

Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant

#14 Old Testament Passover Celebrations

The Passover celebration commemorates the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt over 3,300 years ago. It serves to remind the participants of their redemption history, and God's grace and power in delivering them from slavery.

Passover Celebrations In Scripture

On each of these occasions the celebration of the Passover Marks A New Or A Restored Order Of Worship, and the Solemn Rededication by the people of their Covenant relation with God.

A. Original Passover - Deliverance From Egypt - Most Detailed Instructions

1. Nisan 10 - Choose my 1 year male lamb; examine and inspect it; unblemished

Ex. 12:6 And ye shall keep it up until the 14th day of the same month [1st month, Nisan]: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

2. Dip hyssop branch in blood of the lamb and put on the doorposts of home

3. Lamb is to roasted with fire and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs

4. Eat the whole lamb; no bones to be broken

Ex. 12:12, 27 For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ...you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for He passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when He struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.'" And the people bowed their heads and worshiped.

B. 2nd Passover Observed - 2nd Year After The Exodus - Passover In The Wilderness

[Have journeyed to Mt. Sinai; Established God's covenant with Israel; Received instructions for Tabernacle & furniture; Israel breaks covenant & God renews it; Build & set up the Tabernacle; Laws for priests/Levites; Taught concept of holiness; Census Taken; Gifts of princes]

1. The work building the Tabernacle is completed when the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Presence of the LORD filled the Tabernacle. [Ex. 40; Num. 7, 8]

2. The Tabernacle was completed and dedicated on the 1st day of the 1st month [Nisan 1] of the 2nd year. This was about one year from the time the people of Israel arrived at Sinai.

Num. 9:1-3, 5 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the 1st month [Nisan] of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying,

² Let the children of Israel also keep the Passover at his appointed season.

³ In the 14th day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it.

And they kept the Passover on the 14th day of the first month at even in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel.

3. The people of Israel celebrate Passover in the wilderness at Mt. Sinai.

- a. A New Order Of Worship with a Solemn Dedication
- b. Celebrate their deliverance and looking to their future
- c. Not everyone was able to participate.

Problem: Num. 9:6-8 And there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the Passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day: ⁷ And those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in His appointed season among the children of Israel?

Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you.

Num. 9:10-12 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the Passover unto the LORD. ¹¹ The 14th day of the 2nd month [Iyar] at even they shall keep it and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ¹² They shall leave none of it unto the morning nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it.

Note: There was a second chance to bring the Passover offering IF you met the parameters. If, however, he was able to attend and did not, such a person is punishable by excision.

To this day the Jewish people celebrate an additional holiday because of the request of this group of people in Num. 9.

Note: The next time the Israelites will observe Passover is 39 years later under Joshua when they are ready to ENTER the Promised Land.

C. 3rd Passover Observed - PASSOVER AT GILGAL IN PROMISED LAND

Before Israel was ready to face the enemy, they needed a preparation of heart and willingness to submit to God's direction so they might experience His power. God took them through several events to instruct and prepare them for battle. Each is fundamental to victory.

Josh. 4:19 And the people came up out of Jordan on the 10th day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho.

10th - the day the Passover lambs were chosen in Egypt (Exodus 12:3)

By crossing the Jordan, they are "choosing" to consecrate themselves to the LORD. He is Lord!

1. Morale of the Land's inhabitants: They feared the faith and obedience of Israel.

Josh. 5:1 So it was, when all the kings of the Amorites who were on the west side of the Jordan, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel until we had crossed over, that their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel.

God's Promise Fulfilled: Ex. 23:27 I will send my fear before thee and will destroy all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs unto thee.

a. Their heart melted; and there was no longer had the courage to face the Israelites.

Essential To Spiritual Victory: IN CHRIST, ALL the enemies I face are in essence defeated foes. [Rom. 6; Col. 2:1-15; Heb. 2:14]

b. When our spiritual enemies see that we are trusting in God and are willing to step out in obedient faith - even when it seems crazy - they instantly lose confidence in their battle against us. WOW!!!

c. We may forget, but our spiritual enemies always remember: Rom. 8:31 that *If God is for us, who can be against us?* They know when we are really trusting in God, their defeat is assured.

