

***Passover/Feast of the  
Unleavened Bread  
Devotionals***

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## Monday – Understanding the Feast of Unleavened Bread

- Old Testament Connection: To remember God’s deliverance of Israel from under the Egyptians, God commanded the yearly celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
  - “So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.” (**Exodus 12:14-15**, and continues on in verses **16-20**)
- Traditionally/Historically: Until today, every Jewish household will clean the house from top to bottom and remove any speck of leaven. (It has even been suggested that perhaps this is where the tradition of spring cleaning began.)
- New Testament Connection: Leaven often is associated with sin or impurity in the Bible. This aspect connects with preparing ourselves (being the temple of God), sweeping clean all the leaven (sin) from our hearts and minds as we enter into remembrance of Jesus as our Passover lamb.
  - In a letter to the Believers in Corinth, Paul writes a warning against sexual immorality by using a familiar reference to the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover sacrifice (**1 Corinthians 5:6-8**). This is significant because although there were probably some Jewish Believers in Jesus, the majority of people in body of Believers at Corinth most likely came from Gentile backgrounds. The fact that Paul used this particular illustration means that the body of Believers there were well aware of the Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread and the intricacies involved therein:
    - “Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore, purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you are truly unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.” (1 Corinthians 5:6-8)
  - Recognize the connection between the physical command to clean out the leaven with the spiritual command to “examine one’s self” before He partakes of the LORD’s supper. (**1 Corinthians 11:27-29**)
  - Take time to work through anything that may be like “leaven” in your life. What can you do to get rid of it so its affects do not spread in you or spread to those around you?

## Tuesday – Understanding the Need For Purity and Serving One Another (Jesus washes the disciples' feet)

- Old Testament Connection: The sacrifices that were offered had to be pure, without blemish (**Exodus 12:5**). The whole idea of the sacrifice was to be a substitute, interceding as the one who would “serve” with the paying of his life. (**Exodus 12:12-13, 21-23**)
- Traditionally/Historically: Traditionally, ritual purity was important for both the sacrifice and the one receiving the sacrifice. Jews wash their hands to physically purify themselves for Passover before the main course is served.
- New Testament Connection: Jesus put a spin on this tradition and took it a step further. He often focused on the practical heart connection. He was the One who cleansed His disciples. In addition He pointed out that part of our spiritual cleansing involves humbling ourselves and putting others above ourselves, serving one another in love. Although He was God in the flesh, Jesus demonstrated His love by humbling Himself and washing the feet of His disciples. He set the example of how we should love one another and encourage purity in one another.
  - “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel with which He was girded.” (**John 13:3-5**)
  - “So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for I am. If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” (**John 13:12-15**)
  - Take time to think how you could demonstrate this kind of love to those in your circle of influence today. Think about what it means to be a “living sacrifice.” (**Romans 12:1-3**)

