

Christian Passover Service

(revision 2011-b)

Instruction

The Historical Origin and Fulfillment of Passover

Assistant: The story of **the first Passover** is recounted in Exodus 12-15 when the Lord called Moses to lead His people from slavery in Egypt. It recalls how the Hebrews were spared by the Angel of Death as he passed over their homes marked with the blood of a sacrificed lamb.

The **ritual commemoration** of the Passover became an annual celebration. Each household was to sacrifice a Passover lamb, eat unleavened bread and bitter herbs, and rejoice in God's redemption.

Christ has fulfilled and perfected the Passover. His death and resurrection redeems us from enslavement to sin, death, Satan, and the world. His blood, like the blood of the first Passover lamb, protects God's people from the Angel of Death and breaks the oppressive reign of Satan.

At the Last Supper Jesus inaugurated the new and final covenant between God and man. His sacrificial death expressed in the designation of bread and wine as his Body and Blood is a most intimate participation in that sacrificial death. Thus, the Lord's Supper is the New Testament Passover meal which re-presents in these last days the once-for-all sacrifice of the true Passover Lamb, and brings us into union with him, until he comes again!

The early Christians celebrated **Easter** as the Christian Passover feast and is the fulfillment of the annual old covenant rite, in which God's deliverance is recalled and celebrated.

The **final fulfillment** of the Passover is in the Messianic Kingdom (Lk 22:15-16). Then the disciples of Jesus will eat and drink at table with their Messiah and rejoice together in his victory forever (Lk 22:28-30).

The Exodus Events as Prophetic Types

Assistant: The early church saw all of the main events of Israel's exodus from Egypt as types or foreshadowings of God's redemption in Christ. For example, the apostle Paul identifies the passage through the Red Sea with Baptism and the manna and water with Eucharist (1 Cor 10:1-5).

Other types recalled annually at the Christian Passover Service include Egypt as a type of "the world" alienated from God and bound up in sin; Pharaoh and his Army as types of Satan and his evil legions; and the entry into the Promised Land as a type of our new life in Christ and its consummation in the New Jerusalem.

These types are a very helpful way for Christians to understand the preparatory events of the Old Testament and their fulfillment in the New Testament.

Leader: This ritual meal reflects the pattern of a Jewish Seder, adapted for Christian use. The Passover Service consists of four parts, each including a shared cup of wine. Throughout the ceremony the meaning of each item on the table will be explained, we will have a celebration of the word of God, a time of prayer and praise, a meal, and lastly concluding prayers.

PART ONE: The Preliminary Course

Introduction

Leader: Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough, inasmuch as you are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. (cf. 1 Cor 5:7-8)

An appropriate opening song is now sung by all.

Assistant: Jesus said: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life ... The light will only be among you a little while ... believe in the light, so that you may become children of the light. I came into the world as Light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness." (cf. Jn 8:12; 12:36, 46)

Assistant lights candle.

Dedication of the Feast

Leader fills the cup with wine, raises it, and says the blessing:

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who chose us in Christ before the world began to be holy and blameless before you. In your love, O God, you give us seasons of penance and seasons of celebration of our freedom in Christ. Blessed are you, O Lord, who sanctifies your people and gives them joy. Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who created the fruit of the vine.

All: Amen.

As the cup is being passed someone reads Lk 22:14-18.

Lk 22:14-18—When the hour came, he took his place at table with the apostles. He said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for, I tell you, I shall not eat it again until there is fulfillment in the kingdom of God.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said, “Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you that from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

Preliminary Course

(The Leader explains the bitter herbs [horseradish], haroseth, and green herbs)

Leader: The **bitter herbs** represent the bitter suffering endured by the Israelites while slaves in Egypt. The **haroseth** is a mixture of fruit and nuts. Its reddish color recalls the mortar used by the Jews for building during their centuries of forced labor. **The green vegetables** (parsley/celery) represent spring and the **salt water** in which they are dipped represents the tears shed by the people of Israel while in bondage in Egypt.

Leader: Blessed are you O Lord our God, King of the Universe who created these fruits of the earth.

All: Amen.

