

Communion and Passover
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"And when your children say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?' you shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the LORD who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes.'"
Exodus 12:26-27

Then came the first day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. And Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, so that we may eat it."
Luke 22:7-8

When Jesus celebrated the Passover at the end of the Gospels, it was the last Passover that was under the Law of Moses before God. In that meal He created a new feast, the Lord's Supper, and gave it to the church. It is important for us to understand that the Lord's Supper (we call this communion or breaking bread) is born of the Passover, but completely separate from it, just as the New Covenant is separate from the Old Covenant. But the imagery of the Passover is strong in the Lord's Supper, just as all of the feast days fo the Jews (listed in Leviticus 23) are shadows of the Lord's Supper. It is as Scriptures tells us: the OT is meant to teach us the principles of the NT (Romans 15:4, 1 Corinthians 10:11).

OT Feast Shadow NT Feast	
Passover	Looking back to His sacrifice
Unleavened Bread	Breaking of unleavened bread
First Fruits	First day of the week
Weeks	Partaking with saints
Trumpets	Looking forward to His return
Day of Atonement	Drinking of fruit of the vine
Tabernacles	Looking forward to His return

It helps us too to understand why Jesus took emblems of the Passover and used them to institute His Supper (an emblem is a strong representation or identification that embodies another thing).

Why unleavened bread? Jesus told His disciples that He was the Bread of Life in John 6:35. This was not referring to communion, but it might be said that communion refers to this idea. We ought to consider that throughout the New Testament, leaven is identified with sin (1 Cor. 5:6-8, Gal. 5:9). Too, we need to know that Jesus was without sin (1 Pet. 2:21). Therefore, it makes sense that if Jesus were to represent His life in the flesh, a life which in dying He took away our sins, that representation or emblem would be a bread without leaven to reflect a body without sin. Unleavened bread tells us that Jesus died without sin, but that His death was to take away our sin. As our Passover Lamb, His blood causes death to pass over us.

Why fruit of the vine? Jesus specifically used the Greek word *Ampelos* rather than the word for wine (*oinos*). This word refers to a Grapevine¹. It makes sense, since we see that grapes are compared with blood in Scripture (Gen. 49:11). Another likely reason that it is not called wine is that leaven was forbidden to be in the house during the Passover (Ex. 13:7). Fermentation is a form of leaven; in the Elephantine letters describing Passover it is revealed that fermented drinks were to be removed during Passover². Jesus tells us that this drink, this cup is the purchase of the New Covenant (consider Acts 20:28).

Therefore, the order of communion (First, dying to sin through His body, second, joining ourselves to His covenant in His blood) matters, since it is a reenactment of the plan of Salvation. We die to sin in repentance, we arise to walk in a new life in baptism. Hebrews 10:1-10 tells us this, summarizing with this statement: *“He takes away the first that He may establish the second”*. Takes the 1st (our sins, the previous covenants) in His body (bread). He establishes the 2nd by His blood (cup).

Death is in the body (Romans 8:6, 1 Peter 3:18)
Life is in the blood (Genesis 9:4, Leviticus 17:11)

¹ Kyle Butt: *What is the “Fruit of the Vine”?* <http://ap.lanexdev.com/APContent.aspx?category=11&article=1262>

² <http://www.kchanson.com/ANCDOCS/westsem/passover.html>