

PASSOVER SEDER REENACTMENT

MATTHEW 26:17-30

Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'" So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.

When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?" He answered and said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?" He said to him, "You have said it."

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus told His disciples to "take, eat... and drink..."

And we eat the bread, and drink the cup each time we celebrate the Christian ordinance of communion.

But what we call "*communion*" was only a small segment of a larger feast. Every Passover for the last 3500 years Jewish families have participated in what they call the "*Seder*" or "*Order*". Around the table the family performs rituals, and practices traditions that provide *profound meaning* and *spiritual symbolism*.

And the Passover Seder Jewish families celebrate today hasn't changed a whole lot from what the last supper Jesus celebrated with His disciples.

Not just the bread and cup, but every move Jesus made that night spoke of His work for you and me. We learn much from participating in a Passover Seder.

Paul even compares Passover to the Christian life.

In 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 he writes, "Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." If we're going to live out the Passover, we need to know what it involves...

Preparations for the Passover began four days earlier - on the Jewish calendar, Nissan 10th. On that day the **PASSOVER LAMB WAS SELECTED.**

The family would pick from their flock an unblemished lamb - *their very best*. This lamb would be sacrificed to God – then they'd eat it on the Passover.

On the Sunday prior to the Passover each family chose a lamb for sacrifice. It was eaten at the meal.

The nation Israel also chose a lamb for Passover.

And it was on "*selection Sunday*" that Jesus made His glorious march into the city of Jerusalem – *His Triumphant entry*. Zechariah predicted Messiah would come riding into the city on the back of a donkey...

Daniel predicted the very day of Messiah's presentation to the nation... Jesus entered the city on the exact day Daniel predicted. The crowd cheered. *They hailed Him their Messiah* - but they didn't realize they were also selecting a Passover Lamb.

Not only did the family select the lamb, but other preparations were made... Matthew 26:17-19 tell us, "Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples." So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover." But how?

Well, the top priority in the family's preparation was to **PURGED THE HOUSE OF LEAVEN.**

The **leaven** or “*Chametz*’ was any grain or flour interjected with a leavening agent for longer than 18 minutes (the time it takes for fermentation to occur).

According to Jewish Law in making the matzah, or unleavened bread, the dough must bake in less than 18 minutes, or it’s considered non-kosher.

Removing leaven is an important Passover symbol.

Throughout the Bible leaven is a type of sin... The Jews refer to leaven as “*a souring agent*.” And sin sours our lives. It spoils the life that God intended...

Leaven also corrupts by puffing up. And at the heart of the word “*sin*” is the letter “*l*”. Sin likewise corrupts through pride – through puffing ourselves up.

Before Passover can be celebrated it’s necessary to rid the house of all leaven. That night the family canvasses every inch of the home looking for leaven.

This is a fun time for the kids.

The father starts the search with prayer, “*Blessed are Thou, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with Thy commandments and commanded us to remove all leaven from our house.*”

The disposal of the leaven was also a procedure full of purpose... The leaven is raked into a paper bag with a feather and wooden spoon; then the bag is burned

The preparation for Passover, is what happens in our lives as a result of our Passover - *the work of Jesus!*

The **feather** represents the Holy Spirit... (*who came upon Jesus in the image of a dove*)...

The **wooden spoon** represents our repentance... *(it's not gold - a spoon is not flashy - rather it's wooden, and humble, and simple, and unpretentious).*

The **bag** speaks of the body of Jesus... *(all the leaven was gathered in one location and disposed of at one time).* Jesus paid for all our sin, once and for all.

Lastly, the **fire** speaks of Jesus' death upon the cross... *(the fire of God's judgment consumed all our sin at the crucifixion of Jesus).*

Through the work of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit sin is swept from our lives when our hearts become humble and repented and trust in Jesus.

After the leaven is burned up the Father utters the following words, "Any leaven that is in my possession, which I have not seen, have not removed and do not know about should be annulled and become ownerless, like the dust of the earth."

The day of Passover occurred on the Jewish calendar - Nisan 14th. One historian writes of this wonderful feast, "Three thousand, five hundred years of slavery, tyranny, dispersion, and the Holocaust have never stopped the miracle of Passover."

For Passover everything is decorated **white** - **linen**, and **candles**, and **dishes** adorn the table top.

Revelation 19:7-8 tells us the color "*white*" represents the righteousness of the saints... "For the marriage supper of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

The **robe** or *kittel* was worn by the father. He acted in the role of the priest - who also wore a white robe.

