

Matthew 26

Read Matthew 26:1-5: Jesus not only knew about the plot on his life; but it was actually his plan.

All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8)

but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (1 Peter 1:20)

The chief priests mulled over a secret plan; and the best timing to take him down. Even our most secret plans are not outside of God's plan.

Read Matthew 26:6-13: Jesus definitely hung with the down and out crowd. These people were sick and had a long history of sin.

Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." (Luke 5:31)

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek,

For they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled. (Matthew 5:3-6)

for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10)

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.” (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

Read Matthew 26:14-16: It is interesting how we judge others. We ask how Judas could have betrayed Jesus. We ask how certain celebrities and public officials could get involved in the things they do. We really can't compare them to others who do not have those same opportunities.

- "When people feel powerful or feel powerless, it influences their perception of others," According to their understanding, we judge the power of others relative to our own: When we feel powerful, others appear less so --and powerlessness and smallness often go together in our minds.
- "What power does is that it liberates the true self to emerge, "More of us walk around with kinds of social norms; we work in groups that exert all pressures on us to conform. Once you get into a position of power, then you can be whoever you are."
- "People who are given more power see more choice."They see beyond what is objectively there, the amount of choice they have. More directions for what actions they can take. What it means to have power is to feel free of the punishment that one could exert upon you for the thing you did." Which paves the

way for another hallmark of the powerful--hypocrisy. People are less tolerant of cheating than the less powerful.

It is easy for someone who can't pay their bills to criticize the opulent lifestyle of the wealthy. Those of us who were raised in reasonable homes can't make good comparisons to those raised in abusive situations. We are blessed if we do not have opportunities to sin. God knows where our point of betrayal lies.

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Our ability to resist sin comes from God.

The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.

He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor punished us according to our iniquities.

For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.

As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.

For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, And its place remembers it no more.

But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting On those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children, To such as keep His covenant,
And to those who remember His commandments to do them. (Psalm 103:8-18)

Read Matthew 26:17-30: The symbolism of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is the sinless life of Christ. Leaven is a symbol of sin or corruption. The apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 5:8, encouraged the mostly gentile church there to “keep the feast, not with old leaven, *nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness* [lingering sinful attitudes], but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”—a clear reference to the Feast of Unleavened Bread (emphasis added). Leaven puffs up; and makes things appear larger than they are. Unleavened bread is flat; and not inflated.

Jesus is the only person to live a sinless life. Yes, the Feast of Unleavened Bread is a festival that helps us to focus on replacing sin with righteousness. But the only real way to put sin out of our lives is to put Jesus Christ *into* our lives! We are promised that we can truly put sin out of our lives because Jesus Christ lives within us (compare Galatians 2:20;Romans 7:23-25 – Romans 8:1-4). Before the beginning of the Passover, all leaven, which is a symbol of sin (1 Cor. 5:6-8), must be removed from the Jewish home. The house is cleaned from top to bottom and anything containing leaven is removed. Then, the evening before the Passover, the father of the house takes the traditional cleaning implements: a feather, a wooden spoon, and a bag, and searches the house for any specks of leaven which might have been missed (my mother used to leave it on top of the refrigerator so my father shouldn't spend all night hunting!). Once the leaven is removed, the family sits around the table and ceremonially washes their hands with a special laver and towel. Jesus also took part in this tradition, but rather than wash his hands,

he got up from the table and washed the feet of his disciples, giving us an unparalleled lesson in humility (John 13:2-17). Other great Unleavened Bread events involved rededicating of the people of God to their Creator. Two examples are recorded in 2 Chronicles.

Chapters 29 through 31 describe the religious reform led by King Hezekiah, and chapters 34 and 35 tell of another reform through King Josiah. These chapters reveal the tremendous excitement and joy God's people felt as they recommitted themselves to Him (2 Chronicles 30:21-23 and 2 Chronicles 35:17-18). But at the very center of it all—at the very core of the meaning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is the all – encompassing truth that the resurrected Jesus Christ, the One who was raised during this spring festival, now lives His life in every individual Christian! Jesus repeatedly emphasized the importance of His own resurrection. During the last supper, He told the disciples that He would soon be betrayed, but He also told them that He would live again: "Because I live, you will live also" (John 14:19). He had just promised them that Christians would not be left as orphans (John 14:18)—that is, spiritually unprotected and totally vulnerable to the power of Satan.

