The Last Supper

Scripture Reference: Luke 22:7-23

Suggested Theme: Jesus came to save the world from sin. The Passover tradition helps us understand God's plan to save us.

Memory Verse: "You carefully study the Scriptures because you think that they give you eternal life. Those are the same Scriptures that tell about me!" John 5:39, ICB

Story Overview:

On the night before He was crucified, Jesus celebrated one last Passover meal with His disciples. Jews ate the meal annually to celebrate God's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. On this particular night, Jesus used elements of the meal to institute a new remembrance, bread to remember His body and wine to remember His blood. From this time forward, the followers of Jesus would celebrate God's deliverance from sin through Jesus.

Background Study:

This would not be the first Passover meal for Jesus and his disciples. It was an extremely important event; these men would have celebrated it yearly since they were children. This time was different, however. Jesus knew this was the last time He and the disciples would be together to celebrate before He was crucified and then returned to heaven after the resurrection.

The setting of the meal is bittersweet. On one hand, Jesus was excited to eat this last meal with the men who were close to Him. On the other, one of the men, Judas, had already secretly met with the Pharisees and made the decision to betray Jesus. Jesus knew this, but the other disciples did not.

There was a strict schedule for the Passover feast. The Passover lamb was sacrificed at a specific time on the fourteenth day of the first month on the Jewish calendar. (Leviticus 23:4-8). In this case, it was on Thursday of Passion Week. We will later learn that Jesus was crucified on Friday.

It seems Jesus had planned ahead and had already made some arrangements for where the celebration would take place. He sent Peter and John ahead to meet a man who would show them to a large upstairs room where they would eat together. Preparations would involve gathering the key traditional food items that were familiar to all Jews.

- **Unleavened bread:** Flat bread made without yeast. Originally this was eaten during the Passover because the Jews left Egypt so quickly that the bread did not have time to rise. The unleavened bread was to be eaten at specific times during the meal.
- **Lamb:** Killed at sundown and roasted. The blood of the lamb was to be given to the priest to pour on the altar. They were to eat the whole lamb during the meal.

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- **Bitter herbs:** These were eaten to remind the Jews of the bitter times in Egypt.
- **Wine:** This was to be drunk at four specific times during the Passover meal.

In the famous Leonardo Da Vinci painting of the Last Supper, Jesus and the twelve apostles are depicted sitting at a table on one side facing the viewer. It is more likely that the table was very low, with those participating reclining on cushions. This would have been the custom of that time.
The Last Supper - Leonardo Da Vinci - High Resolution 32x16

God's story began long before the New Testament. Much of what Jesus said and did relates to what God planned and did in the Old Testament. It is important for adults and children alike to see the Bible as one beautifully connected story. It is in the reading of this history that the full meaning of the purpose of Jesus becomes clear.

> "Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that we could have hope. That hope comes from the patience and encouragement that the Scriptures give us.." Romans 15:4, ICB

The first Passover had been celebrated hundreds and hundreds of years earlier on the last night that the Jews were captive in Egypt (Exodus 12). The Jews who followed God's instructions and placed lamb's blood on their doorposts were able to celebrate the meal safely inside their homes while the Angel of Death passed over them. Jews continued to celebrate the Passover as a reminder of God's salvation (rescue from Egyptian slavery). Jews continue to celebrate it today.

Everything that is known about the history of God's people and the celebration of Passover brings fuller meaning to what Jesus did during this meal.

> "Then Jesus took some bread. He thanked God for it, broke it, and gave it to the apostles. Then Jesus said, 'This bread is my body that I am giving for you. Do this to remember me.' In the same way, after supper, Jesus took the cup and said, 'This cup shows the new agreement that God makes with his people. This new agreement begins with my blood which is poured out for you.'" Luke 22:19-20. ICB

It is good to read how the other Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark and Luke) explain the events of the evening. They include the preparation for the meal, the traditional part of the Passover meal, Jesus instituting the new "Lord's Supper," and references to the betrayer being at the meal eating with them.

