

# Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist

Dr. Brant Pitre

## The New Exodus

### First Exodus

1. Deliverer: Moses
2. Israel: Released from Egypt
3. Journey to Promised Land
4. Worship of God: Tabernacle/Temple
5. Ultimate Destination: Jerusalem

### New Exodus

1. New Deliverer: Messiah
2. Israel and Gentiles: Released from the Sin, Exile, and Death
3. Journey: New Promised Land (New Eden)
4. Worship of God: New Temple
5. Ultimate Destination: New Jerusalem

## The Old Passover

1. In order to have a New Exodus, you must first have a New Passover
2. Old Testament Passover: (Exodus 12)
  - a. Father was priest over his family (cf. Exodus 24)
  - b. Unblemished Male Lamb taken and sacrificed; blood poured into bowl
  - c. Dip hyssop branch in blood
  - d. Spread blood on the doorposts of the home
  - e. Eat the Lamb

## Later Jewish Passover

1. Passover Night: Child would ask the Father:
2. “Why is this night different from other nights?”
3. “Why do we eat unleavened bread and roast lamb?”
4. Father’s Answer: “It is because of what the LORD did for *me* when I came out of Egypt” (Exodus 13:8)
5. Passover Liturgy: spiritually *brought them back to participate* in First Passover:

“In every generation a man must so regard himself as if he came forth himself out of Egypt, for it is written... [Exod 13:8]. Therefore we are bound to give thanks....” (Mishnah *Pesahim* 10)

## The New Passover

1. The Last Supper: What is different? (Mark 14; Matt 24; Luke 22)
  - a. Lamb is not the focus
  - b. Jesus speaks of “pouring out” blood; only priests can do this (Lev 4:5-7)
2. No Ordinary Passover:
  - a. New Priests: Jesus and 12 Apostles (representing 12 Tribes)
  - b. New Lamb: Jesus replaces Lamb with himself
  - c. New Sacrifice: Unleavened Bread (Body) and Wine (Blood) offered
3. Why did Jewish Christians believe Eucharist was Jesus’ body and blood?
  - a. Eucharist, like the Old Passover: is a *participation* in the New Passover of Jesus
  - b. You had to *eat* the Lamb to complete the sacrifice
  - c. St. Paul: Jesus is the New Lamb“Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the feast!” (1 Cor 5:7-8)

# Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist

Dr. Brant Pitre

## The Old Manna

1. If Jesus inaugurates a New Exodus, what food is given for the journey?
2. The Manna in the Wilderness (Exodus 16)
  - a. Israel cries out for food; they want to go back to Egypt
  - b. The LORD says: “Behold, I will rain down bread from heaven for you”
  - c. In the Morning: “Bread” from heaven (Manna)
  - d. In the Evening: “Flesh” from heaven (Quail)
  - e. Manna: white, tasted “like wafers made with honey”  
(A foretaste of the promised land: “milk and honey”)
  - f. “The Grain of Heaven” and “The Bread of Angels” (Psa 78:21-25)
3. The Manna in the Tabernacle: Placed in a Golden Urn in the Tabernacle (Exod 16:33-34; Heb 9:6)

## Later Jewish Tradition

1. The Messiah will Bring Back the Manna from Heaven:  
And it will happen that... *the Messiah* will begin to be revealed... *And those who are hungry will enjoy themselves* and they will, moreover, see marvels every day... *And it will happen at that time that the treasury of manna will come down again from on high, and they will eat of it* in those years because these are they who will have arrived at the consummation of time. (2 Baruch 29:3-8)

## The New Manna

1. The Lord’s Prayer: “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matt 6:11; Luke 11:3)
  - a. “Give us this day our *epi-ousios* bread”
  - b. Greek: *epi* (“on, upon, above”)  
*ousios* (“substance, being, nature”)
  - c. St. Jerome: “Give us this day our *supersubstantial* bread” (Douay-Rheims)
  - d. Both daily *and* supernatural: just like the Manna

“Taken literally, (*epiousios* – “superessential”)... refers directly to the Bread of Life, the Body of Christ” (CCC 2837)

2. The Bread of Life Discourse (John 6: 48-64)

Jesus said: “I am the bread of life. *Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.* This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man might eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and *the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.*” The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” So Jesus said to them, “Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, *and I will raise him up at the last day.* For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.... *This is the bread which comes down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.*” Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, “Do you take offense at this? *Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending where he was before?*”

3. Why did Jewish Christians believe the Eucharist was Jesus’ body and blood?
  - a. They knew it is *supernatural* bread *from heaven*
  - b. They knew it is his *risen* body and blood

# Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist

Dr. Brant Pitre

## The “Bread of the Presence”

1. Worship of God in First Exodus: Tabernacle
2. Old Testament “Bread of the Presence” (Commonly mis-translated “Showbread”)
3. God Instructs Moses to Build the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:10-40)
4. Three Key Symbols of God in Tabernacle
  - a. Ark of the Covenant: Throne of Invisible God
  - b. Golden Lampstand (Menorah): 7 Tongues of Fire
  - c. “Bread of the Presence”: Set on Golden Table
5. The Bread of the Presence in the Tabernacle (Leviticus 24:1-9)
  - a. 12 Cakes of Bread
  - b. Set out each Sabbath by Priests on behalf of Israel
  - c. “A Perpetual Due”: to be “continually” “before the LORD” “as a covenant forever”
  - d. Lampstand Candles must be “kept burning continually” with the Bread of the Presence
  - e. Veiled when carried out of Tabernacle (Num 4:1-15)
  - f. “Bread of Presence”: Literally “Bread of the Face” (Heb *lehem ha pannonim*)
  - g. A Sacrifice of Bread *and wine* (Exod 25: 29)

## Later Jewish Tradition

According to the Rabbis, the Bread of the Presence would be placed on a golden table (such as that described in Lev 24:6) and *elevated* for pilgrims to see:

*They used to lift it up and exhibit the Bread of the Presence on it to those who came up for the festivals, saying to them, “Behold, God’s love for you!” (Babylonian Talmud, Menahoth 29a)*

## The New Bread of the Presence

1. Jesus and the New Temple (Matt 12:1-8)

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck ears of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” He said to them, “*Have you not read what David did, when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the Temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the Temple is here.*”

2. Why did the first Jewish Christians believe in the Real Presence?
  - a. The Eucharist was the New “Bread of the *Presence*”
  - b. Jesus has laid claim for himself and his followers, just as David did, to the priesthood (cf. 2 Samuel 6)
  - c. Jesus is the New Temple: his disciples will offer the New Bread of the Presence
  - d. The New Temple: “the temple of his body” (John 2:19-22)