

Numbers Chapter 9

Verses 1-14

The call from the LORD to keep the Passover led to an inquiry from those whose uncleanness kept them from obeying.

This request led to an amplification of the requirement by the LORD.

This was the second Passover.

This epistle concluded the section (7:1 – 9:14), relating events that took place before the census of (1:1).

The issue at stake was what to do with “certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man”.

Could they celebrate “Passover” The answer is “yes,” but one month later.

But it is added that if “the man ... is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbearth to keep the Passover”, he “shall be cut off”.

It is a threat of sudden death at the hands of God (Lev. 17:4, 9; 20:6, 18; 23:29; Num. 15:30-31; 19:13).

Note in the New Testament the need for observing Christ’s Passover as the true paschal lamb (see in the book of John).

John 6:53 “Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.”

This is the very thing we are doing when we take communion.

We eat the unleavened bread in memory of Jesus sacrificing His body on the cross for us; taking our sins upon His body, nailing the sins of the world to the cross.

Verses 1-5

This second “Passover” would still follow the ordinances established by the LORD when the Israelites were in Egypt (Exodus 12:1-16; Deut. 16:1-2).

Numbers 9:1 "And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying,"

“The first month”:

The events recorded in these verses precede the beginning of the census in chapter 1, but follow the dedication of the tabernacle in chapter 7.

This gives a specific time, which precedes much that we have already been reading.

Numbers 9:2 "Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season."

Though this ordinance was enjoined the people of Israel, and observed by them at the time of their coming out of Egypt, and had been since repeated (Lev. 23:5).

Yet without a fresh precept, or an explanation of the former, they seemed not to be obliged.

Or might not be sensible that they were obliged to keep it, until they came into the land of Canaan (Exodus 12:25).

And therefore a new order is given them to observe it.

"At his appointed season":

And what that season is, is next declared.

Passover is to celebrate the night the Hebrews were spared from the loss of their firstborn in Egypt.

Death passed over the houses that had the blood of a lamb over the door.

At the very same time every year, they were to remember that night, and be thankful to God.

The Passover had been made an ordinance forever, but we do not read where they kept it during their wilderness wanderings.

All of this was a type and shadow of our Passover Lamb (Jesus Christ).

1 Corinthians 5:7-8 "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:" "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth."

Numbers 9:3 "In the fourteenth 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."

“At even”:

The time between the end of one day and the beginning of the next.

See (Exodus 12:6).

The law did not leave any room for excuses for not keeping the Passover.

Notice (at even).

This Passover was a shadow of the great Passover, when the Lamb of God shed His blood for all mankind.

The Jewish day began at approximately 6 in the evening and continued to 6 the next evening. This is how Jesus ate Passover with His disciples just after 6.

He was captured and tried during the night.

At 9 A.M. in the morning, He was Crucified.

At 3 that afternoon, He commanded His Spirit to leave His body.

He was the Passover Lamb before 6 on the very same day He had eaten with the disciples.

All of these things happened between 6 P.M. and 6 P.M.

He was even in the tomb before 6 P.M. This day is a day God had set aside for this purpose.

To vary the day, is to disbelieve.

This 14th day in their first month is very similar to our April.

Our date varies, because the Jews month changes with the full moon.

Numbers 9:4 "And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, that they should keep the passover."

The time now drawing nigh for the observation of it.

It being now almost a year since their coming out of Egypt.

That very first Passover should be fresh in their minds.

They should remember well the Passover which brought them new life.

Moses tells the people to keep Passover.

Numbers 9:5 "And they kept the passover on the fourteenth 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."

No mention is made of keeping the feast of unleavened bread seven days, only of the Passover.

Which indeed was only enjoined at this time, though the feast of unleavened bread used to follow it, and did in later times.

But perhaps it would not have been an easy matter to have got the flour to make it of, sufficient for so large a body of people.

For seven days together in the wilderness; though they might be able to furnish themselves with what was enough for one meal from the neighboring countries.

And especially from Midian, where Jethro, Moses's father, lived.

