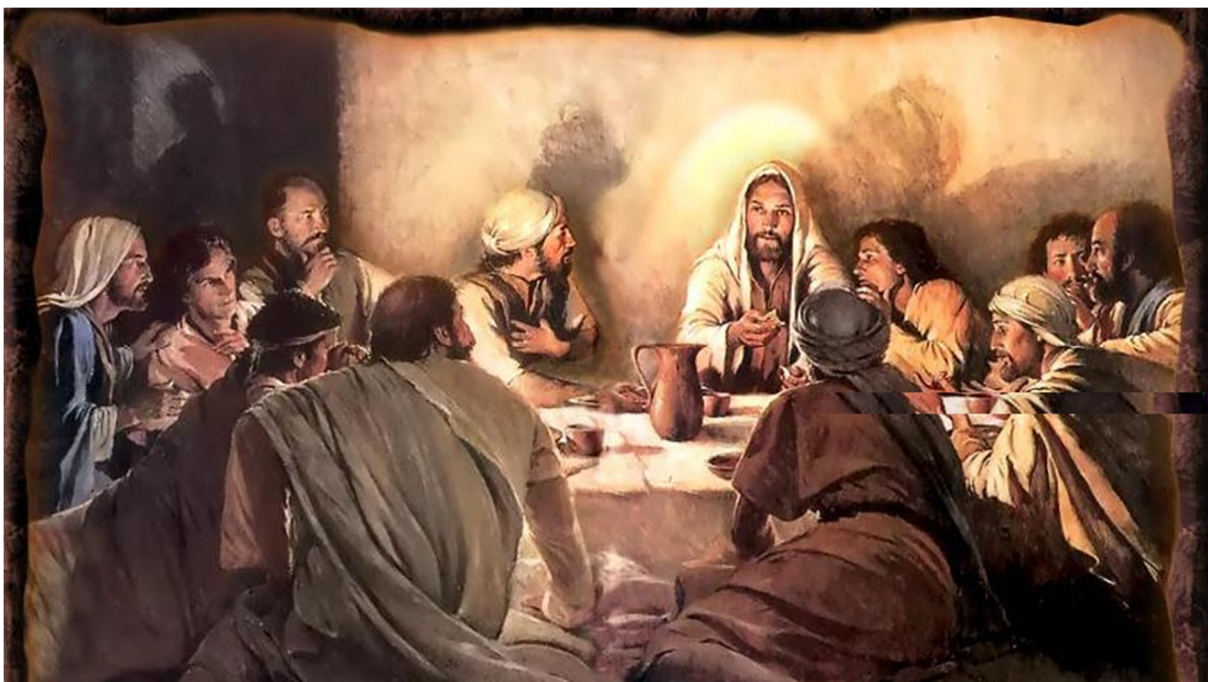


**THE LAST SUPPER TEXTUAL/CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS
YEAR TWO/THREE**

Time: 20 minutes

- 1. In your group work out who will read the each of the three different accounts of the Last Supper.**
- 2. Read the text and fill in the information on the graphic organiser about the text.**
- 4. Share any similarities and differences between the accounts.**
- 5. Split up and read the contextual information regarding the Last Supper and as a group, fill in the contextual analysis part of the graphic organiser.**
- 6. What information from your textual/contextual analysis would you include in your storytelling for children of this age? How would you include it?**



LUKE 22:8-13; 17-20

⁸So Jesus said to Peter and John, 'Go and prepare the Passover meal for us to eat.' ⁹But they asked, 'Where do you want us to prepare it?' ¹⁰Jesus told them, 'As you go into the city, you will meet a man carrying a jar of water. Follow him into the house ¹¹and say to the owner, "Our teacher wants to know where he can eat the Passover meal with his disciples." ¹²The owner will take you upstairs and show you a large room ready for you to use. Prepare the meal there.' ¹³Peter and John left. They found everything just as Jesus had told them, and they prepared the Passover meal.

