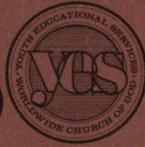


YOUTH BIBLE LESSONS



LEVEL 8



SPECIAL FEAST
LESSON



The Spring Feasts

SPRING FESTIVAL
EDITION

THE SPRING FEASTS

When two teams are playing together, how do you know which players belong to which team? Professional athletes and many school teams wear special uniforms or caps that distinguish them, or set them apart, from the players on other teams. The cap or team uniform they wear is an *identifying sign* that shows everyone else which team they belong to.

MANY IDENTIFYING SIGNS

Think of the many different kinds of identifying signs we see all around us. In the United States, the American flag flying outside a building usually identifies that structure as a government building—perhaps a post office, a school or a town hall. In Washington D.C. there are many foreign embassies. Each flies its own country's flag outside its building as a sign that identifies which country the embassy represents.

A sign can be something that you wear, like a uniform, something displayed like a flag, or it can be something you do. Some clubs have special handshakes so that people who may have never met before will, by just shaking hands, immediately know they are members of the same club. This is a "secret" sign that only members know about. But most signs are open and obvious, like those we have already mentioned.

ABOUT OUR COVER . . .

God commands His people to attend Church services on His annual and weekly Sabbaths.

Y.E.S. Photo

A SIGN IDENTIFYING GOD'S PEOPLE

Did you know that God gave the nation of ancient Israel a special sign that would identify them as His chosen people? This same sign identifies God's people today—the members of His one true Church. This sign is very open and obvious to all. It is something His people *do* that is different from the rest of the world. To find out what this sign is, read Exodus 31 and then fill in the missing words of verses 12-13 below.

"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the _____, saying, Verily my _____ ye shall keep: for it is a _____ between _____ and _____ your _____; that ye may know that _____ that doth _____ you."

The word *sanctify* means "to set apart." God said that keeping His weekly Sabbath day holy would be a sign setting His people apart from others. It would identify God's special people down through the ages—"throughout your generations."

In Moses' generation, the children of Israel were chosen by God as His people. Since Christ came, until this very day, only those whom God the Father has called and who are being led by God's Holy Spirit are His people (John 6:44; Romans 8:9, 14).

ANNUAL SABBATHS ALSO A SIGN

But notice that God said His people are to keep His *Sabbaths* (plural). He repeated this

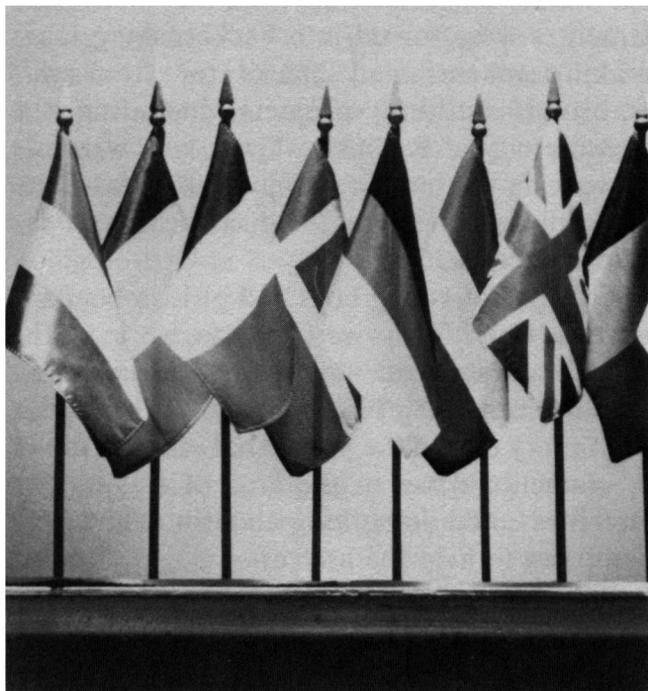
command in Ezekiel 20:12, 20. Did God mean only the weekly Sabbaths? Just what are the days God calls *His Sabbaths*?

In this lesson we shall learn that in addition to the weekly Sabbaths, God also calls the *annual holy days* His Sabbaths! Members of God's Church must keep His weekly and *annual Sabbaths* holy. The keeping of these Sabbaths is a sign that identifies God's Church today.

