
THE SPRING FEASTS

People in God's Church all over the world are looking forward to the spring festival season. It is a time of deep meaning and great rejoicing for God's people.

Do you know why?

The spring festivals reveal the beginning steps in God's great plan of salvation for all mankind!

GOD'S FEASTS PICTURE HIS PLAN

It is God's purpose for all who have ever lived to become a part of His universe-ruling Family. And God has a plan by which He is accomplishing this wonderful purpose. He has set aside 7,000 years for its completion.

Each of God's seven annual festivals pictures a separate step in His plan of salvation. God commands us in the Bible to keep these festivals year after year, *forever!* This is because God wants His people to never forget His great purpose and plan for mankind.

THE SPRING AND FALL HARVESTS

The ancient Israelites, to whom God

originally gave His festivals, once lived in the land of Palestine. God uses the two yearly agricultural harvests of that area as a type or picture of the future *spiritual harvests* of human beings into the God Family. The first harvest is of the spring grain, which is the early or small harvest. The second is the much greater fall harvest.

The Day of Pentecost, which comes at the time of the spring harvest, pictures the "firstfruits," or the first spiritual harvest of people who will be born into the God Family. Just as the spring harvest is smaller, those God is calling now are small in number compared to the billions who will be born into His Family later.

When Christ returns to earth, the whole world will then be taught God's way of life and be given the opportunity to become part of His Family. The firstfruits are now being trained to become teachers in the World Tomorrow. When the great fall harvest of billions of people begins to be reaped after Christ's Second Coming, the firstfruits will teach these people God's laws and way of life so they in turn can be born of God.

The festivals that occur during the

ABOUT OUR COVER . . .

The Days of Unleavened Bread, the second step in God's Master Plan, symbolizes the putting away of sin from our lives.

YES Photo

fall harvest season picture the completion of God's plan for mankind. They all come in the seventh month—and their complete fulfillment will be the latter great harvest of the billions of people who have lived and died, but who have never heard or understood God's truth.

Do You Remember?

1. What do the seven annual festivals remind God's people of? _____
_____.
2. What are the two harvests in Palestine and what do they picture in God's plan? _____

_____.



YES Photo

Members of God's Church are the "firstfruits" being trained to become teachers in the World Tomorrow.

THE FIRST PASSOVER

God first began to reveal His festivals to the people of Israel while they were slaves in Egypt. It was then that God gave His people the Passover, which pictures the first step in His plan.

After God sent nine plagues which devastated the nation of Egypt, Pharaoh still refused to release the Israelites! (Be sure to read about the first nine plagues in Exodus 7:14 through Exodus 10:27 and then list them on a separate sheet of paper.)

God then decided to send one more plague on the Egyptians. He intended it to be so terrible that Pharaoh would finally free the Israelites. God told Moses that He would kill all the firstborn of both people and animals in the land of Egypt (Exodus 11:4-5).

It was at this point in time that God taught the Israelites about His true calendar. God told them that the month of Abib, in which the tenth plague was to occur, is to be the first month of the year.

God said that He would spare the Israelite firstborn if each family would kill a perfectly healthy, unblemished male lamb less than a year old. The lamb was to be killed just after sunset, at the beginning of the fourteenth day of Abib. Its blood was to be smeared on the doorposts of their houses. During the evening, the lamb was to be roasted and then eaten.

On the night of the fourteenth of Abib, God brought the final plague on Egypt (Exodus 12:29). The Israelites who had the

blood on their doorways were spared, or “passed over” by the death angel who killed the firstborn of Egypt. The lamb’s blood was a “token” or sign showing that the people and animals in the household should be spared.

MEANING OF THE PASSOVER

The passover lamb “without blemish” pictured Jesus Christ, who would come hundreds of years in the future and live a sinless life, without spot or blemish (I Peter 1:19). The lamb was a symbol of Christ who is called the “Lamb of God” (John 1:29).

