

Grace and Unleavening

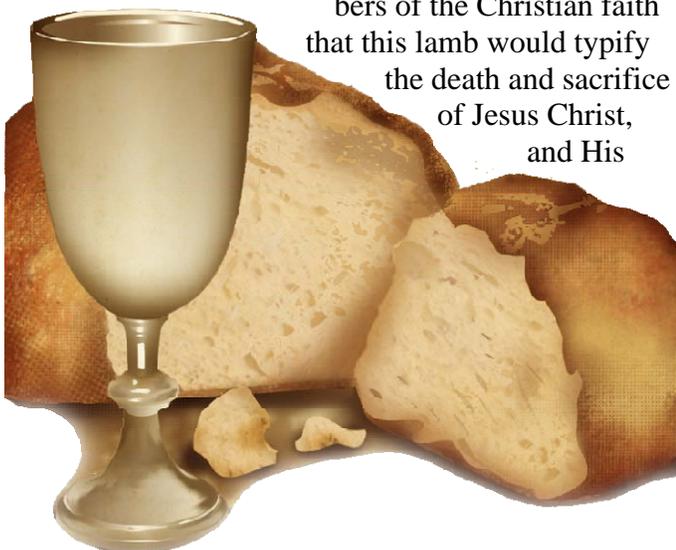
By Peter Kamen

We of the Church of God are days away from a season which we know as “The Days Of Unleavened Bread” As our belief and manor of custom dictates, we will strive to unleaven our “quarters” [home, car, etc] and abstain from any food containing leavening for seven days. We will in place of leavened products, consume unleavened bread for this particular time period.

WHY?

I will write with the assumption that the readers of this article will at least be familiar with the account of the Exodus and the original Passover account. We'll take a look at this set of scriptures found in Exodus 12. In this chapter, God instructs Moses and Aaron concerning the month of Abib as being the first month of the year to them, and then on the tenth day of this month, every man was to select a lamb for a household. This lamb had to be “a male without blemish”. Then on the fourteenth day of the same month, they were to kill it at twilight, and sprinkle some of its blood on the door posts and top of the houses where the lamb would be eaten. There appears to be no

dispute among members of the Christian faith that this lamb would typify the death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and His



shed blood covering our sins. God “Passed Over”

the homes of the Israelites when He sent the death angel to smite the firstborn of the Egyptians.



UNLEAVENED BREAD

Then in Ex 12, verses 17-20, God instructs the Israelites concerning the Days of Unleavened Bread. Here we see that the Israelites were to unleaven their homes, and totally abstain from leavening for a seven day period. It is not my purpose in this article to explain or review the entire account of Ancient Israel and the Exodus. I do encourage any reader who wishes to review all of the details to read this account in full.

UNLEAVENED BREAD AND THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

My purpose in writing this article is to show the significance of these days to the New Testament Christian church. What could these days mean to us, and do we have any business in observing them. It has been a common and consistent position among most of the New Testament churches to believe and teach that Christ fulfilled the meaning of these days at His coming and crucifixion. And, even some in the Church of God itself have forsaken the observation of these days based on similar arguments.

CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

In the book of Matthew beginning in verse 26, Jesus implemented a symbolic ritual for the New Testament Church; “And as they were eating, [the



Passover meal] Jesus took bread, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said "Take, eat; this is My body". Verse 27-28, Then He took the cup and gave thanks, and gave it to them saying "Drink

from it, all of you. For this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Again, there is little dispute if any that the Passover lamb represented the future sacrifice of Christ which would come and is fulfilled. Jesus assigned the elements of bread [which would have been unleavened in this time frame] to represent His broken body, and the wine to represent His shed blood.

BUT WHY THE CONTINUATION OF THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD?

One of the classic arguments against the observation of this Festival is that "Christ has unleavened us" and therefore there is no need for the New Testament Christian to observe this "physical" ritual. To do so, some argue, is tantamount to one's attempting to "earn" one's salvation by works. Many will site Colossians 2:16-17 emphasizing the statement "shadow" of things to come. As I have often pointed out when covering the Holy Days, this word actually can be translated "Image" which serves the true intent of Paul's words. The Holy Days did in fact point An-

cient Israel toward Christ's first coming, and they now serve to point the New Testament church to His second coming and that which is yet to be fulfilled.

