
 Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist by Dr Brant Pitre
Goal: Look at the Eucharist through 1st Century Jewish eyesBackground

Jews were prohibited from drinking blood (Lev 7-especially Chapter 17: *Sacredness of Blood*) It is clearly stated that ...**Lev 17:11** "*Since the life of a living body is in its blood, I have made you put it on the altar, so that atonement may thereby be made for your own lives because it is the blood, as the seat of life, that makes atonement.*"

St Paul (Staunch Pharisee, Jewish Rabbi and persecutor of the church) forbidden by Jewish Law to drink blood, boldly states in **1Cor 10:16-17**: "*The cup of the blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?*"

First Key Image of New Testament

1. Why did the Jews in Jesus time believe so quickly in such the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist?

Background**The first Exodus consisted of...**

1. Chosen people enslaved because they broke their covenant with God; God sent a leader to release them from slavery, sin and idolatry in **Exodus 12**
2. The new Exodus was a new journey with a new leader, a new pilgrimage, a new promise, a new Eden, a new *COVENANT between God and His chosen people*.
3. The focus was on the TABERNACLE; center of EXODUS; destination was not the desert or Mount Sinai but Jerusalem, the heart of the PROMISED LAND but the City of David (**Exodus 15** Prophets foretold of something *greater* than the Tabernacle – a new temple, a *permanent* (not a tent or a building) which would be more glorious than Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem – center of the *New Exodus* would be *exodus from sin and death*.

Exodus from Egypt began with PASSOVER – death of firstborn, death of a lamb, unleavened bread, eating *roasted lamb*, etc. God gave very specific instructions to follow in order to be set FREE from Egypt; especially a ritual sacrifice with several steps to follow:

1. Father of each household (acting as priest) take unblemished male lamb (no broken bones), sacrifice and pour blood in a **golden basin**, use a **hyssop branch** to spread blood on doorposts and lintel of home (**seal of the covenant**)
2. Roast the lamb over the fire and **eat its flesh**. Over time, this ritual evolved into Jewish Passover (Seder) Meal **Exodus 30:8**

Two parts of the Passover (Seder) meal are especially important

1. On the night of Passover, youngest child would ask the father of the household "*Why is this night different from any other? Why do we do these things on THIS night? Why do we eat unleavened bread and roasted lamb?*" The father responded with these EXACT words "*It is because of what the Lord did for ME when I came out of Egypt.*"
2. Passover on the night of last supper was over 1000 year AFTER the event. How could the father say "what the Lord did for ME.?"

47 *First century Jews believe they were somehow **spiritually brought back in time** to*
48 *participate in that first Exodus...Every sacrifice of every lamb all down through centuries*
49 *was seen as an actual participation in the one sacrifice of the Passover lamb on the night of the*
50 *Exodus and Moses – the Mishnah states in every generation, a Jewish man must regard himself*
51 *as if he himself came forth out of Egypt – giving thanks because by delivering his ancestors*
52 *from Egypt, so too was he delivered.*

53 **Second Key Image from Old Testament (The Passover and New Covenant)**

54 Second Exodus needs: (for a detailed description of the Last Supper, see *Mark 14, Matt 24 or Luke*
55 *22*) **NOTE:** Try to look at the passages through eyes of 1st century Jew and ask these questions:

56 1. What is missing from the Last Supper?*

57 *No Leviticus priest present at Passover meal.*

58 **NOTE:** At the time of Jesus, there was not a Leviticus priest present at the Passover Meal; This is
59 significant because for a long time, the father of the household offered sacrifice of lamb.
60 After the Israelites committed idolatry (Exodus 32) – that privilege was taken from them
61 and given to the tribe of Levites, only Levites could sacrifice the Paschal lamb. Jesus was
62 priest at last supper.

63 2. How is it similar to the Jewish Passover?

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68 3. How is it different?

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72 **NOTE:** No longer is priesthood by bloodline (Levites) but through Jesus

73 ***B. See New Sacrifice taking place** – Jesus replacing the lamb with sacrifice of Himself*
74 *remember in OT had to EAT the lamb; in NT had to eat the lamb – institution of the*
75 *Eucharist*

76 **NOTE:** Any first century Jew would know they had to eat the lamb; “...Passover does not complete
77 with death of the lamb but completed by communion where you would receive the life that was
78 given for you and take it into yourself...”** **- if not eat Lamb of God sacrificed for us, then we die**

79 ***C. New elements of Sacrifice of Lamb-** focused on flesh and blood of the Lamb- elements no*
80 *longer real flesh and blood of an imperfect animal but bread and wine*
81 ***transubstantiated***into flesh and blood of sanctified Lamb of God*

82 **NOTE:** Just as Jews remembered for over 1000 years the Exodus from Egypt with Seder Meal (as if it
83 was happening again on that night), the New Covenant is remembered with Jesus as the sacrificed
84 Lamb of God at every Mass – our exodus from Sin and into salvation.

