

THE RESTORED CHURCH OF GOD®

# CHILDREN'S BIBLE LESSONS



SPECIAL FEAST LESSON

LEVEL 4



THE SPRING FEASTS

# The Spring Festivals

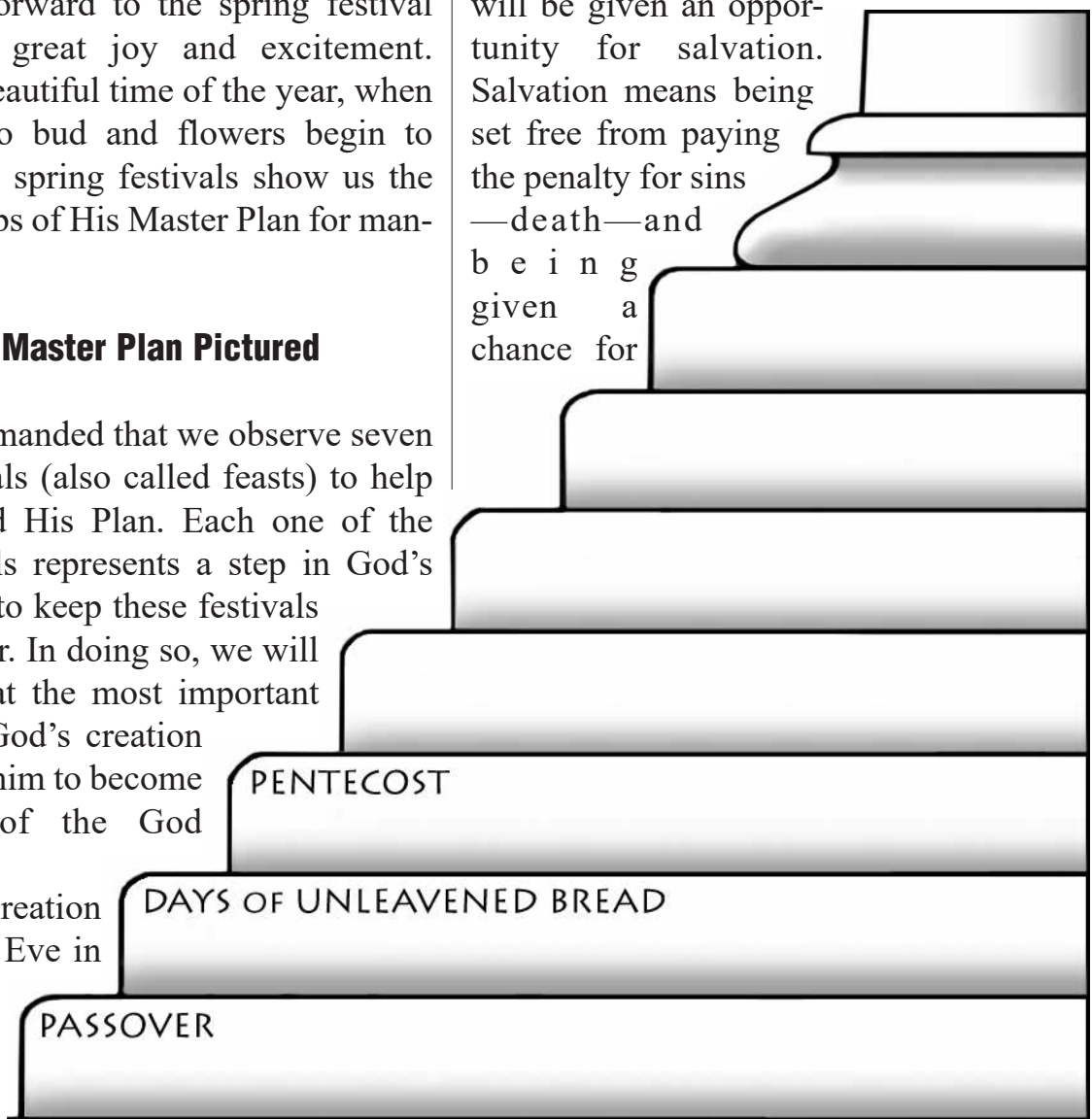
When spring arrives, God's people look forward to the spring festival season with great joy and excitement. During this beautiful time of the year, when trees begin to bud and flowers begin to bloom, God's spring festivals show us the beginning steps of His Master Plan for mankind.

