

## God's Holy Days: The Plan of Salvation Revealed

### Feast of Unleavened Bread: Putting Sin Out

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**About a third of the people in the world claim to be Christian. Yet festivals of the Bible, such as Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread have little or no meaning to most of them. In this chapter we continue our discussion of how the Bible's festivals and holy days picture the plan of God with a discussion of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.**

The Passover sacrifice instituted just prior to the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt was symbolic of Jesus Christ, whose suffering and death paid the penalty for our sins, making salvation possible. "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

There are spiritual lessons also in the manner in which the Passover was eaten. The first Passover was to be eaten haste, and with unleavened bread (Exodus 12:8). "And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover" (Exodus 12:11). The Israelites were to be **poised to flee from Egypt**.

Following on the heels of the Passover is the Feast of Unleavened Bread, during which no leavened bread was to be eaten, and leaven used for making bread was to be put out of their dwellings.

"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. 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. 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" (Exodus 12:15-17).

No leaven was to be found in their homes for seven days, the fifteenth of the month through the twenty-first, inclusive (Exodus 12:19-20). Note that unleavened bread was also to be eaten with the Passover meal (Exodus 12:8, 18). Though closely related, the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are separate feasts, each having its own significance historically, and from a spiritual standpoint. "This [Feast of Unleavened Bread] has been considered as a distinct ordinance.... The passover was to be observed on the fourteenth day of the first month; the feast of unleavened bread began on the *fifteenth* and lasted seven days, the first and last of which were holy convocations" (*Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*, at Exodus 12:15; cf. Leviticus 23:5-8).

The Israelites kept the Passover by sacrificing the Passover lambs and eating the Passover meal on the night of the Passover. The next morning they began to assemble and then began the journey out of Egypt the following night — the fifteenth day of the first month of the sacred calendar.

“And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might 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, having their kneading bowls bound up in their clothes on their shoulders.

.....

“And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves. Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years – on that very same day – it came to pass that all the armies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night of solemn observance to the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the Lord, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations” (Exodus 12:33-34, 39-42).

The unleavened bread reflects in part **fleeing Egypt in haste. Israel left the night after the night of Passover.** They ate the Passover on the fourteenth and departed on the fifteenth.

“They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the **fifteenth day** of the first month; **on the day after the Passover** the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians” (Numbers 33:3).

They began their journey **at night** on the fifteenth. Days begin at sunset according to the sacred calendar (cf. Genesis 1:5; Leviticus 23:32; Judges 14:12, 18). “Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the Lord your God, for in the month of Abib the Lord your God **brought you out of Egypt by night**” (Deuteronomy 16:1).

Egypt was given wholly to idolatry. Partaking of the society of Egypt is equated with sin. “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the **passing pleasures of sin**” (Hebrews 11:24–25).

From a spiritual standpoint, leaven in this context represents sin. Keeping the feast **without leaven** pictures **putting sin out of our lives.**

Having access to God's mercy through Christ's sacrifice, we are to strive to **put sin out of our lives**, to obey his commandments, to keep the covenant. “But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him..., To such as keep His covenant, And to those who remember His commandments to do them” (Psalm 103:17-18).

A lesson for us is that in regard to sin, we must not delay removing ourselves from sin or circumstances that would lead us into sin. “Flee sexual immorality” (I Corinthians 6: 18). “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry” (I Corinthians 10: 14).

We are to separate ourselves from influences that tend to lead us astray. Israel fled Egypt physically, but **not in their hearts.** We must make sure our hearts are not back in the world. Think about where your affections lie. Is your heart attuned to the world, or to the word of God?

“But you, O man of God, **flee** these things [lusts, temptations to sin] and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1 Timothy 6:11–12).

Most people are consumed with material pursuits, often money or the things money can buy. Money itself is not evil, nor the material things we have need of. But the inordinate love of those things is a root of evil (1 Timothy 6:10). If we set our hearts on those things, and put them first, we will be distracted, and turned aside from the way of eternal life.

