



Imperial Academy Bible Lessons



Special Fall Festivals Lesson

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In the dark autumn sky, the beaming moon was almost full. Below, light was glowing inside the windows of the Sanders's home. They were preparing for their big trip.

Robert, 11, and his father had just finished changing the oil in the car. As they came into the house where Robert's mother and little sister were packing the last of the clothes, Lou Ann, 9, came running up.

"Daddy, the sun set!" she said as he scooped her up with a hug. "Can we mark off another day on the Feast calendar?"

"Yes, we can," Mr. Sanders said with a smile.

The Sanders were about to keep their second Feast of Tabernacles. Robert and Lou Ann had such an exciting Feast last year that they had been looking forward to this year's festival ever since. Mrs. Sanders had drawn a big calendar decorated with pictures of fall on a large piece of construction paper. Each day had a number counting down to Opening Night. As each day passed and the sun went down, Robert and Lou Ann got to cross it off the calendar.

"Who wants to do the honors this time?" Mr. Sanders asked.

"I do! I do!" Lou Ann exclaimed. "OK, here you go," Robert said, handing her the big red marker. She went to the calendar hanging on the wall by the dining table and colored in one of the last boxes. "Only two days left!" she said.

"I can't wait till morning!" Robert said.

"It's going to be a fun road trip," Mr. Sanders said. "One day of driving and then we will be at the Feast site! The evening after that, the Feast starts!"

"You'll have lots of time to draw, color and read in the car," Mrs. Sanders said. Then she winked at Mr. Sanders and quizzed Robert, "Isn't the Feast a fun vacation?"

Robert thought for a second. "No!" he said with a smile. "It's not a vacation. But it is fun!"

Mr. Sanders laughed. "Good, Robert. The Feast isn't a vacation. It's a very special holy festival."

"Like Atonement?" Lou Ann asked. The Sanders had just kept Atonement two days ago and the Feast of Trumpets several days before that.

“Yes,” Mr. Sanders said, “the Feast of Tabernacles is the next festival on God’s calendar. It’s not a vacation—it’s better! Like the other holy days, it teaches us something specific about God and His awesome plan for human beings.”

“Each of the seven festivals teaches us about a step in God’s plan,” Mr. Sanders said as the family sat down in the living room to finish packing their suits, dresses, play clothes, and other belongings they would need on their trip. “Most people don’t know about God’s holy days,” he said. “That’s why they don’t understand God or His plan for everyone.”

“But they’ll know about the holy days soon, right?” Robert asked.

“Yes,” Mr. Sanders said as he packed a pair of binoculars and nudged his son. “Somebody was paying attention last Feast!”

THE PURPOSE OF GOD’S HOLY DAYS

The Sanders family was getting ready to keep the Feast of Tabernacles because they were obeying God. Thousands of years ago, God commanded that His people keep seven annual festivals: Passover, feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day (Leviticus 23).

The first three of these festivals occur in the spring. They show how God plans to bring a small group of people into His Family to become God beings. This group is known as the Bride of Christ.

The last four of these festivals occur in the fall. They show how God plans to bring everyone else into His Family. These people will become the children of Christ and His Bride.

In this lesson, you will learn along with Robert and Lou Ann Sanders the meanings of the four fall festivals: the Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day.

WHY PEOPLE NEED GOD’S HOLY DAYS

“I have some extra snacks,” Mrs. Sanders said as she brought out a plate. “You’ll have the rest of these tomorrow, right about the time we cross the state line.”

“Thanks, Mom,” Robert said. “I love turkey wraps! I can’t wait to go to restaurants at the Feast! The first thing I’m going to have is a *big* cheeseburger,” he said as he licked his lips in anticipation.

“The Feast is about good food, good activities and good conversations,” Mr. Sanders said. “Why does God command that we enjoy good things and rejoice at the Feast?”

“Because of the Millennium?” Lou Ann asked.

“That’s right,” Mr. Sanders replied. “At the Feast we enjoy extra time to learn about God and to talk with people in God’s Church. We even have abundant money to share nice meals and to go to exciting activities. This is to show us how happy and how abundant God’s way of life is. When Jesus Christ re-

turns, the Feast will be fulfilled. It will be 1,000 years—a millennium—of people being happy.”