## God's Master Plan Pictured

God has commanded that we observe seven annual festivals (also called feasts) to help us understand His Plan. Each one of the seven festivals represents a step in God's Plan. We are to keep these festivals year after year. In doing so, we will not forget that the most important purpose for God's creation of man is for him to become a member of the God Family.

From the creation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, every per-

son who has ever lived will be given an opportunity for salvation. Salvation means being set free from paying the penalty for sins—death—and being given a chance for



eternal (never-ending) life in God's Family. The annual festivals teach us step by step how God's Master Plan is being brought about.

Each festival is filled with important meaning and reminds us of the wonderful future God has prepared for humanity.

### Two Seasons of Festivals

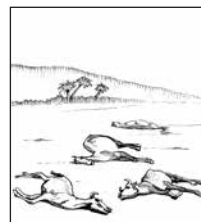
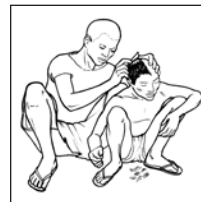
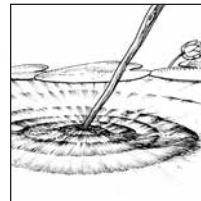
God's seven annual festivals are kept during two seasons, the spring and the fall. When God gave His festivals to the ancient Israelites, He used the two seasons when crops were harvested in the land of Israel. These harvests picture the two spiritual harvests of mankind into the God Family.

The first crop harvest came in the spring and was the smaller grain harvest. Likewise, God's first spiritual harvest is smaller and is pictured by the Day of Pentecost, when the firstfruits will become members of God's Family. Who are these firstfruits? They are the few people God is now calling out of all the billions of people in the world. He is training them to become teachers of His way of life in His Kingdom. All people who have ever lived will eventually be taught God's way of life and will have their opportunity to be born into the God Family.

The second harvest in Israel, which came in late summer or early fall, was a much larger harvest of crops. God's Fall Festivals picture this future time of the great spiritual harvest of billions of people who have lived but have never known God's way of life. We will learn about the Fall Festivals in another lesson.

### The First Step in God's Plan: Passover

While the people of Israel were slaves in the land of Egypt, God began to teach them about His festivals. The first step in His Master Plan is pictured by Passover, the first spring festival.



God chose and trained Moses to lead His people out of slavery. He sent Moses to Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, demanding that the people of Israel be set free. But Pharaoh refused, so God sent plagues on the whole nation.

The first plague turned all the rivers and waters to blood. Next there were the plagues of frogs, lice, flies, dying livestock, boils, hail, locusts and darkness over the whole land. These nine plagues caused terrible damage in Egypt. After each plague Moses told Pharaoh that God commanded him to set the Israelites free. Although the plagues caused a lot of suffering and damage, Pharaoh continued to refuse to do as God commanded. You can read about these plagues in Exodus 7:14 through 10:27.

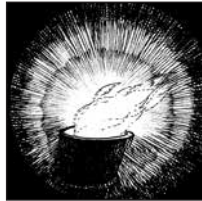
God was going to send one final plague on Egypt. This one would be so awful that Pharaoh would no longer stubbornly refuse to obey



God’s command to set the Israelites free. Moses told Pharaoh, “The Lord says, ‘At midnight I will go through all of Egypt, and all the firstborn of both man and animal shall die.’”