The lamb’s blood sprinkled on the doorposts, which saved the firstborn from death, represented the blood of Christ, our Passover lamb who was sacrificed for all mankind (I Corinthians 5:7).

Those who repent of their sins and accept Christ’s sacrifice are protected from the penalty of sin, which is eternal death. Christ gave His life to pay that penalty which we would otherwise have to pay as a result of breaking God’s laws.

God commanded that the Passover be kept as a memorial each year forever (Exodus 13:10). It was a memorial of God’s “passing over” and sparing the firstborn of the Israelites in Egypt. It also pictured the time when Jesus Christ would come as the Passover lamb to shed His blood to pay the penalty of the sins of all mankind.

CHRIST KEPT THE PASSOVER

While on earth over 1900 years ago, Jesus Christ observed the Passover (John 2:13, 23). On the evening of the



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The unblemished Passover lamb represented Jesus Christ who was called the “Lamb of God.”

Passover before His crucifixion, Jesus changed the way His disciples were to observe the Passover from that time forward.

During this Passover meal, Christ washed His disciples' feet (John 13:4-5). Foot washing in Jesus' time was a menial task that servants performed when visitors entered a house. Since open-toed sandals were the common type of footwear worn at that time, people's feet became very dusty and were washed before entering someone's house.

By washing His disciples' feet, Christ showed that He, the Creator of all life, had come to *serve* mankind. He was willing to do this by giving His life to pay the penalty of the sins of every human being who has ever lived.

Jesus wanted His disciples to understand that if He, God in the flesh, had humbled Himself by becoming a mere human being to serve mankind, then His disciples should also be willing to serve others.

When God's people wash one another's feet each year at the Passover service, they show their desire to follow Christ's example, and to serve others with humility.

BREAD AND WINE— THE NEW SYMBOLS

Instead of shedding the blood of the lamb and eating its roasted body again in the future, Christ taught His disciples to break and eat unleavened bread on Passover night. This bread was to be a *symbol* reminding them of Christ's body which was to be brutally beaten so that

they and we today could be healed when sick (Luke 22:19; I Peter 2:24).

Christ also told His disciples to drink a small amount of wine. The wine was to be a *symbol* of Christ's shed blood, which makes it possible for our sins to be forgiven. Christ commanded His disciples to observe the Passover in this way each year in remembrance of His great sacrifice for mankind.

The apostles and the New Testament Church did keep the Passover as Jesus had taught. The Apostle Paul wrote the Church members at Corinth, reminding them to keep the Passover with the new symbols of bread and wine just as Jesus Christ had done (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

Do You Remember?

1. What was the last plague God sent upon the Egyptians? _____
_____.
2. What is the first month in God's true calendar? _____.
3. How did Christ observe the Passover just before His crucifixion? _____

_____.
4. How does foot washing express humility? _____
_____.
5. What do the bread and wine taken during the Passover service symbolize? _____

_____.

THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

Returning to the story of the first Passover in Egypt, the final plague—death of the firstborn—brought great fear and sorrow upon the Egyptians. Pharaoh called for Moses that same night and urged him to take the Israelites out of Egypt immediately.

The following morning, on the fourteenth of Abib, the Israelites received much gold, silver and clothing from the Egyptians who were anxious for them to leave. That night, the fifteenth of Abib, the Israelites began their exodus from Egypt. They were overjoyed with their newfound freedom from over two hundred years of slavery!

God also commanded the Israelites to observe a special seven-day festival as a memorial of His delivering them from Egypt. This seven-day festival is described in Exodus 12:14-20 as beginning with a Sabbath and a holy convocation (Church service) in the first day, and ending with a Sabbath and Church service on the seventh day.

During these seven days, the Israelites were commanded to eat unleavened bread. All leavening was to be out of their houses during this time. Leaven is an ingredient used in baking which makes bread and cakes rise up to be light and puffy. Yeast, baking powder and baking soda are common types of leaven.

