

The Feasts of the Lord, Part 2 – Unleavened Bread

(Lent 3, March 8th, 2015)

Exodus 13:3-10

Introduction

- Recap (QUICKLY!) the seven feasts.
- Recall that we will not be treating these Feasts in their chronological order
- Passover is originally set in Egypt, and UB is also given in Egypt in connection with the Exodus. These two are unique among the feasts in that they were instituted before Israel left Egypt – the other 5 were instituted in Leviticus 23 later.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread - Summary

- Passover is technically a single day feast, occurring always on 14 Nisan, whereas UB is a full seven days, starting the day after Passover, on 15 Nisan and running through 22 Nisan. Because the two are right next to each other, often they are blurred together and collectively referred to as the eight days of Passover. In the Gospels they are also referred to together as the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Luke 22:1,7).
- This was the first of the three pilgrimage feasts (Weeks and Tabernacles are the other two); First Fruits then takes place on the second day of UB.
- The Bible gives three instructions for observing the feast:
 1. During the weeklong feast, Israel was to fast from eating any leavened bread.
 - a. Called in Exodus “the bread of affliction” it was to remind Israel that they departed from Egypt in great haste. The great deliverance by the Lord was at long last at hand, and there was not time to allow even dough to rise.
 - b. All leaven was also to be removed from all homes and all their lands (Ex 13:7; Dt 16:4).
 2. The first and last days of the feast were to be days of rest (Sabbath) with sacred assemblies held and work being prohibited.
 3. Special sacrifices were to be offered at the Temple each day of the feast.

Meaning / Significance

- The principle command of the Feast was the removal of and to abstain from leaven in general, and leavened bread in particular. Thus any bread to be eaten would be unleavened, called *matzah*, and was specifically intended in Scripture to recall to mind the flight from Egypt. The specific truth attached to the symbol of eating the *matzah* is so that “you may remember the day in which you came out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life” (Dt. 16:3). There is an intentional connection between eating and remembering.
- Leaven, or in Hebrew, *hametz*, (lit. “sour”), represented sin and corruption. Only unleavened, *matzah*, bread could be used at the Temple, because only a pure offering was worthy of being made. Compare with the “lamb without blemish or defect” required for various sacrifices at the temple.

- We should note that at other times, other Feasts, for example Weeks, bread made from wheat and with leaven was offered in the Temple as a wave and thank offering, but it was not burned.
- It is also worth noting the corrupting nature of leaven – a little bit will affect the whole dough; likewise sin has the power to corrupt the hearts and minds of people, and leads to death. Thus the Feast that focuses on God’s redemptive miracle centers on the idea of the removal of sin.
- The Exodus is the great salvific act for national Israel, its birth – its baptism, as it were. It is repeatedly referred to throughout the Pentateuch. Israelite slavery in Egypt represented bondage to sin and death, thus there is a clear redemptive theme to the Feast.
- This redemptive theme is just as equally carried by Passover itself, but what UB communicates is the expunging of sin as part of God’s redemption of his people. If the lamb was the substitute at Passover, dying that the sons might live, the leaven was the removal of uncleanness from those who had been paid for by the blood. In other words, the Feast held up the call to holiness in the redeemed. God expects this people to purge from their lives unclean things. Not because the purging saves them (that has already been accomplished), but because that is how redeemed people are to live.

Application & Fulfillment

- Fulfillment – two fold
- There is an unequivocal connection between Passover and UB, the one flows naturally from the other. Jesus Christ is clearly the fulfillment of Passover, in that he is the true Lamb who was slain for the removal of our sins. UB thus illustrates the life lived in Christ, where we put to death our sinful nature. Gal 2:20.
- The physical body of Jesus was pure – he was sinless. He alone faithfully kept the feast of UB. Thus he was the perfect, pure sacrifice for sin. In addition, his body in the tomb did not see corruption (Ps 16:10). We are under a curse and return to dust, but Jesus was not, and so did not. Anticipates the absence of corruption in resurrection.
- The place of yeast/leaven in our lives today vs. Israel. Yeast itself, that is, the microorganism, is not evil. It is a part of the creation. God tells Peter in Acts 10, call nothing that I have made unclean. But what yeast represented in observance of the FoUB, sin, is unclean.
 - The perniciousness and corruptive power of sin, “A little yeast leavens the whole loaf”. What are the things in your life that you allow to dwell in your home or in your mind or in your heart that corrupt you? How prepared are you to root out these corrosive things – be it unholy behavior or unholy objects.
 - Jesus repeatedly calls his followers to “be salt and light”, that is to be holy and set apart. In fact Jesus says that if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off!
- 1 Cor 5:6-8, St. Paul applies both Passover and UB to Christ and its meaning for Christians. See Allen Ross’s commentary, p. 413-4 for an excellent summary.