

THE SEVEN DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD Is It Just A Legalistic Jewish Ritual Or A Lesson In Obedience And Spiritual House Cleaning?

Praise God, we have been passed over. We now stand justified before our God. The second death has no power over us (Rev. 20:6). How did we do it? We didn't.

The Man who was not passed over

Determined before the world began, Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb, provided by the Father, chose not to be passed over so that we could be. Thus, the meaning of that ancient ritual of the Passover can now be understood. The first born Son of God has become our Passover and salvation is now within the reach of all mankind (I Pet. 1:19-20).

It happened about 2000 years ago

Planned and set in motion before the foundations of the world our death penalty was to be passed over. It was passed over because the perfect Lamb of God took on the penalty that was adjudicated to us. He proved His love for us and faith in His Father by obedience. Because of His sufferings, many sons will be brought to glory (Heb. 2:10). It's a gift called grace. But, is there nothing left for us to do other than just pray and pay and have no say; which seems to be what much of the religious hierarchy would have us believe?

The Passover supper

We understand the symbols given to us by Jesus Himself on the night He was betrayed. The wine represents His blood shed for us; the bread symbolizes His broken body for our healing (Lk. 22:19-20). The washing of His disciple's feet demonstrates humility and servitude and what our attitude should be toward each other (John 13:4-20).

God's perfect timing

Certainly this lends credence to and sheds light on the appointed times of God as outlined in Leviticus 23. Obviously they each have a designated purpose and will be, or have been, fulfilled at their appointed time. Those who have taken the effort to study them understand that they outline God's plan for the salvation of mankind and the redemption of His world. We memorialize them by honoring them at the appointed time as instructed by God

The first annual Holy Day

We have just completed the first appointed time, The Passover. Knowing that each has a definite time and purpose would it not be prudent for us to examine the next step in God's plan; the seven days that comprise the "Feast of Unleavened Bread" that immediately follow the Passover? The first and second annual Holy Days of the year and the five work days in between are probably the least understood of all seven of God's yearly appointed times.

But weren't those days Jewish?

Some would argue that Christ's death on the cross ended all of that Jewish legalistic nonsense. But then, how do we explain that the First Fruits offering (Wave Sheaf), and the day of Pentecost were fulfilled after the cross, at exactly the time appointed by God?

What about the many references in the Bible of the early church being involved in God's Holy Days long after the cross? But do we have one specifically mentioning an observance of the Days of Unleavened Bread? Yes, we do.

Unleavened Bread practiced by a Gentile church

About 34 years after Pentecost, the New Testament church having now been well established in doctrines and ordinances, we find a gentile church in Corinth keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread. Paul angrily takes them to task - no, no not for keeping those days, but for not keeping them properly.

He admits they are physically unleavened, having removed all leavening from their homes. He then admonishes them for being spiritually leavened, because they are condoning sin in their midst by not putting the guilty party out of their congregation immediately. Read the whole story in I Corinthians 5.

In spirit and in truth

From this we learn that there is both a spiritual aspect and a physical aspect of obedience to God, both important in observing God's appointed times. We are told to

worship God in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23-24). But, how do we do that? We can certainly agree that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. One can say, I have faith, but where is the fruit? Truth is in the doing. Study James 2. Belief can only be proven by active obedience, as when God tested Abraham:

Abraham's physical obedience

God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his son. Did he say, “I will obey you in principle Lord”, or “my spirit is with you”? No, he proceeded to perform the physical act of sacrifice. Although he was stopped barely before the act was completed, it was enough to convince God that he would have done it. Only then did God say, “for now I know you will obey me” (Gen. 22:12). His obedience was proven by his actions!

Israel's faith proven by obedience

On that terrible night of the 10th plague in Egypt, Israel could have told Moses, “we believe you Moses, our God will save us.” But, would their first-born have been saved had they not physically obeyed the instructions as given? Belief must be accompanied by action.

Israel had to physically march around Jericho as instructed before the walls fell. Action produced the desired results.

Christ had to obey physically

Christ pleaded with the Father to find some other way to save the world, but there was no other way. He had to

suffer through the physical act of obedience in order to save you and me.

The apostles obeyed

The apostles were physically observing the Day of Pentecost in the right place at the right time when the Holy Spirit descended upon them. One wonders, would they have received the Holy Spirit had they not been observing Pentecost? Again, belief is proven by obedience, but obedience has been so maligned that it is now called legalism from many pulpits?

