

The Seder: Feast of Passover

Introduction

The Jewish people have celebrated the Passover meal for thousands of years. It was instituted by God Himself, in **Exodus, Chapter 12**, on the night when the Angel of Death came to Egypt and struck down the firstborn children of the Egyptian people. The Israelites were commanded by The Lord to slaughter a lamb, and to place its blood on the tops and the sides of their door frames. When the Angel saw the blood, he would pass over that house and spare the lives of those inside. It was a picture of what would one day save those who would, by faith, apply the blood of Jesus to their hearts and be saved from sin. The wages of sin is death (**Romans 6:23**), but those who have trusted in Jesus death upon the cross will be saved from that death (**Romans 10:9**).

The Jews were instructed to observe this meal as a lasting ordinance (**Exodus 12:14**) so that future generations would know that on the day of Passover, the nation of Israel had been miraculously set free from Egyptian bondage. The word "Seder" (meaning *order*) was applied to the meal because it became an ordered ritual, to teach those who had not heard of the Exodus from Egypt. Every part of the meal was carefully selected to tell the story. The four cups of wine represent God's fourfold promise of deliverance in **Exodus 6:6-7**. The green parsley reminds us that the Passover occurred in springtime. The salt water and bitter herbs are reminiscent of the bitter tears of bondage. The Haroset (Apple/Cinnamon mixture) represent the mortar that the Israelites used to make bricks. The Lamb, of course, represents The Lamb that was slain to apply the blood to the doorposts.



On the night before His atoning death, that would set believers free from the bondage of sin, our Lord took his disciples into the upper room of a house in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Passover. He wanted them to understand that He was the Lamb of God, come to take away the sins of the world. It was on that night that the Seder supper revealed its true meaning, salvation for those who would place their trust in the Son of God.

Order of The Seder

1. **First Cup of Wine – “Cup of Sanctification”**

The "Kiddush" is prayed before the meal. (**Luke 22:17**)

2. **The Washing of Hands**

Ceremonial cleansing before the meal began.

It was here that the Lord rose from the table to wash the feet of His disciples (**John 13:4-5**).

3. **The Parsley Dipped in Saltwater**

To remind the listeners of the springtime of deliverance from the bitter tears of slavery.

4. **The Middle Matzah Broken**

The middle Matzah, called the Afikomen, is broken, and then taken away to be hidden.

Later, the one who finds it and brings it back will receive a reward.

5. **The Four Questions**

The youngest child at the table will lean against the leader and ask,

"Why is this night different from all other nights?

On all other nights, we eat either leavened or unleavened bread,
but on this night, only unleavened bread?

On all other nights, we can eat all kinds of herbs, but on this night, only bitter herbs?

On all other nights, we do not dip even once; but on this night, we dip twice?

On all other nights, we eat either sitting or reclining, but on this night, we eat reclining?"

It was the disciple John who leaned against the leader (Jesus) the night of the Lord's Supper (**John 13:23**).

It would have been John's task to ask the prepared questions, for he was the youngest disciple.

6. **The Second Cup - “Cup of Deliverance (Telling)”**

The story of the Jews is told, from the calling of Abraham, through the Exodus, and the Law of Moses. After the telling, the first half of the Egyptian Hallel (Praise) is sung, as found in *Psalms 113-114*. After the singing, the cup is poured in ten increments as the ten plagues upon the Egyptians are recited (plague of blood, frogs, gnats, flies, livestock, boils, hail, locust, darkness, and death of the firstborn).

7. **The Dipping of the Matzah**

Everyone washes their hands a second time, and then breaks the upper and middle matzah in pieces to dip into the horseradish and Haroset, to remind them of the sweet redemption from bitter bondage.

It was at this point that Jesus dips the matzah and hands it to Judas.
Judas gets up from the table to betray Jesus.

8. **The Dinner**

At this point the whole roasted lamb would be served. No bones were to be broken (symbolizing Christ's death) and all of the lamb was to be consumed. Jesus did not give of Himself to save us. He gave all of Himself upon the cross, as a ransom for our sins. The meal was to be eaten in haste as the Jews reclined because they were prepared to leave for the Promised Land the next morning.

Today a Jewish Passover meal is a feast much like our thanksgiving dinner.

9. **The Afikomen**

After dinner, the children are sent to look for the hidden middle Matzah that was broken and hidden. When it is discovered and brought back to the table, the child who found it would get a special reward. This is a picture of the body of Christ who was broken, hidden in a tomb, and then "brought back" at His resurrection. Those who seek Him, and find Him, are rewarded with the gift of salvation!

Most Jews today have no idea where the tradition of the Afikomen came from. It is the only Greek word in the Seder meal. The word comes from *ikneomai*, which means, "I came". The Jews are still looking for the promised Messiah, but the simple truth of His coming is found in the tradition of the Afikomen. Jesus, the Messiah, has already come!

10. **The Third Cup - "Cup of Redemption"**

It is at this time, when the Lord Jesus broke the Afikomen and said, "This is My Body", that He took the third cup and said, "This is My Blood" (**Luke 22:19-20**).

This was a twist from the traditional Seder, that was reminiscent of a Jewish wedding ceremony, where the bride price would be paid to the father, and a cup of wine was offered to the bride to accept the groom's proposal. The body of Christ was the "bride price" given to appease the Father. The bride accepted the cup, and the groom would then go off to prepare a place for her to live. Only then, would He come back for her.

The redemption cup tells the story of our redemption and is now observed by Christians all over the world, as "The Lord's Supper", or communion. When we take the bread and the wine, we are actually pledging to marry Christ and give Him rule over us.

Traditionally the Jews would go outside and look for Elijah, when they drank this cup. For **Malachi 4:5** says that Elijah will come to precede the Messiah. What the Jews failed to see was that John the Baptist was a type of Elijah, who preceded the Christ. And Elijah himself will come in the last days to preach during the Tribulation period, before Christ comes to reign on the earth (most Christians believe that Elijah will be one of the two witnesses in **Revelation 11**).

11. **The Fourth Cup - This cup is called the "Cup of Acceptance"**

Jesus told His disciples that He would not drink this cup until He returns in His Kingdom (**Matthew 26:29**). He knew that his acceptance by the Jewish nation had not yet come. When He returns, however, the Jews will embrace him as their Messiah, and all who believe will share the cup of acceptance!

12. **Singing of the Hymn**

At the end of the Seder, the rest of the Egyptian Hallel (**Psalms 115-118**) is sung.

The night our Lord went to the cross, He sang those words (**Matt. 26:30**). How fitting it was for Jesus to sing;

The Stone which the builders rejected has become the Chief Cornerstone.

This was the Lord's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. (Ps118:22-24 NKJV)

The verses we have heard all our lives take on new meaning in the shadow of the cross.

Jesus was rejoicing as He prepared to die for our sins! He embraced the cross in order to save us.

Psalm 118:26 says it best for us: **"BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD"**.

And all of God's people said...AMEN!!!