Those who do not keep these annual holy days do not understand God's great plan for mankind. For it is these holy days, or annual Sabbaths, which picture God's plan for accomplishing His great purpose for mankind. God's purpose is that all who have ever lived be given the opportunity to be born as spirit beings into His Family!

SPRING FESTIVAL SEASON HAS GREAT MEANING

In the Fall Festival Lesson, we will learn that the fall festivals picture the time when God will soon intervene in the affairs of



Y.E.S. Photo

Flags are an identifying sign of nations, as God's Sabbaths are an identifying sign of His chosen people.

mankind. He will begin to teach all nations His way of life—that obedience to His laws will result in peace, happiness and great prosperity. But God will not teach mankind His ways all by Himself! Nor will Jesus Christ be the only teacher. Read in Isaiah 30:20 what God, speaking of the Millennium, says: “. . . yet shall not thy _____ be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy _____.”

Before God sends Jesus Christ to restore the government of God on earth, He must first train a group of people who will be a special *team of teachers* to work with Jesus Christ. They will reign as kings and priests and will assist Jesus Christ in teaching God's laws to all nations.

The Day of Pentecost, which comes during the spring festival season, shows us that God is calling just a very few *now*. He is teaching and training these few (who have repented and are striving to obey God) to live the way of life that produces peace, happiness, joy and that leads to eternal life in His Family. Then, in the very near future when Christ returns to the earth, He will have His “Team” ready and prepared to work and rule with Him (Revelation 2:26; 5:10).

So just like a cap and uniform identifies the members of a baseball team, both the weekly and annual Sabbaths identify those who keep them as members of the team that God is now calling to be teachers in the World Tomorrow. Everyone will then be keeping these days, as shown in Isaiah 66:23. “And it _____ come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one _____ to another, shall _____ come to _____ before me, saith the LORD.”

In the World Tomorrow God will then call all those living on the earth to be His people. But He is now calling just a few to be the first to learn His way, and to be the *first* to become members of His Family. Members of God's Church today are the “firstfruits” in God's plan for mankind (James 1:18).

How Well Do You Remember?

In each of the following questions circle the letter which corresponds to the correct answer.

1. God's weekly and annual Sabbaths
 - A. are identifying signs of His people today.
 - B. were to be observed by the children of Israel.
 - C. picture God's plan for mankind.
 - D. All of the above.
 - E. None of the above.
2. In God's plan,
 - A. nobody but people in God's Church today will be called to become members of God's Family.
 - B. members of God's Church today will help rule the world with Christ and teach all nations obedience to God's commandments.
 - C. the spring feasts teach us that God is calling all people now.
 - D. All of the above.
 - E. None of the above.

ARE ALL FEASTS HOLY DAYS?

If you look at the chart on page 9, you will notice that there are seven annual feasts. Two of them are seven days long! You will also notice seven annual holy days. But each of them is only one day long. Each of the holy days occurs on, or during, a feast. But the Passover, the first feast, is not a holy day.

All holy days *are* Sabbaths, during which normal work may *not* be done. But the Passover, the very first of God's annual festivals, is not a holy day, nor is it an annual Sabbath!

THE PASSOVER

In Leviticus 23, the seven annual festivals of God are listed. Read verses 4-5 and fill in the missing words. "These are the _____ of the _____, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim _____

_____ . In the fourteenth day of the first month _____ is the LORD's _____."

Remember, God counts days from sunset to sunset, not from midnight to midnight as is done today. The way God counts days, there is only *one* part of the day that is dark—the *first* part. On the fourteenth day of His *first* month (God's calendar begins in the spring season, not in the winter as the Roman calendar we commonly use today does), *in the evening* or beginning part of that day, God commanded His people to observe the Passover.

