

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 31 March 2019. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Christ, the Passover Bread

Exodus 12:8

Thirty-four hundred years ago, God's people, the children of Israel, were living in the land of Egypt, as slaves to the Egyptians. For at least 150 years, the children of Israel had served the kings of Egypt with rigour. But then, God raised up a deliverer named Moses. Through Moses, God sent plague after plague upon Egypt; but the stubborn Pharaoh refused to let God's people go. After nine devastating plagues, Egypt was all but destroyed; but Pharaoh still hardened his heart against Jehovah.

But then, the tenth plague came—the plague which finally compelled Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go. On the night of the 14th of Nisan, God passed over every house in the land of Egypt; and in one night, God slew the firstborn of every household—*except* for the households of the children of Israel. Not one firstborn of the Israelites died. Yet, there was a condition even for the Israelites to escape death. God instructed the children of Israel that in that evening, each household was to take a perfect, spotless, healthy lamb, slay it, and put its blood on the top and side doorposts of their house. Then they were to roast the lamb with fire, and eat it. God promised that when He saw the blood on their doorposts, He would pass over them, and would not destroy the firstborn in that house.

In last week's message, we learned the meaning of all this. The Passover is far more than a memorial of how God spared Israel from judgment, and freed them from Egyptian bondage; it is a *prophecy* of what Christ would one day do on the cross. It is a picture of how Jesus Christ is the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. It is a picture of how Christ shed His own precious blood on the cross, so that we might be saved from God's wrath. The placing of the blood over the door is a picture of personally placing one's faith in Christ for salvation. The eating of the lamb is, likewise, a picture of believing on Jesus. Just as one must eat food to live physically, so one must "eat" the Lamb of God (believe on Him) in order to receive spiritual life. When one believes on Christ, He is freed from the bondage of sin, and from the penalty of sin (which is eternal death in hell); and he begins to live unto God.

Now, this morning, we will learn about another food which the children of Israel were commanded to eat on the Passover night: the Matzah Bread. The title of this message is *Christ, our Passover Bread*.

Read Exodus 12:1-8.

I. The meaning of leavened bread

As we saw in **verse 8** of our Scripture, the children of Israel were to eat bread along with the Passover lamb. But it couldn't be just any old bread. It had to be Matzah bread. Now, what is Matzah bread? It is bread that is "unleavened." That is the word that is use there in **verse 8**. (**Read verse 8 again.**) Leaven is just another word for "yeast." Yeast, of course, is the stuff that makes bread rise as it is baking.

Now, I must admit that I had always been a little fuzzy in my understanding of how, exactly, yeast makes bread rise. So, out of sheer curiosity, I looked it up. Basically, yeast is a living

thing. It is a fungus; and as a fungus, it multiplies and *grows*. As water, flour, and yeast are mixed together to make dough, enzymes in the flour and yeast cause starch molecules to break down into sugars. The yeast then starts to eat the sugar; but as the temperature rises during the baking process, the yeast cells start to eat up the sugar like mad. As they eat the sugar, they release carbon dioxide; and the carbon dioxide, being a gas, gets trapped in little bubble pockets. These bubbles then make the bread blow up, just like a balloon.

Now, as we saw in our Scripture, the children of Israel were not to eat any leavened bread on the night of the Passover. In fact, they weren't allowed to have *any* leaven anywhere in their house. They had to search through their whole house, and get rid of any leaven that they saw. By the way, to this day, the Jewish people are so meticulous about removing the *chametz* (leaven products) from their houses, that they spend an entire month cleaning their house in preparation for Passover! They clean and scour every centimetre of the house, from top to bottom. They look in every corner, under every cushion, and under every rug, to make sure that not one bread crumb (which might contain leaven) remains. On the final night *before* Passover, they have a ceremony called *Bedekat Chemetz*. The parents hide ten pieces of leaven throughout the house; and the father leads the children in searching for the leaven, by candlelight. After they have found the last bit of leaven, they remove it from the house.

Now, why did God command the children of Israel not to eat leavened bread? Well, for one thing, they had to make their bread quickly. The LORD told them, "*Ye shall eat it in haste.*" Why? Because they had to be ready to leave Egypt straightaway. Remember, God was about to slay all the firstborn of Egypt. Sometime in the middle of the night, Pharaoh would realise that his *own* firstborn son was dead; and he would quickly call Moses, and would command the children of Israel to leave Egypt immediately. They had to be ready to go.