One year I washed the old robe with an ink pen, and the rabbis deemed it non-kosher. This is a new robe.

The father wore another priestly item - a special **mitre** or crown. I don't have a crown, but if I spill grape juice on this white robe my wife promises to crown me.

I do have a **yarmulke**, which everyone else at the table wears. The yarmulke is worn by Jews to remind them that mankind is not alone in the universe. God created us, dwells above us, and watches over us. We live our lives under God's authority and protection.

And finally, each person at the Passover table has a **pillow**. In ancient times people ate in a reclining position, and propped themselves up on a pillow.

The Passover begins with **THE LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES**. The **mother** of the family is given the honor (**volunteer**) of lighting the Passover candles.

The story of redemption begins with a woman. Genesis 3:15 predicted Messiah would come through the '**seed of the woman**.' In fulfillment of that promise Jesus was born of a virgin named Mary. The light of God came into the world through a woman.

She **lights a candle** and recites a blessing: "**Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe, Who has sanctified us by Thy commandments and commanded us to kindle the light of the holy day.**"

The Father then **lifts high the Seder plate** and issues **THE CALL TO WORSHIP...**

“This is the bread of poverty which our fathers ate in Egypt. Whoever is hungry, come and eat! Whoever is distressed, come and celebrate Passover with us! This year we are here - next year in the land of Israel! This year we celebrate as slaves - next year as free.’

Next, comes **THE CUP OF SANCTIFICATION**.

This is **the first of four cups** served during the Seder. Dad holds up the cup and leads in the *Kadaysh (or prayer of dedication)*, which is recited by all:

“Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe who creates the fruit of the vine. Blessed are Thou, O Lord our God, who chose us from among all peoples to make us a nation of priests before you.

In love hast Thou given us, O Lord our God, Sabbaths for rest and holidays and festivals for rejoicing. We thank you for the Feast of Unleavened Bread in remembrance of your gift of freedom and deliverance from Egypt. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has kept us alive, who has sustained us and brought us to this season.”

At this point, everyone **WASHES THEIR HANDS** - an important preparation... Water is poured from the wrists to the fingertips - and as it rolls slowly and deliberately down the hands you are to use the time to examine your life - spiritually turn loose of any impurity or impediment that's hindering your walk with God.

In John 13, it was at this point in the Seder, that Jesus not only offered to wash the disciples' hands, but also washed their feet – a symbolic act of servanthood.

Two types of cleansing takes place in the Passover... The washing of **blood** affects the inner man, or our spiritual nature. And the washing of **water** symbolizes the cleansing of our thoughts and conduct.

Next the father hides the **AFIKOMEN** or *dessert - the hidden matzah*... Next to the father's place at the table is a **linen envelope with three compartments**.

Each sleeve contains a sheet of matzah bread.

He takes the center sheet, breaks it - wraps it in a napkin - then hides it. This is a vital part of the feast. Its spiritual significance is revealed later in the Seder.

The father then presents **THE MATZAH OF HOPE**.

While the nation of Israel was in Egypt, and throughout most of their long history, the Hebrews have been an enslaved and persecuted people. Even today, in different places on Earth, Jews still aren't free to express their identity, or advance their beliefs.

At every Passover Seder a special sheet of Matzah is set aside in memory of the enslaved Jews around the world. They were not to forget their brothers.

Let's also set aside a sheet of matzah to remind us of Jews who are enslaved today - *not only physically, but enslaved to sin* - Jews who have been trapped and blinded to the truth of their Messiah Jesus of Nazareth.

Next, the **youngest child** in at the Seder meal asks the father **FOUR QUESTIONS... (volunteer)**

Among the disciples, the youngest man, the Apostle John probably asked Jesus these questions...

- 1) Why is this night distinguished from all other nights? On this night we eat only unleavened bread.
- 2) On all other nights we eat any kind of herbs, but on this night only bitter herbs. Why?
- 3) On all other nights we do not dip, but tonight we dip twice. Why?
- 4) On this night we all recline in our chairs at the table. Why?

The Jews understand the importance of communicating to their children the foundations of their faith. So much of the Passover involves the children.

And we should *take a cue from the Jews* – let's instill in our kids the foundations of our faith. This Easter season try to think of a few new and creative ways to bring your kids into the reality of Jesus' resurrection.

The father of the family plays off the questions that were asked, to retell **THE STORY OF THE EXODUS**.

He recounts how God heard the prayers of His people and raised up a Deliverer to set His people free.

