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Why Don't We Eat Leavened Bread During the Days of Unleavened Bread?

Eric V. Snow, sermonette, April 9, 2011, Ann Arbor, MI UCG

Why do we do what we do? Can we explain our teachings to others if we were asked? At this time of the year, it's good to focus in on a specific doctrine that we may need to defend if unconverted relatives, friends, co-workers, or neighbors asked us about it. So then, why don't we eat leavened bread during the Days of Unleavened Bread? Why do we eat unleavened bread for seven days after the Passover? If we've been in the church for decades, we should be able to explain why we keep the ritual that's central to the Days of Unleavened Bread.

S.P.S. Today let's understand why we should not eat leavened bread but should eat unleavened bread during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

1. God commands us to obey this ritual as part of this festival in the Old Testament.

Exodus 12:15-20

Verse 17: If it's a permanent ordinance throughout all our generations, why should we assume it's abolished?

Burden of proof is on the other side, the dispensationalist Protestants: We have a clear command in the Old Testament. They have to find a statement in the New Testament that equally clearly would abolish it. We don't need to find reconfirmations of Old Testament commands in the Paul's letters or elsewhere. Instead, they have to find texts that abolish the Sabbath, the Holy Days, tithing, and avoiding unclean meat that don't also abolish other moral laws they believe in also. "Judo argument" issue: Use strength of opponent against him, by substituting another law that he believes in into the argument used against these four laws. "Going back to Moses," "Christians should be Christ-centered, not law-centered." Blah, blah, blah.

Verse 19: Why seven days? Number of completeness. Seven days make up a whole week, or an entire cycle. The spiritual goal here

is to be completely unleavened, or free from sin, in our daily lives.

Notice that this supposedly “ceremonial” law applied to the gentiles also, not just to the Israelites. There was one law for both peoples. Thus, it wasn’t designed to make the Jews different from everyone else.

2. It isn’t a sin to avoid eating unleavened bread on this or that day during the festival.

Obviously, we should aim to positively perform this command, and eat unleavened bread each day also. God wants us to become unleavened by positive action, not merely by avoiding the negative action.

Study paper by Dr. Levy on this subject on the ucg.org Web site that explains this issue more. Mr. Armstrong said back in 1982 that one doesn’t have to eat unleavened bread each of the seven days.

Exodus 20:8-10

Is it a sin to only work 5 days or less during the week? Are retirees or the involuntarily

unemployed sinning by not working? We're obviously commanded to work less than six days sometimes, such as when an annual holy day during that week, such as Pentecost or the Feast of Trumpets.

Note also that the penalties are inflicted only when one eats leavened bread, not when one forgets or avoids eating unleavened bread. Some people's health conditions, such as gluten-intolerance, could make them hesitant to eat bread in general. They shouldn't be forced to eat bread.

3. We should aim to live spiritually transformed lives that correspond with the physical ritual of deleavening our homes.

I Cor. 5:6-8

V. 6: A small amount of sin easily can grow and contaminate the whole area. It's like how one rotten apple can end up spoiling a whole crate of them.

V. 7: [NASB: "just as you are in fact unleavened"] Since the Corinthians had all sorts of serious problems, it's hard to believe they

were unleavened only in a spiritual sense. They had to be literally keeping the ritual. That means New Testament Christians were keeping this ritual, including gentiles, not just Jews.

We should perform this ritual in order to make us think about changing our sinful habits and wrong ways of life. God's ceremonies for us have a teaching function. For example, we can think about various analogies about how sin slips into our lives and dominates the world as we clean odd spots of our homes and as we avoid eating leavened bread during the Feast. Think of how full the world of sin must be by analogy when the grocery stores and restaurants are full of leavened products that they sell during the Festival.

V.8: Will we go on to live our lives differently spiritually? Or will we keep this ritual, but not change how we live? If so, we did this ceremony in vain, as an empty formality. We should take specific concrete steps to reduce the hold of various sins in our lives.

Conclusion: We should avoid eating leavened bread and eat unleavened bread during the Days of Unleavened Bread because God

commands it. Although we can learn good lessons by eating unleavened bread each day during the Festival, we shouldn't think it's a sin if we don't. Finally, let's aim to actually live sin-free lives that correspond to our physically unleavened properties.

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