

A Guide to THE PASSOVER MEAL

MARK 14:12-16.

We have met together to re-enact and share in the experience of the Last Supper in the Upper Room. In a moment, we will move into the room prepared for us.

When Jesus and the disciples met together in the upper room of a friend's house, they were not doing something unusual. For in fact, families in every house in Jerusalem met together to celebrate the Passover on the 14th Nisan.

The Passover, or Paschal Meal was the first night of 7 days and nights in which all Jews celebrated the feast of Unleavened Bread. So it was a night among nights. There was and still is for the devout Jew, a strict procedure in observing this weeklong event and in particular this Passover night.

The tradition surrounding this meal has been passed on from generation to generation for more than 3,000 years with relatively little modification. However, the practice of the Passover has also had to adapt through history with the

changing circumstances of the people of Israel. The initial ceremony is outlined for us in Exodus 12. The Passover practiced by Jews today appears to be a great deal more elaborate and complex.

Every time I look at the Passover or the Last Supper, I discover a little more about it. Even so, I believe tonight's re-enactment to be reasonably close to Jesus' final meal before the cross. The wording is more modern and in some ways more Christian. Yet, the aim is to recreate the night before Christ's crucifixion, not simply to develop a "Christian Passover".

The importance of our sharing together is to experience the events of that night; being alert to Jesus as He knowingly faces the cross (John 13:1), the disciples with Him as they took part in this annual remembrance of the Passover Night, and of their shock as Jesus first washed their feet and then spoke of His betrayal and death.

Let us begin the Passover Meal.

- **ENTER THE PREPARED ROOM**
- **LIGHTING THE CANDLES**
- **BLESSING**
- **FIRST CUP PRESENTED**
- **BLESSING AND RESPONSE**
- **DRINK THE FIRST CUP**
- **HANDS WERE WASHED - FOOT-WASHING (?)**
- **QUESTION OF THE PASSOVER**
- **HISTORICAL RESPONSE**
- **PASSOVER MEAL & SECOND CUP PRESENTED**
- **EXPLANATION & RESPONSES**
- **HALLEL PSALMS**
- **LAMB MEAL PRESENTED**
- **EXPLANATION**
- **EAT THE MEAL - Jesus speaks of His betrayal; the sop; Judas leaves.**
- **TABLE CLEARED & HANDS WASHED**
- **THIRD CUP PRESENTED (?)**
- **THE LORD'S SUPPER (departure from norm)**
- **HYMN: Psalm 136**
- **LEAVE (early, ceremony unfinished)**
- **WALK TO GETHSEMENE TO PRAY.**

THE PASSOVER MEAL

ENTER THE PREPARED ROOM

1. LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES.

HOST: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has kept us alive by your Word. May our house be consecrated by the light of Your face, shining on us in blessing and in peace.

2. THE CUP OF SANCTIFICATION

[Fill the Cups]

HOST: The Passover has begun. During the Seder (Passover ceremony) we will drink from our cups four times. The first is the Cup of SANCTIFICATION, by which we commit this time to God and His glory.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Sovereign of all the Universe, who has chosen us from among all people and exalted us above all languages and did sanctify us with Your commandments, and with love You have given us, O Lord our God, solemn days of joy, festivals and seasons of gladness; this day of the feast of Unleavened cakes, the season of our freedom: a memorial of the departure from Egypt; for You have chosen us, and sanctified us above all people; and Your holy festivals You have caused us to inherit with joy and gladness. Blessed are You who sanctified Israel and the seasons.

ALL: Blessed are You, O Lord our God, who created the fruit of the vine.

[All drink]

3. THE WASHING OF HANDS.

During the meal and possibly about this time, Jesus, "got up from the meal, took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him." John 13:4-5.

4. THE PASSOVER STORY.

YOUNGEST CHILD: Why is this night different to all other nights?

HOST RESPONDS: We celebrate tonight in this special way so that we can remember how God brought His people out of Egypt. Here is the story of the Passover...

[Tell the Passover Story]

5. THE PASSOVER MEAL AND THE CUP OF PRAISE.

[The meal is brought in and cups refilled.]

HOST: The **UNLEAVENED BREAD** is the symbol of God helping His people escape from Egypt. Yeast makes bread rise, but it takes time. Because the Hebrews had to make hasty preparations to leave Egypt, they did not have time to wait.

ALL: Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brought forth bread from the earth.

[Each person breaks off 2 pieces of bread]

HOST: The **GREENS** symbolize the hyssop used by the Hebrews to smear the lamb's blood on their doorposts.

The greens represent life and the salt water, the tears of life. They remind us that the life of the Israelites was dipped in tears in Egypt.

[All dip greens in salt water and eat]

The **BITTER HERBS** symbolize the bitterness of life in Egypt, where the Egyptians put the Israelites in slavery. They also remind us of the deep bitterness of a life gripped by sin and death.

[All eat some bitter herbs with bread]

The **HAROSIS** reminds us of the mortar used by the Israelites in their brickwork in Egypt. It is sweet because even the bitterest labour is sweetened by the promise of redemption.

[All eat some Harosis between bread]

The **EGG** is the symbol of life. The eldest sons of the Israelites were glad to be alive. We dip the egg in salt water to remind us that life was won for us through the tears of death. [All dip pieces of egg in salt water and eat]

ALL: These foods all remind us of the bitterness of slavery from which God rescued His people.

HOST: The Second Cup is the **CUP OF PRAISE**. In the light of God's mercy toward His people, we are bound to give thanks, to praise and to bless Him who brought us out from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to gladness, from mourning to Festival-day. So let us say before Him - Hallelujah!

ALL: Hallelujah! [ALL DRINK]

[Read some Hallel Psalms ie. Ps 113-118]

[The lamb is brought in.]

HOST: The **ROAST LAMB** reminds us of the lambs whose blood saved the first-born of the Israelite families from death. The sweet things that follow remind us of the land flowing with milk and honey, the Promised Land where the Israelites were led by God.

[Say GRACE]

HOST: So let us eat and be joyful.

[Eat LAMB MEAL then SWEETS.]

[When finished, wash hands.]

6. THE CUP OF REDEMPTION.

[Fill the cups]

(Jesus departed from the norm and presented the disciples with a new memorial meal - The Lord's Supper.)

7. THE GREAT HALLEL

[Read Psalm 136]

8. DEPART FROM THE UPPER ROOM FOR THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMENE ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

[Read & meditate on John 14, 15, 16 or 17]