

FIRST READING – BODY AND BLOOD B

A reading from the Book of Exodus.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Moses came and told the people
all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances;
and all the people answered with one voice, and said,
“All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do.”
And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord.
He rose early in the morning,
and built an altar at the foot of the mountain,
and set up twelve pillars,
corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel.
He sent young men of the people of Israel,
who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed oxen
as offerings of well-being to the Lord.
Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins,
and half of the blood he dashed against the altar.
Then he took the book of the covenant,
and read it in the hearing of the people;
and they said,
“All that the Lord has spoken we will do,
and we will be obedient.”
Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people, and said,
“See the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you
in accordance with all these words.”

Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING – BODY AND BLOOD B

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

When Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come,
then through the greater and perfect tent,
– not made with hands,
that is, not of this creation –
he entered once for all into the Holy Place,
not with the blood of goats and calves,
but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.
For if the blood of goats and bulls,
with the sprinkling of the ashes of a heifer,
sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is purified,
how much more will the blood of Christ,
who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God,
purify our conscience from dead works
to worship the living God!

For this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant,
so that those who are called
may receive the promised eternal inheritance,
because a death has occurred that redeems them
from the transgressions under the first covenant.

Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:



The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – BODY AND BLOOD B

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

On the first day of Unleavened Bread,
when the Passover lamb is sacrificed,
his disciples said to Jesus,
“Where do you want us to go and make the preparations
for you to eat the Passover?”
So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them,
“Go into the city,
and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you;
follow him, and wherever he enters,
say to the owner of the house,
‘The Teacher asks, “Where is my guest room
where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’”
He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready.
Make preparations for us there.”

So the disciples set out and went to the city,
and found everything as he had told them;
and they prepared the Passover meal.
While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread,
and after blessing it he broke it,
gave it to them, and said,
“Take; this is my body.”

Then he took a cup,
and after giving thanks he gave it to them,
and all of them drank from it.
He said to them,
“This is my blood of the covenant,
which is poured out for many.
Truly I tell you,
I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day
when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”
When they had sung the hymn,
they went out to the Mount of Olives.



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES IN DEPTH

Reading I: Exodus 24:3-8

Two passages from the New Testament have made this section from Exodus central to the understanding of Christian redemption and its representation in the Eucharist.

The first is Mark 14:24: “This is *my* blood-of-the-covenant.” Here the covenant blood of Christ is contrasted with the blood that Moses sprinkled against the altar and over the people.

The second New Testament passage is [Hebrews 9:15-21](#), especially verse 20, which actually cites Exodus 24:8. (It is curious that the second reading stops short of this verse. When the Lectionary is reviewed, the desirability of extending it accordingly should be considered.)

Why was it necessary in the Bible for a covenant to be ratified in blood? The idea seems to be that the death of the victim has a finality about it that makes it, and therefore the covenant that it ratifies, irrevocable. Sacrifice is expressive of the offerer’s total commitment to carry out the terms of the covenant.

This passage suggests a way in which the Eucharist can be related to the atonement. Before the covenant is complete, the people have to become participants.

In the Sinai covenant this is achieved when Moses sprinkles the people with half of the blood, after applying the other half to the altar, representing YHWH himself.

Similarly, in Christ’s sacrifice the sacrificial death is completed, on God’s side, when the Son presents himself to the Father (“blood”=his life surrendered in obedience unto death).

On the human side, it is completed when the communicant receives the Eucharistic cup in communion.

The Eucharist, understood thus, becomes an integral part of the once-for-all sacrifice of Calvary.

Responsorial Psalm: 116:12-13, 15-16, 17-18

These same verses were used on Holy Thursday, the only difference being the refrain, which today is from verse 13 instead of from 1 Cor 10:16

This psalm is very appropriate after the Old Testament reading, for, as we suggested above, it is in our partaking of the Eucharistic cup that the typology of Moses’ sprinkling the people with the blood is fulfilled.

