why can't I have bacon? Okay, maybe that's the dad that's asking that. But they're asking questions about, why can't I have some other food? Why only unleavened bread?

I don't like the crackers. Maybe I want the big bread. I like the big rolls. And so they begin to ask questions and it gives them a chance to talk to them, explain to them the meaning behind this.

[11 : 12] And in particular, the lesson that's to be taught, we see in verse 10 of chapter 13. I'm sorry, we don't see it there. I'm sorry, it's the end of verse 9.

That the law of the Lord may be in your mouth, for with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt. And so here's the lesson to be taught. God is the one who delivered us from Egypt. And he didn't do it in some weak and feeble way.

It didn't just happen that the Pharaoh fell asleep and we snuck out of the land. He did it with a powerful hand. And in that moment, you would recount not just the Passover, not just the rapidity with which they left the land, but all the pleads that happened.

How God showed himself to be more powerful than all the gods of Egypt. Everything that we have studied so far throughout the book of Etzies was to be recounted and taught to their children.

And even as I said last week, it's encouragement for us as well. By God's grace, I get one time a week, sometimes two times a week, to speak and preach the gospel.

[12 : 23] But you're with your children all week. You're with your families. Recount the lessons. Don't forget what the Lord has done in God's mighty hand in delivering his people. And in the future, this observance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread would always be tied to that.

It says Deuteronomy 16, 3-8. 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, so that you may remember all the days of your life, the day when you came out of the land of Egypt. And so again, it's always to remember what God did in delivering them from Egypt.

And we see that all leaven was to be put out of the house. Maybe I should have addressed this already, but just what is leaven?

What are we speaking of? Probably many of you are familiar with this already, but it's basically what we would, I mean, yeast or some form of a type of yeast that would cause the bread to rise. And so as we think of it, we can think of yeast.

[13:30] I know some of you are into making bread at home. Probably there are others of you who have never bought bread except from the grocery store. But you use yeast to make it rise, to make it the way it is.

And so especially in that culture, they probably were making sourdough, which the idea would be you keep a little bread that has the yeast in it, and you store it up, and then you add it to the new bread.

And as you add it to the new bread, that yeast then starts feeding on the bread, releasing gas that causes the bread to rise. And so you would pass that on basically by saving pieces of bread that you would then reuse and make something similar to sourdough.

I don't make bread, so I hope I got that close to right. Some of you can correct me when I got it a little wrong, but the idea is the same. They were keeping the yeast that they could then reuse. But when this wheat came, they had to put it out of the house, even out of the entire territory.

It had to be done away with. They had to get rid of it for the entire week. And again, very specific instructions about how that is to be done in verses 15 through 20.

[14:31] I won't go back and reread that, but you'll see there, they're told four times in those six verses not to eat anything with yeast. Twice they are told that if they do, they will be cut off from Israel.

What does that mean? What does it mean to be cut off from Israel? Look at verse 15. That's one of the two examples, not to mention chapter 13, which repeats it.

But seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day, you shall remove leaven out of your houses. For if anyone eats what is leaven from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.

So if anyone ate unleavened bread in the week, they were to be excommunicated from the nation of Israel, considered to no longer be a part of Israel.

Now we're talking nationally here. This is a people group. And yet we have to understand that Israel in the Old Testament is identified as the people of God.

[15:31] And so we have an object lesson. And again, it's hard not to get into the meaning. We'll talk more about the meaning in a minute. But we have an object lesson where if you disobey, if you eat the leavened bread, then you're excommunicated from the people of God.

You're kicked out from the people of God. You're considered to have no part with the people of God. And I think we can understand even, and again, I don't want to miscommunicate. Not all of Israel was Christian.

Not all of Israel was saved. But you have to understand as well to be considered no longer part of God's covenant people was to be accounted an unbeliever, to be cut off from even salvation as it were.

And so there's an object lesson here. It also, the idea of being cut off at other places in God's word in the Old Testament is tied to the idea of banishment.

You're out of the nation. You're not to return. And also even with death. Exodus 31, 14 through 15. You shall keep the Sabbath because it is holy for you.

[16:33] Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among the people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord.

Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. And so we have right there in the middle, it says that their soul shall be cut off from among his people. And before and after it, it makes clear, what does that mean to be cut off from his people?

Well, in that instance, it's to be put to death. Now, I'm not sure that that would be the sentence here with unleavened bread, but you understand the seriousness of the idea of being cut off. It could be as serious as a capital punishment.

You'd be put to death. At the very least, you'd be kicked out of the people. You'd be no longer a part of the nation. You'd be out of your house, your family. And so we get just a glimpse of the seriousness of what's going on here in the feast.

This isn't just a celebration. Could you imagine if our nation, if you didn't celebrate Memorial Day, we'd kick you out into Canada? Uh, right? Just for not celebrating Memorial Day.

[17:41] If you didn't observe this, not just one day, but for seven days, if you in any way violated this, then you'd be kicked out. We see in verse 16, it begins and ends with the Holy Assembly.

On the first day, you shall hold a Holy Assembly. And on the seventh day, a Holy Assembly. No work shall be done on those days, but what everyone needs to eat, that alone may be prepared by you.

This word assembly is in the Greek version of the Old Testament is the same word we would use for church. And I think it gives a good example. What is a Holy Assembly?

What is a gathering of all God's people together for a holy purpose? Essentially, they're having church. He's saying on the first day and the seventh day, you're going to gather together and you're going to worship. It's going to be a time of Holy Assembly, a worship service.

