

# *Christian Seder*

## *Passover Celebration*

Based Upon Scriptures

*“In your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples.”*

Matthew 26:18

Leader: We have gathered together to celebrate the Passover of God’s chosen people from slavery to freedom. Scripture instructs us that Jesus celebrated Passover in Jerusalem every year of his life. Although Jesus easily dispensed with some of his Jewish customs (by healing on the Sabbath, keeping company with foreigners- and even foreign women), he was regular in his Passover observance during his childhood and throughout his public ministry.

Reader 1: **“Every year Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem for Passover.”** Luke 2:41

Leader: Scripture also tells us that though He knew the dangers of returning to Jerusalem, He chose to return for the last Passover of His life.

Reader 1: **“I have very much wanted to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer.”**  
Luke 22:15

Leader: It was also at His last Passover, the event we call The Last Supper, that Jesus initiated the New Covenant. Through this New Covenant, Jesus calls us together to celebrate in remembrance of Him.

Reader 2: We light this candle to remind us that God promised to send us a light in our darkness.

*At this time, light your candles.*

Reader 2: **"You, Lord, are the light that keeps me safe. I am not afraid of anyone. You protect me and I have no fears."** Psalm 27:1

ALL: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe. Through your son and your grace, You sanctified and redeemed us as your people. Blessed are You, O Lord our God, who gave us the Holy Spirit to light our way. In your name we light the festival candle.

Reader 3: At the Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples to show them how much He loved them. After He washed their feet, He said, **"Do you understand what I have done? You call me teacher and Lord, and you should, because that is who I am. And if your Lord and teacher has washed your feet, you should do the same for each other."** John 13:13-14 We also remember that He said: **"The one that is greatest among you shall be your servant."** Matthew 23:11 Let each of us wash the hands of one another while reflecting upon Jesus' act of humility.

*At this time, take turns washing each other's hands.*

Reader 3: **"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in his Holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart..."** Psalm 24:3-4

ALL: Thank you Lord for showing us how to serve others.

Reader 4: **"You will know the truth and the truth shall set you free."** John 8:32 Before each of you is a cup that will be filled four times today. Each time it is filled, we will toast the Living God for the acts of redemption and freedom that have been done for us. **"I will deliver you from slavery. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God."** Exodus 6:6-7

As Christians, we often go to the Old Testament in order to truly understand that God's will for our freedom and redemption has been consistent from the beginning of time. It has been *our* will that has put us in bondage and *our* will that prevents an intimate relationship with God. Today, as we drink each cup, let us affirm,

ALL: **"Thy will be done."** Matthew 26:42

Leader: **"I am the Lord! And with mighty power I will punish the Egyptians and free you from slavery."** Exodus 6:6

*At this time, fill your cups for the first time.*

God's chosen people were slaves in Egypt and could do nothing but cry out for help. As we drink this cup, let us remember our own slavery and our promise of freedom.

**"If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."** John 8:36

We lift our cup to God and give thanks.

ALL: Blessed are You, our Lord and our God, Ruler of our lives and the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine. Blessed be God forever. Thy will be done.

Leader: Let us now drink this cup, The Kaydesh, the Cup of Freedom, the first cup of Passover.

*Allow time for all to consume the cup.*

*Seder plates are brought out at this time.*

Reader 5: **"And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' then tell them..."** Exodus 12:26

Question 1: How different is this night from other nights?

Reader 5: This is the night of Passover. Read Exodus 12:1-14

Reader 6: **"After you have entered the country promised to you by the Lord, you and your children must continue to celebrate Passover each year. Your children will ask you, 'What are we celebrating?' And you will answer, 'This is the Passover sacrifice of the Lord.'" Exodus 12:26-27**

It is not only our ancestors who were redeemed by the hand of God, but each and every one of us as well. We too, have come out of Egypt. When the Jewish people celebrate Passover, they bless their food before eating it. Like them, we ask for God's blessing on the food we eat.