¹⁷Jesus took a cup of wine in his hands and gave thanks to God. Then he told the apostles, 'Take this wine and share it with each other. ¹⁸I tell you that I will not drink any more wine until God's kingdom comes. ¹⁹Jesus took some bread in his hands and gave thanks for it. He broke the bread and handed it to his apostles. Then he said, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Eat this as a way of remembering me!' ²⁰After the meal he took another cup of wine in his hands. Then he said, 'This is my blood. It is poured out for you, and with it God makes his new agreement.'

MATTHEW 26:17-19; 26-30

¹⁷On the first day of the Festival of Thin Bread, Jesus' disciples came to him and asked, 'Where do you want us to prepare the Passover meal?' ¹⁸Jesus told them to go to a certain man in the city and tell him, 'Our teacher says, "My time has come! I want to eat the Passover meal with my disciples in your home."' ¹⁹They did as Jesus told them and prepared the meal.

²⁶During the meal Jesus took some bread in his hands. He blessed the bread and broke it. Then he gave it to his disciples and said, 'Take this and eat it. This is my body.'

²⁷Jesus picked up a cup of wine and gave thanks to God. He then gave it to his disciples and said, 'Take this and drink it.

²⁸This is my blood, and with it God makes his agreement with you. It will be poured out, so that many people will have their sins forgiven. ²⁹From now on I am not going to drink any wine, until I drink new wine with you in my Father's kingdom.'

³⁰Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

MARK 14:13-16; 22-26

¹³Jesus said to two of the disciples, 'Go into the city, where you will meet a man carrying a jar of water. Follow him, ¹⁴and when he goes into a house, say to the owner, "Our teacher wants to know if you have a room where he can eat the Passover meal with his disciples." ¹⁵The owner will take you upstairs and show you a large room furnished and ready for you to use. Prepare the meal there.' ¹⁶The two disciples went into the city and found everything just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover meal.

²²During the meal Jesus took some bread in his hands. He blessed the bread and broke it. Then he gave it to his disciples and said, 'Take this. It is my body.' ²³Jesus picked up a cup of wine and gave thanks to God. He gave it to his disciples, and they all drank some.

²⁴Then he said, 'This is my blood, which is poured out for many people, and with it God makes his agreement. ²⁵From now on I will not drink any wine, until I drink new wine in God's kingdom.'

²⁶Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

Jesus was a Jew, and like many Jews, sharing meals was an important part of his daily ritual. Meals were an opportunity to build and rebuild relationships in the family.

There are many different festivals that the Jewish people celebrate throughout the year. One of these festivals is the Passover. The Passover festival commemorates the last meal of the Jewish people before their flight out of Egypt. Moses led the Jews out from slavery to the Promised Land and gave thanks for their freedom (Exodus 12). A lamb was sacrificed as part of this festival. This Passover (Seder) meal has been celebrated for over 4000 years.

Jesus celebrated the Passover meal in Jerusalem with his disciples the night before he died. This meal, celebrated by Jesus, is now called the Last Supper. Like all important meals, it was prepared for in a special way (Luke 22: 7-18).

Each family prepares for this festival by cleaning the house and oven, gathering together special dishes and cutlery used only for special events, and inviting other relatives and friends to celebrate this meal with them so that no one will be left to celebrate on their own. Everyone wears their best clothes.

The supper table is set very carefully with special items:

The Passover was a communal celebration. Usually families celebrated the Passover together and so it is interesting to note who Jesus chose to celebrate this, his final Passover, with – his closest friends and followers. The communal aspect of the Eucharist is far more than a group of people sharing a meal, it is the coming together of those who share the belief in the Kingdom of God. When people go to Mass they are remembering Jesus' Life, Death and Resurrection and making a communal commitment to go and share God's love in the world.

- The book called *hagaddah* (Hebrew for 'retelling') containing the story of how the Jews escaped from slavery in Egypt;
- In the middle of the table a plate called the Seder plate. In the middle of this plate is a bowl of salty water. Around the outside, there are smaller dishes of different foods: *haroset* (chopped nuts, dried fruit, cinnamon mixed with wine); bitter herbs; parsley; roasted egg; and a lamb bone.

