

Introduction

1. In Exodus 11:1-11 Moses recorded his announcement of the tenth and final plague against Pharaoh and Egypt, the death of the firstborn
2. However, before recording the fulfillment of the plague and Israel's deliverance from Egypt he recorded Yahweh's instructions for celebrating three different ordinances when they arrived in the land of Canaan:
 - a. Passover
 - b. Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - c. Consecration of the Firstborn
3. These are recorded in chapters 12-13 and it gets a little challenging and seems repetitive because Moses jumps back and forth between recording the fulfillment of the 10th plague and Israel's deliverance, and the announcement and instructions for the ordinances
4. So, we decided to approach these chapters topically by grouping the verses for each ordinance together
5. As Dustin explained last week when he covered the Passover, we are approaching these by focusing on three things:
 - a. The initial intent of the ordinance
 - b. The spiritual significance of the ordinance
 - c. The fulfillment of the ordinance in Jesus Christ
6. Today we will be addressing the Feast of Unleavened Bread

A. The initial intent of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was to perpetually remind Israel of the day they left Egypt and the haste in which they left

1. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was an extension of Passover; we see this in 12:14-15:
 - a. **"This day"** in v. 14 is a reference to Passover (previous verses) which was to be celebrated on the evening of the 14th day of the first month (Abib, later named Nissan)
 - b. According to v. 15 this was to be followed by seven days of eating unleavened bread and this is referred to as the Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - c. Because of their connection to one another, they were essentially thought of and celebrated as one extended event
 - d. In fact, the Feast of Unleavened Bread was sometimes simply referred to as Passover or **"the Feast of the Passover"** (see Luke 22:1; John 13:1)
2. The Lord gave specific instructions for celebrating the feast (Read 12:15-16):

- a. It began in the evening the day after Passover, the 15th and lasted for seven days
- b. The first and seventh days were to be a **“holy assembly”**:
 - 1) These were similar to sabbaths in that they had to cease all work except preparation for the daily meals
 - 2) The word **“assembly”** also indicates these were days for corporate worship:
 - a) Later in Exodus 23:14-17 we learn that only the males were commanded to gather together, but often women and children attended as well
 - b) The main gathering place was wherever the tabernacle, and later the Temple, were (ultimately Jerusalem)
- c. During the seven days, there were two primary rules regarding leaven (READ 12:15):
 - 1) Not only could they only eat unleavened bread (bread without yeast), but they had to remove ALL leaven from their home
 - 2) Later in 12:19 we learn that these rules even applied to everyone including **“the sojourner or a native of the land”**
 - 3) The penalty for eating leavened bread during the seven days was severe: they were to be cut-off from Israel (excommunicated)
- d. While it’s not mentioned here in chapter 12, the Lord also commanded special sacrifices to be made daily during the week (Numbers 28:17-25):
 - 1) A burnt offering of two bulls, one ram, and seven one year old lambs without defect—these generally symbolized devotion and worship
 - 2) Grain and drink offerings to go along with each of the burnt offerings—these were generally represented thanksgiving
 - 3) And, a male goat as a sin offering for atonement
- 3. They were to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread every year as a reminder to future generations of the day the Lord delivered Israel from Egypt:
 - a. It was to serve as a **“memorial”** and **“permanent ordinance”** of how the Lord had brought them out of the land of Egypt (RE-READ 12:14, 17)
 - b. However, it wasn’t just to be a general reminder, but a specific reminder of the haste in which they had to leave (READ 12:39; Deuteronomy 16:3)

B. The spiritual significance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread

- 1. First, it reminded Israel of the Lord’s nature, what He had done for them, and the need to pass it along to their children (READ 13:3-10):
 - a. His sovereignty (13:3)
 - b. His faithfulness (13:4-5)
 - c. The need to pass it along to their children (13:8)
 - d. Even a reminder of keeping His Law in their mouths (13:9-10)

