

CELEBRATING PASSOVER - WITH CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING

Lighting of the Candles

The leader lights the candle to begin the celebration. She is the one who lights the Sabbath candles each week.

Prayer said while lighting the feast day candle:

"Blessed art thou, O Lord God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us by thy commandments and hast commanded us to kindle the festival lights.



Blessed are thou, O Lord God, King of the Universe, who hast kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this season. May our home be consecrated, O God, by the light of thy countenance, shining upon us in the blessing and bringing peace."

Kiddush (Grace before meal)

The first act of the Passover is a benediction, the KIDDUSH, (The leader takes a cup of wine/grape juice and recites this blessing:)

"Blessed are Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Creator of the Fruit of the vine. Blessed are Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast chosen us among all peoples, and sanctified us with Thy commandments.

In love Thou hast given us, O Lord our God, solemn days of joy and festive seasons of gladness, even this day of the feast of the unleavened bread, a holy convocation unto us, a memorial of the departure from Egypt. Thou has chosen us for Thy service, and hast made us share in the blessing of Thy holy festivals. Blessed are Thou, O Lord, our God, who hast preserved us, sustained us, and brought us to this season." (All are asked to take their cups in their hands.)

ALL "We who are Christians know that on the night that Jesus celebrated Passover with his disciples he said "From now on, I tell you, I shall not drink wine until the kingdom of God comes.' (Luke 22:18) (All are asked to drink some of the wine/grape juice.)

The next traditional act of Passover meal is the eating of the GREENS. The greens are a symbol that nature comes to life in spring. Following the Jewish custom, we dip the greens in salt water before eating them and pray:

"Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, creator of the fruit of the earth." (All dip greens and eat as greens and bowl of salted water are passed around the table.)

Another action of the Passover meal is the blessing of the MATZOH. (The leader lifts the matzoh and says:)

"Lo, this is the bread of affliction which our Leaders ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are in want come and celebrate Passover with us. May it be God's will to redeem us from all trouble and from all servitude. Next year at this season may the whole house of Israel be free." (Matzoh is returned to the plate, to be broken later.)

The Questions



At the Passover Meal, the youngest ask the Leader traditional questions about the Passover. The questions we ask here today are similar, but have been changed somewhat to help us see the relationship between the Old and New Testament the Passover meal and our celebration of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion.

Question 1:

Girl: Why is this night different from all other nights?

Leader: In the MISHNAH we find the ancient teaching of the Jews about the meaning of the Passover meal:

"In every generation a person must regard himself as if he came forth himself out of Egypt, for it is written, "And thou shalt tell thy son in that day saying: 'It is because of that which the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt (Exodus 13:8). Therefore, we are bound to give thanks, to praise, to bless him who did all these wonderful things for our ancestors and for us. He brought us out from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning to a festival day; from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption."

We who are followers of Jesus know that as God rescued the Israelites through Moses, so he redeemed us through Jesus Christ. Christ died and passed out of this world to be with his Leader, to show us the way, and to prepare a place for us. As he said:

ALL: "No one can come to my Leader except through me." (John 14:6) St. Paul said: "You have been set free from sin; you have been made slaves of God and you get a reward leading to your sanctification and ending in eternal life. For the wage paid by sin is death; the present given by God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:22-23).

Question 2:

Girl: Why do we eat bitter herbs at this special meal?

Leader: Bitter herbs are eaten on Passover because our Leaders were slaves in Egypt and their lives were made bitter.

ALL: We who are followers of Christ do not hesitate to taste of this bitterness as a reminder of his suffering and death. We remember that he said: "Anyone who does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:27) (All eat of bitter herbs.)

Question 3:

Girl: Why do we eat bitter herbs again, this time with sweet sauce?

Leader: We dip the bitter herbs in the HAROSSES (sweet sauce or jam) as a sign of hope. Our Leaders were able to stand the bitterness of slavery because it was sweetened by the hope of freedom.

ALL: We who are followers of Christ are reminded that by sharing the bitterness of Christ's suffering we strengthen our hope. (All eat bitter herbs dipped in sweet sauce.)

HAGGADAH (story retold)

At each Passover, during the Passover meal, the HAGGADAH, the retelling of the Israelites' salvation from the tenth plague because the lintels of their doors had been marked with the blood of the lamb sacrificed at God's command, occurs. The retelling of the story includes the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. This is the most important part of the Passover celebration.

Question 4:

Girl: Why did the Jews at the time of Christ eat the Paschal lamb when they celebrated the Passover meal?

Leader: (reads Exodus 12:26-27) We continued a sacrifice in the Temple of a lamb for each family in Jerusalem at Passover time. The lamb was then taken home, roasted and eaten at a special meal. Since the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, there is no longer the sacrifice, but its meaning is told in the Passover. Often a lamb's bone is on the Passover table as a reminder of the sacrifice and the blood that saved our people.

ALL: As followers of Jesus, we consider Christ to be our sacrificed lamb. "Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us" (1 Cor.5:7)

Question 5:

Girl: Why did Christ and his disciples wash at tables?

Leader: It was customary at the festival table to wash the hands of all present while saying this prayer: (Bowl of water and towel are passed and hands are washed.)



"Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who sanctified us with his commandments, and commanded us concerning the washing of hands"

On the last Passover night that Christ spent with his disciples, he gave new meaning to the washing by washing the feet of his disciples. In this way he taught them about the importance of love and serving others.

ALL: "The greatest among you must be your servant". (Matthew 23:11)

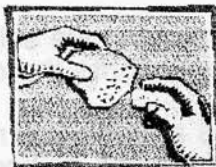


Question 6:

Girl: Why did Jesus and his disciples eat MATZOH (unleavened bread) at Passover table?

Leader: The blessing and the breaking of the matzoh are important parts of the Passover meal. The origin of it is that when Pharaoh let our foreLeaders go from Egypt, they were forced to flee in great haste. They had not time to bake their bread; they could not wait for the yeast to rise. So the sun beating down on the dough as they carried it along with them baked it into a flat, unraised bread.

ALL: We as followers of Jesus remember that he distributed the bread to his disciples and added words in which he asked them to remember him whenever they ate the Passover bread and drank the wine. (All break off and eat a piece of matzoh passed around by the leader.)



Question 7:

Girl: Why did Christ and his disciples drink wine at their Passover meal?

Leader: The feast of the Passover begins and ends with the drinking of a cup of wine. It is both a blessing and a thanksgiving expressed in this benediction prayer:

"Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, creator of the fruit of the vine". (All drink the rest of the wine/grape juice in their cups.)

Let us hear what happened the night Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples for the last time (Read Luke 22:15-20.)

For us who are Christian, that night became the night of a new Passover, a new covenant or agreement between God and his people.

Let us remember with respect the feast of Passover and its place in God's plan for his people. Let us remember and be thankful for the new meaning Jesus gave to the Passover celebration. By this act, which we now call the Lord's Supper, by his death and resurrection, he established a new passover a new way to freedom for God's people.

HALLEL (Psalms 113-118)

(As this ritual ends, and before the full Passover meal is served, the first two Psalms of the Hallel, Psalms 113, 114, are read or recited. After the meal Psalm 118 is recited. The Hora* may be done at this time).

Following the service the meal of chicken soup, lamb, rice, salad and peas is served. Fruit may be served for dessert.

Thank you to Dianne Nikiforuk for this service.