After forty years on the backside of the wilderness, God sent Moses to demand, "Let my people go!"

At times pharaoh hardened his heart.

At times God hardened the pharaoh's heart.

The father recounts the plagues - and the final plague God used to break the pharaoh's stubbornness and prove God's superiority over the idols of Egypt.

The final plague was the angel who brought death to the firstborn of every home... The only families spared were those who trusted in God's promise, and spread the blood of a lamb on their doorpost and threshold.

Over the believing homes the death plague "*passed over*" - thus the name "*Passover*." It was God's way of providing a means of salvation for His people.

The father of the family also recounts how God parted the Red Sea, fed His people in the wilderness, and brought them into the land He had promised.

After re-telling the story of the Exodus the father takes the second cup of the Passover, **THE CUP OF WRATH**, and **pours ten drops** of wine into his plate.

The ten drops represent the ten plagues.

With each drop the family names the plagues in unison... **"1) water to blood, 2) frogs, 3) lice, 4) flies, 5) diseased livestock, 6) boils, 7) hail, 8) locust, 9) darkness, 10) death of the firstborn."**

Now comes the **SYMBOLS OF THE PASSOVER...**

These are the items on the Seder plate - eaten by the family. *They're symbols, but more than symbolic.*

The Jewish Midrash, or teaching of the rabbis, taught *Jews* to put themselves in the *shoes* of their forefathers. Through the Seder they relive emotionally the strains of bondage and the joys of freedom.

You weren't supposed to celebrate Passover as much *with your head* as *with your heart!* You were to approach it as if you'd been there with Moses. There were six symbols of the Exodus on the Passover plate.

First, there is the **Matzah**, or "*bread of affliction*". The unleavened bread spoke of both *haste and holiness*.

"*Without sin*" is the familiar symbolism of the unleavened bread, but it also spoke of *faith*.

The night before they left Egypt, the Hebrews left the leaven out of their bread because they believed God's deliverance would occur before the bread could rise.

Second, is the **Zeroah**, or the shank bone of a lamb.

Exodus 12:46 specified that the bones of the lamb were not to be broken. Likewise, Psalm 34:20 predicted not one of Messiah's bones would be broken.

This was fulfilled on the cross. Roman policy was to break the victim's legs and hasten his death. When the soldier saw Jesus was already dead he withheld the breaking blow, thus satisfying the OT prophecy.

The third item on the Seder plate is the **Karpas**, or *parsley*. It was dipped twice in the salt water. At the crossing of the Red Sea there were two dippings...

The Jews dipped into the waters and came up on the other side... But when the Egyptians took a dip they drowned... Moses lifted his rod and the waters returned devouring the Egyptian army. Therefore after the second dip the parsley is devoured or eaten.

Fourth is the **Maror**, or *horseradish*. This represents the bitter herbs Moses told Jews to eat at Passover.

Kosher horseradish is so hot it brings tears to your eyes. And the tears remind us of the bitterness of bondage. The pain the Hebrews experienced in Egypt.

Sometimes we as Christians forget the bitterness and bondage of our sin. We toy with sin, and pretend it's no big deal. We forget the tears it causes.

We need a reminder of the pain and bitter-taste of sin, and never lose appreciation for God's grace.

Fifth is the **Haroset**, or *charoses* – it's a combination of cinnamon, and nuts, and honey, and apples. It's sweet to the taste. (I call it "*Hebrew nut'n honey*").

The cinnamon was added to make the mixture look like mud - a reminder of the bricks made in Egypt.

The apples are the sweetness of their redemption... *It reminds us of the joy that's ours in Jesus!*

The sixth item is the **Baytzah**, or *roasted egg*. In the NT Temple an egg was offered as a peace offering.

But when the Roman legion destroyed the Temple in 70 AD the roasted egg became a reminder of the end of the Temple worship. It was dipped in salt to emphasize the bitterness of that devastating event.

The egg was also was an ancient symbol for new birth - and through the exodus Israel was born again.

Literally, the Hebrews became a new nation.

And Christians too have received a spiritual birth through the work of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:9 refers to us as a "**holy nation, (God's) own special people.**"

So much of the instruction we Christians receive today comes through typical preaching and teaching – and it's limited because it involves only our minds.

The Passover celebration is so powerful because it involves **all five senses**. God wants us not only to *hear* of our salvation, but to *taste it, touch it, smell it, see it!* By using all the senses we discover and appreciate the wonders of God's grace in new ways.

