

Associates for Scriptural Knowledge • P.O. Box 25000, Portland, OR 97298-0990, USA

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Webpage on the Internet: <http://www.askelm.com> • E-Mail address: askoffice@askelm.com

Dear Associates and Friends,

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In this month's article, "[Israel and Judah: 35. Reforms of King Hezekiah](#)," the Passover during Hezekiah's first year as King of Judah is a central focus of this narrative. Read Exodus chapters 12 and 13 for background about the original Passover before the children of Israel left Egypt. These instructions from God through Moses were modified in Deuteronomy once a sanctuary had become the central focus of Israelite life and culture. Hezekiah's goal in all his reformation acts was to return to the ritual and religious purity and practices of Mosaic times (2 Kings 18:6).

Cast of Characters:

YHWH. The Creator, ruler, mover, and controller of all events. He influences individuals, kingdoms, countries, and peoples. Through His Son, Christ Jesus, YHWH "**is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will**" (Ephesians 1:11). It was God's will that the sad story of Israel and Judah as God's chosen people required a Redeemer, the promised Messiah of Israel, Jesus Christ.

The only human character named in this episode is King Hezekiah of Judah. Everyone else mentioned was either dead (Ahaz) or part of a group.

Ahaz. Evil king of Judah, recently dead at the beginning of this episode. He is mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions of his overlord, the Assyrian king Tiglathpileser.¹ Ahaz listened to the prophet Isaiah who spoke out publicly against his evil works and idolatry. Ahaz did not heed Isaiah, but neither did he harm him. Ahaz stopped the sacrifices in the Temple of Solomon and locked its doors. He brought God's punishment of death and destruction upon God's people of Judah. The people went along with the idolatry of Ahaz until he died.

Hezekiah. Heroic reformer King of Judah, son and heir of Ahaz. He leads the task of cleaning and purifying the Temple, reinstating Mosaic sacrificial rituals combined with Davidic music and pageantry. Hezekiah works to tear down the idolatrous system established by his father Ahaz, and seeks to eliminate pagan altars, ritual sites, and incense platforms throughout his kingdom. The people support Hezekiah's religious reforms while he is alive.

The Levites. The members of this Israelite tribe are teachers, performers, and servants at the Temple and in their hometowns. In this article they help out when there are not enough purified priests to serve the restored Temple rituals and sacrificial offerings.

The Priests. Levites from the line of Aaron only. One senses while reading the biblical narratives in this month's article that there is a hesitation by the priests to commit fully to YHWH alone.

The People of Judah. The people follow the lead of their kings, priests, or wealthy nobles who were idolaters who sacrificed children (even their own). They are willing also to follow reformers like Hezekiah and the prophets who wanted the people to worship YHWH only. Being human like you and me, God's chosen people always seemed willing to compromise in favor of the wrong. They followed their leaders, always with a tendency toward greater sins and evils. The prophets worked

¹ See my October 2018 Commentary, "[Tiglathpileser](#),"

hard to warn the people and expose sin, especially among the upper classes, alternately rebuking and pleading with them to stop, consider, and change their ways from sin and idolatry. As sin increased, God's punishments increased until the ultimate punishment of exile comes upon them.

The People of Israel. During Hezekiah's reign the people lived under the barely functioning northern Kingdom of Israel. The people were as disobedient to YHWH as their kings and leaders. There were no good kings of Israel, so the people only had the prophets of YHWH to try to hold back the rising tide of sin and evil for the kingdom of the ten Israelite tribes. YHWH constantly called on them to change their ways through His prophets. They accepted God's miracles on their behalf, but only for short times, then they turned back to their idolatry. Most were killed by Assyrian invasions resulting in a series of deportations of people to Assyria. Early in Hezekiah's reign a call goes out to them to come to Jerusalem for a Passover celebration honoring YHWH. Several groups attended.

The Passover. The festival commemorating the passing of the people of Israel out from Egypt. It is "**YHWH's Passover**" a phrase that occurs first in Exodus 12:11. The festival was to be observed on the evening of the 14th of Nisan, the first month of the ceremonial year. The first Passover celebrated during Hezekiah's reign was unique in both time and circumstances.

"Christ Our Passover"

After you read this month's article, consider reading or rereading these three articles by Dr. Ernest Martin:

- "[The Law of Moses, the Passover and the Lord's Supper](#)" (originally from 1992) shows how God progressively reveals through Christ the true purpose and function of these three symbolic teachings which are all fulfilled in Christ's advent, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and present glory as the captain of our salvation.
- "[The Apostle John, the Lamb, and the Spirit](#)" (originally from 1979) shows how John in his Gospel demonstrated Jesus was the fulfillment of the true Passover. God's preparation of His Son for His sacrifice to take away "**the sin of the world**" (John 1:29) is compared with the care taken with the lamb chosen and eaten for the Passover sacrifice.
- "[The Passover Contradiction](#)" (originally from 1980) shows that the Gospel of John has a symbolic chronology so Christ's death on the tree of crucifixion can be understood as the reality of the phrase "**Christ our Passover**" in 1 Corinthians 5:7.

All the ritual actions of the Law of Moses and even the New Covenant are symbolic. What is more important, the actions of "**Christ our Passover**" (1 Corinthians 5:7) or your eating a Passover meal? It is fine to learn about the Passover with its many symbols, and to teach the biblical information to your children, but I hope eating the Passover meal yearly would have little value for you in your mature relationship with God.

Only Christ's actions on our behalf, symbolized by the Old Testament festivals, have any true value. The baptism of Jesus was most important for you, not your baptism. The circumcision of Jesus was important for you, not your circumcision. If you are female, Christ's circumcision is efficacious because it affects your heart. Read these four verses (and their contexts) about "circumcision of the heart," Deuteronomy 10:16, 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4; and Romans 2:29. Physical circumcision is only a symbol.

Thank You

I doubt you will find teaching like the three "older" ASK articles anywhere else. Thank you for helping preserve these and other articles to be available for people when God leads people to them. They are excellent examples of the important information on the ASK website. Your funding gives us the means to write new material like this month's article, as well as update older material with new references. May God bless your Bible study while ASK material helps guide you. Again, thank you.

David W. Sielaff
david@askelm.com