



A Passover Meal Liturgy for Christians

Remembering God's Mighty Works in Israel and in Christ

This year, as we are forced to remain in our homes, we are reminded of the circumstances of the very first Passover, when the people of Israel shut themselves into their homes as the angel of death passed over them.

This Passover Liturgy is based loosely on a very shortened version of a traditional Jewish Seder Meal and a Christian version of the Passover written by Ann Voskamp.¹ As Gentile Christians, we recognize that we do not truly celebrate the Passover as a Jew might. However, as followers of Jesus, who has grafted us into his family, we celebrate elements of the Passover as pointing toward our liberation from sin and death through Christ Jesus. Indeed, Jesus did exactly this in celebrating the Passover with his disciples, which we now celebrate as the Last Supper.

The liturgy can be used in the context of a whole meal (including your own sides), or you can just make enough to do the liturgy alone. If you are doing the meal with young children, feel free to substitute some of the readings with those from a children's Bible, or you can use the suggested passages from the *Jesus Storybook Bible*, indicated in the footnotes following each Bible passage. If you are alone, use the liturgy as a private devotional, pausing after each section to pray to God.

¹ https://annvoskamp.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/A_Christian_Passover_Easter_Meal.pdf

What You Will Need

- 1) **Bowl with warm water** (for foot washing)
- 2) **Dry towel** (to dry feet after foot washing)
- 3) **Unleavened bread**

There are a few options to use for unleavened bread, from making it yourself, to buying pre-made matzah, to some “gentile alternatives”

a) Recipe:

<https://www.alyonascooking.com/unleavened-bread-matzah/>

- b) Store bought Matzah
- c) Saltine Crackers
- d) Flour Tortillas

- 4) **Lamb meat**

Once again, there are a few options:

a) Recipe:

<https://www.foodandwine.com/holidays-events/passover/8-delicious-lamb-recipes-passover-seder>

- b) Sometimes the lamb is substituted with chicken
- c) A roasted beet is used as a vegetarian alternative

- 5) **Fresh parsley**

- 6) **Wine or grape juice**

- 7) **Horseradish**, chopped or minced (bitter herbs)

- 8) **Small bowl of salted water**

- 9) **A glass or goblet of wine/grape juice** (Elijah’s cup)

Setting the Table

Place the bread, meat, parsley, horseradish, and salted water in the center of the table, where everyone can reach. At each place setting, pour a small glass of wine/juice. Add one extra chair, and place the goblet filled with wine/juice for Elijah in front of that chair.

If you have children, one fun tradition is to break the unleavened bread in half, placing one half on the table, and hiding the other half for the children to find – to “steal” and to “hold ransom” when the time to eat the bread comes. For a Christian take on this tradition, one could connect the finding of the bread to how Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

Gather everyone together, and have each person take their place at the table.

The Opening Blessing

The Leader and all participants hold their cups of wine/juice up in a toast, and the Leader recites the opening blessing. (Note, this blessing is based on the traditional Jewish *kiddush*, but has been altered for a Christian setting.)

Leader: *Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who has chosen us from the beginning of time, exalting us by making us holy through the blood of the Lamb of Christ. In love You have given us, O Lord our God, Sabbaths for rest, holidays for joy, festivals for gladness, and the Son for our redemption. Blessings to our God who saw fit to deliver us!*

Everyone toasts their cups and takes a drink.

Washing Each Others' Feet

Following the blessing, the traditional Jewish Passover would usually begin with a ritual hand washing. In place of this, we remember instead Jesus' example to his disciples and to us as he washed his disciples' feet.

Note: If you are doing the liturgy on your own, simply read the instructions and use the warm water as a symbol to remind you of Christ's love for you, washing your sins away in his blood.

Leader: On the night that Jesus gathered with his disciples to celebrate the Passover together, just as the meal had started, Jesus did something that would have been absolutely unthinkable. He got up from the table, took a basin of water, wrapped a towel around his waist, and began to wash his disciples' feet. The disciples' feet would have been caked in dirt from their travels. This was the duty of a servant or a slave, certainly not something that one would expect from a rabbi, much less the Lord, the King, the Messiah.

The Leader now takes the bowl and the towel, and begins by washing the feet of one of those seated at the table. This does not need to be elaborate. Simply sprinkle some water over the bare foot, gently washing with one's hand. Dry the foot afterward.

Depending on how many people are gathered, the Leader can wash everyone's feet, or you may take turns, with the one who has just had their feet washed taking the bowl and towel and washing the next person's feet in turn.

When everyone is done, the Leader continues, or a second person can be asked to read:

[John 13:12-17] When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. ‘Do you understand what I have done for you?’ he asked them. ‘You call me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.’²

Leader: *Out of love for us, Jesus became a servant—taking our sin, the dirt of our souls, upon himself so that we might be made clean. Let us remember this example he has set before us, and serve one another with humility and love.*

Serving the Unleavened Bread

If you chose to hide half of the bread before the meal, have the children search for the lost bread. Once again, use this as an opportunity to share how Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10).

Question #1 *(asked by a child or the youngest):*

“Why are we eating unleavened bread tonight?”

