

In Their Midst

Exodus: From Slavery to Covenant Presence

Session 5. The Night of Passover

Reading: Exodus 11:1-13:16

Part One

Leader Preparation Guide

Session Overview

Discovery Aim

The group discovers how the lamb, the blood, the meal, and the firstborn shape Israel's deliverance and perpetual memorial.

Catholic Touchstone

This session touches the Paschal mystery, Christ the true Passover Lamb, liturgical memorial, and the Eucharistic participation of the redeemed in Christ's saving sacrifice.

Tonight the group reaches the decisive night of Israel's deliverance. Help them stay close to the details: a lamb is selected and slain, blood marks the houses, a meal is eaten in readiness, the firstborn are struck or redeemed, and the event becomes a memorial for every generation. Do not rush to Christian fulfillment before the group has felt the weight of the Exodus text itself. Once they have observed the pattern, let the New Testament identify Christ and the Last Supper as its fulfillment.

What You Need to Know

One saving event with several inseparable signs

Exodus does not reduce Passover to a single symbol. The lamb is slain, its blood marks the house, its flesh is eaten, and the people depart under God's protection. Keep those actions together. The text presents deliverance as something God accomplishes and Israel receives through trusting obedience.

The lamb is not explicitly called a sin offering

Avoid forcing later categories onto every detail. Exodus presents the Passover victim as the appointed sacrifice whose blood marks the households protected from judgment and whose flesh becomes their meal. Later Scripture identifies Christ as the Passover Lamb and deepens the sacrificial meaning.

Memorial is embodied remembrance

In Exodus 12 and 13, remembrance includes a recurring feast, prescribed actions, instruction of children, and a renewed confession of what the Lord did. Do not describe the rite as time travel or as another sacrifice of the original lambs. It makes God's saving act the defining reality of later generations through liturgical observance. This provides an Old Testament foundation for understanding sacramental memorial, while the fullness of that doctrine comes from Christ and the Church.

The death of the firstborn

The text deliberately presents a severe divine judgment. It follows Pharaoh's oppression, the killing of Hebrew sons, repeated warnings, and Pharaoh's refusal to release the firstborn people whom God calls his own in Exodus 4:22-23. Do not minimize the deaths or imply that every Egyptian shared Pharaoh's personal guilt. Catholic teaching affirms that God alone is Lord of life, while human beings may never

treat this narrative as permission for violence. The passage does not disclose the eternal destiny of those who died.

Consecration and redemption

Exodus 13 joins deliverance from Egypt to the consecration of every firstborn. Israel's firstborn belong to the Lord because he spared them. The firstborn donkey is redeemed with a lamb, and Israel's firstborn sons are redeemed. Salvation therefore creates a claim: those delivered by God now belong to God.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

The beloved son and the provided lamb

In Genesis 22:7-14, Isaac asks about the lamb, Abraham trusts that God will provide, and a ram dies in the son's place. Exodus develops the pattern at the scale of an entire people: death passes over the houses marked by the blood of the appointed victim.

The lamb who suffers

Isaiah 53:7 describes the suffering servant as a lamb led to slaughter. The image gathers together willing suffering, apparent helplessness, and a death offered for others.

Christ our Passover

St. John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God in John 1:29. John 19:33-36 connects Jesus' unbroken bones to the Passover pattern. At the Last Supper, Jesus takes the Passover setting and gives his disciples his Body and Blood under the signs of bread and the cup, which the Passover setting and Luke 22:18 identify as the fruit of the vine. St. Paul states the fulfillment plainly in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8: Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed, so the redeemed are to keep the feast in sincerity and truth.

The firstborn Son

Luke 2:22-24 explicitly recalls the Exodus command when Jesus, Mary's firstborn, is presented to the Lord. The Son who belongs wholly to the Father will accomplish the definitive exodus through his death and resurrection.

Voices of the Church

Read these aloud where they land. Each is either a direct citation or an honest summary, labelled as such.

St. Melito of Sardis, d. c. 180

St. Melito proclaims that the mystery once displayed in the slain lamb reaches its fulfillment in Christ, who was bound, slain, buried, and raised, leading humanity from slavery into freedom.

