

Place: Lurgan Baptist: 22:1:2008

Readings: Ex 12:15-20 Lev 23:6-8 1 Cor 5:7-8

FOCUS ON THE FEASTS

THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

An African Christian once wrote, “*the cross of Christ condemns me to be a saint.*” The Lord Jesus died to make us happy hereafter, but He also died to make us holy here. Now that is basically the message of the feast of unleavened bread. While Passover is a type of Christ’s death, the feast of unleavened bread points to the whole course and conduct of the believer’s life from the day of his conversion onwards. Of all the feasts of Israel none shows the holy standard of living to which God call us more than the feast of Unleavened Bread. *Instituted by God and given to the nation of Israel it is used synonymously with the festival of Passover.* Luke tells us, “*Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh which is called the Passover.*” (Lk 22:1) Both the slaying of the Passover lamb and the Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorate what God did on behalf of the people of Israel when He brought them out of the land of Egypt, from slavery into freedom. (Deut 16:1-3)

In Biblical days the Feast of Unleavened Bread was observed for seven days, from the 15th of Nisan (March- April) through to the 21st. (23:6) Today Israelis and Reform Jews still keep the feast for seven days, while

Orthodox and Conservative Jews observe it for eight. Now five out of the seven feasts were one day feasts. Passover, Firstfruits, Weeks, Trumpets, and the Day of Atonement. The other two feasts, Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles were seven day feasts. *The one day feasts speak of certain acts of God, rounded off and completed once and for all, for example the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, which could only take place once.* The seven feasts speak of the results of those acts both to God and man. Now as I have said the Feast of Unleavened Bread was inseparably associated with the Passover, and the close connection between the two feasts illustrate the close relationship between the two truths which are here presented. **The Passover sets forth the doctrine of salvation, Unleavened Bread sets forth the doctrine of sanctification.** First there is Redemption the blood is shed and applied, then there is Rejoicing. We are saved from bondage and death, then we are strengthened to live for the Lord.

First the judgement is removed, then we in obedience to the Lord remove sin from our lives. You see, redemption should always lead to reformation. So the Feast of Unleavened Bread speaks to us of holiness. H. K Downie says this. “*The subject of holiness has been so obscured with error, loos thinking, exaggerated language and extravagant claims to sinless perfection that many sensitive souls, knowing something of their own imperfections, have shrunk from it, forgetting that however abused it is a scriptural doctrine. The standard should not be lowered because the truth has been so easily abused.*” He continues “*Here as in many other things we*

prove ourselves to be creatures of extremes, either claiming too little or claiming too much. There are those who claim sinless perfection. I once heard a man say he had not sinned for fifteen years. There are others who take sin for granted and leave it at that. Between these two points there is the happy scriptural medium.” So this feast speaks to us of holiness. Now let me substantiate that by explaining this word “**leaven.**” Have you heard of the law of the first mention ? It simply means the first time anything appears in the Scriptures. The first time we read of “*leaven,*” in the Scriptures is found in (Ex 12:15) and there they were to put it away. Now in the last reference to leaven in the Bible Paul says “*a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*” (Gal 5:9) Now what is leaven ? It is the material we now generally call “**yeast,**” and yeast is that substance that makes bread dough rise. The small holes that we see in bread are caused by the leaven, the yeast in it and a very small piece of leaven or yeast will soon affect a large quantity of flour. A small piece of leavened dough put into unleavened dough will soon leaven or make sour the whole lump of dough.

Now leaven is used in the Bible as a symbol of sin or moral corruption. Why does the Lord use this as a picture of sin ? To begin with leaven is a small thing, but it spreads secretly and quietly just like sin. Leaven infects the dough. You don’t hear the dough rising, but you see it rise. Leaven is small and powerful and it can spread quickly and when it spreads it always puffs up. Isn’t that a perfect of sin ? Do you recall Paul’s words to the church at Corinth ? “*It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you and ye are puffed up.*”

(1 Cor 5:1) There was sin leaven in the church at Corinth and the fellowship was infected. Leaven is a picture of sin. Sin gets into our lives very secretly, very quietly and it starts to spread if we do not deal with it. It will grow, it will puff up. Now of course these people in Egypt were not saved by getting rid of the leaven, they got rid of the leaven because they had been saved. You are not saved because you have out sin out of your life, you are saved because you are under the blood. But let those who “*nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*” (2 Tim 2:19) There is a very definite responsibility on the part of the believer to put away sin from his life. First comes redemption and then a life of holiness. Now bearing all that in mind I want you to notice here,

(1) THE MEANING OF THIS FEAST

Look if you will at (Ex 13:7) I want you to notice here.

