

May 2021

Frank W. Nelte

THE SECOND PASSOVER IS NOT FOR GOD'S PEOPLE TODAY!

You've heard about keeping the Passover in the second month, right? And many times when the Church would produce a yearly calendar, the date for the Passover in the second month would be identified in that calendar, as if there would always be some people who would need this information. After all, that date in the second month is identified for us in the Old Testament.

But **that second Passover date is not for you and me!** It is not really for God's people in New Testament times. It was for people in Old Testament times because they faced vastly different circumstances than are, and have been, faced by Christians in New Testament times.

Or, to qualify this statement somewhat: that second Passover date is not for you and me **except in certain very, very, very rare and unusual circumstances**. I will present some of those very, very, very rare circumstances later.

Let's examine the Scripture that discusses this second Passover.

NUMBERS CHAPTER 9

The situation was as follows:

During Israel's wanderings somebody had died just before the Passover was to be observed in the second year, and some close family members (or even close friends) had carried the dead body out of the camp, and then buried it. This meant that **the men** who had touched the corpse, and then buried it, **were ceremonially defiled** (Numbers 9:6). This defilement precluded them from keeping the Passover through no fault of their own ... somebody had to take the corpse out of the house or tent and bury it.

Let's note: those men were otherwise physically quite capable of taking the Passover on the correct day. But **their defiled status**, which status was imposed on them by circumstances beyond their control, made them ineligible to keep the Passover.

So Moses took the matter to God (Numbers 9:8-9).

God then made a judgment. That judgment is recorded in verses 10-13. Let's look at it.

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. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, *and* eat it with unleavened bread and bitter *herbs*. 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. (Numbers 9:10-12)

Right, what has God done here? God has looked ahead, beyond Israel's wanderings in the desert, to a time when people living in their own permanent homes might take long journeys to distant places. During their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness the Israelites never kept the Passover after the first few years.

We can know that they didn't keep the Passover for most of those 40 years because **they did not circumcise the males** that were born during those 40 years (Joshua 5:5). And there is no way that God would have allowed them to observe the Passover with uncircumcised children (and later adults) in the homes. So God made a very emphatic statement to Joshua **before the Israelites were allowed to keep the Passover**. God told Joshua:

"Make sharp knives and circumcise all the uncircumcised males in the whole nation." (That's Joshua 5:2, paraphrased slightly.)

Only then were the Israelites allowed to keep the Passover, because after all the males had been circumcised, God said: "this day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you" (Joshua 5:9).

In Old Testament times if (theoretically) an Israelite family had any uncircumcised males amongst them (be they baby boys older than 8 days or be they adults), then the Passover could not be kept in that home. The account in Exodus 4:24-26 makes clear that **God was going to kill Moses' uncircumcised son**. When an angry and rebellious Zipporah then circumcised her son, then God "let him go", i.e. God spared the life of Moses' son. See verse 26. This incident took place shortly before that first Passover in Egypt.

The point is: in Old Testament times **if** a family would (theoretically) have had any uncircumcised males, who were older than 8 days, **then** that family would have been ineligible to keep the Passover, something God also spelled out in Exodus 12:48-49. While this point is unimportant for our particular question here, it is unlikely that the whole nation of Israel kept the Passover after the second year, down to the time when they kept the Passover in the days of Joshua.

However, here is what is important in the judgment God gave in Numbers 9:10-12. There were many different matters that could render a person "unclean" in ancient Israel. Two examples that rendered a person "unclean" included: 1) a woman having just given birth to a baby (see Leviticus 12:2-7), and 2) a woman during her menstrual cycle (see Leviticus 15:19-20).

The point is: while there were many different reasons why a person might be "unclean", in His judgment God identified **only one specific reason for being "unclean"**, which would make the person eligible to take the Passover in the second month.

Instead of specifying "if any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean **by reason of a dead body**", God could easily have left out the restrictive statement "by reason of a dead body". In that case God could simply have judged: "If any man of you or of your posterity **shall be unclean or be in a journey afar off**, yet he shall keep the Passover unto the LORD".

But God didn't say it like that!

The expression "by reason of a dead body" is **a qualifying statement**. It excludes all other reasons for being "unclean" from keeping the Passover in the second month. Can we see that? So this statement tells us that only one specific reason for being "unclean" makes a person eligible to keep the Passover in the second month. And that one reason is that the person had been in contact with a corpse.

So the first thing we need to note is that God's judgment did not open the door to a multitude of reasons for keeping the second Passover. God did in fact give a very restrictive statement in this matter.

Next, apart from this one limited category of uncleanness enabling someone to take the second Passover, God listed only one additional category of people, who could also take the Passover in the second month. That second category of people who could take the second Passover referred to people

who would be **on a journey far from home**.

