

Are We Required to Eat Unleavened Bread Each Day of the Feast?

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All Scriptures are from the New King James translation unless otherwise noted.

There are some who claim that it is not necessary to eat unleavened bread each day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is our belief that those who teach this are making a fundamental mistake. Consider God's command:

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel (Exodus 12:15).

And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread (Leviticus 23:6).

Notice that the edict nowhere states that we don't have to eat unleavened bread. We are instructed to "eat unleavened bread" for seven days! God made the proclamation on two separate occasions so that there would be no misunderstanding. The words of God are simple and clear. "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread," and God means exactly what He says. So how could anyone believe differently?

The misconception likely stems from the context of the second half of God's decree where He states that anyone who eats leavened bread will be cut off from His people. However, because there is no documented punishment for those who do NOT eat unleavened bread, some presume that unleavened bread does not have to be eaten each day of the Feast. It is our opinion that those who believe such a thing are making a serious mistake.

God does not unequivocally state a punishment for not eating unleavened bread because there could be legitimate exceptions. For example, an individual could be sick and unable to eat. Would a loving God require someone with severe nausea to force down food causing them to vomit it back up? The answer is obviously no. A case might also exist where someone is too poor to obtain unleavened bread. There are situations in which it is impossible for an individual to make or eat bread; such as an elderly person in a nursing home, or a victim of an accident.

God is a being of enormous love and mercy. Therefore, if a person cannot eat unleavened bread for some reason outside their control, He will not cut them off. This is likely why there is no punishment stated for not eating unleavened bread.

In this context, consider that Christ gave us the example of an ox in a ditch. The Lord of the Sabbath allows certain work to be done on the holy day if it is absolutely necessary to save life or property. However, this does not mean that we can decide if we will keep the Sabbath holy or not. We must never think that we can make that kind of decision on our own.

Just as we cannot choose to observe the Sabbath or not, we cannot choose to eat unleavened bread during the Feast only when we see fit. It must be eaten each day as long as we are able.

Some have also attempted to use fasting as an acceptable reason not to eat unleavened bread on any given day of the Feast. Although there is no Scripture stating that we must not fast during this time; it is implied by the fact that God commands us to eat unleavened bread each of the seven days. With the exception of the Day of Atonement, we can choose when and when not to fast; and we must keep God's words rather than create a human justification for not doing so.

It must be remembered that the unleavened bread is a symbol of Christ. During this particular Feast, leaven pictures sin, and removing the leaven must be done (Exo. 12:19; Deu. 16:4). We must also replace our sinful nature with the righteousness of our Savior. This is symbolically done by putting unleavened bread inside of us. If we are told to eat unleavened bread, picturing putting Christ in us, why would anyone make excuses for not doing so? Such behavior directly breaks the first and third commandments.

Further, seven is the number of completeness. These days picture our effort to put Christ's mind in us over the length of our entire lives. If we choose not to eat unleavened bread on any of these days, when we are able to do so, this might indicate an unwillingness to give ourselves completely to God.

If we don't eat unleavened bread because we don't make the time to obtain it, we break His Word. If we don't particularly like eating the "bread of affliction," and refuse to eat it because it does not please our palate, we commit a sin. By choosing to eat or not to eat, according to our discretion, we do not humbly tremble at the thought of breaking God's word (Isa. 66:1-2). We openly commit the sin of presumptuousness, and God clearly states that there is a punishment for this:

But the person who does *anything* presumptuously, *whether he is* native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the LORD, and he shall be cut off from among his people (Numbers 15:30).

If we act as though we know better than the plain words of God, it makes us guilty of a great sin (2Pet. 2:10). It is presumptuous to refrain from eating unleavened bread when we are physically able. God clearly states that we are to eat it during these days, and that is exactly what we should do.