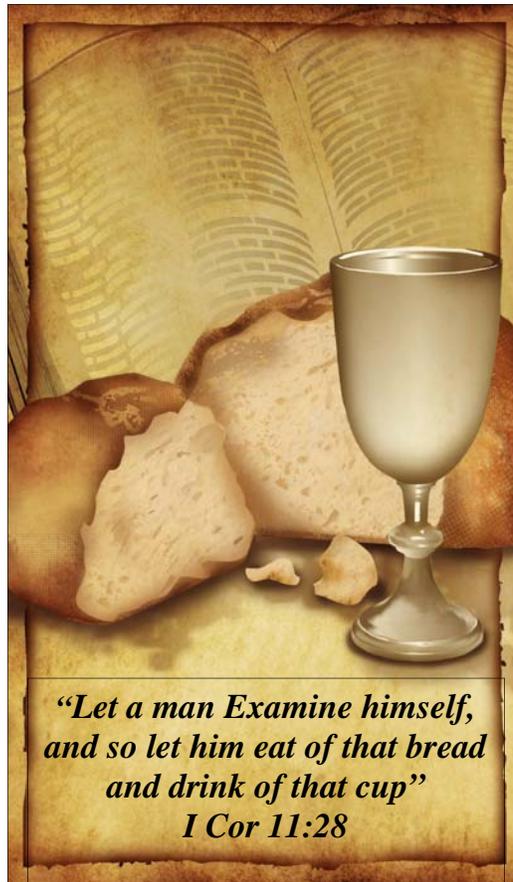
BUT WHY THE CONTINUATION OF THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD?

EARLY CHURCH KEPT THIS FESTIVAL

The first reference to the Days of Unleavened Bread occurs in the book of Acts, chapter 12:3 in reference to the church being persecuted, and it is recorded in this verse, "Then were the Days of Unleavened Bread". Then in chapter 20:6, it recorded that Paul and his party sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened bread. Some will argue that these verses in themselves do not prove that the Apostles observed them, but rather were just making mention of the season. The Jews certainly would still be keeping them. But true reinforcement comes in Paul's letter to

the Corinthian church. In 1 Corinthians 5:7-8, Paul in dealing with a moral issue in that church alludes to the analogy of these days, that leavening is a "type" of sin. "Therefore purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, [through the sacrifice of Christ] since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us [which we remember yearly with the bread and wine] Therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Our initial removing of the leavening from our quarters is symbolic of the "unleavening" which occurred by virtue of



"Let a man Examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup"
I Cor 11:28

Christ's sacrifice for us. BUT-- we still have a responsibility in our daily living, and here is where the avoiding of leavening for seven days comes in.

CHRISTIAN LIVING AND GRACE; PICTURED BY THIS FESTIVAL

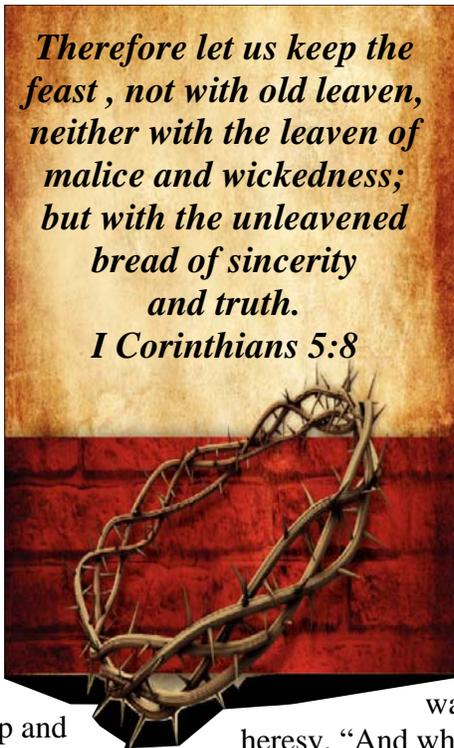
We are all familiar with the knowledge that a Christian is saved by grace and not works as Paul reminds us in the book of Ephesians second chapter, verses 2 and 8. But then James in his book instructs us that "Faith without works is dead" This can appear to be contradictory at best, and confusing at the least.

In order to reconcile these statements, we need to understand how "grace" works. In Romans 8:1 Paul after confessing his own personal struggles with sin in the previous chapters offers this comforting fact; "There is therefore now NO condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Paul goes on to explain how the Spirit of life in Christ has made him free from the law of sin and death. This means that as long as one is following the lead of Christ through the Spirit, you will remain under God's grace, and not be condemned if you slip and stumble, but confess your sins. You will remain "Justified" in God's sight.

But God in His infinite wisdom knew that there would be a need to keep us in remembrance of this. And grace would be one of the first things that our adversary, Satan, would seek to pervert..