On Pascha 65-71.

How this is cited. This is a summary of St. Melito's sustained identification of Christ with the Passover lamb and deliverer in sections 65-71, not a direct quotation.

For the group. Let the group see the Passover pattern as a preparation for Christ, not as an isolated religious custom.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, c. 315-386

St. Cyril teaches that because Christ himself declared the bread to be his Body and the wine to be his Blood, Christians receive them with faith rather than judging only by what the senses perceive.

Mystagogical Catechesis 4.1-3.

How this is cited. This is a close summary of St. Cyril's Eucharistic teaching in the cited catechesis. It does not claim that those paragraphs provide a detailed commentary on Exodus 12.

For the group. The Passover meal prepares the group to ask how Christ gives the saving reality of his sacrifice to his people as food and drink.

St. Gaudentius of Brescia, d. c. 410

St. Gaudentius teaches that Christ fulfills the ancient Passover and leaves the sacrament of his Body and Blood to the Church, so that the one saving sacrifice is received sacramentally among God's people.

Tractate 2.1-2.

How this is cited. This is a summary of the tractate's treatment of the Passover figure and Christ's Eucharistic gift. Section numbering can vary slightly between editions.

For the group. Israel had to receive God's appointed meal, and Christians likewise receive rather than invent the form of covenant communion.

Catechism Connection

The Catechism says

CCC 608. Jesus' mission is interpreted through the image of the Lamb of God and the Passover lamb whose blood brings redemption.

CCC 1093. The Church reads the Old Testament as preparation for Christ and gives special place to the exodus and Passover in her liturgy.

CCC 1334. The unleavened bread of Passover recalls the haste of Israel's liberating exodus and belongs to the biblical preparation for the Eucharist.

CCC 1340. At the Last Supper, within the Passover meal, Jesus gives the Jewish Passover its definitive meaning through his own passing to the Father.

CCC 1363. Biblical memorial is a liturgical proclamation of God's saving works, and in the New Covenant Christ's Paschal mystery is made sacramentally present.

CCC 1374. Christ is truly, really, and substantially present in the Eucharist, not merely present as an idea recalled by the community.

CCC 2258. Human life is sacred and remains under the sovereignty of God, who alone is Lord of life from its beginning to its end.

CCC 1022. Each person receives particular judgment at death, so temporal death in a biblical judgment scene does not by itself reveal a person's eternal destiny.

Thread Watch

Thread Watch

Why God brings Israel out (develop). Notice that deliverance leads immediately to worship, remembrance, consecration, and a new calendar. Freedom is already being ordered toward belonging to God.

Deliverance through water (hold). Do not anticipate the sea crossing. End with Israel departing under God's protection so the next session can reveal the passage through water.

Fear of God versus fear of rulers (develop). Contrast Pharaoh's final powerlessness with Israel's trust-filled obedience to God's strange and urgent commands.

God dwelling among his people (develop). The shared meal and perpetual feast begin forming a people whose common life is ordered around God's saving presence and action.

Mediators of deliverance (develop). Moses communicates God's commands, but the Lord himself judges, protects, and brings the people out.

Where is the lamb? (plant). Let the group connect the provided victim in Genesis 22, the Passover lamb, and the Lamb identified in the New Testament.

The sealed guess (hold). Do not reopen the guesses. Let worship, memorial, and consecration quietly add evidence for session 8.

Objection Bench

Leader only. Do not raise these unless someone in the room does.

The death of Egypt's firstborn looks like collective punishment of people who may not have chosen Pharaoh's policy.

Acknowledge the moral weight instead of defending God casually. The narrative presents the plague as divine judgment after the attempted destruction of Israel's sons, repeated warnings, and Pharaoh's refusal to release God's firstborn people. God is Lord of life, but human beings are not authorized to imitate this judgment. The text does not claim that every person who died was equally culpable or eternally condemned.

Calling the Eucharist a Passover memorial only means that Christians think back to Jesus' death.

