

## Re-education (Part 1)

### **Unlearning the Wrong Way**

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Education is big news these days. And big business too.

Here in Charlotte we hear all the time about the mess that the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools are in. The whole system is just terrible. It is one of these big city school systems that decided to take all (consolidate) the schools in the area under its wing. It is just a huge debacle. There are thousands of kids. The district is always screaming for more money?that is our county taxes and such. We always get hit in the pocketbook because of the way that the administration has messed things up.

I think that most people see that if they would just go back to community schools with local administrations it would solve many of these problems.

But, no, they have to have a big city government with billions of dollars funding the system that is in decline.

I do not know if your are aware of it, but if you read the national news regarding education you will find that numerous studies and case histories have found that all over the country the amount of money that a school system receives per pupil is inversely proportional to the student's academic achievements.

So academically, the worst schools happen to be the ones that get the most money.

Charlotte schools are typical of the nation. They are getting near the ten thousand dollar range per pupil now. And they are constantly turning out kids who cannot read, write, or sundry other problems.

It is a sad indictment of our county. We cannot even educate our children properly any more.

On occasion we hear about how necessary it is for Americans to emphasize education because the 21<sup>st</sup> century is going to be globally competitive. We need to emphasize things like math and science and put Americans in the forefront of technology.

Yet, all we ever seem to hear about are falling standards, the de-emphasis of core subjects, and declines in both teacher and student aptitudes.

We heard within the past six or nine months that a math teacher in California could not pass the aptitude test for her subject. But, she finally fell back on "oh, it is not necessary." The teachers' union backed her up to the hilt! There she was teaching math and she was functionally illiterate in the subject.

I heard recently that in Hampton Roads, Virginia schools were seriously considering cutting reading from their own elementary school curriculum. Can you believe that? Stupid! Those are the people who are administering these schools!

What happened to the three "R's?"

Our college campuses are no better. College campuses have really lost their way. They have become lightning rods—cultural hot spot, political hot spots, social hot spots—rather than places of academics.

We hear more about political things on the campuses, than we do about advancements in education.

Just yesterday, President George W. Bush was here in Charlotte. And the thing that he came here for was to announce at a local community college that the federal government was going to change the way that it retrains people who have been laid off. This region has been quite hard hit especially because of the losses in the textile industries.

I just heard this morning that a couple of counties north of Charlotte, here, are near the 10 percent unemployment range, whereas the remainder of the country is just under 6% , which is not bad, actually. In my high school economics class, my teacher told us that 5% unemployment was fine and nothing to get excited about.

But, of course, the national media thinks that 6% is terrible, when it actually is not. It is only a bit off from the desired norm. Do you see how you are being manipulated there?

Regarding the textile industry in this area, many of those people who worked in those plants had been there for 20 to 30 years. Being retrained is an ordeal for those people. And, they are being retrained for jobs that they may not have any aptitude for, like jobs in the technology sector. Here they have been working with yarn and now they are being asked to work with microchips or some such similar thing.

The process of being retrained is agonizing to them and some just cannot learn it. They would be better off going to some other sector where the learning curve is not so steep.

Some of them just cannot do it. Certainly, most who leave these union jobs—which is what they are—cannot find the pay out there that was anywhere near what they used to receive.

So, the area around here is somewhat depressed and so President Bush came to give us what he feels is a shot in the arm.

Herbert Armstrong used to tell the story of the cartoon that we might have reprinted in the Plain Truth, or one of our other magazines in which students were sitting at their desks in school with each one having a funnel in his head. The teacher was going around the room pouring knowledge into their heads, as if this was the way that it worked.

Oh if it were only so easy!

Rush Limbaugh would have said that they had "young skulls full of mush." Teachers go around and teach them what they think they should know, or as he [Rush] would say, "their own brand of politics."

But in the case of the textile workers it is much harder to learn a new way of doing things after learning and practicing and using the old way for so many years.

And that is what I would like to talk about today: Re-education—Re-education as it pertains to

the Days of Unleavened Bread. And of course, as it pertains to our lives because the Days of Unleavened Bread are just a microcosm of our whole life—the things that we need to do.

Men say that you cannot teach old dogs new tricks. But, under God's calling if the old dog fails to learn the new tricks, he gets no bone.

