

## The Last Supper at Passover

*The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."*

This familiar verse is often read when we observe communion. We gather together tonight because it is **Good Friday**, the day we remember our Lord's **crucifixion**. He would have **breathed his last at 3:00 this afternoon** and by **this time** Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus would have laid him in the **borrowed tomb** and returned to their homes because by **nightfall the Sabbath** had begun.

But the **night before** this was the **Passover**, which Jesus celebrated with his disciples in a spacious, second-story room in the wealthy section of Jerusalem.

Passover is one of the most sacred events in the Jewish calendar. It was **one of three times** a year when Jewish families would travel to **Jerusalem** to sacrifice at the temple and commemorate the occasion as a nation, as God's covenant people.

For **400 years** the Israelites lived as foreigners in the land of **Egypt** and in the latter part of that period, the Egyptian Pharaoh made them his **slaves**. And if you watched Charlton Heston in the Ten Commandments this week, you know that God sent **Moses** to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into the **Promised Land**. But Pharaoh refused and so God brought **ten plagues** on Egypt to show his power over the false gods worshiped by the Egyptians. It is the **tenth plague**, the most sobering of them all, that set the occasion for the **first Passover**.

Moses warned Pharaoh that if he refused to let the Israelites go as the Lord commanded, then God would send the angel of death to kill the **firstborn sons** in all of Egypt. But there was **one way to escape God's judgment**.

Read Exodus 12:1-14 (verses 12-13 the congregation reads aloud)

Read Exodus 13:8-10

Every year after this on the **appointed time**, Israel would select lambs on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of their first month and slaughter, cook and eat them on the appointed 14<sup>th</sup> day. In the year **AD 30** the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the first month occurred on a Sunday. On that day, according to the Scriptures, the Passover lambs were selected and brought into Jerusalem. On that same day, **Jesus, the Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world, rode into Jerusalem riding on a donkey.

Now on Thursday, at twilight, Jesus sits with his disciples to lead them in his final Passover observance.

Read Matthew 26:17-20 (stress my appointed time)

Judas sits at Jesus' left and John at his right. There are **four cups** involved in the Passover observance representing the four promises the Lord through Moses, as it is written in **Ex 6:6-8**.

**First Cup: Sanctification “bring you out”** (poured)

To sanctify means to set apart for a unique purpose. The Passover service is hereby sanctified, but much more so, our participation is a symbol that **God has set us apart to know Him** and to **make Him known** to the rest of the world.

Benediction of Thanksgiving over the first cup: **“Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, Who hast created the fruit of the Vine!”** [Drink first cup]

*Head of the Company washes his hands.* Jesus instead washes his disciples’ feet! He does the most menial task of a servant to teach his disciples servant leadership and sacrificial love. A lesson in sanctification indeed!

The Head of the Company would dip some of the *bitter herbs into the salt-water* or vinegar, Speak a blessing, **“Blessed art Thou, LORD our God, Who creates the fruit of the earth.”**

- Bitter herbs represent the bitterness of slavery (symbolic of the hyssop)
- Salt water represents tears of affliction
- Jesus came, not to rescue the Jewish people from Roman occupation, but to free all people from slavery to sin and the grief that sin causes.

Next, he would **break the middle of the three unleavened cakes**

Unleavened (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)

Striped (Isaiah 53:5)

Pierced (Zechariah 12:10—they will look upon the one they have pierced)

Larger half hidden until after supper (Afikoman or after-dish). [cover with cloth, set aside]

Hold up other half and say **“This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. All that are hungry, come and eat; all that are needy, come, keep the Passover.”**

[put bread of affliction on plate]

**Second Cup: Judgment “deliver you”** [is filled]

The youngest then asks the questions about the meaning and significance of this meal.

Cup is raised 3 times with prayers given and Psalm 113 – 114 sung.

Read **Psalm 113** (I read odd numbered verses, congregation even numbered verses)

After 3<sup>rd</sup> raising, [it is drunk.]