Exodus itself makes memorial more than private recollection: it is a divinely commanded feast with words, actions, food, communal participation, and transmission to later generations. That does not prove the whole Catholic doctrine by itself. Christ's words at the Last Supper and the Church's apostolic faith establish that the Eucharistic memorial sacramentally makes his one sacrifice present and gives his true Body and Blood.

Session Goals

1. Help the group identify the distinct roles of the lamb, blood, meal, unleavened bread, and firstborn in the Passover narrative.
2. Let the group discover that Israel's deliverance becomes a perpetual, communal memorial rather than a fading private memory.
3. Trace the biblical identification of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Passover lamb and meal.
4. Face the judgment of the firstborn honestly without minimizing the text or claiming more than it reveals.

5. Show that being redeemed leads to consecration, worship, and a new way of life under God's claim.

Time Note

Planned for 75-90 Minutes

Plan for about 5 minutes of prayer, 10 minutes for Win, 14 minutes for the reading, 45 to 50 minutes for Build, 10 minutes for Send and weekly practices, and 3 minutes for the closing prayer and memory verse.

If you are running long, cut in this order.

1. Cut the Dig Deeper prompt after question 5 first.
2. Shorten question 10 to a brief observation of Exodus 12:43-49.
3. Discuss only one of the two Send questions if time is nearly gone.
4. Assign the second Live It practice without discussing it.

Part Two

Discussion Guide

Opening Prayer

Pray together

Lord God, you heard Israel's cry and acted to set your people free. Send your Holy Spirit to open the Scriptures to us. Give us reverence before your justice, gratitude for your mercy, and faith to receive what you reveal. Lead us more deeply into the saving mystery of Christ, our Passover. Amen.

Win

Open questions. No wrong answers. Let everyone speak before you move on.

W1. What meal, tradition, or annual celebration helps you remember who you are or where you came from?

W2. When have you had to follow important instructions before you fully understood why they mattered?

Keep this warm and brief. The goal is to bring shared meals, memory, and trust into the room without beginning the interpretation early.

Read

Read aloud

Use four readers: Exodus 11:1-10, Exodus 12:1-28, Exodus 12:29-51, and Exodus 13:1-16. Ask everyone else to mark repeated words, commands, and explanations of why the feast is to be observed.

Build

Numbered inductive questions. Ask, wait, let the group work the text. The ANSWER boxes are for you to share after the discussion, not before it.

The final warning

1. In Exodus 11:1-10, what does the Lord announce, and what signs show that Pharaoh's power is about to be reversed?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The Lord announces one final plague, the death of the firstborn throughout the land of Egypt, from Pharaoh's own house to the firstborn of the servant girl and of the cattle, after which Pharaoh will drive Israel out completely. The Egyptians will give Israel silver and gold, Moses is regarded highly, and a distinction will be made between Egypt and Israel. The enslaved people will leave with favor and goods, while the ruler who resisted God will be unable to keep them.

The appointed sign

2. List everything an Israelite household must do in Exodus 12:1-13. What is selected, killed, applied, eaten, worn, and prepared?

Take it as far as the room wants

Floor. List each required action in the order the text gives it.

Ground. Ask which actions concern protection and which concern participation.

Depth. Consider why deliverance is given through things Israel must both receive and do.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The main commands are these. Each household selects an unblemished year-old male lamb or kid, keeps it until the appointed day, and kills it at twilight. The blood is placed on the two doorposts and lintel. The flesh is roasted, not eaten raw or boiled, and is eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, with nothing left until morning and any remainder burned. The people eat dressed for travel, with belt fastened, sandals on, staff in hand, and in haste.

3. According to Exodus 12:12-13 and 12:21-23, what does the blood do, and who actually delivers Israel?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The blood serves as the sign appointed by God on the houses where Israel is gathered. When the Lord sees the blood, the household is protected from the destroying plague. The blood is not presented as magic and Israel does not rescue itself. The Lord judges Egypt and passes over the marked houses, while Israel receives his protection through obedient trust.

Where is the lamb?

Live discovery

Divide into pairs. Half should read the first passage and note the question, provision, and substitute. Half should read the second passage and identify the person and titles. Then report to the group.

