

### The Celebration of the Passover and Guiding Cloud

#### Numbers 9

Numbers 9 - *“Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying: <sup>2</sup> “Let the children of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time. <sup>3</sup> On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall keep it at its appointed time. According to all its rites and ceremonies you shall keep it.” <sup>4</sup> So Moses told the children of Israel that they should keep the Passover. <sup>5</sup> And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, at twilight, in the Wilderness of Sinai; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did.*

*<sup>6</sup> Now there were certain men who were defiled by a human corpse, so that they could not keep the Passover on that day; and they came before Moses and Aaron that day. <sup>7</sup> And those men said to him, “We became defiled by a human corpse. Why are we kept from presenting the offering of the LORD at its appointed time among the children of Israel?” <sup>8</sup> And Moses said to them, “Stand still, that I may hear what the LORD will command concerning you.”*

*<sup>9</sup> Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>10</sup> “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘If anyone of you or your posterity is unclean because of a corpse, or is far away on a journey, he may still keep the LORD’s Passover. <sup>11</sup> On the fourteenth day of the second month, at twilight, they may keep it. They shall eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. <sup>12</sup> They shall leave none of it until morning, nor break one of its bones. According to all the ordinances of the Passover they shall keep it. <sup>13</sup> But the man who is clean and is not on a journey, and ceases to keep the Passover, that same person shall be cut off from among his people, because he did not bring the offering of the LORD at its appointed time; that man shall bear his sin. <sup>14</sup> ‘And if a stranger dwells among you, and would keep the LORD’s Passover, he must do so according to the rite of the Passover and according to its ceremony; you shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger and the native of the land.’”*

*<sup>15</sup> Now on the day that the tabernacle was raised up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the Testimony; from evening until morning it was above the tabernacle like the appearance of fire. <sup>16</sup> So it was always: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. <sup>17</sup> Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, after that the children of Israel would journey; and in the place where the cloud settled, there the children of Israel would pitch their tents. <sup>18</sup> At the command of the LORD the children of Israel would journey, and at the command of the LORD they would camp; as long as the cloud stayed above the tabernacle they remained encamped. <sup>19</sup> Even when the cloud continued long, many days above the tabernacle, the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD and did not journey.*

*<sup>20</sup> So it was, when the cloud was above the tabernacle a few days: according to the command of the LORD they would remain encamped, and according to the command of the LORD they would journey. <sup>21</sup> So it was, when the cloud remained only from evening until morning: when the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they would journey; whether*

*by day or by night, whenever the cloud was taken up, they would journey. <sup>22</sup> Whether it was two days, a month, or a year that the cloud remained above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would remain encamped and not journey; but when it was taken up, they would journey. <sup>23</sup> At the command of the LORD they remained encamped, and at the command of the LORD they journeyed; they kept the charge of the LORD, at the command of the LORD by the hand of Moses.”*

## Background Notes

In Numbers 9 we're going back in time. The event on the date given in verse 1 occurred even before the date of the census that was taken in Numbers 1! Numbers 1:1 says that the census was taken in the second month of the second year, and the date in Numbers 9:1 is in the first month of the second year.

So the significant events that we've seen thus far in our study of the book of Numbers were in the following order:

The Tabernacle was erected on the first day of the first month of the second year after they came out of Egypt (Exodus 40:17). Then came the twelve days of dedication of the altar and Tabernacle (Numbers 7). Then came the lighting of the lamps on the golden lamp stand in the Tabernacle, and the consecration of the Levites (Numbers 8).

Now, on the fourteenth day of the first month of the second year, the Passover was celebrated (Numbers 9). *“And they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, at twilight, in the Wilderness of Sinai; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so the children of Israel did”(v5).*

So that's a brief summary or an overview of the order of events covered thus far in the book of Numbers.

The Passover was instituted back in Exodus 12. In Numbers 9 we have the first annual celebration of the Passover after the children of Israel came out of Egypt.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God expects His people to remember how He saved them.