And on that first and last day, they were not to work at all. They were free from work to be able to worship God. The only work that was to be done was the preparing of the food that was to be eaten. [18:46] And so in that way, the first and the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread were treated as though they were a Sabbath day. But notice as well that the date is set for this.

and the date begins on the 15th or the 16th that goes to the 15th that goes to the 21st of the month no matter what day it falls on.

So even if it fell on a Tuesday, then that Tuesday and the next Tuesday would be a time of worship to the Lord. And you'd observe it as a Saturday or as a Sabbath day as they would normally observe a Sabbath.

So again, that week you would have the Passover. Let's say you might have the Passover on Sunday, you have the Feast of Unleavened Bread on Monday and the next Monday and you'd have the Sabbath on Saturday and the Sabbath on Saturday.

You might have five days of corporate worship in which you did no work but dedicated that day to the Lord. And then we read on the final day that there is a feast. Chapter 13, verse 6.

[19:54] You shall keep it until the 14th day of the month when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. And I'm sorry, that was chapter 12. I was looking at the Passover.

I thought the dates were wrong. Sorry, 13th says, seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord. So even though this is called the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the feast really happens at the end.

There's a worship service at the beginning, there's a worship service at the end, and then with that last worship service they have a church-wide potluck. I mean, something along those lines. They gather together and have a feast together as God's people.

And so, that kind of walks us through the observance of what's going on here. Why does it matter? What's the meaning of this? What's going on here? Look at chapter 12, verse 17.

And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your host out of the land of Egypt. Therefore, you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a statute forever.

[20:54] And so, the meaning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is really Exodus. It's salvation or deliverance. What are we remembering when we do this?

We are remembering that God brought us out of Egypt. That He saved us. That He delivered us from bondage and slavery. But why Unleavened Bread?

I mean, if we're going to pick anything to celebrate this, why do we pick Unleavened Bread? Well, that also is explained to us in chapter 12, 39, which I did not read earlier. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had brought out of Egypt, for it was not leavened because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.

And so, it's explaining to us why. It's because of the rapidity with which they left Egypt. And so, as they do this, they're remembering we didn't even have time to prepare bread before we left.

When God brought us out, He brought us out instantaneously. Now, remember, the pledge may have lasted nine months. It's been going on. But, we see here an importance of how fast they were brought out.

[22:13] God did this quickly for us. At His appointed time, when He was ready, it happened all at once. Now, it's also interesting, God tells them beforehand they're going. He gives them four days to keep the land and prepare for the Passover.

And yet, they're out in such a hurry they don't have time to make bread. And so, for many years, they will remember as they take unleavened bread that it's symbolic of their haste to leave.

They are to remember their quick deliverance from Egypt. as we think about this as well and think about the meaning of it, we are reminded of salvation.

I've talked to you all along that the book of Exodus really points us to God's great salvation. Here's a people in bondage, much like we are in bondage to sin apart from salvation.

And we need deliverance from that slavery to sin. We need salvation. salvation. and we're reminded that though God may work on people for years, when His appointed time comes, He brings salvation instantaneously.

[23 : 23] Our experience is much like that of Paul's who's walking in opposition to God until Christ appears to him and his heart has changed. And so, we're reminded of the rapidity with which God's Spirit takes a heart of stone and makes it into a heart of flesh.

And so, they're remembering God brought us out and He brought us out quickly. The Feast of Unleavened Bread also symbolized purity unto the Lord.

And I think this is one of the major points of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Leaven or yeast is an ingredient that produces fermentation. Really, a chemical process to make the dough rise.

And so, as I said before, they would allow a piece of old dough to ferment and then add it to a new lump of dough and that leaven would spread throughout all the bread. And so, you see that the leaven or the yeast grows and spreads throughout all the bread.

Jesus uses a very similar illustration in one of His parables about yeast and how it fills all the bread. And so, yeast represented the corrupting power of sin.

[24 : 33] And so, we're reminded, they were reminded, let none of the corrupting power of sin invade your heart, invade your life. It spreads. As we think about it in particular, with this first instance and then the remembrance of it, what corruption in particular are they to avoid?

I think it's that of Egypt. They were reminded to keep pure from sin, the sin and the wickedness of the nation of Egypt in which they lived. bread. There's this discontinuity with the idea that yesterday's bread is being added to today's bread.

It's not a new start. We're continuing on and using old bread with new bread and so a continuous aspect to it but also discontinuity with old and new being combined.

And I believe God's saying that's not going to work. Unleavened bread represented a new start. Go back to verse 2 of chapter 12. This month shall be for you the beginning of months.

It shall be the first month of the year for you. Here's a new start for you. This is a month in which you become a nation. How are we going to remember that? We don't want the old leaven. We don't want the old yeast of Egypt.

[25 : 53] We're starting new at this moment in time. And so again, think about where would the leaven have come from? All that they had to make bread would have come from Egypt.

If they had brought leavened bread with them it would have been the yeast of Egypt. And so they were to rid themselves from leaven and take none of it with them when they left Egypt. It's a new start.

And this really symbolized their forsaking and leaving behind all Egyptian influences that could spread and corrupt them. Now we know that as we read on in the account they're still influenced by that.

Right? They still turn back to worshiping false gods. They make idols like those in Egypt. And so that power is there. And symbolically the practice is just to remember but it can't effectively remove that from us.

but they are reminded of that year after year continually. That they're to rid themselves of that kind of corruption and those influences. I've said this already with the Passover but let me just briefly say it does say that this is to be observed.

[27 : 11] Verse 17 Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as a statute forever. Now I said this in the Passover maybe not all of you were here. Maybe it's just good to repeat it and remind you.