Leader: *We eat the unleavened bread to remind us of the fact that the Israelites did not have time to wait for yeast to rise because they had to be ready to move when God said. For us as Christians, it reminds us to live lightly, always ready to go when God calls us, for in the twinkling of an eye, like a thief in the night, Jesus is going to return and we will all go home.*

² For doing the liturgy with younger children, find the story in your own children’s Bible or use *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, “The Servant King,” pages 286–288.

The following scripture passage may be read by the Leader or by another reader:

[1 Corinthians 5:6b] Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? [7] Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. [8] Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

ALL IN UNISON: Tonight we eat unleavened bread to remind us of the new life that has been given to us in Christ.

Leader: On the night that Jesus ate this meal with his disciples, he took the bread and broke it, showing to them that his body would be broken for us, just like the Passover lamb.

The bread is broken in half, and then passed around, each person taking a piece for themselves.

Serving the Bitter Herbs

Question #2 (*child or the next youngest*):

“Why are we eating bitter herbs?”

Leader: The bitter herbs remind us of the bitter pain and suffering the Israelites went through as slaves to the Egyptians. It now reminds us of our own bitterness toward God, and the suffering Jesus endured because of our sins.

Psalm 22 reminds us of the bitter suffering of our Lord:

The following scripture may be read by the Leader or by another reader:

[Psalm 22:1a] My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

*[13] Roaring lions that tear their prey
open their mouths wide against me.*

*[14] I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.*

*My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted within me.*

*[15] My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
you lay me in the dust of death.*

*[16] Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains encircles me;
they pierce my hands and my feet.*

*[17] All my bones are on display;
people stare and gloat over me.*

*[18] They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.³*

ALL IN UNISON: Tonight we eat bitter herbs because Jesus, our Bread of Life, has paid the price and absorbed our bitter sins.

Everyone takes a small portion of the bitter herbs (horseradish) and eats it. The herbs may be eaten alone or with a small piece of the unleavened bread.

Serving the Vegetables Dipped in Salt Water

Question #3 *(child or the next youngest):*

“Why tonight do we dip our vegetables in salt water two times?”

³ For doing the liturgy with younger children, find the story in your own children’s Bible or use *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, “The Sun Stops Shining,” pages 302–304.

Leader: The green vegetables remind us of the new life of spring. God is the giver of life, and in Jesus Christ, he has made all things new.

The Leader dips a sprig of parsley once in the salt water. Then, holding the parsley up and allowing the salt water to drip back into the bowl, the Leader continues:

Leader: The salt water reminds us of the tears that the people of Israel cried in their slavery and suffering in Egypt.

The Leader dips the parsley into the salt water a second time.

Leader: We also remember how the Hebrew people painted their doorposts with blood so that the angel of death would pass over them.

The following scripture may be read by the Leader or by another reader:

[Luke 22:39] Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. [40] On reaching the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation." [41] He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, [42] "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." [43] An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. [44] And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.⁴

ALL IN UNISON: Tonight we eat our vegetables dipped in salt water to remind us of the anguish of Christ and the new life he has given to us.

Everyone now takes a sprig of parsley, dips it into the salt water twice, and eats it together.

⁴ For doing the liturgy with younger children, find the story in your own children's Bible or use *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, "A Dark Night in the Garden" pages 294–296.

Leader: We trust in God’s promise to us: [Revelation 21:4] “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Serving Elijah’s Cup

Leader: At the empty space is placed a goblet of wine that is reserved by the Jews for the coming of Elijah. The Israelites believed he would foretell the coming of the Messiah. This cup remains to welcome Elijah and his announcement of the Messiah’s return.

The following scripture may be read by the Leader or by another reader:

[Matthew 11:7b] Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? [8] If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings’ palaces. [9] Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. [10] This is the one about whom it is written:

*‘I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.’*

[11] Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. [12] From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it. [13] For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. [14] And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. [15] Whoever has ears, let them hear.⁵

⁵ For doing the liturgy with younger children, find the story in your own children’s Bible or use *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, “Heaven Breaks Through,” pages 200–202.

Leader: Our Lord has declared about John the Baptist—“he is the Elijah who was to come.” John the Baptist proclaimed Christ’s coming—the arrival of Jesus as our Messiah! So for us as Christians, we do not leave the cup untouched, but we each share in it and in the joy that hope has come true! The Messiah has come to us! He is alive to give our lives eternal joy, promise, and hope of an eternity with Him!

Pass Elijah’s cup around the table for everyone to drink.

Serving the Lamb

Leader: *As the Jews needed the blood of a lamb on their doorpost for the angel of death to pass over them, so we need the blood of the lamb on our hearts for the angel of death to pass over our souls. And we have a lamb—as John the Baptist proclaimed, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).”*

ALL IN UNISON: [1 John 3:16] **This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.**

Leader: *We take of this lamb, representing the voluntary sacrifice of Jesus, God’s own gift of a perfect lamb, for our sins, that punishment may Passover us.*

ALL IN UNISON: **Praise God from whom all blessings flow! Praise Him who has set the captives free! The Lamb has come and taken away the sins of the world! [Revelation 5:12] Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!**

All once again raise their glasses and toast. The meat and the rest of the meal may now be eaten.