

John: Welcome to Passover, our celebration of God's rescue and redemption. The Passover story is one of the most referenced events in all of history and in the Bible.

We know the children of Israel watched all night for God's deliverance from Egypt as they stood on the shores of the Red or Reed Sea.

For 400 years the people had wondered when God would bring His people out of slavery and back into the land of promise.

God heard their cries and orchestrated their release from slavery and exodus out of Egypt. God gave instructions that would allow His judgment to pass over the families who obeyed His instructions.

This Passover meal was very specifically described by God and is known as a seder, which means 'order' in Hebrew, because there was an ordered way to have the meal. This is why we read a script: to keep the order in order to remember more fully and accurately this wondrous event in history.

We know these children of Israel continued to celebrate Passover for many generations after, sometimes according to God's instructions and sometimes without such obedience.

When Jesus came to live among us, we know He celebrated Passover though it's hard to say exactly what that looked like.

According to the Gospel accounts, it was during Passover that Jesus laid down His will, sought the Father's plan, and asked his disciples to "Watch with Me," as God again made a way for deliverance and Jesus offered Himself as the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.

In the years since Jesus's life on earth, many traditions have been added to God's instructions due to realities like the destruction of the Temple and exile in Babylon. The modern Jewish seder meal is worth learning not just because it's culturally interesting but because the anticipation of Messiah is so clearly present. Whether the seder you follow is an ancient tradition or a newer one, the whole Passover story is read in parts by everyone present. As a dad, I can think of no better way to teach my children Scripture and to remember that God keeps His promises.

Melanie: We have hosted events in the past and hope we've been clear in our purpose: to teach and honor GOD's acts in history, to remember His faithfulness in keeping His promises, to celebrate His ongoing provision of freedom from bondage.

We aren't sure the contemporary seder meal is identical to Jesus' own final Passover meal but the foundational elements were surely present and it can greatly inform our faith. We encourage you to continually learn as a family how the seder's symbolism points to Jesus the Messiah.

Let us begin with the lighting of the candle, lit by the woman of each household (possibly the eldest woman at your table) because God chose to birth the Light of Life into the world through a woman, and so HE chose to dwell as holiness in human flesh. In the face of that kind of love, words fail.

Woman: Lord, as we kindle these lights, may your Spirit be our light this evening. Guide us through every part of tonight's gathering, bless us with a divine understanding of what this celebration means for us.

Light candle.

“Barook etah Adonai eloheinu, melekh ha olam asher kidshanu b’devaro uvishMO anakhNU madli-khim haneyrot shel yom tov.”

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has set us apart by His Word, and in whose Name we light the festival lights.

Begin...the story...

Leader: The Story of Passover is a story of miracles, redemption, rescue, and love. God showed his power to overcome evil, and we see a shadow of how He would one day fulfill His promise to defeat death forever.

We will pour four cups this evening. Each represents an expression of the redemption named in Exodus 6:6-7. God told Moses to tell all Israel, “I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments; and I will take you to Me for a nation and I will be to you a God...”

The first cup is the Cup of Sanctification.

Everyone fill first cup.

All say: We praise you, Adonai our God, who made us holy and has lovingly given us festivals for gladness. You have given us this Festival of Passover and Unleavened Bread to celebrate our freedom from sin and bondage, a holy time to recall our coming out of Egypt and Jesus our Salvation. We praise you, Adonai, who sanctifies us. Together, let's drink this first cup.

Everyone drinks.

Leader: We'll have our youngest willing reader read four questions, all of which we will answer throughout the evening's meal.

Youngest Reader: 1) All other nights we eat bread, why do we eat matzah tonight? 2) All other nights we eat vegetables, why do we eat bitter herbs tonight? 3) All other nights we do not dip our vegetables, why do we dip them twice tonight? 4) All other nights we sit upright at the table, why do we recline on a pillow tonight?

Leader: It is an honor and privilege to answer the four questions as we recite the mighty works of our faithful God. On all other nights we eat raised bread. On Passover we eat only unleavened bread because as God's children fled Egypt, they did not have time for their bread to rise. More than this, Scripture teaches that leaven is a good symbol for sin because leaven, or yeast, works its way through the whole dough.

Leader holds up 3 matzah stack which is wrapped together.

Leader: During Unleavened Bread and Passover, may we break our old habits of sin and selfish living and begin a new, holy life. This is the bread of affliction, striped and pierced like our Savior.

All read : Isaiah 53:5, Zechariah 12:10.

Leader: *take middle matzah, break in half, and re-wrap half.*

This center matzah is called afikomen--the upcoming one-- and is wrapped for burial.

