

FANTASTIC FEASTS... & WHERE WE FIND THEM

Foods have festivals to celebrate them. Gilroy has its Garlic Festival. The Central Valley Pizza Festival is held in Lemoore.

There are some weird ones:

- Bug Fest - This entomophagy event at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences hosts over 35,000 visitors each year where they can partake in Café Insecta, a pop-up restaurant where local chefs prepare insect delicacies like Quivering Wax Worm Quiche... and amazingly sell out. This year's theme is stinkbugs.
- Waikiki SpamJam - Hawaii is known for sand, surf, and SPAM. And though it has a tiny population, its people consume more SPAM than any other state. To celebrate the Hawaiian bond to the meat, they host a festival each year where local chefs prepare dishes like SPAM musabi and SPAM wontons.

One of the Lord's annual festivals involves a non-food: Yeast.

The first mention of yeast in the Old Testament is in Exodus chapter twelve, in conjunction with the second of Israel's annual feasts - the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Exo 12:15 Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.

Exo 12:16 On the first day *there shall be* a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but *that* which everyone must eat - that only may be prepared by you.

Exo 12:17 So you shall observe *the Feast of Unleavened Bread*, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance.

Exo 12:18 In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening.

Exo 12:19 For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether *he is* a stranger or a native of the land.

Exo 12:20 You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.' "

In the Bible, yeast goes by the name “leaven.” Leaven is mentioned 22 times in the Old Testament and 17 times in the New Testament.

Yeast is a micro-organism that is part of the fungi family. They digest sugar and excrete carbon dioxide and alcohol as by-products. Yeast cells multiply rapidly as long as there is enough sugar and the conditions are right - temperature and moisture.

When yeast is put in warm dough it begins to digest the sugars and multiply, excreting carbon dioxide. The carbon dioxide bubbles are trapped in the dough. The bread is puffed up with air pockets created by the yeast after it is baked allowing the bread to be fluffy and substantial rather than flat.

Although we love the benefits of yeast, it is an agent of decay. Because it has a decaying affect on life, the Bible uses it as a metaphor for **sin**.

Here's a New Testament use of the word, in First Corinthians chapter five:

1Co 5:6 ... Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

1Co 5:7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

1Co 5:8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.

The apostle Paul used leaven to describe the spread and growth of sin.

If you were here for our last study, we looked at the Feast of Passover. It commemorated the night that the destroyer of the first-born passed over those households that had applied the blood of the sacrificed lamb to their doorposts.

Passover was on the 14th of the Jewish month Nisan. We just read that the Feast of Unleavened Bread began on the day after the Passover, and continued for seven days. The lamb was slain on the 14th day at sunset, which ended the day. The Feast of Unleavened Bread began immediately after sunset, which was the beginning of the 15th day.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted 7 days, from Nisan 15 until Nisan 21. We'll see next time that the third feast, Firstfruits, also occurred during these dates.

As a reminder, The Hebrew word for "feasts" - *moadim* - literally means "appointed times."

God has carefully planned and orchestrated the timing and sequence of each of the seven annual feasts to demonstrate the work of redemption through Jesus.

We saw how Jesus fulfilled the Passover. He was the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. He was crucified as our Substitute and sacrifice on the 14th of Nisan - **just as the Passover lambs were being offered in the Temple.**

Jesus also fulfills the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Leaven symbolizes sin and decay, the power of death. Jesus, God's Lamb was killed and placed in the tomb on the twilight of Passover. Two things to note about Him:

1. First, He had led a pure, spotless life, unblemished by sin. We could say His life was unleavened. Search though you may, you find nothing sinful in Him.
2. Second, although in the tomb for parts of three days and three nights, His body would not see decay. It was unleavened.

On the Day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter quoted Psalm 16:10 and applied it to Jesus, saying, "For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption [decay]."

The Feast of Unleavened Bread thereby pictures the burial of the sinless Son of God, Israel's Messiah.

The day before Passover was known as the *Preparation Day*, the day one prepared for the feasts Passover and Unleavened Bread. The lamb had to be prepared, but the houses were also cleaned as families searched for leaven. This included washing walls, boiling cooking items, and washing clothes.