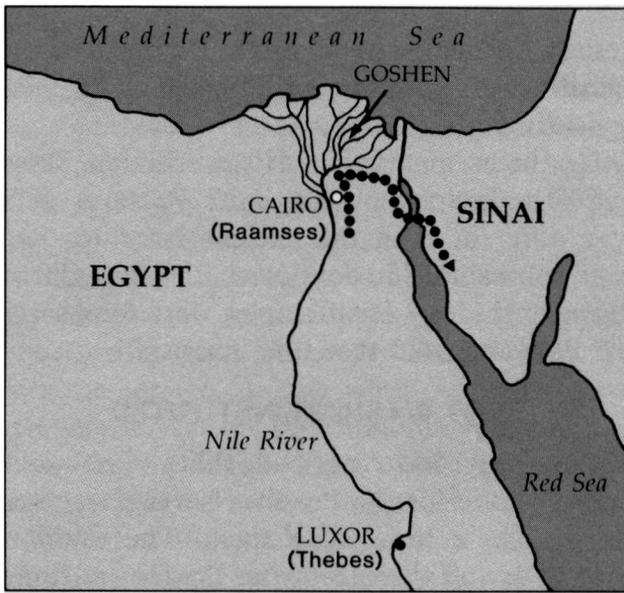
Baptized members of God's Church gather together each year in a solemn assembly to observe the Passover. To understand more about the Passover, its importance and what it pictures, we must first understand its origin.

ISRAELITES IN BONDAGE!

The children of Israel were *slaves* in Egypt for over two hundred years before God rescued them. Stern Egyptian taskmasters threatened and whipped any Israelite who fell behind in his work. Day after day, all day long, the Israelites were forced into backbreaking labor making mortar and bricks for Pharaoh's ambitious building projects, including the treasure city of Raamses. Those who were not at work on the building projects were forced to work all day under the heat of the sun in the fields (Exodus 1).

The lives of young boys and girls in bondage were terrible. They were put to work in the fields planting or reaping, or had to join their families in making bricks. They would do this most every day of the year. That was the life of the Israelite slaves in the land of Egypt. The Israelites could do nothing about it. They were powerless to help themselves.

But God is all powerful, and through His faithful servant Moses He performed many mighty miracles. He sent ten great plagues on Pharaoh and the Egyptians to deliver His people from slavery. Beginning with Exodus 7:14, read through the verses to the end of



The map above shows the beginning route of the exodus and the approximate location of the treasure city of Raamses.

chapter 10 and list the first nine of the ten plagues.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

Even after these nine destructive plagues, Pharaoh still stubbornly refused to let the Israelites go. God finally told Moses, “Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence . . .” (Exodus 11:1).

The Egyptians would be devastated by this tenth and final plague. The death angel sent by God would take the life of all the firstborn in Egypt, both men and animals, if they were not under God’s protection.

In ancient societies, the firstborn son was given very special treatment. He received the greatest portion of the inheritance, and became the head of the family when his

father died. In a monarchy, like Egypt, when a king or Pharaoh died, it was his firstborn son who ascended the throne. The firstborn was usually the most loved and respected in the family. So for all the firstborn in the land to die was a great tragedy to the Egyptians! (In the Fall Festival Lesson you will learn that it is within God’s great plan to later resurrect the firstborn of Egypt whom He killed, and then give them a chance to become members of His Family.)

THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB

Even though God said this plague would be on every family living in the land of Egypt, God gave the Israelites a way to escape. God told them that on the tenth day of the first month (Abib), each family was to choose from among their flocks a male lamb, under a year old and without any blemishes. They were to kill it just after sunset on the beginning of the fourteenth of Abib, and mark the doorposts of their houses with the blood of the lamb. Inside their houses that night, the Israelites were to roast and eat the lamb and be ready to quickly leave Egypt.

When the death angel came by during the night of the fourteenth he would *pass over* any house that had the blood on its doorposts, and spare the firstborn members of the family. Read about this in Exodus 12:13 and fill in the blanks. “And the _____ shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the _____, I will _____ you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the _____ of Egypt.” It was their obedience—striking the blood of the lamb on their doorposts—that saved the firstborn of the Israelites from death in Egypt.

Little did the Israelites know that the passover sacrifice was a *type*, a forerunner, of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ many years in the future! Read about this in the following scriptures and fill in the missing words.

I Corinthians 5:7 (last part of the verse),
“For even _____ our *passover* is
_____ for us.”

I Peter 1:18-19: “Forasmuch as ye know that
ye were not _____ [redeemed
means “bought back” from the penalty of
death] with corruptible things... But with
the precious _____
_____, as of a _____
_____ and
without _____.”