So God spelled out only two very specific reasons for allowing someone to keep the Passover in the second month:

1) Being unclean because of having touched a corpse.

2) Being on a journey far from home.

WHY ALLOW SOMEONE ON A JOURNEY TO TAKE THE 2nd PASSOVER?

So why did God make provision for people on a long journey to take the Passover one month later?

In verse 12 God actually spelled out the reason why God made provision for people in this category. Here is what God said:

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. (Numbers 9:12)

Keeping the Passover involved killing an animal that had been specifically set apart four days earlier. And then the next morning anything that was left over was to be burned.

This could not be done by someone on a trip away from home.

People could not take an animal on a trip with them. And the animal was not to be selected either more or less than 4 days before it was to be killed. So someone on a three week trip could not select an animal to take with him. And on many (most?) trips it would simply not be possible to take an animal along on the trip.

This is the difficulty which God acknowledged, when God in this particular judgment included this second category of people who were eligible for the second Passover.

All the instructions for how the Passover was to be observed during Old Testament times focus on this being an occasion that was performed **in people's individual homes**. Being amongst strangers while on a long journey was not a suitable place for observing the Old Testament Passover.

So what about God's Church today?

NEITHER REASON APPLIES TO GOD'S PEOPLE TODAY

The only two reasons God Himself listed for observing the Passover in the second month do not in any way apply to God's Church today. Here is why.

1) **The ritualistic laws** regarding ceremonial "uncleanness" **were done away** when Jesus Christ died on the stake for our sins. That's what Paul explained in Hebrews 9.

The holy spirit this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered

both **gifts and sacrifices**, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; *Which stood* only in **meats** and **drinks**, and **divers washings**, and **carnal ordinances**, imposed on *them* **until** the time of reformation. (Hebrews 9:8-10)

The word "until" in the expression "until the time of reformation" refers to a time limit. The things Paul is referring to were imposed "until" Jesus Christ had died for our sins. They are no longer "imposed" on God's people today. Paul is clearly speaking about those things as being in the past.

"Gifts and sacrifices" refer to both voluntary and commanded sacrifices, and to freewill offerings. Paul then spelled out the specific laws he was referring to as having been imposed with a time limit. Those laws consisted of four categories: "**meats**" (i.e. meat and flour offerings) and "**drinks**" (i.e. drink offerings) and "**divers washings**" (i.e. washings to achieve ritualistic cleanness and to remove ceremonial uncleanness, as for someone who had touched a corpse, etc.) and "**carnal ordinances**" (i.e. ordinances that affected the flesh, like circumcision, etc.).

The point is: **if** today a family member of a converted Christian dies a few hours before the Passover, and the converted Christian helps the undertaker take the body out to the undertaker's vehicle, **then** there is no reason whatsoever why that converted Christian should not observe the Passover a couple of hours later. At the Passover service that bereaved converted Christian is likely to find more solace and more comfort for his bereavement than in any other possible situation. The Passover is, after all, a focus on how to deal with the knowledge that Jesus Christ Himself willingly died for our sins, and that God the Father then resurrected Christ to a glorious immortal existence.

Today such a Christian, who has touched a corpse, is not viewed by God as "unclean". Those laws simply do not apply to God's people today.

So **the actual reason**, for why God made this specific judgment regarding keeping the Passover in the second month, **is totally eliminated today**. Today those men in Numbers 9, who had touched a corpse, would be fully acceptable for keeping the Passover that very evening. The original reason for a second Passover simply does not exist today. Keep in mind also that those particular men really wanted to keep the Passover with everyone else. **They wanted to take part**. But ritualistic requirements prevented them from doing so.

So let's look at the second reason which God addressed in His judgment.

2) When the observance of the Passover involved selecting one specific animal on the 10th day of the first month, and then killing, roasting and eating that animal on the 14th day, and then burning any leftovers early the next morning, but still on the 14th, then that could not be done by people on a journey in some distant land.

But **Jesus Christ changed the emblems for the Passover service** to a small piece of unleavened bread and a small quantity of red wine. And for this observance people do not need to be in their home area. Today converted members of God's Church can keep the Passover almost anywhere on earth.

All they need is a private room, which room they have carefully de-leavened, a small piece of unleavened bread, a small quantity of red wine, and a good translation of the Bible, and some guidelines regarding how to conduct their own Passover service. And if there are two or more converted Christians together in such a location, then they can also include the foot-washing part of the Passover service.

The point is:

Today this second reason for keeping the Passover in the second month is also no longer valid!

And so both biblical reasons for observing the Passover in the second month are invalid today.