And so re-education becomes a vital subject—an important topic—that we need to consider every once in a while, because that is what we are going through. We are going through re-education—re-training.

If you would please open your Bibles to Exodus 13, I would like to begin speaking about the Days of Unleavened Bread themselves and show you how this applies.

Exodus 13:3 And Moses said to the people: "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this *place*. No leavened bread shall be eaten.

As we go through this please notice both the negative and the positive aspects of leavened and unleavened bread and the eating of them.

Exodus 13:4-10 "On this day you are going out, in the month Abib. "And it shall be, when the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month. "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day *there shall be* a feast to the LORD. "Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters. "And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, '*This is done* because of what the LORD did for me when I came up from Egypt.' "It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD'S law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt. "You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.

So here we have, very early in the course of things, the fundamental meaning of the Days of Unleavened Bread. For seven days beginning in the first month (Nisan or Abib), on the fifteenth day, we must not eat bread that is leavened. And conversely, we must eat unleavened bread.

If I can put this in its simplest terms, we must stop doing something, and we must start doing something else. And then on top of that we must keep on doing that something else. It is like the Sabbath if you think about it.

The Sabbath day is a day in which we stop—cease—doing our normal labors, and we start doing

God's will, God's things, because it is God's day. We are supposed to do God's pleasure—Speak God's words, think God's thoughts, and do God's activities.

In a way you could say that the Days of Unleavened Bread and the Sabbath are parallel in this, except in the one we have work as the thing we are stopping or starting, and then in this, it is bread. Leave the leavened alone and begin eating the unleavened.

And so Nisan (Abib) 15 is the day that Israel left Egypt, or more correctly, this is the day that God led them out of Egypt. And the seven days represents the week that it took for them to get completely out of Egypt by crossing the Red Sea on the last day.

We memorialize this annually to remind us that God, as He did with Israel, redeemed us from spiritual Egypt, and is leading us to the Promised Land—the Kingdom of God.

That is the Old Testament setting. Paul writes to the Corinthian church in I Corinthians 5. I should mention here that this was written in the mid-fifties AD. So this was some 20 plus years after Jesus' death and the founding of the church of God. And here, a quarter century later, they are still keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread.

I Corinthians 5:7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

That is the cause and effect there. Actually, it is the effect and the cause as he wrote it. We are unleavened because of what Christ our Passover did for us. He accomplished our de-leavening. Our job, then, is to purge out the old leaven he says.

I Corinthians 5:8 Therefore let us keep the feast [it is a command, or charge from the Apostle Paul. Do not let anyone tell you that no one in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century ever told us not to keep this Feast, because here is a very positive command], not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.

Here he gives us some spiritual meanings for these symbols of unleavened bread and leavened bread, too. Leaven, he says, is the corruption of sin. He calls it malice, and wickedness. This we are supposed to purge from our lives.

And as new lumps of dough (he also calls it new loaves, new creations), we must live by the unleavened bread which he defines as sincerity and truth.

I would like to look at the word *sincerity*. We know what truth is. That is pretty simple for us to grasp.

But, sincerity is a bit more difficult. It is the Greek word, "*eilikrineia*." If you know anything of Greek, you know that the root in this word, "*krin*" has to do with judgment.

Thayer's Greek Lexicon says that this word, *eilikrineia*, means an expression of pure and

unadulterated motives.

Now that is not very far from the English word *sincere*. In English the word, sincere, means "without hypocrisy," "serious," and even ideas of "purity." It tends to mean more "without hypocrisy" by the common usage of today. "We are sincerely honest," or "We are sincerely trying to help someone." We have pure motives, which is what Thayer said the word means.

Now, Zodhiates writes that its basic idea is "clear judgment, or discernment"—which begins to change the meaning just a bit—"clear judgment, or discernment, that is spiritually in all things both of Christian faith and practice."

So, it is not only clear discernment, or judgment of beliefs, but it is also clear discernment or judgment of our practice of those beliefs. It reaches both into the mental/logical areas of things, as well as the actual application of things.

Jamison, Fawcett, and Brown give us a bit better mental picture of what this word means. They say, "it expresses literally a thing which examined by sunlight is found unadulterated."

