

Feeding Frenzy

By John Plunkett – April 7, 2012

One spring morning I was walking on Qualicum Beach, which is close to our home; praying and asking God for inspiration for some sermon topics for the upcoming Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Every year at that time in the early spring, out there in the Georgia Strait, which separates Vancouver Island from the Canadian mainland, vast shoals of herring – millions – or probably billions – of these beautiful silver fish are out there, migrating northwards. But also, at the same time, there are many other forms of wildlife out there. They turn out in droves in their short window of opportunity to greet these migrating herring. Actually not to *greet* them; but rather to *eat* them!

We see the number of eagles increasing, and sea-lions, seals, ducks, different kinds of geese; and, of course, many fishing boats too. There are also many different species and seagulls.

That particular day, as I walked and prayed on that beach, I noticed a huge flock of seagulls lazing in the morning sun. But those seagulls were not just idly sunbathing. They were quietly watching and waiting.

Suddenly, right out of the blue, “all Hades” broke loose as the whole flock of gulls rose up; then screamed en masse down into one small area of the formerly calm water. The whole scene was transformed into a maelstrom as hundreds of seagulls ruthlessly battled for the tasty spoils. I saw one seagull there with a badly wounded leg, probably injured by his buddies.

After a few days I was surprised to notice that the seagulls, the eagles, the sea-lions and the fishing boats had all but disappeared from our local waters as the surviving herring continued their migration northward. Many of the predators likely followed them at least some of the way. These predators seem to know that the time for their herring feast is very short, and they make the most of it.

What about you and me, brethren – members of God’s true Church? Are we as eager as those seagulls to feast on the food that God has set before us? You might be thinking, “Does God really want His people to go crazy, kicking and scratching each other, to keep others away from our food supply; and to stuff as much food down our gullets as we possibly can?”

Of course not! I think you know what I am talking about. I am speaking about *spiritual* food, not *physical* food. You know that, just like the spiritual "race" that is mentioned by the apostle Paul, God has a "prize" reserved for every one of us (I Corinthians 9:24; Philippians 3:14; Hebrews 12:1). We do not have to battle each other – or other churches – for it either. God has a prize for every one of us. We also know that, just like "the feeding of the four and five thousand (plus)" mentioned in Matthew 14 and 15, God mercifully provides food enough for *all* of His children. Yes, He gives us *physical* food, but more importantly, He feeds us with *spiritual* food as well – the Bread of Life.

On this First Day of Unleavened Bread, I would like to talk about – Bread! Not so much about the putting away of *leavened* bread, which symbolizes sin. Of course, we must put leavened products out of our homes before the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins; but the time for de-leavening is over for this year. No, not so much the putting away of leavened bread; but rather, the consuming and ingesting of unleavened bread – the sinless Bread of Life.

Does God command us to eat unleavened bread for all of the seven days? I have heard discussions over the years from people who say that we do *not* have to eat unleavened bread *every* day of the feast; but just that, if we eat bread at all during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it must be unleavened bread. Is this what God commands?

The consuming of unleavened bread is a very important physical symbol; so let us run through a couple of verses that give us the answer:

Exodus 12: 15 Seven days **shall you eat** unleavened bread.....

Exodus 12:18, 20 In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, **you shall eat** unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even... "You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings **you shall eat** unleavened bread."

Exodus 13:6 "Seven days **you shall eat** unleavened bread....

Exodus 13:7 "Unleavened bread **shall be eaten** seven days.....

Are we getting the point? God is repeating this, and when He repeats something in His Word, it is usually for emphasis.

Exodus 23:15 You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread: **you shall eat** unleavened bread seven days.....

Exodus 34:18 The feast of unleavened bread shall you keep. Seven days **you shall eat** unleavened bread.....

This last verse really hammers it home, by the way God inspired it to be written.

Leviticus 23:6 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.

I think that you will agree with God's Word that there is not much "wiggle-room" here. God's Word is clear that we *must* eat unleavened bread every day for seven days. Unless we are rebels, why should this be a problem? Why even resist it? Even if we do not like unleavened bread very much, is it such a trial to eat a few little bites of it each day? No, not really! We *must* do it because of its symbolism. The symbolism is very important to every one of us.

For just this seven day duration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, leavened bread represents sin, and unleavened bread represents righteousness, sinlessness, and the sinless One – Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life.

A few evenings ago, at the Passover service, and all of the way through the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when we eat unleavened bread, we are symbolizing the eating of the Bread of Life. This is the ingesting and the consuming of our Lord Jesus Christ – and consequently Him living in us.

God wants us to feast on the Bread of Life while we can, during our short window of opportunity. Jesus explained this with a physical food analogy:

Luke 5:33-35 And they (the Scribes and Pharisees) said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but yours eat and drink?" And He said to them, "Can you make the children of the bridal chamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days."

Something else that most of us don't like doing is fasting. But it is good for us to fast every so often. It is good for our physical bodies and it is good for us spiritually.

