

Session 12: A Kingdom of Priests

A Kingdom of Priests: Priesthood in the New Covenant

Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

The last night goes to heaven. In the Book of Revelation the group finds every thread of this study resolved in glory: the Church sung over as "a kingdom, priests to his God and Father" (the title, fulfilled); the Lamb standing as though slain at the center of a liturgy that never ends (Session 5, completed); twenty-four ELDERS around the throne with golden bowls of incense "which are the prayers of the saints" (the interceding, priestly people, at home); and the last two chapters returning to where the study began: a garden, a river, the tree of life, the curse gone, God's servants worshiping and SEEING HIS FACE, keeping for ever what Adam failed to keep. One final steelman tests the study's whole method, and the answer is the study itself. Then the group is sent: every one of them a priest of the kingdom, some of them perhaps called to hands being laid on. The last word belongs to the memory verse of the first night, kept at last.

Catholic Touchstone

The Catechism teaches that in the earthly liturgy we share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ, minister of the true sanctuary, stands at the right hand of God (CCC 1090, quoting the Second Vatican Council); and that it is in this eternal liturgy that the Spirit and the Church enable us to participate whenever we celebrate the mystery of salvation in the sacraments, with the whole company of heaven: the Lamb, the elders, the great multitude (CCC 1137 to 1139, reading Revelation 4 and 5 as the shape of all Christian liturgy). What the group discovers tonight in Revelation, the Church claims they enter every Sunday.

What You Need to Know

Open with the doxology that has been waiting since Session 8: "To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us A KINGDOM, PRIESTS to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 1:5 to 6). John, in exile on Patmos, writing to persecuted churches, opens the Bible's last book by singing Exodus 19:6 over them as accomplished fact. Then the throne room. In Revelation 4 and 5 the group will find the whole architecture of this study standing in glory, and the discoveries are theirs to make: the Lamb "standing, as though it had been slain" (their Session 5 discovery: the risen Lamb bearing the marks of his once-for-all sacrifice, the permanent center of heaven's worship); twenty-four crowned figures around the throne, and the Greek word for them is PRESBYTEROI, elders, the very word the group traced through Acts and the Pastorals last month; Revelation does not identify them, and interpreters differ, but the resonance is unmistakable and the Church's liturgical reading has always treasured it; and in the elders' hands, "golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (5:8), with an angel at the heavenly altar mingling incense "with the prayers of all the saints" (8:3 to 4): the intercession of the whole priestly people, arriving at the throne as liturgy. And the new song names the study: "thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made them A KINGDOM AND PRIESTS to our God, and they shall reign on earth" (5:9 to 10). Every phrase the group has carried since Session 1 is in heaven's hymnal.

Then the ending that is a beginning: Revelation 21 and 22. A new heaven and new earth; the dwelling of God with men; and then, unmistakably, Eden: "the river of the water of life... the tree of life... and there shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall

WORSHIP him; they shall SEE HIS FACE" (22:1 to 4). The study began with a man placed in a garden to serve and to guard, who failed; it ends with a garden-city whose gates never shut, into which "nothing unclean shall enter" (21:27), guarded perfectly at last, where the serving never ends and the face is finally seen. And one verse for Thread C, discovered live from Hebrews: "the assembly of the FIRST-BORN who are enrolled in heaven" (Hebrews 12:22 to 23): the firstborn office, forfeited at the calf, restored in Christ the Firstborn, now the family name of every baptized person on the rolls of the heavenly city. Every thread ties.

The final steelman examines the study itself, which is the most honest way to end: "This was twelve weeks of beautiful pattern-matching. But typology proves nothing; with enough motivation you can connect any dots you like: bread here, bread there; a priest here, a priest there. Impressive, and circular." Build it sincerely, because half-taught typology deserves the objection. The answer is the study's own method, reviewed: at every load-bearing joint, the connection was made BY SCRIPTURE, not by us. Psalm 110 connected the Messiah to Melchizedek, a thousand years before the Church. Jesus connected the cup to "the blood of the covenant" of Exodus 24. Hebrews connected Melchizedek's silence, the tithe, and the oath. Peter connected the Church to Exodus 19:6. Paul connected his ministry to priestly service. Revelation connects the end to Eden. The group did not draw lines between dots; they discovered lines already drawn on the page, with the texts open, usually before being told the destination. That is the difference between typology as the Bible's own deep grammar (CCC 128 to 130: the Church has always read the unity of the two Testaments through typology, God's own pedagogy) and typology as a parlor game. The last word on method belongs to Christ himself on the Emmaus road: "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

