

Chosen by God Topic

The Jewish Roots of Christianity

The Lord's Supper

There is much debate about whether the last meal that Jesus partook of with His disciples in the Upper Room was intentionally modeled as a Passover Seder, or just an ordinary meal that happened just before Passover. There is no mention of lamb being eaten, but neither is there any specific mention of food other than the bread and wine, though this was clearly a meal. But Matthew, Mark, and Luke clearly connect it with Passover, and many of the elements that are recorded are consistent with a Passover celebration.

READ the account of the Last Supper in each of these passages:

Matthew 26

Mark 14

Luke 22

John 13

The words of Christ in Luke 22:15 seem to indicate the intentions of Jesus for this final supper with His disciples to be a Passover meal. Since Christ would be sacrificed as THE Passover Lamb the following day, it seems reasonable to me to conclude that this meal may have actually happened the day prior to Passover, on the day of Preparation, lending to the confusion of timing. If that is the case, it seems to only accentuate the importance Jesus placed on observing this one last Passover.

Why do you think Jesus so eagerly wanted to eat this one last Passover with His disciples?

How important did it seem to be to Him to connect this Passover meal with the Lord's Supper? _____

What did He anticipate according to Luke 22:16? _____

What was the new fulfillment of this old feast of remembrance? (Luke 22:20) _____

The gospel of John does not seem to make the same connection between the Last Supper and Passover like the other three do. Why do you think that is?

INSIDE:

Passover	2
Best Seat in the House	2
The Cups	3
The Bread	3
Lord's Supper in the early church and today	4
Puzzle page	5
Answers and Sources	6



The Last Supper

When a Jewish family celebrates the Passover meal, the father or host recounts the redemptive story of God setting His people free. The story is interpreted for those gathered, and its significance explained. We see that this is exactly what Jesus does on the night that He shares a last Passover meal with His disciples, and institutes the particularly Christian Lord's Supper. Just as in the traditional Haggadah, Jesus is telling a redemptive story to His disciples, a new fulfillment of an old, old story. We cannot ignore that Jesus very intentionally linked the events of His arrival as the Messiah to Passover. Christ is reinterpreting for His disciples, for all of Israel, and for us, the meaning of Passover. We must understand that the rabbis had interpreted Exodus 12:42 to mean that they should be keeping vigil for what great thing God would do next. Passover was a night of watchfulness, of waiting for the Messiah to come.

How does the Passover context shape the meaning and implementation of the Lord's Supper? _____

What similarities are there between Melchizedek's actions of Genesis 14:18, and the Lord's Supper? _____

Unlike the synoptic gospels, John does not include an account of the memorial meal at that last gathering of the disciples. He does, however, include a lengthy discourse by Jesus on the imagery of the bread and wine in John 6:22-69.

What is the true bread from heaven that John refers to in 6:32-58? _____

How does John 6:60-66 indicate that this was a deciding point for those who followed Jesus? _____

What happens to our own faith when it is stretched beyond our ability to understand, or even offends us? _____

What was the faith response of those who remained followers of Jesus? _____

In 1 Cor. 10, how is the example of Israel tied to the Lord's Supper? _____

Best Seat in the House

The seating order at a Passover meal was strictly defined. As Jesus and the disciples came to the table, it is understandable that questions of seating would arise. Who would sit in the seats of honor? Who would sit in the servant's seat? The father/host/rabbi sat in the most honored seat, the second in from the right leg of a U shaped table (bird's eye view). Next to the host, at the end, would sit the youngest, the one designated to ask the prescribed questions that would be answered with the story of God's redemption. On the other side of the host, would be the next honored guest. Because it was one next to Jesus who would have dipped his bread into the same bowl. Matt. 26:23 seems to indicate that it was Judas who sat in this esteemed position. There is also good argument that Peter sat in the position across the table on the end – where the servant who was to wash the feet would sit. (Vander Laan) What added meaning does that give to Jesus washing Peter's feet in John 13:1-17? _____

What is the implied purpose of Christians gathering in 1 Cor. 11:20? _____

What was the attitude that put them at risk of judgment? _____

How can this happen even outside the context of a meal? _____

The Cups

God established His covenant with Noah in Gen. 9:8-9 as *Elohim*. In the Abrahamic covenant in Gen. 17:1-2, He is known as *El Shaddai*. In Ex. 6:2-7, God introduces Himself to Moses as YHWH, the same name that He uses with His people in the giving of the Commandments in Exodus 20:2 where He describes Himself as the God who brought His people out of Egypt from a house of slaves.



In Exodus 6:6-7, YHWH makes 4 promises to His people:

1. to bring them out of _____
2. To rescue them from _____
3. To redeem them with outstretched arms
4. To take them as His own people.

Somewhere along the way, to remember these promises, the Jewish people began the tradition of drinking wine from a cup 4 times throughout the Passover meal. At the prescribed point, the appropriate blessing would be recited by the host, and the cup passed around. In Luke 22:17, Jesus blesses the first cup and passes it around. The second cup, also taken before the meal, is apparently not mentioned. The third cup would have been the one after supper, the cup of redemption.

