

S.D.G.

Chapter Eight

THE FEAST OF THE FIRST FRUITS

Book Three

THE KING CROWNED

By Stephen H. Funck, March 12, 2020

During the night, the priests in the Temple threshed, roasted, and ground the barley into flour. All night they prepared it. The priests refined the freshly milled flour by sifting it through thirteen sieves. Early morning, Joseph ben Caiaphas, the high priest, was busy mixing the barley flour with oil and frankincense to prepare it as a bread offering. Joseph took the batch of dough in hand and waved it before the LORD as a wave offering. Then he touched the barley flour to the corner of the altar.¹ This began the fifty-day count of the Omer² to the festival of Shavuot.

As the day before, the gold table of Showbread had been placed on the Porch. Again the Chief Priest lifted up the loaves, seeing them was considered the same as seeing the face of God and through them God was looking back at them. Again the proclamation was chanted over all the people, "Behold God's love for you!"

Meanwhile on the other side of the city some pilgrims were wakened by a rumbling. They looked over toward the sound and saw the watch laying on the ground by an open tomb. The watch got up, looked inside and hurried off. Some women came, looked inside and also left. Later some other men and women came, looked and left. The pilgrims knew that was the tomb of the false prophet Yeshua who had been crucified on the other side of the garden. It was time to start the fire for the morning meal.

Passover, Sabbath, the Feast of First Fruits, three great celebrations in a row. The excitement, the joy, was almost too much for anyone to bear. Surrounded by millions of celebrants at the most glorious Temple in the world, the glorious city of the Great God of Israel. Gleaming white, pure gold. The people were washed over with waves of deep emotion, experience. It is to be transported out of this world into another place.

Never a good without a discordant sound. The watch at the tomb asked to speak to the High Priest personally.³ Malchus went out to them. After he heard what they had to say, he told them to join in the worship and they would take care of this later.

¹ By divine design, the ritual of offering the first fruit of the barley Omer in the Temple coincided with the resurrection of the Messiah. Paul invoked the symbolism when he wrote, "Messiah has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). The day of His resurrection began the fifty-day count to Pentecost.

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counting_of_the_Omer

³ Matthew 28:11

After the morning sacrifice and the additional Passover sacrifices, the high priest offered a portion of grain offering on the altar as a memorial portion. The priests had baked the remainder of the dough into loaves of unleavened barley bread to be shared among the priesthood. Joseph concluded the ceremony by sacrificing a single male lamb as a burnt offering to accompany the new grain.⁴

There was a beautiful, grand festive procession of pilgrims bringing their First Fruits - Bikkurim⁵ with gold, silver or willow baskets to which live birds were tied. They were greeted by dignitaries and proclaimed: 'My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; but there he became a great, mighty and populous nation. And the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, and imposed hard labor on us. Then we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction and our toil and our oppression; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror and with signs and wonders; and He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Now behold, I have brought the first of the produce of the ground which You, O Lord have given me.'⁶ .

The High Priest said: "Bless for us, Lord our God, this year and all the varieties of its produce for good; and bestow blessing upon the face of the earth. Satisfy us from Your bounty and bless our year like other good years."

The pilgrims replied: "Blessed are You, Lord, who blesses the years."⁷

After the ceremony ended, the procession continued for the rest of the day as the pilgrim throng came with their gifts. It was like it was a few days earlier when they came bringing their lambs for slaughter. Each family group sent one or two to represent them which reduced the total, still nearly 250,000 came. Long lines extended from all the gates. Inside thousands of priests reverently received their gifts and carried them to the Inner Court.

The High Priest Joseph with the Treasurer of the Temple, Helcias, and a large retinue of Chief Priests of the leading families were at the Duchan before the Great Door⁸ of the Temple. They welcomed those who had brought large gifts for the Temple. The Golden Vine⁹ surrounded the great door, 40 cubits high with the grape clusters as big as a man and leaves almost as large. Gold gifts were made into a grape leaf or grape or a plate one cubit square and inscribed with the name of the giver. The priest goldsmiths had been busy all week fashioning them into shape.

4 [The Resurrection and the Omer D. Thomas Lancaster, First Fruits of Zion.www.torahclub.org/copyright](http://www.torahclub.org/copyright)

5 <http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/6139-first-fruits>

6 Deuteronomy 26:3-10. NASB

7 <https://thetorah.com/a-torah-prescribed-liturgy-the-declaration-of-the-first-fruits/>

8 <https://www.ritmeyer.com/2015/12/14/the-gold-of-the-jerusalem-temple/>

9 Josephus "The Jewish War" <https://www.ritmeyer.com/2015/12/14/the-gold-of-the-jerusalem-temple/>

In the fifty years since the Temple was renovated, the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place were covered first with gold leaf and now with gold plates. The Porch and Temple were covered with gold leaf. The Golden Vine already had a number of leaves and clusters. During the week the six leaves, three grapes, and four plates had been displayed along the Duchan¹⁰ between the Court of Priests and the Court of Israel. It was expected in future years the Inner Court and then the Middle Court would also be beautified. Everyone was ecstatic. This was the best of all the Passover years. Relief. Joy. Praise God who makes all things good.

