

Date: 15th March 2015

Series name: A Walk Through Exodus

Sermon # in series: 8

Sermon Title: ‘The Feast of Unleavened Bread’

Bible Reference: Exodus 12

**A disclaimer from Pastor Stuart**

*My role in the church here is to feed and care for God’s people the best I can. Key to that, in my opinion is teaching and preaching from the Bible; but that is not all a pastor has to do! In fact after the emails, staff admin, hospital visits, community visits, leadership meetings, etc, etc, there sometimes seems to be little time for sermon prep! Years ago I used to agonise over trying to come up with two, often three, totally original sermons each week. But I’ve found that, for me at least, that is impossibility. I’ve learned to be grateful for and to use the gifts God gives to help me – not only the Holy Spirit, but other Bible teachers and preachers.*

*Over the years I’ve discovered that if something teaches, inspires and excites me it’s likely to do the same for those I speak to. So I admit that sometimes I find myself depending heavily on other people’s ideas, at least to ‘prime the pump’ and therefore I claim originality for very little in these sermons. If you look hard enough and wide enough you’ll probably find who I’ve been reading and learning from! I never knowingly plagiarise, but if you find I have, then I apologise. It must have been that what was said was just too good not to use!*

*I am particularly indebted to the likes of John Piper, Sam Storms, Wayne Grudem, John Ortberg & Rick Warren. The Lord regularly uses them to get my spiritual pulse racing. I’m also indebted to many who kindly make their sermons available on the likes of sermoncentral.com and preachingtoday.com. Others who help me include ‘The Doctor’ (Martyn Lloyd-Jones), C.H Spurgeon and any of the Puritans.*

*These sermons are not made available because I think they’re good but in the hope and with the prayer that they may be used by the Holy Spirit to bless others as they have blessed our own church here in Ipswich, UK.*

*Unless otherwise specified, all scriptures are taken from the HOLY BIBLE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Hodder and Stoughton Limited.*



This material is copyright ©2011 Whitton Baptist Church and is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 UK: England & Wales License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/uk/)

Last time ‘Passover’ – God’s instructions as to how they were to avoid the angel of death. After the plague the were pretty much pushed out of the country by not only Pharaoh but all the people. They were only too pleased to see them go.

In the end it all happened so far that the Israelites don't even have time to make their bread for the journey – **12:33-34**. Had to take the dough before yeast was added, wrapped in cloths and took it with them as they went. (I’m not a bread maker but I wonder if this was actually a help as it meant the dough lasted longer before it needed to be cooked, thus giving them a supply of food for the first part of the journey?)

But whatever, this unleavened bread was to become a powerful symbol in the years ahead, reminding them of the night of their escape, and their life at the people of God. For at the same time as The LORD gave Moses instructions on how to avoid the death of the first born (what became known as ‘The Passover’) he gave him instructions as to how they were to remember this event into the future – **Ex 12:33-34** – with the ‘*Feast of Unleavened Bread’* – a feast that once out of Egypt they were to celebrate every year.

I want to pause and look at this tonight as it will lead us nicely into our time around the Lord’s Table.

Both **Ex 12:15-20** and **Lev 23:4-7** record the instructions from the Lord as to what was involved:

* Started day after Passover
* Lasted for 7 days and started and finished with a ‘Sabbath’ – a holy day set aside for the Lord on which they were to do no work.
* First day they were to remove every trace of yeast and to keep it that way for the duration of the feast. So flat bread only.

Quite a simple thing but what was it all about? **Ex 12:17** tells us that in its simplest form it was to make sure the people didn’t forget what God had done and how he had rescued them. So it was a time of remembering – as was the celebration/re-enactment of the Passover meal. This whole period of 8 days, starting with the Passover meal through to the last holy day of the feast of unleavened bread was a time for the nation to look back and make sure they didn’t forget what God had done. The two ‘holy days’ at start and end were especially significant – they were days when people were to stop, no work – time to think, to remember and reflect.

This was in addition to the regular weekly ‘Sabbath’ day God was about to enshrine in the nations life. So very important not to forget! God knows people better than they know themselves. We like them are prone to forget and let the mists of time cloud our memories of what God has done.