Tonight the roots ARE the fulfillment: Eden (Session 1) returns as the garden-city; Exodus 19:6 (Sessions 1 and 8) returns as heaven's new song; the incense and altar of the sanctuary (Session 2) return as the prayers of the saints; the Lamb of Passover (Session 6) stands at the center for ever; and the firstborn (Sessions 1, 4) are enrolled by name. Let the group narrate the whole arc themselves in the final Build; it is the study's last and best live discovery.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Cyril of Jerusalem

Instructing the newly baptized on the Mass, St. Cyril teaches in substance: when the priest cries "Lift up your hearts," we answer truly, for in that most awesome hour the heart is to be with God on high, not on earth; and we join the seraphim's own hymn, Holy, Holy, Holy, so that our song and heaven's song are one. The fourth-century catechist tells his people what tonight's texts show: the Sunday liturgy is the heavenly liturgy, entered. (A summary of his mystagogical instruction.)

Mystagogical Catecheses

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Irenaeus of Lyons

"The glory of God is a living man, and the life of man is the vision of God." Irenaeus' most famous sentence is Revelation 22:4 in miniature: the end of the whole priestly story, from Eden's first charge to the last page, is not a task completed but a face seen, and human beings fully alive in the seeing. Everything the priesthood ever guarded, it guarded for this.

Against Heresies, Book 4

VOICE OF THE CHURCH St. Augustine

"There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. This is what shall be in the end without end." The final sentence of the City of God, the book this study has walked with from its second week, describes the final state of the kingdom of priests: rest, vision, love, praise, without end. Augustine wrote twenty-two books to arrive at that sentence. Your group walked twelve weeks to be able to hear it.

City of God, Book 22, chapter 30

Catechism Connection

- CCC 1090: in the earthly liturgy we share in a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy of the holy city toward which we journey.
- CCC 1137 to 1139: Revelation's throne, Lamb, elders, and multitude as the pattern of all the Church's liturgy, which the Spirit enables us to enter in every sacramental celebration.
- CCC 128 to 130: the Church's ancient reading of the unity of the Old and New Testaments through typology, God's own pedagogy; the method of this entire study.

Thread Watch (leader only)

- THREAD A (Melchizedek): fully resolved since Session 6; tonight the Lamb's eternal offering completes the picture. Available freely.
- THREAD B (serve and guard): FINAL RESOLUTION at Revelation 21:27 and 22:3: nothing unclean enters, and his servants serve him for ever; the Eden charge kept at last, by grace. Name it explicitly in Build III.
- THREAD C (the firstborn): FINAL RESOLUTION at Hebrews 12:22 to 23, the assembly of the first-born enrolled in heaven; discovered live in Build III.
- THREAD D (kingdom of priests): FINAL RESOLUTION at Revelation 1:6 and 5:9 to 10; the title thread closes in heaven's new song, and the first memory verse is prayed as the study's last word.

Session Goals

1. The group finds Exodus 19:6 fulfilled in Revelation 1:6 and 5:9 to 10, and the elders and incense of the throne room, with the texts open.
2. The group discovers the Eden restoration of Revelation 21 to 22 and explicitly closes Threads B and C.
3. The final steelman about typology is stated at full strength and answered by reviewing the study's own method: the connections were Scripture's, discovered, not ours, imposed.
4. The group connects Sunday Mass to the heavenly liturgy through CCC 1090 and 1137 to 1139, and through Cyril's *Sursum corda*.
5. Every participant leaves commissioned: named a priest of the kingdom, with one concrete practice chosen, and the study's first memory verse prayed as the last word.

Timed Plan (90 minutes)

- 0:00 Welcome and opening prayer (5 min)
- 0:05 Win questions (10 min)
- 0:15 Build I: The doxology and the throne room, Revelation 1, 4 to 5 (25 min)
- 0:40 Build II: The garden at the end, Revelation 21 to 22, threads close (20 min)
- 1:00 Build III: The last steelman, the method itself (15 min)

- 1:15 Send and commissioning (10 min)
- 1:25 Live It, memory verse, closing prayer (5 min)

Pre-chosen cuts for a 75-minute room: drop the Dig Deeper and shorten Build I by reading Revelation 4:1 to 11 yourself as scene-setting, keeping the group work for chapter 5. Never cut the commissioning; it is the entire point of twelve weeks.

Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Leader: Father, twelve weeks ago you showed us a man in a garden and a promise at a mountain. Tonight, open heaven to us as you opened it to John. Let us see where the whole story was going all along, and send us home as what you have named us. Through Christ our Lord, the Lamb who was slain. Amen.

