



Passover

~ Lent Week Six ~

By: Rae-Ellen Sanders



*“When the hour had come, He sat down,
and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them,
‘With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;
for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’”*

~Luke 22:14-16 (NKJV)

“The Lord kept the Passover with His disciples in the Upper Room to fulfill the law. More than that, communion with Him looks toward the Wedding Supper that we will be eating and drinking in the last days. Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant by His observance of the Pesach (Passover) and at the same time established the New Covenant with us. We entered into a new dimension of worship and fellowship with the spirit. Jesus was about to be sacrificed as the Passover Lamb. We are not only to observe the Lord’s Supper, we are to be a part of it by being part of His sacrificed body. Jesus participated and finished the old ceremony that we might participate with Him and be a part of the new.” ~ Author unknown

My family and I had the privilege of hosting a Seder dinner and also attending another at our church this year. It was exciting to research our Hebraic roots and see how Jesus is tied into Passover. So many Christians don’t understand Passover or the significance it holds to Resurrection Sunday. I would like to share what I learned. Following are instructions of how you would perform a Seder dinner in your own home. I hope learning about how the Jews celebrate Passover will encourage you to see their devotion and how they look to the Messiah for redemption! There is a lot of Scripture reading so be prepared to turn some pages! Grab your Bible and a notebook to take notes and get cozy.

Passover commemorates the Israelites departure from Egypt into freedom from slavery. You can read about it in Exodus when the Lord instructed the Israelites, the night they escaped Pharaoh’s rule, to kill a spotless lamb and paint the blood over their doorpost. It would be a sign for the death angel to *pass over* their homes and protect their firstborn sons from the tenth plague (Exodus 12:13). Pharaoh comes to his breaking point when his son is killed and tells Moses his people can go! In haste, they eat their bread and lamb while standing, then flee to the Red Sea where they experience God’s deliverance. I highly recommend reading the account Exodus 13:17-14:31 for yourself.

Every year at Passover (Pesach), Jews sit down to retell this story with many prayers, blessings, cups of wine, and a special ceremonial dinner that commemorates the Exodus. “Seder,” which means “order,” is so named because of the specific order of events followed in this deliverance celebration. The celebration is pretty long but it’s important that you don’t skip any steps, it’s like a dress rehearsal. Every step and blessing is imperative to the Passover celebration. The quoted blessings are to be spoken out loud by the man of the household.

Pesach is actually a lasting ordinance performed every year. It is first instructed in Scripture in Exodus 12:1-28 and then ordained by God in Leviticus 23.

So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance. (Exodus 12:14)

The difference from the first Passover is that you sit comfortably in relaxation or lean on pillows rather than eating in a hurry. Passover begins with the woman of the house lighting a candle that represents her bringing “light” into the world through childbirth as Mary did with Jesus, “The Light of The World.” The candle also signifies that Christ will bring us out of darkness. She says a prayer that starts the Passover Celebration.



Passover

~ Lent Week Six ~

By: Rae-Ellen Sanders



During the meal, five cups of wine are served to each individual. Each cup of wine is served with an accompanying Scripture and symbolizes an expression of God's redemption for His people.

A blessing and a prayer of sanctification accompany **The First Cup** of wine. "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from bondage" (Exodus 6:6 NKJV). For the Christian, the first cup represents God's promise to deliver us from the bondage of this world, setting us apart for a life of holiness.

At this time, participants ritually wash their hands and feet before partaking of the meal. "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from My sight" (Isaiah 1:16). This is a spiritual act of setting oneself apart for the works of God. Christ shows us through the example of washing the disciples feet to serve each other and to bear each other's burdens. Read John 13:4-5, Isaiah 52:7, and John 13:12-17 out loud while washing one another's feet.

On the table is a large plate with five symbols of the Passover on it; "bitter herbs," usually horseradish; a "vegetable," usually parsley; "Chazeret," often romaine lettuce; "Charoset," a mixture of apples, nuts, and cinnamon; and a "Shankbone" from a lamb. In addition there is a bowl of salt water, three Matzah pieces wrapped in linen, a wine glass, and an extra place setting with cup and chair for the spirit of Elijah, the forerunner of the coming of the Messiah.

Next, a piece of parsley is dipped into salt water and eaten, to remind the Jewish people that life in Egypt before Passover was filled with tears (salt water). Read Matthew 26:21-25.

The patriarch takes out the middle piece of Matzah (unleavened bread) and breaks it into two pieces. The larger piece is then hidden until the end of the meal. The other piece is added back to the white linen.

As Christians, we understand the three pieces of the bread to represent the Trinity; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three co-equal persons of the Godhead, all without corruption (leaven). The white linen represents Their heavenly abode which is pure and holy. The Matzah is striped with holes in it, foreshadowing the pierced, broken Jesus. The middle piece symbolizes the Bread of Life (Jesus) to all those who partake of Him. At the completion of the meal, the children will look for the hidden piece called the "Afikomen" (a Greek word meaning "He came" or "dessert"; to bring out that which is hidden). It is returned to the linen with the other pieces. This points to the resurrection and ascension. The child who finds the Afikomen is rewarded. Likewise, we are rewarded with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and eternity fellowshiping with our God when we accept Christ as Lord and Savior!

The Passover story is then read from Exodus 12:1-14. The youngest at the table asks the following questions at every Seder meal and they are answered by the dad or man of the house with these words.

