

SESSION THREE

The Lamb Must Be Eaten

Exodus 12:1-14, 21-28, 43-47; 1 Corinthians 5:7

PART ONE · LEADER PREPARATION GUIDE

Session Overview

Discovery Aim. Participants walk slowly through the Passover instructions and discover that the blood alone does not complete the ritual: the lamb must be eaten. In Israel's founding act of salvation, sacrifice culminates in a communal meal, kept as a memorial for ever.

Catholic Touchstone. The Church confesses Christ as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (CCC 608), and reads Israel's Passover among the great signs of the Old Covenant that prefigure what God would do in Christ (CCC 1150). Tonight the group learns the grammar of the Passover so thoroughly that its fulfillment, when we reach it, will read like a sentence they already know how to parse.

What You Need to Know

This is a close-reading session. The power of Exodus 12 is in its details, and the discovery you are shepherding the group toward is structural: God binds the blood and the meal together and provides no version of Passover in which the blood suffices without the eating. Verse 8 is the hinge: "They shall eat the flesh that night." Not may. Shall.

Walk the specifications with the group and let them feel the strangeness. The lamb must be without blemish, a male a year old, and it is chosen on the tenth day but not slain until the fourteenth (Exodus 12:3-6). Four days with the household. The lamb is kept by the family before it dies for the family. Ancient Jewish and Christian readers alike noticed the intimacy: this is not anonymous sacrifice.

The blood goes on the doorposts and the lintel, and the LORD passes over every marked house (Exodus 12:7, 12-13, 23). But note carefully what happens in the same breath as the blood command: the flesh must be eaten that night, roasted, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, and nothing may remain until morning (Exodus 12:8-10). The destroyer respects the blood outside; the Passover itself is completed at the table inside.

The meal is communal by design. A lamb per household, and if the household is too small, the nearest neighbor joins in, the company sized to the lamb (Exodus 12:4). It shall be eaten in one house (Exodus 12:46). All the congregation of Israel shall keep it (Exodus 12:47). Nobody keeps Passover alone. The sacrifice creates a meal, and the meal creates a people.

The memorial command reaches past the first night: "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). And catechesis is built into the rite itself: "when your children say to you, 'What do

you mean by this service?' you shall say..." (Exodus 12:26-27). The Passover is designed to be asked about.

One detail to plant lightly and guard heavily: "you shall not break a bone of it" (Exodus 12:46). Tonight's Dig Deeper files it away without explanation. Do not explain it. Its payoff belongs many weeks from now, and it lands hardest on people who have carried the detail without knowing why.

A pastoral note for the open question at the end of Build: when you ask why God binds salvation to a supper, some in the group may reach back to Session One on their own. Eating what God gives, on God's terms, has been communion since Eden. If they find that, the study is working. Confirm the pattern without extending it forward.

Old Testament Roots and Fulfillment

The Passover becomes the master key of Israel's memory. The Exodus is the salvation event of the Old Testament, and God fixes its commemoration not in a monument or a text alone but in a meal, repeated for ever, in which every generation eats what the first generation ate.

Later practice concentrated the Passover in Jerusalem, where the lambs were slain in the temple courts and eaten within the city. Melchizedek's Salem is quietly becoming the required address of the memorial meal. The group does not need this tonight, but you should hold it: geography keeps converging.

Leader-side connections to guard: John the Baptist's title for Jesus, the timing of the crucifixion in John's Gospel, and John 19:36 on the unbroken bones all belong to later sessions. The unbroken bone detail in particular is Thread C ammunition. Carry it in silence.

Voices of the Church

St. Melito of Sardis

On Pascha, 2nd century

St. Melito preached that the mystery of the Lord was sketched in advance in the Passover lamb: the sheep slain in Egypt traced the outline of the one who was to come. The model, he said, was precious in its time, and then yielded to the truth it foreshadowed, as a sketch gives way to the finished work. For Melito, Exodus 12 was the Gospel drawn in charcoal.

St. John Chrysostom

Baptismal Catecheses, 4th century

St. John Chrysostom told the newly baptized that if they wished to learn the power of the blood of Christ, they should go back to Egypt and consider its type: the blood of a lamb on the doorposts, before which the destroyer would not enter. If the figure had such power, he argued, how much more the reality it prefigured.

St. Athanasius of Alexandria

Festal Letters, 4th century

St. Athanasius wrote a letter to the churches each year to announce Easter, and again and again he framed the feast through the Passover: Israel ate the flesh of a lamb in haste, but the Church keeps the feast in Christ our Passover, the true Lamb, on whom the faithful now feed. The yearly rhythm of Israel's memorial, he taught, was training for a greater feast.