## Wednesday – Jesus as Our Passover Lamb (The One Who Takes Away the Sin of the World)

- Old Testament Connection: A lamb was sacrificed for each household. Its blood was placed on the doorposts of the house. When the destroyer arrived at any house that was covered in the blood, it passed over because the life had been paid for. The lamb was then roasted over the fire and consumed by everyone, and if any was left until morning it was burned. (**Exodus 12:3-13**)
- Traditionally/Historically: Lamb sacrifices for Passover were offered at the temple until the Romans destroyed the temple in 70 AD and sacrifices were no longer possible. The shank bone on the Passover plate reminds us of this sacrifice. At some point in time, a roasted egg was also added to the plate in remembrance of the roasted lamb. (As the roasted egg turns brown in the fire, some have linked this to the Easter tradition of coloring eggs.) The tradition of the “Afikomen” (the middle matzah) is also related to the Passover sacrifice. Afikomen is a Greek word, which the Jewish oral traditions describe as inferring to the “dessert” (the last thing to arrive to the table). However, a literal Greek translation of “Afikomen” means “he came/arrived” (ἀφικόμεν, the aorist tense of ἀφικνέομαι), referring to the fact that the Messiah, the anointed one who would redeem Israel and the world, has come.
- New Testament Connection: When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he called out, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”(John 1:29). Jesus eventually fulfilled these words as He took the wrath of God on Himself and His blood was placed on the cross. For all who believe in His sacrifice for our sins, we come under the covering of His blood and the punishment passes over us. At the last Passover meal with His disciples, we are told that Jesus broke bread and gave it to His disciples, telling them that it represented His body. As stated above, the Afikomen was a representation of the Passover lamb. We have no idea when this tradition actually began but some have suggested that Jesus and His disciples actually started the tradition because it fits so perfectly with breaking of unleavened matzah (symbolically without sin and literally pierced with holes). From there, the bread is wrapped up, hidden away, and finally brought back to be the final thing eaten in the Passover meal. There couldn't be a better object lesson to remember Jesus sacrifice. It should be pointed out that when the temple was destroyed (70 AD) the Jews were no longer able to sacrifice. This means that Jewish Believers in Jesus may have already been celebrating this custom for 40 years up that point. It is possible that when sacrifice came to an end, the rest of the Jewish community picked up on this already established custom as representing the Passover sacrifice (although not acknowledging that Jesus is the Lamb of God). This may also explain why in Jewish oral traditions, we find some confirming it as a substitute for the Passover lamb, while a few actually forbid eating the Afikomen (perhaps because it so perfectly represents Jesus).
  - Take time this day to let your heart break for the lost sheep of Israel. Pray for all the Jewish families around the world who partake in this festival year after year, who eat the Afikomen, but who still don't see its significance to Jesus' sacrifice for us all. (**Romans 10:1-4**)

## Thursday – The Blood of the New Covenant (The Cup of Redemption)

- Old Testament Connection: **Exodus 6:6-8** informs of four “I will” statements that God promises to do for His people.
  - 1- (Verse 6) **“I will bring you out** from under the burdens of the Egyptians”
    - The Cup of **Sanctification**
  - 2- (Verse 6) **“I will rescue you** from their bondage”
    - The Cup of **Judgment**
  - 3- (Verse 6) **“I will redeem you** with an outstretched arm”
    - The Cup of **Redemption**
  - 4- (Verse 7) **“I will take you** as My people”
    - The Cup of **Praise**
    - The text shows three more “I will” statements that are not represented by further cups:
      - (Verse 7) “I will be your God”
      - (Verse 8) “I will bring you into the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”
      - (Verse 8) “I will give it to you as a possession/inheritance”
- Traditionally/Historically: Four cups of wine (symbolized as “joy”) are taken during the meal, based on the first four statements when God says “I will.” These statements deal mainly with Israel coming out of Egypt.
  - The first cup, the Cup of Sanctification, is a cup which reminds us to get ready for God to meet us. Before the meal, the house is purified and cleaned of all leaven/yeast. This cup also ushers in the ritual washing of hands (to become pure) before partaking of the meal.
  - The second cup, the Cup of Judgment, reminds us how God performed 10 plagues to show His power over the gods of the Egyptians. Because each cup of wine symbolizes a full cup of joy, at the reading of each plague a drop of wine (joy) is removed with your finger to show that we do not take pleasure in the suffering of our enemies.
  - The third cup, the Cup of Redemption, recalls how God redeemed His people. The root of this word (גאל) deals with act of purchasing someone/something to your care (such as the act of a kinsman redeemer).
  - The fourth cup, the Cup of Praise, marks the release of bondage with a celebration. After this cup is taken, the meal is finished with a song of praise.
    - As stated above, there are three more “I will” promises in the Old Testament text after this, interestingly, with no specific cups are assigned to them. This is because these “I wills” were looked on as being even further into the future. In other words, they are viewed as being fulfilled when the Messiah comes and establishes His ‘physical kingdom’ on earth. (cf. **Mathew 26:29; Luke 22:16; Revelation 11:15, 12:10**)

- New Testament Connection:

