

Message #10**Numbers 9:1-23**

One thing is very clear from this chapter, knowledge and growth and blessings from God is progressive. In other words, God's people don't know everything all at once and they don't get growth and blessings all at once. It is a progressive process. You take in the word of God and obey that and then you build on that. You take in more of the word of God and obey that. This is clearly what we learn from Numbers 9.

TO ACTUALLY HAVE GOD LEAD HIS PEOPLE AND BLESS HIS PEOPLE, THEY MUST BE CLEAN AND THEY MUST PRECISELY OBEY HIS WORD IN A PROGRESSIVE WAY.

Not many people get this point because if they did, they would be very interested in carefully understanding every book of the Bible. In order to have the powerful presence of God in our lives or church and in order to have God actually lead us and bless us, we need to carefully understand God's Word and apply it.

There are three main areas of instruction given in this passage:

INSTRUCTION AREA #1 – Instructions concerning the Passover. 9:1-5

Carefully observe from **verse 1** that the Lord spoke to Moses. God speaks through his chosen instrument, who, in this case, is Moses. Now God could have just spoken to everyone all at once, but that is now how He chooses to reveal Himself. As near as I can determine, this is the way God always speaks. He has someone that He has singled out and gifted and that person receives or takes in God's Word and then communicates it. This is true in every dispensation.

Now **verse 2** gives instruction as to how Israel is to observe the Passover. God commanded Israel to celebrate the Passover. This was not optional. He told them when and how to celebrate it.

Two things are worthy of observation. It is for Israel, not the Church and it is to be observed at a specific time. You cannot help but see dispensational truth here. There are things for Israel and there are things for the Church.

Now the first Passover was celebrated as the children of Israel prepared to leave Egypt (Ex. 12:1-13). We may recall from Exodus that this occurred just before Pharaoh pursued the Israelites. But once they were safely out of Egypt, God made it clear that they were to observe it forever, especially when they got into the Promised Land (Ex. 12:24-25).

The Passover guidelines given in Exodus 12 included:

- 1) The date and time of the Passover—14th day of the first month.
- 2) The directions for preparing, sacrificing, cooking and eating the Passover Lamb.

- 3) The various things that were to be eaten at the Passover meal- unleavened bread; bitter herbs. Everything was to be eaten and nothing was to be left. Unleavened bread eaten seven days.
- 4) The removal of any unleavened thing from the house for seven days.
- 5) Regulations concerning non-Jews living in Israel and the Passover.
- 6) Responsibility to tell the story of God's redemption.

What is clear is that God did not want them to forget about the Passover while they were on their way to the Promised Land. God says I want this Passover celebrated while in the wilderness.

It was critical that Israel always remember what kept them from death was the blood of the lamb.

So in **verse 3**, God says on the 14th day of this month at twilight, they were to observe it obeying everything involved according to the ordinance of the Passover. In other words, everything was to be carried out all previous requirements of the Passover "scrupulously."

Each family was to take its own Passover lamb and slaughter it, and celebrate this inside their house. They were not to break any bones of that sacrificial Lamb (Ex. 12:46).

You could not just celebrate this any way you wanted. You could not allegorize or spiritualize this. You could not decide to do this another night and you could not decide to use a different kind of animal. This had to be carefully observed and must be followed to the letter God's way.

There are some applications we want to make in the Church Age:

- 1) Jesus Christ is our Passover—I Corinthians 5:7.
- 2) We have a responsibility to get leaven and sinful things out of our lives.
- 3) We ought to often remember the fact that God saved us from our sins and delivered us from condemnation.
- 4) For the Church, the ordinance we are required to celebrate is the Lord's Supper.

Verse 4 says that Moses told the sons of Israel exactly what to do and how to observe it. His job was to faithfully communicate God's Word to the people and expect them to obey it.

Verse 5 says that they observed the Passover on the right day, at the right time and in total conformity to what God prescribed.

So far in the book of Numbers things are fantastic. God's Word is taught and the people obeyed it. There was real harmony between God and Israel in that wilderness. Had Israel stuck to this kind of precise commitment to God's Word, national life would have been wonderful. But as we will see, she did not maintain this for long.

Here is a critical key part of getting the blessings of God—precise obedience to the Word of God. The more we precisely obey the Word of God, regardless of how we feel, the more blessings we will receive. What we do see is that in real worship there are regulations. This is called by theologians the "regulative principle of worship."

Worship is never to be a free-for-all, left to the whims and emotions of the people. God is a God of regulatory worship and if worship is to be acceptable to Him and blessed by Him, it cannot be a free-for-all, up for grabs experience.

INSTRUCTION AREA #2 – Instructions concerning being unclean. 9:6-14

Now in order for any ordinance to be acceptable to God, the people must be clean. Those who are participating in worship need to be clean. So God addresses the subject.

Some of the people were unclean because they had touched a dead body (**9:6**). They realized that they would not be able to participate in the Passover in an unclean state, so they went to Moses and told him. Truth is we live in a fallen world and sometimes God's people get a little dirty.

According to **verse 7**, the people who were unclean admitted they were unclean, but they wanted to know why they were prevented from participating in the ordinance. The Passover was a once a year sacred event and if you were ceremonially unclean and could not participate, it was a major issue. In all reality, if you missed the Passover on that date, you had to wait an entire year before you could celebrate it again. So some of the men who were unclean decided to ask Moses about it.

