*Introduction*

Yesterday evening we looked at the Passover, the first feast of the new religious year for the Jews. The remembrance of the night when the angel of death passed over Egypt killing the firstborn of all in the land, both human and animal. This was also the time that the Israelites became a Nation in their own right and free from the slavery of Egypt.

The blood of the Lamb was taken and using hyssop, was sprinkled on the door posts and lintel of the doors to the houses of the Israelites. It was this blood that spared them from death. In the same way we saw that Jesus’ shed blood, when applied tour lives, saves us from the wrath to come and gives us life.

This morning we look at the second of the Lord’s feasts, the feast of unleavened bread.

This feast is named after the bread which is required to be eaten during the holiday period – unleavened bread, bread without yeast. The Hebrew Scriptures call this feast *Hag Hamatzot. Matzah* and the plural *Matzot* are the Hebrew words for unleavened bread.

**The meaning of the feast**

This feast is a reminder of God’s miraculous deliverance from the bondage of the Egyptians, for when the Israelites left Egypt in the middle of the night, in a rush, there was no time for the bread dough to rise.

***DT 16:1-8 Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night. Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the LORD thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place his name there. Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life. And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast seven days; neither shall there any thing of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning. Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee: But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt. And thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents. Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread: and on the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work therein.***

***EX 12:37-39 And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle. And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual.***

**The timing of the feast**

The Passover was to take place on the 14th day of Nisan. The fast of unleavened bread on the 15th day of Nisan and it would last for 7 days.

Today, the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread are blurred together and are known collectively as the 8 days of Passover. In Jesus’ day it was also common to call all eight days as the feast of unleavened bread.

We have two references to this in Luke:

***LK 22:1 Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.***

***LK 22:7 Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed.***

This feast is a prominent feast, unlike the other feasts that were instituted in Leviticus 23, this one, along with the Passover was instituted prior to the exodus from Egypt. We read of it in Ex 12:14-20.

Unleavened bread is the first of the three annual pilgrimage feasts, the others being the feast of weeks and Tabernacles. On these feasts all the Jewish men were required to present themselves before the Lord at the Temple.

***DT 16:16-17 Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty: Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee.***

Jesus and his parents also kept this feast and we have recorded that when Jesus was just twelve years old he had gone on such a pilgrimage with his mother and father and on the way home, they found him missing from the group.

Where was he – at the Temple, about His Father’s business. They found him after 3 days.

This incident, only recorded by Luke, has hidden meaning. I would recommend to you a book entitled “The Restored Vision” by A E Ware which sets out the Chronology of Jesus’ life and clearly shows that Jesus was in the Temple on his twelth birthday at 6pm the time of the slaughter of the paschal lamb at Passover, to present himself to God his Father as the one willing to be the sacrifice for the sins of the world, and after 3 days his earthly Father and Mother found him again. A representation of the three days in the grave.

The Biblical record gives three instructions for this feast of unleavened bread. Special sacrifices were to be offered in the temple on each day of the feast, the first and seventh days of the feasts were Sabbaths and no work was to be carried out and leaven was totally forbidden throughout the days of the feast.

It was unlawful for the Israelites to even have leaven in their possession during this time;

***Ex 12:15 Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.***

***Ex 13:7 Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.***

In Deuteronomy it goes even further to show the extent of this restriction:

***DEUT 16:4 And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast seven days;*** (coast = territory)

Gods command leaves no room for debate, any leaven, no matter how small was permitted. They must not eat it, have it or touch it or look at it. It had to be got rid of or you would break the commandment.

**Modern observance**

Jewish people who observe the feast of unleavened bread carry out painstaking preperations before the arrival of Passover and what follows by cleaning of their houses, washing walls and painting, the cleaning of clothing with the pockets turned out, carpets, and even vacuum bags are discarded, kitchen utensils are meticulously cleansed so that there is no trace of leaven.

On the night before Passover, after prayers at the Synagogue, the father of the house would return and perform the *Bedikat Hametz* or “ the search for the leaven” ceremony.

The mother of the house will always leave a few bits of bread in corners etc. to be found.

He searches the house by candlelight and usually using a wooden spoon and a feather to sweep the crumbs onto the spoon. Any bits that are found are placed in a bag or wrapped and tied with thread and burnt the next morning.

