

The story of the Eucharist

So... what is going on every week in church with the bits of bread and sips of wine?

Well, the mystery that is celebrated so often when Christians gather for church is at the very centre of who we are!



Different Christian traditions like to call it by different names, but don't be confused by that.

When we talk about the **Mass**,

Communion,

the **Eucharist**, or

the **Lord's Supper**

we are basically talking about the same thing, but it is far from simple, so I hope you're paying attention!

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Early Christians worshipping by William Hole

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Some text taken from the Easy-to-Read Version of the Bible

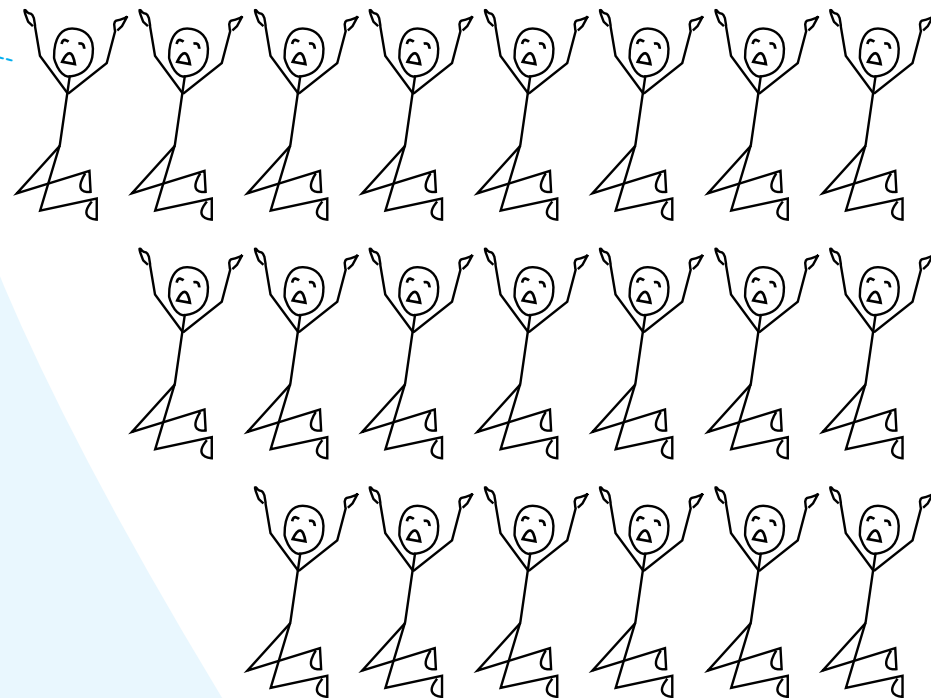


In order to understand what's going on in church on Sunday, we first have to go much, much further back to look at the story of a miracle that happened to save God's chosen people, Israel...

Many, many years ago, the people of Israel were slaves in Egypt. They were miserable and prayed to God for him to save them.



Please save us God! ---
We are miserable!