All sample some of each, together with the salt water.

PART TWO: Celebration of the Word of God

Initial Proclamation

Leader lifts up ceremonial plate containing the three pieces of unleavened bread and uncovers the top piece, then says the prayer.

Leader: This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. All who are hungry, let them come and eat. All who are needy, let them come and celebrate the Passover with us. May our most powerful God deliver all who are in bondage and set all our persecuted brothers and sisters free!

All: Amen.

Leader lowers the plate, covers it, and pours a second cup of wine.

The Ritual Questions

The youngest present rises and asks the following:

"Why is this night different from all other nights?"

- On no other night do we recall the deliverance from Egypt and the entry into the Promised Land. Why on this night?

- On no other night do we eat bitter herbs and drink sweet wine. Why on this night?

- On no other night do we eat of a lamb in remembrance of Jesus as our Passover Lamb who was slain and now lives. Why on this night?

- Oh, why is this night different from all other nights?"

The Celebration of the Word

Leader: The exodus from Egypt, freedom from bondage and the entry into the Promised Land prefigure the redemption and new creation in Christ. The Book of Deuteronomy recalls these events:

Then you shall declare before the LORD, your God, 'My father was a wandering Aramean who went down to Egypt with a small household and lived there as an alien. But there he became a nation great, strong and numerous. When the Egyptians maltreated and oppressed us, imposing hard labor upon us, we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and he heard our cry and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression. He brought us out of Egypt with his strong hand and outstretched arm, with terrifying power, with signs and wonders; and bringing us into this country, he gave us this land flowing with milk and honey. (Deut. 26:5-9)

Leader: In the Book of Revelation (5:6-10) the glory of the Passover Lamb depicts the future which lies before us when we will enter the into the Sabbath rest when Jesus comes again.

Then I saw standing in the midst of the throne and the four living creatures and the elders, a Lamb that seemed to have been slain... He came and received the scroll from the right hand of the one who sat on the throne.

When he took it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each of the elders held a harp and gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the holy ones. They sang a new hymn: "Worthy are you to receive the scroll and to break open its seals, for you were slain and with your blood you purchased for God those from every tribe and

tongue, people and nation. You made them a kingdom and priests for our God, and they will reign on earth."

Optional: An assistant may read the following exhortation.

(The lines are taken from a 2nd century Easter sermon by Melito of Sardis)

Jesus Christ is the Passover of our salvation.
He was led away as a lamb and sacrificed as a sheep.
He delivered us from servitude to the world as from the land of Egypt.
He released us from bondage to the devil as from the hand of pharaoh and sealed our souls by his own spirit and our bodies by his own blood.
This is the one who covered death with shame and who plunged the devil into mourning as Moses did pharaoh.
This is the one who smote lawlessness and deprived injustice of its offspring, as Moses deprived Egypt.
This is the one who delivered us from slavery into freedom, from darkness into light from death into life, from tyranny into an eternal kingdom and who made us a new priesthood and a special people forever.
This one is the Passover of our salvation.

*(The **Leader** now recites the following thanksgiving, and after each line **All** respond, "**It would have been enough for us.**" or the Hebrew response: "**Dayenu.**")*

* Had he brought us out from Egypt, and not executed judgment against them, *(response)*

* Had he executed judgment against them, and not divided the sea for us, *(response)*

* Had he divided the sea for us, and not drowned our oppressors in it, *(response)*

* Had he drowned our oppressors in it, and not helped us forty years in the desert, *(response)*

* Had he helped us forty years in the desert, and not fed us with manna, *(response)*

* Had he fed us manna, and not brought us to Mount Sinai *(response)*

* Had he brought us to Mount Sinai, and not given us the Law *(response)*

* Had he given us the Law, and not brought us into the Promised Land *(response)*

* Had he brought us into the Promised Land, and not given us the temple *(response)*

* Had he given us the temple, and not sent us his Son, the Messiah *(response)*

* Had he sent us his Son, and not given him up to die for our sins on the cross *(response)*

* Had he sent us his Son to die on the cross, and not raised him from the dead in victory *(response)*

* Had he raised him from the dead, and not sent us his Holy Spirit *(response)*

Leader: How much more so do we have to be thankful for the unbounded blessings of the all-merciful God: that he brought us out from Egypt, executed judgment against them divided the sea for us, drowned our oppressors in it, helped us forty years in the desert, fed us with manna, brought us to Mount Sinai, gave us the law, brought us into the promised land, gave us the temple, sent us his son, gave him up to die for our sins, on the cross, raised him from the dead in victory, and sent us his Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Explanation of the Passover Symbols

The Leader asks the questions below and three people give the answers.