85 4. If in OT Exodus, God gave food and drink to sustain the Hebrews; what would be the food and
86 drink of the New Testament? (**Exodus 16**)

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90 **NOTE:** If in Old Covenant, you had to eat the flesh of the lamb to be saved from death. In the New
91 Covenant, you had to eat the lamb – every first century Jew would have understood this. Passover
92 not completed with death of a victim but completed by the communion where you would receive
93 the life that was given for you and taken into yourself. If Jesus going to inaugurate a new Exodus,
94 what FOOD will He give us for the journey? (**Exodus 15 – 16**)

- 95 5. The New Manna
96 A. What did the manna taste like (**Acts 2**)? *Wafers that tasted like honey; a foretaste of*
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99 B. Why did they collect a double portion on Fridays?
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102 C. What else did they do with the manna they collected?
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105 D. Why?
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108 E. Why does this sound familiar?
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111 F. What two places in the Bible does Jesus speak of the new manna of the new Exodus?
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115 **BACKGROUND:** The Lord's Prayer (the only recorded prayer that Jesus gave to His apostles)
116 (Mt 6:11; Lk 11:3)

117 Our Father, who is in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth
118 as it is in Heaven. ***Give us this day our daily bread*** and forgive us for our trespasses as we forgive
119 those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen
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121 9. How does the phrase ***Give us this day our bread*** relate to the manna from the Old Testament?
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125 10. What does the super-substantial sound like?
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130 11. John 6 – What is significant about this passage as it relates to the Eucharist?
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136 12. The first Jewish Christians understood the new manna could not be ordinary bread – if the Old
137 Testament manna from heaven was *supernatural* than can the New Testament manna
138 simply be a symbol?
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144 13. Jesus said if you eat this *New Manna* from heaven, you will have eternal life – Eucharist is the
145 *supernatural* bread from heaven. What clue does Jesus’ give us that the Eucharist is NOT
146 simply His crucified Body and Blood?
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151 **Third Key Image from Old Testament (Eucharist as Bread of Presence)**

152 1. In the Old Testament after the Exodus, where was worship centered?
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156 2. What was at the heart of the portable temple?
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160 3. What three pieces of sacred furniture did God instruct Moses to place into the Holy of Holies?
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166 4. How many holy symbols are hidden in the Tabernacle of the Old Testament and their
167 significance?
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172 5. In the Book of the Jewish Laws, what does Leviticus 24:5-9 tells us about The Presence?
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176 6. What ritual is required when the Bread of the Presence was removed from the Tabernacle?
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181 7. In the Hebrew Old Testament, *Lachem Ha-Chaim* (the Bread of the Presence expression) and the
182 Hebrew word *Panim* have a double meaning. What do they mean and how is that significant
183 to understanding The Presence?
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188 8. Read Exodus 25:29-30. What can be determined by this passage?
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193	9. What other similarities can we find in Samuel 21 between the food and drink in the Holy of
194	Holies?
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199	10. In Samuel 21, what do we know about the Levitical priesthood?
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204	11. What is the one time Jesus mentions the Bread of the Presence?
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209	12. What did Jesus mean when he said, “I tell you, something greater than the Temple is here”?
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213	13. What is Jesus implying?
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218	14. How was it that the first Jewish Christians came to believe in the real Presence?
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224	15. What does the Eucharist and the New Passover reveal to us?
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230	16. Why is it important not to only look back to the cross but also forward to the resurrection of the
231	body when we look at Eucharist as the new manna?
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236	17. In John 6, Jesus said “he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise
237	him up on the last day”. What is the pledge of our bodily resurrection?
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242 **FINAL NOTE** (Brant Pitre): "(Eucharist) takes us back to the cross and forward to the resurrection
243 and provides the Bread of the Presence for Him to dwell with us now so that we may be sustained
244 and draw on His presence and got to Him in the Tabernacle, in Eucharistic Adoration, in the Mass,
245 and we can look upon the Bread of the Face of God – it is veiled now but will not always be so..."
246 Remember when the Israelites reached the promised land, the manna stopped – so the veil of bread
247 and wine that now covers the face will be lifted and we will no longer look upon him but will see
248 Him face to face.

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250 **Closing Prayer**

251 Jesus, we thank you for the new manna from heaven, our foretaste of the Promised Land, our
252 pledge of the resurrection and we thank you for the gift of yourself and the new Bread of the
253 Presence, the new bread of the face of God.

254 O Lord Jesus, draw us to your face, draw us to yourself and help us to love you more and more every
255 day in the most Blessed Sacrament of the holy Eucharist and be with us and lead us all into the glory
256 of Your Kingdom as we say:

257 Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit as it was in the beginning is now and
258 ever shall be world without end. Amen

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260 **References**

261 *Dead Sea Scrolls* (CD) FORMED.org

262 *Mishnah* – an authoritative collection of exegetical materials embodying the oral tradition of Jewish
263 law and forming the first part of the Talmud

264 Exegetical – critical explanation or interpretation of a text, especially of scripture;
265 interpretation, explanation, exposition

266 Talmud - the body of Jewish civil and ceremonial law and legend comprising the Mishnah and
267 the Gemara. There are two versions of the Talmud: the Babylonian Talmud (which dates
268 from the 5th century AD but includes earlier material) and the earlier Palestinian or
269 Jerusalem Talmud.

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272 **Definitions**

273 *Tran·sub·stan·ti·a·tion* - especially in the Roman Catholic Church) the conversion of the substance
274 of the Eucharistic elements into (literally) the body and blood of Christ at consecration, only the
275 appearances of bread and wine still remaining; the idea that though it looks like bread and wine, it
276 is not.

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278 **Consubstantiation** - The **difference** is in how that idea is understood. **Consubstantiation** is the
279 idea that, at the same time, it is both bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ;

280 *Consubstantial* (as adjective) - as used in The Creed- of the same substance or essence (used
281 especially of the three persons of the Trinity in Christian theology). "Christ is **consubstantial**

282 **with** the Father"

283 Exegetical – synonyms elucidative, explanative, explanatory, explicative, expository, illuminative,
284 interpretive