ALL: Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts which we are about to receive from Your bounty. Blessed be God forever.

Reader 7: Each of the foods we will eat tonight has a special meaning for the Jewish people. The youngest child always asks the questions at the Passover.

Question 2: Why do we dip the parsley in salt water?

Reader 7: **“Accordingly, taskmasters were set over the Israelites to oppress them with forced labor. Thus they had to build the Pharaoh’s cities of Pithom and Raamses. Yet, the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread. The Egyptians, then, dreaded the Israelites and reduced them to cruel slavery, making life bitter for them with hard work in mortar and brick and all kinds of field work; the whole cruel fate of slaves.” Exodus 1:11-14**

The parsley reminds us that nature comes to life in springtime. The saltwater reminds us of the tears and sweat of the Jews during their slavery in Egypt.

*Dip the parsley into the saltwater and eat.*

Question 3: Why do we eat matzah?

Leader: Matzah is bread that is made without yeast. Yeast makes the bread rise but it takes time. Because the Jews had to leave Egypt quickly, they did not have time to wait for the bread to rise. They took what was available and knew that God would provide the rest.

Reader 1: **“Stop being proud! Don’t you know that a little yeast leavens all the dough? 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. Let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” 1 Corinthians 5:6-8**

Leader: During this season of Lent, Passover, and Easter, we are attempting to break our old habits of sin and selfishness and begin a new life in Christ.

*Leader lifts the plate of Matzah*

This is the bread of affliction, the poor bread that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. We eat it tonight, not to sustain our bodies, but to nourish our spirit. We break the matzah and wrap one half, the afikomen, “the coming one”, as our Jewish ancestors have traditionally done. It will be shared later in the meal.

As Christians we break the matzah as a reminder that Jesus, our Redeemer and Messiah, was broken for us. We know that our Messiah has come and we await His second coming. We wrap the afikomen in a white cloth just as our Lord was wrapped the day of His death.

*A portion of matzah is wrapped and set aside. The other portion is held up.*

Let us share this piece of unleavened bread, reminding us of our willingness to do the will of God, and of God's willingness to provide for us.

*Pass the matzah. Each person take a piece.*

ALL: Blessed are You, O Lord our God. Ruler of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth. Blessed be God forever.

*All eat a bite of matzah, saving some to eat with bitter herbs and haroset.*

Question 4: Why do we eat bitter herbs?

Reader 2: The bitter herbs remind us that the lives of the Jews were made bitter by slavery. They also remind us of the bitterness of Jesus' suffering and death for our salvation. We remember the bitter life of living outside God's will.

*Eat some of the bitter herbs with matzah.*

Question 5: Why do we eat haroset?

Reader 3: The haroset is a mixture of apple, spices, nuts, and wine. It looks like the mortar the Jews used to build the Pharaoh's cities while they were slaves. As Christians, it reminds us of repentance, to change directions in order to do the will of God more completely. When we follow the will of God, we taste the love of God. And even though we experience bitterness in our life, we have the sweetness of God's love to carry us through the bitter times. Even our Messiah, who was always in the perfect will of God, tasted bitterness.

While sharing His final Passover with the twelve disciples, Jesus said, "**And behold, the hand of the one who is to betray me is with me at the table.**" Luke 22:21

There will always be some bitterness in life, but like the bitter herbs, once dipped into the haroset, it is nothing like the experience of the bitter herbs alone. And so for us, once we allow God into our life, the bitterness we bear is nothing like the bitterness without God.

*All take a piece of matzah and scoop out some haroset to eat. Now, dip the matzah into the bitter herbs and haroset and eat together.*

Leader: Even as Moses said, **“Let my people go!”** Exodus 5:1, he knew that Pharaoh would resist. Moses had been warned by God of terrible events or plagues that would have to occur before the Israelites were freed.