What is noted about this cup in Luke 22:20? _____

Is there any additional information about it in Matt. 26:27-29? _____

In Mark 14:22-25? _____

What meaning is added to verse 25 in light of Isaiah 25:6-9? _____

Would you consider this event more of a new covenant, or a covenant renewal? Why? _____

The Bread

According to Deut. 16:1-3, what kind of bread would have been present at the Last Supper? _____

Why is that significant in light of the words of Jesus in Luke 22:19? _____

What was true of all grain offerings given to the Lord by fire? (Lev. 2:11; 6:17) _____

How is the importance of Christ as bread without yeast reinforced by 1 Cor. 5:6-8? _____

Do you think there is a connection between the breaking of this unleavened bread at the Last Supper, and the beginning of the eight day feast of Unleavened Bread? _____

What does bread in the kingdom of God refer to in Luke 14:15? _____

Name some of the covenants that occurred in a meal setting: _____

Bethlehem “house of bread”

How does the fact that Bethlehem means “house of bread” enrich your understanding of the Lord’s Supper? _____

The Lord's Supper in the Early Church

Without the problems in the early church at Corinth, there would be little recorded about the observance of the Lord's Supper by the early followers of Christ.

What do we learn of the early church observance of the Lord's Supper from these passages?

Acts 2:46 _____

Acts 20:7,11 _____

1 Cor. 11:20-34 _____

The Lord's Supper in Today's Church

The Lord's Supper: a tiny little cup with half a swallow of grape juice, and a pill sized wafer that is unlike anything that would ever see our dinner table. It often seems to me like a tiny, even stingy, ration of the real thing, a reserve that I fear may be reflective of much of what we practice. A neat and tidy little bit and sip coupled with somber faces and the shushing of children. Somehow, it feels so pared down from the original. There is no intimacy among the partakers, no community. We remain as removed from one another as diners at a restaurant sitting at their own private tables. The emphasis is on our individual relationship with God as we solemnly face forward with heads bowed.

We partake with a sense of impending danger, with Paul's admonition to not participate in it unworthily ringing in our ears. Our observance has become stilted and reserved as we attempt to play it safe. In some churches, only the authorized religious leader is considered worthy of touching the emblems. What was Paul's caution in 1 Cor. 11:27-33? _____

What was the Lord's Supper called in Jude 1:12? _____

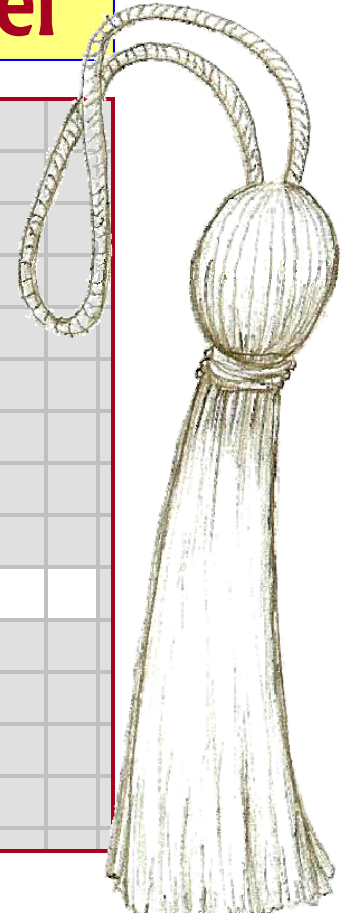
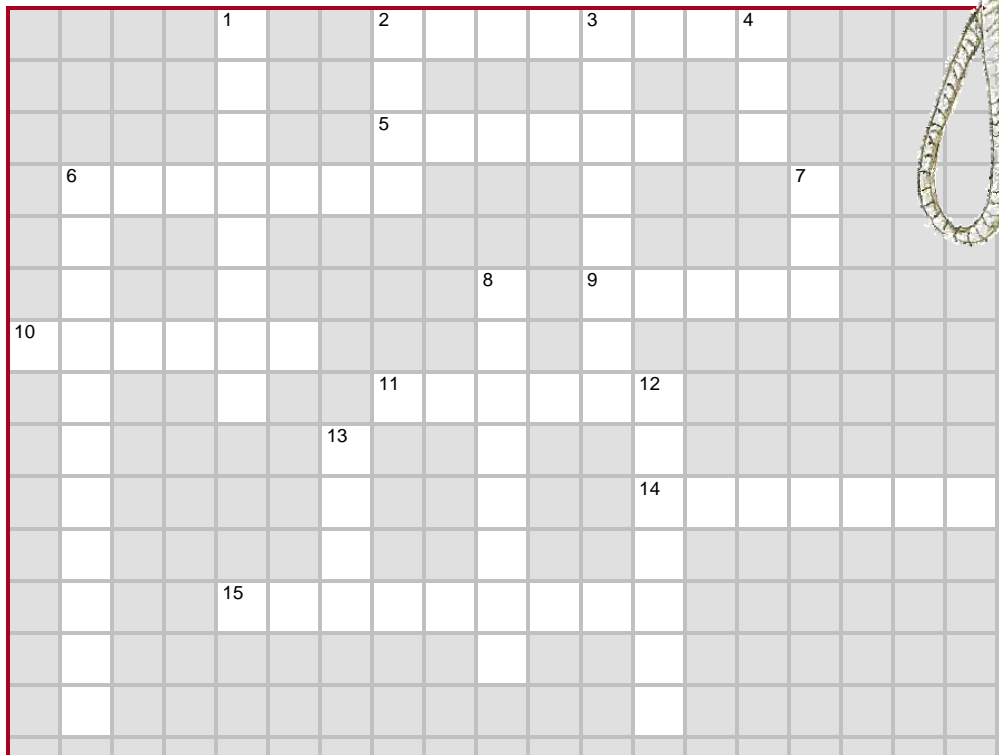
This love feast was prohibited among the early Christians by the fourth century AD, and the Lord's Supper removed from the context of a celebratory meal. (Viola 193) Perhaps the connotations were too scandalous, or the zeal too extreme. There was no longer much connection with a supper, or with breaking bread. It came to be viewed more as an offering, or sacrifice, and was "served" from an altar rather than a dinner table in a home.