Meanwhile, God showed the people of Israel that the first month of His calendar year would begin in that month, called Abib. He also told them how to save their



firstborn from the plague He was about to send. Every Israelite family was to take a healthy male lamb without flaws, less than one year old, and kill it at sunset



on the fourteenth day of Abib. Then they were to take the blood of the lamb and place it on the doorframe of their house, above and on each side of the door. That night, the lamb was to be roasted and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Exodus 12:1-8).

God promised, “The blood shall be a sign for you, upon the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall fall upon you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.” The Israelites were not to leave their houses for any reason during that night!

At midnight on the fourteenth of Abib, the death angel of God went throughout all the land of Egypt and killed the firstborn of both man and animal. But the Israelites who had placed blood on their doorposts were “passed over” and their firstborn were protected.

### What Passover Means

That first Passover in Egypt looked forward hundreds of years to Jesus Christ’s future coming to Earth as a human being. The male lamb pictured Christ, who is called the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Christ is also called our Passover lamb in I Corinthians 5:7.

The lamb was to be without spot or flaws. This foreshadowed Christ living His life without sin, without disobeying God even once (I Peter 1:19). The blood placed on the doorway spared the Israelites’ firstborn from being killed. This was a symbol of Christ’s willingness to be a sacrifice and shed His blood for mankind.

The Bible, in Romans 3:23, tells us that everyone has sinned, and Romans 6:23 says that the penalty for sin, for breaking God's laws, is death.

After Christ's crucifixion, the apostles taught the people that He had paid the death penalty in their place. When the people heard this, they were deeply sorry for disobeying God. They asked the apostle Peter what they should do. Peter told them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38).

Let's look closer at what this means. Repentance means to feel deeply sorry about sinning, which is breaking God's laws, and wholeheartedly wanting to change from living the world's way of get to God's way of give. At baptism, when someone accepts that Christ gave His life as payment for the death penalty in his place, his sins are forgiven. He must then, with God's help, live the way of obedience to God's laws and do his very best not to sin.

The first annual festival of the year, Passover, is to be kept year after year. God told ancient Israel, "This day shall be to you a memorial: and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance" (Exodus 12:14).

God did not want His people to forget that He had passed over their firstborn and protected their lives when they were in Egypt. And as we have seen, this Passover looked forward to a future time when the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, would give His life as the Passover lamb. He would pay the death penalty with His shed blood for the sins of all human beings.

## **Did Christ Keep the Passover?**

The Bible tells us that when Jesus walked the Earth over 1,900 years ago, He kept the Passover (John 2:13, 23). Even though He was God and the Creator of all things, Christ humbled Himself to become a flesh and blood human being. While on Earth, He served mankind by performing miracles such as healings, casting out demons, and physically feeding many people. He also taught about God's government and laws. However, Christ's greatest act of service was when He sacrificed His life as payment for mankind's death penalty.

On the evening before He was crucified, Christ knew the time had come for Him to give His life as the Passover lamb. That evening, He taught His disciples how God's people should observe Passover from that time forward.

Christ rose up from the dinner table while they were eating the Passover meal, took a basin and towel, then knelt down before each of His disciples and washed their feet. We know that people in ancient times did not have automobiles. Almost everyone wore sandals and walked wherever they needed to go on unpaved dirt roads. Washing the dusty feet of a guest before he or she entered someone's house was a duty of the lowest-ranking house servant.

On His last Passover on Earth, Christ humbled Himself to perform the duty of a lowly house servant when He washed His disciples' feet. By His example, Christ showed His disciples that they, like Him, should willingly serve their fellow man. Each year at the Passover service, God's



people follow Christ's example and wash one another's feet (John 13:14-15). This shows their willingness to humble themselves in service to others.

### **New Symbols of Bread and Wine**

When the Passover meal was ending, Jesus gave His disciples new symbols that were to be used from that time forward in place of the lamb.

The first new symbol was that of unleavened bread, which was to be broken and eaten. Jesus explained that the bread represented His body being cruelly beaten so that God's people could be healed when they got sick (I Peter 2:24).