And which was not very far from Sinai, where the Israelites now were.

"According to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel":

Which is observed to their honor.

Though Jarchi gives this as a reason why this book does not begin with this account, as the order of things seems to require.

Because it was to the reproach of the Israelites, that all the forty years they were in the wilderness they kept but this Passover only.

The reason of which was, because of the omission of circumcision during that time.

Through the inconveniences of travelling, and the danger of circumcision in it, without which their children could not eat of the Passover (Exodus 12:48).

This was the first remembrance of that Passover.

They did as Moses commanded.

Verses 6-13

The ritual uncleanness of these men presented a problem for them on the day of Passover.

Here is an example of Yahweh making a new provision for the good of people in particular situations (something seen again in chapters 27 and 36 regarding the daughters of Zelophehad).

This was especially important here, because a person who ignored his opportunity to keep the Passover would be “cut off” from the community (Exodus 12:15).

However, the LORD’s gracious exceptions were never to be taken as reasons to disregard His commands.

Numbers 9:6 "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:"

“Defiled”:

Ceremonially unclean because of contact with a dead body.

See (note on 5:2).

Many believe the two men to be Mishael and Elizaphan, who had just recently buried Nadab and Abihu.

Those who touched a dead body were considered unclean for seven days.

Numbers 9:7 "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?"

To Moses, who was the chief magistrate, though Aaron was the High Priest.

Jarchi says, they were both sitting together when the men came, and put the question to them.

But it was not proper to speak to one after another.

For if Moses knew not, how should Aaron know?

Says he; the more difficult matters were brought to Moses, and he gave answers to them.

"We are defiled by the dead body of a man":

They had touched it, or had been where it was, or at the funeral of it, and so were defiled.

This they knew was their case by a law before mentioned, and which they speak of.

Not as a sin purposely committed by them, but as what had unhappily befallen them.

And they could not avoid; and express their concern, that upon this account they should be deprived of the ordinance of the Passover and as this confession shows an ingenuous disposition, so what follows.

A pious, religious, and devotional frame of mind.

"Wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in his appointed season among the children of Israel?"

They speak very honorably of the ordinance of the Passover; they call it "an offering of the LORD".

The Passover lamb being a slain sacrifice; and this offered to the LORD, by way of thanksgiving.

For, and in commemoration of, their wonderful deliverance out of Egypt.

And done in faith of Christ the Passover, to be sacrificed for them.

And it gave them much uneasiness that they were debarred by this occasional and unavoidable uncleanness, that was upon them, from keeping it.

And what added to it was, that they could not observe it on the day which the LORD had appointed.

And when the whole body of the children of Israel were employed in it.

For it is no small pleasure to a good man to observe every ordinance of God in the manner and at the time He directs to.

And His people in general are attending to the same.

And rather they were urgent in their expostulations, because it is said, this was the seventh and last day of their pollution, when they should be clean at evening.

And the Passover was not to be eaten until the evening, and therefore so earnestly expostulate why they should be kept back from it.

They had been out of the camp, because of their uncleanness.

They did the right thing, coming to inquire what they should do.

Numbers 9:8 "And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you."

Where they were.

Aben Ezra says, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

"And I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you":

As it was a singular case, of which there had been no instance before.

Moses would not determine anything about it himself but would inquire of the LORD His mind and Will concerning it.

And for that purpose, very probably, went into the Most Holy Place, where the LORD had promised to meet him and commune with him.

From off the Mercy Seat, about any matter of difficulty he should inquire about (Exodus 25:22).

It appears, there had been no ordinance pertaining to this specific thing at this time.

Moses inquired of God, what should be done.

Numbers 9:9 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

From between the cherubim, after he had laid the case before Him, and He gave him an answer.

When Moses inquired of the LORD, He answered him immediately.

Numbers 9:10 "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."

“Any man ... of your posterity”:

This word from the LORD was not only for the current situation, but it was a continuing ordinance for Israel.

If a man was unable to eat the Passover because of uncleanness or because he was away from the land, he could partake of the Passover on the fourteenth day of the second month.

