

Jewish Roots of the Mass - In Light of the New Covenant

1. Review of the Gospel Message
 - a. Relationship & Harmony - Adam and Eve in the Garden
 - b. The Fall of Man & Original Sin
 - c. Continued & Gradual Pursuit of Man by God - particular focus on Israelites
 - d. Reconciliation of Man through Jesus Christ - Old Covenant fulfilled by Christ and ushering in of the New Covenant
2. Principal reasons why God became incarnate:
 - a. To dwell among us & speak to us as man, so as to establish intimate friendship with us
 - b. To teach us perfect virtue by his example, especially love, humility, obedience, religion, magnanimity, and fortitude
 - c. To give us the possibility of supreme merit through the exercise of faith
 - d. To offer an expiatory sacrifice to satisfy for all human sin in perfect justice and so to nourish our hope of redemption
 - e. To show the divine love for man and give us a supreme motive for charity
 - f. To give us a participation in His divinity through sanctifying grace and, thus, to found the Church to be His Mystical Body and His Bride
 - g. To show man the immense dignity to which he has been elevated by Christ: the dignity of entering into communion with the Blessed Trinity;
 - h. To enter into a nuptial union with us
3. These ends are summed up under 3 headings of Presence, Sacrifice, and Communion/Spiritual Nourishment
 - a. To perpetuate His human presence among men as our Redeemer and the divine Victim for our souls
 - b. To perpetuate His redemptive sacrifice, the supreme act of His burning charity, and allow us to join with Him in offering it to the Father
 - c. To unite Himself in intimate communion with us so as to be our spiritual food and drink

“Christ instituted the Eucharist for the same reasons He became Incarnate...The Eucharist is NOT an afterthought, not something secondary...it is inextricably tied up with the Incarnation and the Passion of Christ...The Eucharist obeys the same divine logic as the Incarnation and the Passion, for it is their sacramental *prolongation* throughout the life of the Church until Christ comes again in glory”

The Eucharist pg 10 - Feingold

“God became man to dwell among us on our level, to sacrifice Himself for us to win the forgiveness of sins and merit every grace, and to bring us into intimate union with Himself by giving us a share in His divine life. As we have said...all three are proper to love, for love seeks to dwell with the beloved, sacrifice for the beloved, and unite oneself with the beloved as intimately as possible.”

The Eucharist pg 12 - Feingold

4. The 3 Ends Foreshadowed in the Old Testament

"Now of all the gifts which God vouchsafed to mankind after they had fallen away by sin, the chief is that He gave His Son; wherefore it is written (John 3:16): "God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son."...Consequently the chief sacrifice is that whereby Christ Himself "delivered Himself...to God for an odor of sweetness" (Eph 5:2). And for this reason all the other sacrifices of the Old Law were offered up in order to foreshadow this one individual and paramount sacrifice – the imperfect forecasting the perfect."

St. Thomas Aquinas; ST I-II, q. 102, a. 3.

- a. Presence - Cloud of Glory
 - i. Incarnation and Eucharist prefigured by God's presence by a visible cloud of glory called *shekhinah* (Hebrew)
 - ii. Skhnh - "to dwell or abide" describe the overshadowing of God's presence
 - iii. Exodus 35:34-38
 - iv. Same figure of the supreme indwelling of God that occurred when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). John chose the word "dwell" from the root skhnh which literally means to "dwell as in a tent", to recall the dwelling of God with His people through the shekhinah
- b. Sacrifice - Abraham & Isaac, Passover
 - i. Abraham - willing to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac out of faith in God → prefigure of God the Father willingly sacrificing His only Son Jesus Christ
 - ii. Passover - yearly commemoration of the event of Exodus.
 1. NT - The Last supper is the new Passover where Christ is the Paschal lamb, the victim, and the priest who willingly gives His life on the altar of the cross at Calvary
 2. The Mass and the Eucharist are the same sacrifice → one true eternal sacrifice which sets us free and saves us from death
- c. Communion/Spiritual Nourishment - Manna in the Desert
 - i. The mysterious food which fed the Israelites for 40 years as they wandered in the desert.
 - ii. Exodus 16- "Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day" "When the people of Israel saw it they said to one another 'what is it' For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them ' it is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat."
 - iii. Manna is a foreshadowing of the Eucharist...
 1. Bread from heaven - nourishment given by God, not the work of man. → (Jn 6:48-51)
 2. Mysteriousness of the manna - don't know where it came from → so too the Eucharist is a mysterious gift of God..
 3. God gave each only as what was needed, not more or less -

