

GOOD FRIDAY: THE FEAST OF  
UNLEAVENED BREAD  
Lev. 23:4-8

INTRO: We have come once more to the day we call 'Good Friday'. It is the day we commemorate the death of Christ. In Leviticus 23, Israel's seven divinely appointed feasts are listed. It all begins with Passover, which begins on the eve of Nisan the 14th. The lambs were slain, to use a Hebrew expression, between the evenings. That is, they were slain so that the Passover meal could be prepared before the Sabbath began when and it began when the sun disappeared in the evening.

The Jews had a special preparation day for the Passover, which was commemorated in the evening. Actually, I understand that preparation for the Passover began the month before, the month Adar of which we learned in the feast of Purim. In that month roads and bridges were repaired and preparation was made for several million pilgrims to come to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem the law was that anybody with a home there made room for guests. And so, on Passover, families from all over the known world gathered for the Passover meal in Jerusalem. It is the meal Jesus had with His disciples that we call 'the last supper'.

So turn with me to John 19 to look at this preparation day (read 31). Nisan the 14th was the preparation day. Now you see, some think Jesus was crucified on Friday because this verse says the next day was a Sabbath. But this Sabbath was a high day, that is not the regular Sabbath, but the Sabbath that began a seven day feast, the feast of unleavened bread. Notice in light of this preparation day verse 42 as well (read).

Alfred Edersheim says this of the preparation day, "Early on the forenoon of the 14th of Nisan the feast of the Passover may be said to have begun. In Galilee, no work was done all that day; in Judea it was continued till mid-day; the rule, however, being that no new work was to be commenced, though that which was in hand might be carried on. The only exception to this was in the case of tailors, barbers, and those engaged in the laundry. Even earlier than mid-day of the 14th it was no longer lawful to eat leaven. The strictest opinion fixes ten o'clock as the latest hour when leaven might be eaten, the more lax

eleven. From that hour to twelve o'clock it was required to abstain from leaven, while at twelve it was to be solemnly destroyed, either by burning, immersing it in water, or scattering it to the winds. To secure strict obedience and uniformity, the exact time for abstaining from leaven and for destroying the leaven was thus made known: 'They laid two desecrated cakes of a thank-offering on a bench in the porch (of the Temple). So long as they lay there, all the people might eat (leavened); when one of them was removed, they abstained from eating, but they did not burn (the leaven); when both were removed, all the people burnt (the leaven)' (The Temple, 118).

Now, on the eve of the 14, when the sun disappeared, Nisan the 15th began. This is that high Sabbath John spoke of. So, let us now turn to Leviticus 23 to read of this feast (read 23:4-8). So, this feast began with a Sabbath, a day of rest, and it closed with a day of rest. This Sabbath could fall in the middle of the week and thus, the following week, in the middle of the week would be another special Sabbath.

#### I. SIGNIFICANCE IN THE PAST

So, let us consider the significance of this feast in the past. Let me begin by saying that Israel had seven feasts set out by the Lord. They later added Hanukkah, which is around our Christmas, and Purim. So, let us briefly consider here the first two feasts. Passover is the first. You remember that Israel was in Egypt. They were slaves to Pharaoh and the Pharaohs were brutal taskmasters. And God sent Moses to deliver Israel. And finally God brought about 10 plagues on Egypt, and in the tenth plague, the slaying of the first-born, Pharaoh relented and let them go.

What happened was that God instructed the Israeli's to sacrifice a lamb, and place some of the blood on the doorpost's of their houses, on the 14th of Nisan, in the evening. And that night, any house that had the blood painted on the doorposts, when the death angel saw it, he passed over that house. That is the Passover in brief. This account is given us in Exodus 12.

But let us read now of the second feast, that of Unleavened Bread. This we find in Exodus 13 (read 1-10). Now, before us is this question: If Passover pictures Israel's deliverance from Egypt, what does the feast of unleavened bread signify historically? And as I have pondered this, it seems to me that it pictures Israel's deliverance from the rigors of slavery in Egypt. That is its historical significance. Remember the historical significance for later.

Now, let me just mention that there were three very important feasts at which all Jewish men were to appear in Jerusalem. These are Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. The first three feasts all occur within seven days, so anyone coming for Passover would, no doubt remain for the other three. The last three feasts took place within 21 days, from the first day of seventh month until the 21st day. The last feast, the feast of tabernacles or booths, was once more a feast of 7 days, beginning with a special Sabbath and closing with a special Sabbath.

So, we conclude this point with the fact that the feast of unleavened bread, historically, speaks of Israel's deliverance from the bondage of slavery.