Circumstances have changed. Both of those reasons likewise were only in force "until the time of reformation", i.e. until Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Those two biblical reasons simply don't apply today!

GOD'S WARNING

Let's notice the warning God gave in the next verse, after spelling out the two possible reasons for keeping the Passover in the second month.

But **the man that *is* clean, and is not in a journey**, and forbears 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.** (Numbers 9:13)

Let's recognize that for all practical purposes all of God's people today are "clean" and they are "not in a journey", because these two reasons don't enter the picture for us today.

What God is saying here is this: unless someone has a really air-tight valid reason for wanting to keep the Passover in the second month, that person should be "cut off from among his people" (put out of the Church?), and God will view his attempt to keep the second Passover as "sin".

Read verse 13 again. This is extremely serious. Why did God say this?

Yes, why did God issue this dire warning?

God knew that there will invariably be some people who will look for any flimsy excuse to keep the Passover in the second month. And such flimsy excuses will always incur a penalty from God.

It is never "a light thing" for someone to take the Passover in the second month, a provision God made for extreme and unpredictable circumstances. God really wants all of us converted Christians to observe the Passover in the first month.

Don't ever flippantly reason: "oh, I'll just have to keep the Passover in the second month this year", because that line of reasoning will draw a severe penalty from God. Here is a point we need to always keep in mind:

We must **never ever**, under any circumstances, **plan in advance** to keep the Passover in the second month. That line of reasoning would be utterly perverse! It is perverse because it would imply that God has to somehow fit in with our plans and our commitments. For over 3,000 years God has told us exactly when we are to keep His Passover, and if we make plans or commitments that don't take that into account, then we are simply not worthy of the calling of God.

Please don't ever, ever even remotely consider **in advance** to keep God's Passover in the second month. The Apostle Paul was "in a journey afar off" more than any other apostle in the New Testament. And at no point did Paul ever consider keeping the Passover in the second month. If anyone in the New Testament would have had a justification for keeping the Passover in the second month, it would have been Paul. But neither Paul, nor any other writer of the New Testament ever entertained the idea of keeping a second month Passover. And Jesus Christ certainly never hinted at a second Passover during His ministry.

I might add one point here:

Being in pain at the time of the Passover in the first month is not a reason for keeping the Passover in the second month! If people (i.e. baptized members of the Church) who are in pain are able to walk, then they need to keep the Passover in the first month. And for those members who are bedridden at the time of the Passover in the first month, the Church can arrange to have the Passover emblems taken to them, after the Passover service for the congregation has been concluded. In ancient Israel people in pain and any who might have been bedridden would be in the home where the Passover was kept ... and their health status did not affect their ability to partake of the Passover. So pain per se is never a reason for not taking the Passover at the appointed time.

Now personally, I really dislike seeing a date for a Passover in the second month included in any calendar. I dislike that because it makes provision **in advance** for people to plan for a second month Passover ... as if that is somehow on a par with the actual Passover God instituted in the first month. It is the responsibility of God's Church to **discourage** God's people from ever contemplating taking the Passover in the second month. And omitting a second month Passover date from the calendar is a good start in that direction. We should also understand the following:

THE SECOND MONTH PASSOVER IS NOT ON A PAR AT ALL!

Is that clear?

The real Passover that God instituted for the first month was designed by God to be the lead-in to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And so for the first month Passover God's people should be "almost completely" unleavened, allowing for perhaps last-minute unleavening to still be carried out before sunset at the end of the 14th day. The Passover is then followed by seven days of eating unleavened bread. The first month Passover is inextricably linked to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They form an entity just like the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day form an entity.

ALL THOSE LINKS ARE LOST WITH A SECOND MONTH PASSOVER!

Do people who keep a second month Passover still keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the first month? Or do they skip this Feast in the first month and then keep it after their second month Passover?

Or do they (i.e. baptized members of God's Church) keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the first month but **without first** keeping the Passover? How can they put sins out of their lives completely, without first accepting and acknowledging the sacrifice of Jesus Christ at the Passover?

How do they count for Pentecost ... from the first month Passover, which they did **not** keep? Or from the second month Passover which they plan to keep?

There are no options to keep Pentecost and Trumpets and Atonement and Tabernacles on any dates other than the dates God has laid out in Leviticus 23. If you don't keep any of these Feasts and Holy Days on the dates God has appointed, then you don't have the option to somehow still keep them on alternate dates. So **why should you possibly have the option to keep the Passover on an alternate date** ... when the only two reasons stated by God for that alternate date don't apply to God's people today?