- a. particles of consecrated host contain the fullness of the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ
- b. The Eucharist nourishes the recipient according to his spiritual state, fervor and capacity, not the amount of Eucharist received.

5. In Light of the New Covenant: Bread of Life Discourse - John 6:48-69

- a. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; 50 this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. 52 The Jews quarreled among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us [his] flesh to eat?” 53 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 do not have life within you. 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. 55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. 57 Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever.”...Then many of his disciples who were listening said, “This saying is hard; who can accept it?” 61 Since Jesus knew that his disciples were murmuring about this, he said to them, “Does this shock you? 62 What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? 63 It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh* is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe.” Jesus knew from the beginning the ones who would not believe and the one who would betray him. 65 And he said, “For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by my Father.” 66 As a result of this, many [of] his disciples returned to their former way of life and no longer accompanied him. 67 Jesus then said to the Twelve, “Do you also want to leave?” 68 Simon Peter answered him, “Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

“The Eucharist, however, does not merely realize an aspect of the New Covenant or symbolize it... Jesus says that the Eucharist *is* “the New Covenant in my blood” (Luke 22:20). By giving us Communion, the Eucharist brings us into the most intimate union with Jesus and causes our divinization, and it also makes it possible for us to offer the most perfect worship of God by giving us the means to offer ourselves to the Father in union with Christ’s own sacrifice. The Eucharist therefore is the heart of the New Covenant.”

The Eucharist pg 36 - Feingold

6. Church Fathers on the Eucharist

- a. **St Ignatius of Antioch** (writings from around 107 AD on his way to martyrdom)
 - i. Against the heresy of Docetism: “They abstain from Eucharist and prayer because they refuse to acknowledge that the Eucharist is the flesh of our savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which the Father by His goodness raised up.” (Letter to the Romans 7)
 - ii. My passionate love has been crucified...I take no pleasure in corruptible food or the pleasures of this life. I want the bread of God, which is the flesh of Christ who is the seed of David; and for drink I want His blood, which is incorruptible love.” (Letter to the Ephesians 20)
- b. **St. Justin Martyr** - Description of the Mass, written around 150 AD
- c. **St. Irenaeus** - a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of St. John the Apostle
 - i. “For we offer to Him His own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh and Spirit. For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity.” (*Against the Heresies*; written around 180)

7. Reflection

- a. Every church with the Blessed Sacrament is infinitely holier than the Temple in Jerusalem → that was but a type or figure of the presence of the Word Incarnate
- b. The Holy of Holies was the place where only the high priest could enter once a year after multiple days of purification → The church that sits above us is infinitely holier and we can stand before the presence of God freely and often
- c. What extraordinary intimacy we have with God that we not only pray in His presence, we even receive Him into our bodies and become one with Him! We, as recipients of the Eucharist, get to become a tabernacle of our Lord!
- d. Through our Baptism, the Holy Trinity dwells within our souls, this too makes us temples of the Holy Spirit at all times - 1 Corinthians 6:13-20

8. Practical Application in the Mass

- a. During Mass, reflect on how God pursued the Israelites for thousands of years with great love, meekness, and perseverance
- b. Then reflect on how God has personally pursued you throughout your life; the ways in which He has drawn you near to Himself and provided for you. Then, with our Blessed Mother, present and the foot of the cross: gifts which you are thankful for, crosses you still bear, and any wounds or frustrations in which you seek the Lord’s healing.

Next Month: March 22nd - Symbolism within the Liturgy