After the symbols of Passover the father **sings a song** called **DAYAYNOO**, which means "*It is enough.*"

We won't try to sing it, but we'll read it responsively. *I'll read the stanzas - you read the two word chorus...*

FATHER: Yes, it would have been enough, it would have been more than enough, had He simply rescued us from slavery. Yes, it would have been enough but He did far more than this. He brought us through the sea to stand upon dry land.

FAMILY: Da-da-yay-noo, Da-da-yay-noo

FATHER: Yes, it would have been enough, it would have been more than enough, but then He met our every need in desert life. For forty years He did provide. He sent us food, He gave us water, made our clothes to last throughout the length of years.

FAMILY: Dadayaynoo, Dadayaynoo

FATHER: Yes, it would have been enough, but more than this did He provide. He gave us Sabbath for our rest and gave the Law. He gave the Law that we might know the fullness of His will and promise. All these things He did provide for Israel.

FAMILY: Dadayaynoo, Dadayaynoo

Think of all God has done for us! If all He'd done was send His Son to die on the cross, it would've been enough to cause us to praise Him for all eternity.

But in addition, He's lavished on us all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. What amazing grace!

The singing is followed by **THE PASSOVER MEAL**

On the day of Passover the family eats the lamb it chose earlier in the week... The meal was a festive time, like our Thanksgiving. In the place of the *festive meal* we'll sing **a festive song**, and serve communion.

After dinner it is time for **dessert** - **THE AFIKOMEN**.

Remember the matzah that was hidden. Its now time for it to be retrieved, and again the kids get involved. A child searches and finds the hidden matzah (**child**).

When he or she retrieves the afikomen, and presents it to the father, he rewards them with a piece of **candy**.

And it was at this point in the Feast that **Jesus revolutionized the Passover Seder**. He took a 1500 year-old tradition, and gave it totally new meaning...

Jesus took the bread, *the Afikomen* - it represented Israel's faith in God's deliverance. He blessed it, broke it, then as He gave it to His disciples, Jesus made a remarkable statement, **"take, eat; this is My body"**.

Remember the Afikomen was the middle loaf of the three - wrapped in a single envelope, or napkin.

Think of **the doctrine of the trinity**. God is one God, yet He exists in three distinct persons, *Father, Son, Holy Spirit*. The Afikomen is the middle sheet in the napkin and Jesus is the middle person of the Godhead.

That middle sheet is **taken out** - *the Incarnation* - Christ came to earth. It's **broken** - *the Crucifixion*.

Then it's **wrapped** in linen, or grave clothes, and hidden - *the burial of Jesus*. Later the bread is **discovered** by the father's children - *the Resurrection*.

Then it's **given** to the people - *the Gospel*. To be eaten as **dessert** ... *Jesus is sweeter than candy!*

Jesus is **"the bread of life."** He's our strength - our sustenance. He alone satisfies our spiritual hunger...

But He's also *sweeter than candy!*

It just can't get any better than life with Jesus! He is sweet enough to be our portion forever.

And look closely at the matzah you hold in your hand. Here's a snapshot of Jesus. *Have you ever wondered how Jesus looked?* Here's His portrait...

He's **unleavened** or sinless... The **bumpiness** reminds us how His face was beaten and bruised...

The **stripes** teach us how His back was lashed...

And the **holes** - or pierced marks – remind us of the wounds in His brow, hands, feet, and side. Isaiah 53 tells us, **"He was wounded for our transgressions..."**

Notice in verse 26 we're told Jesus took the bread and blessed it... *Ever wondered what Jesus said?*

Throughout the long centuries of Hebrew history this blessing has remained unaltered. The father states: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who bringest forth bread from the earth."

It's interesting that Jesus was born in the town called "Bethlehem" - which means "*house of Bread.*"

Jesus called Himself "*the bread of life.*"

When He rose from the dead, God brought *bread from the earth!*... Paul refers to Jesus as "*the first fruits of the resurrection.*" The hidden matzah spoke of our Savior. *Let's eat the bread in remembrance of Jesus...*

Next came the third cup of the evening, **THE CUP OF REDEMPTION**. Everyone took this cup - then **Jesus revolutionized Jewish tradition even further.**

For centuries this cup of wine had represented the blood of the Passover lamb. But in verse 28 Jesus holds up the cup, and tells His disciples, "**Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.**"

This third cup now speaks of the ultimate sacrifice that the Passover had always foreshadowed.

