

Moses and the Eucharist

One of my favorite stories found in Scripture is that of the Israelites' deliverance from slavery in Egypt. The ten plagues, the heated exchanges between Pharaoh and Moses, and the parting of the Red Sea combine to make a riveting storyline. At the heart of this great event in salvation history is the Passover which is packed with Eucharistic meaning. The Passover sets the stage for what Christ accomplished on the cross. In theological terms, the Passover of the Old Covenant *foreshadows* Christ's sacrifice and the Eucharist of the New Covenant.

In order to rescue His people from slavery, God gave them very specific instructions. He did not simply ask them to pack their bags and head for the exit. Rather, in Exodus chapter twelve we find that the Israelites needed to prepare for departure from Egypt by partaking of a sacrifice and meal. Each family was to *slaughter and eat* an unblemished male lamb and *spread its blood* on the doorposts. Seeing the lambs' blood on their doorposts, the angel of death would pass over (hence the term "Passover") the Israelites' homes and spare their first-born sons. However, the angel of death would enter the Egyptians' homes, which did not bear the mark of the blood of the lamb, and kill their first-born sons. God further instructed the Israelites that this Passover was to be celebrated from generation to generation since it recalled the day that they were delivered out of slavery. This is the Passover of the Old Covenant.

God becoming man (Jesus) marks the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, from the Old Testament to the New Testament. In the Old Covenant, the enormous gap existing between God and man was insurmountable because of man's unforgiven sin. God had rescued His people from slavery in Egypt, but the worst form of slavery and roadblock to friendship with God is bondage to sin. Therefore, the Old Testament Passover needed to be fulfilled and perfected by the ultimate Passover: the deliverance from sin by Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. Thus, in the Old Testament, God freed the Israelites from Egyptians, but in the New Testament, God freed us from sin by sending His Son.

Jesus Christ is the perfect and unblemished Lamb of God, foreshadowed by the lambs of the Old Testament Passover. For our deliverance, He has been *slaughtered*, His *blood and torn flesh have been spread* across the beams of the cross, and His flesh and blood are given to us in the Eucharist to *eat*. As the Israelites, the people of the Old Covenant, were to partake in the sacrifice and meal of a lamb for their deliverance, so are we, the people of the New Covenant. Furthermore, as the Israelites were to perpetually observe the Passover, Christ commanded us to perpetually observe His Sacrifice (the ultimate Passover) at Mass when He said at the Last Supper, "Do this in remembrance of me." When the priest at Mass lifts the chalice containing the Precious Blood and the paten holding the Precious Body of Christ, we should recall the words of Moses to Pharaoh, for Christ echoes them to sin: "Let my people go."

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