Whole company then washes their hands. → prepare to eat unleavened bread

- Top wafer represents daily bread, sustenance (manna)
- Bread of affliction

**“Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.”**

**“Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us by Thy commandment to eat unleavened bread.”**

[eat piece of top wafer and piece of middle half]

Bitter herbs (horseradish/celery) dipped in charoset (apple/nut mix = the clay for bricks in Egypt)  
**“Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us by Thy commandment to eat the bitter herbs.”**

[eat celery dipped in charoset]

Here Jesus shares the heaviness of his heart by announcing that one of them will betray him.  
Peter gets John’s attention and asks him to ask Jesus who it is.  
Jesus says it is the one whom he gives “the sop” ← when the full meal is served

The Sop: consisted of lamb, unleavened bread (bottom wafer) and bitter herbs wrapped together.  
Everyone in the company would have some, but Jesus gives it first to Judas.  
Straightaway Judas leaves the room in order to report Jesus’ whereabouts to the priests.  
With Judas gone on his satanic deed, the inevitability of Jesus’ soon crucifixion was secured.

Have we not also betrayed our Lord, one whom we have enjoyed such closeness and intimacy and have rejected and denied him before others, or by our misplaced priorities? Our sin.

[eat piece of bottom wafer, celery/horseradish and charoset] ← **we are all guilty**

We, like the disciples, needed the next cup.

“Resurrect” the Afikoman

**Third Cup: Redemption “redeem you”** [pour]

Jesus raises the Afikoman. [repeated thanking God for providing bread]

**“This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”**

**“This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”** [drink 3<sup>rd</sup> cup, although Jesus might not have]

**Fourth Cup: Kingdom “bring you to me and I will be your God”** [pour]

Jesus does not drink this cup because it had not yet reached its fulfillment.

They conclude by singing the rest of the Hallel, Psalms 115-118.

- Later that night, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prays to the Father “let this cup pass from me, but not my will, but yours be done.”
- When Peter tries to protect Jesus with his sword, Jesus rebukes him and asks “Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?”
- Then on early Friday afternoon, he accepted wine soaked in a sponge on a stalk of hyssop—he drank, as it were, the Cup of Completion, and cried “It is Finished!”

And so we come to the time when we remember our Lord Jesus the Messiah

Celebrating the Lord's Supper is testimony of the past, present and future:

Past: we do this in remembrance of Him, of Jesus our Passover Lamb who sacrificed himself to rescue us from God's just judgment.

Present: that Jesus died, not only for each of us individually, but for us as the people of God, and so the Apostle Paul instructs us:

**Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.**

The body of the Lord not only speaks to the bread representing Christ's broken body, but also that we partake together as the Body of Christ. So let there be no division or strife between us. As we have peace with God through Christ, so also must we have peace with one another who belong to Christ.

[distribute elements]

**MT 26:26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."** [partake of bread]

**MT 26:27-28 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."** [partake of cup]

Future: Saturday was the Jewish Sabbath, the day of rest, and Jesus, having finished his mission on the earth, was laid to rest as the Sabbath began. Then the third day of the Feast was a special celebration of thanksgiving for God's faithful provision for the early harvest of barley. The people would bring their firstfruits of the barley harvest to the temple as an offering, anticipating God's faithfulness for the later wheat harvest. It is on the Day of Firstfruits that Jesus rose from the dead. 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 states:

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

50 days later was the feast celebrating the wheat harvest, called the Day of Pentecost, the day that Jesus sent his Holy Spirit to fill and empower his followers to be his witness to the whole world of his resurrection—to bring in the harvest of souls from all nations!

After the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, the Jews would end the Passover by declaring "**Next year in Jerusalem**" in hopes of God's restoration of the kingdom of Israel. Instead, we look forward to the New Jerusalem, when our mission on this earth as the church of Jesus Christ will be completed and the kingdom of God fulfilled when our Lord, Jesus Christ returns and so we end our Passover observance with the final words of New Testament:

**Even so, come Lord Jesus!**