

Celebrate Freedom

Long Beach Alliance Church • May 4th, 2008 • Pastor Chris Lankford

THE SONS OF ISRAEL WHO RETURNED FROM EXILE AND ALL THOSE WHO HAD SEPARATED THEMSELVES FROM THE IMPURITY OF THE NATIONS OF THE LAND TO JOIN THEM, TO SEEK THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL, ATE THE PASSOVER. AND THEY OBSERVED THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD SEVEN DAYS WITH JOY, FOR THE LORD HAD CAUSED THEM TO REJOICE, AND HAD TURNED THE HEART OF THE KING OF ASSYRIA TOWARD THEM TO ENCOURAGE THEM IN THE WORK OF THE HOUSE OF GOD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL.

~EZRA 6:21-22 (NASB)

1) Completing The Task/Celebrating The Results

- A) With the strength of Persian King Darius behind them (Ezra 6:1-12), the local government officials and the Jews aggressively finish the rebuilding of God's Temple in only a few years (6:13-15).

- B) Once the Temple was completed, a great dedication celebration was held by the Jews which reinstated proper worship (6:16-18).

- C) This ceremony officially marks the moment when God's people are fully restored in the Promised Land (6:18).

2) Marking The Moment For All To Remember

- A) Providentially, the next month on the Jewish calendar (from Adar, 6:15) was Nisan, the beginning of the Jewish religious year and the month of the Passover feast (6:19).

- B) The Passover Feast, along with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, celebrated in conjunction with Passover (although they are different festivals), were commemorations (remembrances) of God's deliverance in Israel's history.

- C) Passover remembered when God passed over the houses of the Israelites and spared the first-born children of the household while in Egyptian captivity (Exodus 12:26-27).

- D) The Feast of Unleavened Bread remembered that the Israelites had no time to even put leaven in their bread when fleeing Egypt, and only ate flat-bread (unleavened) after being delivered from their Egyptian captivity (Exodus 12:17).

3) Celebrating Deliverance

- A) The example of Scripture consistently calls God's people to commemorate God's miracles in our lives (and community) with intentional celebrations which remind us of God's goodness and mercy for us.

- B) Passover itself looks forward to Jesus Christ, the ultimate Passover Lamb (cf. John 1:29). Unleavened Bread looks forward to Communion, where the "unleavened body" of Christ is remembered (1st Corinthians 5:7-8).

- C) How do we mark God's goodness in our own lives?