

MINISTUDY The Feast of Unleavened Bread Our Part in Gods Master Plan

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Last month we learned that the Passover, the first of God's commanded annual festivals (Lev. 23), is the beginning, the very first step, in God's great master plan of salvation for mankind. It was Jesus Christ, "our Passover" (I Cor. 5:7), who died for our past sins. But accepting Christ's sacrifice to pay for our sins is not enough.

Once we have repented of our sins and been forgiven by God, we must strive to forsake sin completely. We must come out of this world's ways of sin (Rev. 18:4) - just as Israel left Egypt, a type of sin (Heb. 11:25-26) - and stay out. We must be putting all sin away from us. That is our part in God's master plan.

To help keep us in the knowledge of the second step in His plan, God gave His Church the annual Feast of Unleavened Bread. The observance of this Feast impresses upon us that we must strive not to return to the sins Christ paid for with His shed blood. Let's understand.

1. What Feast did God command the Israelites to keep immediately after the Passover? Ex. 12:17, Lev. 23:6. Were they to keep the Feast just this one time? Ex. 12:17, 13:10.

Notice that the Feast of Unleavened Bread was given by God before the people reached Mt. Sinai - before they even left the land of Egypt. It was also to be kept by all their succeeding generations forever.

2. For how many days is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to continue? Compare Exodus 12:15 with Exodus 34:18 and Numbers 28:16-17. Read also Deuteronomy 16:3-4. Were the first and seventh days set apart as "holy" days on which the people were to assemble themselves, much the same as they would on a weekly Sabbath day? Ex. 12:16, Lev. 23:3, 7-8.

The first month of the Hebrew calendar, which God inspired the Jews to preserve for New Testament Christians today, was called Abib or Nisan in Hebrew. It corresponds to the time that will fall variously during the months of March and April of the Roman calendar today. The Feast of Unleavened Bread therefore begins on the 15th of Abib, immediately after the Passover. It continues for seven days until the 21st of Abib. Both the 15th and the 21st are special Sabbaths - annual "holy convocations" - days of rest and worship of God.

3. Were the Israelites to put all leaven and leavened food out of their homes and property during the seven Days of Unleavened Bread? Ex. 12:15, 13:7. Deut. 18:4

A leavening agent is any substance used to puff up - to produce fermentation, causing dough to rise. Yeast, baking soda and baking powder are leavening agents.

4. Is leaven clearly a symbol for sin? Matt. 16:6, 11-12, Luke 12:1, 1 Cor. 5:8.

Leaven is often referred to in the Bible as a type of sin. Leaven puffs up, and so does sin. Unleavened bread is a flat bread that contains no leavening agent, and therefore typifies the absence of sin. And since 7 is God's special number signifying completion or perfection, God wants His people to strive to put sin completely out of their lives.

S. Does God specifically command His people to eat unleavened bread during this Festival? Ex. 12:15, 19-20, Lev. 23:6.

The Israelites were not merely to expunge all leavening and leavened foods from their property. That would have only symbolized putting away sin. They were commanded to eat unleavened bread during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This act of eating unleavened bread symbolizes the opposite of sin - obedience to God.

6. Upon one's repentance, Christ's sacrifice blots out all his past sins. When Paul asked If we should continue in sin, what did he answer? Rom. 8:15-16. What was his apostolic command? Verses 11-13.

Christ died so that we would not have to pay the penalty of eternal death (Rom. 6:23). Now God expects us to obey His law - to "unleaven" our lives. God does not want us to continue in sin, for Christ is not the minister of sin (Gal. 2:17).

7. Did Paul, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, say New Testament Christians should keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread? I Cor. 5:8.

Here is a direct command to keep these Days of Unleavened Breads Notice what Paul teaches New Testament Christians about becoming "unleavened."

8. Were the Corinthians permitting a person who was openly practicing sin to fellowship with God's Church? Verse 1.

9. Was this sin in their midst causing them to feel guilty, or was it rather causing them to become vain - to be "puffed up"? Verse 2. Did they think that they could be more forgiving and therefore more righteous than God by allowing this fornicator to remain in the Church? Same verse.

10. Paul, knowing that this sin was causing foolish members to swell with vanity and become puffed up, gave them specific instructions. What were those instructions? I Cor. 5:3-5.

11. Does the apostle Paul compare this sinning member to a little bit of leaven? Verse 8. Again, what is his instruction? Verses 7-8.

Paul explains that just a small amount of leaven - a sinful person, by analogy - can cause the whole lump of dough - the whole Church, again by analogy - to become saturated with sin. Permitting sin to continue unabated and openly before all the congregation would, in time, have caused others to gradually let down and begin slipping back into former sins. Sin would thus spread in the lives of other Christians by the bad example of just one, as certainly as a little leavening in bread dough eventually causes the whole loaf to rise - to become puffed up.

Paul therefore commanded the Corinthian church members to put out the sinful, spiritually "leavened" member of their congregation (verse 7) so the Church might be spiritually "unleavened."

12. What did Paul say that clearly shows the Church was, at the moment he wrote. keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread?

Verse 7. Notice the words "since you truly are unleavened."

The apostle Paul was telling them to put out this spiritual leaven just as they had already put out all physical leaven in preparation for this Festival. They were to keep the Feast not only with unleavened flat bread, but with the spiritually "unleavened" attitude of sincerity and truth.

13. Was Moses faced with choosing between the licentious sins of Egypt and serving God? Heb. 11:24-26. Did this mean he would suffer with God's people? Verse 25. Why was Moses willing to make such a choice? Verse 26.

Moses knew that to inherit eternal life in God's Kingdom he had to utterly forsake the ways of sin.

14. Does God want Christians to forsake this world's ways of sin as Moses did? Rev. 18:4, Heb. 12:1-4. Are we to continually "strive" - to expend effort and energy - to put sin out of our lives as it crops up? Heb. 12:1, 4.

If we are to receive the gift of eternal life and become members of God's Family, we must prove our willingness to obey God here and now by striving to get the spiritual leaven of sin out of our lives. This is our part in God's great master plan, as pictured by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Thus at this time every spring, we are to renew our resolve to live in harmony with God's laws henceforth - to rededicate our lives to continual spiritual growth.

But God knows that to overcome and obey Him we need His spiritual help. Therefore He promises to give us the power of His Holy Spirit. In the following Ministudy we'll learn about the third festival, picturing the next step in God's master plan for our spiritual creation. ????????

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