

# THE LESSONS OF LEAVEN

JAMIE MCNAB

## 2.4.26

Today is the 15<sup>th</sup> Nisan ... Abib ... the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread — a Holy Day.

If we look around our towns and communities ... there aren't many other people keeping this Feast today — keeping this Holy Day.

We're definitely in a small minority — a slither of a minority!

**Why do we keep this Feast Day? The simple answer is: God commands it!**

Why? Does God have an important reason? Is there a purpose? Yes. Of course. An important purpose.

**All of God's Holy Days are to teach us important lessons ... for this life now and even for our eternal lives.**

### Leviticus 23:1-2

1 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, *(these are God's Words!!)*

2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: '**The feasts of the Lord, (Jehovah) which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.** (God's Feasts!)

**These are God's Feasts.** ("Feasts" should be "Appointed times" — Hebrew "Moedim" — is a better translation) **We should respect them.**

### Leviticus 23:4-8

4 **These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times.**

5 **On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Lord's Passover.**

6 **And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; seven days you must eat unleavened bread.**

7 **On the first day you shall have a holy convocation;** you shall do no customary work on it.

8 But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord for seven days. **The seventh day shall be a holy convocation;** you shall do no customary work on it.”

Let us look at the very first reference to this Feast:

#### **Exodus 12:14-20**

14 **‘So this day shall be to you a memorial; (something to remember) and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.**

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.

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.

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.

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.**

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.

20 **You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.’ ”**

**Note: The Israelites here are still in Egypt ... months before the Old Covenant.**

**These were given as an everlasting covenant before Sinai.** They were given BEFORE THE OLD COVENANT. So we should be keeping them today!

There are some very specific instructions of what we are to do.

### **Exodus 13:3, 6-7,10**

3 And Moses said to the people: “**Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten.**

6 **Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord.**

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.**

10 You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.

- No leaven (chametz) ... or leavened bread (seor — no leaving agents)
- EAT UNLEAVENED BREAD FOR 7 DAYS

**The teaching is in 2 parts.**

**There are two parts involved in changing our lives and walking with our God** (just like 2 parts to Passover ... Bread and Wine).

1. We have to “**put out**” the bad things from our lives — big sins (adultery ... fornication ... sexual immorality ... pride) and smaller sins (anger ... strife ... gossip ... bad language... selfishness).

2. But then ... “**put on**” the good behaviour ... good works ... kindness ... goodness ... patience ... courtesy ... giving. We’re supposed to be lights in our communities — salt of the earth. **Making a difference.**

A question we could ask is: **Does God Himself need the Feast of Unleavened Bread?** NO! I don’t think so! **It’s for our benefit — to help us grow to maturity ... to have a more successful walk with Jesus and our Father.**

It’s good for us to take some time and effort to physically de-leaven our homes ... eat unleavened bread.

**But ... if that’s all that happens ... just purely physical ... then really we have wasted The Feast!**

There is much more involved. **Spiritual lessons.**

**Leaven is merely a symbol that God uses to teach us key truths.**

**God has set the Feast days up so we get an annual reminder.**

So let’s see what the Bible reveals about the meaning of leaven in our lives.

**There are 2 ways that leaven is used in the Bible.**

**The first lesson that we see pictures sin.**

### **1 Corinthians 5:6-8**

6 Your glorying is not good. **Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?** *(That is a key feature ... you don’t need much. You might think it is something that you can ignore. A little bit will spread and cause problems)*

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.**

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.** (*What Feast could that actually be?*

*It is rather obvious ... the Feast of Unleavened Bread:*

**Numbers 28:16-17 [NKJV]**

**16 On the fourteenth day of the first month is the Passover of the LORD.**

**17 And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast; unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days.)**

- Leaven = malice (evil motives/thoughts/intentions)  
= wickedness (evil actions). Put that out.
- Unleavened = honesty ... truth ... genuineness

So ... **PUT OFF/PUT AWAY** sinful behaviour and sinful attitudes. Put sin away (The Corinthians were too comfortable with sin)

**Then ... the 2<sup>nd</sup> meaning of leaven ... false teaching ... false doctrine.**

**Matthew 16:5-12**

5 Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.