At the olive press and at Lazarus' home there was great consternation and scurrying back and forth and to the tomb. It was empty! Unbelievable reports! Have our longings caused us to imagine things? All the commotion delayed the start of morning prayer.

Before their morning prayers were over, a delegation of officials came with the announcement that Lazarus had been replaced as Master of the Sacred Oil. He and all that were with him were to leave the premises immediately. Those at the oil press were already being evicted. The worshipers: steward, foremen and workers, families were still there. The officials appointed the steward acting Master of the Sacred Oil. Lazarus' great home and everything in it was under his control until the council appointed a new Master. They all looked at Lazarus with pain and compassion and he looked at them. They nodded but knew this was not a safe time to speak.

It was a relaxed day for the Prefect. The whole city and nation were shut down for the festivals. He went up the tower to look over it all. Claudia was already there. Reading. She looked puzzled and he asked her why.

"I know it is here someplace."

"What?"

"But we possess no substantial, life-like image of true Law and genuine Justice; a mere outline sketch is all that we enjoy. Cicero On Obligations."¹¹

"So what do you make of that?"

"There is a real true Law and a righteous genuine Justice. Deep inside that is both good and bad. Somehow inside we know it, but we are unable to bring it out. We always fall short."

"My beloved Claudia. You long to be perfect. Not even the gods can make that happen."

"A perfect God could."

"You are my perfection."

Joseph of Aramathea was in his usual place in the Court of Israel for morning worship. One of the others asked if he knew Lazarus had been removed from his position as Head of the Sacred Oil. ¹²

"When did that happen?"

"It is being done now, as we talk."

¹⁰ See Book III Chapter One Triumphal Entry page 4`

¹¹ Like Claudia, I cannot find it. I neglected to do the citation when I copied the quote, "De Officiis".

¹² See the Sign of Concord/King of Kings / Supplement / "Lazarus / Olive Press / Gethsemane"

Joseph hurried out of the Inner Court and went through the Golden Gate ¹³ to Bethany. The oil press was just outside the gate, he met the disciples there, more than 130 people.¹⁴ All they had was piled at their feet. The watch was posted by the entrance. They were confused, angry, distraught. They had heard the news that the tomb was empty and that angels had been seen. They were just finishing their morning prayer when the officers came. Joseph prayed with them. He was on the way to Lazarus' house and those there.

James, Thaddeus, Thomas, Simon, Jude went with him up the long road through the olive trees between the tens of thousands camped there. They crowded both sides of the road examining them, commenting that they were the followers of Yeshua. Some, many were asking them about the report of the tomb being empty. The word also spread that Lazarus was evicted, so they were being asked where they were going. The crowds pressing in and all the questions were horrible. When they got to the top, a crowd as big as the one below was standing, milling around helpless.

Joseph embraced Lazarus. They finally let each other go. He asked, "Lazarus, do you have any idea where you would be going?"

Tears welled in his eyes and his voice breaking. "I have nowhere. Nowhere for myself and where can all these with me, Mother Mary, the women and little ones. Lord God, ruler of the heavens, Father of all, Who provides for His faithful people."

"The ways of God are beyond understanding. Where can we turn but to you, God of Heaven?"

Joseph said his house would hold many but not all. They would have to find more places. Clopas told Mother Mary and Lazarus he would go back to Emmaus and be out of the way. He said others would be welcome but it was a very long walk. No one was willing.

Soon after that Nicodemus came. He had been thrilled at the report of the empty tomb and angels. Coming by the oil press, he learned of the eviction and saw the watch posted. From the heights of joy to the depths of despair! "What is going on? What is the Lord of Heaven doing?"

Mother Mary was talking with, consoling, many who were surrounding her. Her granddaughter Alma and husband Joseph were followers¹⁵. As they were talking, her stepdaughter Mary came¹⁶. She heard the news while staying with her people in the Capernaum guesthouse. The rumors of empty tomb, angels, people who had died seen walking in the city, and eviction were spreading everywhere. Joanna¹⁷, Susanna and others staying in the city also came. All were talking at the same time, both about the miraculous news and the tragedy. Celebration, joy, weeping and laughter.

¹³ <https://www.ritmeyer.com/2019/03/11/the-golden-gate-of-the-temple-mount-in-jerusalem/>

¹⁴ See the Supplement http://thesignofconcord.com/uploads/How_many_were_with_Jesus_at_his_Last_Supper_.pdf

¹⁵ See Book II Chapter 2 Wedding at Cana or Book III Chapter 1 Triumphal Entry

¹⁶ See Book I Chapter 1 Preparations

¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joanna,_wife_of_Chuza

The officials had a detachment from the Temple Watch. They were urging louder and louder, everyone had to leave, now, NOW! They ordered the watch to push them away from the house. They headed down to the oil press. The crowds were shouting at them, terrible words, insults as they passed through. At the bottom of the hill they met more tears and puzzlement. The women repeated their stories: what they had seen, met, heard. Yeshua, Himself? For real! The men also repeated their story. None of this seemed like it could be happening.