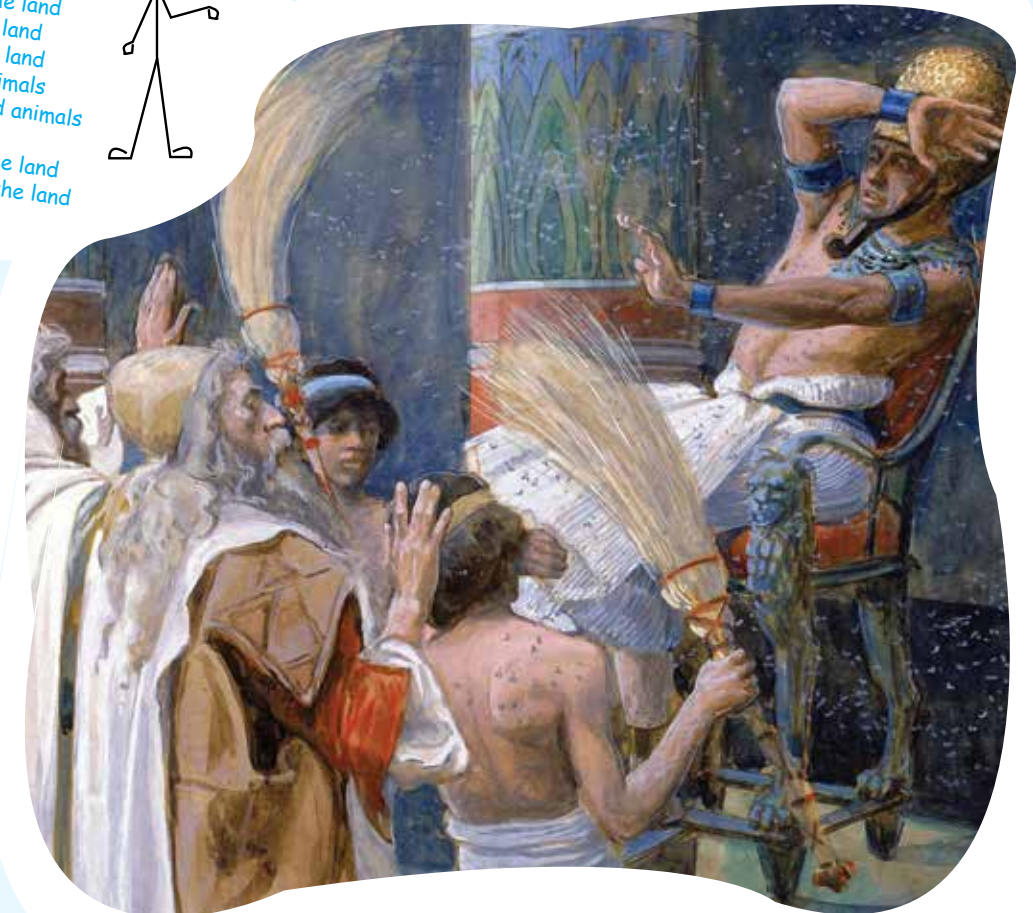
God sent Moses to be the leader for Israel and to go and speak to the Pharaoh and to say **“Let my people go!”** But Pharaoh said **“No.”**



So God sent plagues on the Egyptians to make Pharaoh change his mind.

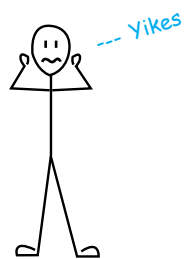
Every time God sent a plague, Pharaoh would say, “Just make it stop and I’ll do what you want!” But when God stopped the plague, Pharaoh broke his promise. And this happened *nine* times.

- The first nine plagues were ---
1. Water turned to blood
 2. Frogs covered the land
 3. Lice covered the land
 4. Flies covered the land
 5. Disease on the animals
 6. Boils on people and animals
 7. Hailstorms
 8. Locusts covered the land
 9. Darkness covered the land



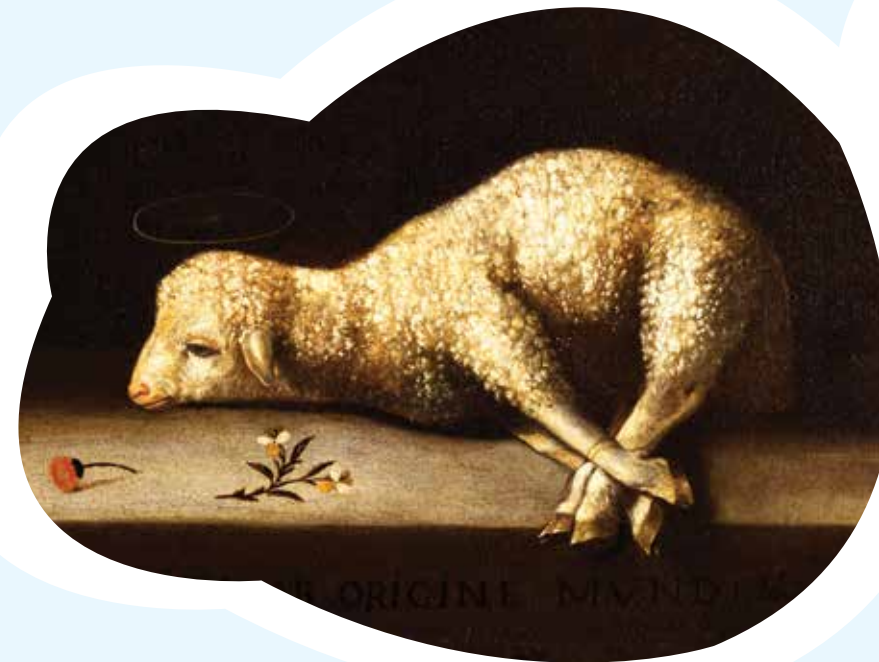


All of the plagues so far had been dreadful, but the tenth plague was even worse. It was the death of all the firstborn people and animals in Egypt. God told Moses what the last plague was going to be, and that after this Pharaoh would *definitely* let the people of Israel go. Moses warned Pharaoh, but he would not listen...