- Matthew 26:17-29
- Mark 14:12-25
- Luke 22:7-23

Read more about the meaning of the Lord's Supper here.

Eating with someone in this Eastern culture reaffirms friendship and trust. Yet, Judas participated in this meal even though he had already secretly betrayed Jesus. It was customary to take a piece of bread (or a piece of meat wrapped in bread) and dip it into a bowl of sauce (made of stewed fruit) on the table. Judas was in the process of dipping the bread when Jesus said that someone who was dipping bread with Him would betray Him. (Matthew 26:23-25)

It is good to note that John expands on the teaching of Jesus in his account in a different style to Matthew, Mark and Luke. In addition, John is the only writer who combines the story of the Last Supper with Jesus washing the disciples' feet.

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Way to Introduce the Story:

This will require a few preparations before the children arrive. First, read over Exodus 12:21-27 so you are familiar with it. Then attach a strip of red paper across the top of the doorway. Prepare a snack of flatbread, horseradish (or similar bitter herb) and grape juice.

When the children have gathered, make sure they see you open your bible to the Old Testament book of Exodus. Serve the snack. It is highly likely that the children will respond just as the children in the Bible did. As the children eat the snack, they will probably want to know the meaning of the bitter herbs you have just served them! You can then read Exodus 12:21-27 from the bible or give a brief recap. The bitter herbs reminded God's people how bad it was to be a slave in Egypt. Then they ate the bread and drank the wine to celebrate how God delivered/freed them. Point to the red "blood" you have put over the door.

Even though this first Passover happened in the Old Testament, Jews celebrated it every year at the same time. Jesus and His followers celebrated the Passover too.

The Story:

The Passover was an important celebration for Jews every year. Families would gather and eat a special meal together.

They celebrated the time, long ago, when God saved His people from being slaves in Egypt. On the last night that they were slaves, the firstborn children of the Egyptians died. But God protected His people. He protected them, and death "passed over" them that night.

Every year, when children asked what the Passover meant, the grownups would tell them that even though it happened long ago, God wants us to know that He loved His people then and will always continue to love them. When His people follow Him, God will save them.

Jesus and His friends wanted to eat the special Passover meal, so Jesus told Peter and John to go to Jerusalem and prepare for it. He did not tell them the place to go. Instead, He told them to follow a man carrying a water jar. That man would take them to the house where they would have a special meal in an upstairs room.

Peter and John did exactly as Jesus said. They followed the man carrying the water jug, and He led them to the house where they would have the Passover meal.

The owner of the house showed them a big room upstairs where they could celebrate Passover.

Soon, Jesus and His disciples were sharing a meal together. As they ate and celebrated, they would have thought about things that happened many years before they were born.

They ate the bitter herbs and thought about how terrible it would have been to be slaves in Egypt. God had delivered His people from slavery!

They ate the lamb roast and remembered the lamb's blood that people put over their doorways as protection. The angel of death passed over when it saw the blood. God protected His people from death!

God had saved His people from being slaves in a terrible place. God loves His people! Jesus and His friends celebrated the Passover and were happy that they were God's people. They celebrated by drinking wine. They celebrated by eating bread and dipping it in a tasty sauce.

Everyone that night was celebrating except for one person. That person was eating, but he had a terrible secret. Only Jesus knew the secret.

While everyone was eating, Jesus said, "Someone here is not really my friend. He will do bad things that will get me into trouble. One of the ones who is dipping the bread in the bowl with me will betray me."

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Judas Iscariot was the one with the secret. He had been talking to the Pharisees, and they had made a plan together to get Jesus arrested. Judas did not stay to finish the celebration.

Jesus and His followers had been celebrating something that God had done long ago in the Old Testament. Now Jesus knew the time had come to tell His followers that God would ALWAYS take care of them.

Jesus led everyone in a prayer of thanks to God, and then He told them that they would celebrate in a new way from now on. The bread and wine would mean something different now.

Jesus took some bread. He thanked God for it, broke it, and gave it to the apostles. He said, “This bread is my body that I am giving for you. Do this to remember me.”

