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A PASSOVER DEVOTION FOR CHRISTIANS



*Start
Holy Week
with Jesus*

A PASSOVER DEVOTION FOR CHRISTIANS

The first Passover was recorded in the book of Exodus. Enslaved and oppressed by the Egyptians, Moses instructed every Jewish household to sacrifice an unblemished lamb and smear the doorway to their house with its blood. While they ate the lamb that evening, the Angel of Death came through Egypt and killed every firstborn who was not protected by the blood of a lamb.

This was the breaking point for Pharaoh, who lost his crown prince that night. Terrified and upset, he told the Jewish slaves to get out of Egypt. Through this one action, God redeemed His people out of bondage in Egypt and set them on the path to the Promised Land of Canaan.

The whole Passover story is bigger than that, but this is where the celebration gets its name. The Angel of Death “passed over” the children of Israel who were protected by the blood. It was a foreshadowing of the Lamb of God who sacrificed His life so that God’s wrath would “pass over” those who place their trust in Him.

This devotional is designed to use the four main elements of the Passover celebration to re-orient our hearts to the gospel truth that we are celebrating this Easter season. Celebrate it with your family. Use the elements of the study to focus your attention on the Lamb of God, who came to take away the sins of the world.

On Thursday, before the day of His crucifixions, Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples. Symbolically He walked through the sacrifice of a lamb and the redemption that was offered through its blood. Of all the people in the room that night, only He knew that in a few short hours He would be living out the ultimate sacrifice for the final redemption.

SUPPLIES YOU WILL NEED

This devotional uses four elements to picture the truths that we find in the Passover celebration. Each of the elements has a symbolic meaning that helps us to understand the story. Before you begin the devotional, you’ll need the following items:

Bitter Herbs

The bitter herbs remind us of the bitter lot of the Israelites while they were slaves in Egypt. Before he told them to get out, Pharaoh intentionally tried to make their lives hard. Eating the bitter herbs gives us a taste of what that might have been like.

- Use green onions to represent the bitter herbs. Each person should have a trimmed onion for themselves.

Apple Sauce

In the Passover celebration, a sweet mixture of apple sauce, nuts, and chopped dates is used. It represents the mortar that the Israelites had to use with their mud bricks to build what Pharaoh commanded. For this devotional, apple sauce is an appropriate approximation.

- A small bowl of apple sauce, chunky if you can find it, that will be shared by everyone.

Lamb

The Passover is the remembrance of the lamb. Since most of us don't have a live lamb, any symbol of a lamb can be used. If your family has small children, you could do a craft to make a lamb out of cotton balls and q-tips. Or you could draw a lamb on a piece of paper and cut it out. If you have a toy lamb (or a nativity set lamb), this could also be used.

- A representation of a lamb, how ever you choose to create it.

Matzah

Since Pharaoh drove the Israelites out of Egypt so quickly, they didn't have time to let their bread rise (Exodus 12:39). So they made flatbread. Today, matzah is used to represent the bread, and it signifies the fact that God's intervention happened very quickly and suddenly. If your family has a flatbread recipe, you can use that instead of store-bought matzah

- You will need a piece of Matzah large enough for everyone to break off a piece to eat.

Grape Juice

Throughout the Passover celebration, participants drink four cups of grape juice or wine. Each of these is a celebration of one of the four promises God made in Exodus 6:6-7:

Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and (1) I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and (2) I will deliver you from slavery to them, and (3) I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. (4) I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

- Everyone will need a cup or glass and enough grape juice to pour a couple of swallows into each of the cups.

This devotional is best done around a table with each of the elements placed in the middle as follows

1. Green Onion & Apple Sauce should be together
2. The Lamb
3. Matzah or flatbread
4. Grape Juice

SHARING THE DEVOTIONAL

1. Bitter Herbs remind us of captivity and slavery

When the children of Israel were living in Egypt, Pharaoh made them into his slaves. He oppressed them and made them do hard labor for him.

Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their foremen, "You shall no longer give the people straw to make bricks, as in the past; let them go and gather straw for themselves. But the number of bricks that they made in the past you shall impose on them, you shall by no means reduce it, for they are idle. Therefore they cry, 'Let us go and offer sacrifice to our God.' Let heavier work be laid on the men that they may labor at it and pay no regard to lying words." (Exodus 6:6-9)

Even today, all people are slaves to sin. It separates us from God and in His holiness, He has set a punishment for this offense against His righteousness.