In Numbers 28:16-17 we notice that this seven-day festival begins on the fifteenth day of Abib—on the same day the Israelites left Egypt. It was on the

beginning of this first Holy Day that a “Night to be Much Observed” was celebrated by the Israelites. This celebration took place on the night they left Egypt and was to be observed every year forever (Exodus 12:42).

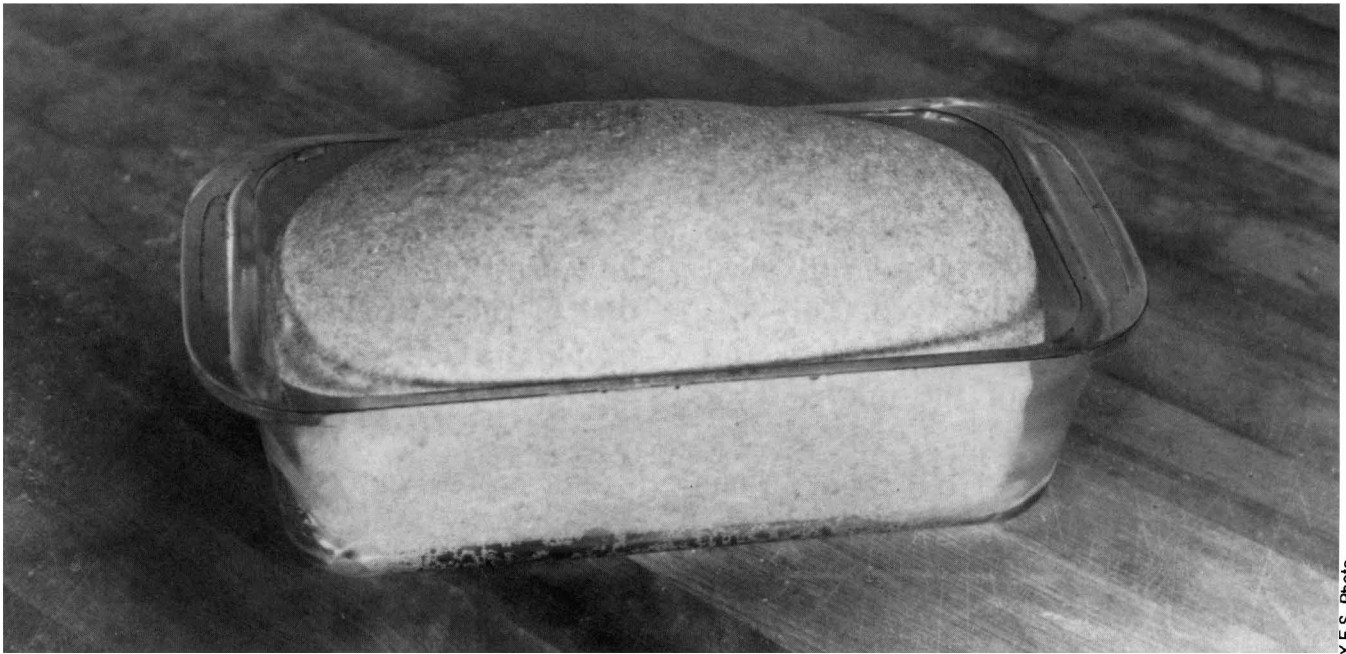
LEAVEN—A SYMBOL OF SIN

The land of Egypt is sometimes referred to in the Bible as a symbol of sin. Just as the Israelites departed Egypt the day after the Passover, so we, too, must depart from *sin*!

The Bible shows that leaven also is a symbol for sin (I Corinthians 5:8). Just as the Israelites were commanded to put leaven out of their homes, so God commands His people to put *sin* out of their lives and to keep His laws. When a small amount of leaven is put into bread dough, it spreads through the whole lump causing it to puff up and rise. In the same way, our sins, which often begin small, can lead to more and greater sins, eventually affecting most everything we do. This is why we need to “put away” sin and do what is right in God’s sight.