I have a little story about this.

My in-laws were visiting a few years ago and we just had a new addition put on the back of our house. We were going to have a den there. And we were showing my father-in-law the kind of tile that we were going to have put in there.

And I said, "Come over here, dad. I want to show you this under my full-spectrum lamp! You can really see what it looks like under this full spectrum lamp."

And he looked at me kind of funny and said, "Why do we not just take it outside? The door to the den is right here, and we can go out to the patio and see it perfectly under the sunlight."

Here I was trying to show off this bit of new technology and the old technology worked far better. You could really see the color of the tile underneath the sun.

And that is the picture of sincerity here. You see things clearly because the light of truth shines upon it. We can see clearly what needs to be done. We can see clearly how we should walk along the course of our lives. That is what this sincerity idea here is in I Corinthians 5.

We have this pure, unadulterated discernment of what needs to be done, how it needs to be done, and what it is going to accomplish.

And, the unleavened bread, symbolically and spiritually, helps us to do this. It is not only truth, it is also the idea of proper and unadulterated judgment and discernment.

In other words, Paul is telling us to keep the Feast, and so our lives, according to the truth with clear, unadulterated judgment and discernment.

But how is this possible? How can we do this?

For starters, our knowledge and understanding of the truth varies from person to person. And it is quite limited by our education, our abilities, our background; some of us have trouble grasping certain concepts for various reasons.

None of us grasps the entire picture. God and Jesus Christ do. But the rest of us are lagging far

behind in terms of a full perspective of the truth.

We know some parts well and other parts we kind of ask, "How does this all fit in?"

Not to mention that upon our calling we know almost nothing and have to have even the simplest things explained to us. It takes years to build up the full repertoire of the truth.

Secondly, we have a terribly adulterated and impure ability to judge. The reason for this is that we spent so many years back there in the world that it trained us to judge things wrongly. Even with God's Spirit, our choices end up being frequently ungodly. Decidedly not the things that Jesus Christ Himself would have chosen. We can see that by looking back and seeing what messes we have made of things!

And also, most of us who have been in the church for decades still battle human nature tooth and claw every day.

Here is a man, an apostle, who about 20 years after his conversion was still battling it all the time! This was his struggle, and it is typical of all of us!

Romans 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

I think that we could all say that! We still feel our flesh as almost overpowering. And so we can say truthfully with the Apostle Paul, "I am still carnal!"

Romans 7:17 But now, *it is* no longer I who do it [meaning these things that he does], but sin that dwells in me.

Even though we have been de-leavened by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, there is still sin in us; sins that we have not rooted out, as well as the pulls of human nature that are just there. Satan is still around enticing us to do these things. There is still sin in us that needs to be purged.

Romans 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find.

Romans 7:23-25 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind [meaning using his mind to fight this], and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am [not was—am!]! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

He is talking about a titanic battle that occurs within all of us all the time. We do not get a rest from it. Well, maybe when we go to sleep is the best rest we can get.

But, like the apostle Paul, we have been converted for a long time, but we still go through this. Battling this other law that is trying to bring us back into the bondage of sin? It never lets go! It never lets up.

Sure, we have been led out of Egypt, but there is always this pull like a whirlpool trying to pull us back into its vortex, spinning us around like a washing machine; confusing us and making us fall under its spell.

But, this man that we are talking about here who made himself an example to us was not an ordinary Christian. He was by all accounts a righteous and dogged individual. He was the one who got in there in the middle of a scrap and fought. He was not a placid Laodicean Christian who just let things happen—let things slide—and thought he would work on it later.

This was a guy who was so full of God's Spirit that he fought tooth and nail—and yet it still happened to him, daily. Even his walk went by fits and starts, as ours does.

You all know that no magic wand accompanies our baptism and laying on of hands. God does not say, "Abracadabra," and "Presto-change-o," we are living in sincerity and truth.

God does not alter our minds in a huge way. He gives us His Spirit that gives us the opportunity for that alteration to take place over time. But, right after our calling and baptism we do not have pure character all at once.

And thus we understand that this—our conversion—is all a process of re-education to become unleavened—to put on the mind of Christ and walk in newness of life just as He walks.