Let them find it. Genesis 22:7-14; John 1:29

4. What earlier question about a lamb does Scripture invite us to remember, and how does the New Testament identify the Lamb?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

Isaac asks where the lamb for the offering is, and Abraham answers that God will provide. A ram is then offered in Isaac's place. In John, St. John the Baptist points to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Scripture develops a pattern of a beloved son, a victim provided by God, deliverance from death, and finally Jesus identified as the Lamb.

Dig Deeper

Ask what is similar and what is different. Genesis provides a ram in place of one son, Exodus provides victims for Israel's households, and John identifies Jesus as the Lamb whose mission concerns the sin of the world.

A meal for a people on the move

5. Why do you think the Lord commands Israel not only to mark the houses but also to eat a shared meal in readiness to depart?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The text joins protection, nourishment, communion, and departure. Israel is not merely spared while remaining in slavery. The people eat what God provides and prepare to follow him out. The household meal also makes deliverance communal rather than private. The text does not explain every later sacramental implication, but it clearly makes eating part of Israel's obedient participation.

A perpetual memorial

6. What words and actions in Exodus 12:14-28 and 13:3-10 show that remembering Passover means more than privately recalling an old event?

Take it as far as the room wants

Floor. Find the words that command remembering.

Ground. Ask who is made responsible for handing the memory on, and to whom.

Depth. Discuss how a commanded memorial can make a past deliverance present to a later generation.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

God commands a feast, a holy assembly, the removal of leaven, repeated observance throughout the generations, instruction of children, and an explanation of what the Lord did. The memorial is public, embodied, communal, and ordered by God. Later Israelites are taught to confess the deliverance as the foundation of their own identity.

Build: the Passover reaches forward

Live discovery

Have one group read the Gospel passage and list what Jesus takes, says, and commands. Have another group read St. Paul's words and identify who the Passover victim is and how the redeemed should live.

Let them find it. Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8

7. How do these New Testament passages use Passover language to explain Jesus and the life of his people?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

At the Passover meal Jesus takes bread and wine, identifies them with his Body and Blood, speaks of the New Covenant, and commands the disciples to do this in remembrance of him. St. Paul explicitly identifies Christ as our sacrificed Passover and calls Christians to keep the feast with sincerity and truth. The New Testament presents Jesus' death, the covenant meal, memorial, and transformed life as belonging together.

Press: is memorial only mental recollection?

8. A careful Christian might say, 'Exodus proves that God's people should remember salvation with a symbolic meal, but it does not prove that a past sacrifice becomes present or that the Eucharistic elements truly become Christ's Body and Blood.' What part of that caution is fair, and what further evidence must be considered?

Build then press

The strongest form of the objection. Passover is an annual ritual that recalls a past event. The later lambs do not recreate the original exodus, and participants do not travel back to Egypt. Therefore, Passover typology can support a symbolic Eucharistic meal without establishing sacramental presence or the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence.

Answering from the text. The caution is fair that Exodus alone does not establish every element of Catholic Eucharistic doctrine, and the Eucharist neither repeats Calvary nor transports worshippers through time. Yet Exodus also shows that biblical memorial is more than a mental reminder. It is a divinely instituted liturgical participation that makes God's saving act the living basis of the worshipping community. The decisive further evidence is Christ's own identification of the bread and wine with his Body and Blood, his command to continue the memorial, and the apostolic identification of Christ as the sacrificed Passover. Catholic doctrine rests on that whole scriptural witness, not on the Exodus analogy alone.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

A sound reading should neither ask Exodus to prove the entire doctrine by itself nor reduce memorial to subjective recollection. Exodus supplies the pattern of sacrifice, meal, liturgical memorial, and covenant identity. Christ's words and the apostolic witness reveal the fulfillment: his one sacrifice is not repeated, but its saving reality is sacramentally made present and received in the Eucharist.

The cost of judgment

9. What makes the death of the firstborn difficult to read, and what details in Exodus 4:22-23, 11:1-10, and 12:29-32 help us understand how the narrative presents it?

Take it as far as the room wants

Floor. State plainly what happens and to whom.

Ground. Gather what the text does supply about warning, sonship, and repeated refusal.

Depth. Ask what may honestly be said about God's justice here, and what the passage does not tell us.