{Someone hide afikomen while all children hide their eyes}.

As the afikomen is buried or hidden, Messiah Jesus was hidden, buried in a tomb for three days. Just as the afikomen will return to join our meal later, so our sinless Messiah rose from the dead as God's firstfruits of resurrected souls.

Break piece of matzah from other half of middle piece, distribute remainder and eat.

Let us bless God for bread.

All say: Blessed are you, Adonai, who brings forth bread from the earth.

All eat.

Leader: On all other nights we eat all kinds of vegetables, but on Passover, we eat maror, bitter herbs. As sweet as our lives are today, it is good to remember the bitterness of the lives of the children of Israel before God brought them out and of all who are slaves to sin.

All read Exodus 1:12-14.

Leader: Let us scoop some maror/horseradish onto a piece of matzah and allow the bitter taste to remind us of the bitterness of sorrow of our ancestors all those years ago.
All eat.

Leader: *Hold up sprig.* Passover comes in the spring and we praise God for the new, green life that grows. But in Egypt, life was bitter for God's children, so we dip our sprig into salt water to remember the tears that life brings.

Everyone dip sprig and eat.

All say: *Blessed are you O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth fruit from the earth.*

Leader: On all other nights we don't dip vegetables, let alone twice. But tonight we've already dipped our parsley once & now we'll dip again. Dip a sprig or a piece of matzah into the bitter and then dip into the charoset--the chopped apple mixture. This second dip is a sweet one, to remind us that even the most bitter of circumstances are sweetened by the hope we have in Adonai our God.

All eat.

On all other nights, we eat sitting up, but tonight we lean on a pillow. This is to remind us that when the people of Israel celebrated the first Passover, they were enslaved. Now we eat reclining, as free people.

All say, *"Once we were slaves, but now we are free!"*

Leader: Four readers and each one of us will together tell the story of the first Passover. We are grafted into the family of Israel, and know this story is our family story.

Reader One: God had promised Abraham offspring too numerous to count and to make his children into a great nation. His great grandson Joseph was carried into Egypt as a slave but eventually was raised to greatness in Pharaohs' house. Joseph's whole family soon came to Egypt to seek food during a drought and they lived there in peace for many years. But then another pharaoh came to power and he grew terrified of the growing population and obvious favor of the children of Israel. Let's all read **Exodus 1:6-14.**

All read *Exodus 1:6-14*

Reader Two: The pharaoh became so terrified of the growing population and obvious favor on the children of Israel that he ordered that all baby Hebrew boys be thrown into the Nile River.

By God's miracle, Moses survived and grew up in the ways of Egypt, yet was nursed and trained by his Hebrew mother Yochebed as well.

Let's all read **Exodus 2:1-10. All read.**

Reader Three: Moses learned his heritage, killed an Egyptian task-master in anger, and fled Egypt. He spent forty years as a shepherd in the desert. The Lord saw the affliction of his people in Egypt and approached Moses in a bush lit with flames that did not burn. Moses was instructed to return to Pharaoh's palace, the very place where he had been raised. Let's read from ***Exodus 3:1-12.***

All read Exodus 3:1-12.

Reader Four: Moses returned to Pharaoh with the message the Lord had sent with him. But God had warned Moses that his message would be met with a hard heart.

Let's all read ***Exodus 3:19-20.***

All read Exodus 3:19-20.

Leader: Let's look at the Second Cup of the night: Cup of Judgment.

Only the Leader pours a small cup.

Leader: God Himself delivered judgment on the dark forces—the evil false gods— of Egypt, through signs and wonders including 10 plagues. God proved over and over He alone is the one true God. Yet with each plague, Pharaoh hardened his heart, and would not relent. As a tenth plague unfolded, God gave His people a way to be redeemed from this final judgment. Let's all read the list of plagues.

All say, with much drama: Blood! Frogs! Lice! Beasts! Cattle Disease! Boils! Hail! Locusts! Darkness! Death of Firstborn!

(Pause for kids to dramatize the plagues.)

Leader: After 9 of the plagues had struck Egypt, Pharaoh was unrelenting. And so God said: "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn-- both men and animals--and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt; I am the Lord," (Exodus 12:12).

God instructed His people to bring a perfect lamb into their homes on the tenth day of the month of Nisan. The families were to inspect their own lambs for four days to make sure they were perfect. Only a perfect sacrifice can pay for our sins before our perfectly holy God. John the Baptist prophesied this role Jesus would take when he exclaimed at Jesus' dedication at the Jordan River,

All say: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!"