As we heard in the offertory this morning God uses us all up in this process. And by the time that the process is over we are finished. We probably could not take much more. God knows just when to stop. He knows how long we need before He says that we are done.

Now this is where Israel's experiences in the wilderness come into play because there is a lot of good lessons that we can learn about this re-education process.

This is an encapsulation of what God is trying to do:

Leviticus 18:1-3 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: `I am the LORD your God. According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do [sounds like the 'do not eat leavened bread' part]; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances.

Now, here is the positive aspect of what we are to do:

Leviticus 18:4-5 `You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I *am* the LORD your God. `You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the LORD.

Here we have it very simply: Drop the old sinful ways that you learned back there in Egypt and which you will have to struggle against in the Land of Canaan. And on the other side, follow His life-giving way.

That is, in a nutshell, the whole process.

And this sermon, in the time that I have left, is devoted to that first part, dropping the old sinful ways. And then on the last Day of Unleavened Bread I will get to the other part about putting on the life-giving way.

Now let us put ourselves into the sandals of the Israelites. They had been slaves in Egypt for several generations after Joseph's death and after a different dynasty came into power in Egypt. This dynasty had no history with Joseph.

And so seeing the Israelites multiply and becoming a strong power in its own right, the Pharaoh decided that something had to be done to curb their multiplication. And so he decided to get the midwives in on this, to kill all the boy babies. But the midwives were on the Hebrew's side, and let the boy babies live because they gave him the excuse that these Hebrew women just pop these babies out before they could get there.

So, God blessed these midwives and said that they will have families of their own.

So, the Israelites grew and they decided that they would have to do something. So they put taskmasters over them, and they became slaves.

Several generations go by. If we know slaves, we know that their lives are controlled entirely by the taskmaster.

So, what drops out? Well, things like leisure time. These Israelites probably worked 7 days a week at their tasks. They had no Sabbath?no rest. They were worked until they dropped. Their family life was stifled. If they were working all the time they sure did not have a great deal of time for family togetherness. And this also meant that their education was limited.

Now, they probably took some and made scribes and such, and gave certain ones education, but by and large, if the recent history of the U.S. is any indication as far as how peoples treat slaves, education is not a priority from the masters' point of view.

And so the Israelites had a hard time passing down the laws and the principles they had learned from the patriarchs.

The only thing that they could really absorb was the culture of Egypt, the religion of Egypt, and the things that the Egyptians did, and made them do—the ceremonies and such that they had to attend, and their politics and such.

And so they, in effect, became as much Egyptian as the Egyptians, except they were under bondage.

They still retained their identity as Israelites, because slavery has a way of coalescing your identity down to something basic. They knew what tribes they were from, but there was very little transmission of the truth—minimal at best.

So, God's principles of living, His commandments, were lost in a large measure. I am not saying that they were completely lost. I am sure that some of the promises were remembered. There were things like Joseph's command to take his bones back when they leave, because God is going to redeem you sometime in the future.

But that was precious little to hang anything on because they were slaves. They were in the mud, like "The Ten Commandments" movie, tramping it down, and making it ready for bricks; pulling big slabs of stone; keeping the master's house; doing all the things necessary to keep up the government, and such; public works. They were busy.

So, these things became lost.

It even affected Moses. Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, but there were certain things that he had to relearn. There were certain things that God had to emphasize to him to get him back to thinking properly.

Exodus 4 contains just one incident. This was just after God had revealed Himself on mount Sinai in the burning bush.

Exodus 4:18-23 So Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said to him, "Please let me go and return to my brethren who *are* in Egypt, and see whether they are still alive." And Jethro said to Moses, "Go in peace." And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go, return to Egypt; for all the men who sought your life are dead." Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand. And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ` Thus says the LORD: "Israel *is* My son, My firstborn. "So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn. ""

Now this is important in leading up to this story that takes place in verses 24 through 26 because we have to remember whom we are dealing with here.

Moses was the one God had chosen to lead his people, and to present this deal before Pharaoh. He was the one out front. He was the ambassador. He was the one who was going to get all the press. He was the one that the people were going to be talking about in the street. He was the one that all the Israelites had to look to. And he was the one whose example they would be expected to follow.

So, here was the one that God had chosen.

But, he had forgotten to do something terribly important. And God could not let that pass.

