

Message #19

Exodus 12:14-20

When Jesus Christ was here on earth on the very night He was betrayed, He celebrated the Passover meal with His own disciples (Matt. 26:19). At that meal He took some of the unleavened bread and broke it and gave it to His disciples and said, "Take, eat, this is MY body." Then He took a cup of wine and gave it to them and said, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sin" (Matt. 26:26-28). There can be little doubt that the Passover was a sacred ceremony that pointed to Jesus Christ. That Passover meal is first developed right here in Exodus 12.

The first thing we observe when we go down through these verses, there is a considerable amount of repetition. The instructions of **12:14-16** are closely paralleled by the instruction of **12:17-20**. There are some differences, but there are great similarities and the big question is why? Why is there so much repetition and restatement? The answer is **God wanted instructions of this Passover meal carefully imbedded in the minds of His people because this was a very sacred meal that memorialized not only the salvation of a nation, but the salvation of a sinner through the sacrifice of God's own Son.**

I believe this is the key to understanding this text. As we said, Jesus Christ, Himself, celebrated the Passover meal with His own disciples and specifically said it was all about Him (Matt. 26:19-29). The Apostle Paul, in the development of His grace theology, specifically said Christ is our Passover (I Cor. 5:7).

This was a very serious and sacred meal to God because it pointed to His Son and it was to be viewed that way and it was to be conducted very precisely. This was not a meal that was to be carried out lightly. In fact, right here in Exodus if a person did not follow the instructions precisely, he would be "cut off" from the congregation of Israel.

THE PASSOVER MEAL IS TO BE CELEBRATED VERY PRECISELY IN THE EXACT WAY GOD PRESCRIBED BECAUSE IT HAS NATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL APPLICATION, SPECIFICALLY IN POINTING TO THE SACRIFICE OF HIS OWN SON.

Now the feast of unleavened bread was a distinct and separate ordinance from the Passover blood that actually saved a person. This unleavened bread was to take place immediately following the shed blood salvation. So this feast is in the context of one who has already escaped the death sentence. It certainly remembers the sacrifice, but looks forward to a new relationship with God.

Now you did not just celebrate this any way you wanted. The specifics of this Passover were to be carefully followed and observed. Now I have carefully read the Messianic Passover Seder that the Jews celebrate today and it appears to me that it has become a ritual that includes many man-made things, such as drinking four cups of wine and the tradition of having three Matzah's (pieces of unleavened bread, a hard thin wafer) on the plate; one for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

They have missed the whole connection to Jesus Christ, but we want to carefully see it. As best as we can, we want to carefully crawl through the five facts of this Passover meal, which is so vital to Jesus Christ, Israel and to us:

FACT #1 – The Passover was to start on a specific day. **12:14a**

We may observe that **verse 14** opens with the fact that “this day” will be a memorial to you. Not this day might be or should be, but will be a memorial to you. Now in pointing to this day, he is not slighting the other days. It is just that the starting day was nonnegotiable and crucial to the entire Passover week. **The day the Passover Lamb was sacrificed and the day the blood was shed started a new Passover feast of unleavened bread.**

If you missed the starting day, then everything else would be misaligned in the nation’s relationship with God. The Israelites were to leave Egypt on the 14th day of the first month (**12:18**) and if you got the start date wrong, then everything God demanded to take place was not possible.

There is a specific timing with God for everything. For example, the precise moment Jesus Christ was born came at a moment called by God “the fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4). When Paul talks about the entire prophetic plan of God, he refers to it as “times” and “epochs” (I Thess. 5:1).

There was one specific day that starts a relationship with God and the start date is the day a sinner appropriates the blood sacrifice to his own life by believing on Jesus Christ. The day Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross becomes the beginning point of anyone having a relationship with God. It is the start date. Miss this date and you do not have a relationship with God. You miss everything else if you don’t have this date.

The point is God has specific timing for everything and the day that memorializes His Son is not celebrated any day, but on the specific day He ordains.

FACT #2 – The Passover was to be celebrated as a permanent ordinance. **12:14b**

All subsequent Jewish generations were to celebrate this as a “permanent ordinance.” Now we will admit that Israel has done a pretty good job of celebrating the Passover and they do it every year. However, they were not to just go through physical motions; they were to carefully understand the meaning of it. They were to think back to the night when they put that blood on the doorpost and ate the lamb and the unleavened bread. God wanted Israel to remember how He delivered her from Egypt and she has done a good job of that. But she has missed a key point. **She has missed the connection to Jesus Christ.**

The Passover is to be celebrated every year because God wanted His people to remember that He may be trusted to be the saving God and this clearly points to Jesus Christ as the Savior.