Recall on the last night in Egypt the salvation of the Hebrews had nothing to do with the conduct, or behavior, or virtue of the persons living in the house.

Their deliverance was based solely on whether or not the promise had been trusted - and the blood had been applied to the doorposts and header of the home.

And this speaks to us today! Eternal life and our standing with God depend not on our own merit or good works. It's totally dependent on our faith in the blood of Jesus - whether we believed God's promise, and applied Jesus' blood to the doorposts of our heart.

In verse 27 Jesus "gave thanks." Here's the liturgy that was used: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine."

In John 15 Jesus is depicted as the true vine, and we're the branches. A vine is a symbol of fruitfulness and joy - fitting analogies of our experience with Christ.

Again, let's drink the cup in remembrance of Jesus...

Jesus says to His disciples in verse 29, "I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

Here's a promise we can't appreciate without some insight into Jewish culture. Today in America, a couple moves from engagement straight into marriage. But in Jesus' day there was an intermittent step, "betrothal."

During the betrothal period the couple was considered legally married. If they split, it required a bill of divorcement. They were married in terms of commitment. But they were not allowed to live together, or enjoy the sexual pleasures of marriage.

When a couple entered the betrothal, papers were signed, and a dowry paid. The groom then toasted His bride before leaving to work on their future home.

When it was completed, He returned for His bride.

And this is Jesus' strategy. With the third cup of redemption, Jesus toasted His bride. He was leaving to prepare her a place for her in heaven. He even promised not

to celebrate, and drink of the vine, until our quarters are ready, and we're reunited with Him.

The last cup of the Passover Seder was the **CUP OF ELIJAH**. At the table on the night of Passover there's always an extra place setting, complete with it's chair.

Malachi 4 teaches that Elijah will come before the appearance of the Messiah. Thus, each family needs to expect him, and prepare a place at the table just in case he visits them. *The youngest child is sent to the door to see if Elijah is in sight!* **(Two volunteers should check the doors to see if they spot Elijah.)**

Jesus and His disciples didn't drink this cup at their Seder, since in Jesus' mind Elijah had already come.

The Bible says, John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah. He paved the way for the Messiah.

It's appropriate today, that we include this fourth cup in our celebration, since we expect Elijah to return.

Revelation 11 implies that before Jesus' Second Coming - after the church has been raptured - Elijah will be one of the two witnesses that'll appear and perform mighty signs as a testimony to God.

The Seder closes with a **BENEDICTION**.

It's the desire of every Jew from around the world to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem! *And that's also become the desire of the Israeli tourist industry!* **"Next Year in Jerusalem"** is the familiar Hebrew saying!

The father closes the Seder by saying, **Next year in Jerusalem!** The family joins in, **Next year in Jerusalem!**

We as Christians desire to eat Passover next year in the New Jerusalem - in Heaven itself! We're waiting on Jesus to come, and snatch us up to Him forever!

Notice we're told in verse 30, **"And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."**

How much fun would it have been to hear Jesus sing? Was He a tenor, or a baritone, or maybe a bass?

The question that follows verse 30 is always **"what hymns did they sing?"** The Passover psalms were the **HALLEL PSALMS**, which include Psalms 113-118.

Many of these psalms were prophetic of Jesus. They spoke of the Messiah's suffering and rejection. What an eery, somber experience - to hear Jesus, on the threshold of the cross, sing about the next day's pain.

We'll read two of these psalms.

I'll do the "father" - you do the "all"... **FATHER:** Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the Lord. Praise the name of the Lord... **ALL:** Blessed be the name of the Lord From this time forth and forever.

FATHER: From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the Lord is to be praised. **ALL:** The Lord is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens.

FATHER: Who is like the Lord our God. Who is enthroned on high. **ALL:** Who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth?

FATHER: He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap.

ALL: To make them sit with princes of His people.

FATHER: He makes the barren woman abide in the house as a joyful mother of children. **ALL:** Praise the Lord! And again everyone: **ALL:** The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes."

It's sad that the Lord who is so prominent in the Passover is still rejected by most Jews today.

But the stone who was rejected by the Jews has become the chief cornerstone of the Church - *and hopefully the cornerstone of your life*. He is worthy!

The father closes the Seder with **A FINAL PRAYER:**

"Our Seder is now complete. May our service be acceptable to You, O Lord our God, and may we be granted the blessing of celebrating Passover for many years to come. Pure and Holy One, Dwelling on high, raise up Your people with love and lead us to Zion in joyful song. Amen."... that concluded the Seder meal.