Exodus 4:24 And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment [it may have been a particular encampment since it says "the encampment"], that the LORD met him and sought to kill him.

This was right after He had told Moses, "When you get to Egypt this is what you are going to say to Pharaoh?" But, the very next night [it seems] God comes in and tries to kill Moses. Some sort of sickness? Strangling in his bed? I do not know. It does not say how God tried to kill him, but just that Moses was in danger of his life.

Exodus 4:25 Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast *it* at *Moses'* feet, and said, "Surely you *are* a husband of blood to me!" So He let him go. Then she said, "*You are* a husband of blood!"—because of the circumcision.

Here was the man God had chosen to lead Israel, and he had failed to circumcise his son. It is the sign of the covenant. Maybe he had forgotten? Or maybe he had given in to Zipporah because the Midianites were not ones to circumcise. I do not know. Maybe she was squeamish. Maybe she wanted her sons to be Midianites and not Israelites. I do not know. Midianites are sons of Abraham through Keturah.

Moses had to learn a lesson. Moses had to be re-educated in this. Truly Moses knew the circumcision rite. Moses himself was circumcised. In fact, the Egyptians practiced a form of circumcision as well (for different reasons, of course). Theirs was for cleanliness most likely, because Egyptians were clean-freaks.

Here Moses had forgotten to do one of the most basic and necessary rites as a son of Abraham. Moses had to be re-educated.

God could not have his chief servant flouting the most fundamental rite of the Israelites covenant with God. God was stressing to Moses the importance of absolute obedience to His commands, and that they are a matter of life, and death.

God is serious about His people following His law—following His covenant—being faithful to His covenant. All of the "t's" must be crossed, and all the "i's" must be dotted.

In Exodus 16 is the occasion of the giving of manna.

Exodus 16:11-12 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, `At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that *I am* the LORD your God.'"

Because they had been complaining that Moses had brought them out into the wilderness to let them die.

Exodus 16:13-16 So it was that quails came up at evening and

covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay all around the camp. And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, *as fine as frost on the ground*. So when the children of Israel saw *it*, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it *was*. And Moses said to them, "This *is* the bread which the LORD has given you to eat. "This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: ` Let every man gather it according to each one's need, one omer for each person, *according to the number of persons*; let every man take for *those who are* in his tent."

So, an omer for every person.

Exodus 16:22-23 And so it was, on the sixth day, *that* they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. Then he said to them, "This *is what* the LORD has said: ` Tomorrow *is* a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake *today* , and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning."

This was a slight change from what He commanded before because they had understood that if they kept it overnight, that when they got up in the morning, it would stink and have worms. And so, here on Friday, the preparation day, Moses had to tell them that this is an exception. You gather twice as much as normal, and leave over half for the next day, and it will not stink this time, only because it is the Sabbath. God will perform this miracle every Sabbath.

We are to mark this day because it is special to God.

Exodus 16:24-30 So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it. Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today *is* a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. "Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, *which is* the Sabbath, there will be none." Now it happened *that some* of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. And the LORD said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? "See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." So the people rested on the seventh day.

Now one of the first things that God did to re-educate Israel was to remind them of the Sabbath day. They had lost the knowledge of the Sabbath day in their sojourn in Egypt. Now whether

they knew that there was a Sabbath day or not, I am not sure.

From the way that God explains it here, it is almost like it is a new thing to them. They had to have it explained in the most simple details. Otherwise, He is also using this occasion to tell them which was the Sabbath day because during their sojourn in Egypt, using an Egyptian calendar, they had forgotten which day was the truth Sabbath day. I do not know which one it is. Maybe it is both. But regardless, they had forgotten it.

In order to fulfill the covenant with God, they needed to be re-educated in this and begin keeping the Sabbath. He told them how they were to treat it, and how they were to conduct themselves on it.

And this is often where God starts with one of us. He starts with the Sabbath day, and begins to re-educate us having to tell us to get rid of Sunday (that is not His day) and begin keeping the Sabbath day, which is His day, and has been his day ever since creation.

He teaches us over our entire lifetimes how to treat the day—what to do, and what not to do on it; what freedoms we have within it, and what we are restricted from doing.