Leader: The Passover Lamb which our fathers ate in temple days, what was the reason for it?

Brother: *(Pointing to or lifting up the lamb bone)*

It is because the Lord passed over the houses of our fathers in Egypt and spared our first-born, as it is written in scripture: "and you shall say it is the Passover offering for the Lord who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when he smote the Egyptians and spared our houses." And the true Passover lamb is Jesus Christ, as the apostle teaches: "Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed."

Leader: This unleavened bread which we eat, what is the reason for it?

Brother: *(Pointing to or lifting up a piece of matzoh)*

It is because there was not time for the dough of our ancestors in Egypt to become leavened, before the Lord revealed himself to them and redeemed them, as it is written in scripture: "and the dough which they had brought out from Egypt they baked into cakes of unleavened bread, for it had not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt and allowed no time even to get food ready for themselves." According to the apostle, this bread symbolizes the true righteousness in Christ with which we celebrate the feast: "therefore, let us celebrate the feast not with old leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Leader: These bitter herbs which we eat, what is their meaning?

Brother: *(Pointing to or lifting up some of the bitter herbs)*

They are eaten to recall that the Egyptians embittered the lives of our fathers in Egypt, as it is written: "and they embittered their lives with hard labor; with mortar and bricks, with every kind of work in the field. All the work which they made them do was rigorous." They can also help us remember the bitterness of sin, the oppression of Satan, and the mighty deliverance of the Lord.

Leader: In every generation one must look upon himself as if he personally had come out from Egypt, as scripture says: "and you shall tell your son on that day, 'it is because of what the Lord did for me when I went forth from Egypt'." For it was not our fathers alone that the Lord redeemed: he also redeemed us with them, as it is said: "he brought us out from there that he might give us the land which he pledged to our fathers."

Time of Prayer and Praise

Leader: Therefore it is our duty to thank and to praise in song and prayer him who performed all these wonders for our fathers and for us. He brought us from our slavery to freedom, from anguish to joy, from sorrow to festivity, from darkness to great light. Let us therefore sing before him a new song.

All: Amen.

(Time of prayer and praise, 15 - 20 minutes excluding Easter music)

Drinking the Second Cup

Leader raises the cup and says the blessing.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, who redeemed us and our fathers from Egypt, and brought us to this day to eat unleavened bread and bitter herbs. May we rejoice in your salvation and always say, 'the Lord be praised.' Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who created the fruit of the vine.

All: Amen.

The Leader drinks from the cup and passes it around the table.

PART THREE: The Passover Meal

Blessing over the Unleavened Bread

Leader calls for a moment of silence to recall that Jesus may have used this blessing to transform unleavened bread into His Body. Then takes a piece of unleavened bread and says the blessing.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.

All: Amen.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who gave the commandment concerning the eating of unleavened bread.

All: Amen.

The Leader breaks the bread into small pieces and distributes a piece to each person.

Leader: Let us combine the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs, as it is written: "with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it."

Each person places some of the bitter herbs and some haroseth between two pieces of unleavened bread.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who gave the commandment concerning the eating of bitter herbs.

All: Amen.

All now eat the unleavened bread with bitter herbs and haroseth.

The Festive Meal

The Third Cup

After the meal, the Leader fills the cups and calls for a moment of silence to recall that Jesus may have used this blessing of wine to transform it into His Blood.

Leader: Let us bless the Lord.

All: Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and forever.

Leader: Let us bless our God of whose bounty we have partaken.

