



April 7, 2023

Jesus places a positive outcome with the Passover

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.

Here we are just a few days after the Passover observance this last Tuesday evening. Might you and I reflect on what was the most important Passover celebration recorded in the Scriptures?

There have been significant ones in the past. The original Passover celebrated in Egypt was a powerful event. Numbers Chapter 9 records the Passover celebration one year after the Exodus. The Passover celebrations during the revivals instituted by Kings of Judah, Hezekiah, and Josiah, were wonderful celebrations and at least temporary returns to following God's instructions. Luke chapter 2 records the travel and celebration of "*the Feast of the Passover*" by Jesus and his parents.

One of, if not in fact the most significant Passover celebration, is that final one observed by Jesus with His disciples. Jesus clearly stated that He was going to observe the Passover with His disciples (which included killing and eating a lamb or kid at the meal after which He focused on the symbols of the broken unleavened bread and wine).

We read from Mark's Gospel, "*Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?"*" (Mark 14:12) Now, the chronology of the events mentioned in this verse might be puzzling. Here's the explanation: It is obvious that Jesus gave instructions to Peter and John (Compare Luke 22:8) during the daylight portion of Abib 13. The events of that day would include the preparation of the stew of bitter herbs, the procuring unleavened

bread for use in the ceremony later that night, (the night time portion of the beginning of the 14th) and the procuring of the Passover lamb to be slain at sunset and then roasted and eaten that night of the 14th. It was referred to as the first day of Unleavened Bread because unleavened bread was to be used during the Passover that evening. Even though this was not the Holy Day or First Day of Unleavened Bread (which is the 15th of Abib.) The meal included the roasted lamb. Why else would it be stated "*they killed the Passover lamb?*"

The gospels indicate that Jesus had made an agreement with the owner of the building containing the upper room where they observed the Passover. The owner brought water, and may have acted as a caterer. Peter and John had some part in the preparation. The lamb could not be slain until sunset (or at the beginning of) Abib 14. The slaying, dressing and roasting of the lamb (a smaller animal not a full grown adult) could be done in about 3 hours. Jesus had to observe this Passover according to the instructions in the Pentateuch.

Luke chapter 22 records, "*When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him*" (v.14). Mark 14:17 says that He and the disciples came "*in the evening.*" Jesus announced to the disciples, "*With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer*" (Luke 22:15) They may not have actually begun eating the meal until about 9:00-9:30 p.m. (Sunset in early April in Jerusalem was about 7:00 p.m.). That night Jesus and His disciples ate the Passover lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. Jesus of course anticipated introducing the foot-washing, putting emphasis on the broken unleavened bread, and poured out and distributed wine. The foot-washing account in John's Gospel is introduced with "*And supper being ended...*" (John 13:2 NKJV based on the Byzantine text)

The traditional meal was basically finished, but the food was still on the low table. Following the foot-washing, Jesus indicated to John that it was Judas Iscariot who would betray Him. Jesus then tells Judas, "*What you do, do quickly.*" (v.27) Then John records, "*he [Judas] then went out immediately. And it was night.*" (v.28) So, Judas was there for the foot-washing, but left before the bread and wine were given to the other disciples as symbols of the body and blood of Jesus.

The introduction and explanation of the bread and wine was yes, a sobering, reflective, and profound part of this final Passover observance by Jesus as a human being. He knew that He would fulfill the symbolism of the slain Passover animal. He knew that his body would be horribly beaten and horribly abused. He would shed His blood, finally giving His life to pay for the sins of all mankind.

But, here's what a lot of well-meaning Christians miss. Jesus places a very positive outcome on what is to transpire over the next day or daylight part of Abib 14. *"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."* (Matthew 26:28)

Our well held traditions have many so somber, quiet, and sober, after they partake of the Passover service, that they miss what Christ would have us also focus on.

I remember many years ago being criticized for having a cup of coffee and piece of pie with brethren after conducting and leaving the Passover service. Our fellowship after the Passover centered around what our Savior had and has done for us.

You and I are so blessed to be able to enter the new covenant in this age as a forerunner of what Jesus will do with Israel in the future! (Jeremiah 31) For us, He is NOW the Mediator of the better covenant with the better promises of eternal life. (Hebrews 8:6) In fact, read John 17, the final prayer of our Savior with His Father the night before he was brutally murdered and died. In verse 13 we read *"And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves"*. Why would He say this, and have it recorded, if it was not vitally important? Very few are joyful upon the finish of the Passover service each year.

Do we leave the Passover service encouraged, or so down, and somber we are almost depressed? Remember when we were told "not to talk, but simply file out and go home"? Suddenly, like a light switch, the next morning we jump out of bed, and all is well! Why tonight is the Celebration of freedom with the Night to Be Much Observed!

What a blessing to have once again partaken of the yearly Passover. I pray you left upbeat, and encouraged. And, I pray you had a truly inspiring, but positive, joyful, and comforting Passover!

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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