



April 19, 2024

Passover, Joy, and Encouragement

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, 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.

For approximately 3 years, from March of 2020 until May of 2023, many people were staying in their homes during the “virus” for most regular activities. With so many staying in their homes, and not traveling, life as we knew it was much different than what we were used to. Many became very discouraged and that carries on with many even today.

It still feels strange, as normally in years prior, I’d been writing to all from Cúcuta, Medellín, Montería, or Santa Rosa, Colombia where my wife and I would have been with brethren for the Passover, the Night to Be Much Observed, and beginning of the Days of Unleavened Bread. We’d then have soon headed to Bogotá to enable us to observe the continuing of the Days of Unleavened Bread with more brethren there, before heading back to our congregations in the United States.

Life has a way of changing for all of us, sometimes suddenly.

In two days, on Sunday evening this year, we’ll participate in the celebration of the Passover service that will take place just after sunset. It will be a time for remembering, reflecting, commemorating, and rejoicing. As we read the Scriptures and think back to the first observance of the Passover service by the Israelites in ancient Egypt, it will be an inspiring and sobering exercise. What a powerful experience to have thousands of Israelites still enslaved by the Egyptians take time off from their forced work to prepare for this special ceremony!

The heads of households were instructed to select on the 10th day of the month Abib a yearling lamb (or kid) that was without blemish. They were to keep it penned up and evidently continue to examine it often to make sure it had no defects.

They were to prepare unleavened bread and a dish of bitter herbs to be used for a special meal the night of Abib 14. Then as sunset came that ended Abib 13 and began Abib 14, the heads of households began to sacrifice the lambs that had been penned up. The throat was cut, the jugular severed, and the blood that flowed out was collected in a container. For that evening each head of household functioned as a priest in performing this sacrifice. All over the land of Goshen thousands of lambs were killed. The collected blood was spattered on the doorways of their homes using a stiff piece of shrub called hyssop. They prepared the lamb for roasting, entered their homes, and roasted the sacrificed lamb. Then the whole family ate that special meal during that night of Abib 14.

I have to wonder what their emotions were as they participated in these rituals and then entered their homes? Certainly they included guarded anticipation. It had to be very sobering and rightly so! But might we consider also with their firstborn being spared, were they not thankful and joyful?

The heads of households and the whole family acted in faith! They had faith that the blood of the slain lamb would protect their homes from the death of their firstborn. The Lord had told them, *“For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt . . . Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you . . .”* (Exodus 12:12-13).

As the Israelites were eating the roasted lamb, death fell on those in the houses not marked by the blood of a lamb. *“And it came to pass at midnight that the LORD struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt . . .”* (Exodus 12:29) The commotion that transpired that night throughout Egypt was incredible, as the

Israelites remained in their homes as instructed. *“And none of you shall go out of the door of his house until morning.”* (Exodus 12:22)

Sounds a little like what some of us went through these last few years, does it not?

Can you imagine the relief they felt and also the nervous expectation? They remained alive until morning. Would they perhaps then face the wrath of Pharaoh the next morning or would they be freed? It was the Egyptian people who demanded they leave and pushed them out of the land. *“And the Egyptians urged the people that they might send them out of the land in haste. For they said, “We shall all be dead.””* (Exodus 12:33)

Friends, we too must act in faith and believe that we are delivered from death by the blood of the lamb. *“For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”* (1 Corinthians 5:7) *“knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”* (1 Peter 1:18)

We believe that we have been set free from the sentence of the second death and have been given the hope of eternal life. *“But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 6:22-23)

So, sobering yes, but also wonderful! We should rejoice with thankfulness on this evening as well! I trust you will have a faith-filled, awe-inspiring, *and* positive joyful Passover celebration!

May you finish this next couple days prior in prayerful self-examination and looking to Christ for His example of how we should be living on a daily basis. Philippians 2:5 needs to be our focus. But, let us also be reminded that because our Savior died and rose again after that sacrifice was made, it was then possible

for us to not only be forgiven, but and as penned in John 17 the night before His death, *“And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.”* (John 7:13)

In spite of all we are going through or see in this world right now, don't let it take our minds or thoughts off of God and His plan and promises! May you be encouraged!

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 be 'S. Hoefker', written in a cursive style.

Scott Hoefker,

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