

Passover – Jesus’ Final Week

Intro: It is the oldest continually celebrated tradition in the world. 3500 years ago, in a dark and distant time, God broke into a world of hopelessness and brought safety and life.

I. Exodus and Passover

- A.** The story is familiar to most of us who were raised in one church or another, but it needs to be reviewed to give us context this morning.
- B.** The Jews had gone into Egypt as honored guests but a change of regime took place and they found themselves as slaves. Their living conditions got worse and worse over time. Finally, God was ready and sent in 80 year old Moses and his brother, Aaron.
- C.** Faced with Pharaoh’s stubbornness, God unleashed a series of plagues on Egypt, striking down their gods and striking at the heart of their pride and willfulness. God warned Moses that the worst plague was about to come: the death of the firstborn.
 - 1. God was going to unleash the Angel of Death into the streets of Egypt. The people of God, the Jews, would be safe from the Death Angel if they obeyed God and did exactly as they were told.
 - 2. On the 10th day of the month, a young lamb without spot or blemish was to be selected and held until the 14th when it would be killed in the evening. (Exodus 13:4-6)
 - 3. As soon as it was killed, the blood was to be sprinkled over the door posts of their houses. The lamb was to be roasted and eaten hurriedly, with their shoes on, ready to move.
 - 4. That night, only those who had the lamb’s blood on their doorways and who were ready to move would be left untouched.
 - 5. The next day, the 15th, was to be a feast of remembrance that would last eight days.
- D.** The Passover was a sign of what would come later, through Jesus.
 - 1. Jesus was called the Lamb.

2. He was a male, without blemish or spot, slain for us so that death would no longer be a fearful thing. Just like the Passover lamb, no bone would be broken. God's wrath would not touch us for we had his blood as our shield.
3. The lamb was separated and chosen four days before it was slain. Jesus entered Jerusalem four days before he was slain.

II. The Passover Meal

- A.** The first thing: a thorough housecleaning by the hostess and a ceremonial search by the host. He uses a lighted candle, a wooden spoon, a feather and a napkin. The last crumbs of leaven – hidden for him by the wife -- are wrapped in the napkin and burned. (“Purge out the old leaven” 1 Cor.5:7)
- B.** The hostess then lights the candles and chants a blessing. “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who sanctifies us by Thy Commandments and commands us to light the lights of Passover.” The table is set. Some things are standard, set by God 3500 years ago. Other things have changed.
 1. The lamb is gone now. After the temple was destroyed it is represented by a bone on a plate.
 2. Bitter herbs are there to remind them of their captivity.
 3. Sometime during the Babylonian captivity it became traditional to place an egg, hard boiled and roasted brown, on a plate to represent life, hope, and the future.
- C.** Everyone has a pillow on their chair to relax and enjoy the Passover. It is a symbol that they are now free from the bondage of Egypt and are able to enjoy comfort.
- D.** The cup of wine will be refilled four times representing the four verbs in Exodus 6:6,7 – I will bring you out... I will deliver you... I will redeem you... I will take you to be my people.
- E.** There is a cloth with three sections in it. Matzo, or unleavened bread, is placed in each section. At sometime during the meal the head of household opens the cloth, takes out the middle bread, breaks it in half. Half goes back into the cloth. The other half is wrapped in another cloth. That piece is called the “afikomen” meaning “that which comes after.” The children hide their eyes while the father hides that piece of bread.

- F. The four questions (asked by the youngest person):
1. Why is this night different from every other night?
 2. Why on this night do we eat only unleavened bread?
 3. Why on this night do we eat the bitter herbs?
 4. Why do we dip the vegetable in salt water?
- G. But no more tears. Good news is in the meal. We are on THIS side of the Red Sea. We have crossed the Red Sea and the Jordan safely and we will cross the next river safely as well.

III. This is My Body, This is My Blood

- A. Then, the children search for the hidden bread. Whoever finds it brings it back to the head of the table who then unwraps it, breaks it, and hands it out.
- B. It was at that point in the Passover Meal that Jesus would have said: “Take and eat. This is my body which has been given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”
- C. [set up Communion, read Psalm 114 and offer prayer]
- D. As they take the cup that represents deliverance, redemption, and adoption, Jesus says, “Take and drink. This is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.” [read Psalm 116:1-9]

NOTE: should we do the offering as we stand after the communion? If so, I will read Psalm 118:1-9 there. If not, I will use it as an admonition. Either way, please have these verses up on Media Shout. Thanks.

Alternate admonition: Psalm 118:22-29