Egypt is sometimes used in the Bible as a
symbol of sin. When we sin, we bring upon
ourselves the penalty of eternal death (Romans
6:23). Since we all have sinned (Romans 3:23),
we are all under the penalty of death!

Jesus Christ is called the Lamb of God,
which takes away the sins of the world (John
1:29). He qualified to do this because He lived
a perfect, sinless life as a human being. He
never incurred the penalty for sin, which is
death, on Himself. And since He was the very
Son of God, His one life was more valuable
than all other human lives combined! Christ
was therefore able to pay the penalty of death
for all mankind.

God the Father wants us to live forever as
members of the God Family, but because we all
have sinned, we have brought on ourselves the
penalty of eternal death! But Jesus Christ, by
dying in our stead, paid that penalty for us.

When God calls a person, and that person
decides with all his heart to begin living God’s
way of life, to keep His commandments and
avoid sinning, that is called *repentance*. If he
repents, he can be baptized and, with the laying
on of hands, receive God’s Holy Spirit (Acts
2:38).

When a person is baptized, God forgives him
by applying the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to his
past sins. He is then no longer under the death
penalty that hung over his head.

PASSOVER OBSERVANCE TODAY

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were
commanded to observe the Passover by

actually killing and eating a lamb. But when
Jesus Christ came to the earth, He replaced the
sacrifice of a lamb at Passover with *new
symbols*.

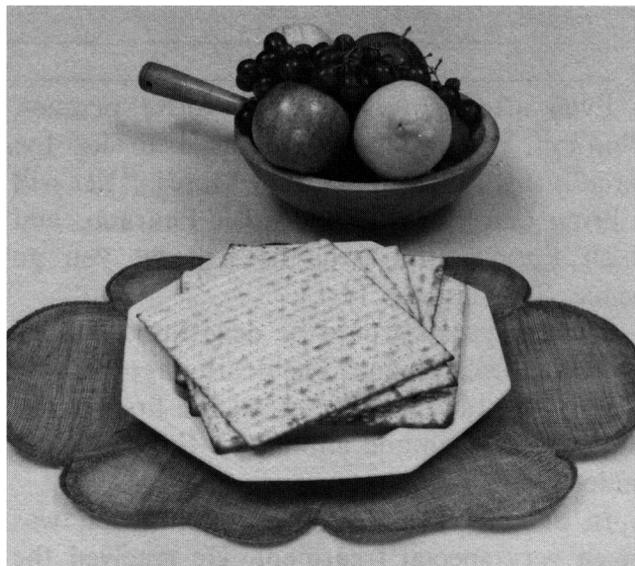
On the evening before His crucifixion, Jesus
and His disciples observed the Passover in a
way different than the ancient Israelites had
been commanded to do. Let’s notice how Christ
changed the way His disciples were to observe
the Passover from that time forward.

FOOT WASHING INSTITUTED

You may have noticed that when your
parents leave for the Passover service, each of
them takes a towel with them. The towel is
used to dry off their feet after the foot washing
service. Foot washing is one new symbol that
Christ instituted for the Passover.

After taking a towel and pouring water into
a basin, Jesus washed the feet of each one of
the disciples. The disciples could not under-
stand why Christ did this, the job of a
household servant (John 13:4-7).

Notice how Jesus explained His actions in
John 13:13-17. “Ye call me Master and Lord:
and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your
Lord and Master, have washed your feet;
ye also ought to _____



Unleavened bread symbolizes the putting away of sin
from our lives.

_____ feet. For I have given you an _____, that ye should _____ have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye _____.”

Jesus was illustrating to His disciples that He had come to earth to *serve* mankind. Shortly afterward, He proved the extent of His extreme service for this world when He gave His very life for the sins of all mankind! And so foot washing depicts the attitude of *humility* and *service* to others that Christ always exhibited, and which He desires that every Christian should strive to imitate.

BREAD SYMBOLIC OF CHRIST'S BODY

What other *new ways* of observing the Passover did Jesus institute during that Passover before His crucifixion? One very important symbol Christ introduced during the Passover meal concerned the meaning of the unleavened bread they ate that evening. In Matthew 26:26, we read, “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and _____ it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is _____.”