Many from Galilee would be going home in a few days for harvest. They had no reason to stay. They would be back for the high holy day of Pentecost. Susanna and Joanna invited the women. Since Joanna was staying in the Tetrarch's Palace, she had room, but it would be wiser if they were all women. The Disciples were going to Joseph's, Mother Mary with them. Nicodemus invited those who could not fit at Joseph's to stay with him. Some noticed John hanging on the side, looking lost as if he did not want to be seen but did not know where else to be. He was trying to hear what was being said. He was very uncomfortable and hungry. Philip went over to him and talked quietly. They followed the others, talking on the way to Joseph's.

As they split up, Nicodemus asked Thomas and Alma to come with him, since the other disciples and Mother Mary were going with Joseph. Alma wanted to stay with her grandmother but knew a representative should be there too. Nicodemus explained he has room since his guests abandoned him because he followed Yeshua. The various groups settled into their new places. It was very crowded. Passover pilgrims always were. They ate all their prepared food yesterday on the Sabbath, so the women began preparations for the next meal. The men decided who would go present the First Fruits - Bikkurim offering.

Mary Magdalene, Mother Mary, John, actually all remembered Jesus had talked of his crucifixion and that he would rise on the third day. No one had talked of it. It did not seem right - bad luck. Yet there had been a bubbling in their spirits, hope, a possibility, anticipation, wondering. The women talked about practical matters. The men did not have much to say, wondering what would be and unable to do anything about that. All week long that had gone from the heights of joy and thrown into the depths of despair. They were numbed by that, unwilling to make plans.

Practical matters keep life going, time to eat. The men returned from the Bikkurim offering. Clopas¹⁸ returned to the people at Joseph's overflowing with excitement. They had seen Yeshua, talked with him for a long time. They did not realize it was him, until He broke the bread and vanished. Everyone wanted Clopas to repeat the story. Then they wanted the women and men to tell again what they had seen and heard at the tomb. It was a lively and excited dinner.

Matthew's son said, "Father, didn't the Master say when we eat bread and drink wine, we are to remember him?" Matthew talked with the other disciples and they all agreed to do it, but how? Since Matthew brought it up, he was the one to lead. Nearly all the people there had been with Yeshua at His Last Supper. Matthew stood and addressed the crowd. Most were packed into Joseph's great room, the rest close by.

"Blessed is Adonai, the blessed one! Blessed is Adonai, the blessed one, forever!" that caught their

18 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_of_Clopas "Symeon, the son of Clopas, of whom the Gospel also makes mention; to be worthy of the episcopal throne of that parish. He was a cousin, as they say, of the Saviour. For Hegesippus records that Clopas was a brother of Joseph. Church History (Book III, ch. 11),

attention. "At the last supper we ate with our Master Yeshua. He commanded us to remember Him when we eat and drink. We have heard wonderful stories from many who have met Jesus today, angels have announced that Yeshua has risen from the dead. We have gone from despair to joy. His arrest and crucifixion, our continuing oppression by the council are terrifying. The Lord God is a mighty God. His outstretched arm and mighty hand have won the victory. He is the victorious God. We worship and praise Him. The Lord is with us. Lift up your hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. On the night He was betrayed, our Lord Yeshua took bread. He broke it and gave it to us saying 'Take and eat, this is my body given for you'. Please all eat in remembrance of Him. He took the Cup of Blessing and gave it to us to drink, saying 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and all people for the forgiveness of sin'. Please share the cup and remember Him."

Someone started praying and the rest joined in: 'Our Father in heaven! May your Name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us the Bread¹⁹ we need today. Forgive us what we have done wrong, as we too have forgiven those who have wronged us. And do not lead us into hard testing, but keep us safe from the Evil One.²⁰

A deep quiet filled the room, not a sound, no one moved. Serious, contemplating, intense. Until, they become aware of a presence. Yeshua was standing among them.

Questions:

What was going on the day Jesus rose?

The followers of Jesus have been at Lazarus' home, why did they move to a different place?

Why was Thomas not with them?

What was it like when Jesus appeared? You may have a different concept. I have to have some kind of description. I told the story so some could say it was physiologically driven imagination. That does not mean He did not really appear.

The Gospels record the events of Jesus' life. They do not include the background information everyone knew at the time they were written. This is one of a series of stories that includes that background faithful to what is known about the history and culture. I hope this provokes-in a good way-the reader to think deeply about the Scriptural account. Go to my web site for more. <http://thesignofconcord.com>. These are in the section titled "King of Kings". There is also a section titled "King of Kings Supplements" with additional information.

If you do not think this reflects the culture and historic situation, how would you tell the story?

Many thanks to my patient wife Lynne for repeatedly proofreading.

This is meant for non technical readers. The footnotes are links to the documentation.

¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord%27s_Prayer <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epiusios>

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messianic_Bible_translations#Complete_Jewish_Bible