

The Passover Seder

The Jewish Passover meal, or *Seder*, was instituted by God while the Israelites were in Egypt during the last plague. In preparation for the last plague, God directed Moses to establish the Passover feast. The feast was to occur while an angel sent by God killed the first born in every family and the first born of all the animals. The term "passover" refers to the fact that every family that participated in the Passover Feast would be "passed over" and no one would die in their home or among their cattle. As part of the feast, each Jewish family was to also put the blood of a lamb on the lintel and the doorposts of their home.

Unleavened Bread. The Passover Feast started with the removal of leaven, bread baked with yeast, from the home. Then they were to eat only unleavened bread, or *Matzah*, for the next seven days of the feast. Leaven was a symbol of sin so unleavened bread, bread without yeast, was symbolic of a sinless life.

Perfect Lamb. The Passover lamb was to be an animal without blemish or deformity. The lamb was symbolic of Jesus Christ who died for all of us so that we could have our sins taken away.

Bitter Herbs. The bitter herbs, or *Maror*, typically included horseradish, salt and green onions. The bitter herbs were a reminder of the bitterness of slavery and suffering in Egypt. It is also a reminder of our sin. It is symbolic of the reason that Jesus had to die.

Four Cups of Wine. During the meal four cups of wine were consumed. Each cup had a symbolic meaning for Israel and each one also symbolizes what Jesus Christ has done to forgive our sins.

Cup of Sanctification - It symbolized Israel's deliverance from being under the burdens of the Egyptians. **Jesus purifies us from sin.**

Cup of Deliverance - It symbolized Israel's deliverance from their bondage. **Jesus delivers us from the control of sin.**

Cup of Redemption - It symbolized God's promise to redeem Israel with an outstretched arm. **Jesus outstretched his arms on the cross.**

Cup of Restoration - It symbolized the fact that God took the Israelites to be His people. **Jesus will fully restore us when he comes again.**

*The most significant part of the Seder meal occurs when the *Yachatz* is picked-up after the *Karpas* (parsley dipped in salt water) is eaten. The *Yachatz* is a single pouch containing three *Matzah*. The single pouch symbolizes unity. The middle *Matzah* is then removed, broken in half, and wrapped in a cloth. This is called the *Afikomen*. Jewish tradition says that the three *Matzahs* represent the Jewish people, the priests and the Levites. Jewish tradition does not know why the middle *Matzah* is broken. However, for Christians, the *Yachatz* represents our one and only God and the three *Matzah* represent the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The breaking of the middle *Matzah* symbolizes the punishment and death of Jesus Christ. It is important to

note that *Matzah* is stripped and has holes. One half of this broken *Matzah* is then wrapped and put away until just before the third cup. This symbolizes Jesus' burial and resurrection on the third day. The Passover Seder is a great reminder of what Jesus Christ did for all of us. We can be delivered from the bondage of sin when we believe in Jesus Christ and ask Him to forgive our sins.

Questions for further discussion after Seder:

1. What do Passover and Easter have in common? (Think spring festivals, eggs, and redemption, to start.) How do they differ?
2. What things did you learn from the Seder that you didn't know before?
3. Read Exodus 12. How did Jesus become our Passover lamb?
4. How did viewing the Seder impact the way you will view and participate in the Lord's Supper in the future?
5. Was there anything that was confusing to you? What further questions do you have?