

A New Covenant Passover Services

Calvin Lashway
March 2017

We observe the New Covenant Passover after sundown on the evening beginning the 14th day of the Hebrew month of Nisan, this falls in March/April on the Western or Gregorian calendar used by most modern nations. In 2017, Passover occurs on the evening April 9th.¹ In keeping the Passover, we are following Jesus' example and His command to eat the bread and drink the wine "in remembrance of me" (Matthew 26:17-29; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-23; 1Corinthians 11:17-34).

Preparing for the Passover Service

The following instructions for preparing for the Passover come from the article *Passover At Home*, by long time Church of God minister, the late Ronald L. Dart.

In preparation for the service, only a few things are needed: A towel and basin for each person who will participate in the footwashing service, some unleavened bread and a small amount of red wine. Each participant will also want to have his own Bible.

A room should be prepared for the service with adequate seating and room to move around for footwashing. The footwashing can be done in another room if one is available. Only enough unleavened bread and wine for the participants should be brought into the room. There should be a small glass for each person with about half an ounce of wine in it. The unleavened bread should be placed, unbroken, on a plate or serving tray. Both bread and wine should be covered with a white table napkin before the service begins.

When the time is come, everyone should take his seat quietly. While it is not necessary to be somber at this service, we traditionally allow each person some time for reflection and self-examination. The head of the family, or whoever is chosen to lead in the service, will open with prayer.

In the opening prayer, we should give thanks to God for His Son, our Passover, who died in our place. Some reference to God's love for us, and our love for one another is important.

General Instructions

Over the years, those I have taken the Passover with have used the following outline. This service was designed for a small group of no more than fifteen people. If you have a larger group, or a smaller group you may want to adjust the service to better fit your needs.

The individual leading the service will general say the opening prayer, or they may ask for someone else to give the prayer. There will be other times of prayer during the service: a prayer thanks for the bread, a prayer thanks for the wine, and the closing prayer. The host may say these prayers, or he may ask for someone else to assist him. Following the opening prayer the host will begin reading a series of small paragraphs, explaining the meaning of the New Covenant Passover. At the end of each paragraph, there is a list of scripture references relating to that section. Those in attendance can take turns reading these verses out loud. If someone does not wish to participate in the scripture readings, they should feel no obligation to do so. I recommend making copies of the Passover service that you can give to those in attendance. It will make it easier for them follow along, especially in the oral reading of the scriptures. At the conclusion of the service, we sing a hymn. There is no specific hymn required. Use one that deals with Jesus sacrifice and the forgiveness of sin he makes possible. Destroy any blessed leftover bread and wine used during the Passover service; these emblems should not be used for any other purpose.

Passover Services

Opening Prayer

The Meaning of Passover

We gather here this evening to remember and proclaim Jesus' death, on our behalf. The New Covenant Passover is a memorial of Jesus' death as the true Passover Lamb. We eat the broken unleavened bread and drink the wine in remembrance of the sacrifice of His physical suffering and shed blood. This sacrifice makes possible the forgiveness of our sins. By partaking of the Passover symbols of bread and wine, we are proclaiming our continual faith in Jesus' sacrifice.

Exodus 12:1-14; Matthew 27:27-50; 1Corinthians 5:7; John 1:29, 35-36; 1Peter 1:18-19; Colossians 1:20-22; 1Corinthians 11:23-26

Each year at Passover the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine, are reminders that we share or participate in Jesus' death. When a person accepts Jesus' sacrifice and is baptized, he shares in the death of Christ; his "old man" is crucified with Jesus. Partaking of the Passover symbols is a reminder of our participation or sharing in the death of Jesus through the death of our old self. For Christians, the New Covenant Passover is a reminder of the commitment we made to God at baptism. It is a time of spiritual renewal and rededication to God the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ. Passover also teaches us that we being many become one body because we partake of the one bread - Jesus Christ.

1Corinthians 10:16-17; Romans 6:1-11

The Meaning of The Passover Symbols

Foot Washing

During Jesus' last Passover, He rose from the supper and washed His disciple's feet. He then commanded His disciples to follow His example. There are important lessons we learn from washing one another's feet.

Humility

This act of humility and service by Jesus to His disciples, teaches us that we should also in humility serve others. We must have more than just an attitude of humility and service; we must have actions of humility and service.

Luke 22:13-15, 24-27; John 13:1-17; Philipians 2:3-8

Baptism and Forgiveness

Foot washing is a reminder of our baptism and cleansing from past sin; as well as a reminder of the cleansing we can receive for sins committed after baptism.

John 13:8; Acts 22:16; 1Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 John 1:6-2:2

At this point pause and wash one another's feet. When finished return quietly to your seats, allowing yourself and others time for quiet reflection.

Unleavened Bread

The broken bread symbolizes Jesus' physical suffering of beatings, scourging, and crucifixion He underwent on our behalf. In and on His body Jesus carried our sins, sufferings, sicknesses and sorrows. We eat this bread in remembrance of Him. In eating the broken bread, we are showing our continual faith in, and acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice. It is through His sacrifice that we will have eternal life.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Matthew 8:16-17; 1Peter 2:21-25; John 6:32-35, 47-58; Luke 22:14-15,19

At this point pray, giving thanks for Jesus' sacrifice, and asking God's blessing on the bread. Break the bread into bite-sized pieces and distribute it for eating. Use this time to quiet reflection.

Wine

The wine is a symbol of Jesus' blood shed for the forgiveness of our sins. We drink this wine in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice for us. In drinking the wine, we are showing our continual faith in, and acceptance of Jesus' shed blood for the forgiveness of sin.

Matthew 26:19-20, 27-29; 1John 1:7-9; Hebrews 9:11-15; Ephesians 1:7

At this point pray, giving thanks for Jesus' sacrifice, and asking God's blessing on the wine, then distribute it for drinking. Use this time to quiet reflection.

Jesus' Final Words

The Gospel of John records Jesus' final words on the night of His last Passover. These words to His disciples, and His prayer to the Father deepen our understanding and meaning of the New Covenant Passover.

At this point, take turns reading Jesus' final words.

Betrayal - John 13:18-30	Jesus is the way to the Father - John 14:5-14	The work of the Holy Spirit - John 16:5-16	Jesus prays for future believers (John 17:20-26)
Love one another - John 13:31-35	The promise of the Holy Spirit - John 14:15-31	Grief will turn to joy (John 16:17-33)	
Peter's Denial - John 13:36-38	Abiding in Jesus - John 15:1-17	Jesus prays for Himself (John 17:1-5)	
Comforting the disciples - John 14:1-4	The world will hate the disciples - John 15:18-16:4	Jesus prays for His disciples (John 17:6-19)	

Closing Comments

This evening we have again remembered and proclaimed the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf. In partaking of the symbols of His body, the bread, and wine, we have shown our continual faith in Jesus and His sacrifice.

Hymn

Jesus and His disciples sang a final hymn at the close of their Passover service (Matthew 26:30). Following their example we will also sing a hymn.

At this point sing a hymn.

Closing Prayer

¹ In 2018, Passover occurs on the evening March 29th; in 2019, Passover occurs on the evening April 18th; in 2020, Passover occurs on the evening April 7th.