Catechism Connection

- **CCC 608.** John the Baptist points to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, recalling both the suffering servant and the paschal lamb, symbol of Israel's redemption at the first Passover.
- **CCC 1150.** Among the signs of the Old Covenant by which God prepared his people, the Church counts the Passover meal, a prefiguring sign of what was to come.

Thread Watch

THREAD WATCH • LEADER ONLY

Thread C planted tonight: the lamb must be eaten. Sacrifice is completed at the table. This thread resolves in stages across Sessions Eight, Nine, and Twelve. Tonight, plant it firmly in the ANSWER to Question 3 and then leave it alone.

Guard the unbroken bone. Exodus 12:46 goes into the Dig Deeper box with a deliberate wink and no explanation. If anyone knows where it reappears, ask them to carry it in silence with you. That moment belongs to the whole group, later.

Guard the Lamb language of the liturgy. Someone may connect tonight's text to words they hear at Mass. Affirm that their ears are working, and say the study will put those words in their full setting soon. Do not do it tonight.

Thread A continues. If the group connects tonight's meal-logic back to Eden, confirm it warmly. That is the thread doing its job.

Session Goals

1. Walk the Passover instructions closely enough to feel their strangeness and their intimacy.
2. Discover that the blood protects but the eating completes: there is no Passover without the meal.
3. See that the meal is communal, catechetical, and perpetual by God's own design.
4. Leave with the planted question: if sacrifice is completed by eating, where is the lamb we must eat?

Time Note • One Hour Forty-Five with a Shared Meal

0:00 to 0:30, Table. Grace before the meal, eat together without hurry, and let the two Win questions surface naturally over food. Do not turn the table into a classroom.

0:30 to 1:20, Build. Fifty unhurried minutes. Bibles open at the table or moved to the living room, whichever your space favors. The Dig Deeper box is part of the flow, not an extra, and the live discovery moments deserve real hunt time.

1:20 to 1:35, Send. Two questions, no answer boxes, room for silence.

1:35 to 1:45, Live It This Week, memory verse, closing prayer.

If the night truly runs long: Cut the question on Exodus 12:11 and fold its point, a meal eaten dressed for the road, into your framing of the memorial question. Treat cuts as emergencies, not expectations; at this length the session should breathe on its own.

AT THE TABLE

Flatbread or pita tonight, eaten together family-style. If your group is adventurous, lamb is on theme but entirely optional. Somewhere in the meal, eat one course standing or quickly, in haste, and say nothing about why.

PART TWO · DISCUSSION GUIDE

Opening Prayer · Grace Before the Meal

Lord God, you spared your people by the blood of the lamb and fed them at a table of haste and hope. Bless this meal, gather this company into one, and keep us ready to move when you call. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Win · At the Table (30 minutes with the meal)

1. What is a food tradition in your family that has survived multiple generations? Do you know where it started?
2. Have you ever eaten a meal right before a major departure or life change, a last dinner before the move, the deployment, the wedding? What do you remember about it?

Leader note: these are dinner conversation, not an agenda item. Ask them while people are still eating, and let the meal take its time.

Build · Opening the Word (50 minutes)

1. Read Exodus 12:1-6. What are the exact specifications for the lamb, and what strikes you about the four days between choosing it and slaying it?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Without blemish, a male, a year old, chosen on the tenth day, slain on the fourteenth at twilight, by the whole assembly.

Keeping the lamb from the tenth day to the fourteenth means the family lives with it before it dies for the family. The text does not spell this out, but it is easy to imagine the children seeing it, feeding it, maybe naming it, a reflection readers ancient and modern have drawn. God builds intimacy into the sacrifice: salvation here is personal, not anonymous, and it costs something the household has come to know.

2. Read Exodus 12:7, 12-13, and 12:23. What does the blood do, and where does the protection actually happen?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The blood is applied to the doorposts and lintel, and the LORD passes over every house it marks. The destroyer does not enter (Exodus 12:23).

Notice that the blood must be applied, not merely shed. A lamb slain in the yard with its blood left in the basin saves no one. Salvation involves the blood reaching the house.

3. Now read Exodus 12:8-10 very carefully. Besides the death of the lamb and the blood on the door, what must happen? Is there any provision anywhere in this chapter for skipping it?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The flesh shall be eaten that night, roasted, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, and none of it may remain until morning. The command is as absolute as the blood command, and it comes in the same breath.

