

Two Lessons About Leaven

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BIG SANDY, Texas—This past week, many people celebrated various events dealing with the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. Here is a quick summary.

- On Sunday, April 9, people commemorated (either with a congregation or in their home) the suffering and death of our Lord and Savior—on a date representing the night that He was betrayed. They partook of the New Testament symbols in remembrance of Christ.
- On Monday, April 10, at 3:00 p.m., people privately in their homes commemorated the death of Christ—on a date representing the moment when He died on the cross.
- On Thursday evening, April 13, people privately in their homes commemorated the resurrection of Christ—on a date representing three days and three nights following the date picturing His death.

What about Days of Unleavened Bread?

Some people could ask: Do people among the Church of God also keep the Days of Unleavened Bread?

My answer: Yes, many observe those days in two ways.

First, many gather with congregations on two annual days—they gathered this past Tuesday (April 11) and will gather on Monday (April 17).

Second, many will make modifications to their lifestyle during the entire seven days. Many will eschew leavened foods and will make a special effort to eat some unleavened bread each day. More important, many will make a conscious effort to resist sinful behavior and to practice righteous behavior.

Someone could ask: Shouldn't disciples seek to be doing the spiritual actions every day of their lives?

My answer: Of course, but disciples keep these days as a reminder of their everyday goals.

1 Corinthians 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."

Old Testament lesson

Bible students have learned that there are two lessons in the Bible about the leavening.

- The Old Testament lesson was about “getting out in haste.”

Consider the following Old Testament verses: Exodus 12:11; Exodus 12:34; Exodus 12:39; and Deuteronomy 16:3.

How did this lesson apply to New Testament disciples? Consider reading Christ’s words in Luke 17:31-36—which applied directly to the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and had some later application to disciples in later times.

New Testament lesson

The New Testament lesson was taught by the apostle Paul.

- Paul’s lesson was about leaven picturing sin.

(For the record, Christ taught contrasting metaphors about leaven. Christ gave a parable in Matthew 13:33 about leaven being a good thing and gave a metaphor in Matthew 16:6-12 about leaven being a bad thing.)

Paul emphasized the metaphor of leaven as sin (1 Corinthians 5:1-8 and Galatians 5:1-9).

Saved by grace

I want to encourage all readers of this article to understand the proper order of using the metaphor of leaven picturing sin.

- Disciples are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9 and Titus 3:4-7).
- Because disciples are saved by grace, they should seek to put sin out of their lives (Ephesians 2:10 and Titus 3:8).

I know that lesson should be obvious.

But some people become confused and tend to use the leaven metaphor backwards—in a way to subconsciously influence them to seek to earn salvation.

How is a person unleavened?

Some sincere people spend weeks seeking to get the leaven (even the crumbs) out of their home before they partake of the New Testament symbols of the broken bread and the wine.

Unfortunately, they often tie this effort into the notion of being worthy to partake of the symbols.

Who is more righteous between the following two people?—Is it a person who spends a month getting the physical crumbs out of his home before the com-

memoration, or is it a person who gets leavened food out of his home a few days before the commemoration?

Neither determines worthiness.

The action of removing crumbs out of a house for a month before the commemoration or the action of removing unleavened food out of a house a few days before the commemoration is not a factor in determining worthiness before God.

Is a person's worthiness established by having the cleanest kitchen, dining area, children's rooms, car, trunk, etc.?

Many people say: I know that worthiness is not evaluated based on our success about getting every crumb out, but God wants us to make the effort to learn the lesson.

My answer: And, pray tell, what lesson is that? Do you really believe that worthiness is evaluated on the effort to remove sin?

Truly unleavened

Notice three phrases from 1 Corinthians 5:7.

- Purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump.
- Purge out the old leaven . . . since you truly are unleavened.

How is a person truly unleavened? Is it by one month of cleaning out crumbs? Is it by a few days of removing leavened food out of the house?

Getting the physical leaven out of a home cannot make a person worthy to commemorate the suffering and death of Christ.

- "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."

Reaction to grace

I have friends who use the leaven lessons as an effective tool in their Christian walk. They certainly know that the spiritual lesson is greater. But they also do the physical part merely as an effective reminder.

The lesson of leavening in the Old Testament was about people reacting to the magnificent deliverance from bondage.

The lesson of leavening by Paul in the New Testament was about people being thrilled by God's grace and wanting to react properly to that grace.

The Days of Unleavened Bread are a tremendous reminder about wanting to please the Father—by avoiding sin against Him and by avoiding sin against our neighbor.

- God gave you physical life. How will you behave?
- God gave you His name. How will you represent the family?
- God is giving you spiritual life. What are His expectations of you?