

## **THE MESSIANIC AND ESCHATOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AFIKOMEN AND THE 3<sup>RD</sup> AND 4<sup>TH</sup> CUPS OF WINE AT THE PASSOVER**

Communion is a well established ordinance in Bible believing churches. Whether the practice is done weekly, monthly quarterly, or other set times, it has become so "common" that many miss, and rarely consider, the underlying impact of what Jesus was teaching at His last Passover. A primary reason is that oftentimes, in a church culture, our view of Scripture is driven more by tradition. The Jewish cultural background of communion, and many other traditions we hold, is seldom, if ever, considered.

Communion was instituted at the final Passover Seder that Jesus observed. Some 40 years later, the practice of the Passover in the Jewish world would undergo major changes.

The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. had a major impact on the format of the Passover and the *afikomen*. The birth of Christianity and the surrounding culture, now that the Jewish people were in diaspora, also played a role in the way Passover evolved.

Today, Jewish people have a tradition of a matzah bag with three compartments and a board of matzah in each compartment. The middle board of matzah is removed from the bag early in the Seder, broken in half, and the larger piece is wrapped in a linen napkin and is called *afikomen*.

Prior to the destruction of the Temple the lamb was brought to the Temple to be sacrificed and the edible parts brought to the home for the Seder that evening. Jesus followed the customs of His day in the celebration of the Passover.

### **1) MATTHEW 26:19-20, 26-29**

#### **PASSOVER SEDER**

- 19 *And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.*  
 20 *Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.*

#### **THE BREAD AND THE AFIKOMEN**

- 26 *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.*

#### **THE JUICE - THE 3<sup>RD</sup> AND THE 4<sup>TH</sup> CUP OF WINE**

- 27 *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;*  
 28 *For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*  
 29 *But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*

### **2) THE BREAD AND THE AFIKOMEN**

- 26 *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.*

The highlight of the entire Passover Seder is the drama surrounding the afikomen.

The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. had a major impact on the format of the Passover and the afikomen. The birth of Christianity and the surrounding culture, now that the Jewish people were in diaspora, also played a role in the way Passover evolved.

Chaim Raphael in his [A Feast of History: The Drama of Passover Through the Ages](#) says:

"[The Seder] was more sharply defined in its present form in the century after the destruction of the Temple - say between 100 and 150 CE."

The origin of the afikomen ritual is ancient, most likely predating the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. Jewish scholar David Daube (The following quotes of David Daube come from a written version of his address at *St. Paul's Lecture* founded by the London Diocesan Council for Christian-Jewish Understanding) argues persuasively that this is the case in his writings on the subject. Of importance is his establishment of the afikomen with Messianic identification. He states:

"...the decisive framework for a Messianic ritual is there, in the early sources"

Michael Moore wrote an article titled *The Mystery of the Middle Matzah* in the *Christian Witness to Israel* publication The Spring Herald in 2010. He writes:

In 1925, the German scholar Robert Eisler proposed that the afikomen was part of the Passover observed by Jews at the time of Jesus and that the broken matzah represented the Messiah. Eisler's thesis was opposed by both Jewish and Christian scholars and was largely forgotten until 1966 when David Daube, a Jewish scholar at Oxford University, revived it and produced further documentation to support Eisler's theory. Daube argued that the term afikomen was derived from the Greek verb afikomenos meaning "the Coming One" or "He who has come" and that the "Coming One" was none other than the Messiah.

Further confirmation for Eisler's theory had emerged in the 1930s when a remarkable Greek document called *Peri Pascha* ("On the Passover") was discovered. Written by Melito, the second-century bishop of Sardis, the biblical scholar Frank Moore Cross described *Peri Pascha* as "nothing less than a Christian Passover Hagaddah" and in it Melito twice refers to Jesus as the "one who is coming (afikomen) out of heaven to the earth"!

Even the meaning of the word afikomen, which is Greek, argues for the Messianic understanding of this routine.

The Greek *aphikomenos*, being what in Greek grammar is termed an aorist, denotes 'he that came' or 'has come' rather than 'he that comes' or 'shall come.' To understand why this rendering was chosen it would be necessary to probe into the Messianic time scale of the translators.

Daube, David, *The Significance of the Afikoman*, Pointer, The Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, London, Spring, 1968

The common Jewish explanation of the meaning of this word is either *dessert* or *entertainment*. Daube questions this understanding. Moore comments on Daube's understanding:

In a lecture entitled "He that Cometh" given at St Paul's Cathedral under the auspices of the London Diocesan Council for Christian-Jewish Understanding, Daube set forth a case that the unleavened bread Jesus gave to his disciples at the Last Supper was the afikomen. When Jesus announced, "This is my body", said Daube, he was making use of an existing prophetic tradition to reveal himself as the Messiah. According to Daube, the messianic symbolism was eventually lost, deliberately distorted or possibly suppressed by rabbinic authorities, giving rise to the later interpretations of the word as a "dessert" or an "after-dinner entertainment."

