

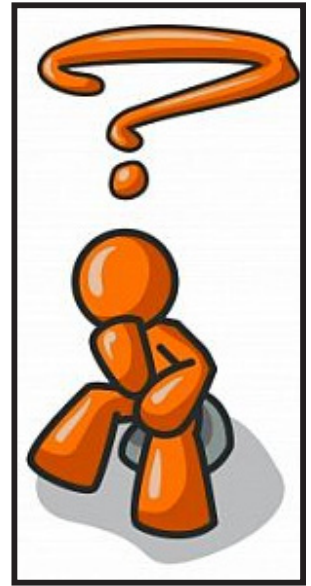
What About ... the Seder Meal?

By CLARK BLANCHARD

In Exodus chapter 12, God initiated the ordinance of Passover for the nation of Israel. It was to be an annual remembrance of the Passover lamb during their Exodus from Egypt. Jesus kept the Passover with His disciples, as described in the Gospels (Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-38; John 13:1-20). It was a simple meal, consisting of roasted lamb, bitter herbs, unleavened bread, and wine. Jesus used this occasion to institute the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17-34). Furthermore, Paul explained that the ultimate meaning of the Passover is in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. *For Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed*" (1 Corinthians 5:7b).

Unbelieving rabbinical Judaism has taken these profound truths of Passover and perverted them with their traditions (Mark 7:6-9) of the Seder (order) Meal. Unlike the biblical focus, pointing to the Passover lamb, the Seder points away from the lamb to a myriad of other traditions, focusing on the liberty of the Jewish people instead of the death of the Passover lamb.

The Seder celebrates the idea of political liberation, especially as it occurred for Israel's exodus from Egypt. It includes drinking four cups of wine, eating matza (unleavened bread),



partaking of symbolic foods on the Seder Plate, reciting questions and answers, and reclining in celebration of freedom. As is common with most rabbinical traditions, great variations are practiced by the Jewish people today.

Central to the typical meal is the Seder Plate with the following six symbolic foods:

1. A mild green vegetable (*Karpas*), such as parsley or celery, which is dipped in salt water or vinegar, representing the tears shed by the Israelites in slavery.
2. A bitter herb (*Maror*), such as horseradish and a green vegetable such as endive or romaine lettuce, representing the bitterness endured by the Jews in Egypt.
3. Another bitter herb (*Hazeret*), again such as horseradish with romaine lettuce, also signifying the bitterness of life as slaves in Egypt.
4. A sweet spread (*Haroset*), typically made from fruit, nuts, and wine, representing the mortar and mud bricks the slaves used to build Pharaoh's cities.
5. A roasted shank bone or poultry neck (*Zeroah*), representing the Passover lamb used to mark the door posts.
6. A roasted egg (*Baytzah*), which symbolizes the festival offerings brought to the Temple. It also symbolizes Jewish mourning at the loss of the Temple in Jerusalem.

In addition to the Seder Plate, several other symbolic foods are typically used. These include, but are not limited to, three special matza unleavened wafers and four glasses of wine. The matza wafers are used in various ways, depending upon which rabbinical tradition is followed. Commonly, the middle one (*afikoman*) is hidden from the children, who receive a gift if they can find it, as a reminder of the happy times of the holiday. Some make a sandwich out of the other two wafers with a variety of meanings. The four glasses of wine are ceremonially consumed throughout the meal. Some groups include an extra glass set aside for the prophet Elijah, whom they believe will announce the coming of the Messiah for Israel. Much of the ceremony is framed in predetermined questions and answers, primarily about the Exodus.

The Seder Meal is typical of rabbinical tradition. It leaves out the central issues which are near to the heart of God and substitutes countless man-made inventions (Isaiah 29:13). The true Passover underscores the shedding of the innocent lamb's blood so the death angel would pass over and the firstborn would be spared. It teaches redemption by the blood of the lamb; the innocent for the guilty. The Seder knows nothing of this. Instead, it is occupied with the plight and political freedom of the Jewish people. At the Last Supper/Passover, Christ, as the Lamb of God, instituted the true memorial – *"this is my body...this is my blood...which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"* (Matthew 26:26-28).