



Imperial Academy Bible Lessons



Special Spring Festivals Lesson

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All over the world, people in God's Church are looking forward to the spring holy day season. These days are about God's plan for YOUR future!

GOD FAMILY PLAN

Long before Earth or the universe existed, there were only two Beings: magnificent, glorious, powerful superbeings. The first was God, who would later become *the Father*. The second was the Word, who would later become *Jesus Christ*. Both God and the Word were called God, because they were united, kind of like all the members of your family are called by your last name.

God and the Word wanted to have a family. They wanted a *huge* family of many beings that they could share their way of life with and who could build and beautify the universe. For this purpose, they created human beings. If we human beings learn to live God's way, we will eventually be born as spirit beings into God's Family!

To teach human beings how to live His way, God devised an awesome plan. This

plan takes 7,000 years to complete, and it has seven steps. Each step is represented by a festival. By studying and observing these seven festivals, we learn how to become like God.

TWO HARVEST SEASONS

The Middle East is where the events of the Bible took place. This region has two harvest seasons each year. The first is a spring grain harvest, called the *firstfruits* harvest. The second is a fall harvest of many crops. God uses harvests to picture how He plans to bring as many people as possible into His Family.

The firstfruits harvest is much smaller than the great fall harvest. This symbolizes the fact that those whom God "harvests" into His Family first are a small group of people. These people are in God's Church, which is very small compared to the number of people who are not. The fall harvest is much larger. This symbolizes the fact that *after* God brings a small number of people into His Family, He will bring a huge number of people. Those represented by the fall harvest include almost everyone who is

alive—or ever has been alive—and who hasn't yet been called by God.

The first three festivals, which occur in the spring, represent God's plan to bring the **firstfruits** into His Family! This lesson will explain these spring festivals. To understand what the Bible reveals about these days and what they mean for you, you will need your Bible, a pencil and an attitude that is ready to learn!

MEMORY TEST

Why does God command His people to keep the seven annual festivals? _____



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God's people today, the "firstfruits," are training to teach everyone in the World Tomorrow.

When are the two grain harvests in the Middle East? Which part of God's plan does each harvest represent? _____

THE FIRST PASSOVER

About 3,500 years ago, a nation of people called the **Israelites** were **slaves** in Egypt. Near the end of their captivity, God started to teach them about His festivals. The first festival is the **Passover**. It represents the first step in God's plan.

Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, **oppressed** and abused the Israelites. The Israelites also suffered because they followed the sinful practices of the pagan Egyptians. God sent **Moses** to tell Pharaoh that the Israelites were like God's firstborn child, and He commanded him to let them go. Pharaoh refused, and God devastated Egypt with 10 terrible plagues. (To review these plagues, read Exodus 7:14-11:5. On a separate sheet of paper, list a description for each of these 10 plagues.)

Before the last plague struck, Moses told Pharaoh what it would be. He said God would send a death angel to kill every firstborn in Egypt: man, woman,



Sacrificing the unblemished lamb represented Jesus Christ's future sacrifice.

child and beast! (Exodus 11:4-5).

But God offered protection to His children, the Israelites. To escape this terrible curse, they had to follow special instructions from God (Exodus 12:1-37).

God taught the Israelites about His **sacred calendar** (which was different from the pagan calendar the Egyptians used). The first month of God's calendar is called Abib. God commanded the father of each family to select a young, unblemished male lamb on the 10th day of Abib and to take special care of it until the 14th day. After sunset on the 14th, the man had to kill the lamb, then roast it and eat it with his family along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. God also commanded that the

man smear some of the blood on the doorposts of his family's house.

That night, God sent the death angel to kill the firstborn. Hundreds of thousands, possibly even millions, of Egyptians died. The only ones spared were those who showed that they would obey God and accept His protection by staying inside a house marked with the blood of a lamb. When the death angel came to one of these houses, he passed over it. That is why this night is called *Passover*.

MEANING OF PASSOVER

The sacrifice of these lambs saved lives. But the Passover lamb symbolized something even more important. This lamb "without blemish" pictured one of the two eternal God Beings: the Word. About 1,400 years after the first Passover, the Word came to Earth and became a human being: Jesus Christ. Christ is called the "Lamb of God" in John 1:29. He lived a sinless life, without spot or blemish (1Peter 1:19). Then He submitted Himself to be killed in order to save *all* human beings from the **death penalty** for sin! (1Corinthians 5:7).

Sin is the breaking of God's law of love. The penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23). Everyone who has ever lived has sinned (Romans 3:23)—except Jesus Christ. He did not deserve the death penalty, but He suffered *our* death penalty for us. If we repent of our sins, choose to live God's way of life, and accept the fact that we

are guilty of spilling Christ's blood, God can cause the death penalty to *pass over* us! We can be reconciled to God and then saved by Jesus Christ living His life in us (Romans 5:10).

