

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

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The Feast of Unleavened Bread commences after the completion of the Passover which occurs at the end of the fourteenth day of the first month in God's calendar (see the various Passover studies found under: God's Holy Days). The position of the festival of unleavened bread in God's Holy Day sequence is very important and in this study the symbolism associated with it will be examined. The real meaning behind this festival could never be fulfilled unless the Passover was completed successfully, because the Passover pictured the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ who came to satisfy the animal sacrificial system, making complete forgiveness of sin possible and reconciliation with Almighty God (Heb. 9:22; cf. Lev. 17:11). Christ stated that this was one of the reasons he came to earth as a human being.

Do not presume that I (Christ) came to tear down the law or the Prophets; I came not to tear down, but to fill up (Mt. 5:17; RNT; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Jesus Christ also pointed out that many scriptures explained the work he was to fulfill in order to make salvation available to all who have sinned.

You (Jewish religious leaders) search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me (Jn. 5:39; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. note in parenthesis).

For if you (Jewish religious leaders) believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? (Jn. 5:46-47; Ed. note in parenthesis)

Moses gave a prophecy regarding the first coming of Jesus Christ, and Moses described him as a prophet of God.

The Lord your (Israel's) God will raise up for you a Prophet like me (Moses) from your midst, from your brethren (through the lineage of Judah; cf. Gen. 49:8-10; 1Chron. 5:2; Isa. 65:9; Rev. 5:5). Him (Christ) you shall hear (listen to) (Deut. 18:15; Ed. notes in parentheses).

I (Almighty God) will raise up for them a Prophet like you (Moses) from among their brethren, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him (Deut. 18:18; cf. Jn. 8:28b; 12:49-50; Ed. notes in parentheses).

So Christ's coming to earth for the purpose of dealing with the sins of mankind was prophesied by Moses and fulfilled by Christ who came through the lineage of the tribe of Judah, which Almighty God describes as His lawgiver.

...Judah is My (Almighty God's) lawgiver (Ps. 60:7b; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Consequently, it is an irony that some religious people claim Jesus Christ came to do away with His Father's law. Instead, Christ stated in Matthew 5:17 that he came to fulfill a particular aspect of His Father's law -, the animal sacrificial system, which was established as a temporary means to deal with sin (Heb. 9:13). This system, often referred to in scripture simply as "the law", was meant to be a reminder and a disciplinarian (schoolmaster or tutor; cf. Gal. 3:24-25) that pointed to Christ's atoning work from the time that sin first entered the world (Rom. 5:12). Abel understood this truth and faithfully offered an appropriate sacrifice that pictured the future sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and it was accepted by God (Gen. 4:3-5). Ancient Israel was to continue this practice until Jesus Christ came. Hence, the command to set aside a lamb on the tenth day of the first month of the year (which corresponds

to March/April in the secular calendars in use today) and then sacrifice it on the afternoon of the fourteenth day (Ex. 12:26). This particular aspect of the Passover was to continue until the time of Jesus Christ. It came to a full end seventy years after his death and resurrection with the dramatic end of the sacrificial system, which was prophesied by Christ when he described the destruction of the temple. Once this temple was gone, the entire animal sacrificial system ceased.

Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple.² And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Mt. 24:1-2; cf. Lk. 19:41-44).

As John the Baptizer stated, Christ was the one who would fulfill the sacrifice of a lamb on the afternoon of the fourteenth day of the first month of God's year.

The next day John (the baptizer) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, „Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29; Ed. note in parenthesis)!

Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples.³⁶ And looking at Jesus as he walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God! " (Jn. 1:35-36).

Due to Christ's sacrifice, every person who believes their sins can be forgiven upon repentance because they will be covered symbolically by the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:22; cf. Lev. 17:11) is now able to be baptized (see the studies related to: Baptism). Repentance means being truly sorry for one's sins and turning from their old way of living to a new and better way - living in accordance with Almighty God's will as expressed in His law and commandments.

Therefore, we were buried with him (Christ) through baptism into death (symbolically our old way of living is dead and buried under the water), that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory (power) of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4; cf. 7:6; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).



AGAIN, THE NEXT DAY, JOHN STOOD WITH TWO OF HIS DISCIPLES.³⁶ AND LOOKING AT JESUS AS HE WALKED, HE SAID, "BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD!"

John 1:35-36

Once an individual has repented and been baptized, they are in a condition that can be described as "unleavened" using the Bible's symbolic language. To be unleavened means to be without sin and therefore no longer puffed up as a result of sin, because one's sins have been forgiven and thus completely removed (1Cor. 4:6, 18-19; 5:2; 13:4). When the apostle Paul was addressing some issues pertaining to God's church in Corinth, he pointed out that the brethren were unleavened because of Christ's sacrifice on their behalf, but he also warned them to be vigilant and not allow their old way of doing things to creep back into their thoughts and actions.