“Why aren’t people happy now?” Robert asked. “Everyone likes to be happy. So why aren’t they?”

“It’s because they don’t know how,” Mrs. Sanders said.

“People think they know how to be happy, but they don’t!” Mr. Sanders said. “The very first people, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God and sinned. They tried to be happy by living their own way, as influenced by Satan. And everyone since then has done the same thing. When you and I sin, we do the same thing. Without God’s instruction, humans just don’t know how to be happy. We *want* to be. God *made* us to be, but if we don’t listen to God and obey Him, we *can’t* be happy! Just look around you and watch the news.”

Lou Ann’s face conveyed a tinge of grief. She had recently seen parts of the evening news, an unending list of sadness that was hard to watch: mixed-up families, leaders lying, young people rioting, robberies, shootings, a terror alert, orphaned children, murders and war.

“Sometimes you fight with your brother,” Mrs. Sanders said gently. “You think you are right and he is wrong. Or you are purely being selfish. He does the same thing. Adults do that too.”

“The Feast helps us see what the world will be like when God takes over,” Mr. Sanders said. “Even though we still live

in a world where everyone is rebelling against God, the Feast is like a time machine that takes us to the future. In the Millennium, everyone will be happy because they will be living the way their Creator made them to live!”

“It won’t be too long until the Millennium, will it, Daddy?” Lou Ann asked.

“After Adam and Eve rebelled against God, He gave human beings 6,000 years to continue doing the same thing,” Mr. Sanders explained. “These 6,000 years are almost up! Then we will have 1,000 years of doing things *God’s* way!”

REVIEWING THE SPRING HOLY DAYS

“When Jesus Christ returns, will He help everyone learn to be happy all by Himself?” Mrs. Sanders asked Robert.

“No, He will have the Church,” Robert answered.

“That’s right,” Mr. Sanders said. “That is what the three spring festivals are about. Do you remember what those festivals are?”

“Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost,” answered Lou Ann.

“Good! And what does Passover represent?” Mr. Sanders asked.

“It’s kind of like a funeral for Jesus Christ,” Robert replied.

“Passover represents the first step in God’s plan,” Mr. Sanders said. “All human beings—except one—have sinned. You have been selfish and sinned; I have; everyone has. Because we have sinned, we have

earned the penalty of death. Everyone lives; everyone sins; and everyone dies.”

“That’s so hopeless!” Lou Ann blurted out.

“Yes, it would be,” Mrs. Sanders said, “if it wasn’t for Jesus Christ!”

“Jesus Christ was a God Being, but He chose to become a human being,” said Mr. Sanders. “He lived a human life, just like you and me, except He *never* sinned. Because He is our Creator and because He never sinned, His death pays for all of our sins.”

“So now we don’t have to die forever,” Robert told Lou Ann.

“If you repent and strive to follow God, your sins can be forgiven,” said her father. “The fact that Jesus Christ died for us, makes the next step in God’s plan possible. What’s the next step?”

“The feast of Unleavened Bread!” Lou Ann exclaimed. “I like Mom’s butterhorns best!”

“Your mother does make us delicious treats that week,” Mr. Sanders said, smiling at his wife. “Why does she do that?”

“Because we can’t eat leavening,” Robert answered.

“That’s right,” Mrs. Sanders said. “Leavening is like sin. Leavening puffs up bread with gas, and sin puffs up people with pride. Unleavened bread is like Jesus Christ.”

“How is that?” Robert asked.

“Because unleavened bread is flat and dense, full of substance and not air,” his mother answered. “Jesus Christ was like



ILLUSTRATIONS MELISSA BARREIRO

God’s holy days are a great time for fellowship.

that in the sense that He was sincere, truthful and humble.”

“So Passover means that Christ died for our sins and the feast of Unleavened Bread means we have to stop sinning and be like Him,” Robert said.

“Almost right,” Mr. Sanders said. “Christ died for our past sins. But we are not strong enough to just stop sinning on our own. That’s why we have Pentecost. That is the third festival, and it shows us that God’s people need the power of His Holy Spirit to help them overcome sin and live like Jesus Christ.”

“The Holy Spirit is also what God uses to bring us into His Family as His children,” Mrs. Sanders said.