Reader 4: **“Yet I know that the King of Egypt will not allow you to go unless he is forced. I will stretch out my hand, therefore, and smite Egypt by doing all kinds of wondrous deeds there. After that he will let you go.”** Exodus 3:19-20

Leader: God sent plagues, one by one to strike the Egyptians. They were plagues of insects, disease, storms, and darkness. As the people of Egypt became afflicted with pain and disease, Pharaoh still believed the plagues were tricks. Pharaoh’s heart was hardened and not until the tenth and most horrible plague was God able to pierce his heart. We fill our cups for a second time.

*Cups are half-filled. Do not consume just yet!*

Leader: A full cup is a symbol of joy and indeed we are filled with joy at God’s mighty deliverance. But we also must remember the great cost at which this redemption was purchased. Lives were sacrificed to bring about the release of God’s people from the slavery of Egypt. As Christians, we remember that a far greater price purchased our freedom from the slavery of sin- the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. So we fill this second cup, the Maggid, the Cup of Plagues, half full.

Reader 5: **“On the tenth of this month every one of your families must procure for itself a lamb...They shall take some of its blood and apply it to the two doorposts and the lintel of every house in which they partake of the lamb. That same night they shall eat its roasted flesh with unleavened bread and bitter herbs...For on that same night I will go through Egypt, striking down every first born of the land, both man and beast, and executing judgment on all the gods of Egypt- I, the Lord! But the blood will mark the houses where you are. Seeing the blood, I will pass over you; thus when I strike the land of Egypt, no destructive blow will come upon you.”** Exodus 12:3-13

Leader: This lamb is on our plate to remind us of the blood that marked the doors of God’s chosen people. They were instructed to eat in haste and be ready to flee at a moment’s notice. God wanted them to know that it was through the blood of the lamb that they were saved from death. Our Jewish brothers and sisters lift this shank bone to remember the Temple, where all sacrifice occurred, no longer exists. We lift this shank bone to remember that our Lamb, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, has already been sacrificed, once and for all. His blood was used to imprint upon our heart a new covenant with God.

ALL: Blessed are you, O God, for You have, in grace, supplied all our needs. You have given us yourself, forgiveness for sin, life abundant and life eternal. Blessed be God forever. Thy will be done!

Reader 6: At this time in the Passover meal, our Jewish ancestors would recite Psalm 113 which they termed, "The Little Hallel" followed by drinking the second cup of Passover. Read Psalm 113.

*All drink from the Maggid, the second cup.*

Question 6: Why do we eat this egg?

Reader 7: Since the time of the Last Supper, the Jewish people have added a roasted egg to their meal, signifying a special holiday offering. It is to remind the Jewish people of the destruction of the Temple and the renewal of life.

Reader 7: We lift this egg as a sign of new growth, new hope, and new life, our renewal in Jesus Christ.

Leader: At this time, we finish our food of the Passover and celebrate in fellowship our new birth in Christ.

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Leader: We have eaten in celebration, enjoying each other's companionship and remembering the stories of old. The Jews of Jesus' day also celebrated with jubilation. However, at that "Last Supper", the mood became more solemn now. Jesus broke with the Passover meal tradition and He Himself entered into the New Covenant- initiating the Eucharist.

Reader 1: **"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to His disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my Body." Matthew 26:26**

Jesus calls His disciples to bring their full attention to this fulfilled prophesy of sacrifice. And then He said, **"Eat this as a way of remembering me."** Luke 22:19

ALL: Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth and who reminds us that we do not live by bread alone. Blessed be God forever.

Leader: Let us now share the afikomen, remembering Jesus, the Lamb of God, broken for us to take away the sin of the world.

*Leader unwraps the afikomen, breaks, and passes to the group.  
Cups are filled a third time.*

Leader: We fill this third cup tonight, the Birkat Ha-Mazon, the Cup of Redemption. Jesus pronounced this cup to be the “blood of the covenant”. It is also known as the “blessing cup” because it was consumed with the prayer of thanksgiving during the main course of the meal.