A second month Passover makes the Passover a stand-alone observance that has **no connection whatsoever to any other occasion in the year. It is only a substitute** that God made available for a limited period of time to deal with specific difficult situations. And substitute observances are never as

good as the real thing. Would you keep that second month Passover in a house that is not even remotely "deleavened"? Would you freely eat leavened foods in the week that follows such a second month Passover? Would you start a period of "examining yourself" with that second month Passover? Or would you just be fulfilling **some kind of ritualistic requirement**?

The point is: keeping the Passover in the second month is not for God's people today! It is not something that any converted Christian should ever contemplate in advance. And **it is not something that God's Church should ever make provision for**, by giving members a specific date in advance for such an observance. And it is not on a par with the first month Passover observance! And don't ever, ever consider a second month Passover for reasons of "convenience", to fit in with your personal plans!

Okay, so let's now consider the "very, very, very rare circumstances" I referred to at the start of this article, which might lead to someone still taking the Passover in the second month.

THE VERY, VERY, VERY RARE CIRCUMSTANCES

I have shown that the actual reasons for keeping the Passover in the second month, that were specifically identified by God Himself, no longer apply to us in New Testament times. They no longer apply to us today because:

1) **The ritual laws** regarding being "unclean" for various reasons were done away by Jesus Christ's sacrifice for us. So today no converted Christian is "unclean" for any reason (i.e. for touching a corpse or for any other ritualistic matter).

2) When **Jesus Christ changed the Passover emblems** from killing a lamb and then eating the meat of that lamb, to now simply eating a small piece of broken unleavened bread and drinking a small quantity of red wine, it eliminated the need to be in one's own home environment to observe the Passover. Without needing a specific animal that had been selected and then set apart four days earlier, the Passover can now be kept by anyone "in a journey afar off".

So both biblically stated reasons for a second month Passover have become null and void for God's people today.

The only thing that remains is **the principle** which underlies the second reason for taking the Passover in the second month. That principle is as follows:

Something **totally unexpected** and unanticipated happens, which makes it impossible for the converted Christian to keep the Passover on the 14th day of the first month. It is something for which the person could not possibly have taken evasive action in advance.

Some examples would be:

1) A converted Christian falls into **a coma** shortly before Passover and only comes out of the coma some time after the date for the Passover.

2) On the way to keeping the Passover the Christian is involved in a car accident, and is **rushed by ambulance to a hospital** for immediate treatment for major injuries. The person will obviously not be able to attend the Passover service.

3) On the way to the Passover service the Christian is **attacked by criminals**, robbed and beaten up,

and his car and phone are stolen from him. He's not going to make it to the Passover service.

Converted Christians involved in these types of situations would be eligible to keep the Passover in the second month. But these are obviously **extremely rare and highly unlikely circumstances**. That is why I have said that there are "very, very, very rare circumstances" that would qualify a Christian today to keep the Passover in the second month.

Almost all other circumstances can be planned for in advance, so that the Passover can be observed in the first month. The Church can plan to help people in most situations to keep the Passover.

We could ask: how often over the, say, past 50 years have converted Christians been in serious accidents, accidents that required hospitalization, while they were on the way to Passover services? How many times have church members been in a coma over the Passover date? How many times have church members "fallen amongst thieves" on the way to keeping the Passover (compare to Luke 10:30)?

The answer would be: extremely rarely, **if at all**.

Now **if** a church member does indeed meet the strict criteria for keeping the Passover in the second month, **then** the person's minister can provide the date for keeping such a second month Passover. But **nobody else's attention should ever be drawn to the date for the second month Passover**.

The possibility of a second month Passover shouldn't really feature in anyone's thinking. Only **when an emergency arises** does such a date need to be revealed, not that it is difficult for anyone to figure out the correct date for such an observance for themselves. People just need accurate new moon data to know which day will be the 14th day of the second month.

But the point is: **this second month date should never feature in anyone's thinking** until a real emergency develops around the first month Passover date. And then there are still 29 or 30 days left to prepare for a second month Passover. That's plenty of time to sort out the correct date and all other details. God really wants us to keep the Passover in the first month. Don't ever entertain any other option! And if emergencies arise, then we can deal with them at that point in time.

The most important verse in Numbers 9 for God's people today is the very sober warning God spelled out in verse 13. Don't ever forget that.

Now I have not written this article because I think that many people in God's Church have tried to keep the Passover in the second month. I don't think that is the case. It is not a major problem in God's Church right now. But my concern is that **we shouldn't even think of a second month Passover as a possibility**, because the original reasons for keeping the Passover in the second month simply don't apply to God's Church in the New Testament. And it is foolish to even list a second month Passover date in any calendar model.

Apart from some extremely unlikely circumstances, the second month Passover is simply not something for God's people in our age.

Frank W Nelte