With the command fulfilled and the leaven purged from their homes, the way was now clear to celebrate the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread.

**The fulfillment**

What is the spiritual significance of this feast? How did Jesus fulfill it?

Sin is often pictured as leaven in the Scriptures.

Jesus gave us an example of the teachings of the Pharisees as sin:

***MT 16:6-12 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.***

***LK 12:1 …he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.***

Leaven is well suited as an example of sin as it rapidly permeates through the whole of the dough. Leaven contaminates, sours it. As it ferments it swells. In fact it swells to many times its original size but does not change its weight.

This souring process is in fact the first stage of decay. It was Adams sin that started this decaying process which not only involved the human race but all of creation.

***ROM 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.***

Because leaven was a picture of sin, only unleavened bread was used in the Temple

***LEV 2:11 No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the LORD, shall be made with leaven: for ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of the LORD made by fire.***

***LEV 6:16-17 And the remainder thereof shall Aaron and his sons eat: with unleavened bread shall it be eaten in the holy place; in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation they shall eat it. It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it unto them for their portion of my offerings made by fire; it is most holy, as is the sin offering, and as the trespass offering.***

As with all the feasts of Leviticus 23, the prophetic meaning of the feast of unleavened bread is found in the work of the Messiah.

Just as the Passover pictures for us the substitutionary death of the Messiah, Yeshua as the Passover Lamb, so the feast of unleavened bread shows the burial of the Messiah.

In Isaiah 53 we read that the Messiah would be the lamb that was offered as our sacrifice –

***ISA 53:4-7 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.***

So the prophets also spoke of His burial-

***ISA 53:9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.***

Normally, one who dies as a criminal is buried as a criminal. In the days of Jesus, those who were put to death for wrongdoing would have been taken down from their crosses, or from their beatings, and thrown on the garbage heap, Golgotha, the place of the skulls.

There the bodies would rot with all the other waste from the city.

But not Jesus. He was NOT a criminal, He was NOT guilty of any crime, He WAS Sinless. God did not allow His body to be placed on the trash heap.

No Jesus was indeed honoured in His burial because he was a pure, sinless, spotless – without leaven sacrifice.

He died, not for his own transgressions, for there were not any, but for the sins of the world, past, present and future.

Therefore, God honoured him with a rich man’s tomb, that of Joseph of Arimathaea

***MAT 27:57-60 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.***

There is a further significance to the death of our Lord Jesus. Normally when a person dies, they return from whence they came – dust, Not so with Jesus.

King David prophesied of Jesus the Messiah –

***Psalm 16:10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.***

David was not speaking about himself, after all Davids tomb has been with us for 3000 years.

No after carrying our sins far away –

***Psalm 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.***

***HEB 9:23-28 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.***

He rose again on the third day, Halellujah!!!

The Messiah fulfilled the feast of unleavened bread in that he was the pure, sinless, sacrifice of God.

God validated this by his burial in the Rich man’s tomb and that His body was not allowed to see decay in the grave – like dough soured by leaven. But that he rose again. The Messiah was not a sinner under a curse of death and decay.

**The application**

The Apostle Paul uses the picture of leaven when talking to the believers in Corinth

***1CO 5:1-8 It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 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, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.***

Paul’s message is simple and direct. As believers, who have accepted the sacrifice of the Passover lamb at Calvary, we are called to live lives that show Jesus. We should live as unleavened bread – by being pure and separate from the world and worldly things.

Paul was dismayed at the level of sin that was going on in the Church at Corinth, yet they were proclaiming to be followers of Christ.

So many Christians today believe that they can have the unleavened bread of Christ but keep the leaven of their old lives.

The two do not go together, we are to get rid of the old life and its sin, and put on the new life in Christ. We are to be different, we are to be separate, we are to be pure.

We are no longer under the dominion of sin

***RO 6:1-4 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.***

James tells that we are drawn away by our own lusts

***JAMES 1:14-16 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren.***

For us as Christians, it is not enough that we get rid of the things that others can see, the conspicuous things. We need to take the candle of Gods word and search our entire lives, every nook and cranny, every speck until it is purged.

***For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:(1 Cor 5:7)***

This evening DV we will look at the feast of firstfruits and again see Jesus.

Have a blessed day.