1. *No leaven bread was to be eaten.*
2. *No leaven bread was to be seen.*
3. *No leaven bread was to be allowed in their houses.*

Now in order for all this to be accomplished they had to go through a process that was called **nullification**. This starts with a thorough spring cleaning of the home. All food products that may contain any trace of leaven are discarded. Using the light of one candle a search for leaven is conducted throughout the whole house. Any leaven found is swept up by a feather into a wooden spoon. The father then recites a prayer nullifying the leaven. “*Any leaven and leavening which is my*

possession and which I have neither seen, nor destroyed, nor known of, is to be as naught, and as ownerless as the dust of the earth.” It was important that the leaven be removed from the home before midday on the 14th because in Temple days the Passover sacrifice was slain in the late afternoon. Since the Paschal sacrifice is not to be offered with leaven (Ex 34:25) all leaven had to be eliminated during the morning hours. Now Lange maintains that the unleavened bread had a twofold significance for the Jew.

1. It signified the nation's separation from the leaven of Egypt, the leaven being regarded as the corruption of the Egypt and a symbol of the corruption of the world.

(Matt 16:6, 12 1 Cor 5:8)

2. It signified the afflictions associated with the flight from Egypt. The Lord said “ Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread therewith even the bread of affliction.” (Deut 16:3)

Now remember that the two feasts that is the Passover and Unleavened Bread were inseparable. Let's seek to understand this feast by asking a few questions.

(a) WHO ?

Who could eat ? Well, the answer is given in (12:43-51) You see, Moses makes it clear that no foreigner could participate in this feast. In other words, the Egyptians were not allowed to eat of this feast. It did not matter how rich, wise, educated they were, no outsiders were allowed at this feast, only God's people could share in this feast, it

was not a matter of morality, but it was a matter of birth. (Ex 12:48) If you were born into the nation, you were privileged to share in the feast. And is it not the same today ? The Lamb is a picture of the Lord Jesus, but those who are outside of the family of God and have never trusted Christ cannot feed on Him. *How can those who are not under the blood, not indwelt by the Spirit feed on Christ ?* Is this your privilege ? Are you blood bought ? Do you know therefore what it is to feed on Him ?

(b) HOW ?

How did they eat ? (12:11) In other words they ate this feast as pilgrims, ready to be called out at a moments notice. Egypt was not their home, Israel was destined for the promised land, and so they ate as pilgrims ready to be called out at God's command. Is this how we live our lives ? Do we live as those who may be called out at a moment's notice ? My we do not know the hour of our death, even more we do not know when Christ will return, but surely we want to be living that when “ *He shall appear we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.*” (1 Jn 2:28) Do you notice that they ate in haste ? My mother always taught me not to gulp my food. Since I got married it's no longer my mother but my wife. Like some of you I have a tendency to do everything fast, so this feast would have suited me, for they were to eat in haste so that they would not be caught lingering when the call came to move out.

Are you eating in haste ? That is, are you keeping alert to the fact that Christ may come ? Do you recall what Peter

said ? “ *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is too brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* ” (1 Pet 1:13) We allow our minds to get filled with all sorts of things, do we not ? Peter says, “ *Pull your mind together, your thoughts together, with shoes on your feet and staff in your hand get ready for His coming.* ” (a) (b)

(c) **WHAT ?**

What did they eat ? For one thing they *ate the lamb* (12:8) Now they were not saved by eating the lamb, they were saved by applying the blood. Some believers do not take time daily to feed on Christ. They say, “ *Oh, yes I am saved by the blood, but I don't spend much time reading my Bible. I don't spend much time feeding on Christ.* ” My have you left your first love ? Do you no longer have any desire for the Saviour ? No appetite for Him ? Did you notice that allowance was made for each person's appetite ? Look at (12:4) Not every Christian has the same appetite. Some saints of God are so filled up with worldly things, they've lost their appetite for the Saviour. But some believers so love the Lord Jesus that they feed on Him moment by moment.