Win

1. Looking back across the whole study: what is the single discovery that most changed how you read the Bible?
2. What did you write in your sealed guess back in Session 1, and what does it feel like to remember who you were when you wrote it?

Build I: The Throne Room

Read Revelation 1:5 to 6 aloud, together, out loud, all of you at once.

Q1. John opens the Bible's last book with this doxology over persecuted little churches. Which words has this group been carrying since its first night, and what is John claiming about them?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

"Made us A KINGDOM, PRIESTS to his God and Father": Exodus 19:6, the study's title and first memory verse, sung as accomplished fact, by his blood. Not aspiration; identity. The kingdom-of-priests vocation, spoken at Sinai, wounded at the calf, restored at the cross, is the name of the Church under persecution and the name of everyone in this room.

LIVE DISCOVERY. Say: "Now the throne room. Read Revelation 4:2 to 11 and 5:6 to 10 in your teams, and hunt for THREE things: (1) how the sacrificed one appears; (2) who is seated around the throne, twenty-four of them, and, if your Bible has notes or you remember your Greek from Session 10, what their title is in Greek; (3) what is in their bowls, and what the text says it IS." Give this time; it is the study's last great hunt.

Q2. Report the three findings, and connect each one backward into the study.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

(1) "A Lamb standing, as though it had been slain": Session 5's discovery, now seen whole: the risen Lamb, bearing the marks of his once-for-all sacrifice, is the permanent center of heaven's worship (the abiding presence the Church names at CCC 1085). (2) Twenty-four ELDERS: the Greek is presbyteroi, the exact word the group traced through Acts and the Pastorals; Revelation does not say who they are, and interpreters propose angelic courtiers or glorified representatives of God's people, but Catholic readers have long delighted that heaven's liturgy is furnished with ELDERS, crowned and worshiping around the throne. (3) "Golden bowls full of incense, which ARE the prayers of the saints" (5:8; and 8:3 to 4 shows an angel mingling incense with the prayers of all the saints at the heavenly altar): the intercession of the whole priestly people, your Tuesday-night prayers included, arriving at the throne as liturgy. Then the new song (5:9 to 10): ransomed "from every tribe and tongue and people and nation... and hast made them

a kingdom and priests to our God." Malachi's "among the nations" (Session 5), Peter's royal priesthood (Session 8), and Sinai's vocation (Session 1), harmonized in heaven's hymnal.

Build II: The Garden at the End

Read Revelation 21:1 to 4, 21:22 to 27, and 22:1 to 5, divided around the room, slowly.

Q3. This study began in a garden. Inventory the last two chapters of the Bible: what from Eden has come back, what from Eden's failure has been repaired, and, listen closely to 21:27 and 22:3, what has happened to the two jobs Adam was given in Genesis 2:15?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Eden returns, enlarged into a city: the river of the water of life, the tree of life, God dwelling with men, no more curse. And hear the echo of Adam's two verbs, an echo this study offers as its traced reading of the canon's shape: his servants shall SERVE him (22:3, the worship-service word), the serving that never ends; and the guarding perfected by grace: "nothing unclean shall enter it" (21:27), gates that never shut because the city no longer needs defending. In this reading, what the first man failed to keep, the Lamb has kept for ever, and his people keep it in him. And the crown of it all: "they shall SEE HIS FACE" (22:4). Every altar, every veil, every priest, every sacrifice in this whole study existed to bridge a distance that will finally be gone.

LIVE DISCOVERY. Say: "One thread left. In Session 1, the firstborn of every family lost the priesthood at the golden calf. Hebrews 12:22 to 23 describes who is enrolled in the heavenly city. Find the title given to the whole assembly."

Q4. What is the heavenly assembly called, and what does that close?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

"The assembly of the FIRST-BORN who are enrolled in heaven." "The assembly of the first-born enrolled in heaven": Hebrews' own phrase. Set it beside the thread this study traced (the firstborn pattern of the fathers, the Levites taken in the firstborn's place, Christ "the first-born," Hebrews 1:6), and the resonance is unmistakable: in Christ the baptized are heirs with the Firstborn, enrolled in his city. Offer the tie as this study's traced reading resting on Hebrews' real words; the oldest thread comes home.