Jesus said the broken bread symbolized His body. Before Christ was crucified, He was severely beaten and whipped.

Even for the strong, healthy body of a hard-working carpenter, this was an exhausting and terrible beating! It was so severe that the skin was even torn back off His bones, and many were no longer able to recognize Him (Isaiah 52:14).

We become sick because we break physical health laws. If we don't eat properly balanced meals, if we don't get adequate rest, or if we don't get proper exercise we eventually become sick. Sickness is the penalty we pay for breaking God's physical health laws, just like the second death is the penalty for breaking God's spiritual laws.

But Jesus Christ and God the Father want us to live happy, full, abundant and *healthy* lives. Christ inspired the Apostle John to write, “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and *be in health* . . .” (III John 2).

Because of His great love for each of us, Jesus allowed Himself to be beaten and suffer intense pain even though He didn't break any physical health laws. He paid the physical penalty *for us* so if we become ill or suffer an accident, we can be healed (I Peter 2:24).

What does God tell us to do when we are ill? “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church [your local minister]; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil *in the name of the Lord*: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick . . .” (James 5:14-15).

God promises to heal us! That is part of the meaning of the Passover!

WINE SYMBOLIC OF CHRIST'S SHED BLOOD

Another very important part of the Passover service is the wine, which is symbolic of Christ's shed blood. In Matthew 26:27-28, we read: “And he took the _____ [of wine], and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, _____ ye all of it; For this is my _____ of the new testament, which is _____ for _____ for the remission [forgiveness] of _____.”

From that time forward, each year during the Passover service, God's people drink a small amount of wine after they eat the unleavened bread. This wine is symbolic, and a reminder of the shed blood of Jesus Christ. It reminds God's people that when they repent of their sins, it is the death of Christ—His shed blood—that frees them from the penalty of eternal death resulting from the sins they have committed. Though God's people strive to obey God's laws, they are not yet perfect, and still sin sometimes. But if they repent of their sins, God will forgive them.

So the wine replaced the blood of the lamb

as the *symbol* of Christ's blood shed for the forgiveness of sins.

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH KEPT THE PASSOVER

After Christ's death, His disciples continued to follow His example in keeping the Passover, as well as all the other festivals. The Apostle Paul, around 55 A.D., continued to instruct the Churches of God about the correct way to keep the Passover—to follow the example set by Jesus Christ.

To the Church at Corinth, Paul wrote, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (I Corinthians 11:26-27). God's Word clearly shows that true Christians will *continue* observing the Passover as an annual memorial of Christ's death.

THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

Immediately following the Passover is the second of God's festivals, the Days of Unleavened Bread. God's instructions concerning this feast are found in Leviticus 23:6-8. "And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of _____

_____ unto the LORD: _____ ye must eat unleavened bread. In the _____ day ye shall have an _____: ye shall do _____ servile [laborious] _____ therein. But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD _____: in the _____ day is an _____: ye shall do no _____ therein."

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is seven days long. It begins and ends with a holy day—the first two annual holy days of the year. These holy days, or Sabbaths, are days of rest from

our physical labors that we routinely do during the week. They are days set aside by God as *holy* time.

Since the Feast of Unleavened Bread is a week long, a weekly Sabbath also will occur during this time. This weekly Sabbath is especially important. It is used in determining what day Pentecost, the *next* holy day, is to be observed.

PUTTING AWAY SIN

Returning to the time just before the Israelites left Egypt, on the morning after the Passover meal, the Egyptians were more than happy to let the Israelites go free. They hoped that the terrible plagues would stop. All day long the Israelites gathered their possessions, along with the gold, silver and clothing which was given to them by their Egyptian masters. That night, the night of the fifteenth of Abib, the Israelites began their journey out of the land of Egypt.