They also ate *the bitter herds.* (12:8) This reminded them of their suffering in Egypt. In the book of Deuteronomy Moses reminded them time and again to “ *remember.* ” (Deut 8:2) We are not supposed to remember our past sins for God has forgotten them, but don't ever forget what your life was like before you met Christ. The next time that you think that God has been

hard on you, that the Christian life is too difficult just remember what you were before you met Christ.

They also ate *the unleavened bread.* “ *Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread.* ” (12:15) There was not to be any yeast within their homes for that whole week. They had to cleanse their lives and homes of any leaven. (a) (b) (c)

(d) **WHY ?**

Why did they eat ? They did not eat the lamb to be saved because they were saved by the blood. They ate the lamb because they needed the strength and nourishment for their pilgrim journey. My we are pilgrims on the way to glory (1 Pet 2:11) and we need to feed on Christ through the Word or we will faint by the way. Are you feeding on Him as a pilgrim ready to be called away ? Are you enjoying all of the Lord Jesus ? Are you being strengthened day by day as you feed on Him ? (1)

(2) **THE MENTION OF THIS FIGURE**

You see, throughout the Bible leaven as a figure of sin is mentioned time and again. Indeed when we turn to the Word of God we discover that there are different kinds of leaven that are mentioned, different sins that must be put out of our lives. You may be wondering. Why is my Christian life faltering ? Why am I at a standstill ? Why am I going backward ? Or you may be saying, “ *Why is our church not growing as it should ? Or why don't we have a living and vital fellowship ?* ” Perhaps because there is a leaven that has to dealt with. You see, we need

to get rid of,

(a) THE OLD LEAVEN:

Paul says, “*Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.*” (1 Cor 5:7) Paul is referring to that which belongs to the old life. Old habits indulged in before conversion are apt to reassert themselves in moments of unwatchfulness. Now this lesson of purging out “*the old leaven,*” is enforced by God in the book of Leviticus “*After the doings of the land of Egypt wherein ye dwelt shall ye not so.*” (18:3) You see, things that are looked upon with favour in Egypt and are looked upon as being alright with the world have no real part in the life of the believer. Paul says, “*Don't drag into your new life the leaven from the old life.*” Abraham did that you know. Twice he told his wife, “*Now we are going to lie. You must tell everybody that you are my sister. If you tell them you are my wife, they might kill me to get you.*” Do you recall that ? (Gen 12:10, 20:1-2)

She must have been beautiful for Abraham to have that kind of fear. Do you see what Abraham did ? He dragged into his new life some leaven from the old life, and of course it got him into trouble. Do you need to get rid of the old leaven ? Are their “*old habits and practices,*” that you indulged in before your conversion and recently they have reasserted themselves ? (a) What about,

(b) THE LEAVEN OF BITTERNESS:

Look at (1 Cor 5:7-8) Warren Wiesbe says, “*the phrase 'keep the feast,' does not imply that Christians today are obligated to keep the Old Testament feasts, 'keep the feast,' means, 'let us live our Christian life as a feast, free from the leaven of malice and wickedness.*” Do you know what malice is ? **Malice is carrying bad feelings in your heart against someone.** Whenever you hear that your enemy has had success it makes you envious, whenever you hear he has had trouble, it makes you happy. Malice is that grievous poison down inside that prevents believers from getting along with each other. Like leaven it grows and infects whole families and churches. No wonder Paul says, “*let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice.*” (Eph 4:31) Peter says, “*Wherefore laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envies and all evil speakings.*” (1 Pet 2:1)