The original Passover was an act of grace upon the faithful. God killed or passed over homes depending on the spilling of lamb's blood. It was a foreshadow of the future reality. The eventual real Passover is Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The Jews have particular ways they keep the Passover; which speaks more about Christ than they realize. He is still hidden from their awareness.

Lighting the candles

Once the house and the participants are ceremonially clean, the Passover seder can begin. The woman of the house says a blessing and lights the Passover candles. It is appropriate that the woman brings light into the home, because it was through the woman that the light of the world, Messiah Jesus, came into the world (Gen. 3:15)

Haggadah

Haggadah means "the telling" – the telling of the story of Passover. The story is told in response to four questions asked by the children: why is this night different from all other nights? The father proceeds to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt, reading from a book called "The Haggadah" and using symbols and object lessons in order to keep the attention of the little ones.

The first cup of wine

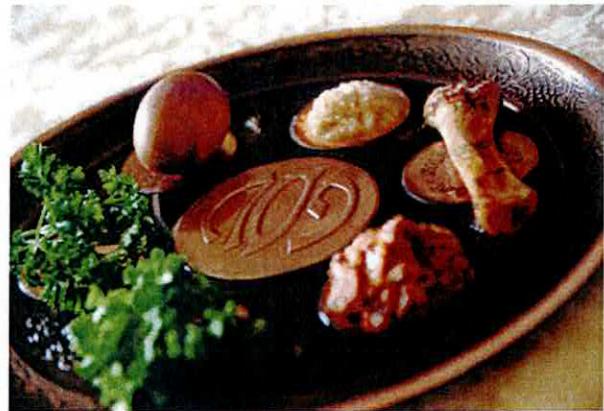
The seder begins with a blessing recited over the first of four cups of wine: "Blessed art thou, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast created the fruit of the vine." Jesus himself blessed the first cup in Luke 22:17-18.

The second cup of wine

The second cup is to remind us of the Ten Plagues and the suffering of the Egyptians when they hardened their heart to the Lord. In order not to rejoice over the suffering of our enemies (Prov. 24:17), we spill a drop of wine (which is a symbol of joy) as we recite each of the Ten Plagues, thus remembering that our joy is diminished at the suffering of others.

Afikomen

A very curious tradition now takes place. At the table is a bag with three compartments and three pieces of motza. The middle piece of motza is taken out, broken, and half is put back into the bag. The other half is wrapped in a linen napkin and hidden, to be taken out later, after the meal.



The seder plate

The rabbis have devised a series of object lessons to keep the attention of the little ones during the Passover seder. These items are tasted by each person, as each is instructed to feel as if they themselves had taken part in the flight from Egypt.

Karpas – greens

The first item taken is the karpas, or greens (usually parsley), which is a symbol of life. The parsley is dipped in salt water, a symbol of tears, and eaten, to remind us that life for our ancestors was immersed in tears.

Beitzah – egg

A roasted egg is on the seder plate to bring to mind the roasted daily temple sacrifice that no longer can be offered because the temple no longer stands. In the very midst of the Passover Seder, the Jewish people are reminded that they have no sacrifice to make them righteous before God.

Maror – bitter herb

This is usually ground horseradish, and enough is eaten (with Motza) to bring a tear to the eyes. We cannot appreciate the sweetness of redemption unless we first experience for ourselves the bitterness of slavery.

Charoset

Charoset is a sweet mixture of chopped apples, chopped nuts, honey, cinnamon, and a little Manischewitz grape wine (kosher for Passover) just for color! This sweet, pasty, brown mixture is symbolic of the mortar that our ancestors used to build bricks in the land of Egypt. Why do we remember an experience so bitter with something so sweet? The rabbis have a good insight: even the bitterest of labor can be sweet when our redemption draws nigh. This is especially true for believers in the Messiah. We can find sweetness even in the bitterest of experiences because we know our Lord's coming is near.

