



March 31, 2023

### **Passover Celebration - Some History**

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

Tomorrow, on the Sabbath day, we will be in the month of April, and also the month of Abib according to the Hebrew/Jewish calendar. Most of us will then be celebrating the Passover Tuesday evening, April 4<sup>th</sup>. It's the time of year to both contemplate the events and experiences of the past year and review why we observe this special ceremony and what it means to us.

I find myself again returning to the history of the Passover celebration recorded in the Book of Exodus. It was such a powerful and profound event! If we neglect that description that is recorded for you and me, then we'll miss foundational instructions and typology.

Consider how many individuals and organizations celebrate what they label Communion or the Lord's Supper and follow long held traditions that are not found in the Scriptures. Many will read into the scriptures to satisfy their own teachings.

Some observe their communion tradition multiple times per year and simply follow traditions established by an organization and its leaders without any knowledge of the true history and instructions relating to their origin. Some who claim the label "Christian" throw out the label of "Jewish" to reject the Biblical celebrations, and then on the other hand feel free to observe holidays and days whose customs are linked to ancient pagan practices.

The prophet Isaiah strongly warns both Israel and Judah of a time of trouble and

chastisement for those who reject the Lord and His instructions. *"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."* (Isaiah 8:20)

"The law" records the instructions for observing the original Passover by the Israelites in Egypt. Exodus 12 specifies the time of the celebration (the evening at the beginning of Abib 14) as well as the food to be eaten during this ceremonial meal. This was a special celebration because of the circumstances of the tenth great plague that the Lord sent to free His people. Yes, some details were unique to this first celebration, but the lessons and meaning continued to be important to contemplate and learn from for us today.

An unblemished lamb was chosen, examined for several days, and then slain. The blood of the lamb was splattered with a branch of hyssop on the door frames of the homes of the Israelites. Only those homes marked with the blood of the lamb would be spared from the slaying of the firstborn on that night of Abib 14. The Israelites were commanded to remain in their homes all night until morning during this Passover celebration in Egypt. This was a sober and highly emotional time for those waiting in their homes. They anxiously expected to be delivered from death, and also from their enslavement from their Egyptian taskmasters. No doubt some wondered if this was really going to take place. But it appears that all the Israelite households listened to and followed the instructions.

They had watched the events of the previous nine plagues and surely they saw the hand of the Lord in bringing them about, and the backing up the leadership of Moses as he came before Pharaoh and announced their being unleashed. When daylight of Abib 14 arrived, no doubt word came of the deaths of the firstborn of Egypt. Moses directed the Israelites to hastily prepare to leave the country of Egypt and head to the rendezvous point to travel toward the Promised Land.

Might we consider that the marking of their doorframes with blood, the killing of the firstborn of Egypt, and preparing to leave the country were part of only that first Passover observance?

The apostle Paul refers to these events at the time of the exodus of Israel from Egypt. "*Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition*" (1 Corinthians 10:11). He links the miracle at the Red Sea to baptism. (v.2) He recounts the lesson of the need to "*flee from idolatry*" (v.14) This is an important part of the process of leaving *spiritual Egypt* behind us.

Paul refers to the New Covenant Passover symbols of the wine and bread in v.16. In significant comments in chapter 5 Paul identifies the meaning of the sacrificed Passover lambs with the sacrifice of Christ. In chapter 11 Paul emphasizes the elements of unleavened bread and wine that Jesus introduced at the conclusion of that final Passover observance with His disciples. Paul stated "*For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*" (v.26) The frequency of this celebration is also spelled out in Exodus 12. Looking to the blood of the lamb for having the death penalty passing over us is introduced in Exodus 12.

Exodus 13 then addresses the sanctifying of the firstborn - significant in considering the death of the firstborn in Egypt. The firstborn of clean animals were sacrificed and their blood was sprinkled on the altar. The firstborn of unclean animals were redeemed with a lamb that was sacrificed. The redemption of the Israelite firstborn males was accomplished with the offering of five silver shekels. (Numbers 18:16) This explains the comments of the apostle Peter. "*Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*" (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Christ was a firstborn male, and he sacrificed His life to redeem us. Revelation 1 describes "*Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood*" (v.5). It's humbling and encouraging to consider to what lengths God has gone to teach us, and to provide the means to forgive us and cleanse us of our sins. There are so many facets of Passover to ponder...and we share some

thoughts to reflect upon this Sabbath evening.

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Hoefker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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