In six specific places the prohibition on yeast is emphasized during this feast (Exodus 12:14-20; 13:6-8; 23:15 34:18; Leviticus 23:6; Deuteronomy 16:3,8).

There was no tolerance for disobedience in regards to this feast and keeping the house and area free from leaven:

Deut 16:4 And no leaven shall be seen among you in all your territory for seven days, nor shall *any* of the meat which you sacrifice the first day at twilight remain overnight until morning.

Exo 13:7 Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters.

Besides being prophetic of the sinless Son of God being placed in the tomb without being subject to decay, there are a few other lessons for us from the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

* The picture of searching your house for yeast is a great analogy for us to search our lives for any hidden sin. Israel was to take the yeast and rid it from their midst, in the same way we should rid our lives of sin.

* The Feast Unleavened Bread was to remind Israel of the speed of their Egyptian deliverance. When the Lord passed over the land of Egypt, all the first born died, except for the house of Israel. Pharaoh was outraged and demanded Israel leave Egypt at once; Israel did not have time to wait for the bread to rise before they baked it.

In his second letter, the apostle Peter exhorts believers to live the kind of lives that will “hasten” the return of Jesus. He meant lives

set apart in service to the Lord; lives that are overcoming sin and the flesh.

We need to be a hasty people when it comes to serving.

✳ The primary application of unleavened bread to us as believers in the church age is in the verses I quoted earlier, in First Corinthians:

1Co 5:6 ... Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

1Co 5:7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

1Co 5:8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.

I need to give you the context of this exhortation. Paul was dealing with sin in the church at Corinth. Specifically, there was a man, professing to be a believer, who was having sex with “his father’s wife.” The Corinthians were tolerating it - even celebrating it - as an example of how gracious they were.

Paul’s counsel was to put the man out of the church immediately - removing him from the spiritual protection of the church in hope that he would repent. He saw the situation as a potential danger to the whole church.

To show how dangerous their tolerance was, Paul said, “a little leaven leavens the whole lump.” He was warning the Corinthian believers that tolerating sin would work among them like leaven in dough. If left, it would spread through their ranks.

We see something similar as we track the tolerance of the church over the years. We sometimes call it being *desensitized*; we see or hear or are exposed to things in the world, and become desensitized to their sinfulness, ultimately accepting them.

We usually remain more moral than the world. But we, too, can find ourselves spiraling away from purity. We think if we're better than the world, we're OK.

Maybe an example will help. When I was growing up, it was a big deal for the *Dick Van Dyke Show* to portray Rob and Laura Petri, a happily married couple, in their bedroom - wearing full PJ's and sleeping in separate beds, merely talking.

Today I read on social media that Christians can't wait for *Game of Thrones* to start each new season. The Parent's Guide on IMDB says of *Game of Thrones*,

Sex is a driving force of this series, and full nudity occurs quite frequently throughout each season, including extended instances of exposed breasts, buttocks, and genitals (both male and female). Viewers can expect to see and hear graphic sex scenes, many of which take place in a brothel, as well as several scenes and situations of incest, rape, and sexual violence (primarily towards females).

Are we desensitized? Or have we become leavened?

“Purge out the old leaven.” As was the custom of the Jews before the Passover to cleanse their homes from all leaven, so the church is to clean out immoral practices from its midst.

“That you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”

By virtue of being in Jesus Christ, we are seen by God as unleavened. Our *practice* may be to indulge leaven; but our *position* is that of being unleavened.

We need to bring our practice under the authority of our position and live as a “new lump.” We have the Holy Spirit indwelling us to give us power over sin - to purge it from our lives, keeping us unleavened.

“Let us therefore keep the feasts.” The feasts surrounding leaven were Passover, Unleavened Bread, and (we’ll see) Firstfruits.

Was Paul suggesting we celebrate them? No. There are a handful of exhortations in the New Testament that tells us we are under no obligation to observe the feasts. In the Book of Acts there is a church council to determine if Gentiles are under any obligation to keep the Law of Moses (which includes the feasts). The conclusion was, “No.”

Something else to consider. Once Israel was in the land, the feasts were to be observed in Jerusalem, at the Temple. That isn’t possible.

We “keep” the feasts not by celebrating them on the calendar annually, but by applying them to our walk daily.

We “keep” the feasts spiritually, by walking in their fulfillment.