In the meantime...

...there were special instructions for the people of Israel. In order to keep their homes and families safe, they had to kill a **perfect young lamb** for a meal and paint its blood on the doorframe of their house.



This was a sign that the people inside that house belonged to God and it would keep them safe from the plague of death that was coming.

This special meal was called the “**Passover**” and every year from then on the people of Israel were commanded to have the same meal (but without the bloody doorframes) to remember what God had done for them.

So what happened?

Well, when the Egyptians woke up and found all the firstborn people and animals dead, they were devastated.

But all the firstborn people and animals in the homes of the people of Israel were saved.

So Pharaoh *finally* let God's chosen people, Israel, go.

The Bible says that God led all of the Israelites out of the country of Egypt.

And this is the great story of the **Exodus** from Egypt, which can be found in the book of Exodus, the second book in the Old Testament.



Books of the Old Testament:

- | | | | | |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1. Genesis | 9. 1st Samuel | 17. Esther | 25. Lamentations | 33. Micah |
| 2. Exodus | 10. 2nd Samuel | 18. Job | 26. Ezekiel | 34. Nahum |
| 3. Leviticus | 11. 1st Kings | 19. Psalms | 27. Daniel | 35. Habakkuk |
| 4. Numbers | 12. 2nd Kings | 20. Proverbs | 28. Hosea | 36. Zephaniah |
| 5. Deuteronomy | 13. 1st Chronicles | 21. Ecclesiastes | 29. Joel | 37. Haggai |
| 6. Joshua | 14. 2nd Chronicles | 22. Song of Solomon | 30. Amos | 38. Zechariah |
| 7. Judges | 15. Ezra | 23. Isaiah | 31. Obadiah | 39. Malachi |
| 8. Ruth | 16. Nehemiah | 24. Jeremiah | 32. Jonah | |

Books of the New Testament:

- | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. Matthew | 8. 2nd Corinthians | 15. 1st Timothy | 22. 2nd Peter |
| 2. Mark | 9. Galatians | 16. 2nd Timothy | 23. 1st John |
| 3. Luke | 10. Ephesians | 17. Titus | 24. 2nd John |
| 4. John | 11. Philippians | 18. Philemon | 25. 3rd John |
| 5. Acts | 12. Colossians | 19. Hebrews | 26. Jude |
| 6. Romans | 13. 1st Thessalonians | 20. James | 27. Revelation |
| 7. 1st Corinthians | 14. 2nd Thessalonians | 21. 1st Peter | |

So what does the **Passover have to do with the **Eucharist**?**

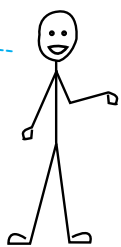
Well, they both have to do with God saving his people because of the blood of a perfect sacrifice.

The New Testament tells us that the sacrifices which were established in the Old Testament were a shadow of the *real* sacrifice in heaven—and the *real* sacrifice is **JESUS!**



So when we receive the Eucharist, we are participating in the *new* Passover, the Passover of heaven—one that saves us from sin, which is the *cause* of death!

"Sin" is the word --- we use to describe evil things that we have thought and said and done.



Do you remember what happened right before Jesus was killed and rose again?

He ate the **Passover** with his disciples.



Why?

Because they were obeying God's command to keep that feast, remembering with gratitude that he had saved their people, all those years before when they were slaves in Egypt.



But at that special meal, Jesus did something **NEW**, something that wasn't part of the Passover tradition.

Here's what happened:

While they were eating,
Jesus took some bread and thanked God for it.
He broke off some pieces,
gave them to his followers and said,
"Take this bread and eat it. It is my body."

Then he took a cup of wine,
thanked God for it, and gave it to them.
He said, **"Each one of you drink some of it.
This wine is my blood,
which will be poured out
to forgive the sins of many
and begin the new agreement
from God to his people."**

And we know what happened next, right?