And though He may reveal it early unto us it takes an entire lifetime to begin doing it properly in the way that God wants us to do it. It takes a while.

If you would go forward in the book to chapter 31, we will see why it is so important to Him.

Exodus 31:12-13 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: `Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it *is* a sign between Me and you throughout your generations?"

Notice, *throughout your generations!* This was not something for only in the wilderness, or in Old Testament times, as long as there are Israelites, there will also be the Sabbath.

Exodus 31:13 ? that *you* may know that I *am* the LORD who sanctifies you.

The Sabbath is a sign so that we may know that God is the One that sets us apart. It is a sign of our obligation to Him. It is a sign for what He has done for us.

Exodus 31:14 ` You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for *it is* holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death;

He is telling us how important it is!

Exodus 31:14-16 ?for whoever does *any* work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. ` Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh *is* the Sabbath of rest; [another little bit added in there!], holy to the LORD. Whoever does *any* work on the Sabbath day, he shall

surely be put to death [He repeats the penalty!]. ` Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath [How many times does He say that in these three or four verses?] throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.

He repeats the eternal aspects of it!

Exodus 31:17 ` It *is* a sign [another repeat!] between Me and the children of Israel forever; for *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed."

And so He says again that it goes all the way back to creation! And, they are to follow His example.

The Sabbath identifies God's people as holy to Him. And unlike circumcision, which is a sign in the flesh, the Sabbath is a sign in one's conduct, and orientation. The Sabbath shows anyone who would notice where you look—that is what I mean by "orientation."

If you keep the Sabbath, you are oriented toward God, because you are obeying Him, following His example.

It is not only a sign of who you are; it is a sign of you who belong to! It is a sign of who you follow! It shows that we are doing as God did by resting—ceasing from our labors—becoming spiritually refreshed each week!

And so here was another thing that they had to be re-educated on—the Sabbath.

There are two similar examples of re-education. The first one, here, is at the Red Sea:

Exodus 14:10-11 And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD. Then they said to Moses, "Because *there were* no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? *Is* this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, ` Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?' *For it would have been* better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."

That is quite a slap in God's face!

Exodus 14:13-14 And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. "The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."

Here they were on the Sinai Peninsula:

Exodus 17:8-13 Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands *became* heavy; so they took a stone and put *it* under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

This other area that they had to be re-educated in was trust in God for protection.

Within the first few weeks of their journey in the wilderness, they had to face both the Egyptian army and the army of the Amalekites, two of the fiercest fighting groups in the world at that time; and this was a people who had been slaves. They had not been trained in the military! The only reason why they had weaponry to fight Amalek was because of the miracle at the Red Sea against the Egyptians.

As I said there in verse 9, it sounds like Moses said there, "*Take whatever we have got, Joshua, and go out there and fight, and I will try to keep my hands up as high and as long as I can.*"

They had no experience.

Who knows what Joshua did in Egypt. In the movie, he was a stone cutter, but the Bible does not say what he did. But, among all the men there, Joshua proved to be the most able commander. And he took them over and led the army.

But it was not his prowess that won this fight. It was not Moses' prowess that won at the Red Sea, either. The first one here, we have God working this great miracle at the Red Sea, killing the entire Egyptian army. And the second one, I have always wondered about, Moses holding his hands up with the tide turning by whether he held his hands up or not.

Some historians think that after this defeat, Amalek regrouped for a bit, and heard that Egypt was defenseless, and they went down into Egypt and took over. That is a possibility. Those times are chronologically confused at this time. But, it is a tidbit of history that may by right, that they went down there and actually established themselves down there in Egypt. Maybe, maybe not. It is one of those question marks of history.

But, even after a defeat (by Israel and God) like that, they were still strong enough to maybe go down there.

So, God had to show them, here, by two very astounding miracles that He would protect them.

When we are first called, God spends a great deal of time and effort getting us to trust Him to fight our battles for us. Usually at the beginning of our conversion is when the most stupendous miracles take place. If we should get sick, God heals quickly; or our kids jump out of a tree, something saves him. Those things make an impression on us. We know that God is around. We know that He sent his angels to help us.