DIG DEEPER

CCC 1090 and 1137 to 1139: the Church reads Revelation 4 and 5 as the pattern of every Mass: the throne, the Lamb standing as slain, the elders, the incense of the saints' prayers, the acclamation of the multitude. When the priest says "Lift up your hearts," St. Cyril of Jerusalem told the fourth century's newly baptized, we answer truly, for in that hour the heart belongs on high; and the Sanctus is the seraphim's own hymn, borrowed. You do not wait for the liturgy of tonight's texts; you participate in it every Sunday (CCC 1090).

Build III: The Last Steelman: The Method Itself

STEELMAN: BUILD IT UP. Full strength, aimed at everything we have done: "A skeptical friend who watched all twelve weeks says: it was beautiful, I grant it. But typology proves nothing. With enough motivation you

can connect any dots: bread here, bread there; a garden here, a garden there; a priest here, a priest there. Pattern-matching feels like discovery from the inside and looks like confirmation bias from the outside. Twelve weeks of impressive circles."

Q5. Review the study's method honestly: at the load-bearing joints, WHO drew the connections: this group, or Scripture itself? Walk back through and name specific cases.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Name them: Psalm 110 connected the Messiah to Melchizedek, inside the Old Testament, a millennium before the Church existed. Jesus connected his cup to "the blood of the covenant" of Exodus 24 with his own words. Hebrews connected the genealogy-silence, the tithe, the blessing, and the oath, in the first century, on the page. Peter connected the Church to Exodus 19:6 by quotation. Paul connected ministry to priestly service with his own cultic vocabulary in Romans 15:16. Jesus connected Psalm 110 to himself in the temple. Revelation connects the end to Eden with a river, a tree, and a lifted curse. At every joint that carries weight, the line was drawn BY Scripture and DISCOVERED by this group with the texts open, usually before you were told the destination; that was the point of every live discovery in this study. That is the difference between typology as the Bible's own deep grammar, which the Church has read since the beginning (CCC 128 to 130 calls it God's own pedagogy), and typology as a parlor game. And be fair to the friend: bad typology exists, and the cure for it is exactly the discipline this group practiced: whole passages, both texts open, honest hedges where the Church has not defined. The last word on the method belongs to the risen Christ on the Emmaus road: "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." We did not invent the reading. We inherited it from him.

Send: The Commissioning

Do this simply and without hurry. Go around the room one final time. Each person answers both questions out loud:

1. "As a priest of the kingdom, the offering I most need to bring is..." (name the one thing: the work, the person, the suffering, the gift).
2. "The one practice from these twelve weeks I am keeping is..." (the morning offering, the blessing of Numbers 6, Psalm 110, the intercession list, confession, the paten prayer at Mass; anything from the Take-Homes).

Then say over the group, plainly: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people. Go declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." And to any man in the room in whom these weeks have stirred the other question, say privately, afterward: the Church is still laying on hands, and the question deserves a real conversation, not a shrug.

Live It: From Here On

- Keep your one practice, named tonight, for the next ninety days. Priesthood is not a study topic; it is a daily office.
- Next Sunday, enter Mass through tonight's door: the throne, the Lamb standing as slain, the bowls of incense. Arrive early enough to remember where you are.
- Hand it on: 2 Timothy 2:2 is now yours ("entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also"), and the relay belongs to the whole priestly people, women and men alike. Invite someone specific into the next study, or lead one.

Memory Verse

"To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Revelation 1:5 to 6 (RSV2CE)

Closing Prayer

Leader: Father, you placed a man in a garden to serve and to guard, and when he failed, you did not abandon the plan; you swore an oath, you sent the Priest, and you have brought us tonight to the city where your servants see your face. Seal in us everything you have shown us. Make our lives one long offering through Jesus Christ, priest for ever, and bring every person in this circle, and everyone we will ever hand the faith to, safely inside the gates that never shut. And now, the words you gave us on our first night, kept for the last: may we be to you a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader Reference Card: Session 12

Every passage used tonight, in order:

- Revelation 1:5 to 6 (Build I, read together; memory verse source)
- Revelation 4:2 to 11 (Build I, team hunt)
- Revelation 5:6 to 10 (Build I, team hunt)
- Revelation 8:3 to 4 (Build I, in the ANSWER)
- Revelation 21:1 to 4, 22 to 27 (Build II, read aloud)
- Revelation 22:1 to 5 (Build II, read aloud)
- Genesis 2:15 (Build II, recalled from Session 1)
- Hebrews 12:22 to 23 (Build II, live discovery)
- Hebrews 1:6 (Build II, recalled from Session 4)
- Romans 15:16; Exodus 24:8; Psalm 110; Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9 (Build III, method review, recalled)
- Luke 24:27 (Build III, in the ANSWER)