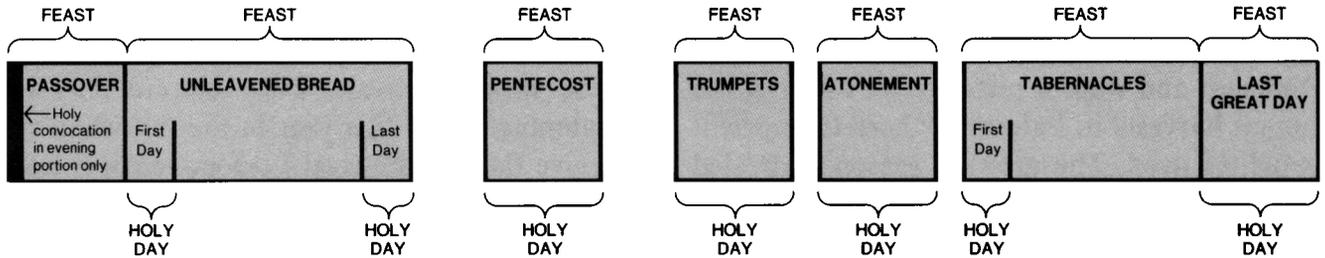
In Exodus 12:42 God said that "It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations."

The Israelites greatly rejoiced that evening—the beginning part of the first annual holy day—an evening that commemorates their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Just as God's power overcame the Egyptians, enabling the Israelites to leave that land, so it is also God's power (in the form of the Holy Spirit) that enables His people today to overcome sin and to keep His commandments.

The process of overcoming sin takes time—it does not happen all at once. That is why the Feast of Unleavened Bread is not just one day long. God made it seven days to show us that it takes time to put away sin.

What does God say we should eat during these seven days? Read Exodus 12:15 and fill in the missing words. "Seven days shall ye _____; even the first day ye shall put away

ARE ALL FEASTS HOLY DAYS?



_____ out of your houses: for whosoever eateth _____ from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.”

Leaven is an ingredient used in baking such foods as bread, cakes and cookies. The leavening agent in them causes them to rise. Leaven “puffs up” bread, just the way sin will puff us up and spread throughout our lives if we allow it to. Have you ever seen someone who was acting big and proud puff out his chest like a “tough guy”? He almost seems to be saying, “Well, nobody’s going to tell *me* what to do!”

Such an attitude leads to sin, which is the transgression of God’s Law. God has told us very clearly in His Bible what we must do and how we must live in order to be happy. He gave us His *laws* that, if followed, *produce* happiness. When we sin, we are in essence telling God, “You can’t tell *me* what to do! I’m going to decide for myself what is right and wrong!”

There is another lesson about sin we can learn from leaven. It only takes a very little bit of leaven to make a whole loaf of bread rise. In I Corinthians 5:6, Paul told the Corinthian Church, “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?”

We should not tolerate *any* sin in our lives, no matter how “large” or “small” it may be. God inspired Paul to write in verses 7-8, “Purge out [totally remove] therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump. . . . Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven,

neither with the leaven of malice [hostility, which comes from pride] and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” The Corinthians were not to allow sin to remain in their midst.

Before the Days of Unleavened Bread, we are to remove leaven and any leavened products from our homes. This helps to remind us that we must be striving to remove sin entirely from our lives and to live God’s way of life.

It would be impossible, however, to put away sin and keep God’s commandments without the gift of the Holy Spirit—the very power of God! This brings us to the last of the spring festivals.

PENTECOST

Pentecost is the third festival and pictures the third step in God’s plan. All other holy days or festivals come on definite days of definite months. But the day on which Pentecost falls must be determined by counting.

The word Pentecost is a Greek word meaning “fiftieth (day).” It specifically refers to counting fifty days beginning with a Sunday following the weekly Sabbath which usually falls during the Days of Unleavened Bread. With Sunday as day number one, Pentecost always ends up on a Sunday fifty days later (Leviticus 23:15-16).

It was on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 31, fifty days after Christ ascended to heaven to be accepted of His Father, that the Church of God was founded. In an awesome display of power, God gave His Holy Spirit to the disciples on that day. It is the Holy Spirit which gives those in whom it dwells the ability

to put away sin and to keep God's commandments!

To help us better understand the meaning of Pentecost and what it pictures, let's look at the annual harvests in Palestine where the ancient Israelites lived. The growing season is divided into the smaller spring grain harvest, and the larger harvest in the fall. The spring harvest is considered the "firstfruits" of the land each year. Pentecost always fell during the time of the first or early spring harvest of grain.