And of course, it solidifies our faith and trust in Him. And if it is something that we keep close in mind, it is something that can help us to remember that He is there to fight for us. It does not have to be anything dramatic like that. It could be that God smoothes over something at work regarding the Sabbath. Or, God gets us a job when we had been fired for keeping the Sabbath, or changing from Sunday to Sabbath. And not only does He get us another job, He gets us a better job. He will fight those battles for us.

This is something Israel needed to learn right away—He is there! He was willing to protect them from two of the most warlike people in the area within weeks of one another. And He did in an astounding way.

In Exodus 15 we will read two sections again, just like the last one. Again, we have two very similar occasions here.

Exodus 15:22-24 So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea [the time frame]; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they *were* bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he cast *it* into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them. And there He tested them,

And just a little bit later?the have not gotten to Mount Sinai yet:

Exodus 17:1-7 Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped in Rephidim; but *there was* no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the LORD?" And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, "Why *is* it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!" And the LORD said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. "Behold, I will

stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

Here is another area of re-education and that was in providing them water to drink. Remember in Egypt, remember where they came from. There were billions of gallons of water within easy reach in the delta of the Nile. They never had to worry about thirst in Egypt. And down where they lived on the delta in Goshen, there were branches of the Nile, and canals taking water places. They never had a problem with a shortage of water in Egypt.

But now, they come out into the wilderness into the desert and water was there only in occasional oases. And here at Marah, they come to one and the water is bitter.

It is an entirely different and new situation for them. They had not come this way before. For a human point of view, you could say, "they went from water rich, to water poor."

Water destitute in this case.

In the first instance, the water is unfit to drink; and in the second, there is no water at all. They come to a camp, and there is just rock and sand. There is nothing there. In both cases, they were thirsty.

It is not known how close to death that they were. They sound like they are just about ready to die. They had come from several days from the Red Sea, and in the second they had come from another place where there was water. So, they were able to store some in water skins, and such. But, maybe they were running out, and they were getting thirsty.

Now you know that water is more necessary than food in keeping you alive. You can only go a couple of days without water before your body begins to break down. But, you can go several weeks without food and still survive.

And so water, if I am correct in this, these illustrations stand for God's providence to sustain life. In our case under the New Covenant with the Holy Spirit symbolized by water, it is very similar because God's Spirit sustains our spiritual life. That is what keeps us in contact with Him.

At Marah, it says that God tested Israel, and they failed the test. The test was "Would they trust God to supply life-giving water?" It was that simple. No. They failed. They complained against Moses for leading them to bitter water.

Now, I have been a minister since 1995, and I have learned a thing or two. I think that maybe my experience is typical of other ministers. I think a similar thing happens to ministers fairly often as what happened here in chapter 15.

Think of it this way. Someone has a problem. Some things come up, and they have a family squabble, or they have a problem at work, or they need this, or that. And they come to the minister for advice—for counsel.

The minister advises a certain course of action. And the person thinks about it and he decides to follow it. But, he comes to what he sees as an unpleasant destination—the bitter water.

Now instead of waiting for God to intervene—to rectify matters—the person complains against the minister, that the minister led him to this place.

Now, the minister's counsel was sound. He was following what God says in His word. The problem was in the impatient execution. Too often we give up hope, and we lose our faith too soon.

Who led the Israelites to the water? Moses? No! God did!

Moses was following the cloud. And God led them to the bitter water, and He had in mind the entire time to tell Moses to find that tree, and throw it in, and He would work a great miracle, and the water would become sweet, and the whole situation would work out just fine.

But the people did not wait for God. He tested them. He was looking at them, and saying, "*OK. Here we have come along this course, straight to a place with water, but it has a problem. What are you going to do with this?*"

He wanted to see if they would come to Moses and say, "What do we do now?" rather than, "*Moses! We should lynch you! You have brought us to a place with bitter water!*"

So, they failed the test. They did not trust Him. Now to the second place above—Massah, and Meribah.

Moses conversely writes that the Israelites tempted or tested God. They, in effect, challenged God to show what He was made of. Here is no water and they were ready to stone Moses to force God to do something—either to save Moses, or to make water to somehow appear.

They were trying to force Him to perform a miracle on their behalf; trying to back God into a corner so He had no other choice.