Now, I know, from experience, that when Mrs. Finley bakes regular bread, it takes about an hour to bake. However, when she baked *unleavened* bread for the Holiday Bible Club a couple weeks ago, it took only about 10 minutes to bake. That is why God commanded Israel to make their bread unleavened. The children of Israel didn't *have* an hour to wait around for their bread to bake. They had to make it fast, because at any minute, they might get the word that they were to leave Egypt.

However, there is another reason why God commanded the children of Israel to eat unleavened bread. In the Bible, **leaven** is often used as a picture, or a symbol; and it represents two things (neither of which is good). Let's look at them.

Read Matthew 16:6-12.

Read 1 Corinthians 5:6-8.

In the Bible, leaven is often a picture of sin and wickedness. Paul spoke of it this way in **1 Corinthians 5**. As we saw in the **Matthew** passage, leaven is also a picture of false doctrine. (Of course, false doctrine is directly related to sin, since it is the product of sin.) Leavened bread, then, reminds us of the sin that is in our lives. The *lack* of leaven in Matzah bread reminds us of *sinlessness*. By commanding the children of Israel to eat *unleavened* bread on the Passover, God was teaching them a very important spiritual truth.

We'll talk more about the *unleavened* bread in a few moments. But first, let's talk about leaven. Let's talk about sin. *How* does leaven remind us of sin? Well, think about what leaven does. When you make bread, you start with just a tiny pinch of leaven; but very soon,

that leaven makes the whole loaf of bread puff up. The yeast affects everything around it. So it is with sin. A “little” bit of sin in your life grows and grows, until it fills your life; and it controls you; and it affects everyone around you, too. As you become increasingly filled with sin, you begin to draw *others* into your sin. That’s why Paul said in **Galatians 5:9**, “*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*” By the way, that is exactly what Paul was talking about there in **1 Corinthians 5**, as well. Paul was telling the church of Corinth that they needed to remove an immoral member from their church membership, and from their church services, because that man’s sin was going to affect *everyone in the congregation*.

Think about the sin in your own life. The Bible says that we are all sinners. That means that we’ve all broken God’s laws. It is natural for us to sin. When our parents, Adam and Eve, decided to listen to Satan’s lie and eat that fruit, and disobey God, they became sinners; and their sin nature has been passed down to all of us. We all come into this world with the desire to do whatever *I* want to do, and not what *God* tells me to do. (See **Romans 5:12**.)

You know, we are so comfortable with sin, that we don’t see it for what it is. When we see a pouting, screaming child, we say, “Oh, that’s just because he needs a nap.” No, it’s because he’s a sinner! That child wants his own way. That is the very essence of sin. Sin is going your *own way*, and not God’s way. The Bible says in **Isaiah 53:6**, “*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.*” As that child grows up, he’ll want his way more and more; and he’ll do bigger and bigger sins against God. He will trample on people, and hurt whomever he needs to hurt, to get what he wants.

God does not see things as man sees them. Take bank robbery, for instance. I wish I had a euro for every time I’ve heard someone say, “I’m not a bad person. I’ve never robbed a bank or anything.” But is that the way God sees it? One of God’s commandments is, “*Thou shalt not steal*” (**Exodus 20:15**). Did God say, “It’s not so bad if you steal something small, or not so valuable; but if you steal something really big, *that’s* sin.” No, God said, “*Thou shalt not steal.*” Have *you* ever taken something that wasn’t yours—even something small? If so, God calls you a thief! Bank robbers start off small, too. First they take something from their sibling’s room. Then they take a candy from the store. Then a little money from mum’s purse. The sin gets bigger and bigger—just as leaven makes bread get bigger and bigger. You see, God sees no difference between that “little” leaven of stealing, and the end product of a bank robbery! A one-time thief is just as much a thief as a one-time murderer is a murderer; and God says that “*Thieves...shall [not] inherit the kingdom of God*” (**1 Corinthians 6:10**).

Everywhere we look around us, we see sin in its many stages of growth; but for some reason, we fail to see the “little” sin for what it is. We laugh about the little child who cheats at a board game; but then we wonder why cheating on tests is absolutely endemic in our universities. Those who cheat in university use the same justification that they used when they cheated at board games when they were children. “I’m just being smart,” they say. “You’ve got to be able to get ahead in the business world. It’s survival of the fittest.” But God doesn’t see it that way. Cheating is stealing someone’s answers; and God says, “*Thou shalt not steal.*” Yet, people just don’t seem to be concerned about it. People don’t get overly concerned these days when they see a small child slap, hit, or yell at his mother or father, either. But then we wonder why that same child, as a teen, screams at, and even physically assaults, his mum and dad as a teen, and steals their money, and goes out with his friends and gets killed or assaulted outside a nightclub. There’s a reason, folks! God says, “*Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land.*” There is a reason why many Hollywood celebrities, rock stars, and rap stars die at age 30 or younger. Many of these people openly express their hatred of their father and mother. God is not mocked! People also

don't think much of when a small child pinches, slaps, hits, or fights with other children. "They're just kids being kids," people say. But God says differently. God says, "***Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself***" (**Leviticus 19:18**). Sin is sin! Jesus said that anger is just like murder, and that mental lust is just like adultery (**Matthew 5:21-28**).