Shankbone of the Lamb

In every Jewish home, on every seder plate, is a bare shankbone of a lamb. In the book of Exodus, Jewish firstborns were spared from the Angel of Death by applying the blood of a spotless, innocent lamb applied to the doorpost of their homes as God brought the people from slavery into freedom. Today, we believe Jesus is that perfect Passover Lamb, and when we apply His blood to the doorposts of our heart, we too go from death into life, from the slavery of sin into the freedom of being a redeemed child of God. As John the Baptist said when he saw Jesus coming towards him, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)



The Meal

Ah, even through the wonders of modern technology, we still cannot bring you the most memorable part of the Passover... the meal, just like grandma used to make! Just picture it: steaming hot chicken

soup with huge, fluffy motza balls; some motza; slices of pungent, home-made gefilte fish with just-ground make-you-cry horseradish; more motza; chopped liver (with lots of schmaltz and crunchy fried onions) on a bed of lettuce; more motza; enough delectable green salad to feed a colony of hungry rabbits; more motza; more crispy fried onions on the side; more motza... and that's just the appetizer!

Next comes the meal... can you smell it? Tender, sweet brisket with cabbage; more motza; home made flanken; stewed chicken, roasted chicken, broiled chicken, boiled chicken, sautéed chicken, baked chicken; more motza; a whole roasted turkey; more motza; fresh-cut green beans with onions; more motza; carrot and prune tzimmes; more motza; sweet potato and raisin tzimmes; more motza; home-made mashed potatoes swimming in butter; more motza... and we haven't even gotten through the appetizer!

Did you save room for dessert? Well, you will have to wait, because now it's time go on with the seder!

The Search for the Afikomen

After the meal is finished, the leader of the seder lets the children loose to hunt for the Afikomen, which was wrapped in a napkin and hidden before the meal. The house is in a ruckus as everyone rushes around to be the first to find the Afikomen and claim the prize as grandpa redeems it from the lucky locator. The going rate is \$5.00! Once the leader has retrieved the Afikomen, he breaks it up into pieces and distributes a small piece to everyone seated around the table. Jewish people don't really understand this tradition, but traditions don't need to be understood – just followed! However, it is widely believed that these pieces of Afikomen bring a good, long life to those who eat them.

The tradition perhaps dates back to the time of Jesus. If this is the case, then Luke 22:19 takes on a greater meaning: "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.'" For Jesus

the Messiah would have taken the middle one of the three pieces of motza, the piece that stood for the priest or mediator between God and the people, broken it as His body would be broken, wrapped half in a linen napkin as he would be wrapped in linen for burial, hidden it as he would be buried, brought it back as he would be resurrected, and distributed it to everyone seated with him, as He would distribute His life to all who believe. As He did this, he was conscious that this middle piece of motza represented His own, spotless body given for the redemption of His people. As the motza is striped and pierced, His own body would be striped and pierced, and it is by those wounds that we are healed (Isaiah 53:5). This middle piece of motza, or the Afikomen, is our communion bread.

Third Cup

The third cup of wine is taken after the meal. It is the cup of redemption, which reminds us of the shed blood of the innocent Lamb which brought our redemption from Egypt. We see that Jesus took the third cup in Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25, "In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" This was not just any cup, it was the cup of redemption from slavery into freedom. This is our communion cup.

Fourth Cup

The fourth cup is the Cup of Hallel. Hallel in Hebrew means "praise," and we see in the beautiful High Priestly Prayer of John 17, that Jesus took time to praise and thank the Lord at the end of the Passover Seder, his last supper. The spotless Passover Lamb had praise on his lips as he went to his death.



Elijah's Cup

A place setting remains empty for Elijah the prophet, the honored guest at every Passover table. The Jewish people expect Elijah to come at Passover and announce the coming of the Messiah (Malachi 4:5). So a place is set, a cup is filled with wine, and hearts are expectant for Elijah to come and announce the Good News. At the end of the seder meal, a child is sent to the door to open it and see if Elijah is there. Every year, the child returns, disappointed, and the wine is poured out without being touched. My people wait and hope for Messiah – they do not realize that Messiah has already come. But those of us who believe in Yeshua know that He is the one the prophets spoke of. He is the spotless, unblemished Passover Lamb, whose body was broken for us, whose blood was shed, and who now lives to distribute His life to all of us who apply His blood to the doorpost of our hearts and have passed from death into His eternal life.

Read Matthew 26:31-56: Here are a couple of examples where men's efforts to be faithful crumble under a little resistance. Fear, weakness and greed are all contributing factors. Meanwhile Jesus is praying for us.

Read Matthew 26:57-68: These verses underscore the misplaced blame of our sins upon Christ.

Read Matthew 26:69-75: So in summary, our opportunities and pressures reveal the heart of man; while only Christ remains faithful.

If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself. (2 Timothy 2:13)