“But God didn’t call people into His Church just so they could become God beings first, before everybody else,” said Mr. Sanders. “People in God’s Church who are getting ready to be born into His Family have an important role to play in the next step of God’s plan!”

MOST IMPORTANT EVENT IN HISTORY

“What is the next step of God’s plan, the next festival of the year?” Mrs. Sanders asked as the family began to pack their final items and get the suitcases ready to take out to the car.

“The Feast of Trumpets!” said Lou Ann. “We kept Trumpets two weeks ago.”

“Yes, the Feast of Trumpets is the first of the four fall festivals,” Mr. Sanders said. “God first commanded this festival for the Israelites in the Old Testament. He told them to blow an instrument at the start of this festival; it’s made from a ram’s horn and is called a *shofar*.”

“Wasn’t that an alarm?” Robert asked.

“Yes,” replied his father. “What was it an alarm for?”

“I think it’s a war alarm. But isn’t Trumpets about Jesus Christ returning? Why are people having a war if Christ is coming back?”

“That’s a tragic thing,” Mrs. Sanders said. “You are completely right: Trumpets pictures Christ’s return, and it also pictures a war. The reason is that when Jesus Christ returns, most people will be angry at Him. He will be returning to become the King of the whole world. He will take over power from all dictators, emperors and kings, and they will be angry.”

“But they can’t fight Christ, can they?” Lou Ann asked.

“They can try,” Mr. Sanders said. “And they will try. But even the most powerful

army you can imagine can’t even come close to destroying Christ—He is a God Being!”

“They will be in the middle of a war already,” Mrs. Sanders said. “The Bible says everyone on Earth will be suffering as huge armies try to destroy each other. If Christ did not come to Earth to stop this gigantic war, human beings would end up killing every person and animal on Earth!”

“What will happen to us in the war?” Lou Ann asked, wide-eyed.

“Sweetie, we can’t do anything to protect ourselves,” Mr. Sanders said, “but God can! God promises to take His people to a place of safety. He will protect us there. Then, when Christ returns, those who have God’s Holy Spirit in them will be transformed into spirit beings. They will meet up with Jesus Christ and His angels and will defeat those armies and help Him establish God’s rule on Earth!”

“That’s not all,” Mrs. Sanders said. “Right before we are born into God’s Family, God will resurrect all those who had God’s Holy Spirit at the time of their death.”

“Like Mrs. Johnson?” Lou Ann asked. Mrs. Johnson was a lady from their congregation who had died last year. She had told Robert and Lou Ann the most wonderful stories.

“Yes, Mrs. Johnson will be there, and Abraham and Moses and King David and the apostles and all the others who have obeyed God throughout the ages,” Mrs. Sanders said.

“When God’s Family fights the armies, what happens to all those soldiers?” Robert asked.

“They will die instantly,” Mr. Sanders replied.

It was Robert’s turn to be wide-eyed. “Really?” he asked. “God just kills them?”

“Yes,” Mr. Sanders said. “Jesus Christ will not allow any rebellion. He will rule with a rod of iron, the Bible says. Then He will gather everyone on Earth who has survived the war, and He will wipe away their tears and begin to teach them God’s way of life. And after 6,000 horrible years of living Satan’s way and finally having a horrid war that almost killed every last person, they will be ready to listen to God!”

“I’ll tell you more about what happens to those soldiers when we get to the seventh holy day,” Mr. Sanders said.

BECOMING AT ONE WITH GOD

“Do you remember what the fifth festival is, Lou Ann?” Mrs. Sanders asked.

“That’s easy,” her daughter answered. “Atonement. We just kept that ... and we didn’t eat anything all day.”

“Why didn’t we eat or drink on Atonement?” Mr. Sanders asked.

“So we will be really, really, really hungry!” Lou Ann exclaimed.

The whole family laughed. “That’s actually right,” Mr. Sanders told Lou Ann. “We obey God’s command to make ourselves really, really, really hungry. What does that teach us, Robert?”

“That we’re only human,” Robert said. “It shows us that we are weak and we need God.”

“It only takes a few hours without eating or drinking for your stomach to start to growl,” Mrs. Sanders said, playfully poking Lou Ann’s tummy, making her giggle.