The second new symbol was wine. It represented Christ's blood that was shed so God's people might have their sins forgiven. Drinking a small amount of wine reminds us that Christ was willing to shed His blood to pay the death penalty for sin in our place (Matthew 26:27-28).

Jesus taught His disciples that they should observe the Passover with these new

symbols as a memorial of His sacrifice for mankind (Luke 22:19-20). God's people observe Passover as the most solemn of all God's annual festivals. It reminds us of the death of Jesus Christ and that He died so our sins can be forgiven.

Since that time, throughout the New Testament Church, God's people have kept the Passover with the new symbols given by Christ. We see an example of this in I Corinthians 11:23-26.

### **Test Your Memory:**

- 1) God's seven annual festivals are also called what? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) The firstborn of the Israelites were protected when the death angel passed over houses with blood on the \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3) The male lamb pictured \_\_\_\_\_, the Lamb of God.
- 4) Christ performed the duty of a lowly house servant by \_\_\_\_\_ His disciples' feet.
- 5) The new symbol of unleavened bread represented that Christ's \_\_\_\_\_ was cruelly beaten so that God's people can be \_\_\_\_\_ from sickness.
- 6) The new symbol of wine represented Christ's shed \_\_\_\_\_ so that God's people might have their sins \_\_\_\_\_.

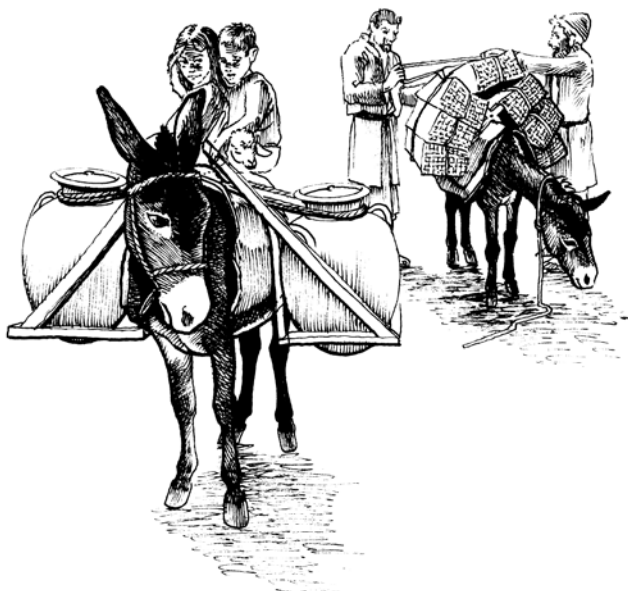
### **The Second Step in God's Plan: The Days of Unleavened Bread**

After more than 400 years in slavery, Pharaoh finally set the people of Israel free. When the death angel passed through the

land, every Egyptian firstborn person and animal died. All over the land of Egypt, people were filled with terrible fear and great sorrow that so many people and valuable livestock had died. At last, Pharaoh told Moses to take the people of Israel and get out of his land so that no more plagues would hurt them.

The rest of the Egyptians wanted to get rid of them too, so they gave the Israelites jewelry, clothing, gold and silver and sent them on their way out of Egypt. All day on the fourteenth of Abib, millions of Israelites prepared to leave. That night, the beginning of the fifteenth of Abib, the people of Israel began their orderly march out of Egypt.

The Israelites had many reasons to be happy. They were free from slavery to the



Egyptians. Their firstborn had been protected from death. They had received valuable goods from the Egyptians. God commanded His people to always remember this joyful occasion year after year with an event called the Night to Be Much Observed (Exodus 12:42).

The Night to Be Much Observed is celebrated at the beginning of the fifteenth of Abib, at sunset. This is the same time the people of Israel left Egypt (Exodus 13:3-4). This celebration is the beginning of the second spring festival—the Days of Unleavened Bread—which lasts for seven days. A Holy Day assembly is held on the first day, and again on the seventh day. For seven days, the Israelites were commanded to eat unleavened bread, as well as remove all leaven, such as yeast, from their homes (Exodus 12:14-20).

