

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: September 17, 2017
Lesson Title: "Liberation"
Lesson Passage: Exodus 12:1-13

ABOUT THIS LESSON

This lesson is based on the biblical record of the institution of the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread. Passover commemorated the Lord's passing over Israelite houses during the final plague, when the firstborn in Egyptian homes died. Originally, the Passover supper was eaten in readiness for the long march of the Israelites into the wilderness, after their hasty exodus from Egypt. Closely related to the first Passover observance was the feast of Unleavened Bread.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Explain the origin of the name "Passover." (2) Identify elements in the biblical account that convey a sense of urgency in the circumstances surrounding these observances.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

To introduce the lesson, comment on the role of symbolism in our lives: Symbolic acts, a familiar part of our lives, gain their significance from the important realities they represent. For example, wedding rings are simply pieces of jewelry; but they are widely regarded as an essential part of wedding ceremonies because they stand for cherished realities. In the same way, serving grape-juice and fragments of hard bread to a church congregation would, in itself, be inconsequential; but this is done with great solemnity in churches where these elements are regarded as symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ who said, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19, KJV). Relate this to the lesson passage: On the surface, today's lesson passage could be seen simply as directions for preparing and eating a meal featuring roast lamb. But when we consider the context in which it took place, the Passover meal was to take on symbolic significance that would find an important place in both Jewish and Christian tradition for centuries to come.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. *With reference to Exod. 12:1-2, observe that, to emphasize the significance of the Exodus, the Passover was to usher in a new age for Israel. (They were about to make a clean break with Egyptian culture, including abandonment of the Egyptian calendar.)*
2. *Read 12:3 and observe that the Passover was initially a family observance, and the lamb was its central feature. Its immediate purpose was related to the impending Exodus, but it was destined to become an*

annual Jewish commemoration of God's great deliverance of His people from Egyptian bondage.

3. *Review the instructions given in Exod. 12:3-6:* (1) Though the original Passover was a family observance, it was later changed into a Temple sacrifice (refer to Ezek. 45:21-25 or Ezra 6:19-20). However, during the Exile, the Passover returned to its original family orientation, since the Temple was not available. (2) According to the Jewish historian Josephus, ten was the number for a household. So two households sometimes had to be combined (v. 4). But, when this was done, care was taken to keep them separated in later practice, by seating them with their backs to one another. (3) The lamb had to be "perfect" (i.e., without blemish (v. 5). And it could be no more than a year old. (4) The heads of all the households gathered in the same place for the slaying of the lambs in the late afternoon before sunset (v. 6).

4. *Comment on the instructions concerning the use of the lamb's blood in v. 7:* The blood was smeared on the doorposts and threshold of each house. *Then call attention to the explanation of the symbolic purpose of the blood in vv. 12-13.* (NOTE: Later, in New Testament times, the blood was applied to the great altar at the Temple, and the carcass was returned to the family, then cooked and eaten at home.)

5. *Refer to the instructions for eating the meal in Exod. 12:8-11:* (1) The lamb is to be roasted rather than boiled (v. 9). (According to the Mishnah, the lamb was roasted on a skewer of pomegranate wood thrust through the carcass from end to end. (2) The bitter herbs, symbolic of Israel's bitter suffering, could consist of lettuce, chicory, peppermint or dandelion. When eaten, these were dipped into a sauce of pounded nuts and fruit sprinkled with vinegar. (3) With regard to the instruction in v. 9, there were long debates in later Judaism as to whether the legs were to be folded inside the lamb while it was being roasted, or left on the outside. (4) The nocturnal nature of the Passover meal is emphasized by the rule that any remaining meat that remained until morning should be burned (v. 10). (5) Suggest that verse 11 implies that the meal might have been eaten outside, because staff and sandals were seldom taken indoors. Nor did one indoors "gird his loins" (tie his long robe around his waist) as when on the march.

6. Obviously, the Passover served a dual purpose. It was essential preparation for the journey that was about to begin; but it also launched a cherished tradition for future generations (*Read 12:14 and 13:8-9*).

CLOSING THE LESSON

Conclude with this: In addition to congregational church meetings, we need to cultivate home-based religious traditions. One example is the Advent meal, a simple meal of fruit, nuts, cheese and bread on the Sunday before Christmas. In Europe, where the custom is widely practiced, Christians invite other families into their homes for this time of fellowship and worship.