There is no version of Passover in which the blood suffices and the meal is optional. God binds them together: the blood protects, and the eating completes the Passover. In Israel's founding act of salvation, sacrifice culminates at the table. Sit with that sentence for a moment before moving on.

4. Read Exodus 12:4 and 12:46-47. Who eats the lamb, and under what rules? What do the details about the company and the one house suggest about what this meal creates?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

A lamb per household, and if the household is too small, the nearest neighbor joins, with the company sized to the lamb. It is eaten in one house, and all the congregation of Israel keeps it.

Nobody keeps Passover alone, and nothing of the lamb is left over or carried off privately. The sacrifice creates a shared meal, and the shared meal creates a people. Israel becomes Israel eating together.

DIG DEEPER

One instruction hides in Exodus 12:46 like a seed in the ground: "you shall not break a bone of it." Of all the rules a roasted lamb hardly needs, why should its bones matter? Scripture wastes nothing. File this detail away, exactly as written, and carry it with you. It will find you again before this study is over.

5. Read Exodus 12:11. How is this meal to be eaten, down to the dress code? What kind of meal has a dress code like that?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Loins girded, sandals on your feet, staff in your hand, eaten in haste: "it is the LORD's passover." Israel eats dressed for the road, plates in hand, one foot already out of Egypt.

This is a meal for pilgrims. The food of salvation is not a banquet you settle into but provisions for a departure; you eat it on your way out of slavery, toward a promise you have not seen. God's meals, it turns out, have a direction. Keep noticing which way his tables face.

6. Read Exodus 12:14 and 12:24-27. How long is this meal to be kept, and what role do the children play in it?

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

A memorial day, a feast to the LORD, an ordinance for ever, throughout all generations. And the rite carries its own catechesis: when your children ask what this service means, you shall tell them the

story of the night the LORD passed over.

God designs the Passover to be asked about. It is a meal that teaches, repeated for ever, so that every generation sits at the same table as the generation of the Exodus.

7. Step back from the details. God could have saved Israel by simple decree, or by the blood alone with no meal attached. Why do you think he binds salvation to a supper?

Let this run as an open discussion for a few minutes before sharing the answer. If someone reaches back to Eden, let them make the connection out loud.

ANSWER · SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Scripture does not give an explicit reason, so hold any answer with appropriate humility. But the pattern we have been tracing since the garden presses forward here: from Eden onward, communion with God comes through eating what God gives, on God's terms.

And notice what a meal accomplishes that a decree cannot: it gathers a people, feeds them, teaches their children, and repeats. God does not merely save Israel from something. He saves them into fellowship, and the shape of that fellowship is a table.

Send · Taking It With You (15 minutes)

- 1.** The lamb lived in the house four days before it died for the house; nothing about that salvation was anonymous. Where has your faith drifted into the anonymous, and what would make it personal again?
- 2.** Passover was eaten in community or not at all, with the company sized so that no one was left out. Who needs a place at your table right now, literally?

No answer boxes here. Ask, wait, and let silence do some of the work.

Live It This Week

- 1.** Invite someone to a meal this week on purpose, as an act of faith rather than convenience. Size the company to the food, the way Exodus 12:4 does.
- 2.** Read Exodus 12:1-14 once more on your own with a single question: what does God bind together here that I tend to separate?
- 3.** At Mass this Sunday, listen for every mention of the word lamb, and simply count them. Bring your number next week.

Scripture Memory Verse

"For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed."

1 Corinthians 5:7

Closing Prayer

Father, nothing you command is wasted and nothing you bind together should be torn apart. Bind us to you and to one another, make our tables places of salvation, and keep us watchful for the Lamb. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PART THREE · LEADER REFERENCE CARD

Passages in order of use

- Exodus 12:1-6 · the lamb chosen and kept four days
- Exodus 12:7, 12-13, 23 · the blood on the doorposts
- Exodus 12:8-10 · the flesh shall be eaten that night
- Exodus 12:4, 46-47 · the communal rules of the meal
- Exodus 12:11 · eaten in haste, dressed for the road
- Exodus 12:14, 24-27 · a memorial for ever; when your children ask
- Exodus 12:46 · the unbroken bone (Dig Deeper)
- 1 Corinthians 5:7 · memory verse

Leader only · do not distribute or read aloud

- Exodus 12:21-28 · Moses relays the instructions; useful for your own preparation
- John 1:29 · the Lamb of God (hold)
- John 19:36 · the unbroken bones fulfilled (hold; Thread C payoff)
- CCC 1363-1364 · memorial (hold for Session Eleven; do not open tonight)