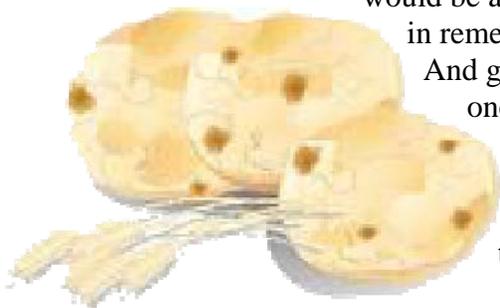
SATAN SENDS IN HIS "STOOGES"

It happened very early on in the New Testament Church. A doctrine was introduced that God's grace was a Carte Blanche invitation for a person now cleansed by the blood of Christ to freely sin because the only responsibility one now has in this state is to "believe." Jude was one to promptly address this issue; "Beloved, while I



was very diligent to write to you concerning the common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unawares, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

The concept being preached was that the more one sinned, the happier God would be, because then God could show His grace in greater measure. Paul was also accused of teaching this heresy. "And why not say, Let us do evil that good may come"? as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say, their condemnation is just." [Romans 3:8] This is a very dangerous heresy because it obscures the responsibility which the Christian bears of being cautious as to not return to a life of sin. Peter also wrote concerning this issue and likened those who are of this mindset to a dog returning to its own vomit, or a pig after being washed, returning to the mud. [2 Peter 2:22]



HOW THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD HELP US TO UNDERSTAND OUR RESPONSIBILITY, AND AVOID RETURN TO SIN

As we have previously seen from the words of Paul, leaven, typifies sin. Yes, Christ has unleavened us, and if we have truly repented of our sins, we have been “Buried with Him” and raised up to a new life where we are led by His Spirit. But temptation is still ever around us, and while we are under his Grace, we have a responsibility to avoid sin [as pictured by leavening during these days] and repent whenever we fall short, which often happens. The practice of avoiding leavening for these seven days is there to serve to remind us of the diligence with which we are to be living in our new life in Christ.

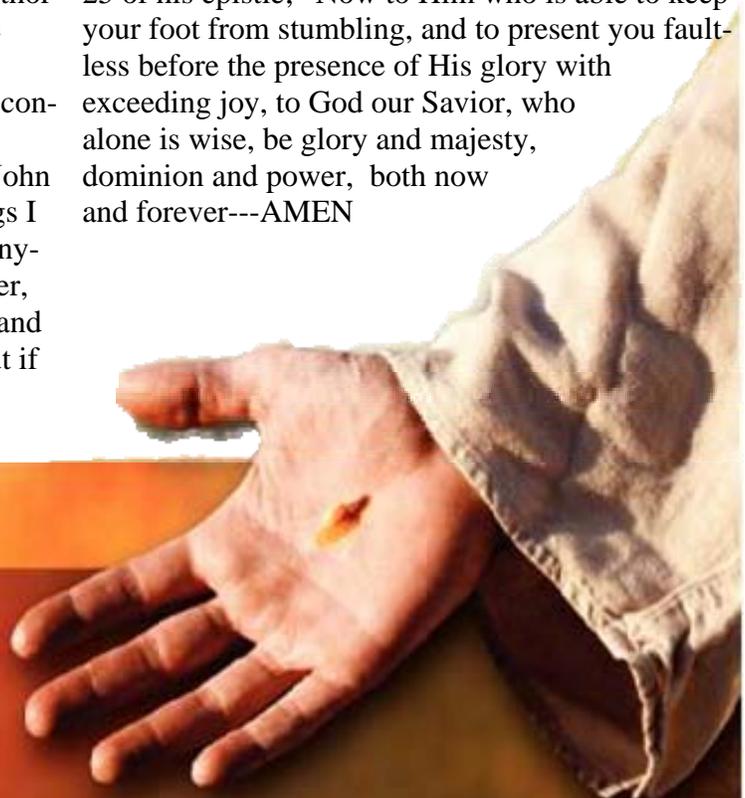
FINAL SCRIPTURES WHICH BEAR THIS OUT

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul lists a number of incidents in which Ancient Israel invoked God’s displeasure and stated that these things served as examples for the New Testament church. The author of Hebrews very strongly admonishes us to be careful as to not become hardened by the “deceitfulness of sin” [Hebrews 3:13] and the consequences of deliberately turning our back on Christ and His salvation. [10:26] Finally in 1 John 2:1 John writes “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.” This is true grace and “unleavening” We are to strive to avoid sin but if

and when we do sin, [and we will] if we confess our sins, we have Jesus Christ as our advocate. But we retain this relationship by walking after, and being led by His Spirit.

John finalizes his thoughts in this epistle by comparing the state of the truly “Born Again” [a future event] Christian as to where we are now, and our remaining responsibility to abide in Christ “We know that whosoever is born of God [in total-ity] does not sin, but he who has been “begotten” [our present state] of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.”

This is what our avoiding leavening during these seven days is all about. It helps us to stay focused on the fact that we are truly saved by grace, but the responsibility still remains for us to choose our direction from here, walking after the Spirit and striving to avoid becoming ensnared again in sin, or allowing our spiritual guard to go down and slip further and further away, as has happened to some. As Jude so beautifully summarizes it in verses 24-25 of his epistle; “Now to Him who is able to keep your foot from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever---AMEN



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