Is it not amazing what some professing Christians have done and said in venting their spite against someone they disliked ? Some believers are very loud in their professions but very low in their standards. My do you need to get rid of the leaven of malice personally ? Corporately ? Domestically ? Gary Inrig tells the story of a man bitten by a dog later discovered to be rabid. Hospital tests confirmed it. The man had contracted rabies. This was at a time when there was nothing to be much done after rabies had set in, no cure had been developed. The Doctor had the bleak assignment of bringing the bad news to his patient. “*Sir,*” he said “*everything possible will be done to make you*

comfortable, but we cannot offer any false hope. My best advice to you is to be your affairs in order as soon as possible.” The dying man sank back in depression and shock, but finally he rallied enough strength to ask for a pen and paper. He began writing furiously. An hour later when the Doctor returned, the man’s pen was still flowing. The Doctor said, “ *Well, it’s good to see you have taken my advice. I take it you are working on your will.*” “ *This ain’t no will, Doc,*” said the man. “ *It’s a list of people I plan on biting before I die.*” My is the leaven of bitterness consuming you just like a cancer ? And therefore are you channelling your energy into snapping at others ? (a) (b)

(c) THE LEAVEN OF HYPOCRISY:

For in Luke’s gospel the Lord Jesus said, “ *Beware ye of the leaven of Pharisees which is hypocrisy.*” (12:1) Now the word “ *hypocrisy,*” (hupokrisis) denotes playacting. Before electricity was discovered which brought with it the many and varied sound devices used today, Greek and Roman actors wore large masks covering the head and face. Concealed in them was a mechanical device for controlling the volume and intonation of the voice. Hypocrite was the term used for a stage actor, hypocrisy is play acting, and it’s deliberately pretending we have reached our ideals when we have not. Time and again the Lord Jesus castigated the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. He cried “ *Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees hypocrites, for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead men’s bones and of all uncleanness.*” (Matt 23:27) They

had fallen into a lifestyle of playacting, of pretending to be what they were not. My everything they did, praying, giving, fasting was done in a spirit of ostentation to be seen of men. Now this leaven not exist today ? Have you never prayed to be heard of men ? Have I not preached at times and my motive was not pure ? Have we not given to be seen of others ? My if it’s done for the wrong motive, its hypocrisy and like leaven it grows. First, we pretend about our prayer life, and then we start pretending about our giving, and then we start pretending about out witnessing. Before long we really believe all of this pretence. Christ said, “ *beware of hypocrisy,*” do you need to rid of this bit of leaven in your life ?

(d) THE LEAVEN OF WORLDLINESS:

Have a look at (Mk 8:14-15) The Herods were a wicked lot but they held power and could dispense patronage. The Herodians could not see any sense in doing things that would provoke retaliation. Herod’s philosophy was to go along with the Jews to get what he wanted and to cooperate with the Romans to get what he wanted. He was a compromiser. The leaven of Herod is the leaven of worldliness. We hear a lot of talk to day that the church has to get into the world and do what the world does in order to win the world for the Lord. Do you know something ? The Bible teaches that the exact opposite is true. Paul says, “ *Be not conformed to this world,*” (Rom 12:2) We don’t have to become sick to help sick folk. We don’t have to become drunk to help those who have a problem with drink. The church has to maintain a separated unworldly attitude if we are going to win folk to

Christ. What about the leaven of worldliness ? Was it not Horatius Bonar who said, “ *I looked for the church and I found it in the world, I looked for the world and I found it in the church.* ” Then there is,

(e) THE LEAVEN OF ERROR:

Or false doctrine. Was this not was our Lord was getting at when He said, “ *Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.* ” (Matt 16:6) Christ meant the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matt 16:11-12) The Sadducees were the “ *modernists,* ” of their day. They didn’t believe in angels, spirits or the resurrection from the dead. (Acts 23:8) My is this leaven of false doctrine not still with us ? Was it not this leaven that had infected the assembly at Galatia ? That church that had been invaded by the Judaizers, the legalists who were seeking to add to the gospel. It was in that context that Paul wrote, “ *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.* ” (Gal 5:9) You say, “ *It’s not important for us to believe these doctrines.* ” Yes, it is, because if false teaching gets into the church it will infect the body, it will create problems, it will rob the church of power, it will grieve the Holy Spirit and the church will lose its witness for the Lord. Do you hear what God is saying to you ? ” *Get rid of the leaven, do not let it even be seen in your life.* ” (1) (2) But note finally,