A spiritual "fast" was later imposed upon Jesus' disciples after He had returned to heaven – and perhaps more especially before God's Spirit was given. That "fast" was a relative lack of Jesus' personal presence with them. That "fast" was a relative lack of the Bread of Life – the Word of God – being with them in person.

In the next couple of scriptures, I would like you to see that the Bread of Life is the same as the Word of God. We will see this over and over again as we go through these scriptures.

In our day today, God's Word is being preached to the world as never before, as far as we know. The Churches of God have many good tools at their disposal for the preaching of the gospel, such as the Internet, television, radio, and the printed word. But Amos prophesied of a future time when God will cause a scarcity of spiritual bread.

Amos 8:11 "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord GOD, "That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.

Here we see again the tie between the Bread of Life and the Word of God. God is telling us, through Amos, that there is a time coming when there is going to be a scarcity and famine of the Word. So again, we need to be like those seagulls; we have to feast on the Bread of Life now, while the window of opportunity is open to us.

What should we be feeding on?

We go through the verses of John 6 every year at the Passover service; and I would like to read some of them again today, to put the accent on the Bread of Life once again, and how important it is.

During what we refer to as "the feeding of the five thousand," Jesus actually fed considerably more than five thousand people with what we believe five loaves of bread and two fish as His basic materials. After that event, something very significant happened:

John 6:22-23, 25-27 On the following day (*right after "the feeding of the five thousand"*)..... However, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks... And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."

Again, we read these verses at the Passover service. They are very, very relevant to the Passover; but they are also very relevant to the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

John 6:30-31 Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will you perform then, that we may see it and believe you? What work will you do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

It appears that these people were just looking for another miracle – another "feeding of the five thousand." They were basically looking for a kind of "magic show" from Jesus.

John 6:32 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven..."

No! Jesus did! He does not actually say so here; but when He was still the LORD (YHVH), *He* was the One who gave them that bread from heaven.

John 6:32-35, 41, 48-56 ... but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. "For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst... The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, "I am the bread which came down from heaven"... "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

Again, we *want* Jesus Christ to be dwelling in us through His Holy Spirit. We *want* this and we *need* it. We are not Christians unless we have this.

John 6:57-58 "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever."

This is *so* important! We will come back to more about Jesus "flesh" later on. His command here is very clear. We are to eat the bread of His body and drink the wine of His blood too. This idea of eating Jesus' body and drinking His blood sounds very strange when we read about it – even to God's people – yes, even now, two thousand years later, as it did back then. But it is so *very* important. Jesus wants us to *feast* on His body and His blood while we have the opportunity; to get it while we can! We need this *strong desire* for the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Two different psalmists were inspired to catch the concept of this strong desire – this urgent need – for the Bread of Life:

Psalms 42:1-2 As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

We get the idea here of the writer's urgent desire for God and for the things of God.

Psalms 119:131 I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for your commandments.

You probably know that, in some scriptures, the Hebrew word for "commandments" is the same word as "words." The Commandments of God are the Words of God.

Again, let us ask this question, "Just what *is* this Bread of Life that we must feed upon?"

We have already seen that the Bread of Life is Jesus Christ Himself – the living Word of God in person. But, as we read earlier in Amos 8:11, the Bread of Life is also the *written* Word of God. The *written* Word of God is no less the Word of God than the personal Word of God –

Jesus Christ Himself, personally. Let us examine this concept a little further:

Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Here we see another tie-in between the Word of God and the Bread of Life.

We spent a lot of time in the book of John on Passover night; but let us go there again. Here, we will go right to the very beginning of the book; and actually, to the very beginning of time:

John 1:1, 14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... And the Word became flesh...

Let us look at this word 'flesh.' The Greek word for *flesh*, all of the way through the New Testament, is the short word, 'Sarx.' It means *meat, food and body*; in this case, of course, Christ's Body. Jesus commands us to keep the Passover each spring, and to eat a little piece of unleavened bread symbolizing His sinless Body:

Luke 22:19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

He also commands us, through the apostle Paul, to continue to eat unleavened bread by keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

I Corinthians 5:8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Some people apply this scripture to the Passover and some apply it to the Feast of Unleavened Bread; but I believe that it can apply to both.

Jesus taught us to pray every day. In Matthew 6:11, He said, "Give us this day our daily bread." In other words, "Let us go to God every day and ask him for our needs." It is right for us to pray every day for our physical food and our other physical needs; but more important in the big scheme of things, it is more important for us to pray for – and to consume – *spiritual* bread. Not just every year at the Passover service; and not just for seven days every year during the Feast of Unleavened Bread; but for every single day of our lives. Again, we need to have Jesus Christ living in us. And if we want to have Jesus Christ living in us, then we must consume the Bread of Life, and study the Word of God every single day.

Shortly after Jesus' resurrection we read about another very significant and relevant "bread breaking event":

Luke 24:13a Now behold, two of them were traveling that same day....