Is it such a big deal to disobey God? Yes, it is! God is a holy God; and He cannot accept us with our sin. He is our Judge; and as our Judge, He must judge our sin. The Bible says that the ultimate punishment for sin is eternity in the Lake of Fire. (**See Revelation 21:8.**)

Why do people question God's right to cast people into the Lake of Fire? For the same reason that they question God's right to slay the firstborn of Egypt. They say, "How could God have done such a terrible thing?" They do not understand that God is our Judge and our Lawgiver (**Isaiah 33:22**). He makes the rules: and He is *right* in His doings. Take God's sentence against those who mistreat Israel, for example. God told Abraham that He will bless those who bless his descendants, and will curse those who curse his descendants. God states, throughout Scripture, that He has attached His own *name* to the children of Israel. The very name "Israel" means "prince with God." God calls Israel His "firstborn." An assault on Israel is an assault on Israel's God. Why should we be surprised, then, that God slew the firstborn of Egypt, when the Egyptians had slain *God's* "firstborn," the children of Israel? The slaying of the firstborn of Egypt was *justice*; and God, the Judge, had the perfect right to execute it.

Perhaps you do not understand the seriousness of your sin, because you have not been saved. Perhaps you are, for the first time, getting a glimpse of how filled your life is with the leaven of unrighteousness. If so, please listen closely to what God says about the *unleavened* bread.

II. The meaning of unleavened bread

The meaning of *leavened* bread is clear. The meaning is that we are sinners, and that our sin has filled our entire being with unrighteousness. That means that we are in trouble with a holy God. **But**, there is good news. Even though God must judge sin, He still loves us, and doesn't want us to perish. (**See John 3:16.**) God made a way for us to be saved from our sin, *and* from hell. God the Son, the second Person of the Godhead, came down into our world, and was born of a virgin named Mary. (**See Isaiah 7:14.**) Even though God the Father chose Mary's husband, Joseph, to rear Jesus in His boyhood, Jesus didn't have a human father. His birth was a miracle. Jesus' *couldn't* have had a human father. If He *had* had a human father, He would have been only a man, and would have been a sinner, like the rest of us. But because Jesus had no human father, He has no sin nature. He is completely a man; but He is also completely God! And He is holy!

Here is where the *unleavened* bread (the Matzah bread) comes in. Remember, what does *unleavened* bread represent? It is a picture of *sinlessness* (having no sin). And who is the only sinless Person who ever lived? It is Jesus! That is why **Matzah bread is a picture of Jesus' body, which had no sin.**

On the night before Jesus went to the cross, He ate a very special supper with His disciples. We all know it as "the Last Supper." Now, this wasn't just any supper; it was the *Passover* supper. This was the Passover day—the 14th of Nisan. The Passover day had begun at 6 p.m. that evening. Just like every other Jew in Israel, Jesus and His disciples ate the Passover meal—except that this time, Jesus ate it at the *beginning* of the Passover day, instead of at the end of it, as everyone did. Jesus had to eat His Passover *early* this year, because He had an

extremely important mission to carry out at the end of the Passover day, while everyone else was eating their Passover meals. His mission was that He was to die on the cross, as the *true* Passover Lamb. That is exactly what Jesus was preparing His disciples to witness. Jesus took the Matzah bread, and broke it into pieces for each of the disciples; but then, He said something strange—something that His disciples had never heard Him say before.

Read Matthew 26:26.

What did Jesus mean when He said, “*This is my body*”? Was He saying that that piece of bread was *actually* His body—that it had somehow magically turned into His flesh? No. Just as Jesus was speaking metaphorically when He said, “I am the Door,” and “I am the Vine,” Jesus was speaking metaphorically when He said, “This is my body.” Jesus was saying that the unleavened bread is something that *reminds* us of His body. How does it remind us of His body? *Because just as the Matzah bread has no leaven, so Jesus’ body has no sin.*

But that’s not all. The Matzah bread also reminds us of Jesus’ body because it had to be *broken*. Matzah bread is baked in one big sheet; and it is brittle, like a cracker. When a family eats the Passover, the head of the family takes that large sheet of Matzah, and breaks it into smaller pieces, so that everyone could have a piece. This is a picture of how Jesus’ body was “broken” for us on the cross. The Roman soldiers took Jesus, and tore His flesh apart with a horrible “cat-o’-nine-tails” whip, which had pieces of metal and bone in it. They pierced Jesus’ head with a crown of thorns. Then they drove nails through His hands and feet, and nailed Him to a cross. Though no bone of Jesus was broken, His *body* was “broken.”