## II. SIGNIFICANCE IN PROPHECY

When we consider the significance of these feasts in prophecy it is important to understand that all seven feasts had prophetic significance. Let me say this first, that the first four of those seven feasts fell in the time of the grain harvest and they speak prophetically of Christ's first coming. The grain speaks of Christ, the bread of life, as I have mentioned to you that Christ was born in Bethlehem, which means??? (House of bread). The last three feasts fall in the grape harvest time and speak prophetically of Christ's second coming. The red grape juice speaks of wrath. As these grapes were trampled, the juice was splashed over those who trampled them with their feet. There are incredible prophetic pictures in the Word of God to this coming time of wrath.

And let me just mention here, that we will have communion this afternoon, and the bread will speak exactly of that which we have here said it pictures and the grape juice, or wine as the Bible calls it, speaks of the second coming of Christ.

So, before we look at the prophetic significance of Unleavened bread, let us consider the prophetic significance of Passover. Turn with me to John 1 (read 29, and 36). Here is the Lamb of God. You see, the day we are commemorating this morning is Passover. We wrongly call it Good Friday. And Jesus is our Passover Lamb. John said He takes away the sin of the world. When we repent of our sins, and believe in Him, He takes away our sin. Passover pictures the death of Christ and any Christian covered by the blood by faith is saved from eternal death.

But, the feast of Passover had its prophetic significance as well. Here is how it went. On the 14th of Nisan was the preparation day. We saw that earlier. Then between the evenings, that is when it begins to be evening and just up until the sun had almost set, the lambs were slain and prepared for the Passover meal. Then, when the sun had set, the 15th of Nisan had begun, and with that the feast of unleavened bread also had begun. It was then that they commemorated the Passover meal.

The Passover meal then, was entirely without leaven. I have been amazed that the Jews use fermented wine at Passover. They have four special cups, and those are fermented wine. That seems unbiblical to me, since they were extremely careful to remove all leaven, and wine has leaven. But here is our next question: since Passover speaks of the death angel passing over the homes that had the blood on their doorposts, what does the feast of Unleavened Bread speak of?

Go with me to Exodus 12. I want to show you something significant about how they had the first Passover meal (read 11). They ate their meal ready to travel. As soon as the meal was done they left Egypt. You see, the death of the first-born in Egypt caused Pharaoh to call for Moses that and they left Egypt that very night. That is why they were instructed to

eat the Passover, ready to travel. And that night, in the early hours of the feast of Unleavened Bread, they left Egypt for the Promised land. They were set free from bondage. They were set free from slavery.

Now as I trace their journey, it was the third day that they camped before the Red Sea. Three days and three nights have passed, just as Jesus was three days and three nights in the grave. And then, on the fourth night, the time Jesus was resurrected, they walked through their death experience and walked out on the free side of the Red Sea. And Pharaoh and his army, that represented slavery, were buried in the sea! Israel has been redeemed! And 50 days later, their next feast finds its historical significance. I will tell you about that at Pentecost, Lord willing.

Now let add something extra here at no extra charge. Of the first four feasts which picture Christ's first coming and were fulfilled at the very time that He died and was resurrected and ascended to heaven, we keep three feasts. We keep Passover. That is our Good Friday. We keep First-fruits. That is resurrection Sunday. And we keep Pentecost, of which I plan to tell you more in just over fifty, pence, days. But, we do not keep the feast of unleavened bread. Have you ever wondered why not? A good many times, I have wondered about that.

Well, I understand that the early Church kept this feast. There are several hints that the Apostles and early church kept this feast in Acts 12:3 and 20:6. But in our background, we have never kept the feast, other than that we have unleavened bread for communion. But I do not know why we do not keep this feast, and I might add as well that we do not keep any of the feasts that refer to the second coming. I think that is because they are as yet unfulfilled.

But I have pondered this as well: why was the feast of Unleavened Bread a seven day feast? It is interesting that the first feast begins with a seven day feast, and it begins with a Sabbath, and ends with a Sabbath. That means on the first and last day they did no work. It is further interesting that the last feast, the feast of booths was also a seven day feast and it began with a Sabbath and ended with a

Sabbath. And my own attempt at an answer to these two seven day feasts is that they both spoke prophetically of a long period of time. And as such, the feast of Unleavened Bread spoke of the duration of time from the death of Christ until the second coming of Christ, and this time includes the Church age. The second feast of seven days speaks, and I think, without doubt; of the millennium. And this is once more a long duration of time.

Historically, the feast of Unleavened Bread speaks of Israel's deliverance from slavery to Egypt. So prophetically, the feast of Unleavened Bread speaks of deliverance from the bondage of sin. I heard of a lady who said, "I didn't know I had a temper until I got saved." Passover will deliver us from such things, and Unleavened Bread speaks of a life free from bondage to sin.