Why were the children of Israel required to keep the Passover every year? Answer: When they celebrated the Feast of Passover, the Israelites remembered how God had delivered them out of bondage in Egypt at the time of the Exodus. At that time they had to apply the blood of the Passover lamb to the doorway of their homes, and the Angel of Death passed over every home that was under the protection of that blood. God said, *“When I see the blood, I will pass over you...”* (Exodus 12:13).

Passover is a wonderful picture of our salvation! In fact, the word “redeemed” is used in reference to that great deliverance from bondage in Egypt. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 we read, *“For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”* As the people of Israel had to apply the blood of the Passover lamb to their homes, so we must apply the blood of

Christ to our lives for salvation. We must put our trust in Jesus Christ - not just as a great moral Leader, but also as the One who shed His blood and died on the cross for our sins. We must trust in Him as our personal Savior.

As God expected the people of Israel to remember their salvation from slavery in Egypt, so God expects us to remember our salvation from the penalty of sin. When we celebrate of the Lord's Supper, we remember how God saved us. The Lord Jesus went to the cross to die for our sins. His body was broken; His blood was shed; He gave His life for us - and He asked His people to remember how He saved them.

In verses 6-8, a question came up about some men who couldn't celebrate the Passover on the appointed day. They wanted to keep the Passover, but they were ceremonially unclean on that particular day. The Lord graciously said that anyone who was unclean, or on a distant journey, could celebrate the Passover one month later. However, everyone who was clean and not away from home was expected to observe the Passover at the appointed time. If someone deliberately neglected the Passover with no good reason, that person was to be cut off from the people - either banished or put to death (v13).

I think that there's a spiritual application here for us. The Lord Jesus asked us to remember Him, and God expects us to celebrate the Lord's Supper regularly - but not in a legalistic way! If we're sick, or on a journey, there's no problem if we occasionally have to miss the celebration of the Lord's Supper. However, a deliberate and willful refusal to celebrate the Lord's Supper may be an indication of a serious problem. It may even be an indication of unbelief.

God expects His people to remember how He saved them.

## 2. God expects His people to follow where He leads them.

The pillar of cloud was a sign of the presence of the Lord (v15-23). We first read of this cloud back in Exodus 13:21-22. *"And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people."* In Exodus 14 we read that God used His cloud to protect His people from the Egyptians before the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea. In Exodus 33 the cloud was present when the Lord spoke with Moses.

God used His cloud to guide His people, step-by-step, through the wilderness. This cloud was the "glory cloud," known as the *Shekinah glory*. It signified God's presence, and its presence indicated that God was dwelling in the midst of His people. When Israel camped, the cloud rested over the Tabernacle. When the cloud moved, Israel marched, and the cloud led them. Sometimes the cloud remained in the same location for many months, and sometimes the cloud moved overnight. God determined **when** His people moved and **where** they moved.

Can you imagine how the people complained? If the cloud stayed in one place for a time, the complaint would be - "Why doesn't the cloud move? I'm tired of this same old location. We've been here for months!" On the other hand, if the cloud moved frequently - "I can't believe the cloud is moving already! We've only been here for a day, and I just got my tent set up!" (We would never complain like that - would we?!)

This has obvious lessons for us, doesn't it? God expects His people to follow, wherever and whenever He leads them. This principle applies to God's people as individuals, and it applies to God's people collectively. Take, for example, your local church. If you're part of a fellowship of true believers, God expects your church to follow Him - not the other way around! Many church leaders expect God to follow **them**. They expect God to bless **their** ideas and plans - when they ought to be **looking to the Lord for guidance!** The Lord wants to guide your church, as to its location, its policies and its programs. Is your church willing to follow? Are you willing to follow?

God expects His people to follow where He leads them.

## Practical Application

### Leave the "where" and the "when" to God!

In this chapter we see that our **sovereign God** determined **where** His people moved and **when** His people moved. This is true today for every individual believer. In Psalm 32:8, God gives us a great promise *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye."*

That's a pretty good guidance system, isn't it? What a promise! The Lord knows the "where" and the "when" that is best for us. Does the Lord know when we should make a job change? Of course he does! Does the Lord know where we should move our family, or where we should retire? Of course He does!

The Lord will surely show us His will as we wait on Him. Don't race ahead of God! Don't act independently without God! Leave the "where" and the "when" to God!