The apostles and New Testament Church faithfully kept the Days of Unleavened Bread. In Acts 20:6, we find that Paul and those traveling with him kept the Days of Unleavened Bread at Philippi in northern Greece.

Because God commanded that this festival be kept as a memorial forever, members of God’s Church today put all leaven out of their houses and keep the Days of Unleavened Bread, including the “Night to be Much Observed.” This



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Only a small amount of leaven is required to make bread dough rise and puff up.

festival pictures the second step in God's plan. It is a special *reminder* for God's people to carefully examine their lives, put sin out, and strive to obey God's commandments.

Do You Remember?

1. On which day of the month of Abib did the children of Israel leave Egypt? _____
_____.
2. How does sin act like leaven? _____
_____.
3. What do the seven Days of Unleavened Bread show that we must be striving to do? _____

_____.

PENTECOST

The third and final festival occurring during the spring is Pentecost. Also

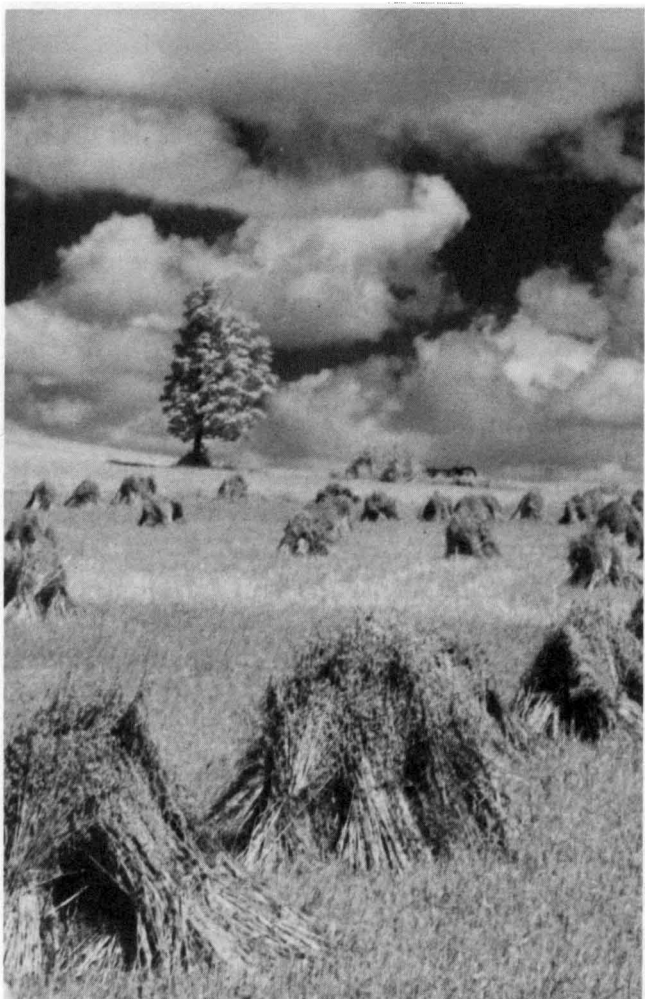
called the "Feast of Firstfruits," it pictures the third step in God's great plan.

To understand what this day pictures, we must again look at the two annual harvests in Palestine. The first one is the small harvest. The second harvest occurs during the late summer and early autumn, and is known as the fall harvest. It ends just before the "Feast of Ingathering," otherwise known as the Feast of Tabernacles.

At the beginning of the spring harvest, the stalks of the grain planted earlier, have grown to maturity. They are ready to be harvested. But the ancient Israelites were not permitted to harvest any of this early crop until the day of the wave-sheaf offering (Leviticus 23:14). (This and other rituals pictured a future event which has since occurred, and therefore are not practiced today.)

The wave-sheaf offering took place on the Sunday immediately following the weekly Sabbath which usually fell during the Days of Unleavened Bread. On this day, in a solemn ceremony, the priest waved a small handful of newly-cut sheaves (a bundle of cut stalks) of grain to be accepted by God. This was called the wave-sheaf offering and represents the *first* of the firstfruits or early harvest.