All: Blessed be our God of whose bounty we have partaken and through whose goodness we live.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who feeds the whole world with your goodness, with grace, with steadfast love and mercy. Through your great goodness food has never failed us. May it not fail us forever and ever for your great name's sake since you nourish and sustain all beings, and do good to all, and provide food for all your creatures whom you have created. Blessed are you, O Lord, who gives food to all.

All: Amen.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, for by your great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. Blessed are you, all-merciful God, for giving us new life in your Son.

All: Amen.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, for this feast of Passover. In your great goodness you give us this time of celebration and rejoicing, in remembrance of the redemption won for us through your Son's death and resurrection. We welcome this week with gladness, and dedicate it wholly to the celebration of your Son's triumph over sin, death, and Satan. Look graciously upon your servants and show us your glory. Blessed are you, O Lord, who gives joy to his people.

All: Amen.

The leader lifts up the cup of wine and says the blessing.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who created the fruit of the vine.

All: Amen.

The leader drinks from the cup, passes it around and then fills it again.

PART FOUR: The Conclusion

Leader: The soul of all living things shall bless your name, O Lord our God; the spirit of all flesh shall ever adore and extol your fame, our King. Were our mouths filled with singing as the sea and our tongues uplifted in song as the waves and our lips with praises as the heavens, and our eyes shining as the sun and the moon, and our hands stretched out as the eagles of the skies, and our feet swift as the hinds, we would still not be able to offer proper thanks to you, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, and to praise your name one thousandth share or even a tenth of one thousandth share for the great goodness you bestowed upon our fathers and upon us.

From Egypt you redeemed us, O Lord our God, and from the house of bondage you liberated us. In famine you fed us, in plenty you sustained us, from the sword you saved us, from pestilence you delivered us, from severe sickness you spared us.

Therefore the limbs you have fashioned within us, and the spirit of life which you have breathed into us, and the tongue which you have placed in our mouth, they shall all thank, praise, extol, glorify, exalt, adore, hallow and give sovereignty to your name; for every mouth shall

give thanks to you, and every tongue shall pledge fealty to you; and every knee shall bend to you, and every living thing shall bow down to you; all hearts shall revere you, and all souls shall sing to your name.

You are God by the power of your might, great by the glory of your name, almighty forever and inspiring awe by your deeds. You are the King enthroned sublimely and exalted. By the mouth of the upright you shall be praised, and by the words of the righteous you shall be lauded; by the tongue of the faithful you shall be exalted, and in the midst of the holy you shall be hallowed.

Blessed are you, O Lord, King extolled in praises.

All: Amen.

The Fourth Cup

The Leader lifts the cup and recites the blessing.

Leader: Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who created the fruit of the vine.

All: Amen.

The Leader drinks from the cup and passes it around the table.

Leader: Ended is this Christian Passover Service. In your great mercy, O Father, you have allowed us to recall the great events by which you rescued your Chosen People and sent your Son to save us. Now as we prepare for the Easter festivities with hearts and minds renewed, may your Holy Spirit make us ready to drink the new wine with Jesus in the Kingdom."

All: "Amen! Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!"

Glossary: Seder Symbols and Customs

1. Seder: The word "Seder" means order, referring to the Passover service conducted during the Passover meal.
2. Blessings: The most common and important form of Jewish prayer is the 'blessing'. Each blessing usually begins; "Blessed are You, Lord our God..." and proceeds to indicate in some way the object which is being blessed. Sometimes the blessing consists in an action. Rather than asking God to bless something, the Jews would thank God for that thing and understand that the thing was thereby specially consecrated.
 - a) **Wine and Bread**: Especially important are the blessing over the wine and bread. The initial blessing over wine, called the Kiddush, or Sanctification, precedes every Sabbath and festival meal, and proclaims the holiness of the day and consecrates it especially to the Lord. The blessing over the bread is the thanksgiving for the meal, bread being the traditional 'staple' which symbolizes the meal as a whole.
 - b) **Four Cups of Wine**: Four cups of wine are passed around the table and drunk. The four cups represent the four chief expressions of God's deliverance in the book of Exodus: "I shall bring them forth," "I shall deliver them," "I shall redeem them," and "I shall take them unto me as a nation."
 - c) **The Common Cup and Loaf**: The common cup and loaf express the unity of the people, their brotherhood as sons of Abraham and co-heirs of the promise. It also represents their common share in the blessing over the bread and wine.
3. Lamb: The lamb represents the lamb which was sacrificed in the temple and eaten by Jewish families in the land of Israel. All its blood was drained out; the commandment of the Lord that none of its bones be broken (Ex. 2:46) was carefully observed. It was roasted on a cross-like spit of pomegranate branches, and it reminded the Jews of the lamb whose blood had saved their ancestors at the great Exodus.
4. Unleavened Bread: It was called the "bread of affliction" because it was made of flour and water alone. It represents the bread baked by the Jews during the hasty flight from Egypt, when there was no time for leavening. The three piec-