*It’s why for us our ‘sabbaths’ are so important. No longer under to old law of Moses, but the principle holds true. One day a week to stop, change pace, to take time out for God. Rest of body and mind is important for us all. But gives us time out for God and it’s so critical for us spiritually to do this. Our Sabbath is Sunday – resurrection day. How we need to remember that we serve a risen Saviour, who lives so that we might live, who’s res ensures we will rise, who lives as our mediator, who rose and send his Spirit to seal us to keep us and gift us and empower us. Sunday really is a critical day for us spiritually and to lose value of it, to easily miss it or to find being with God’s people and under his word a chore or a bore is a sure sign that things are not tight*.

Back to the feasts – key thing was ‘unleavened bread’ which harked back to the haste with which they left, but is actually much deeper than this. More than just a commemoration, it’s a symbol of the life they were to live as God redeemed people.

If the Passover meal, with the sacrificial lamb commemorated the act mercy and grace of God in saving them, then week of unleavened bread *reminded them of the kind of life they were to live afterwards – a life set apart from God, a life with as little sin as possible.*

**The reason for this is that in the Bible yeast is a symbol of sin**. Yeast aids the process or decay – it works by breaking things down. And as we know it has a spreading effect – a little goes a long way, a little bit will affect the whole lump. One bad apple will corrupt the whole box. And interestingly, as yeast works it also tends to make thing puff up – see bread, cakes, etc!

**That’s exactly how sin works and what it does!** It brings decay; where it is present it breaks things – hearts, relationships, lives. We see it all around us don’t we. Strangely the other thing that sin does is puff people up, it brings pride. Pride comes before a fall – as Adam and Eve found. Pride is one of the greatest evidences of sin.

**In contrast to this then bread without yeast is a symbol of purity.** And this is how we are to live as God’s people. Paul makes the connection in **1 Cor 5:7** where he calls on the us to ‘*Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our* ***Passover****lamb, has been sacrificed.’* It’s clear that in Paul's mind is this feast and the Passover. Since Jesus has died then get rid of sin in your lives. We’re called to live holy, pure lives.

When the Jews celebrate Passover/unleavened bread they take great care to eliminate yeast from their houses – they do it, hoovering, sweeping, washing. We don’t need to do this, but as we remember our Passover lamb in communion it’s important for us at that time to be seeing to get rid of sin in our lives. Not to let it lie in the open, knowing it’s there. **Ps 139: 23** *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting*. That’s a good prayer for us to pray.

But then not only do we see Jesus in the Passover Lamb, but also in the unleavened bread. Time and again Jesus is seen in the Bible as the Bread from God. The manna in the wilderness was pointing to him and Jesus himself couldn’t have been clearer about this - *‘I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."* [**John 6:51**](http://biblia.com/bible/kjv1900/John%206.51). *"For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."* [**John 6:33**.](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%206.33) The Jewish leaders knew exactly what he was saying – this was a claim to be the Messiah in every way but the actual words and is why they wanted to kill him!

When Jews today celebrate this feast this is what they use – Matzo bread. Notice the holes and the stripes! Remind you of anything about Jesus? This is admittedly a new thing for the bread (perhaps 150yrs old) but almost without realizing it they have made it even more into a picture of Jesus.

Here now, as we come to to remember the greater Passover, here as we come to shelter under the blood, we take bread and wine. Tonight I've brought some flat bread, unleavened as it fits with what we’ve been looking at. As we come, as we take the bread without yeast, let us not only remember Jesus, but let us also remember that we’ve been set free from bondage of sin, and called to live like and for Jesus. We are called then to get rid of the sin in our lives – let’s take some time to let the Spirit shine his light into our hearts, to show up to us where the yeast of sin remains and by his help resolve to get rid of it. Sin of pride that puffs us up, makes us self centered, putting self before others or even the Lord. Sin of corruption, where there are things in our lives that break down rather than build up. Thoughts, words, actions. If we know they break down then resolve to remove them.

Music play whilst we think

Come up to receive bread and wine. Be active and not just served; make a decision to receive, take a step of faith. Too easy sometimes to take it as it comes round. This way you will need to be active, and yes people may see – that’s part of it,it’s not meant to be a private thing!