Psalm 81:6-7 "I removed his shoulder from the burden; His hands were freed from the baskets. You called in trouble, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah. Selah

And God says, "And you thought you were testing Me, but I was testing *you* again! I have proved what kind of people you are!"

Psalm 95:6-7 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He *is* our God, And we *are* the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand.

Now this puts us in the proper attitude for this. We are totally under Him.

Psalm 95:7-11 ? Today, if you will hear His voice: "Do not harden

your hearts, as in the rebellion, As *in* the day of trial in the wilderness, When your fathers tested Me; They tried Me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with *that* generation, And said, `It is a people who go astray in their hearts, And they do not know My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, `They shall not enter My rest.'"

This explains what happened there in Meribah. They thought that they were testing Him, when all the while, He was the One conducting the test. And He saw just what kind of people they were—hard-hearted rebels. They did not know His ways, and they were not in the attitude to learn His ways.

All they wanted to do was string up His servant, and get whatever God was going to give them. They did not care one whit for anything that God was going to teach them. They just wanted stuff starting with food and water, and the plunder of the Egyptians, and that land of milk and honey. They wanted nothing to do with all the real treasure that He was trying to teach them.

He worked hard even after this point to re-educate them to follow His ways. But they proved unable, unreceptive, and unyielding over years—an entire generation.

And so, because they showed what kind of people they were, they dropped like flies along the way. It says in Hebrews 3 that they were scattered in the wilderness. They would not be saved. They would not re-educate themselves to come into the Promised Land.

Turn to Ezekiel 20 to summarize. God is telling Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 20:5-11 "Say to them, `Thus says the Lord GOD: "On the day when I chose Israel and raised My hand in an oath to the descendants of the house of Jacob, and made Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, I raised My hand in an oath to them, saying, `I *am* the LORD your God.'" "On that day I raised My hand in an oath to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, `flowing with milk and honey,' the glory of all lands. "Then I said to them, `Each of you, throw away the abominations which are before his eyes, and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt. *I am* the LORD your God.'" "But they rebelled against Me and would not obey Me. They did not all cast away the abominations which were before their eyes, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt. Then I said, `I will pour out My fury on them and fulfill My anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.'" "But I acted for My name's sake, that it should not be profaned before the Gentiles among whom they *were*, in whose sight I had made Myself known to them, to bring them out of the land of Egypt. "Therefore I made them go out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness [so they might accept God's way and learn]. "And I gave them My statutes and showed them My judgments, `which, *if* a man does, he shall live by them.'"

Remember, that is in Leviticus 18: 5.

Ezekiel 20:12-13 "Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths [Exodus 16], to be a sign between them and Me [Exodus 31], that they might know that I *am* the LORD who sanctifies them. "Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, ` which, *if* a man does, he shall live by them'; and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out My fury on them in the wilderness, to consume them.

Which He did.

Now Ezekiel 23: 8 which is about Oholah, and Oholibah. I just want to pick up this one verse:

Ezekiel 23:8 She has never?

This was written after Israel and Judah went into exile in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> BC after the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were defunct because of Assyria and Babylon coming and conquering them. This is what God says:

Ezekiel 23:8 She has never given up her harlotry *brought* from Egypt?

Eight hundred years or so after He brought them out of Egypt, they were still doing what they had done in Egypt. No wonder He sent them into exile! This is particularly Oholah, which was Israel, but He says the same thing about Oholibah about 10 verses later.

Israel would never allow itself to be re-educated. She lacked faith, and of course she lacked God's Holy Spirit. God says elsewhere that He is going to have to crack their stony hearts and give them a heart of flesh, and His Holy Spirit to make it work.

But, we have both of those things now—faith and God's Holy Spirit. My question is, "Are we allowing God to Re-educate us?"

Joshua 24: 14 was his final address as he was about to die. I just want to pick out this one verse because it encapsulates what we have talked about today:

Joshua 24:14 "Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth [where have we heard that before?], and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!

The Days of Unleavened Bread are about ridding ourselves of sin, of our idolatry, of our false gods, of our wrong attitudes, of our hardness of heart—and that is good and necessary to rid ourselves of these things. We are told here to put away those things. But, it is only half of the

process. Getting rid of those things is only half of our job.

The other half we will get to on the last Day of Unleavened Bread.