JESUS CHRIST KEPT THE PASSOVER

While Jesus Christ lived on Earth as a human being about 2,000 years ago, He kept Passover every year. On the Passover that occurred just hours before His **crucifixion**, He showed His disciples a *new way* to keep this memorial from that time forward. Sacrificing lambs was symbolic of what Jesus Christ would do. Now Jesus Christ—the Lamb—was about to make *the* ultimate sacrifice.

The first thing Christ taught His disciples to do during this *new* Passover service was to wash each other's feet (John 13:4-5). He wrapped a towel around His waist and poured water into a basin. One by one, Christ washed each of His disciples' feet and dried them with the towel. Since people wore open-toed sandals, their feet were dusty and dirty. It was the job of a lowly servant to wash the feet of visitors. By washing His disciples' feet, Christ showed that He, the Creator of mankind, had come to *serve* mankind.

The Word, a God Being, humbled Himself to become a mere human. As a human, He humbled Himself to be unfairly mocked, hated and killed. Since this great Being was willing to do all this to serve others, we should

also be willing to humble ourselves and serve others.

NEW PASSOVER SYMBOLS

Instead of sacrificing a lamb on the Passover and eating its roasted body, Jesus taught His disciples to eat a small piece of unleavened bread and to drink a small glass of red wine. The broken piece of unleavened bread represents His beaten body. He allowed people to beat His body horribly to pay the penalty for our physical sins that make us sick. Because Christ paid this penalty, God can heal us when we are sick or injured (Luke 22:19; 1 Peter 2:24).

The wine was a symbol of Jesus's shed blood. Christ allowed His blood to be spilled to pay the penalty for our spiritual sins. Because He created all human beings, His death was able to pay the death penalty for all human beings. His death did not need to pay the penalty for His sins, because He never sinned. So God is able to apply *Christ's* death to *our* sins.

Christ commands His disciples to keep Passover this way each year to remind us of the tremendous price of sin. The Son of God voluntarily gave His life for us!

Christ's apostles and the New Testament Church did as Christ instructed. They kept this new Passover service every year. The Apostle Paul even wrote a letter to the Church members in the city of Corinth, reminding them of the deep spiritual meaning behind the bread and wine (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

MEMORY TEST

What was the last plague God sent on Egypt? _____

What is the first month of God's calendar?

What new Passover symbols did Jesus Christ teach His disciples the night before He was killed? _____

Why does washing feet symbolize humility? _____

In the new Passover service Christ

established, what do the bread and the wine symbolize? _____

FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

In Egypt, the death of the firstborn brought great fear and sorrow to every home. After this terrible night, Pharaoh sent a messenger to Moses telling him and all the Israelites to get out of Egypt as fast as possible.

As soon as the messenger arrived, on the morning of the 14th of Abib, Moses told the Israelites to ask the Egyptians for gold, silver and clothing. The Egyptians were now anxious to get rid of the Israelites, and they gave them these things. After sunset, under the light of a full moon, the Israelites began their exit from Egypt, known as the Exodus. Since God's calendar counts sunset as the start of a new day, this Exodus happened on the 15th of Abib. The Israelites left Egypt with their hands raised high in celebration: God had rescued them from slavery!

God commanded the Israelites to



Just a little leaven will make an entire loaf puff up.

observe a seven-day feast as a memorial of this miraculous escape from Egypt. This feast is called the **Days of Unleavened Bread**. It represents the second step in God's plan to bring human beings into His Family. The first day and seventh day of this festival are holy days. God commanded the Israelites to not work on these days but to attend a special service (Exodus 12:14-20).

During the Days of Unleavened Bread, God commanded His people to keep all leavening out of their homes. **Leaven** is any baking ingredient that causes dough to become puffed up. In ancient times, yeast was the most common form of leaven. Today, baking powder and baking soda are other common forms. During these seven days, God commands us to eat flat bread, made without any leavening.

The first evening of this festival starts at sunset on Abib 15, the same evening that the Exodus began (Numbers 28:16-17). This evening is called the **Night to Be Much Observed**. God commanded

His people to remember the Night to Be Much Observed every year forever (Exodus 12:42). It reminds us how God delivers His people from slavery. In our day, God frees us from our enslavement to sin!

A SYMBOL OF SIN

In the Bible, the ancient land of Egypt is a symbol of sin. Pharaoh is a type of Satan the devil. To escape from sin, the Israelites had to leave Egypt and Pharaoh. The lesson for us today is that *we must leave sin!*

Leaven is another symbol of sin (1 Corinthians 5:8). This tiny, almost invisible ingredient causes bread, cake and cookies to become puffed up with air. Similarly, sin causes people to become puffed up with pride. Also, just a little leaven will spread through a whole loaf of bread, just like a little sin can spread through your whole life, affecting almost everything you do.