The pretenders

So what if I say, “Lord I believe you; I rejoice in your Holy Spirit. I am saved by your grace and not by works. Therefore, I consider your commandments, to be nailed to the cross (*a misunderstanding of Colossians 2:14*) and have no need to obey them, for then I would be denying the power of the blood of your salvation.

However, I will obey you in spirit and in truth. I will keep the spirit of your Sabbath days, but surely you can’t expect me to abandon my business or to do no work on the Sabbath. Why, that would be – ‘lee-gaa-liss-tic’.”

But it's by grace, why do works?

We hear so much about grace. It’s possibly the most bandied about word in Christian speak, yet the least understood. Earlier, I implied we did nothing to obtain grace. Certainly we can’t earn it; we can’t buy it, and we sure don’t deserve it. How then, do we obtain it? By obedience. “Oh, there’s that word again. Isn’t that

preaching legalism?” And yet, we must obey the requirements of belief, repentance, and baptism (Heb 6:1-2) or grace becomes stillborn. Even then, we must study to show ourselves approved unto God (I Tim. 2:15).

Listen to the words of Christ: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6:53). Wasn’t he giving them a preview of the fulfillment of the Passover and a description of the last supper? Do we do it as He instructed and demonstrated? That is total commitment, as displayed in baptism and Passover services, a physical act of obedience!

But didn't Christ keep the Commandments for us?

What do you suppose Jesus meant when He said, “if you love me keep my commandments” (John 14:15)? If one has been given the invitation and opportunity to accept Christ in baptism but, simply repeats the "magic words" and takes no further action, is he really under grace? I think not. Even Jesus chose to be baptized and isn't He our example? So we must conclude that there is something required for grace. It's called action i.e. “obedience”.

The passive Christian

A plague called passivity has run rampant throughout Christianity. But then why not, aren't they told right from many pulpits, that, if you are once saved, you're always saved, there is really nothing more required, that at any moment you will be raptured away to heaven anyway, and

that it's grace plus nothing that saves. Therefore don't be overly concerned, just pray and pay, believe what your Priest or Minister tells you and everything will be okay. But by all means, don't fall into that legalism trap of keeping the Sabbath or Holy Days.

As we are told in Jude 4 certain men have crept in unawares, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness,

One of their twists is the misapplication of the word "legalism," causing grace to be turned into a kind of sloppy agape or a greasy grace that cannot save. They speak against God's laws and say that keeping those "Jewish" days is legalism, and equivalent to depending on works for salvation. See what Isaiah 8:20 says about those who trample on God's law, there is no light in them.

Turning a blessing into to a burden

Legalism has been defined as paying strict attention to the letter of the law while minimizing the spirit of the law. Jesus made this point to the Pharisees when He told them that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. The Jews had transformed the blessing of God's Sabbath into a burden instead of the joy He had intended it to be. But it is also wrong to ignore the letter of the law.

God's laws are given to man as a blessing that if followed will lead to a long, healthy, happy life. Listen to what John says about God's law: "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are *not grievous*" (I John 5:3).

But can't we just keep those days in spirit?

If I say, “I will keep the spirit of your Feast of Unleavened Bread, Lord” but then I don’t follow through with the physical act to remove leaven from my life who am I fooling? Where is the truth that proves my spirit, the action that proves my faith? It’s called “Obedience”! To borrow an old adage, “the proof is in the doing.” Could that be the missing element in many Christians lives? Study Matthew 7:15-24.

Making it personal

What would your spouse think if you said, “I am keeping the spirit of our marriage vows dear,” while you caroused around town? What did He say about those who say they know Him but do not physically and spiritually keep His commandments (I John 2-4)? He calls them liars. How can you worship Him in spirit and truth while you are physically lying? The physical and the spiritual go together. You can’t separate them. Grace is not a substitute for obedience. Much of Christianity has turned grace into lasciviousness just as prophesied in Jude 4.

The benefit of doing

By using leavening as a symbol of sin, the seven-day period of striving to live an unleavened life in this world of sin and temptation is a great teaching tool. It is a shadow of our striving to live a sinless life after being cleansed of all sin by Christ’s sacrifice for us. It teaches us, by example, how easy it is, even after being cleansed, to fall back into sin. It reminds us that we’re not there yet

and that Satan as a roaring lion is still seeking those he might destroy (I Pet. 5:8).