### III. SIGNIFICANCE IN THE PRESENT

So, what is the significance of this feast to the present, in every day life? What significance does it have to everyday practice? Well, leaven, in Scripture, frequently speaks of sin. Leaven works like sin. It does not always speak of sin but it always speaks of pervasiveness. In baking bread, they would take some of the old bread which had already been leavened and add it to the new lump of dough. This leavened bread was so pervasive that soon it had the new lump leavened as well. It is because of this pervasive nature that leaven pictures sin. And sin, when it enters, begins to enslave. That is what happened to Israel in Egypt.

Go with me to 1 Corinthians 5, a New Testament passage on this subject. What had happened at Corinth was that one member was living in a very serious sin. And so, among the other problems Paul had to address was this issue, which he does in chapter 5. So, having told the Corinthians to excommunicate this man, he now explains why this is necessary. We start at verse 6 (read). There is the principle of sin taught by leaven. They needed to remove this sinning brother because if they did not, letting it go would leaven the whole church. And Paul says they should well know the principle of leaven.

So, look at verse 7 (read). Now here we have the clear teaching. Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Just like the lamb slain in Israel was slain to deliver the Israelis from Egypt, so Christ died to deliver us from sin. And having been saved, we are truly 'unleavened'. A Christian who is around other Christians and causes them to even lean towards sin, is a Christian who represents leaven. Let me ask you, what kind of influence are you around others? By this you will know if you are a sinning Christian or not. A true Christian ought never to leaven others.

Now it says here, "Therefore let us keep the feast..." I take that as the feast of Passover, or for us, communion. "...Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven..." So, when you take a piece of leavened dough, old dough, and place it in a new lump, it leavens the new lump. And then Paul shows us what this leaven is like in Christians. It is things like malice, and wickedness. The words translated 'malice' and 'wickedness' are two words for evil. The first word translated 'malice', Trench says, is the evil habit of mind. This results in the second word, poneeros, the active outcome of such a mind. All of this leads to a malignant life that corrupts others, thus leaven. The exact opposite of that is stated in the verse as sincerity and truth.

So, hold your mark at our chapter and go to Matthew 16 (read 6-12). You see, we do well to refrain from getting together with those whose heart is not right. Look now at 1 Corinthians 5:9 (read). Now, Paul makes it abundantly clear that he is not talking about non-Christians, though if they become a danger to lead us into sin, we ought to avoid them in such cases too. But he is talking here about those who are called Christians. So, let us read verses 10-12 (read).

Now let us go to Galatians 5 (read 1-8). Again, a little leaven leavens the whole lump. Now look at verses 10-15. Verse 13 speaks of liberty. That is what unleavened bread speaks of! When Israel had commemorated the first Passover, they were liberated from slavery and bondage. When we become Christians, we are set free from sin.

Now, this Egypt, or rather what it pictures, the world of sin; enslaves us through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. And in 5:16-21 we have some such listed for us (read).

But the good news is what experiencing the Passover does for us. It delivers us from such bondage and enslavement and brings about things as are listed in 22-24.

Maybe I could recommend one more reason for a seven day feast. It is this, that getting rid of leaven is a life-time process. It takes a lot of time. Passover, justification, takes but a moment of time. Resurrection with Christ also takes place in a moment of time. But walking resurrection life takes a life-time.

May I encourage you this morning, in light of all the talk on leaven, and getting rid of leaven? When God took Egypt out of the Israeli's, He had a life-time project on His divine hands. When He caused Israel to take the promised land, again He had a life-time project on His hands. When He takes the world out of us, it too is a life-time project. When He causes us to gain Christian victory, once more we have a life-time project!

CONCL: So, let us conclude this study of the feast of Unleavened Bread. Let me do it with the picture of victory, nikee! Let me begin by saying that victory over sin is possible for everyone. We do not all have the same battles, but we all have battles. And no matter what our battles are, victory is possible for all. I ask you, do you hunger for it? Do you thirst for it? That is a most encouraging sign. If you say, "Oh, what a failure I am. Oh Lord, deliver me from myself. Help me to overcome. I am such a wretch." If you say that, and you have a deep desire for victory, I am very encouraged. If you are here and you wish that others were the kind of Christian you are, that is a much greater concern.

Now at communion I have planned to share some thoughts from Revelation chapters 2-3 are. I believe they give us a picture of the Church age. The first church addressed is Ephesus. Look at the promise to the overcomers, the Nikee

people (read verse 7). Now look at the victors in the second church, the church of Smyrna (read verse 11). Now consider the promise to the overcomer in the church of Pergamos (read 2;17). Then the overcome in the church of Thyatira (read 2;26). Then the church of Sardis (read 3:5). Then the church of Philadelphia (read 3:12). And last, the church of Laodicea (3:21).