

Like many a passion in life, it all started with a kiss.

Jesus, having seen the mob arriving, said to his disciples, “See, my betrayer is at hand.” Only earlier that evening, having gathered with his disciples, Jesus shared the meal with this man. He even shared the charoset with him.

Charoset is a dip made from apples, ground almonds, kiddush wine, and cinnamon. It is a tradition honoured not only in the sharing but also in the way it is made. Everything in the seder meal has significance and meaning.

In the Christian tradition, the unleavened bread and the cup of Elijah from the meal are used to remember what Jesus has done for us. The bread, unleavened due to the need to make it quickly, was the bread on the night of the Exodus. It symbolises Christ’s body broken for us and is sacramental in the sharing. Every time we do this, we do so in remembrance of Jesus.

The final cup of the Passover is that of Elijah. A cup is always left for Elijah. The prophecy says that the Messiah will not come until Elijah returns. In Luke’s account of the Passion, the cup is given twice. One signifies the end of the seder, and then Jesus shares the cup of Elijah. He is the Messiah, and this cup represents the spilling of his blood. Again, we do this in remembrance of him.

So, what is the dip about?

The dip signifies the mortar on the houses and huts of Egypt, where they were enslaved, and the new dwellings to be built in Jerusalem. The remembrance of Egypt is why the dip is rather sweet. Every part of the mixture can also tell a story.

Rabbi Akiva, a sage and wise man who taught in the period after the sacking of Jerusalem in 70CE, had an interesting take on it. Rabbi Akiva would have been an early teacher of the Seder tradition that went on to replace the Temple sacrifices.

Akiva taught that although the men of Israel in slavery wanted to cease to have children. This would bring the Israelite people to an end rather than have more generations endure slavery. However, the women were determined to carry on. They took their husbands to apple orchards and ensured more children were born. He pointed to a verse in the Song of Songs: “*Under the apple tree I awakened you; there your mother conceived you*” (Song of Songs 8:5).

Indeed, a different sort of Passion!

Akiva taught that charoset is made from apples in honour of the women who wouldn’t give up. The *charoset* does not represent suffering but endurance and rebirth, and therefore it is appropriate that it is sweet. It is also fitting that the *maror*, *bitter herbs*, are dipped in the *charoset* because it tempers its bitterness — because even in Egypt, there were elements or moments of sweetness.

“Who is it, Lord?” “Who is going to betray you?”
Jesus said, “The one whom I share the dip with.”

And with that, Judas was told to do what he had to do. And he left. And it was night.

In the story of Jesus' death and resurrection, a significant amount of prophecy is fulfilled. Some prophecies are apparent, and some are lost in the annals of history and culture.

Dipping the bitter herbs in the sweet apple mixture, Jesus gave Judas the sign needed. The Passion of Jesus was about to begin.

I wonder if Judas understood the significance of the dip.

In betraying Jesus, new life was to begin. The potent symbols of rebirth endurance, and tinged with the bitterness of crucifixion, are powerful. The Son of Man needed to be handed over to be killed to bring about the rebirth of our relationship with our Creator God. After Judas left, the bread was already broken, and the wine outpoured.

The sign that Judas was to give to the mob was a simple kiss.
"Is that how you betray me with a kiss?"
All this took place to fulfil the scriptures.

For us, we don't know what sort of kiss it was. In the Middle East and throughout Europe, greeting one another with a kiss or two is customary. How comfortable that makes us feel in this bastion of testosterone-driven Aussie blokedom is questionable. Beware of reading back our culture into another time and place.

Today, we look back at this simple part of the Passion of Jesus. Having dipped his bread in the dip and sharing it with Judas, the sign to begin the renewal and endurance process began. It was both bitter and sweet. And from there, Judas went into the night.

That simple kiss: a sign of respect or even love, set in motion the Passion of our Lord Jesus. Today, we enter the bitterness of this journey. We enter the endurance of the three days of waiting when the mortar of the first Exodus becomes the building material of the Easter people.

We know that realising what he had done was considerably burdensome for Judas, and Jesus understood that. Many in our community understand the pain and struggle of remorse. Having set in motion the inevitable death of Jesus, Judas entered his agony and death. He was to be with Jesus as he descended into the dead.

Was Judas ultimately redeemed? I cannot answer that, but it is on the first pages of my questions to God when it is time to give an account of my life.

The Passion began with a kiss. No, it is not a penny novel; it is our story of us. As Easter people, we also need to be aware of what we have done. But if it was not for the sharing of a simple sweet dip on the night before the day called Good, one can only wonder.

As we endure the bitterness of the maror over the next two days, remember, the mortar that makes up our new life is made from the sweetest apple, and it is all in the name of new life in Christ.