Reader 2: **“Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them and they all drank from it. He said to them, ‘This is my blood of the covenant which will be shed for many.’”** Mark 14:24

Just as the blood of the lamb brought salvation in Egypt, Jesus’, our Messiah’s atoning death brings salvation to all who believe.

ALL: Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine. We gratefully drink. Blessed be God forever, Thy will be done!

*All drink from the third cup.*

Leader: Following the third “cup of blessing”, Jesus tells his disciples, **“I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father. Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”** Matthew 26:29-30.

*Leader then holds up the Elijah Cup.*

Reader 3: This cup is for the Prophet Elijah. This is the cup that cannot be drunk. Jewish tradition tells us that before leaving us, Elijah declared that he would return at least once each generation. But he would not appear to be Elijah. He would return as an outcast, a sinner, one who we might hate or one who we have not forgiven. As Jesus celebrated Passover with His disciples, He also raised this cup, Elijah’s Cup. Let us remember that it was Elijah, as well as Moses, who appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. And at the Last Supper, Jesus once again invited Elijah to join in the meal.

Leader: Lord, grant us a gift. Help us to remember the story of Elijah and Elijah’s cup throughout the coming year. Let one of the children throw open the door as we welcome Elijah to our Seder, and the message of Elijah into our hearts.  
*Leader lowers the cup.*

Reader 4: **“I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God.”** Exodus 6:7  
The culmination of the Jewish seder was the singing of “The Great Hallel” (Psalm 136) and the drinking of the fourth and final cup of wine, often called the “cup of consummation”.

Leader: At the Last Supper, however, Jesus and the disciples share three cups- The Cup of Freedom, The Cup of Plagues, and the Blessing Cup. They join together in singing a hymn, but then disregard the fourth cup. Instead, Jesus interrupts the meal and the disciples follow Him into the Garden of Gethsemane to pray, leading finally, to His Passion.

Reader 5: **“And they offered him wine mingled with myrrh; but he did not take it.”** Mark 15:23

Reader 5: *The Great Hallel* Psalm 136

Give thanks to the Lord for He is good.

ALL: His love endures forever!

Give thanks to the lord of Lords

ALL: His love endures forever!

He alone does great wonders.

ALL: His love endures forever!

Who by His understanding made the heavens.

ALL: His love endures forever!

Who spread out the earth upon the waters.

ALL: His love endures forever!

Who made the great lights,

ALL: His love endures forever!

The sun to govern our day, the moon and the stars to govern the night.

ALL: His love endures forever!

Who sent His only son to redeem us from our sin.

ALL: His love endures forever!

Give thanks to the God of Heaven!

ALL: His love endures forever! Blessed are you, O Lord our God, Ruler of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine. Hallelujah! Blessed be God forever. Thy will be done.

Leader: Jesus prayed in the Garden: **“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not as I will, but as you will.”** Matthew 26:39

Question 7: What is this New Passover?

Reader 6: Read John 19:28-30

Leader: The New Passover begins on Holy Thursday with the celebration of the Eucharist and continues through the Triduum on Easter Sunday when Jesus rose from the grave. We celebrate Jesus passing over from death to life each time we receive communion at Mass.

We will fill our cups a fourth and last time today, giving thanks and praise to God, our great Redeemer.

Reader 7: **“When the disciples saw Him, they worshipped Him, but they doubted. Jesus approached and said to them, ‘All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.’”** Matthew 28:17-20

*All drink from the fourth cup.*

Leader: As Moses and the Israelites celebrated freedom from slavery, and the Jewish faithful of today continue Passover in that context, as Christians, we celebrate the New Passover: Christ as the Sacrificial Lamb that has freed all mankind of sin and death and welcomes us into New, Everlasting Life. Our Passover Seder is now complete, just as our redemption is forever complete. Go in peace!