God commands us to remove leavening



The wavesheaf offering represented the first of the firstfruits during the time of ancient Israel.

from our houses before the first day of Unleavened Bread. During this feast, He commands us to eat unleavened bread. This all reminds us to put sin out of our lives and to live God's way of life instead.

The ancient Israelites kept these meaningful days. So did Jesus Christ. So did His disciples. So did His apostles and His New Testament Church after He died. (For example, the Apostle Paul and his companions kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the city of Philippi, recorded in Acts 20:6.) And, like them, God's Church today still keeps these days. The Night to Be Much Observed and the rest of the Days of Unleavened Bread represent the second step in God's plan for mankind: After we repent of our past sins and accept Jesus Christ as our Passover lamb, we must strive to put sin out of our lives!

MEMORY TEST

Which day of the month of Abib did the Israelites begin their Exodus from Egypt? _____

How is sin like leaven? _____

How does the Feast of Unleavened Bread represent the second step in God's plan? _____

PENTECOST

The third and final holy day of the spring holy day season is **Pentecost**. This festival pictures the third step in God's plan.

Pentecost is also called the feast of firstfruits. Remember, the spring holy days occur around the time of the small, spring grain harvest in the Middle East. Pentecost occurs at the end of the spring harvest.

The Israelites were not allowed to begin harvesting their spring grain until the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Specifically, they had to wait until the Sunday after the weekly Sabbath during this Feast. On this day, the priest waved a small bundle of newly cut grain stalks to be accepted by God (Leviticus 23:11). This solemn ceremony was called the **wavesheaf offering**. The sheaf of grain that the priest waved before God was the *first* of the firstfruit harvest.

What did this sheaf of grain represent? It symbolized Jesus Christ! Christ was killed to save mankind from our sins. He was dead for three days and three nights. Then He was **resurrected**. He presented Himself to God the Father to be accepted. God accepted Jesus Christ, and Christ became the first human being to become a glorified, eternal member of God's Family! After that, the harvest of *other* people into God's Family could begin! This is how the wavesheaf and the spring harvest represent God's plan.

(Why doesn't God's Church today have a wavesheaf ceremony on the

Sunday after the Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread? It is because Jesus Christ has come, and He was the ultimate fulfillment of that symbol.)

Jesus Christ's sacrifice opened up God's Family to mankind. But the huge majority of mankind has rejected God's way of life, just like Adam and Eve rejected the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. God has allowed people to live the way they choose. He has called only a very few people to live His way of life and to qualify to be born into His Family. The small number of people who are in God's Church now and have God's Holy Spirit have this opportunity. But, when the time is right, God will open up this same opportunity to everyone on Earth—and then to everyone who has ever lived!

Pentecost helps us focus on God's plan to bring His Church into the God Family first. Why this small first harvest? So that these people can help Jesus Christ, the first of the firstfruits, harvest the rest of humanity into God's Family!

GIVING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Unlike other holy days, Pentecost doesn't fall on a specific day of God's calendar. The word *Pentecost* is a Greek word meaning "count 50." To find out when Pentecost falls, count 50 days from the day the wavesheaf was offered. Counting Sunday as day one, Pentecost always ends up on another Sunday, 50 days later.

After Christ was resurrected, He appeared before God the Father, and the

Father accepted Him. Fifty days later, the disciples of Christ gathered in Jerusalem to keep Pentecost. God gave His Holy Spirit to these obedient disciples in an awesome display of power. (You can find out what that dazzling sign was in Acts 2:1-11.) This bestowal of the Holy Spirit on 120 disciples marked the beginning of God's New Testament Church!

Receiving God's Holy Spirit is what makes someone a member of God's Church. God gives His Spirit as a special gift to those adults who have repented of their sins, been baptized, and had hands laid on them by one of God's ministers. The Spirit helps those who have it overcome their carnal human nature. It helps them live God's way of life. At Christ's Second Coming, all those who have the Holy Spirit will be transformed into perfect spirit beings, having the very character of God!

The spring festivals represent the first three steps in God's plan. First, Christ had to die on Passover to pay for the sins of mankind. Then members of God's Church have to repent of their sins and leave the evil ways of this world behind them. Finally, God has to give these members the power of His Holy Spirit so they can overcome sin and qualify to be teachers in the World Tomorrow!

In a future lesson, we will learn about the four fall holy days and how God plans

to bring the vast majority of mankind into His Family in the great fall harvest!