Jesus *became* the perfect lamb—the lamb that was sacrificed to save us. Just like in the Passover, but this time it was so much bigger, because this time it was God himself, taking on human flesh in Jesus, in order to save us from the sin-mess we had got ourselves into.

And just like the people of Israel
were commanded to keep the Passover
as a remembrance of what God had done for them...

so Christians keep the **Eucharist**
as a remembrance of what God in Jesus Christ
did for us...

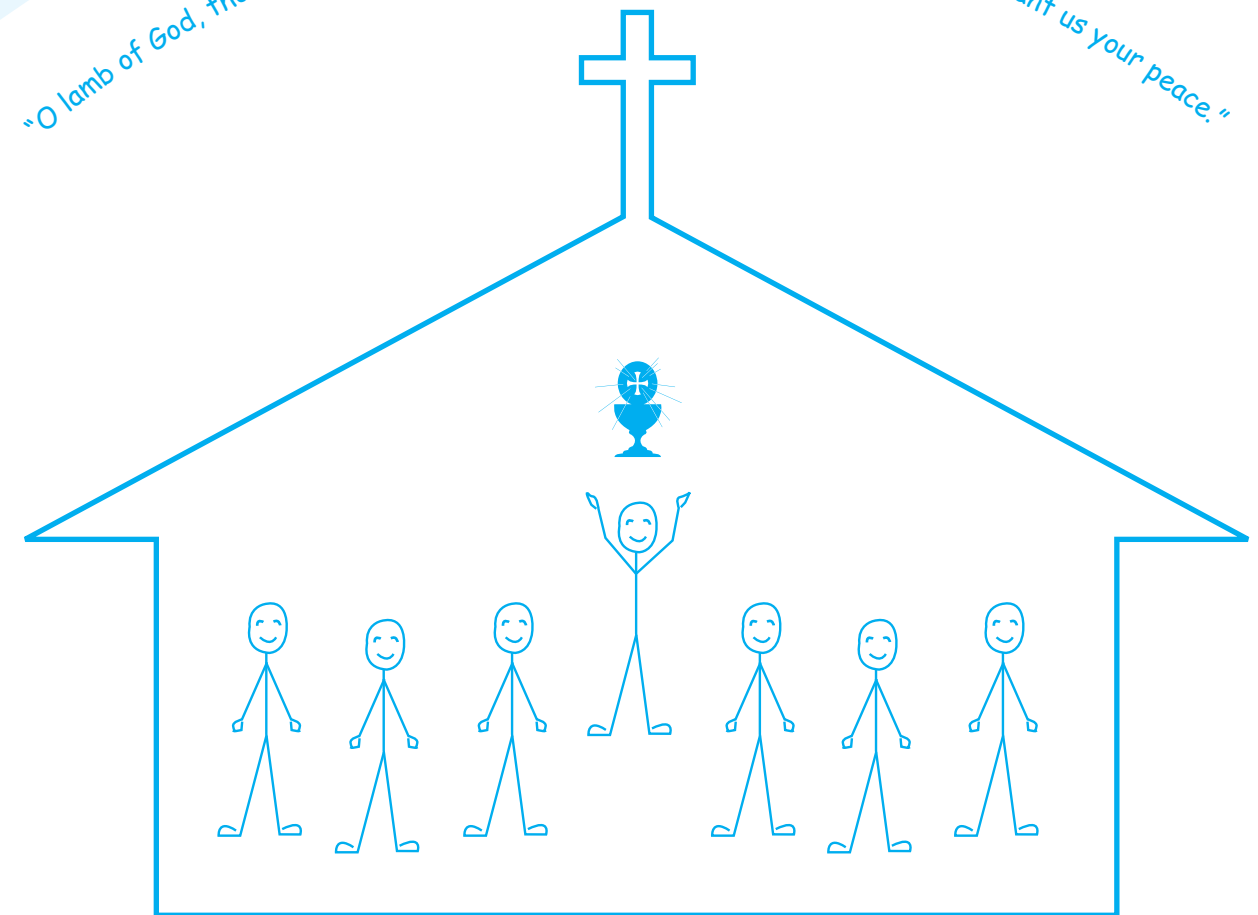


...and when we do, it changes us!

How?

Well, it brings us closer to Jesus,
closer to other Christians,
and it strengthens us to live in a fresh and faith-filled way.

"O lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world: have mercy upon us and grant us your peace."





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