By the way, you’ll notice, when you see a piece of Matzah bread, that it is filled with piercings. As the Matzah bread is baking, the dough is pierced with little holes in lines across the bread, so that any little bubbles of air that may still be in the dough can escape. Is there any meaning to this? I believe so! The piercings in the bread, and their stripe-like appearance across the bread, remind us of how Jesus’ body was pierced. The Scripture prophesied this. **Isaiah 53:5** says, “*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*” In **Zechariah 12:10** the LORD Himself said that one day, the people of Israel will “*look upon me whom they have pierced.*” In **Psalms 22:16** David prophesied of Jesus, “*they pierced my hands and my feet.*” *David’s* hands and feet were never pierced; but *Jesus’* were pierced!

Jesus went through all this so that He could pay for our sins. While Jesus was hanging on the cross, all the sins that you and I have ever done, or ever will do, were placed on Jesus, as though they were *His* sins; and He paid the penalty for them all. Jesus did all this so that you and I could be freed from our sin, and have eternal life (a relationship with God).

Matzah bread is a picture of Christ’s sinless body. It is a picture of His *broken* body. But there is more. Matzah bread (or, rather, *eating* the Matzah bread) **is a picture of receiving spiritual life from Christ, and taking on his nature.**

How does a person receive spiritual life from Christ? Does it happen automatically, to everyone? After all, if Jesus died for everyone, we should all be on our way to heaven, right? Wrong! (**See 1 Timothy 4:10b.**) The Bible says that in order to be saved from your sin, and go to heaven, you must personally *receive* God’s gift of love. You must repent of your sin and *believe* on Jesus. That means that you must admit to God that you are a sinner, and that because of your sin, you are on your way to hell. You must admit to God that you cannot do

any good thing to save yourself. You must stop trusting in your own good works (which cannot save you), and instead trust in Jesus, and in what He did for you on the cross.

That's why putting your trust in Jesus is like eating bread. To this day, Christ's churches still eat the Lord's Supper, as Jesus commanded us to do; and whenever we eat the Lord's Supper, we eat Matzah bread, just as the Jews ate in the Passover. Now, eating bread in the Lord's Supper can't save anyone. A person could go to a church, take the Lord's Supper every time it is observed, and eat a thousand pieces of Matzah bread, yet die and go to hell. Eating physical bread won't take away even one sin you've ever done. Why, then, do we Christians eat the Matzah bread in the Lord's Supper? Because it reminds us of how we have trusted Jesus to save us from our sin. How so? Well, think about it. If you don't eat food, you'll die. You need food to live. Likewise, in order to have eternal life, you must believe on Jesus. That's why eating unleavened bread is like believing on Jesus. When you believe on Jesus, and trust Him to save you, He gives you eternal life. He imparts spiritual life (a relationship with God) to all who believe. We saw this in **John 6** last week; but let's look again.

Read John 6:33-35, 47-64.

When Jesus said that we must "eat his flesh," He was *not* talking about literally eating His flesh, as the Catholic Church falsely teaches. He was not teaching that His flesh magically turns into bread, so that we can eat it, and be saved. He was teaching that we must *believe* on Him, and *receive* Him into our lives, so that we can receive spiritual *life* from Him. Jesus clearly stated His meaning when He said, "**Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.**" When you truly place your faith and trust in Christ, He saves you, and makes you alive to God.

But that's not all. After you believe on Jesus, Jesus helps you to start becoming like Himself! He enables you to partake of His holy nature. We've all heard the saying, "You are what you eat," right? Well, Jesus said, "**I am the Bread of life.**" After you trust in Jesus to save you, He comes into your life; and He then helps you to stop sinning. Just as Matzah bread imparts healthy nutrients into the bodies of those who eat it, so Christ imparts His holy nature into the souls of those who believe on Him. He helps you to get rid of the "leaven" of sin that is in your heart. He helps you to be holy and pure in heart, just as He is.

