

Passover Seder

Introduction

Today we are gathered here to celebrate Passover; we will do that by participating in a Seder Communion. Seder means “order,” which simply means that the celebration will follow a certain order. The document I am reading is called the Haggadah, which is basically a script. It is based on traditional Jewish celebration of Passover, but adapted into a uniquely Christian celebration. Since this is a Christian celebration, we are going to celebrate Passover as Christians, perhaps in a way similar to what Jesus and the disciples might have done with out the meal.

A traditional Jewish Seder is usually done in the home with the family, much like our Thanksgiving celebration. As with our Thanksgiving celebration there are certain items that are expected, if you will: Turkey, Cranberries, green beans, pumpkin pie... However, in each home these items are often prepared in a way uniquely special to that family. Such is the case with the Passover Seder: there isn't anything cooked with leaven, they light candles, they share the story of the Exodus from Egypt, and they eat a wonderful meal. They also prepare and present these things in a way uniquely special to each family. Today we also are sharing these things in a uniquely special way for this gathering of friends. Let us begin.

Prayer to Bless the Seder:

As our opening prayer we will read **Psalms 111**

Search for the Leaven:

In the tradition of the Seder, the Jews would prepare for the festival by cleansing their homes of leaven. The leaven is not only yeast, but represents sin in our lives. Let someone read **1 Cor. 5:7-8**.

In the home the children would now search and find the leavened bread that we have hidden. God calls us as adults to be as children; so let us now take a minute to silently and earnestly pray to ask God, through Jesus Christ our Savior, to clean out the leaven in our own hearts, and forgive us of our sins

(Allow a time for silent prayer.)

Breaking of the Matzah:

At this time the Matzah is broken. The Matzah is unleavened bread that is baked, just as the Israelites left Egypt without having time to allow their bread

to rise as it is written in Exodus 12:34. According to tradition there are 3 pieces of Matzah, and the center one is broken and half is wrapped and hidden to be found at the end of the Seder. As a Christian, it was stunning to see how this seemed to represent the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and the center one, the Son, is broken, wrapped in linen and hidden. John 19:40
(Break the Matzah, wrap it, hide it.)

Hand Washing:

As Jesus has cleansed our hearts; we will next also wash our hands as we read the scripture of **Psalms 24:3-4**.

At home at this time we would wash each others hands with a small basin of water and a towel passed around the table, today we will use a dry cloth to “wash” the hands of the person sitting next to you. We do this to show our humility in the presence of God and also as a reminder that God calls us to help one another.

(Allow time for everyone to wash hands.)

Lighting of the Candles:

We light the candles in honor of God, the Creator of light, who chose from the very beginning to not leave us in darkness but instead to give to us what is good. Let us read **Gen 1:2-4**.

We also light candles to remember that Jesus is the light of the world. Let us read **John 1:1-12**.

The “Mother” of the family would now light the candles.

(Allow time for the ladies to light the candles.)

The Four Promises:

The promises are called the Four Cups in the Jewish Seder. They represent the four “I will” statements or promises that God made in **Ex. 6:6-7**.

The promises are:

I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.

I will free you from being slaves.

I will redeem you with an outstretched arm.

I will take you to be my people and I will be your God.

God kept these promises, but not until the Israelites had obeyed Him and sacrificed the lamb so that its blood...painted on the door post... would cover their sins...showing their obedience...That night, their homes were passed over, but those who did not obey; who did not repent; were left weeping and gnashing their teeth. (Exodus 12:30 and Matthew 13:42)

Through this Passover, God demonstrated the first portion in His plan for our redemption. A plan in operation since the very first sacrifice made in Eden; made to cover the sin of Adam and Eve. (Genesis 3:21)

Our God is the God of the Exodus and He is the God of today; He is the God of promises made and the God of promises kept. In Jesus Christ, our Savior and Pascal Lamb, He has fulfilled the first four feasts and in Him He will fulfill the final three. He commanded the Israelites to keep this Passover Feast, so that they would remember the hardships that they endured and celebrate in thanksgiving the promises that God keeps to His people. Let us read **Exodus 12:14**.