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The plague includes people across Egyptian society, not only Pharaoh, so the human suffering should trouble us. The narrative presents it as the announced climax of judgment against a regime that enslaved Israel, ordered Hebrew sons killed, refused repeated warnings, and would not release the people God called his firstborn son. God finally breaks Pharaoh's violent hold. The passage does not tell us that every person who died had equal personal guilt or was eternally condemned. Nor does it give human rulers permission to imitate divine judgment.

One law and one people

10. In Exodus 12:43-49, what boundaries surround the Passover meal, and what provision is made for a foreigner who desires to keep it?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The meal belongs to the covenant community and is not treated casually. A foreigner may participate if the males of his household receive the covenant sign of circumcision. The text then insists that one law applies to the native and the sojourner. Participation is open through incorporation into the covenant, not through treating the sacred meal as common food.

Redeemed for belonging

11. According to Exodus 13:1-16, why do the firstborn now belong to the Lord, and how are Israel's children meant to learn the reason?

ANSWER *(share after the discussion)*

The firstborn belong to the Lord because he spared Israel's firstborn and brought the people out of slavery. Firstborn sons are redeemed, and a firstborn donkey is redeemed by a lamb. Parents must explain these practices when their children ask. Deliverance therefore creates consecration and testimony: those whom God rescues belong to him and must hand on the story of his saving action.

Send

Open questions. Let these land in silence if they need to.

S1. Where are you tempted to want freedom from something without accepting that freedom also means belonging to God?

S2. What concrete practice could help Christ's saving work become the center of your week rather than a fact you occasionally remember?

Live It This Week

Practices

1. Set aside fifteen minutes to reread Exodus 12:1-28. Circle every command, underline every promise of protection, and finish by thanking God for one specific way he has delivered you.
2. At one meal this week, pray the *Agnus Dei* slowly: 'Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.' Then name one person who needs Christ's mercy and pray for that person.
3. At your next Mass, listen for the language of sacrifice, memorial, covenant, Lamb, Body, and Blood. After receiving Holy Communion, remain in silent thanksgiving for at least two full minutes.
4. Give the first ten minutes of one morning to God before checking messages or social media. Offer him your work, relationships, plans, and fears as a concrete act of belonging.

Scripture Memory

Exodus 12:14

"This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as an ordinance for ever."

Exodus 12:14

Closing Prayer

Pray together

Lord Jesus Christ, Lamb of God and our true Passover, you have delivered us at the cost of your own Blood. Teach us to remember your saving work with faith, to receive your gifts with reverence, and to live as people who belong to you. Free us from sin, nourish us on the journey, and lead us into the freedom of the children of God. Amen.

Part Three

Leader Reference Card

Every passage used in this session, in order. Print this page and keep it in front of you.

Primary text

- **Exodus 11:1-13:16** The final plague, Passover, departure, memorial, and consecration of the firstborn

Earlier Exodus context

- **Exodus 4:22-23** Israel as God's firstborn son

Old Testament roots

- **Genesis 22:7-14** God provides the victim
- **Isaiah 53:7** The servant led like a lamb to slaughter

New Testament fulfillment

- **John 1:29** Jesus identified as the Lamb of God
- **John 19:33-36** The unbroken bones of the crucified Christ
- **Luke 22:14-20** The Passover setting and institution of the Eucharist
- **1 Corinthians 5:7-8** Christ our Passover has been sacrificed
- **Luke 2:22-24** The firstborn Son presented to the Lord

Terms

- **pesach.** Passover, used in the narrative for the Lord's Passover and the sacrificial victim or feast
- **anamnesis.** memorial or remembrance, used in the New Testament command concerning the Eucharist
- **Agnus Dei.** Lamb of God

Catechism

- CCC 608. Christ the Lamb of God
- CCC 1093. The exodus and Passover in Christian liturgy
- CCC 1334. Unleavened bread and the exodus
- CCC 1340. The Last Supper fulfills Passover
- CCC 1363. The meaning of liturgical memorial
- CCC 1374. Christ's true Eucharistic presence
- CCC 2258. God is Lord of human life
- CCC 1022. Particular judgment at death