It is the “cup of salvation,” in the sense that by drinking of this cup we partake in the saving event.

Reading II: Hebrews 9:11-15

Although this passage is going to lead up to the quotation of Exod 24:8, the background is not what Moses did there but what the high priest did annually on the Day of Atonement.

It may be said that the Day of Atonement provides a better analogy for Christ's role in his sacrifice, for it suggests the once-for-all event in which Christ entered into the presence of God at his exaltation, as the high priest entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement.

On the other hand, the Exodus analogy suggests more strongly the mode in which the people partake of this sacrifice, and therefore provides a closer type for holy communion.

By fulfilling the work of the high priest on the Day of Atonement, Christ puts himself in the position in which he can fulfill the work of Moses when he sprinkled the people at the ratification of the covenant. For this reason we would renew our plea for the extension of this reading through verse 20.

Note: In verse 11 the RSV translates "high priest of the good things that *have come*." Other manuscripts have "of good things that *are to come*." The latter reading is preferable not only on text-critical grounds but also theologically, for it emphasizes that Christ's work is a piece of anticipated eschatology, thus leaving open (1) the idea of ultimate consummation, and (2) the continual anticipatory realization of this in the Eucharist.

Gospel: Mark 14:12-16, 22-26

This passage combines two Marcan pericopes—the preparation for the Passover and the institution of the Eucharist. Two points may be noted from Mark 14:12-16.

(1) It is here, not in the institution narrative, that Mark identifies the Last Supper with the Passover meal. As is well known, the Johannine account of the Last Supper dates it on the fourteenth of Nisan, a day before the Passover, which began at sundown on the fifteenth.

We are not called upon here to decide which dating is historically correct, still less to try to harmonize the discrepancy; rather, each account must be asked for its theological intent. Mark wishes to assert that the Eucharist is the Christian Passover meal.

(2) Jesus is depicted in Mark 14:12-16 as the eschatological prophet (an early Christological interpretation) by his supernatural foreknowledge, indicated by the direction to the disciples to meet the man with the water jar. Similar powers were ascribed to Old Testament prophets, especially Elijah and Elisha.

The institution narrative is not a description of the Passover meal but is restricted to those aspects of the Supper that were liturgically important to the early communities.

What we really learn here is how Mark's Church celebrated the Eucharist rather than precisely what Jesus did and said at the Supper, though, of course, what Mark's Church did is ultimately derived from what happened in the upper room.

Apparently, in Mark's Church the Eucharist was celebrated at the conclusion of a common meal (in Paul's earlier account in [1 Corinthians 11](#), the bread precedes the meal, and the cup follows it). Seven actions were performed:

1. Taking the bread.
2. Blessing (of God for the bread; note, not of the bread; this accords with Jewish custom).
3. Breaking of the bread so that the congregation could share the one loaf in communion.

4. The administration (note that the words are words of administration rather than of consecration; consecration, in accord with Jewish ideas, was effected by thanksgiving).
5. Taking the cup.
6. Giving thanks over the cup (a Hellenistic word for the Hebrew act of blessing, retained for the bread).
7. Administration.

Three important words are spoken by Jesus in Mark's account: (1) the bread word, (2) the cup word, and (3) the eschatological saying.

In the light of the first and second readings, exegesis today should concentrate upon the cup word: "This is my blood-of-the-covenant, which is poured out for many."

The trend in contemporary scholarship is to regard this version as a later rewording of the cup word in [1 Corinthians 11](#) due to liturgical development.

Once the intervening meal had been brought forward to the beginning, and the bread and the cup consequently brought together at the end, the tendency was for the two sets of words to be assimilated. So we get: "This is my body. This is my blood."

Mark's tradition interprets the blood as the blood of the covenant on the background of Exod 24. Thus, what the cup conveys is not a thing (blood) but a participation in the event of salvation history, the new covenant

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