And "that same day" was the Wavesheaf Offering day. This is very symbolic. It was Sunday, the 18th day of Abib, and it was the fourth day of Unleavened Bread.

Luke 24:13b, 14-16 ...to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him.

Can you imagine this? These were probably men who had known Jesus – perhaps for three and a half years; but they did not know Him. Either He or His Father restrained their eyes. I don't know that He changed His appearance; but I do know that He had the power to affect their minds.

Luke 24:30a Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread....

This was unleavened bread. This was the fourth day of Unleavened Bread. You see some movies about the life of Christ in which they produce a great big, puffy, leavened loaf, and break it open.

Luke 24:30b ... blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.

Right at that instant their eyes were opened and they knew Him. This is a symbolic act of the breaking of bread at which instant Jesus used the act to take the blinders off these two men. Perhaps when they saw Him do this, it cast their memories back to Luke 22:19:

Luke 22:19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

This is exactly what He did with the two disciples after His resurrection. He opened their minds and they knew Him. Then He vanished from their sight.

Luke 24:32a And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road..."

This was the *personal* Word of God talking with them.

Luke 24:32b ... and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"

The scriptures which He opened to them are the *written* Word of God.

Luke 24:35 And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.

The two disciples tied these two events together – the breaking of the bread and the opening of their recognition of Him. When they saw the other disciples, they described the event to them, with the knowledge that there was something very significant about the instant Jesus He broke the bread.

It was still within the Feast of Unleavened Bread when this happened. Was it a mere coincidence that Jesus made Himself known to them at the instant that He broke bread? I really don't think so! I believe that the symbolic breaking of bread is so very important.

Let us look at another verse referring to the Passover service:

I Corinthians 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

Please do not be misled by this word 'communion.' Some of the Protestant organizations have misappropriated the term and used it for their counterfeit of God's true Passover. But the word 'communion' comes from the Greek word 'koinonia' and it means *fellowship, communication, sharing, partnership* and *joint participation*. In a nutshell, it means *unity!*

God's people must *regularly* consume and ingest the Bread of Life – not just as Passover symbols. Jesus Christ Himself – the Word of God – gives us true unity with Him. A person cannot be any closer to another person than one who is living inside of him!

This is referring to true unity with Jesus Christ and, through Him, unity with each other –

our fellow siblings of Jesus Christ, yes, in our own groups and in other groups of God's true church throughout the world.

I Corinthians 10:17 For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

We are all *one* bread and *one* body!

I'm sure you have heard the saying, "You are what you eat." It is true! If we continually eat the Body of Jesus Christ – the Bread of Life – we will be just like Him. We will be members of the God Family. We will be God!

It is hard to take this in as it is such a huge concept. It makes perfect sense that we will become just like Him, because we are Jesus' siblings – fellow children of God. Usually when we think of the concept of being just like Jesus Christ, we usually quote I John 3:2:

I John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

This must be one of the most exciting verses in the whole of scripture. Yes, we will be like Him because we will see Him as He is. But, in the context of today's sermon, we will be like Him because we eat Him – the Bread of Life. Three thousand years ago, David was inspired to foresee this very same thing:

Psalms 17:14 With Your hand from men, O LORD, from *men of the world* who have their portion in this life, and whose belly you fill with your hidden treasure. They are *satisfied* with children, and leave the rest of their possession for their babes.

God provides physical food for all of the people – yes, even for "men of the world" – many of whom are not in His church. The Hebrew word translated as "satisfied" here is 'saba' and it means 'filled with food.'

Psalms 17:15 As for me (*and I'm a man of God, not a man of the world!*), I will see your face in righteousness; I shall be *satisfied* when I awake in your likeness.

The word satisfied here that same Hebrew word, 'saba' – filled with food – in David's case, totally filled with the spiritual Bread of Life.

Let us go back to those seagulls again! Let us think about them disappearing from our local beaches as they *followed* those tasty herring northwards up the Georgia Strait.

I Corinthians 11:1 Be you *followers* of me, even as I also am of Christ.

The apostle Paul was a long-time *follower* of Jesus. He didn't just jump on the prize as on a one-time reward when it first came available. The apostle Paul did not just get baptized and then try to rely on the symbol of baptism to get him through to the end of his life. He stuck with the prize. He *followed* the prize doggedly throughout his life. With all the ups and downs he experienced, he continued to keep the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread all through his life. He was fully aware of their rich, inspiring, strength-giving symbolism – every single year of his life until his dying day:

I Corinthians 11:23-24, 26-28 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is my body which is [given (Luke 22:19)] for you; do this in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

We have come around in a big circle. We have come all of the way from the Passover into the Feast of Unleavened Bread – and back again to the Passover. Please think about these things deeply as we participate and enjoy all seven days of this Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Yes, let us participate and enjoy a God-approved, spiritual feeding frenzy while we can. Let us jump through the window of opportunity that God has graciously opened for us. Let us follow, capture and consume the wonderful prize that God offers to us...

No, not a shoal of pretty silver fish – but the priceless Bread of Life.

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