

“The Last Meal”

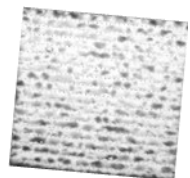
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The Significance of the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

Why learn about the Passover meal and the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Isn't it just an Old Testament thing for Jews? What's so important about it?

- According to the New Testament, the “**Last Supper**” was the “**Passover**” meal that Jesus longed to eat with His disciples. *He chose this specific setting* because it would help illustrate His ultimate purpose, and it would mark an ongoing tradition that would help us to remember His sacrifice. (Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-20)
- Understanding the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread helps to give us a fuller picture and a clear background to Jesus' words, actions, and the significance of **why**, as believers in Him, we partake of the bread and the cup in our Communion service.
- Knowing about the Passover and **how it points to Jesus** can equip you to bring a clear picture of the Gospel to your Jewish friends. Just as God gave Israel physical deliverance from death and freedom from bondage in Egypt, He eventually provided us with spiritual freedom from the slavery of sin and deliverance from spiritual death through His Son, Jesus (the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.)



Items In the Passover Meal:

Feather and Napkin: These items are used to give one last once over in the house, making sure all leaven is found and disposed of (Exodus 12:14-15). Any remaining leaven is taken out and burned. For believers, this is a reminder to purge the leaven out of our lives, entering into communion in purity. (See more on this subject in "*Monday devotion*")

Pillow: Because the Passover represents freedom from slavery, all recline during this meal. As believers, we can also rest in recognizing that Jesus' sacrifice gave us freedom from being slaves to sin. (John 8:31-36; Luke 4:16-21; Romans 6:14-23, 8:15)

Water and Towel: These items are used to wash hands before dinner in order to stay ritually pure. Jesus went above and beyond during this tradition and washed the feet of His disciples, setting an example of love and servanthood for generations to come. (See more on this subject in the "*Tuesday devotion*")

Passover Plate: This plate holds the various object lessons meant to remind us of God's blessings and deliverance year after year and to help teach the younger generation of our history and God's goodness.

Shank Bone: This bone represents the Passover lamb.

Roasted Egg: This also serves to represent the roasted lamb but with the added aspect that eggs represent the beginning of a new life.

Matzah: This is the unleavened bread eaten for seven days over Passover (Exodus 12:14-20, 13:3-10; Leviticus 23:6; Deuteronomy 16:3-4, 8). It is also characterized as being pierced throughout with holes and bruised by the fire, just like Jesus was pierced and bruised for our transgressions.

A Bag With Three Matzot: This bag has three compartments sewn into it. Each compartment holds a matzah. The majority, according to Jewish tradition, understand the three matzot to represent the priests, Levites, and the people (others suggest Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). However from a Believer standpoint, we understand the three matzot in one bag to represent a three-in-one unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In all homes around the world, the middle matzah (the Son) is taken out and broken in half. One half is returned to the unity bag while the other half is wrapped up and hidden away. This hidden piece of matzah then becomes known as the “Afikomen.”

Afikomen: As stated above, the middle matzah (the Son, Jesus) is taken broken from the unity bag. Half is then wrapped up and hidden away. At the end of the meal, the children go out, find the Afikomen, and bring it back. The Afikomen is then the last morsel of food eaten during the meal. Some Jewish traditions view the Afikomen simply as dessert while others have recognized it as another representation of the lamb sacrifice. As believers, we understand the Afikomen as the perfect symbolic picture that Jesus left for His disciples, representing His body which was broken for us (Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-24). (See more on the subject in the “*Wednesday devotion*”)

Horseradish: The Bible commands that bitter herbs are to be eaten during the Feast of Passover (Exodus 12:8). It has traditionally been understood that the bitter herbs remind us of the bitterness of slavery. Preferably the horseradish should be spicy enough to make you cry.

Parsley: This is another bitter herb used to remember the bitterness of slavery. It also represents the hyssop plant that was used to spread the blood above the doorposts of the house to spare the life of the firstborn. (Exodus 12:7)

Salt Water: Traditionally the parsley is dipped in this before it is eaten to remind us of the tears shed during slavery and how God parted the Red Sea to help deliver Israel from the Egyptian army.

Charoseth: This is generally a sweet mix of apples (fruits), cinnamon, wine/ grape juice, and usually nuts of some kind. This is one of the things that matzah or bitter herbs can be dipped in. Some also recall that its texture reminds us of the brick mortar that the Hebrews made during their time in Egypt.

Supper: Up until the destruction of the temple (70 AD), an actual lamb was sacrificed and eaten. Today however, meals vary greatly from house to house. Ashkenazi Jews often serve such things as matzah ball soup, chicken, beef brisket, and gefilte fish. Sephardic Jews often serve combinations of lamb, beef, and vegetables stuffed with rice, spiced with strong spices such as cinnamon, cardamom, tamarind, ginger, cumin, and sumac.

Four Cups of Wine/Grape Juice: These cups traditionally represent four of the “I will” statements that God makes to Israel as He promises to deliver them from slavery. Traditionally, each cup represents a full cup of joy. Jesus expanded on this tradition using the cup (most likely the third cup, Redemption) as an object lesson to teach that by His blood, a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31) was being made by the shedding of His own blood. (See more in the *“Thursday devotion”*)

Cup of Elijah: An extra cup and/or place setting is traditionally set for the coming of Elijah. Traditionally, it was understood that Elijah’s coming would herald the coming of the Messiah (Malachi 4:5-6). During Jesus’ transfiguration, Moses and Elijah appear and He speaks with them (Matthew 17:1-9). Jesus’ disciples further ask about the tradition concerning the coming of Elijah before the Messiah appears. Jesus answers by explaining that Elijah has come by way of John the Baptist who heralded Jesus as the Lamb of God. (Matthew 17:10-13; Luke 1:16-17)

Final Hymn/Song: The Passover meal is concluded with songs of praise to God. Jesus and His disciples also followed this tradition (Mark 14:26). One song in particular that is usually read to conclude the Passover is Psalm 118. This Psalm (some suggest written by king Hezekiah, remembering God’s deliverance of his severe sickness and God’s deliverance from the Assyrian invasion) is packed with a number of familiar quotations, some quoted by Jesus Himself (Psalm 118:22-23).

“The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.” (Matthew 21:42)

“Hoshanna (meaning, save now!)...Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.” (Psalm 118:26; Matthew 21:9, 23:39)