Your (some in Corinth) glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven (which multiplies and spreads like sin) leavens the whole lump (1Cor. 5:6; Ed. notes in parentheses)?

Paul was concerned that the brethren in Corinth not allow anyone in their fellowship to continue in sinful conduct because doing so condones wrongdoing which would likely lead others to commit sin. As a result, the original guilty party would also not be helped in dealing with their problem.

Therefore, clean out the old leaven (put out the old way of doing things, including the individual whose conduct they were excusing), that you may be a new lump, since you (who previously repented) truly are unleavened (were forgiven of their sins). For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us (1Cor. 5:7; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Paul was addressing this situation just prior to the Feast of Unleavened Bread because he wanted the Corinthians to deal with it before they attended this festival.

Therefore, let us keep the feast (of unleavened bread), not with old leaven (old way of living contrary to God's will), nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness (specific sinful attitude), but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (according to God's way of living) (1Cor. 5:8; Ed. notes in parentheses).



BY FAITH ABEL OFFERED TO GOD A
MORE EXCELLENT SACRIFICE THAN
CAIN, THROUGH WHICH HE
OBTAINED WITNESS THAT HE WAS
RIGHTEOUS...

Hebrew 11:4a; emphasis added

So we see the early Church of God kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread because it is an integral part of God's law, and it is the means through which God keeps His people in remembrance of His plan of salvation for all who have sinned.

As mentioned previously, this festival would have little meaning to anyone if the Passover sacrifice was not fulfilled. Thankfully, the Passover was successfully fulfilled through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This event does not abolish the Feast or make it of no consequence to God's servants. The Passover is now an

annual memorial to Jesus Christ's work and all that it signifies. This includes the purpose of his sacrifice, specifically, the future resurrection of God's elect and entrance into His kingdom. When Christ keeps the Passover with those of the first resurrection, it will be kept anew.

But I say to you, I will not drink from the fruit of the vine from now, until the day that I drink from it new, with you, in my Father's kingdom (Mt. 26:29; RNT).

Christ's fulfillment of his Father's Passover was also a prerequisite to the event pictured by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This festival pictures a people who are now unleavened as a result of Christ's sacrifice. They have had their past sins forgiven and are living a new life. This group of people began with Abel. He died faithfully keeping God's law, which is why he is referred to as being righteous.

By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous... (Heb. 11:4a; emphasis added).

Being righteous means doing what is right according to God's definition of righteousness. ...For all Your (Almighty God's) commandments are righteousness (Ps. 119:172b; Ed. note in parenthesis).

...And all Your (Almighty God's) commandments are truth (Ps. 119:151b; Ed. note in parenthesis). So, Abel and all those who followed his example of obedience to the law and commandments of God are regarded as being righteous (unleavened) and are symbolically part of the first harvest in the Spring of each new year. This is why the Feast of Unleavened Bread occurs at the beginning of the year, while the Feast of Tabernacles takes place toward the end of the year (see study entitled: The Feast of Tabernacles). The early harvest of people who are seeking to trust and obey God will be the

ones in the first resurrection (cf. Heb. 11). The apostle Paul confirmed this when he spoke to the brethren in Corinth.

Behold, I tell you a hidden truth: We (those who have repented of sin) shall not all sleep (remain dead), but we shall be changed – ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet (see the study: The First Day of the Seventh Month). For the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible (physical body) must put on incorruption (become a spirit body), and this mortal (finite existence) must put on immortality (everlasting life) (1Cor. 15:51-53; Ed. notes in parentheses).

When will those who are “unleavened” be granted everlasting life?

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep (died), lest you sorrow as others who have no hope (cf. Eph. 2:12). ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him (through a resurrection from the dead) those who sleep (died) in (following the example of) Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord (Christ) will by no means precede those who are asleep (already dead). ¹⁶ For the Lord himself (Christ) will descend from Heaven with a shout (cf. Ac. 1:9-11), with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ (those who lived according to the faithful and obedient example of Christ) will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them (who died previously throughout history) in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord (1Thes. 4:13-17; cf. Rev. 5:10; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

God uses the number seven to denote a complete cycle, as confirmed by the seven-day

weekly cycle. Therefore, the seven days during the Feast of Unleavened Bread symbolizes the complete cycle of mankind’s history. During this period many people will have been unleavened through repentance of their sins and believed that Christ’s shed blood covers all their transgressions (Heb. 9:22). These spiritually unleavened people commenced with Abel and will continue progressively until Christ’s return. Those who live according to God’s will, during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ, will be considered the same as those who were alive at his return. They will be caught up together with the others who have trusted and obeyed God previously. Being “caught up” is figurative language that depicts the transition from mortal to immortal (from flesh to spirit), and this will be a progressive process until the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:4-6).