Leader: On that first Passover night, the lamb was killed to pay for, or atone, for the sins of the family. Blood was put on their homes' door posts as a sign that the sacrifice had been made. The family waited, trusting the sacrifice to cover them, for God to pass over them in judgment. We know that on the ultimate Passover night, Jesus

surrendered Himself, the Lamb of God, to become the perfect and final Passover sacrifice. Only His perfect blood could cover us, and only by trusting in His sacrifice can we know that God no longer sees us as guilty, or as slaves, but as His redeemed, rescued children.

Leader: This is the second cup described in Scripture: the cup of God's wrath. (Leader holds up his small single cup). In Isaiah 51 we read God's wrath being poured into a cup.

**All read: This is what your Sovereign Lord says,
your God, who defends his people:
“See, I have taken out of your hand
the cup that made you stagger;
from that cup, the goblet of my wrath,
you will never drink again.**

Leader: A holy God requires a people made holy. God's purity demands judgment for sin.

All read Matthew 26:36-39

All read Luke 22:39-44

Leader: Who drank the cup of wrath? Jesus. He drank it so we never have to.
Leader pours cup of wrath, the single second cup, out “onto the ground”-dispose.

**All read: “See, I have taken out of your hand
the cup that made you stagger;
from that cup, the goblet of my wrath,
you will never drink again.”**

All say: Blessed are you, Adonai our God, for so loving the world, that You sent your one and only Son, that whoever would believe in Him would not perish but have eternal life.

Leader: According to Scripture, on the night of Jesus's death, Jesus took part in some simple traditions with His closest friends. One of Jesus's last acts on earth was to celebrate the Passover with his disciples. From Luke 22:15, we read Jesus saying, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.”

In the setting of this Passover feast, Jesus revealed the mystery of God's plan. By the giving of his own body and blood, Jesus would satisfy God's holy requirement for full and total redemption that formerly required a lamb sacrifice.

It is written in Matthew 16, “While they were eating, Jesus took a piece of unleavened bread, made the blessing, broke it, gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat, this is my body.” Luke records it this way

All read: “And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me,’” Luke 22 : 19 .

Leader: By giving his body, Jesus became the bread of life that rose from the earth! Let’s all say the traditional blessing to God for bread.

All say: “Barukh etah Adonai eloheinu, ha melekh ha olam, motzee lechem min ha’eretz— blessed are you Adonai, our God, king of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.”

Everyone takes portion of matzah and all eat.

{Traditionally a Passover meal is served here}

Leader: We’ve come to the third cup. Everyone pour a third cup. Luke goes on to write, “In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you.”

All read: Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins,” Luke 22:20

We will drink this Cup of Redemption, a symbol that we accept God’s gift of Jesus our Redeemer.

All drink 3rd cup.

Leader: Traditionally, a chair is set for the prophet Elijah to come and usher in Messiah’s coming. But we know from Scripture that a prophet like this has come in John the Baptist. Also in tradition, a child is sent to the door to see if Elijah is there waiting to be invited in. Rather, let’s open the doors of our hearts to the Lord our God, so he may enter and live with us. For it is written that Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him and him with me,” (Revelation 3:20).

Leader: Let’s pour our fourth and final cup of the night, the Cup of the Kingdom.

All pour cup.

We believe that Jesus's death and resurrection have saved us and that when we accept God's salvation, He comes to make his home with us (John 14). We believe in Jesus's promised Helper, the Holy Spirit, so that we may remember all He teaches us. By the power of God's salvation and the equipping of the Holy Spirit, let us seek first the Kingdom, making disciples of all nations, trusting that all we need will be given. Let us raise our fourth and final cup together, in full confidence that the Maker and Sustainer of the universe grants every breath a gift, and that when no more breath is granted, our faith will be made sight in the Kingdom to come.

All drink the fourth cup in acceptance.

Have you brought back the afikomen?

Leader: As we accept God's gift of Salvation, I will pray a blessing over my house. Let's take a moment to bless GOD for our households.

May He who makes shalom in the heavens grant shalom to us and to all people. Amen.

After Jesus finished his meal with his disciples, the Gospels record that He followed tradition and went out singing a hymn. Let's sing...

***In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My Comforter, my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand.
In Christ alone! - who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live.***

Leader: It is traditional to end the meal, sometimes in the wee hours of morning, with this blessing... Next year in Jerusalem! This reflects the desire of God's people to return to their homeland to celebrate in full freedom.

All say "*Lashana Ha Bee-ya, B' Yerushalayim*"

We who believe Jesus has come and saved us, we express our desire that we celebrate next year under the new heavens, here on the new earth! Amen.