Then Jesus took the cup of wine and said, “This cup shows God’s new agreement with His people. This new agreement begins with my blood which is poured out for you.”

Many bad things were about to happen to Jesus, but this last Passover was special to Him and to His disciples. They had come together in the usual way to celebrate the good things that God had done in the PAST to save His people. In the FUTURE, they will always celebrate how God sent Jesus to save His people.

From this time forward, they would eat bread and drink wine to remember Jesus. It would be called the Lord’s Supper.

top

Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

top

Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child’s spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- What was the first Passover Meal meant to celebrate? (The fact that God saved His people from slavery in Egypt)
- Why are Old Testament stories important to us today? (They teach important lessons and teach us about who God is)
- Where did Jesus and His disciples eat the Last Supper? (An upper room of a house)
- What four things did people eat or drink at a Passover Meal? (Flatbread, Lamb, Bitter Herbs, and Wine)
- Which disciple was going to betray Jesus and have Him arrested? (Judas Iscariot)

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- What did Jesus say the Passover Meal also means? (The bread represents Jesus' body, broken for us, and the wine represents Jesus' blood, poured out for us)
- What did you learn about God in this story?
- What did you learn about Jesus from this story?
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Reflection:

- Do you think you would like to eat the Passover meal?
- What do you think Jesus and the disciples sounded like as they celebrated the Passover meal? What did they talk about?
- How do you think Jesus and the disciples felt about celebrating the Passover meal together?
- Do you think the disciples were surprised that Judas Iscariot was going to betray Jesus? How do you think the disciples felt when they learned this?
- How do you think Jesus felt when He told the disciples Judas Iscariot would betray Him?
- If you were one of the disciples, how would you feel about Judas Iscariot after learning he'd betray Jesus?
- Is there a meal or celebration you have with your family that reminds you of the Passover Meal? Why?
- What can the Passover Meal teach us about Jesus and this story? What connections are there between the story of God saving the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and Jesus?
- What is something you wonder about in this story?
- What question do you have for God about this story?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- J-E-S-U-S Song
- Our God is an Awesome God Song
- He's Got the Whole World in His Hands Song
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

top

Activities and Crafts:

- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

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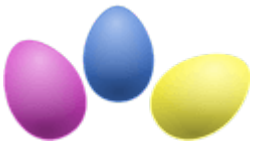
- Gather the ingredients and let the children taste foods from the Passover meal. You can use horseradish for bitter herbs, grape juice for the wine, and pita bread for the unleavened bread. You can purchase very thinly sliced lamb at a butcher or grocery deli. Recline and eat your meal at a low table.
- Have one of the children look up and read Romans 15:4, and then let the group think of lessons they have learned from the Old Testament.
  "Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that we could have hope. That hope comes from the patience and encouragement that the Scriptures give us." Romans 15:4, ICB
- List special foods that help us remember special occasions: birthday cake, chocolate eggs, Christmas pudding, hot cross buns, etc. Compare this to the Passover Meal.
- This lesson is one of several that tell the story of Jesus' Death, Burial and Resurrection. These events are often grouped or taught together and called "The Passion Week." If you or the children want to explore this group of events, you can look below at the related lessons:
  - Triumphal Entry
  - The Last Supper
  - A Night of Betrayal and Prayer
  - The Trial of Jesus
  - Jesus is Crucified
  - Burial and the Resurrection

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable "God's Story" printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:



This story is part of a bigger story about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

A simple way to tell the story is to open plastic Easter Eggs one at a time. Each egg reveals something about the story. If you tell stories about the death, burial and resurrection over a few weeks, you might try repeating this method weekly. The children will really know the story after this! Click here to learn how to do it.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

top

Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page with text (Ministry Spark)
- Colouring page and worksheets about Jesus washing the Apostles' feet (Calvaryum Curriculum)

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- Colouring page and worksheets about Jesus’ betrayal and denial foretold at the Last Supper (Calvary Curriculum)
- Printable, Writing response page (churchhousecollection.com)
- Teacher’s guide (dltk-bible.com)
- An easy-to-follow recipe for homemade communion bread (All recipes)

top

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