(3) THE MANNER OF THIS FELLOWSHIP

You see, if we were to ask the question, how can we as believers have fellowship with the Lord ? This feast of

Unleavened Bread provides the answer. We can have fellowship with God when we walk in holiness. Do you recall what John says, “ *If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness we lie and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another.* ” (1 Jn 1:6-7)

***One cherished sin within the heart
One evil thought received
The peace of God must needs depart
The Holy Spirit grieved***

Now if the Passover sets forth the doctrine of salvation, then the feast of Unleavened Bread sets forth the doctrine of sanctification. Now the Scriptures teach three stages in the believer’s sanctification. There is,

- Positional Sanctification:

When any person accepts Christ that person is at once set apart by the Holy Spirit. Peter speaks about being “ *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit.* ” (1 Pet 1:2) Paul writes “ *And such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.* ” (1 Cor 6:11) Positional sanctification is the standing of every child of God. We have been set apart by God in order that we might live a holy life.

- Perfect Sanctification:

In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ said, “ *be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.* ” (Matt 5:48) Now while complete conformity to Christ is not attainable in this life it should be the goal of every believer. Paul readily acknowledged that he not reached the goal. He says, “ *not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.* ” (Phil 3:12)

- Practical Sanctification:

And this is the emphasis in the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The thrust is this “ *ye are sanctified,* ” therefore be in practice what you are positionally. Paul says, “ *For God hath not called us unto uncleanness but unto holiness.* ” (1 Thes 4:7) This is to be the Manner of our Fellowship. Now this truth is stated here,

(a) NEGATIVELY:

In this feast the Israelite was not to allow any leaven in his house. (Ex 12:15) Now let me develop that for a moment.

- There was to be no Leaven **Personally:**

“ *And there shall be no leavened bread be seen with thee.* ” (Ex 13:7) That has a personal application. No sin in your life. Then,

- There was to be no Leaven **Domestically:**

Look at (Ex 12:15) “ *Ye shall put away leaven out of your houses.* ” Does that not cover the family life of the believer ? Do you know what I have found ? Many who are particular about keeping leaven out of the church, are not so zealous about keeping sin out of the home. My the age in which we live is a difficult and dangerous one for our children and we have every sympathy with them in their problems and struggles. Yet the parents not the children should govern the home. As a parent what are you doing about the leaven in your home ?

- There was to be no Leaven **Commercially:**

“ *Neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.* ” (13:7) Do you know what I have found ? Christians are far more concerned about the leaven in the church, but don't talk to them about the leaven in their business. What about your business ? Is it above board ? Is it marked by righteous dealings ?

- There is to be no Leaven **Ecclesiastically:**

No leaven in all thy quarters. My do you ensure that all leaven has been removed before partaking of the Lord's Supper ? Paul says, “ *But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.* ” (1 Cor 11:28) Just as the Jewish home is searched before Passover dinner for any traces of leaven, we also need to search our hearts for any unconfessed sin before we sit at the Table. The Manner of our Fellowship is (a)

(b) POSITIVELY:

“ Put away leaven,” that’s the negative. *“ Eat unleavened bread,”* that’s the positive. (Ex 12:15) So often we pride ourselves because we do not do certain things, and let me say there is a negative side to the Christian life, but there also a positive. We are to grow, become strong, become more like Christ and how are we to do that ? By feeding on Him. The lamb roasted speaks of His Passion, the Unleavened Bread speaks of His Person. The One in whom there is no leaven, no sin. Christ in all His perfection is to be our food. Paul brings the two feasts together in (1 Cor 5:7) when he says, *“ Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast.”*

He is speaking of the continuous life of the believer as a festival, a holy day free from the sins he mentions. Is that you desire ? It was certainly the desire of Robert Murray McCheyne. Do you know what his constant prayer was ? **“ Lord make me as holy as it is possible for a saved sinner to be.”** Will you make that your prayer ?