2. Renewal Of The Rite Of Circumcision At Gilgal

a. God commands the men be circumcised. [Joshua 5:2-8]

Joshua 5:5,8 but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised. So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed.

The old generation did not obey the voice of the Lord to enter and take by faith the promise of a land flowing with milk and honey.

This new generation was raised up in place of the generation of unbelief.

God's work *would* go on, but the people of God who had unbelief would not share in it.

b. Circumcision was a powerful act of consecration to God.

As a sign of God's covenant with Abraham, circumcision stood for Israel's faith in God's promises which included the possession of the land as their inheritance.

It was an act of faith and spiritual preparation.

Stepping out in faithful obedience and identifying yourself as one of the Lord's people.

Renouncing the flesh and the world. It was dying to self and living to God.

c. They stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed: Obviously, this was suicidal from a military standpoint. All the men of fighting age were made completely vulnerable and unable to fight for a period of several days, till they were healed.

d. They were in a place where they could trust in nothing but God alone - a hard place.

e. Obedience is the secret to success. In their weakness, they were made strong.

Through faith, and patience they inherited the promises. [Heb. 6:12]

Note: God only asked this of them after He showed His greatness by the Jordan River crossing. When we remember all the things the power of God has done in our lives, we are willing to trust Him with a radical obedience.

3. Result: Josh. 5:9 And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.

a. What reproach? Their shame from Egypt; the shame of their degrading slavery

b. God called Israel to a place where they saw themselves as they were in Him.

By faith, they could see themselves as an obedient, trusting people, and to stop seeing themselves as they were in their slavery and bondage.

This is the same work God wants to do in us: Take away the dishonor and shame of our previous sin and rebellion - See ourselves as who we are in Jesus Christ!

c. How was the reproach rolled away?

By their radical trust and obedience to God, by taking the specific action He told them to.

The King James Study Bible notes: "A play on words occurs here. Gilgal ('Rolling Away') marks the place where God rolled away the reproach of Egypt. Israel's era of shameful captivity [and rejection] now came officially to an end. The inheritance of Canaan lay ahead [compare 1:6; 21:43-45]. The same verbal root marks the New Testament site of Golgotha, the place where mankind's captivity by sin [and resultant rejection] was ended [that is, for those who have repented and obtained forgiveness]. There man's sins were rolled away and rolled onto the person of Jesus Christ, so believers might enter God's spiritual inheritance."

This requires our spiritual circumcision. It is only through being spiritually circumcised that we are to partake of The Lord's Supper of the *New Testament* Passover.

4. A Redemption Remembered - Observing Passover

Josh. 5:10 While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover on the 14th day of the month in the evening on the plains of Jericho.

- a. Partaking Of Passover: Relive their deliverance out of Egypt by the blood of the Lamb.
- b. Observing Passover in Egypt protected them from the death angel.
- c. Just as crossing the Red Sea would be followed by the destruction of the Egyptians [enemy], the crossing of the Jordan would be followed by defeat of the Canaanites. [enemy]
- d. Remembering the past is an excellent preparation of faith for the tests in the future.
- e. The original Passover itself could never be repeated, but there was power in its remembrance. They were a people delivered. Remember God's work of deliverance.
- f. We are to remember of our redemption at Calvary.

5. A New Source Of Provision: God Stops The Manna - Eat The Produce Of The Land

Josh. 5:11-12 And the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain.

Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year.

- a. Deliverance from Egypt included the promise they would inherit the land, a land of abundance, a land of wheat, barley, fig trees, olive oil and honey. [Deut. 8:8-9]
- b. When they entered, it was barley harvest so grain was available. The LORD prepared a table for them in the presence of their enemy.
- c. It spoke of their new beginning, a new life as the people of God delivered from judgment and rock solid in the place of blessing.
- d. Celebrating the Passover not only looked backed, but it looked forward to their new life in the land enjoying its abundant blessings by the power of God.

Eating the produce was an act of confirmation of God's abundant blessing.

- e. The city of Gilgal became a beachhead and camp for Israel in their conquest of Canaan. They returned there after battle and remembered, finding strength in the remembrance of the memorial, their obedience, and their redemption.