### Leaven Is a Type of Sin

As we have been learning, the Bible often uses familiar items to help us better understand spiritual principles. For example, the Passover lamb represented Jesus Christ.

In a similar way, Egypt is often used as an example of sin, which is breaking God's laws (I John 3:4). Just as the people of Israel left Egypt the day after observing the Passover, we are to leave behind our old way of life—that of breaking God's laws.

Another example the Bible uses to picture sin is leaven (I Corinthians 5:6-8). Common kinds of leaven are yeast, baking soda, and baking powder. A tiny bit of leaven put into bread dough or cake batter will spread and cause the dough to rise. God chose this as an example to teach us about sin. One tiny bit of sin in our lives will spread and lead to other sins, just like leaven spreads throughout dough.

In Leviticus 23:6, God commanded His people to keep this second festival. We also read in Acts 20:6 that the apostle Paul observed the Days of Unleavened Bread.

The seven-day festival of the Days of Unleavened Bread is also to be observed by God's people today.

Before the first day of Unleavened Bread arrives, God tells us to remove from our homes everything that contains leaven. Beginning with the Night to Be Much Observed, then throughout the next seven days, we are to eat unleavened bread each day. This reminds us that we are to obey God's laws. Also, we do not eat anything with



leaven in it for seven days. This helps us remember we need to put sin out of our lives just as we have put leaven out of our homes.

### The Third Step in God's Plan: The Day of Pentecost

The third step in God's Master Plan, and the final festival of the spring season, is the Day of Pentecost. At the beginning of this les-

son, we saw there are two annual harvests in the land of Israel, where the people of Israel lived. The first smaller harvest is in the spring, when the early crop of grain is ready to be gathered. But the Israelites could not eat that grain harvest until after the wave-sheaf offering was made.

You may be wondering, "What is a wave-sheaf?"

A weekly Sabbath took place during the seven days of Unleavened Bread. On the day following that weekly Sabbath, which would be a Sunday, a bundle of grain called a sheaf was cut from the early spring crop. As the first of the first-fruits, it was taken to the priest in God's temple, where he waved that sheaf of grain before the altar in the temple as an offering to God (Leviticus 23:10-11).

This was the wave-sheaf offering—the first of the firstfruits of the smaller spring harvest.

The first of the first-fruits pictured by this wave-sheaf represented Christ after His resurrection. The morning after His resurrection, Christ rose up to heaven to be accepted by His Father and become the very first human being to be born of God, the very *first* of the firstfruits of God's people born into the God





Family. Because Christ carried out what was pictured by the ancient wave-sheaf offering, it is not practiced today.

How do we know when to keep the Day of Pentecost? Pentecost is a Greek word meaning “fiftieth” (Leviticus 23:15-16). The counting for Pentecost begins on the first day after the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread, and always ends on the first day of the week—Sunday—fifty days later.

### **What Does Pentecost Mean?**

Pentecost is also called the Feast of Firstfruits in Numbers 28:26.

Today, God is not yet working with the billions of people alive on Earth. He is choosing just a small number of people to become His firstfruits (James 1:18). These relatively few people are being taught obedience to God’s laws and to understand His great Plan and purpose for mankind.

Pentecost pictures this first smaller spiritual harvest of God’s people who will become Spirit-born members of God’s Family when His Kingdom arrives on Earth. This group includes those alive today who live God’s Way, as well as all those throughout history who have died but were obedient to God’s laws while they lived.

### **Holy Spirit Received on Pentecost**

An exciting event happened on the Day of Pentecost in the year of A.D. 31, when all of Christ’s disciples were assembled in Jerusalem to observe this festival.

Suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled the house where they were gathered. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire that came and rested on each of them.

At that moment, God gave His Holy Spirit to the disciples. This Day of Pentecost was the beginning of the New Testament Church (Matthew 16:18).