6 Then Jesus said to them, **“Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.”**

7 And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “It is because we have taken no bread.”

8 But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, **“O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?”**

9 **Do you not yet understand,** or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?

10 Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?

11 **How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? — but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”**

12 Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of **the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees**.

**Leaven = false doctrine/false teaching.**

The warning is applicable to us too.

**Leaven pictures sin and false doctrine.**

We'll look at each of these in turn.

### **1. LEAVEN AS A SYMBOL OF SIN**

Putting leaven out of our homes (and lives) for a week pictures putting sin out. It takes action. **It is easy to become casual ... lukewarm ... to begin to tolerate poor behaviour in our lives.** Getting spiritually lazy!

**The Feast of Unleavened Bread is an annual reminder.** To keep our lives clear of sin. When we see it ... put it out ... put it away.

**We need to leave our sinful life behind us ... and walk forward.**

Some believers think all you need to do is "accept Jesus". Then it's all finished ... **OSAS — once saved — always saved.**

**But that's not the picture shown by Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.**

Think about Israel's position at the first Passover.

- They'd kept the Passover ... protected by the blood
- God had passed over
- Did they just stop now? No. They were still in Egypt — they had to get out! To walk off — head off towards the Promised Land.

## Do we stop once we're covered by Jesus' blood?

Israel had been set free ... had to get out ... leave the land of slavery ... leave Pharaoh ... leave their old lives. The picture is the same for us: Leave our old lives (our spiritual Egypt) ... move out ... move forward ... towards The Kingdom — The Promised Land.

### Romans 6:1-14

1 What shall we say then? **Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?** (*Have you fallen off your donkey and knocked your head on a rock?*)

2 **Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?**

3 Or **do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?**

4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so **we also should walk in newness of life.** (*Walking is a journey*)

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,

6 knowing this, that **our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.** (*We didn't know it at the time. We have been released from sin. We have died to that.*)

7 For he who has died has been freed from sin.

8 Now **if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.**

9 **knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more.** Death no longer has dominion over Him.

10 **For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.**

11 Likewise **you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.** (*We should be dead to sin. We should not enjoy sin*)

12 **Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.** (*Don't permit it!*)

13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but **present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.**

14 For **sin shall not have dominion over you**, for you are not under law but under grace. (*Sin had dominion over us ... but we have been delivered*)

### **Romans 6:16-23**

16 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of **sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?** (*You choose*)

17 But God be thanked that though **you were slaves of sin, (past tense)** yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

18 And **having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.** (*Israel was set free. We have been set free — from bondage — from sin*)

19 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now **present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.**

20 For when you were slaves of sin, (*past tense*) you were free in regard to righteousness.

21 What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

22 But **now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.**

23 For the wages of sin is death, **but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

So don't spend time "hanging around" in spiritual Egypt ... under spiritual pharaoh — Satan.

### **Romans 12:1-2**

1 **I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**

**2 And do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**

We are in the world ... spiritual Egypt. We can get comfortable. It can shape our values and standards. If it starts to contaminate us ... put it out ... put it away.

### **1 John 2:1-6**

1 My little children, these things I write to you, so **that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.**

2 **And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.**

3 Now by this we know that we know Him, **if we keep His commandments.** (*Being obedient. Putting on the new man*)

4 He who says, **"I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.**

5 But **whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him.** By this we know that we are in Him.

6 He who says he abides in Him **ought himself also to walk just as He walked.** (*Be like a little Jesus ... WWJD ... What Would Jesus Do?*)

**Don't sin! Put sin away! Put on right living** ... living like Jesus does (not just "give your heart to the Lord").

### **1 John 5:1-3**

1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we **love God and keep His commandments.** (*Voluntarily obedient*)

3 For **this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.**

Verse 3 in the Greek: **"that we keep on keeping His commandments"**. (Continuous present tense) **A LIFESTYLE.**

**It represents a spiritually UNLEAVENED LIFE!**

We'll be alert for physical leaven in the next 7 days ... **but the real lesson is for ALWAYS!**

## **2. LEAVEN AS A PICTURE OF FALSE DOCTRINE**

**Jesus had warned His disciples about false doctrine.**

Most of us are unlikely to be deceived by Roman Catholics ... Jehovah's Witnesses ... Mormons?