2. Second, it reminded Israel of the importance of devotion and thanksgiving to the Lord, as well as their sin and the need for atonement; this was seen primarily through the daily sacrifices offered during the Feast
3. There's a third possible spiritual significance to the Feast of Unleavened Bread which is that it symbolized purification from sin and impurity:
 - a. This is not stated explicitly, but rather implicitly (implied elsewhere in the Bible)
 - b. Many believe this is implied by the fact that Israel had to completely eliminate any leaven from the home during the feast, not just avoid eating leavened bread
 - c. While leaven is sometimes used positively in the OT, its primary use is negative, suggesting impurity and even sin:
 - 1) Leavened bread could only be used in some offerings: these include the Wave offering and Thanksgiving offering
 - 2) However, only unleavened bread could be offered with sacrifices that involved blood, smoke, or fire because these were burned and rose up to God as a **"soothing aroma"**:
 - a) Grain offerings (Leviticus 2:11)
 - b) Passover Lamb (Exodus 12:8; 23:18)
 - c) Show Bread/Bread of the Presence (Leviticus 24:5-9)
 - d) Sin and Guilt offering (Leviticus 6:17)
 - e) Nazirite offering (Numbers 6:15-19)
 - d. We see something similar in the NT:
 - 1) Jesus used leaven in a positive sense in Matthew 13:33 when He used it in a parable to compare the Kingdom of Heaven to leaven
 - 2) However, every other reference in the NT is negative:
 - a) Jesus referred to the false teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees as leaven and warned His disciples to avoid it (Matthew 16:6-12)
 - b) In 1 Corinthians 5 Paul used leaven as a symbol for sin and warned them to clean out the old leaven so they could be a new lump of dough, free from sinful behavior
 - c) In Galatians 5 he rebuked and warned them about false teaching of legalism likening it to **"a little leaven that leavens the whole lump of dough"** meaning that just a little bit of legalism distorts the purity of the Gospel

C. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ
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1. We see this firsthand at the Lord's Supper in Luke 22 (READ 22:14-19):
 - a. During the Passover meal and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the bread was referred to as **"the bread of affliction"** (Deuteronomy 16:3) because it symbolized Israel's suffering and enslavement in Egypt and their subsequent and hasty deliverance from it
 - b. However, when Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples, He assigned a new meaning to the unleavened bread:

- 1) It would now symbolize His body which would be given up for the world
 - 2) It would symbolize the suffering and affliction He would endure on the Cross in order to deliverance us from enslavement to sin and death
- c. This adds an additional dimension to Jesus's statement that He is the Bread of Life:
- 1) In John 6, Jesus used the symbolism of bread and referred to Himself as the Bread of Life which came down from heaven to give eternal life
 - 2) Here He used unleavened bread to symbolize His sinless and undefiled body which would be offered up for our deliverance
2. While there's no command in the New Testament for the Church to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, there is evidence that the early Church did but as a reminder to put away sin and recognize their **"unleavened"** state:
- a. This would make sense considering that many (most?) of the earliest Christians were Jewish
 - b. There's also historical evidence that they continued to celebrate the Feast in this way:
 - 1) In the 2nd century, something known as the Quartodeciman Controversy arose:
 - a) Quartodeciman comes from Latin and means 14th and it refers to the 14th of Nisan, the start of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread
 - b) Christians in Asia Minor insisted on celebrating Passover and the Feast on the 14th of Nisan no matter what day of the week it fell on, and they claimed that this had been handed down by John and Phillip
 - c) Christians in other parts of the world (Rome, Alexandria, and the West) insisted that Passover and the Feast should always start on Sunday since that was the day Jesus rose from the dead
 - 2) The controversy intensified when Pope Victor tried to force the entire Church to submit to starting the feast on a Sunday:
 - a) He threatened to excommunicate any churches and Christians who thought the Feast should begin on whatever day the 14th landed on
 - b) Polycrates, the Bishop of Ephesus, rebuked him and wrote a famous letter to the Bishop of Rome in 190 AD in favor of starting on the 14th claiming that was the practice of Polycarp, a disciple of John the Apostle
 - c. Many believe the Early Church practices the Feast of Unleavened Bread as a reminder of putting away sin based on Paul's allusion to the Feast in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 (READ):
 - 1) In chapter 5 Paul was addressing the church's refusal to judge a fellow believer in the church who was engaging in grave sexual immorality with his father's wife

- 2) He likened this man's sin, and their boasting about it, to leaven which was spoiling the whole lump (a reference to their local church body)
- 3) He called on them to **"clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened"** (7)—a reference to removing the wicked man from their midst (as he states later in 5:13) and their own **"malice and wickedness"** so that they could live in accordance with their new **"unleavened"** (undefiled state) in Christ
- 4) He then called on them to **"celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth"** (8)—the reference to **"the feast"** here is likely the Feast of Unleavened Bread since it followed Paul's statement regarding Christ being our Passover
- 5) Paul is likely speaking of celebrating the Feast symbolically or figuratively, but many in the early church applied Paul's words to the actual celebration and continued to celebrate the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread every year

Takeaway

1. While God expected the Jews to celebrate the Feast every year as a remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt, there is no New Testament command for the Church to celebrate the Feast because it was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus
2. Instead, we are to celebrate the Lord's Supper
3. However, that doesn't mean there's no lesson for us in the Feast of Unleavened Bread:
 - a. It should serve to remind us that sin is much like leaven—just a little bit can spoil the entire lump as Paul wrote
 - b. It should remind us that POSITIONALLY we are like unleavened bread in Christ, free of sin and impurity
 - c. However, it should also remind us that PRACTICALLY we may still need to clean out old leaven (old sin) so that we can be that **"new lump"**