The Holy Spirit gives God’s people the ability to learn His Way, understand and

obey His laws, respect His government, and build the character of God in them. It helps them live God’s way of give rather than the world’s way of get. At the coming of God’s Kingdom to this Earth, His people will be born as Spirit beings, with everlasting life into God’s Family. They will become the firstfruits pictured by the Day of Pentecost, the early spiritual harvest. They will have the perfect character and nature of God.

All the rest of the people who have ever lived, who have never known God’s laws, will be taught



to understand God's Way in the future. This greater spiritual harvest is pictured by the larger fall harvest in late summer to early fall.

**Test Your Memory:**

- 1) The celebration picturing the people of Israel leaving Egypt at sunset at the beginning of the fifteenth of Abib is called \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) To keep the Days of Unleavened Bread, God commanded His people to eat unleavened bread and remove all leaven from their homes for how many days? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Two examples used in the Bible to picture types of sin are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

- 4) True or False: Sin that we do not put out of our lives will spread through all parts of our lives, just like leaven spreads throughout dough.
- 5) The wave-sheaf represented \_\_\_\_\_, the first human being to be born of God and who became the first of the firstfruits of God's people.
- 6) On the Day of Pentecost in AD 31, God gave His \_\_\_\_\_ to the disciples.
- 7) When God's people receive His Holy Spirit, name four areas of life in which it helps them. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Brief Review of God's Master Plan

### A. Steps One through Three—pictured by the Spring Festivals

- 1. **Step One: *Passover***—the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ makes possible the forgiveness of our sins upon repentance and baptism.
- 2. **Step Two: *Days of Unleavened Bread***—removing sin from our lives, living God's Way and obeying His laws.
- 3. **Step Three: *Day of Pentecost***—the giving of God's Holy Spirit, and pictures the firstfruits whom God is now choosing to understand His great Plan and purpose for mankind.

### B. Steps Four through Seven—pictured by the Fall Festivals

Will be covered in the special Fall Festival Lesson.



**BIBLE MEMORY:** Leviticus 23:6-8

## STEPS TO UNDERSTANDING GOD'S PLAN

Circle the correct answer to complete the sentence.

1. God's feasts
  - a. were to be observed in Egypt.
  - b. were only for the Hebrews.
  - c. are to be kept forever.
2. The festivals of God show us
  - a. the way to Canaan.
  - b. God's Plan for all mankind.
3. There are \_\_\_ steps to understanding God's Plan.
  - a. 3    b. 4    c. 7
4. The spring harvest is called the
  - a. great harvest.
  - b. small harvest.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ festival pictures the firstfruits.
  - a. first    b. fourth    c. third
6. Passover today is kept as a memorial of
  - a. Moses passing over the Red Sea.
  - b. Christ's blood shed for us so the death angel will pass over our sins.
7. Christ added footwashing
  - a. as a way to show the long trip from Egypt.
  - b. to remind people to clean up their act.
  - c. to teach us the right attitude of service.
8. Egypt is a symbol for
  - a. Pharaoh.
  - b. sin.
9. There were \_\_\_ plagues before God sent a final one.
  - a. 10    b. 7    c. 9
10. The Days of Unleavened Bread picture
  - a. putting sin out of our lives.
  - b. the days of poverty in the wilderness.
11. Leaven is a symbol of
  - a. faith.    b. sin.    c. hope.
12. Wine at Passover services is a symbol of
  - a. the blood of the dead firstborn Egyptians.
  - b. the blood of Christ.
13. Grain of the early harvest was not eaten until
  - a. all of Israel's fields were harvested.
  - b. the wave sheaf was offered to God.
  - c. the priests had eaten.
14. \_\_\_ days are counted to determine the day Pentecost is kept.
  - a. 49    b. 50    c. 7

ANSWERS:  
1. c    2. b    3. c    4. a    5. b  
6. a    7. b    8. b    9. a    10. a  
11. a    12. b    13. b    14. b