At this meal, the Jewish people drink wine and eat unleavened bread which is flat and crisp. When everything is prepared, the meal can begin.

The festival begins in the evening after all the festival candles have been lit. The youngest person present begins the celebration by asking a number of questions e.g. Why is this night different from all other nights? Why do we eat only unleavened bread? Why do we dip a vegetable in salt water? Why do we eat bitter herbs? Why do we all sit in a reclining position as Roman freemen did? These questions provide a starting point for the recounting of the story. The father of the family reads the story. He uses the food to help the family remember the important parts of the story. The meal is then shared and the evening concludes with traditional Passover songs. Special prayers are said throughout the celebration, for example 'Blessed art thou, Lord our God, Master of the universe, who has kept us alive and sustained us and has brought us to this special time.'

PASSOVER:

- Celebrated in March-April, the Passover commemorated the deliverance of the people from slavery in Egypt. The blood of a sacrificed lamb was daubed on the doorposts of the homes of the Jews so the Angel of Death would 'pass over' their dwelling and kill only the firstborn of the Egyptians.
- The Passover festival included a ritual meal with the eating of unleavened bread, cooked lamb and the drinking of a ritual cup of wine. Interspersed through the meal are a number of ritual stories and symbolic actions. The ritual concludes with the hope of celebrating 'Next Year in Jerusalem; Next Year, May all be Free!'
- During the festival, many pilgrims would travel to Jerusalem in order to celebrate the feast in the holy city. However, the Passover ceremony did not take place the Temple or a synagogue, but at a home.

Passover and the Last Supper

Michele Guimess

Of all the Jewish festivals, Passover is the most important (see 'The great festivals', p. 190). Eight days with no bread, cake, nothing with a raising agent in it, only *matzoh* – flat, crisp slices of fairly tasteless unleavened bread, all in memory of the great escape from Egypt, so swift there was no time for the daily home-made bread to rise.

But at Passover there are compensations. The first night, *Seder* ('Service') night, is a wonderful extended-family celebration of the freedom God gives his people, it's a little like Christmas, except that the *Seder* has a long, age-old liturgy, accompanied by a number of important symbolic rituals.

This was almost certainly the setting for the Last Supper. Jesus used the rituals as a kind

of audio-visual aid, so that in years to come, as they celebrated the Passover, his disciples would understand the full significance of the occasion.

A great deal of the four or five-hour service, as Jews observe it today, revolving around a slap-up meal, is probably much as it would have been at the Last Supper, though it was subject to some medieval alterations. It is contained in a book called the *Haggadah* ('the telling'), recounting the story of how the Jews were delivered from slavery in Egypt, and set out for the promised land. As a child I had my own special edition – with graphic illustrations of the ten plagues, and the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea.

The table, today, is resplendent with the best silver and crockery.

glowing in the light of two traditional candles. In the father's place three squares of *matzoh* are hidden inside a satin holder. In the centre is the *Seder* dish, containing bitter herbs, and two items added after the time of Christ: a burnt egg to symbolize the Great Temple which was destroyed, and the shank bone of a lamb, the only reminder of the lambs whose blood was used to daub the doorposts of the children of Israel at the time of the final plague in Egypt, so that the Angel of Death would pass them by.

Every major festival is celebrated with red wine, the symbol of rejoicing, and on *Seder* night it is compulsory to drink four cups, each with a symbolic meaning: 'I will bring you out; I will free you; I will redeem you; I will take you to be my people.'

After the traditional blessing the first cup is drunk and the youngest child asks four questions, basically, 'Why is this night different from all other nights?' The rest of the service, by way of reply, tells the exodus story. 'We were slaves in Egypt, and God heard our cry and came down and rescued us.' No mention is ever made of Moses.

An hour or so later, after singing Psalms 113 and 114, known as the small *Hallel* ('praise'), and a second cup of wine, when I was desperate with hunger, came that dreaded moment.