**But: If someone appears to be from a "Church of God" fellowship — we might tend to be more relaxed ... let our guard down a little bit ... give more credibility to what they say or teach.**

Hopefully ... we're okay with our understanding of God's truths ... but **it is still necessary to remain alert for the leaven of deception. DECEPTION IS A BIG PROBLEM!!**

The New Testament gives many many warnings about deception and deceivers. The warnings are there for a reason!

**In the Churches of God ... we've seen disputes/debates about:**

- **Calendar**
- **Passover or The Lord's Supper — 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup>?**
- **Pentecost ... Sunday ... Monday ... or Sivan 6?**
- **Jesus ... was He crucified on a Friday?**
- **Sabbath ... from sunrise to sunset?**
- **Sacred Names**

**Wrong teaching leads to —> wrong believing —>which leads to —> wrong thinking —> which leads to —> wrong actions. Wrong actions lead to —> THE LAKE OF FIRE.**

### **Galatians 5:1-4**

1 **Stand fast** (*stick with it!*) **therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free**, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

2 Indeed I, Paul, say to you that **if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.**

3 **And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.**

4 **You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.** (*“Estranged from Christ” ... “severed from Christ” — fallen from Grace!!*)

Verses 1-4 deception from what appeared to be “credible teachers” — FALSE TEACHERS.

### **Galatians 5:7-9**

7 **You ran well.** (*You were running well*) **Who hindered you from obeying the truth?**

8 This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you.

9 **A little leaven leavens the whole lump.**

**You’ve been persuaded away from Christ.**

### **Galatians 5:12**

12 I could wish that **those who trouble you** would even cut themselves off!

Even a little leaven can cause huge damage! The Galatians seemed to have missed out on salvation. See:

### **Galatians 1:6-8**

6 **I marvel** that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, (*“I marvel”*). *Some translations say: I’M ASTONISHED!*

7 which is not another; but **there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.**

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, **preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.**

9 As we have said before, so now I say again, **if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.**

We need to remain vigilant to the risk of false doctrine ... just as we're vigilant to physical leaven during the Feast.

Usually the change from truth to false is slow ... almost imperceptible.

**BE VIGILANT!**

Peter prophesied of false teaching in the Church.

**2 Peter 2:1-3**

1 **But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them,** and bring on themselves swift destruction.

2 **And many (Church members) will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed.**

3 **By covetousness (greed) they will exploit you (take advantage of you) with deceptive words;** for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

- Secretly brought in
- Deceptive words = words of deception  
= a message of deception

So. **WATCH OUT!** And that includes religious teachers ... not just other brethren.

**If we spot false teaching? PUT IT AWAY!**

Our security against deception ... our antidote to false teaching ... is to **know the truth! BE EXPERTS IN THE TRUTH!! Hold fast to what we know is true.**

## **2 Timothy 3:13-17**

13 But **evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. (ANOTHER WARNING!)**

14 But **you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them,**

15 and that from childhood **you have known the Holy Scriptures,** which **are able to make you wise for salvation** through faith which is in Christ Jesus. *(From the Old Testament)*

16 **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,**

17 **that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**

## **Keeping the Holy Days is part of continuing in the Holy Scriptures.**

So ... here we are today. The seven days of Unleavened Bread stretch before us.

We'll all be fairly diligent about avoiding leaven and leavened products in our homes and lives.

But ... **the more important lesson ... is to learn the Lesson of Leaven** ... which we can apply every day ... all year.

**Watch out for sin! Watch out for false doctrine** ... in our lives ... and whenever we find any ... any time in our lives — **PUT IT AWAY!**

**And then we will have a walk worthy of the Lord.**