“**Flee also youthful lusts**; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22). Avoid situations and associations that are likely to stir up lusts. Involve yourself in things that lead to righteousness and righteous conduct. Just as Israel left Egypt in haste, look at sin in the same way. Egypt is a type of sin and a system of lawlessness.

What was it like to live in Egypt as an Israelite? Was it pleasant? In one way, even to those in slavery, there was much that appealed to the flesh. Moses preferred the reproach of God rather than the passing pleasures of sin in Egypt. Sin is fun for a while sometimes. It may be attractive and appealing to the flesh. Israel had selective memory. In their trek through the wilderness they tended to remember the pleasant things they had experienced in Egypt — and in their minds glossed over the awful oppression of slavery (Exodus 16:3; Numbers 11:5).

The world can be very appealing if we set our hearts on it. Pursuing God's kingdom can be daunting, and often involves sacrifice, inconvenience, trials and difficulties (cf. Matthew 7:13-14). But we need to set our minds on seeking the kingdom of God anyway, regardless of what it takes, and not be distracted.

As God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, God also wants to free us from slavery to sin. “Even so we, when we were children, were **in bondage** under the elements of the world” (Galatians 4:3). This refers to the false systems of religion and government ruled by Satan, to which the whole world is in bondage, except for those God liberates from such bondage.

But those who are of the faith of Abraham, are no longer slaves, but sons of God; seed of Abraham; heirs of God through Christ. “...as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham” (Galatians 3:6-7). To become children of Abraham in a spiritual sense, and remain so, sons of the kingdom of God, through faith we must allow God's Spirit to work in us.

Once having made the commitment to follow the path of repentance, one must follow through, heed God's word and obey, or he can be lured back into sin and bondage. Keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread each year for seven days reminds us that putting sin out of one's life and keeping it out is a lifelong struggle.

Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth, to people who had already made a commitment to God, yet needed to further purge sin from their lives. “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened” (1 Corinthians 5:7). The Christians in

Corinth when this Scripture was written were, judging from the context, in the midst of observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and hence were “unleavened,” in a physical sense. But they were not yet entirely unleavened spiritually, hence the admonition to “purge out the old leaven.”

Paul had mentioned earlier in the same chapter that sexual immorality, incest, was being tolerated among them. They were “puffed up” by the leaven of sin (1 Corinthians 5:1-2).

They had yet to finish the job of casting the “old leaven,” out of their lives. They were told, “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” (1 Corinthians 5:8).

Note that Paul’s exhortation – virtually a command – to the predominately Gentile church in Corinth is to “**keep the feast**,” obviously the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The obligation to keep the annual festivals God commands remains under the New Covenant, as this and other Scriptures prove. And it is to be done with an appreciation of what the physical unleavened bread is intended to point to, hearts and minds motivated by sincerity and illuminated by truth.

The Protestant Church historian J.K.L. Gieseler remarks that in the second century churches in Asia Minor (where Peter, Paul, John and some of the other apostles had personally ministered) were continuing to keep the Passover on the fourteenth of Nisan. Gieseler further states, “In it they ate unleavened bread, probably like the Jews, eight days through; they said....” Gieseler goes on to quote Chrysostom writing in Greek what the Christians in Asia Minor said about why they ate unleavened bread eight days (*A Text-Book of Church History*, Dr. John C. L. Gieseler, Trans. Samuel Davidson, Harper and Brothers, 1857, vol. 1, pp. 166-167n.). Translated, “Because the Feast of Unleavened Bread is with [or accompanies] the Passover” (cf. Leviticus 23:5-6; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8). On the Passover unleavened bread was to be eaten (Exodus 12:8; 1 Corinthians 11:23-24). And for seven days during the Feast of Unleavened Bread unleavened bread was to be eaten (Leviticus 23:4-6). So unleavened bread is eaten a total of eight days during the festival period.

“Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed’” (John 8:31). We can truly be Jesus’ disciples only if we abide in His word. The key to spiritual truth is God’s word (John 8:31-32; 17:17). Jesus said, “Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin” (John 8:34). If one practices sin, failing to struggle to put it out of his life, he is a slave to sin.

Putting the leaven out of our homes during the Feast of Unleavened Bread represents the process of putting sin out of our lives. Once the Israelites began their journey, coming out of Egypt had its perils, but it was relatively easy compared with what came later. The hardest part was forsaking the habits and attitudes they had learned in Egypt. Putting sin out proved awfully difficult for physical Israel -- and for the most part they never succeeded very well in doing that (cf. Numbers 14:1-4; Nehemiah 9:17-18; 2 Kings 17:6-20; Amos 5:25-26; Acts 7:38-43).

Getting rid of sin is a process -- it’s a lifelong job that requires diligent, sustained effort. But the job might be made a little easier if we understand WHY we must put sin out of our lives.

Why does God want us to put sin out? Now you might say, "Because God commands us to." Yes, God commands us to put sin out of our lives -- but WHY does God want us to do so? God does things for a purpose. When God tells us to do something, it's for a reason, or more often than not, for several very good reasons!

Why then does God want us to put sin out? What is the purpose?

To answer that question, let's first ask, "What is sin?" The answer is simple. "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, KJV).

Scripture reveals essentially two ways of conduct. One way is expressed in the principles of God's law. The other way is conduct in violation of that law, or sin. God's law expresses a cause and effect relationship. Obedience to its precepts produces joy, happiness, and abundant life. Sin, on the other hand, produces misery, suffering, unhappiness and death (Deuteronomy 30:15-20).

Look at the world in which we live -- you can see everywhere what sin produces. The world is plagued with all sorts of societal and personal problems that are often if not always linked directly or indirectly in some way to sin. Among them are poverty, diseases, divorce, fatherless children, violent crimes, thefts, fraud, corrupt governments, ethnic and racial hatred, war and death.

As Jesus said, sin enslaves. It results in spiritual blindness (Proverbs 4:19; Romans 1:21; Hebrews 3:13, Ephesians 4:17-19). Sin produces unhappiness and suffering (Proverbs 5:10-11; Nehemiah 1:3-4). Sin separates you from God (Isaiah 59:2). Sin leads to death (Proverbs 13:13; Romans 6:23).

God's commandments, however, when obeyed, produce understanding and discernment (Proverbs 6:23; 2:1-5; Psalms 111:109). Obeying God's commandments produces honor (Proverbs 13:18; Proverbs 21:21). Obeying God's commandments produces health (Proverbs 3:7-8; 4:20-22).

Obeying God's commandments produces prosperity: (Psalm 1:1-3; Proverbs 3:9-10). Obeying God's commandments produces happiness: (Proverbs 3:13; Proverbs 29:18). Obeying God's commandments produces peace (Psalm 119:165). Obeying God's commandments produces life (Proverbs 3:1-2; Proverbs 7:1-2; Proverbs 11:30; 3:14; Revelation 22:14).

So why does God want us to put sin out of our lives? It's not because God is arbitrary, petulant or capricious. It's because God wants us to be happy. He wants us to live peacefully, joyfully and abundantly. He wants us to have good health. He wants us to prosper. He wants us to have wisdom and discernment. He wants us to inherit honor and glory and eternal life.

By striving to put sin out of our lives, and overcome it, with the help of God's Spirit, and only with the help of God's Spirit, we can do it (Romans 8:3-14; Philippians 2:12).

Ask God every day to strengthen you, to deliver you from evil. He will if you strive to overcome and cry out to him. God will work in you if you yield to him and seek his help.

The struggle against sin, with the help of the Holy Spirit, is an essential step in God's plan of salvation for mankind.

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