Michael Moore, *The Mystery of the Middle Matzah*, The Spring Herald, *Christian Witness to Israel*, 2010

So, when Jesus picked up the bread and said "Take, eat; this is my body," He was not giving new meaning to the Passover (what Christians celebrate as the Lord's Table - Communion) but was using the existing understanding that this bread, the afikomen, which represented the Messiah, is actually symbolic, representing, Him, as He is the Messiah of Israel.

### 3) THE JUICE - THE 3<sup>RD</sup> AND THE 4<sup>TH</sup> CUP OF WINE

#### EXODUS 6:6-7

"Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, **and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments:**

And **I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God:** and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians." (Bold added)

Sanctification – "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians"

Deliverance – "I will rid you out of their bondage"

Redemption – "I will redeem you with a stretched out arm"

Acceptance – "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God"

### 3<sup>RD</sup> CUP OF REDEMPTION

27 *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;*  
28 *For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

It was at the [end of] meal that Jesus "took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." This would have been the 3<sup>rd</sup> cup, the cup of redemption.

Symbolically, Jesus was saying this cup illustrates my blood which will be shed for the REDEMPTION of everyone and those who "drink it" (symbolically) will have redemption from the penalty of their sin.

### 4<sup>TH</sup> CUP OF ACCEPTANCE

29 *But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom*

After drinking the 3<sup>rd</sup> cup of redemption, Jesus states that He can't drink the 4<sup>th</sup> cup until the Father's kingdom arrives.

The phrase "I will be their God and they shall be my people" (Exodus 6:7) is eschatological.

This phrase is used no less than 15 times in the Old Testament and is used in an eschatological setting. Every reference is future tense ("I will") except for Zechariah 13:9 which is present tense ("It is").

Leviticus 26: 12 *And I will walk among you, **and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.***

The context is that when Israel obeys the commandments of the Lord the relationship will happen. This will only happen when the nation gets saved at the end of the Tribulation.

Jeremiah 7: 23 *But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and **I will be your God, and ye shall be my people:** and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.*

As with Leviticus 26:12, this promise will be realized at the end of the Tribulation.

11: 4 *Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do them, according to all which I command you: **so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God:***

This promise, as with the two above, will be realized at the end of the Tribulation.

24: 7 *And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: **and they shall be my people, and I will be their God:** for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.*

This is the promise to the nation of each individual having a "new heart" - salvation.

30: 22 ***And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.***

This promise is after the "Time of Jacob's Trouble" (30:7) and before the Millennium reign of Jesus (30:18-22).

31: 1 *At the same time, saith the LORD, **will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.***

The context is that with the destructions of the nations at the end of the Tribulation period (30:23-24) "at the same time" Israel will accept the Lord.

- 31: 33 *But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; **and will be their God, and they shall be my people.***
- This promise is part of the New Covenant promise to Israel that will be fulfilled at the end of the Tribulation period.
- 32: 38 ***And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:***
- The context of this verse (32:37-44) is the return from worldwide captivity and the establishment of the millennium kingdom.
- Ezekiel 11: 20 *That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and **they shall be my people, and I will be their God.***
- The context (11:17-20) is the return from worldwide captivity and the people getting a new heart and a new spirit - salvation.
- 36: 28 *And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; **and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.***
- The context is the return from worldwide captivity and the fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant (36:24-28) when the nation is saved prior to the establishment of the millennium.
- 37: 23 *Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: **so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.***
- The context is the reign of Messiah with the everlasting covenant of peace (New Covenant) established with Israel.
- 37: 27 *My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, **I will be their God, and they shall be my people.***
- The context is the reign of Messiah with the everlasting covenant of peace (New Covenant) established with Israel (37:26).
- Zechariah 8: 8 *And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: **and they shall be my people, and I will be their God,** in truth and in righteousness.*
- The context (8:1-8) is the Jewish people returning to the land and dwelling safely in Jerusalem in the millennium.
- 13: 9 *And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: **I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.***
- The context is the Tribulation period and 1/3 of the nation coming through this time and calling on the Lord for salvation.

The reason Jesus couldn't drink the 4<sup>th</sup> cup until the kingdom is set up is that the establishment of the kingdom depends on the repentance of the nation of Israel:

Zechariah 12:10      *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*

Zechariah 13:8-9      *And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.  
And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.*

Matthew 23:37-39      *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!  
Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.  
For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.*

In His first coming the nation (led by its leaders) rejected Jesus. The nation will accept Him at His second coming. The symbolism of the 4<sup>th</sup> cup and Jesus' use of it would have been striking to these Jewish followers of Jesus.