In Leviticus 23:6, God’s people are told they must eat unleavened bread. This is an annual reminder that His people are to think about, and make a concentrated effort to avoid, anything that represents sin. Thus, eating unleavened bread daily throughout the Feast teaches us that we must partake of the unleavened truth of God daily - throughout our lives, as God’s people have done since Abel. In other words, their conduct in all aspects of life are to be in accordance with God’s law and commandments. Because human beings are weak and fallible, it is essential that they ask Almighty God to strengthen and help them in resisting anything contrary to His will.

Therefore, submit to God (recognize our need for Go’s help). Resist the devil and he will flee from you (cf. Lk. 10:17-20). Draw near to God (in prayer and thought) and He will draw near to you... (Jas. 4:7-8a; Ed. notes in parentheses). Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord (don’t think too highly of oneself), and He will lift you up (Jas. 4:10; Ed. note in parenthesis).

After the Passover that Israel observed in the land of Egypt, they were symbolically unleavened because of the shed blood of a lamb. This nation then had an opportunity to begin living a new life, but unfortunately they wanted to go back to their old way of living in Egypt (Num. 14:1-4). They did not understand or appreciate what God had just done in order to free them from slavery. It is no different in today's world because very few understand or appreciate what is involved in freeing mankind from the slavery of living in spiritual Egypt (Rev. 11:5).

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil age (spiritual Egypt), according to the will of our God and Father (Gal. 1:3-4; Ed. note in parenthesis).



...HE (CHRIST) BEGAN TO SPEAK TO HIS DISCIPLES FIRST, "KEEP YOURSELVES AWAY FROM THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES, WHICH IS HYPOCRISY.

Luke 12:1b; RNT; cf. 11:37-54; Ed. note in parenthesis

Living a sinful way of life is so damaging that Almighty God watched his son, Jesus Christ, suffer and die in order to free all those who want to repent of their sins and begin a new life. This new way of living in accordance with God's law and commandments makes the receipt of everlasting life possible, for those who do not seek to return to spiritual Egypt.

...but the ones who endure to the completion of this (age) will be delivered (Mt. 10:22b; RNT; cf. Mk. 13:13; Ed. note in parenthesis).

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened (understood about sin and repentance), and have tasted the heavenly gift (experienced forgiveness from God), and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit (after baptism), ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God (understood God's plan as revealed in His word) and the powers of the age to come (after Christ's return), ⁶ if they fall away (return to spiritual Egypt), to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put him to an open shame (Heb. 6:4-6; Ed. notes in parentheses).

But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity (sin; 1Jn. 3:4), and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die (Eze. 18:24; Ed. note in parenthesis).

All who are unleavened through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, must examine themselves each year coming up to the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, to make sure they are not partaking of any leaven (sin) that will lead them back to the ways of spiritual Egypt.

...he (Christ) began to speak to his disciples first, "Keep yourselves away from the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy (Lk. 12:1b; RNT; cf. 11:37-54; Ed. note in parenthesis).

It is not a coincidence that Almighty God uses leaven symbolically because a small amount of yeast (leavening agent) will eventually permeate a lump of dough. Sin works in a similar manner. A person can entertain a wrong attitude and not deal with it. Eventually it will grow out of proportion and lead to a sinful act. God advised Cain about this process as it was unfolding in his life, with the hope that he would make the

necessary adjustments to his attitude. Unfortunately, Cain ignored this advice and the consequence was deadly for his brother Abel.

A little leaven leavens the whole lump (Gal. 5:9). So the Lord said to Cain, „Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen (examine your inner motives)? ⁷ If you do well (take the necessary action to change your attitude), will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well (ignore the potential consequence of your attitude), sin lies at the door (your wrong attitude will result in the wrong action). And its desire is toward you, but you should rule over it (don't let it get the better of you) (Gen. 4:6-7; cf. vs 8; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Almighty God wanted ancient Israel to be free from oppressive slavery in Egypt and He provided what was necessary to bring this about. Their real slavery was to a corrupt system of worship. Therefore, they were symbolically leavened. God's people today recognize that they too were slaves who were symbolically leavened, and are thankful to Almighty God that He sent Jesus Christ to free them from a sinful way of living, through his sacrifice. This great act of love, mercy and forgiveness is remembered every year when the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread are observed. It is only because of Almighty God's plan to redeem His people that they can become unleavened.

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