6. Joshua Meets With The Commander Of The Lord's Army

Josh. 5:13-14a And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand.

And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, "Are You for us or for our adversaries?"

So He said, "No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come."

a. Joshua was analyzing the situation. How could he prepare his army to take Jericho?

b. We ALL tend to get our eyes on the enormous task facing us.

c. He needed an encounter with the God he served to grasp an important truth.

d. This is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. [theophany]

e. Standing with a weapon drawn suggests the man with the sword was there to fight either against, or with, or for Israel.

f. Joshua's question reveals a typical mindset that is a threat and a hindrance to our effectiveness in our Christian walk. We tend to see the battles and enemies as OUR battles.

g. The Answer: Take Charge as Commander Of the Lord's Army

The Feast of Unleavened Bread begins immediately after Passover. We are to begin feasting on the Lamb. He is our unleavened bread. Joshua encountered the "Commander of the army of the Lord" who had come to take charge.

Consider: The Lord was there with the armies of heaven to secure Jericho so God's people could possess their God-given inheritance, yet a certain perspective was vital for success.

Principle #1: It was not for Joshua to claim God's allegiance for his cause no matter how right and holy it might be. Joshua needed to acknowledge God's claim over Joshua for God's purposes.

Consider: We tend to approach our battles backwards: we turn things around and try to get God to support us rather than to submit and follow Him.

Consider: The battle was a joint venture: God and the Israelites under Joshua's leadership as appointed by the Lord. [Josh. 1:1-9]

1. Joshua must be following the Lord, submitting to His authority, take orders from the Lord and rest the battle in His hands. ALL battles are really the LORD'S battles.

2. Joshua understood this principle: "What has my Lord to say to his servant?"

Principle #2: The Lord reminded Joshua of God's personal presence and His powerful provision; the provision of His vast hosts.

1. God's powerful provision carries with it the promise of His infinite supply and power no matter how impossible the problem appears.

2. There was INFINITELY MORE than Joshua's army: myriads of God's angelic forces who always stand ready to do God's bidding and serve His children.

3 Other Passages help us grasp this principle and its significance to our daily walk.

A. II Kings 6:8-17 When Elisha was at Dothan with his young servant, he found himself surrounded by the army of Ben-Hadad, who, during the night had marched out and surrounded the city of Dothan. The next morning, when Elisha's servant went out to draw water,

he saw the vast army surrounding the city. Being fearful and greatly distressed, he cried out to Elisha, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" Elisha said, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Elisha prayed, "O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." "The Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." They were not alone. A host of God's angelic forces struck the armies of the king of Syria with blindness.

B. Matt. 26:52-53 The disciples were reluctant and perplexed over Christ going to the cross. Peter drew his sword and struck the high priest's slave cutting off his ear. Jesus told Peter to put his sword away. "Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than 12 legions of angels?"

C. Heb. 1:14 "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" - God's angelic armies minister to God's people.

Josh. 5:14b-15 And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?" Then the Commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand *is* holy." And Joshua did so.

How we each need this response: *Worship and Submission*

Ex. 14:13a He had heard Moses say, "The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still"

I Sam. 17:47 "The battle is the Lord's."

What followed his worship & submission? "What has my lord to say to his servant?"

Acts 9:6 Paul's response on the Damascus road, when he came to realize it was the glorified Lord who was speaking to him? He quickly answered, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Significant Sequence: Humble worship, holy walk & then heavenly warfare.

While Dr. C.I. Scofield was pastor of the First Congregational Church of Dallas, there came a time when the burdens of the ministry seemed heavier than he could bear. All but crushed by the weight of the frustrations and problems of the work, he knelt one day in his office. In deep agony of spirit, he opened the Scriptures, looking for some message of comfort and strength. Led by the Spirit to the closing verses of Joshua 5, he saw at once that he was trying to carry the responsibilities alone. That day he turned his ministry over to the Lord, assured that it was His work and that He could accomplish it.

In accepting God's leadership, Dr. Scofield allied himself with God's power.

Robert M. McCheyne: "It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God."

Watchman Nee: "Not until we take the place of a servant can He take His place as Lord."