Even these things of separation do not exempt a person from keeping Passover.

The handling of this situation set a pattern for generations to come.

They were setting a precedent.

Numbers 9:11 "The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, [and] eat it with unleavened bread and bitter [herbs]."

The month Iyar, as the Targum of Jonathan states, which answers to part of our April and part of May.

So that there was a month allowed for those that were defiled to cleanse themselves.

And for those on a journey to return home and prepare for the Passover, which was not to be totally omitted, nor deferred any longer.

And it was to be kept on the same day of the month, and at the same time of the day the first Passover was observed.

Still the more to keep in mind the saving of their firstborn; and their deliverance out of Egypt at that time.

An instance of keeping such a Passover we have in (2 Chron. 30:1).

"And eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs":

In the same manner as the first Passover was eaten (Exodus 12:8).

Only no mention is made of keeping the feast of unleavened bread seven days, which some think those were not obliged unto at this time.

Only to keep the feast of the Passover.

The only adjustment God made for them, was a one month delay of observing.

The very same requirements, of unleavened bread and bitter herbs, are to be eaten.

Numbers 9:12 "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."

None of the flesh of the Passover lamb, what was left was to be burnt with fire (Exodus 12:10).

"Nor break any bone of it":

The same was enjoined (see note on Exodus 12:46).

"According to all the ordinances of the passover they shall keep it":

As when observed in its time, excepting the feast of unleavened bread, which followed the first Passover.

And those rites which were peculiar to the Passover, as kept at their first coming out of Egypt; as the sprinkling the blood of the lamb on the doorposts, eating it in haste, etc.

This text is alluded to in (John 19:36).

This symbolizes the body of the Lord Jesus.

Jesus had no broken bones, so the bones were not to be broken in this sacrifice.

Exodus 12:46 "In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof."

John 19:36 "For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken."

Every aspect of the Passover was to be kept, but one month later.

Numbers 9:13 "But the man that [is] clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the LORD in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin."

"Cut off":

If any Israelite did not keep the Passover at the appointed time and was not unclean or away from the land, he was to be "cut off", which implies that he was to be killed.

The person that would do such a thing as this is, in effect, denying God.

This is the basis of their lives.

Those who do not observe this in remembrance of what God did for them, are truly not His.

The blessings are not for him.

This is like denying Christ, and the great sacrifice He made for us.

The way to life is through the blood of Jesus.

Hebrews 10:28-29 "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:" "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

Numbers 9:14 "And if a stranger shall sojourn among you, and will keep the passover unto the LORD; according to the ordinance of the passover, and according to the manner thereof, so shall he do: ye shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger, and for him that was born in the land."

Foreigners living with the Israelites were allowed to celebrate the Passover but had to follow the prescribed rites (including circumcision; Exodus 12:48).

"One ordinance":

Means that strangers were not to improvise, nor were they to incorporate Israel's rites with their own.

They were to do all the things required of the Hebrew people.

A non-Israelite who wished to participate in the Passover would be required to be circumcised.

Exodus 12:48-49 "And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof." "One law shall be to him that is home born, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you."

This is the same thing as the church.

If a person desires to take communion with you, he must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Communion" is a remembrance of His shedding His blood and giving His body, that we might be saved.

Verses 15-23

See (Exodus 40:34-38).

The cloud, the visible symbol of the LORD's presence, was continually sitting above the tabernacle.

The movement of the cloud was the signal to Israel that they were to travel on their journey.

This event goes back to the first day of the second year (Exodus 40:2).

This passage elaborates and develops Exodus 40:34-38), in a poetic fashion.

God would perfectly guide and lead them into the Promised Land, "at the commandment of the LORD they pitched ... and according to the commandment of the LORD they journeyed" (verses 18, 20).

Up to this point they "kept the charge of the LORD, at the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses" (verse 23).

Numbers 9:15 "And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, [namely], the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning."