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? (Romans 6:16)

AT THE TABLE

- Discuss what it's like to be a slave, focusing either on the historical slavery of the Hebrews, or our slavery to sin.

ACTIVITY:

- In remembrance of the bitterness of slavery (to a conqueror or sin), the green onion is dipped in the applesauce and a bite of the onion is eaten.

2. The Lamb reminds us of the sacrifice that brings freedom

Moses received instructions from God that every family was to take a perfect lamb and sacrifice it and put its blood around their door. Only through this sacrifice and blood would the Angel of Death pass over their home.

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. (Exodus 12:5-7)

At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead. (Exodus 12:29-30)

Jesus came as the Lamb of God. His purpose was to offer Himself as the ultimate sacrifice which would deal with our sin problem once and for all. He lived a perfect life so that He could become the final Lamb that was sacrificed and pay the penalty for our sins.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me because he was before me.'" (John 1:29, 30)

AT THE TABLE

- Recount the story of the Exodus that led up to the Lamb. You can read the scriptures below, or tell the story as a paraphrase.
 - Exodus 6:1-8 (God remembers His promise)
 - Exodus 7:14-21 (The First Plague: Blood)
 - Exodus 8:1-4 (The Second Plague: Frogs)
 - Exodus 8:16-18 (The Third Plague: Gnats)
 - Exodus 8:20-24 (The Fourth Plague: Flies)
 - Exodus 9:1-7 (The Fifth Plague: Livestock Die)
 - Exodus 9:8-12 (The Sixth Plague: Boils)
 - Exodus 9:22-26 (The Seventh Plague: Hail)
 - Exodus 10:12-15 (The Eighth Plague: Locusts)
 - Exodus 10:21-23 (The Ninth Plague: Darkness)
 - Exodus 12:29-30 (The Tenth Plague: Death)
 - Exodus 12:31-36 (The Exodus)
- Remember how Jesus became our Passover Sacrifice
 - 2 Corinthians 5:21 (Jesus is Our Substitute)
 - Romans 5:6-11 (Christ Died for the Ungodly)

ACTIVITY:

- Use the symbol of the lamb as a "talking stick." Only the person who is holding it may speak. If you read the verses to remember the Passover, pass the lamb around to the person who is reading.

3. The Bread reminds us of the price Jesus paid

During the Passover celebration, three different pieces of matzah are used. Two of the pieces are eaten as soon as they are mentioned. One piece is broken in half and part of it is hidden away – until after the meal that occurs in the middle of the ceremony.

It is this broken and hidden away piece of matzah that Jesus used to introduce Communion to His disciples.

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. (1 Corinthians 11:23-24)

The broken bread foreshadows His broken body that was beaten, scourged and crucified as a sinner and a criminal. Because the bread was hidden away, it also paints the picture of His time in the grave before the miracle of life we celebrate on Resurrection Sunday.

When we eat this bread, we remember the sacrifice He made for us. He paid the price that should have come to us. Once and for all He addressed our sin problem before God by giving us His perfect righteousness.

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." (John 6:35)

AT THE TABLE

- Share what Jesus' sacrifice means to you.

ACTIVITY:

- Take the piece of matzah and break it in half. Then pass around one of the halves and let every person break off a piece.
- Eat the piece of matzah together and remember the price Jesus paid for you.

4. The Juice reminds of the new and improved covenant available to us through Jesus' sacrifice.

For centuries, God's people offered repeated sacrifices, continually returning to the altar to cover their sins with the blood of animals. This expressed their faith that one day God would bring about a permanent solution. The sacrificial process was an ongoing reminder that more and better would come one day.

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.

And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezekiel 36:25-27)

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jeremiah 31:31-33)

During the last supper, Jesus said that He was finally introducing this New Covenant. He used the third of the four cups of juice, which symbolizes the promise “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment” from Exodus 6:6. We call it “The Cup of Redemption.”

Jesus said that this cup represents the New Covenant that had been promised for centuries, ever since the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. It points to His blood, which purchased for us a new heart, which is alive before God, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

In the same way, also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” (1 Corinthians 11:25)

AT THE TABLE

- Discuss the benefits we receive because we have received this new covenant.

ACTIVITY:

- Pour a little of the juice into each person’s cup and drink it together, remembering what Jesus sacrifice purchased for us.

5. Conclusion of Praise

AT THE TABLE

- Read Psalm 136 out loud together. One person reads the first line of each verse and the rest of the people respond by saying “For His steadfast love endures forever.”

Conclude with a Prayer of Thanks.