es of unleavened bread on the main plate represent the three classes of Israelites: the Priests, the Levites, and the ordinary Israelites.

5. Bitter Herbs (Horseradish): These herbs represent the bitter suffering endured by the Israelites while slaves in Egypt.

6. Haroseth: This puree was a mixture of squeezed and grated fruits (figs, dates, raisins, apples, and almonds), spices and vinegar. Its reddish color recalled the mortar used by the Jews in building the palaces and pyramids of Egypt during their centuries of forced labor. (As part of the preliminary dish it was intended to stimulate the appetite).

7. Green Vegetables (Parsley/celery): A characteristic relish used at festive meals in ancient Palestine. The greens represent spring and the salt water in which they are dipped represents the tears shed by the people of Israel while in bondage in Egypt.

8. Egg: A hard boiled egg represented the festival offering in the temple on the occasion of an important festival.

Seder Meal

Ritual Platter:	1 hard-boiled egg	Horseradish
	Lamb bone	Haroseth
	Parsley/celery/lettuce	

Main Meal: Any meat (Other than pork) is acceptable for the main dish. Lamb and chicken are two commonly used meats, but beef or fish would also be possibilities. Some lamb is also needed for the ritual platter.

Side Course: Vegetables are, like the main dish, flexible. The haroseth will be the salad, and unleavened bread will replace normal leavened bread. Enough unleavened bread and butter should be available so that people can eat it during the meal.

Appetizers: Each person may have a hard-boiled egg of their own to dip in the salt water.

Ceremonial items: Unleavened Bread Parsley
 Horseradish Haroseth
 Salt water

Festival Wine: Sweet Red; For use in the four blessings.
2—750mL bottles (serves 8-10 people)

Recipe for Haroseth: (Serves 8-10 people)

7 apples 1 cup of raisins
1 cup of chopped almonds (or walnuts)
1/2 bottle of wine 2 oranges (plus some peel)
Less than one tablespoon cinnamon

Soak raisins in some wine to soften. Mix vigorously together small amounts at a time of apple and orange pieces, raisins, and wine. Mix until all ingredients have been used. Add cinnamon and nuts. Refrigerate for a period of time.

Table Setting

From the beginning of the Seder the following articles should be set on the table:

Green Herb: Pieces of lettuce, parsley or celery, enough for one piece (vegetable) per person, perhaps a little more.

Bitter Herb: Usually horseradish, used ceremonially as a dip, enough for each person.

Unleavened Bread: enough for at least one piece per person, perhaps more.

Cups of Salt Water: for the green herb, set on the table so as to be accessible to all.

Haroseth

Festival Candle: set near the front of the table, a simple white unadorned candle of a size sufficient to last out the meal.

Wine Goblet: used as a common cup. [The Lord's Day cup]

Wine: Sweet Red

Ceremonial Trays: both of these trays should be set in front of the leader.

1. Seder plate: a large plate containing a hard-boiled egg, a large lamb bone, some bitter herbs, a piece of parsley, and some haroseth. The contents of this tray are ceremonial only, and will not be consumed during the meal.

2. "Bread of affliction": a plate containing three pieces of un-leavened bread, each wrapped individually in a napkin, and stacked one on top of the other. Like the Seder plate, these pieces of unleavened bread are ceremonial, and will not be consumed during the meal.