Bitter herbs, usually eye-smarting pieces of horseradish root, dipped in *charoseth* (a sweet mixture made out of nuts, apples and wine), are distributed around the table, and swallowed with a certain amount of groaning. They represent our ancestors' pain, made bearable only by the sweetness of the hope of the promised land. Everyone present, says the *Haggadah*, should feel as if they had actually been a slave in Egypt. A

special guest is given this delicacy first. Jesus offered it to Judas.

The men wash their hands (this was probably the moment when Jesus washed the disciples' feet), and at last it's dinner time (roast lamb at the time of Christ, but not today). The middle of the three *matzohs* (or *afikomen*) has always been the special symbol of the Passover lamb. Earlier, the father has broken it in half, and while the children are distracted by the food, he hides it. Immediately after the meal they search until they find it, then sell it back to the father, who breaks it and gives a piece to every guest. No more food must pass their lips that night.

It would be impossible not to make the connection here with Jesus' institution of the Communion, especially as it is followed by the third cup, known as the 'Cup of Blessing'. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? asks the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 10:16). The service continues with

lots of joyous singing, including the great *Hallel* (Psalm 136), and ends with the fourth cup, which is accompanied by a prayer to God to 'send your wrath on the nations that despise you.'

Jesus joined in the singing, then went out into the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:30). 'Let this particular cup pass from me,' he prayed, before he yielded to the ordeal ahead. In other words, 'I am the Passover lamb broken for you, the blood shed for you. God's wrath will be poured on me, so that you are truly free.'

“We have been brought from slavery to freedom, from sadness to gladness, from mourning to feasting, from darkness to light, from captivity to redemption.”

Jewish Passover service prayer

THE SEDER MEAL



The week prior to the crucifixion was quickly drawing to a close. Wednesday of that last week before the crucifixion was a day of silence. The Bible says nothing about it. Jesus probably rested in Bethany with His disciples. But on Thursday, preparations were made for the Passover, which we remember as the Last Supper. In an upper room in Jerusalem, Jesus ate with His disciples.

The Passover meal

According to the Talmud, a commentary on the laws of Moses by the rabbis, four or five cups of red wine were drunk at various times during the paschal supper. The wine was mixed with water, one part to three of the wine. The first cup (see Luke 22:17) introduced a blessing on the day and the wine. This was followed by ritual washings. Bitter herbs, unleavened bread, roast lamb, a special feast called "the Chagigah of the 14th day," and a spicy sauce were then brought in. The ritual in which the son was instructed in the meaning of the Passover was followed by the singing of Psalms 113–114 (the Hallel). After the second cup of wine, a blessing was made on each item of food. Guests ate in a reclining position, with the lamb eaten last. The ceremony was completed with thanks, a third cup of wine called "the cup of thanksgiving" (see 1 Cor. 10:16), Psalms 115–118 (the remainder of the Hallel), and a final cup of wine. Sometimes the Great Hallel (Pss. 120–136) and a fifth wine cup were added.

Jesus probably introduced the "Lord's Supper" after the meal and before the cup.

The Upper Room

An upstairs room is mentioned in connection with the Last Supper, the post-Resurrection meetings of the apostles, and Pentecost. Luke, however, uses two different words, so two different places may have been meant.

Large upstairs rooms with both inside and outside stairs are known in Old Testament times (see 2 Kings 1:2 for an example). The room in which the Last Supper took place could have been such an enclosed room; it could also have been an open room, or *medhafeh*, above a clay-covered roof, on which Arab families in the main house of the village still spend a lot of time.

It is probably impossible to locate the site exactly today. Some identify it with the house of Mary, John Mark's mother. Epiphanius tells us the Emperor Hadrian visited it in A.D. 135. What is now called the "Cenacle," a traditional upper room, is located in a church that was until recently the En Neby Daud Mosque.

Footwashing

Moses wrote of a ritual washing for priests (Ex. 30:17-21). The wife or a servant usually washed the feet of houseguests, though the host might do it for a special guest.

The cup

Cups were made of pottery or metal in ancient times. There were two basic types. Some had handles. The more common cup was a shallow bowl without handles, which came in a variety of shapes and sizes. Many materials were used to make cups. Gold, silver, bronze, pottery, wood,