"Tabernacle was reared up":

The presence of the LORD arrived when the tabernacle was completed and raised up on the first day of the first month of the second year after they had come out of Egypt.

The fire and the smoke were an outward sign to let the people know that God was with them.

The presence of the LORD was in the smoke.

Deuteronomy 5:24 "And ye said, Behold, the LORD our God hath showed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth."

Hebrews 12:29 "For our God [is] a consuming fire."

This is the very same fire that was in the middle of the wheel in Ezekiel.

Numbers 9:16 "So it was always: the cloud covered it [by day], and the appearance of fire by night."

"Cloud ... fire":

The presence of the LORD which was seen in the cloud by day became a fire that was seen at night (compare Lev. 16:2).

God's presence was with them day and night.

Exodus 13:21 "And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night:"

As long as God's children were in the wilderness, His presence remained with them day and night.

Numbers 9:17 "And when the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents."

Or went up from it, higher than it was before, yet not out of sight, but hung as it were hovering in the air over the tabernacle, but at some distance from it.

This was done by the LORD Himself.

"Then after that the children of Israel journeyed":

As soon as they saw the cloud moving upwards, the Levites took down the tabernacle, and each took their post assigned them in the carriage of it.

And the priests blew their trumpets mentioned in (Num. 10:2).

And the whole camp moved and marched on in their journey.

"And in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel pitched their tents":

When it stopped and remained without any motion, it was a signal to the children of Israel to stop also.

And to set up the tabernacle, and pitch their tents about it by their standards.

And according to the order of encampment which had been given them.

They were led of God.

It would be so much better for Christians today, if we would realize that the Spirit of God will lead us now, if we will follow.

God never changes.

We are the ones that change.

Numbers 9:18 "At the commandment of the LORD the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the LORD they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents."

Or "mouth of the LORD".

Not that there was any command in form given, or any audible voice heard, directing when to march.

But the removal of the cloud was interpretatively the order and command of God for them to move also.

"And at the commandment of the LORD they pitched":

Their tents.

When the cloud stopped, they understood that as a signal to them, as a token of the will of God that they should stop likewise.

It was to them as an authoritative command, which they obeyed.

"As long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents":

Whether a longer or a shorter time, as is after expressed.

The cloud would rise, so that the entire group could see and follow.

When it was time for them to stop and set the tabernacle up, the cloud would descend upon the spot.

It left no doubt, what the wishes of God were.

Numbers 9:19 "And when the cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD, and journeyed not."

Or years, for days are sometimes put for years.

And in some places the cloud tarried several years; or however.

If it stayed but a month or a year in any place, as in (Num. 9:22);

"Then the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD, and journeyed not".

They not only kept watching when it would move, or set sentinels for that purpose to observe it, but they kept the charge, order, or commandment, which the tarrying of the cloud was a token of.

And did not attempt to proceed in their journey until they had an intimation so to do by its motion.

And all this while, likewise, the tabernacle being up, they observed all the precepts and ordinances of the LORD in the service of it.

It appears that no one questioned the leading of the cloud and fire.

It was apparent enough to all of them that this was God leading them.

They had actually heard the voice of God from the mountain, when He first spoke the 10 commandments.

It had frightened them so badly, they asked Moses to speak to God for them.

This cloud and fire (visible to all), reassured them of God's presence.

When the cloud stopped, it was time for them to stop.

Numbers 9:20 "And [so] it was, when the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the LORD they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the LORD they journeyed."

Or "days of number", which were so few that they might be easily numbered.

The Targum of Jonathan interprets them of the seven days of the week.

As if the sense was, when the cloud rested a week on the tabernacle.

"According to the commandment of the LORD they abode in their tents":

During these few days, be they a week, or more, or less.

"And according to the commandment of the LORD they journeyed":

When it removed from the tabernacle.

The ordering of the march was not from Moses, but God.

This causes me to believe God would rest them from this desert journey a time, and then carry them again.

Numbers 9:21 "And [so] it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and [that] the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether [it was] by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed."

The whole night, during which time they rested in their beds.

"And that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed."