Now we cannot help but see real honesty and integrity here. They admit the truth about themselves and they want to know God's Word on the matter. They admit they are unclean, but they wanted to know why they could not participate.

In **verse 8**, Moses decided to go to the LORD and ask about this. He didn't know. Even as great a man as Moses was, he still needed to know more of God's Word and will. This is something that every minister ought to remember.

There are some who arrogantly stand before people and pretend to know everything. All people need the integrity of Moses to say, "I don't know, I need to talk to God." Truth is, at best a minister is a finite sinner who is in need of more and more knowledge. As we said at the beginning of this exposition, knowledge and growth are progressive.

What Moses actually did when he wanted to know God's Word and will was get alone with God and pray. Wise are those ministers who get down on their knees and ask God to enable them to accurately understand His Word so they may communicate it to God's people.

According to **verses 9-14**, God spoke to Moses and revealed His Word and will on the matter. Before we look at God's answer, I want to have us observe that God is not a God of nothing but rigid rules. He obviously has flexibility to people and their issues. There are five answers God reveals to Moses:

Revelation #1 - Any unclean person may still observe the Passover. **9:10**

God's answer expands from touching a dead body to travelling in a foreign land. It would be possible that someone was travelling on the day they were supposed to be celebrating the Passover. What about them? Did they have to wait an entire year? God does not pretend there is no problem. What God does is come up with a solution to the problem.

Revelation #2 - They shall observe it in the second month on the 14th day. **9:11**

This is fascinating. God made a provision for those unclean. Those unclean were to celebrate not on the first month, but the second month. They could not just come up with their own date, but God determined that He would expand this to a second date. For those unclean or those travelling, God expanded the Passover to the second month on the 14th day.

What this tells us about God is that He is a Personal God interested in His people. He wants His people worshipping and remembering Him. He is a God of second chances. He is not simply a God of strict rules and regulations. We need to realize this. Things happen. There are situations that occur and you cannot point to a Bible verse to solve it. There needs to be structure and order, but there also needs to be grace. If God can be flexible in sacred things like the Passover, so we can be flexible in various matters of life.

Revelation #3 - They were to celebrate precisely and leave no leftovers, even though not everyone was celebrating. **9:12**

Even though they were celebrating a month later, they still needed to celebrate it precisely. They could not be sloppy about this. They needed to observe the Passover with the reverence and restrictions and respect the Passover demanded.

Revelation #4 - The man who is clean who does not celebrate the Passover when it is supposed to be celebrated shall be cut off from his people. **9:13**

This Passover was a serious matter. If someone was clean and not travelling and did not celebrate the Passover, he was to be cut off from the people and bear his sin. This was an excommunication that even meant death.

Revelation #5 - Any alien living with the Jews may participate but they must carefully follow the Passover rules. **9:14**

Any alien could celebrate the Passover; however, they had to meet the requirements. Males had to be circumcised thus accepting the sign of the covenant and the connection to God and to Israel.

In order for anyone to have a right relationship with God, they must celebrate the Passover. Our Passover is Jesus Christ and in order for anyone to have a relationship with God, they must have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

INSTRUCTION AREA #3 – Instructions concerning God’s guiding cloud. **9:15-23**

As Israel was following these rules and obeying God’s Word, God’s glorious cloud covered the Tabernacle. Everyone was obedient and clean and there was a definite connection between that and the Glory of God in the cloud. This cloud meant God was with His people and God would lead and guide His people.

In the daytime, God had a glorious cloud that covered the Tabernacle and in the evening, God had a glorious fire over the Tabernacle. According to **verses 15-16**, God’s presence was there day and night.

How great is that? God’s presence with His people all the time, day and night.

Now whenever the cloud lifted during the day, it was time for the children of Israel to pack up camp and leave (**9:17**). They would follow the cloud until it stopped and then they knew this was where God wanted them to camp.

God literally gave a command to Israel to leave and they would move until God told them to stop and set up camp and then once the Tabernacle was up, the cloud settled over the Tabernacle (**9:18**). **Now if you were living at this time, it is clear that the first thing you would do in the morning would be to look over at that Tabernacle and see whether or not the cloud was still hovering or whether it was moving.**

There is a good principle for us to follow. Every day we should check our own lives. Every morning we should take a look at ourselves to see whether or not we are in fellowship with God or whether we have moved out of fellowship. Keep in mind that Israel is on their way to the Promised Land, just as we are on our way to heaven. The presence of God is key to successful movement through life.

God was directing Israel to the land, but when God’s cloud stopped, the nation stopped and they would not go forward until the Lord directed them (**9:19**). If the cloud remained a few days, they remained. And when the command of the LORD said let’s go, they would go (**9:20**).

Verse 21 makes it clear that sometimes they stayed one night and **verse 22** makes it clear sometimes they stayed two days or a month or a year. They did not set out until God said it is My time.

What was God doing here? He was teaching His people that moving forward to His blessings requires a focus on Him and His Word. You cannot get the blessings of God in one day. It comes over time and it comes by being faithfully committed to God and His Word at all times.

Verse 23 says they kept the command of the Lord. If Israel’s story would have stopped at **verse 23**, it would have been a great story. But it did not. This kind of commitment to God and His Word did not last long.