



Short Seder Explanation

Passover is a Jewish festival that celebrates and honors the retelling of the Exodus story. The central passages of the Exodus story that are retold during Passover come from Exodus 12-14. The Passover itself refers explicitly to the tenth plague, the death of the first-born, and how God delivered the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt.

As part of the observance of Passover, many Christians now hold a Seder Meal as part of a Passover Haggadah. The Haggadah is the elaborate retelling of the Exodus story. Seder simply means order. In other words, as you celebrate, there is an order to the way you tell the story and eat the elements of the meal.

The Seder Meal is designed to be a multi-sensory experience. It's designed to help you experience the story that God is telling through his people. For Christians, we're not so concerned with the modern Passover. We're much more concerned with the Passover that Jesus and his disciples experienced. The reason is because this will help us understand what's going on in the gospels, and what is going on in the last supper. There are a lot of implication points for us.

The main foods on the Seder plate are as follows:

- A napkin
- A piece of Matza bread
- A sprig of greens (usually cilantro or parsley)
- A hard boiled and peeled egg
- Four cups for juice or wine
- Bowl of salt water
- Bowl of strong horseradish
- Bowl of honey (as least as much honey as horseradish)
- At least one candle

HAGGADAH

Below you will find the traditional steps (order) of the Seder. There is far too much to explain for each section here, but some of the steps will have a short description.

Bedikat Chametz

Search for leaven

Birkat Ha Ner

Lighting of the Passover candles: The lighting of the candle before the meal symbolizes God's way, God's truth, God's word. By lighting the candle you're doing something to set apart a moment, to set apart the space you're in because you want something to happen around your dinner table this night that's different than other nights. Traditionally the mother, or matriarch, lights the candle. As you light the candle, say a prayer to help your heart prepare for this experience.

Kaddesh

Sanctifying blessing and first cup of wine.

The entire Passover meal is built around four distinct glasses which represent four promises, which are taken out of Exodus 6v6-7. There are these four amazing promises that God gives his people here: 1) I will bring you out, 2) I will set you free, 3) I will redeem you, and 4) I will take you to myself. The first cup is the cup of sanctification which is all about God setting his people apart. The first section of the meal is all about being setting apart - about setting our hearts apart. It's about us being sanctified. The second cup is the cup of deliverance, which is what the second part of the meal is about and correspond to the promise of being set free. The third cup of the meal is the cup of redemption. The fourth part of the meal centers on the cup of protection (in modern Jewish seders it is called the cup of blessing or cup of praise).

Urchatz

First hand washing

Karpas

Green Vegetable dipped in salt water and blessing

Yachatz

Breaking the middle Matzoh and hiding the Afikomen

Notice how the matzah is bruised and pierced. It looks striped. The matzah conveys the idea that Jesus was pierced for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, and by his stripes we are made whole. Typically, the matzah is placed in a matzah napkin with three chambers. At this time in the seder the matzah is taken from the center pocket of the napkin (or the middle layer of napkin) and is broken in half. One half of the matzah piece that was broken is then taken and hidden somewhere in the house.

Maggid

Telling the story of Passover and the second cup (deliverance) of wine

Rachtzah

Second hand washing and blessing

Matzah, maror, korech

Blessing for the bread and eating of Matzah.

The matzoh is plain and tasteless to remind us of the speed of God's coming and how things changed rapidly for the Hebrews as God rescued them. They were not able to add leaven to their bread. Rabbis used to say that you haven't celebrated Passover until you've had three things: the matzah, the bitter herbs (maror), and the lamb. The matzah is a reminder of the speed of the departure in the story of the Exodus. The lamb is the symbol of the revolution. The lamb ends up being the symbol of "everything changes tomorrow." Lastly, we have the horseradish.

Maror

Eating of the bitter herbs.

The maror is represented by the use of horseradish. It represents your sin in a sensory manner that you will never forget. In terms of the amount of horseradish representing your sin, you have the ability to choose how much (or how big of a dollop) you will put on your matzah. After doing so, eat it. You may want to ask yourself, is your sin worth a tiny bit of horseradish, or is it worth something more?

Here are some observations worth noting. Jesus and his disciples knew this part of the meal was coming. It's at this part of the meal that Jesus talks about the betrayer, which the disciples didn't get...probably because they're reacting to what they've just eaten. What's interesting is that this bowl is the bowl that Judas dips into with Jesus. For us, this moment is poignant, because this is also the moment where Judas gets pointed out as the betrayer. This is a good opportunity to reflect on our own sin. It's an opportunity to realize that our sin is a stench that burns the nostrils of God. Take this time to reflect on whether you've become too comfortable with your own sin.

Korech

Eating of the egg.

To this day, rabbis still discuss what this egg is supposed to represent. Overall, they've come to the conclusion that it represents shalom, wholeness, or peace with God - life as it ought to be. What is typically done is the egg is dipped in salt water, which represents tears. This is reflective reminder of being delivered. If you want to be delivered and pursue shalom in your life, it's going to come at a cost. It's not going to be easy. Getting rid of the sin in your life and pursuing shalom and wholeness is probably going to take some tears, and pain and hurt. So we dip the egg in the salt water and eat it.

Shulchan Orech

The festival meal

This meal can be anything you like. Take a break and fellowship and enjoy the meal. See the link in our blog post for more information on recipes you can make for your Seder meal.

Tzafun

Eating the Afikomen (the retrieval)

As the meal comes to a close, you re-enter the seder with what's called the tzafun, which about retrieval. This is where you send any kids at your meal to go find the afikomen, the other half of the matzah that we broke earlier in the meal.

The afikomen is very significant for us as Christians. It is the only bread that is interacted with before or after the meal. All the gospel writers talk about this piece of bread. You're going to take it and break it apart and dip it in honey. Afikomen means dessert, and as such, it is the only part of the meal that is sweet. It is particularly significant because when Jesus gets to this part of the meal, he takes the bread and he breaks it, and he says, "this is my body, which is broken for you, so whenever you eat this bread, do it in remembrance of me" - and he dips it in honey.

It's particularly interesting and significant that the dessert portion is the part Jesus connects to his sacrifice. For him, this is sweet. Yes, we mourn and we grieve when we approach the Lord's table, but we often miss the point that when Jesus did this, he did it in a way that for him, it was sweet.

As you dip the matzah in the honey and you eat it, remember that Jesus did this not because he was angry or mad or hurt, but because of his great love for us.

Barech

After meal blessing, the third cup.

Hallel

Songs of praise

Nirtzah

Fourth cup and completion of the Seder