Remember that Jewish tradition on the night just before Passover—the tradition of going through the house with candles, and purging out every last bit of leaven? That is what we *Christians* should be doing in in our hearts every day, in regard to sin. Every day we should be holding up the "light" of God's Word, and allowing God to show us the sins that lie in every corner of our hearts, so that we may ask Him to *purge* those sins from our lives.

Read Psalm 139:23-24.

In **1 Corinthians 5**, Paul urged the Corinthians to "**Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.**" In other words, "Allow Christ to get rid of the sin in your life. That is the whole reason He became the Passover Lamb for you—so that you may be freed from sin!"

Matzah bread is a picture of Christ's sinless body. It is a picture of Christ's *broken* body, which was broken on the cross. Eating the Matzah is a picture of believing on Christ, and of receiving His holy nature from Him. But there is one more thing of which Matzah reminds us. **Matzah bread is a reminder that Jesus Christ is coming back!**

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

As New Testament Christians, we are not required to observe the Passover. However, there is one part of the Passover that Christ has commanded us to keep: and that is the eating of unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper. The bread reminds us of Christ's body, which was broken for us; but it also reminds us that He is returning! Paul said, ***"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."*** Christian, when you eat the bread in the Lord's Supper, remember that He is coming back! Remembering this will motivate you to stay cleansed from sin, so that you'll not be ashamed when He returns.

In closing, I would like to tell you about a very interesting Passover tradition that the Jewish people follow today. At the outset of the Passover meal, the head of the family takes out a bag called the "Afikomen" bag. In this bag are three large sheets of Matzah bread. The father takes the *middle* Matzah, and breaks it. He then puts the smaller piece of broken Matzah back into the bag; and they eat it during the meal. But the larger piece (which is called the "Afikomen") is wrapped in a napkin; and the father hides it somewhere in the house. After the Passover meal is finished, the children then go and seek for the Afikomen; and whoever finds it is rewarded. Why do they do this? The rabbis say that it is because there is no longer any Passover lamb. Remember, the rabbis say that the Passover lamb shouldn't be eaten during the Passover meal anymore, because there is no Temple anymore. Therefore, they say that the Afikomen bread should be eaten after the meal as a *substitute* for the Passover lamb.

Folks...I couldn't possibly make this up! God surely didn't inspire this tradition; but I believe He *allowed* the Jews to come up with this tradition in order to point them to the Jesus whom they are rejecting! Let's look at a couple prophecies about Christ. First, we'll look at one that was made by Hosea. Then we'll look at a prophecy that was made by Christ Himself.

Read Hosea 5:14 - 6:3.

Read Matthew 23:37-39.

To this day, Jesus is "hidden" to unbelieving Jewish people. As a nation, they have rejected their Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ; therefore, Christ has "torn" them (allowed their Temple and nation to be destroyed, in A.D. 70); and He has gone away, and returned to His "place." For now, the Jewish nation, on the whole, refuses to see Him by faith. They will not acknowledge Him. They will not even eat the lamb in the Passover meal anymore, because it looks too much like Jesus! They have removed the Passover lamb, and have substituted the lamb with "Afikomen" bread. But even the Afikomen bread seems to point to Christ! That second piece of Matzah in the Afikomen bag looks a lot like Jesus! Just as the Afikomen is the second piece of bread in the Afikomen bag, so Christ is the second member of the Triune Godhead, who was broken for us; and He is now "hidden away" from the eyes of most Jewish people. Right now, they can't find their Messiah. But one day, during the great time of Tribulation, Israel, as a nation, will finally acknowledge their offence against the LORD, and will seek His face; and when they do, they will "find" that Afikomen. They will finally find Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life, who was broken for them. They will find that He is also the Lamb of God, whom they have been rejecting for centuries. They will finally acknowledge Jesus as the one who has come to them ***"in the name of the Lord."*** They will finally bless Him; and Christ, in turn, will bless them. He will save them, and heal them; and He will literally "return" to them, and set up his glorious 1,000-year Kingdom on earth.

Conclusion: Have *you* found the “Afikomen” bread? Have *you* found the Bread of Life? In other words, have you truly believed on Jesus, and received eternal life from Him? Maybe you’re not sure that you have done this. If so, you can do so this morning! Simply let go of your own self-righteousness, and trust in Christ alone! Repent (change your thinking about your sin), and own Him as your Lord, so that He may own *you* as His child, and take away the “leaven” of sin from your life. And, Christian, I would ask: Are you allowing Christ to mould you after His character? Are you allowing Christ purge the “leaven” of sin from your life, so that you may be a “new lump”? Allow Christ, your Passover, to purge you!