

Seder to Holy Eucharist

What symbolism, themes or rituals did Christians carry forward from this Jewish festive meal?

Paschal Mystery

What is it and why is there a candle associated with it?

Paschal Mystery

- Mystery – because we can “know it” but we can’t explain it
- Paschal – same word as Passover or Hebrew word Pasch
- Means going from death into life

Paschal Mystery- Ancient Israelites

- Angel of death “passes over”
- Liberation by God (YHWH) of God’s people into new life in Promised Land
- Particular people in a particular moment in history in a particular location
- Passover meal – Exodus -- memorial, covenantal, sacrificial
- Event/ celebrated with a meal
- Instructions to share with all generations

Paschal Mystery- Christian understanding

- Jesus' dying and rising again (into a new way of being) invites us into that same process
- Liberation by God (YHWH) of ALL of God's people into new life (everywhere)
- An Event/celebrated with a meal
- Enacted in our Eucharistic meal –
 - memorial, covenantal,
 - sacrificial (Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us)
- Instructions to share with all generations- Do this to remember me.

Christian Cycle of Death into Life

- We participate in it (here and now, and from physical death into eternal life)
- We see it all around us – seasons, nature, natural cycle of life/death
- In our relationships, in our selves (something dies within us in order for something new to emerge) – forgiveness, reconciliation, hope
- Deconstruction/Reconstruction – initiated by God, happens simultaneously, all good
- Death & resurrection– not just resurrection

Common elements: Paschal

- Initiated by God for our salvation
- We participate in it now (cause for joy)
- Brings us into new life (new perspectives, new thoughts, new ways of being)
- For us to remember and tell our children
- Involves a sacrifice (this came about later in Christian thought)- Jesus as the paschal lamb
 - Agnus Dei – Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.

Paschal Mystery in Christianity

- Paschal mystery – the dying and rising again of Jesus and our participation therein – theological core of the gospel
- Paschal cycle – Liturgical celebration: Lent, Holy Week, Easter
 - Especially the Easter Eve Vigil – new fire, darkness into light, stories of salvation, baptisms, first Eucharist of Easter

Paschal Mystery & Scripture

- Synoptic gospels put the Last Supper as a Passover Meal – Jesus will take a tradition of a Passover meal and give it new meaning

When have you experienced a death of some sort and found new life?

Were you able to see God's hand in the complete process?

It's time for your reflection.

Anamnesis

Very important concept!

Anamnesis – not re-enactment of, but entering into the paschal mystery

- Both meals have this perspective – not only in the past, but brought into the present
- Living event, something's happening now, new life is offered now
- Therefore let us proclaim the mystery of faith: Christ has died, Christ **is** risen, Christ will come again.

Anamnesis – Passover Meal

- Not told in the past tense.
- Place for Elijah to arrive.
- Not just symbolic – imagine God's saving hand in their lives as well, each time they celebrate what God did, it reminds them of what God is doing now to save them.

Anamnesis – Eucharist

- Mystical experience
- Peer into souls
- “at the table”
- Take, eat Saying this to you
- We’re in the upper room
- Eucharist too often? No – It’s the entering into the paschal mystery – the real presence of Christ – only grace

Anamnesis – Baptism

- Baptism – “We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. Therefore in joyful obedience to your Son, we bring into his
- fellowship those who come to him in faith, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”
- Somehow our baptism is connected to Jesus’ baptism.

When have you experienced that
sense of entering into the presence
of God, which has felt in the
present?
(In nature, church, relationships)

Time for your reflection

Afikomen

Very important concept!

Development of Passover meal - Israelites

- Ancient Israelites – 1450 BCE
- Unleavened bread, wine, herbs, unblemished lamb
- Ceremony- bread, cup, blessing

Development of Passover meal – 1st Temple Period

- 1st Temple Period (Solomon) – Jerusalem
- Passover meal – one of 3 festivals, required pilgrimage
- Re-enacted the meal (same food, hurry up)
- Bread became prominent feature – festival of the unleavened bread

Development of Passover meal – Temple destroyed - exile

- Festival forgotten- apathy
- Importance began to build back upon return from exile
- THEN emergence of belief of a Messianic deliverance for God's people – even greater saving act - prophets- especially Ezekiel
- Belief this Messiah would come on the night of the Passover meal – joy, expectation
- Afikomen – part of Passover meal
 - Breaking of bread into parts by presider of the meal, distributed, consumed
 - Meaning of Afikomen – “the coming one”

