

I. The Last Supper – of Leonardo Da Vinci – 15ft x 25.5ft – in 1495-98

For many, this is the “iconic” (and authoritative) representation of The Last Supper and is sometimes treated as an almost photographic picture of the event. This has resulted in several misunderstandings of how this event would have appeared.

II. What was the Last Supper?

A. An Observance of Passover.

Matthew 26: 17-10 states “*On the first day of Unleavened Bread...*” preparations for the Last Supper were to be made. (Similarly, in Mark 14:12 “*On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread...*”; and in Luke 22:7 “*Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed*”) Further Matthew 26:20, Mark 14:17 seem to imply that the meal was eaten on that same day. The first day of the Festival of Unleavened bread (or the day before the beginning of the festival) was the Day of Passover.

Taken together these would indicate that for Jesus and the Disciples, this was an observance of the Passover meal.

Note: John 13:1,2 states that “*It was just before the Passover Festival.*” and “*the evening meal was in progress...*” which might indicate that the Last Supper didn't actually occur on the Day of Passover. However if by “*Passover Festival*” is meant the “*Festival of Unleavened Bread*”, that 7 day festival actually began the day after Passover.

III. What was Passover?

- A. Recognizes the Deliverance of the Jewish people from Egyptian “captivity”
- B. Renewal of Covenant with Abraham
- C. Evolution of the covenant Promise (Laws, Guidance, Promised land)
- D. a prescribed Feast Day – beginning of Festival of Unleavened Bread
- E. it is a Sabbath day – day of rest..no work
- F. Day of Remembrance

IV. What are the traditional elements of a Passover Meal?

A. Early rabbinical tradition said that a Passover meal must include:

1. a Passover sacrifice - *Pesach*
2. unleavened bread – *Matzo* - bread of affliction
3. bitter herbs - *Maror*

B. Formal traditions were established after the fall of the Temple in 70 AD

C. Modern prescribed ORDER or SEDER described in a HAGGADAH

There are many examples, as in “*What Every Christian Needs to Know about Passover*” and “*Family Celebrations at Easter*” from which we have a “*Passover for Christians*”. Also “*A Feast of History*” in Bethel's library.

NOTE: the *Seder* was developed *after* Christ's time on Earth so the Last Supper was *not* a Seder.

However it is definitely an observation of Passover and looking at a modern Seder Service could give us some idea of what was included in a Passover observance in Jesus' time.

Note: a modern Seder does not have a Passover Sacrifice nor is lamb served because of the destruction of the Temple...the only source of sacrifices.

Look at “Modern Elements”, p.3 of handout (call attention to p. 4 which is the order of service in the “Christian Haggaddah”)

1. Day of Preparation – *Chametz*
2. A Family Celebration – children, strangers, Elijah
3. candles
4. Basin of Water – *Note how Jesus used the basin in John 13:4-17*
5. 4 Glasses of wine - especially 3rd *cup of Redemption*
 - a. cup of sanctification
 - b. cup of plagues
 - c. cup of redemption
 - d. cup of praise
6. Salted water
7. hyssop – celery or parsley -
8. Matzo Plate - unleavened bread – Unity - *Trinity– note stripes and pierced*
9. The Afikomen - “after meal” - dessert; *note meaning of broken middle matzo*
Note: Jesus use of bread at end of meal may have been first use
10. Seder Plate

The meal we serve is not a Seder meal but includes several of the representative items, together with others that may seem appropriate for a middle-east meal, including:

fruits (dried and fresh, apples, oranges, dates, figs, etc.)
vegetables (carrots, celery,
bread (unleavened matzo, but also homemade “risen” bread)
eggs
drink (grape juice, water)

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