- ***"Why is this night different from all other nights?"***

"Because on every Passover night, including tonight, we repeat the call that echoed through the entrance of Pharaoh's palace: Let My people go!"

- ***"On all other nights, we may eat leavened bread or Matzah, but on this night, why do we only eat unleavened bread?"***

"Matzah reminds us that when the Jews left the slavery of Egypt, they had no time to bake their bread. They took the raw dough on their journey and baked it in the hot desert sun into hard crackers called Matzah."



Passover

~ Lent Week Six ~

By: Rae-Ellen Sanders



- *“On all other nights, we may eat any kind of herbs, but on this night, why only bitter herbs?”*

“Maror (bitter herbs) reminds us of the bitter and cruel way Pharaoh treated the Jewish people when they were slaves in Egypt.”

- *“On all other nights, we do not dip even once, but on this night, why twice?”*

“We dip bitter herbs into the Charoset to remind us how hard the Jewish slaves worked in Egypt. The chopped apples and nuts look like the clay bricks used in building Pharaoh’s buildings.”

- *“Why do we dip parsley into salt water?”*

“The parsley reminds us that Spring is here and new life will grow. The salt water reminds us of the tears of the Jewish slaves.”

- *“On all other nights, we eat and drink either sitting or leaning, but on this night, why do we all lean?”*

“We lean on a pillow to be comfortable and to remind us that once we were slaves, but now we are free!”

During the reading, it is tradition to also review the ten plagues. After each is read, you dip a finger in wine and tap it on the plate. This is done because even the suffering of our enemies pains us and God Himself is grieved at wickedness.

Psalms 113-114 are read out loud and followed by **The Second Cup** of wine, “I will set you free” represents judgment or instruction. “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgment” (Exodus 6:6b NKJV). For the Christian, Passover is the Gospel story. The outstretched arms of Jesus on the cross demonstrated His love and sacrifice that redeemed us from our sins. Likewise, Moses’ outstretched arm over the Red Sea meant deliverance for God’s chosen people to freedom.

The broken piece of Matzah is then taken out again and broken into smaller pieces to be distributed to each person at the table. Read Isaiah 53:5 and Matthew 26:26-29. Bitter herbs are dipped in the Charoset to remind them that even the most bitter of circumstances can be sweetened by hope in God. Read Isaiah 53:3-4. The Shankbone is a remnant of the lamb that provided the blood so God would pass over their homes (Exodus 12:21-22). For some, the Paschal (Passover) lamb would have been expensive, so families would share a lamb between them. A tiny piece of meat is used in a “binding sandwich” with Matzah and bitter herb. This small morsel is eaten just before a regular meal is served.

After eating to satisfaction, the much awaited time for children to search for the Afikomen begins. When it is found, a gift is given and dessert is enjoyed. (At this point you might think the Seder is over, but it is not! Be prepared for a long celebration!) There are still two more cups of wine to drink. (At our Seder, we used cranberry juice).

The Third Cup of wine, “I will redeem you”, is the Cup of Blessing or Redemption, known to the Jews as the “Communion” Cup. Read Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:19-20, and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. The wine in this cup is the color of blood. Before drinking, take one last piece of Matzah, a part of the one that was hidden, and recite, “This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” Partake of both the Matzah and the wine in communion. Read John 14:27-31 as a final blessing.

The last cup will now be filled to overflowing. (It’s a good idea to have a plate underneath). The overflowing cup represents the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. For believers in Christ, this promised land is Heaven. This cup is for Elijah, the hoped-for guest who will sit at the table with a place ready for him. The door



Passover

~ Lent Week Six ~

By: Rae-Ellen Sanders



is even left ajar so he can enter the room easily. Often in Jewish homes, the children will search for him. Elijah's arrival precipitates the coming of the Messiah, hence the excitement.

One more cup, **The Fourth Cup** of wine, "I will take you as my people", is the Cup of Praise or Hope, also known as the Cup for the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. "I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and to Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the LORD" (Isaiah 6:8). It exemplifies the future fulfillment of all of God's promises.

The Third and Fourth Cups of the Seder are the Betrothed and Wedding Cups of the New Covenant. The Fourth Cup, "I will take you to me" is what happens when two people get married. The cups parallel the wedding betrothal process in ancient Jewish custom. When a man proposed, he would negotiate a bride price. (Jesus paid the Bride price when He died for us and rose again). The man would hand the bride a cup of wine and say, "This is the cup of my covenant." (Jesus said these exact words at the Last Supper). If she drank, it meant, "I do", and then at the wedding, they would drink another cup of wine together.

When Jesus says, "I will not drink of this fruit of the vine until I drink it anew with you in My Father's Kingdom," He is connecting this future cup with the cup He drank that night at the Last Supper. The disciples, familiar with the Seder, understood exactly what He meant by that connection. Jesus will come back for His Bride to have the Last Cup together!

To conclude the Seder, many sing in worship; Psalm 115, 118 and 136 are often sung. Passover ends with the words: "**Next year in Jerusalem.**"

As you can see, we have more in common with our Jewish brothers and sisters than you may have thought! The ritual of Passover can be celebrated by both Christians and Jews. For the chosen people, it is a testament to God's faithful deliverance from human bondage through Moses. For grafted-in believers, it affirms God's miraculous providence throughout history to release us from the bondage of sin through our Savior, Jesus Christ!