The problem today is Israel goes through the physical motions of the Passover today, but she has not connected the dots of the generational progression to Jesus Christ.

The generational Biblical progression would lead to the birth of a Jewish Messiah who would be the deliverer and ultimate sacrificial lamb. This Messiah would be the One who would need to shed His blood to save Israel. Had the significance of the Passover been truly understood, Jesus Christ would not have been rejected.

Douglas Stuart writes: “The Old Covenant exodus was the paradigm of God’s saving acts; the New Testament crucifixion was the ultimate exodus because it delivers not merely from bondage to human despotism but from bondage to sin itself, and thus it provides for life not merely in a promised earthly land but in an eternal promised land, the home of the Father” (*Exodus*, p. 282).

Israel has completely missed this point. Her entire salvation is found in Jesus Christ. He came to His nation and He shed His blood to save that nation and that nation rejected Him because she missed the significance of the meaning of the Passover in Exodus 12.

FACT #3 – The Passover required that unleavened bread be eaten for seven days. **12:15**

It is quite obvious from this verse that the matter of “leaven” is a major contextual deal. It is mentioned 8 times between **verses 14-20**. In fact, there are two different Hebrew words used in **verse 15** for leaven. The first is seor which refers to “old leaven” and the second is hometz that refers to sourness.

It was mandatory that no leavened bread be eaten and God was so emphatic about this point that He wanted it removed from the house so the temptation was not even there (verse 15). This certainly illustrates for us that as soon as the blood has been applied to our lives, we should quickly remove any leavened thing from our lives and house.

Now the actual leaven in Bible times referred to spores of yeast which we call “starter dough” today. It is fermented dough that was made in various ways. One way it was made was by airing the dough out in the sun and then to dip it in wine or vinegar and store it in a closed vessel until it went sour or fermented. Another way to make it was to knead flour and water, add salt and then boil this mixture into a kind of porridge and then leave it until it went sour. When leaven is added to bread, it causes it to rise and makes it fluffy and nice.

The big question is why was it so important to God that no leaven be eaten during the Passover week? There are at least three answers to the question:

First, to have an entire week when you are forced to make sure you do not eat leavened bread would mean you would have an entire week when you would have to think about the delivering power of God and that no impurity was tolerated in a relationship with God. People normally eat leavened bread. It tastes better and is more filling. So to not eat this bread for an entire week would mean you would reflect on what God did.

Second, leaven is a picture of sin. Leaven works silently and secretly and spreads and pollutes entirely and sin causes a person to be puffed up just as it causes dough to rise and be puffed up (I Cor. 4:18-5:2).

Both Jesus and Paul referred to false teaching as being “leaven” (Mt. 16:6-12; Gal. 5:1-9). Also Jesus taught that Pharisaical hypocrisy is leaven (Lk. 12:1). Paul taught that people in the church who were in sin needed to be removed because a little leaven, leavens the whole lump (I Cor. 5:6-8).

Third, the Passover is pointing to Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ had no sin. For an entire week, a mind that understands the Passover should reflect on the fact that in order to provide a sacrifice that can save from sin, the sacrifice must be sinless. There can be no leaven at all in the sacrifice that can deliver us.

God was so serious about this that he said if any partakes in an unworthy way, he is to be “cut off from Israel” (v. 15) and “cut off from the congregation of Israel” (v. 19).

Now the first thing that comes to your mind when you read that the person is to be “cut off” is that the person is to be “banished” or “excommunicated” or “executed.” It obviously was very serious business to partake of leaven.

In fact, if a person partook of it he was completely ridded from the society that was connected to God. Either by banishment or execution, the person who partook of leavened bread was to be completely eliminated. Ultimately it would be God who would cut off the person from the blessings so this is serious business.

This would immediately mean that this person was cut off from all potential blessings and benefits for Israel and many of those benefits were and still are yet future. Leaven puts an irreparable breach in the relationship with God.

One Jewish writer said that there were five categories of things that could get a person cut off from God: 1) Tamper with the sacred time of things; 2) Tamper with the sacred substance of things; 3) Tamper with purification rituals; 4) Tamper with worship and worship in some illicit way; 5) Tamper with immoral things and be involved in prohibited, immoral sexual unions.

In this case of eating unleavened bread, you have a specific time at stake and you have a specific substance at stake. So if one were to eat leavened bread, it is a serious violation of what God has prescribed.

What this shows us is that there can be no leaven whatsoever in any relationship with God. There cannot be any sin in the life of a person if that person is to be saved. There cannot be any sin in the life of a person if the person is to be blessed by God. There can be no leaven or sin because if one has sin, one is in fact cut off from God.