Whether at morning or midnight.

For sometimes, as Aben Ezra observes, they travelled in the night.

Whenever their sentinels gave notice that the cloud was taken up, even though at midnight, they arose and prepared for their journey.

And by this it is evident, that the appearance by day and night was the same body called the cloud, though beheld in a different view.

In the daytime as a cloud, in the nighttime as fire.

You would think it would be too dark for them to travel by night, but the fire was so bright, it gave light to this near 3 million people.

This is not just an ordinary fire or Light.

God is the source of all Light.

He could cause as much light as was needed to shine.

It would, probably, have been cooler to travel at night.

Whatever the reason, they moved when God commanded, night or day.

Numbers 9:22 "Or [whether it were] two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed."

Sometimes it tarried but half a day, sometimes a whole day, sometimes two days, at other times a whole month, and even a year.

A full year, as the Targum of Jonathan and Aben Ezra states.

Or a longer time, as the Vulgate Latin version, for in one place it tarried eighteen years, as Maimonides says; some say nineteen years, as in Kadesh-Barnea.

Kadesh means Holy and Barnea means desert of wandering.

"Remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not":

So that, as the same writer observes, it was not because the children of Israel lost their way in the wilderness and wandered about, not knowing where they were.

Or which way they should go.

Hence the Arabians call the wilderness, the wilderness of wandering.

Nor that they were so long wandering in it as forty years, but because it was the Will of God that should stay so long at one place, and so long at another.

Whereby their stay in it was protracted to such a length of time, according to His sovereign will.

"But when it was taken up, they journeyed":

Though they had continued ever so long, and their situation ever so agreeable.

It appears, there was no certain number of days they moved, or stayed in one place.

If God had a purpose for them staying in one place for over a year, they stayed.

One of the most vivid examples of this in the New Testament, was the moving of Paul from place to place.

Paul went where God sent him, and stayed as long as God wanted him to.

Most ministers today follow the guidance of God.

They will not go to minister in a place, unless they feel God sent them.

They will not stay in a place, if they feel God wants them to leave.

The true Christian should make Jesus his Lord, as well as his Savior.

When He is Lord, He controls his moves.

Numbers 9:23 "At the commandment of the LORD they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the LORD they journeyed: they kept the charge of the LORD, at the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses."

“Commandment ... commandment”:

The text emphasizes that Israel obeyed the LORD at this point in their experience.

Throughout the wilderness wanderings, the Israelites could only journey as the cloud led them.

When it did not move, they stayed encamped where they were.

The only times they went where the cloud did not lead them, they met with terrible defeat.

I say once more, we should find out what the will of God is for our lives, and then walk in that will.

Any other life we lead, will be a failure.

They followed the commandments of God spoken through Moses.

We must follow the commandments of God.

Numbers Chapter 9 Questions

1. What does Passover celebrate?
2. Why was the Hebrew firstborn not killed?
3. How long were they to celebrate Passover?
4. Who is the Christian's Passover Lamb?
5. When was it to be celebrated?
6. How could Jesus eat Passover with the disciples, and yet, be the Passover Lamb that same day??
7. To vary the day, is to _____.

8. Their first month is similar to our _____.
9. Why should the first Passover be fresh in their minds.
10. Why were there some men who could not take Passover?
11. Many believe the men to be _____ and _____.
12. Who had they recently buried?
13. Was this excuse sufficient to exempt them from Passover?
14. What did Moses do, when they told him of the matter?
15. When would they take Passover?
16. Why was it important that they not break any bone of the Passover lamb?
17. Those who refuse to keep Passover are, in effect, doing what?
18. He that despiseth Moses' law died without mercy under _____ or _____ witnesses.
19. When a stranger practiced Passover, what must he do first.
20. "Communion" is a remembrance of what?
21. How did the people know God was in the tabernacle?
22. The cloud covered it by _____, and the fire by _____.
23. What will lead the Christians now, if we will follow?
24. Who ordered the march?
25. How often did they move?
26. They went where the cloud _____ them.