On the morning after His resurrection, Christ presented Himself before God the Father to be accepted, just as the priest in



H. Armstrong Roberts

The wave-sheaf offering pictured the first of the firstfruits, in the time of ancient Israel.

Old Testament times waved the sheaf of grain to be accepted by God before the spring harvest could begin. And so the wave-sheaf offering pictured the *resurrected* Christ ascending to heaven to be accepted by His Father as the very *first* human to be actually born of God—the first of the *firstfruits* or first harvest of people into God’s Family!

COUNTING PENTECOST

The word Pentecost is a Greek word meaning “fiftieth (day).” It specifically refers to counting fifty days beginning with the day of the wave-sheaf offering (during the Days of Unleavened Bread). With Sunday as day number one, Pentecost always ends up on a Sunday fifty days later.

MEANING OF PENTECOST

God is not dealing with the vast majority of people in the world today. God shows that 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 now is smaller 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.

HOLY SPIRIT GIVEN ON PENTECOST

Pentecost, the third step in God's plan, also pictures His people receiving the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:1 we notice that the disciples were gathered together in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 31. In an awesome display of power, God gave His Holy Spirit to the disciples on that day. Their receiving of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost also began the New Testament Church!

It is the Holy Spirit which enables those in whom it dwells to overcome sin, to understand God's truth and to grow in God's character. At Christ's Second Coming, they will be born into the Family of God as the "firstfruits" of God's *spiritual* harvest. They will then be perfect, having the very character and nature of God, and be composed of spirit.

In this lesson, we have studied the first three festivals picturing the first three steps in God's great plan. The last four steps in God's plan are pictured by the four fall festivals, and will be covered in the Fall Festival Lesson.

Do You Remember?

1. What was the wave-sheaf offering and what does it symbolize? _____

2. How is the day on which we are to keep Pentecost determined? _____

3. How did the New Testament Church begin? _____

MATCHING

Match the meanings listed below with the words on the left which are used in this lesson. Simply print the correct letters of the matching meaning in the blanks.

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| ___ 1. DISCIPLE | A. Something that helps us to remember important events of the past. |
| ___ 2. HUMILITY | B. The first produce of a harvest, either physical or spiritual. |
| ___ 3. HOLY SPIRIT | C. A substance added to dough to cause it to rise and puff up. |
| ___ 4. WAVE-SHEAF | D. Humbleness and meekness. Willing to serve—not feeling more important than others. |
| ___ 5. FIRST-FRUITS | E. One who is now learning the ways of Christ so he can be a teacher later. |
| ___ 6. GOD'S PLAN | F. A small handful of newly cut stalks of grain presented to God by the priest in Old Testament times. |
| ___ 7. SYMBOL | G. An annual Sabbath on which we attend Church services. |
| ___ 8. LEAVEN | H. The power God puts in Christians to help them overcome sin and grow toward Godly perfection. |
| ___ 9. MEMORIAL | I. Is pictured by God's seven annual festivals. |
| ___ 10. HOLY DAY | J. Something that represents something else, helping us to understand its meaning. |

SEVEN STEPS OF GOD'S PLAN AS PICTURED BY THE SEVEN FESTIVALS

Fill in the meanings of the first three steps in God's plan which are pictured by the three spring festivals.

LAST GREAT DAY—Dead of past ages given their chance for salvation, completing God's great spiritual harvest of mankind.

FEAST OF TABERNACLES—1000-year reign of Christ during which God's great spiritual harvest of mankind is reaped.

DAY OF ATONEMENT—Binding of Satan, allowing all mankind to be "at one" with God.

FEAST OF TRUMPETS—Return of Christ as King of kings; the first resurrection.