- Most likely referring to the “Cup of Redemption”, Jesus explained that this represented the blood of the New Covenant. (**Luke 22:20**)
  - “Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup *is* the **New Covenant** in My blood, which is shed for you.’”
- **Jeremiah 31:31** refers directly to this New Covenant:
  - “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a **New Covenant** with the house of Judah – **not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke**, through I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. **For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.**”
- This is also probably the “cup” that Jesus refers to three times in the garden as He is praying in agony to the Father. (**Matthew 26:39, 42, 44**):
  - “He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, **let this cup pass from Me**; Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.’”
  - “Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, **if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it**, Your will be done.’”
  - “So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.”
- Meditate on Jesus’ heart as He explained for the last time to disciples that He was the Cup of Redemption that would save Israel and the world. Think about how later, He agonized before the Father, even sweating blood (**Luke 22:41-44**), knowing that this New Covenant could only be made with the shedding of His blood. And finally, dwell on the encouragement that Jesus’ submission to the Father’s will, out of love for the world, strengthened Him to willingly embrace His purpose (**John 18:11**). Is the LORD asking you to sacrifice something out of love for others (time, energy, finances) that His will be done? (**Philippians 2:5-8**)

## Friday: Passover Evening (starting at sundown) – A Call to Remember and Tell the Next Generation

- As you enter into the Easter holiday, remembering Jesus' death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead, reflect on how the Passover traditions that you studied this week can compliment how Easter is celebrated.
  - According to Eusebius (c. 260-339 AD, a Christian bishop of Caesarea and who has become the primary source on early church history), Believers in Jesus used to celebrate Jesus' death and resurrection through the traditions of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread up until the time that he finished writing his accounts. The term that the majority of Believers used for this holiday was "Pascha," which is simply the Greek translation of the Hebrew word for Passover (pesach, פסח). When Eusebius was about 46 years old, Roman Emperor Constantine began his rule over the known world (c. 306-337 AD). He put an end to the horrible persecutions and martyrdoms that had plagued Christians for the previous 300 years. Constantine eventually made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, although he still allowed pagan worship to continue as it had. Around this time, and especially in the years to follow, the Pascha/Passover celebration entered into competition with an already existing spring celebration to the goddess of fertility (known by many regional names that sound similar to Easter: Ishtar, Astarte, Ostara, Eostre). At any rate, somewhere along the line, Pascha became more popularly known as Easter. Unfortunately, the overlap of Christian traditions and pagan traditions eventually led to dropping out a lot of the tradition that both Jewish and Gentile Believers in Jesus held for hundreds of years after Jesus (at least up until the time of Eusebius' writings).
    - As you see colored eggs during Easter this season, be reminded of the Passover tradition of the roasted egg, which represents the Passover sacrifice and is colored brown as it roasts in the fire. As you see children going out to search for and find the eggs that were hidden, recall the Passover tradition of the "Afikomen" which represents Jesus as the Passover sacrifice, which is hidden away (reminding us of His death and burial), but which is searched out and found by the children and brought back and eaten as the final element of the Passover meal (symbolizing the resurrected body of Jesus). Take time to tell your children of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection and answer any questions that they might have for the traditions that you hold in remembrance of this.
  - As you celebrate Communion in the future, be reminded that the "Last Supper" which Jesus ate with His disciples was not just an ordinary good-bye meal. Recall how He used the yearly "Passover" tradition to explain to them why He came to this earth (to set us free from bondage [of our sin] and to redeem us [to pay the price for our sin]).

- **Look forward to a hope and a future** as you remember Jesus' promise that we will celebrate this Passover meal *with* Him when it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God. (**Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:13-18; Revelation 11:15; 12:10-11**)
  - Since Revelation does not directly mention the Passover celebration that Jesus told His disciples He would take part in when the kingdom was established, some think that the 'Marriage Supper of the Lamb' may be its equivalent (cf. Revelation 19:1-16). Interestingly, the events leading through the end times and up to the Marriage Supper hold virtually the same themes as the first Passover themes.
    - Sanctification/purification of the bride (the church) through trials
    - Judgment/plagues on the nations
    - Redemption of the bride (the church) by the Lamb
    - Praise and celebration ending with a feast