From here the Jewish people have celebrated this Sabbath differently than we will tonight. Today we want to rely on the Scripture to celebrate how Passover is about and fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

His Promises to Us:

God did not plan to just save the Hebrews; He has always planned to save us, the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ. From the beginning He has desired to save all who would have faith in Him as it written in **Romans 3:22**.

(Leader reads scripture.)

God hears our groaning under the yoke of the world, just as He heard the groaning of the Israelites in Egypt in **Exodus 6:5**.

(Leader reads Scripture.)

And so God through Jesus promises to us that if we believe in Him:

He will bring us out from under the heavy yoke of this world.

Let us read **Matthew 11:25-30**.

(Read Scripture together.)

He will free us from being slaves to sin.

Let us read **John 8:34-36**.

(Read Scripture together.)

The Karpas:

As is traditional we will now dip a leafy herb into salt water. The salt water represents tears, the tears of sadness from the heavy yoke of slavery to sin, (read John 8:34) and the tears of joy when we accept Jesus and are freed. The green leafy herb represents new life.

(Partake of the Karpas)

Announcement of Meal

At this point in our Seder we will now have our meal. When the meal is finished we will complete our Seder. Let us pray now thank God for this feast.

(Pray over the meal)

Foot Washing

It was at this point in the Seder that Jesus broke from tradition and instituted the foot washing and the communion. Let us read John 13: 1-17. The word that Jesus used for “washed” in verse 10 in Greek means to bathe, as to wash a dead body. And the work He used for “wash” is a different word that means more of a ceremonial washing of the hands or feet. The word “clean” is a beautiful word with three definitions, all of which describe us after we are baptized. 1) physically: purified by fire, similitude, like a vine cleansed by pruning and so fitted to bear fruit; 2) in a levitical sense; 3) ethically; free from corrupt desire, from sin and guilt. As a reminder that we are to be servants to each other and also to remind us of our cleansing by Christ through baptism, we will now do a foot washing.

(Perform the foot washing.)

Communion:

The third promise from God that was fulfilled through Jesus was.

He will redeem us with on outstretched arm.

Let us read **1 John 1:7-9**.

(Read Scripture together.)

Knowing that it would be His arms that would be outstretched and that it would be His body that would be broken to redeem us, to free us, the Lord Jesus on the night when 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." (1Co 11:23-24 ESV)

(Indicate that each table should now break the bread and pass the tray around the table. Partake of the unleavened bread.)

“In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." (1Co 11:25 ESV)

(Indicate that we should partake of the cup.)

Finding the Afikmen:

The Gospel of Matthew tells us in chapter 26, verse 30, that “After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” Before singing a hymn and sharing in a closing prayer, let us recall the fourth promise:

He will take us as His people and He will be our God.

Let us read **1 Peter 2:9-10**.

(Read Scripture together.)

We look forward to the remainder of God’s plan of redemption in our own lives and in the history of God’s people. Now the piece of Matzah that was

broken and hidden is now found. In the Jewish seder it is considered the desert. It is amazing how, as Christians, this reminds us of Jesus' second coming.

(Find the hidden Matzah.)

Closing:

Jesus is coming again, so as the times get harder let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10:23). Before Jesus ascended into Heaven, He gave us a command, the Gospel Commission of **Matthew 28:19-20**.

(Read Scripture together.)

Let us leave here refreshed, renewed and filled with a desire to share the Gospel message with as many as will listen, that they also will be freed from their slavery to sin.

Closing Song

Sing Lord I Lift Your Name on High

Closing Prayer

(Pray.)

The Jews would end their ceremony with the cheer "Next year in Jerusalem". Our cheer is "Next Year in Heaven."

(Count to three, then cheer!)

Amen!