Development of Passover meal – Time of Jesus-

- 200,000 pilgrims in Jerusalem
- Temple center of sacrificial system (sheep)
- Eaten in homes or rented rooms (Jesus, room to have Passover meal)
- Needed 10 people, no leftovers

Development of Passover meal – Last Supper

- Disciples understood symbolism of Afikomen – when he said, “This is my body” – he’s naming himself as the Messiah
- Jesus gave the bread and wine with blessing (usual) but said it was his body and blood
- Do this in remembrance of me – shift from typical Passover (remember YH’s saving act) to remember me (fulfillment of God’s saving acts)
- Disciples in Emmaus would have understood the symbolism too

People longed for the Messiah
because they expected life to be
different after the Messiah arrived.
**What are you longing for? What do
you want Jesus to make different in
your life now?**

Your time for reflection

Development of Passover meal – Last Supper

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Development of Passover meal – Last Supper

- Jesus did something new and unusual within the established format of the Seder.
- Jesus gave the bread and wine a paschal significance (his body would die so we can have renewed – saved- redeemed- life)

Development of Last Supper into Holy Eucharist

- Jesus' practice moved into the creation of early church communal meals
- Early Christians were Jewish
- Prayers of blessing and thanksgiving that were traditionally said at Jewish meals were adopted by the early church for their communal meals
- Eucharisteo – give thanks – became the preferred term for the communal Christian meal – eulogia – Greek work for blessing

Development of Last Supper into Holy Eucharist- feeding of 5000 key event

- Didache – 2nd century church manual
- Contained instructions for observing the Eucharist
- Prayers of thanksgiving did not refer to Jesus' death – instead alluded to the feeding of 5000
- Wonder – how is the feeding of the 5000 a key event like the exodus was????

Development of Last Supper into Holy Eucharist- Bread of Life

- Gospel of John – strong imagery around bread (remember bread had become the prominent feature of the Seder meal by now)
- Manna in the desert
- Bread at the Passover meal
- Jesus as the bread of life (paschal connection)

Development of Last Supper into Holy Eucharist- about Unity among believers

- Prayers at Eucharist in the 2nd and 3rd century – not about Jesus' sacrifice, but about unity – a profound oneness for the disciples and for future believers

Development of Last Supper into Holy Eucharist - Communion

- Communion was the developed word, since the Eucharist was seen as the communion with each other as the body of Christ

Development of Last Supper into Holy Eucharist – Unity and/or Sacrifice

- John's gospel and Didache – unity
- Synoptic gospels – and Paul's teachings – Jesus as the sacrificial lamb
- Both – breaking and distribution of bread is a key feature

Development of Last Supper into Holy Eucharist – Early Christian meetings: 2 fold pattern

- Two part evening – supper (full meal) then table talk
- Came together for a meal then the sharing of beliefs, joys, concerns, reading of scripture
- Happened on a Sunday evening (8th day – 1st day of new creation)
- Structure: social time, readings, someone opened up the scriptures, all rise together and pray, bread and wine and water brought out, presider offers prayers and thanksgiving, people assent “amen”, distribution of bread and wine to all. Deacons take it out to those who were absent.

Development of Last Supper into Holy Eucharist – moved into weekly & daily

- Christians urged to meet together for worship every morning before work (Stations)
- Daily church meetings were a wide-spread practice throughout the Greco-Roman world.
- Middle of the 3rd century- meeting date had shifted to Sunday morning Eucharist
- Some Christians celebrated the weekly Eucharist (Sunday morning) and the annual Passover feast or the night vigil – expected the arrival of the Messiah – return of Jesus

Development of Last Supper into Holy Eucharist – today

- Not a full meal
- Bread and wine key parts
- Distribution of bread to all- take out to those who are absent
- Memorial meal (Do this in remembrance of me)
- Covenantal meal (lives out God's plan for our salvation)
- Sacrificial – “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast” – brings in the paschal mystery – somehow Jesus dying allows us to enter into his living presence as the body of Christ.

What does “take, eat, this is my body given for you” mean to you?

Your time for reflection