You may be surprised that, try as you may, you will find that you have not been able to eliminate all leavening from yourself or your household. But that's the point. It teaches you, by example, how sin hides in your life and how easily it slips back into your life without you realizing it. Remember the words of Jesus, "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). The Feast of Unleavened Bread was designed to help us endure. It is a sign in your hand (performance) and a memorial between your eyes (understanding) (Ex. 13:9).

How we learn

Teachers know that we learn by using our five senses. When we physically obey a commandment, we employ most of our five senses as well as our spirit. The more we use them the easier it is for us to learn. We learn by doing.

Repetition is another learning tool that God uses. Every seventh day is a reminder that He is our God and we are His chosen ones (Ex. 31:13). It also gives us a preview of his coming kingdom in the millennium.

He reminds us of His plan of salvation by the yearly repetition of His annual commanded assemblies.

The annual repetition of partaking of the bread and wine on the anniversary of the night He was betrayed (I Cor. 11:20) keeps us from forgetting that He and He alone

paid the price for our salvation whereby we obtain our perfection.

The annual repetition of feasting on unleavened bread helps us to keep in mind that we must continually, throughout our life, feast on the unleavened bread of God's pure word of truth. Christ is the word of God, and He is the bread of life. That is also why we observe His New Testament Passover exactly as He instructed, on the anniversary of the night He was betrayed; not by sacrificing a lamb (since He was the fulfillment of that) but with the wine, the unleavened bread and the foot washing.

The leavening of this world

Jesus had much to say about the leavening of this world. The literal leaven is a shadow of the spiritual leaven we are to beware of, i.e. the leaven of: Herod, deception, slyness and *worldliness* (Mk. 6:14-28; 8:15); the Sadducees, rejection of the spiritual and supernatural, *modernism* (Mt. 16:6-12); the Pharisees, *hypocrisy* (Lk. 12:1); Corinth, pride, wickedness, malice, *sensuality* (I Cor. 4:18-19; 5:1-13); Galatians, *legalism* (Gal. 5:9).

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock." (Matt 7:24).

Let us be diligent in observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread as instructed in Leviticus 23:6-8, not like the Corinthians, but by both, spiritually and physically feasting on the unleavened bread of God's word, avoiding

all semblance of the leavening of this world. Having been cleansed, why would we, like dogs, return to our own vomit (Prov. 26:11)? Let's use this time as a pattern for our life here on earth, of worshipping God in spirit and in truth. Let's keep Paul's words in mind, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you" (I Cor 11:1-2).

Christ kept them, Paul kept them, and the early church kept them. Should not we follow their example?

Take James 2 to heart and let our actions, our works and our obedience prove our faith.

OBEDIENCE TO GOD IS NOT LEGALISM!

Leavening, A Perfect Example Of Sin

Some leavening is classified as fungus, an ever-present single celled organism with characteristics resembling both animal and vegetable. Some fungi are beneficial and some are destructive. Their cellular structure is so small it can only be seen through a microscope. They grow best in darkness, but lacking chlorophyll cannot produce their own food. They must get their nourishment from their host, and under suitable conditions can quickly take over their host. As fungi feeds it expels carbon dioxide gas, which forms bubbles and causes the host to swell to many times its original size, but it's mostly gas. The destructive types cause decay; corruption, spoilage and can completely change and even destroy their host. What an apt description of sin.

Interestingly, a tiny insignificant little sin can quickly grow and become a controlling influence in one's life. It works best in darkness unnoticed; it must have a host to be effective. One must constantly be on the alert to detect sin in his life and usually it must be revealed to him. As it feeds on the mind it swells a person up with pride and fools him into thinking that he is far better than he is. It corrupts the mind and will completely change a person's personality and thought process to the extent that he will not be able to distinguish right from wrong or truth from error, eventually destroying him.

Is it any wonder why God chose leaven to illustrate how sin can and will destroy our lives if we take no effort to obey the directions for life that He has given us.

The promise given to each of the seven churches of revelation was made only to "him that overcomes". The repetitious observance of the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread is given to us as an aid so that we can overcome.

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