

Leaven of the Pharisees

Gillebaldo Elizondo—April 5, 2014

Good morning to everyone; happy Sabbath! It's great to be here. Today I would like to speak briefly about the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is quickly approaching. A lot of us are already starting to clean our homes and think about where the leavening might be. Maybe some of you have a checklist of things that you need to clean before the Passover.

1-Corinthians 5:8—Paul says: “For this reason, 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.**” This is direct command in the New Testament: *to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread!*

Just as we're cleaning our homes from the physical leavening, that is a figure of the spiritual things that we need to be doing in order to *look within ourselves and examine ourselves* for the spiritual leavening that we need to get rid of. Today I would like to give a few points regarding what similarities you can find in the Bible regarding the physical cleaning of your home and also regarding how we need to look for the spiritual leavening, in order to get it out.

➤ Doctrine

Matthew 16:5: “Now, when His disciples came to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. And Jesus said to them, ‘**Watch out and be on guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.**’ Then they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘*It is* because we did not take bread.’ But when Jesus knew *this*, He said to them, ‘O *you* of little faith, why are you reasoning among yourselves that *it is* because you did not bring bread? Do you still not understand? *Do you* not remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets you took *up*? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets you took *up*? How is it that you do not understand that I was not speaking of bread *when I told* you to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?’ Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, **but of the doctrine** of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (vs 5-12).

That is one type of leavening, the doctrine that they were teaching the people was leavened!

➤ Hypocrisy

Luke 12:1: “During this *time*, an innumerable multitude was gathering, *crowding so close* together that they were stepping on one

another. First of all He began to speak to His disciples, *saying*, ‘**Guard yourselves from the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy;** for there is nothing covered that shall not be uncovered, nor hidden that shall not be known. Therefore, whatever you have spoken in the darkness shall be heard in the light; and what you have spoken in the ear in closed rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops’” (vs 1-3).

He mentions here that the leavening of the Pharisees was hypocrisy. We can see from these Scriptures that the physical properties of leavening is pervasive. Once it gets into the bread it fills up the whole thing and expands! That's why Paul said that a ‘little bit of leavening leavens the whole lump!’ It is very pervasive and hard to get rid of.

The definition in English of *hypocrisy* and it's ‘a person who claims to have certain beliefs about what is right, but he behaves in a way that disagrees with those beliefs.’ It also means an actor, a stage actor is someone who puts on a mask. That's the Greek if I understand it correctly.

Sincerity means having or showing true feelings that are expressed in an honest way. Sincere means *without wax*. A long time ago they used to put wax on things to make them look flawless. So, it means something that is real.

We have to keep the Feast with the ***unleavened bread of sincerity and Truth*** as opposed to the leavening that the Pharisees were selling. We have two opposites here:

1. the leavening of the Pharisees
2. the Unleavened Bread that we have to take in, which is Jesus Christ, the unleavened bread

How do we unleaven ourselves spiritually speaking when we are working toward getting ready for the Feast. First of all what we do is identify the leavened items. There are many things in our houses that we don't even know have leavening. We read the labels and find out if something has leavening or doesn't. Likewise, there are many sins that we have, that we are not even aware of unless we look closely and we examine ourselves.

We need to take a closer look and read the ingredient statement on the physical things, but we also have to take a closer look through the Scriptures at how we are conducting ourselves in things that we may not be aware of; sins that we may not realize that we have.

Psalm 19:7: “The Law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandments of the LORD are pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether, more to be desired than gold, yea, much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward” (vs 7-11).

So, we see that the commandments give us a warning system, to be alert for possible sin, possible leavening!

Verse 12: “Who can understand his errors? Oh, cleanse me from *my* secret faults; and keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; do not let them rule over me; then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer” (vs 12-14).

We see here that David prayed to God to show him the hidden faults. We all have hidden faults; leavening that we don’t even know is there. We have to pray and study so that God will show us those things and help us to find out those things and get rid of them.

Once we find something that has leavening, we get rid of the leavening before the Feast. I equate that somehow to confessing our sins to God, in order to get rid of them, to be forgiven of those sins.

Prov. 28 says that he who covers his sins shall not prosper. But whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy.

Psalm 32:1: “Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silent, my bones wore away through my groaning all the day long, for by day and by night Your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah.” (vs 1-4). We need to stop there and think about that! When we confess our sins then God is able to bring us to repentance and forgiveness and the cleansing of those sins.

1-John 1:8: “If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the Truth is not in us. If we confess our own sins, He is faithful and righteous, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us” (vs 8-10). Confession to God in prayer for

repentance is very important.

Then once we put away the leavening and we celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, then we eat unleavened bread; take in the unleavened bread.

John 6:27: “Do not labor *for* the food that perishes, but *for* the food that endures unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give to you; for Him has God the Father sealed.’ Therefore, they said to Him, ‘What shall we do, in order that we ourselves may do the works of God?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God: that you believe in Him Whom He has sent.’ Therefore, they said to Him, ‘What sign will You perform, that we may see *it* and believe You? What work will You do? Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, as it is written: “He gave them bread to eat *that came down* from heaven.”’ Then Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly I say to you, Moses did not give you the Bread from heaven; but My Father gives you the true Bread from heaven. For **the Bread of God is He Who comes down from heaven** and gives life to the world.’ Therefore, they said to Him, ‘Lord, give this bread to us always’” (vs 27-34)—and that is Jesus Christ!

Because we carry with us our human nature. Even after being baptized and receiving the Holy Spirit, we still carry with us the ‘law of sin and death’ and human nature. We have to ask God to renew us continually and we have to eat that Unleavened Bread continually in a spiritual sense.

1-Corinthians 5:7: “Therefore, purge out the old leaven, so that you may become a new lump, *even* as you are unleavened.... [that tells us that they were keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread *physically*.] ...For Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us. For this reason, 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.

Scriptural References:

- 1) 1-Corinthians 5:18
- 2) Matthew 16:5-12
- 3) Luke 12:1-3
- 4) Psalm 19:7-14
- 5) Psalm 32:1-4
- 6) 1 John 1:8-10
- 7) John 6:27-34
- 8) 1 Corinthians 5:7-8

Scripture referenced, not quoted: Proverbs 28

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Transcribed: 4-23-14