Now of course the main question is how is that possible? How is it possible for us to be in the presence of a Holy God without one bit of sin or leaven in our lives? The answer is it is not possible and this is why we must totally and completely trust in the unleavened sacrifice and Savior who shed His precious blood. That one is Jesus Christ.

If one does not trust precisely in the unleavened sacrifice of Jesus Christ, one will be cut off from God forever.

J. Vernon McGee said he had been in Israel when this feast was celebrated and he got tired of eating unleavened bread because it didn't taste as good as the leavened bread. The fact is the leaven of sin sometimes seems to taste better for a while, but it will ultimately cut one off from God.

FACT #4 – The Passover required that two days be deemed as very special. **12:16**

There were to be two separate days of corporate, assembly worship. The two special days were the first day and the seventh or last day. **In a true relationship with God, there must be corporate worship.** There must be a corporate gathering together by the people of God. For the church, this is done on the first day of the week.

The key factor of both of these days is no work at all was to be done. Now what is the significance of this? Why was it so important to stop any form of work? **The answer is because no works can save anyone.** Works could not save Israel and they cannot save us. So all work was to stop and the congregation was to gather together to think about the blood of the Lamb that saved them and the fact that nothing leavened can exist in a relationship with God.

Since we know that Jesus Christ is our Passover, we must wonder about the significance of two days. What would be the two days that would be critical to Israel's salvation and our salvation? There are several different possibilities:

- 1) The two days could refer to the first coming of Christ to Israel and the second coming of Christ to Israel. He came the first time and she rejected Him; the next time she will receive
- 2) The two days could refer to the two main delivering days for Jewish believers, one will be the Rapture when Jews in Christ will be taken to glory and the other will be His second coming when the Jews will be given all blessings in her land.
- 3) The two days could refer to the day Jesus Christ died and the day He arose. He finished the work necessary to save us. In fact, He cried out that very point "it is finished."

The fact that no work was to be done clearly teaches He has done all the work necessary to save us. There is no work for us to do. Those two days did it all.

On the first day and the seventh day there was to be a holy worship ceremony that featured no work and it also featured every single person eating and partaking of unleavened bread. In order to be saved, every single person must believe on Jesus Christ.

FACT #5 – The Feast of Unleavened Bread was to be celebrated on the precise day of deliverance. **12:17**

The precise day of deliverance is a sacred day. To save a nation or an individual, the focus is to be on the shed blood of a sacrificial lamb and the nonexistence of any leaven.

In other words, in order for God to save, there must be the substitutionary death of the Lamb who is without blemish and without leaven. There can be no sin in a relationship with God. Since we are all sinners, the only way we may enter into a relationship with God is via a sinless sacrifice. That is Jesus Christ.

The word “hosts” (v. 17) is a word that indicates that God wants His people to be a conquering military army and force. All of this is contingent upon them obeying His Word and in not being leavened.

The emphasis is that the focus on the shed blood and eating unleavened bread was on the very day of deliverance. This was to be a perpetual ordinance. There was to be a reminder that God delivered His people on the day they ate unleavened bread.

Again we must see the failure here of not only Israel but most people to connect this to Jesus Christ. This all points to Jesus Christ. It is true that Israel remembers her deliverance from Egypt every year at the Passover, but she has missed the full meaning as it relates to her eternal deliverance. Jesus Christ was the spotless, unleavened Lamb and when we partake of Him, by faith we are forever delivered from our sin. **This is an “eternal ordinance.”**

FACT #6 – The Passover is so important that the elements are carefully restated . **12:18-20**

This is basically a restatement of things with the addition of the fact that no matter where you live or who you are with, this Passover which featured the unleavened bread was to be celebrated.

(Reality #1) - Unleavened Bread was to be eaten for seven straight days. **12:18**

It is clear that the 14th through the 21st of the month were the specific days in which this was to be honored. The emphasis of seven days speaks of complete removal of leaven. Israel’s program will not be complete until her sin is completely removed by Jesus Christ. It is interesting that Daniel leaves one final unit of seven until everlasting righteousness is brought to Israel (Dan. 9:24, 27).

(Reality #2) - No leaven is to be found in a house for all seven days. **12:19a**

(Reality #3) - Who ever eats any leaven during this time is to be cut off from the congregation. **12:19b**

It does not matter if one is a native or alien. No leaven may exist in a relationship with God. There are no exemptions to this rule.

(Reality #4) - No leaven is ever to be eaten during this time in all your dwellings. **12:20**

It did not matter where a person lived; this needed to be obeyed or one would be cut off from God. Any relationship with God demands complete removal of all sin.