PENTECOST—

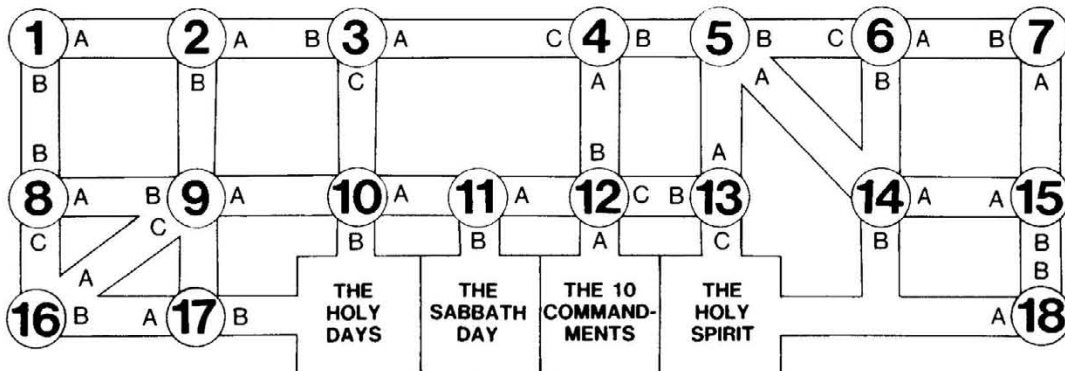
DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD—

PASSOVER—

ROAD OF GOD'S TRUTH

What did God give Christ's disciples on the Day of Pentecost after His resurrection and ascension to heaven? To find out, read the statements/questions carefully that correspond to the numbers on the road map. Then circle the correct answers—either A, B or C on the map. After completing the statements and answering the questions, go back and trace the one complete road filled with correct answers. This will lead you to the answer to the question asked above.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>1. God's festivals
 A. Are to be kept today.
 B. Were to be kept only by the Israelites.</p> <p>2. The festivals of God remind us of
 A. God's plan for mankind.
 B. The Ten Commandments.</p> <p>3. There are ___ steps in God's plan.
 A. 4 B. 3 C. 7</p> <p>4. There are ___ harvests in Palestine.
 A. 1 B. 2 C. 3</p> <p>5. The ____ festival pictures the firstfruits.
 A. Fourth B. Third</p> <p>6. God first began to reveal His festivals to Israel in
 A. Egypt.
 B. The wilderness
 C. The Promised Land.</p> <p>7. Passover today is a memorial of</p> | <p>A. Christ's death.
 B. The ninth plague.</p> <p>8. The first month of God's calendar is
 A. Abib.
 B. April
 C. Sivan</p> <p>9. Egypt is a symbol of
 A. God's Kingdom.
 B. The lake of fire.
 C. Sin.</p> <p>10. Foot washing pictures our
 A. Serving others.
 B. Cleanliness.</p> <p>11. The Days of Unleavened Bread picture
 A. Putting out sin.
 B. Fasting.</p> <p>12. Leaven is a symbol of
 A. Satan.
 B. The Red Sea.
 C. Sin.</p> <p>13. Wine at the Passover is a</p> | <p>symbol of
 A. Christ's shed blood.
 B. The crucifixion.
 C. Christ's scourging.</p> <p>14. The early harvest in Palestine was not to be gathered until
 A. After Pentecost.
 B. After the wave-sheaf offering.</p> <p>15. The wave-sheaf offering pictured
 A. Plentiful food.
 B. The resurrected Christ.</p> <p>16. How many days are counted to determine Pentecost?
 A. 7 B. 50</p> <p>17. Pentecost pictures the
 A. Return of Christ.
 B. First spiritual harvest into God's Family.</p> <p>18. What was given to the disciples on the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 31?
 A. The Holy Spirit.
 B. Eternal Life.</p> |
|--|--|--|



- CORRECT ANSWERS**
- 1. A
 - 2. B
 - 3. C
 - 4. B
 - 5. B
 - 6. A
 - 7. A
 - 8. A
 - 9. A
 - 10. A
 - 11. A
 - 12. C
 - 13. B
 - 14. A
 - 15. A
 - 16. B
 - 17. A
 - 18. A