MEMORY TEST

What does the wavesheaf offering symbolize? _____

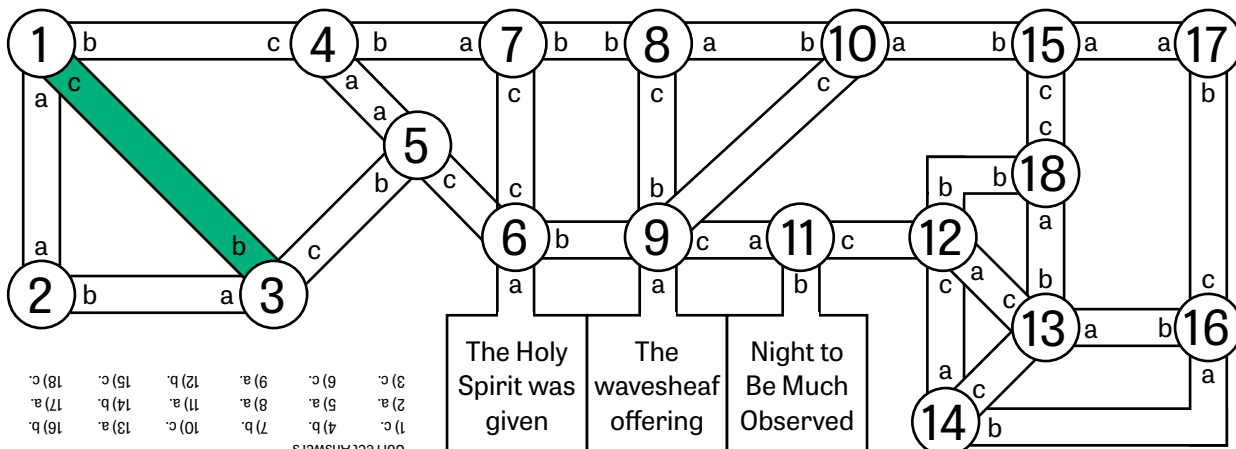
How do you determine when to observe Pentecost? _____

How did God begin His New Testament Church? _____

PATH TO UNDERSTANDING **What event took place the Sunday after the Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread?**

First, circle an answer for each multiple-choice question below. Then go to number 1 on the puzzle and color in the segment of the path that matches the letter you circled. (The first one is done for you.) Check the answer of the number the path takes you to, and fill in the next section of the path. The path will lead you to the answer of the above question.

- 1) Who existed before the Earth and universe?
a. God
b. the Word
c. All of the above
- 2) God's master plan for mankind takes how many years to complete?
a. 7,000
b. 10,000
- 3) Where do the events of the Bible take place?
a. United States
b. Europe
c. Middle East
- 4) How many harvests does this region have each year?
a. one
b. two
c. three
- 5) The spring harvest represents who in God's plan?
a. the Church
b. the angels
c. the world
- 6) God commanded each Israelite family to sacrifice an unblemished lamb on which day?
a. the 10th of Abib
b. the 12th of Abib
c. the 14th of Abib
- 7) Where did God command the Israelites to smear lamb's blood?
a. front porch
b. doorposts
c. the windows
- 8) Other than smearing lamb's blood on their houses, what else were the ancient Israelites commanded to do for the Passover?
a. stay inside their homes
b. wash each other's feet
c. stay up all night
- 9) Which of these Scriptures show that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God?
a. John 1:29
b. Romans 3:23
c. John 6:44
- 10) What is the first thing Christ taught His disciples to do for the new Passover service?
a. drink a small glass of wine
b. eat a little unleavened bread
c. wash each other's feet
- 11) Where did the Apostle Paul remind members of the New Testament Church of the spiritual meaning of the Passover symbols?
a. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
b. Romans 15:1-6
c. Acts 27:33-38
- 12) Any baking ingredient that causes dough to become puffed up is called
a. unleavening
b. leavening
c. yeast
- 13) What does the ancient land of Egypt represent in the Bible?
a. sin
b. Satan the devil
c. the good life
- 14) Acts 20:6 shows the Apostle Paul keeping which festival in Philippi?
a. the Passover
b. the Days of Unleavened Bread
c. Pentecost
- 15) What did the wavesheaf offering represent?
a. man going to heaven
b. the firstfruits
c. Jesus Christ
- 16) Which holy day doesn't fall on a specific day of God's calendar?
a. first day of Unleavened Bread
b. Pentecost
c. Day of Atonement
- 17) Which day of the week is Pentecost always kept?
a. Sunday
b. Monday
- 18) What was given on the first Pentecost after Jesus Christ was crucified?
a. Ten Commandments
b. freedom from lawkeeping
c. Holy Spirit



The Holy Spirit was given
The wavesheaf offering
Night to Be Much Observed