God shows in the Bible that He is not dealing with the vast majority of people in the world today. Those whom He calls before the Second Coming of Christ are His "firstfruits" (James 1:18). Just as the spring harvest is smaller, the number of people God is calling into His Family now is small compared to the billions who will be born into His Family after Christ comes.

And so Pentecost, or the "Feast of Firstfruits" as it is also called, pictures the first and smaller "spiritual harvest" of people who will be born into the God Family. This includes the spirit-begotten members of God's Church today who overcome and endure until Christ's return. It also includes the dead in Christ of past ages.

Pentecost is also an annual Sabbath or holy day, which the people of God are commanded to keep forever. Read about this in Leviticus 23:21. "And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an _____ unto you: ye shall do no _____ therein: it shall be a statute _____ in all your dwellings _____."

A holy convocation, or gathering, is a time when God's people gather together to learn more about God and His plan, His laws and ways. God's people today need this instruction to help them live happier and more abundant lives. They are also learning God's ways better so that as the "firstfruits,"—that special team of teachers—they will be able to assist Christ

in teaching all people in the World Tomorrow.

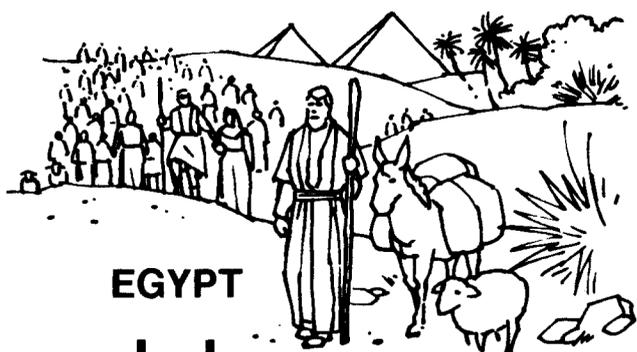
But God's plan is not complete with just these spring festivals. They picture only the beginning! Later this year in the fall when you receive the Fall Festival Lesson, you will learn about the fall festivals which picture the fulfillment of God's plan for *all* mankind.

How Well Do You Remember?

Answer the questions by writing True or False in the spaces provided.

- _____ 1. Some feast days are not holy days, but all holy days are feast days.
- _____ 2. The Passover today is kept with the symbols of bread and wine which are partaken of each week in church services.
- _____ 3. It was only through God's deliverance that Israel was able to leave Egypt.
- _____ 4. It is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ that we are freed from the penalty of death, and forgiven of our sins when we repent of them.
- _____ 5. We can be healed of our sicknesses because of Christ's shed blood.
- _____ 6. We are all under the penalty of death because we all have sinned.
- _____ 7. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is seven days long to show that "coming out of sin" is a life-long process.
- _____ 8. It takes a lot of leaven to puff up a whole loaf of bread.
- _____ 9. Pentecost shows that God is calling just a few people before Christ's Second Coming.
- _____ 10. It is important for us to diligently study and learn God's way of life. It is the only way that leads to true happiness and eternal life in the future!

SCRIPTURE MAZE



Beginning in the area marked "EGYPT," look up the first scripture in the upper left-hand corner, and draw a line through the maze, by moving in the following directions to reach "THE PROMISED LAND." If a scripture deals with Passover, go right; if a scripture deals with Pentecost, go down; and if a scripture deals with the Days of Unleavened Bread, go left.

EX. 12:5	EX. 12:11	EX. 12:43	LEV. 23:16	DEUT. 25:1	EPH. 5:1
EX. 22:1	GEN. 5:1	EX. 24:1	ACTS 2:1	LEV. 16:6	I JHN. 3:13
LEV. 23:20-21	EX. 13:6	EX. 12:19	EX. 12:15	JOS. 20:2	LEV. 16:26
LEV. 23:17	DEUT. 33:1	LEV. 25:9	JOS. 1:6	EX. 16:35	EX. 16:25
LEV. 23:5	JOHN 13:5	I COR. 11:24	I COR. 11:26	EZRA 6:19	I COR. 15:23
REV. 20:2	GEN. 1:1	NUM. 10:2	PSM. 144:1	ISA. 3:12	DEUT. 16:10

THE PROMISED LAND