In what ways does your own congregation do a good job of observing the Lord's Supper in a manner consistent with the original intent? _____

In what ways could the attitude of a "love feast" be restored to the way the Lord's Supper is practiced in your own church? _____

Would Christ recognize our Communion Service as an imitation of His invitation into communion with Him and our fellow disciples? How would He feel about the absence of joy and celebration? Is He honored or chagrined by our remembrance? How does the Christian remembrance of God's deliverance in the Lord's Supper compare with the Jewish Passover remembrance of God's deliverance? _____

Puzzle Page—Remember



Across

- 2** be _____ so you don't forget
Deut.4:9 (8)
- 5** another word for remember (6)
- 6** the Israelites not only recalled the Exodus, but _____ it as if it had happened to them. (7)
- 9** remember what God did to them
Deut. 7:18 (5)
- 10** help us remember (6)
- 11** what was to be remembered in 1 Cor. 11:24 (6)
- 14** can help us remember (7)
- 15** comes from remembering (9)

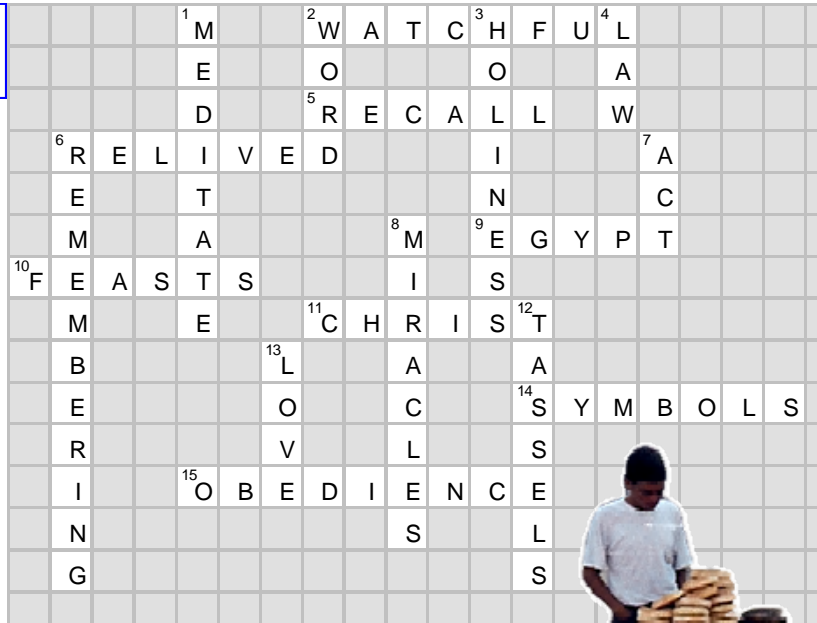
Down

- 1** do this with what is remembered
Psalm 77:11-12 (8)
- 2** remember God's Josh. 1:13 (4)
- 3** remembering who God is shall result in this Lev. 11:45 (8)
- 4** remember this Mal. 4:4 (3)
- 6** essential to spiritual growth (11)
- 7** to remember means to _____
Matt. 7:21-27 (3)
- 8** remember these that God has done
Psalm 105:5 (8)
- 12** clothing was to have these as reminders of God's commands Num. 15:37-41 (7)
- 13** remembering they were strangers would mean treating others with this
Lev. 19:34 (4)

Puzzle Answers

A Difference of Opinion

Whether called Communion, the Last Supper, the Eucharist, a Passover Seder, or the Lord's Supper, Christians have long disagreed, sometimes violently over points of how the "remembrance" instituted by Christ should be conducted. Is it so holy that only a priest can touch it? Should grape juice or wine be used? Is this really Christ's body and blood? Should it be in the context of a meal, or kept far from it? Should everyone take it together, or individually? Should children be allowed to participate? Should it be somber, or celebratory? One cup or many? Wafer or loaf? Background music or not. The controversies are not likely to end any time soon!



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