“I think I’d die if Atonement was a week long,” Robert said.

“We *would* die if we went much longer than three days without water,” Mrs. Sanders said. “And we’d probably also die in less than a month without food.”

“But when we have full bellies, we feel good, so we think we’re kind of impressive,” Mr. Sanders said, puffing out his chest and making Lou Ann and Robert laugh. “We can start to think we’re big stuff and we don’t need God. Atonement reminds us that we need God so much that if He did not constantly give us water and food, we wouldn’t even exist!”

“Thankfully we have a God who is so loving!” Mrs. Sanders said.

“The Day of Atonement shows us that we are just tiny human beings and that we need humble, teachable attitudes to be close to God,” Mr. Sanders said. That’s why we spent extra time praying and studying the Bible on Atonement. Atonement is all about human beings learning to be at one with God.”

“And for that to happen, Satan has to be taken away,” Robert said.

“Good, Robert!” Mrs. Sanders said. “Atonement also pictures Satan being

locked away in a bottomless pit when Jesus Christ returns. But until then, those of us in God's Church have to fight extra hard to be at one with God because Satan is always trying to deceive us."

"After Christ comes back, why won't people have to fight against Satan like we do today?" asked Robert.

"Well, they will still have to fight their own selfish nature," his father explained. "But they won't have to fight against Satan himself. We have to fight against Satan today, because we are developing God's character in order to become the Bride of Jesus Christ. The people who come into God's Family after Christ returns will become the children of Christ and His Bride. God has called us out of the world and into His Church to train us to become teachers before Christ returns. And that is the special meaning of God's next festival: the Feast of Tabernacles."

THE WONDERFUL WORLD TOMORROW

"Two days! Two days away!" exclaimed Lou Ann.

"Yes, we have everything packed and we're ready to leave in the morning," Mr. Sanders said. "Who can tell me what the Feast of Tabernacles represents?"

"I can!" Lou Ann exclaimed. "It's the Millennium."

"Good," Mr. Sanders said. "The Millennium is a period of time that lasts for 1,000 years. It begins at the return of Jesus Christ to Earth."

"Why is the Feast only seven days long?" asked Robert. "I wish it lasted seven weeks!"

"In ancient Israel, wedding feasts lasted seven days," Mr. Sanders explained. "The Feast of Tabernacles represents the wedding feast of Christ and the Church, so it also lasts seven days."

"I didn't know the Feast was about Jesus Christ's wedding," said Lou Ann.

"Yes," said Mrs. Sanders. "After Christ returns, He will marry the Church. Then Christ and His Bride will teach everyone on Earth about God's way of life for 1,000 years."

"Why do we have to leave home and stay in a hotel or go camping during the Feast?" Robert asked.

"God commands His people to live in temporary dwellings at a special Feast site," Mr. Sanders said. "Living in temporary dwellings during the Feast of Tabernacles reminds us that our physical lives are only temporary. We cannot live forever unless we are born as spirit beings into the God Family. That is one reason why we must be baptized and receive God's Holy Spirit."

"What about Robert and me?" Lou Ann asked. "We won't be baptized till we're older."

"That's right. Perhaps you and Robert will not yet be baptized when Christ returns," Mrs. Sanders said. "If you still have not received God's Holy Spirit, you will stay human beings. Because of your training today God will use you in some



Families enjoy extra time together at the Feast of Tabernacles.

capacity to help serve all who make it through the Tribulation. Your father and I will be born into God's Family, so we will be spirit beings; and you will be helping all of us in God's Family to teach human beings about God's way of life."

"But you will still have the opportunity to be baptized, receive God's Holy Spirit, and ultimately be born into God's Family just like your mother and me," Mr. Sanders said. "And because you have had to struggle against Satan before he is put away, you will also be part of the Bride of Christ!"

Both children were beaming. "I love to hear about the animals in the Millennium," Lou Ann said. "I want a pet honey badger."

"Whoa!" Robert said. "That would not make a very good pet. They are so mean!"

"In the Millennium they'll be nice!" Lou Ann responded.

"That's right," Mrs. Sanders said. "The Bible talks about wolves, leopards and lions in the Millennium; they'll lie down next to lambs, goats and calves."

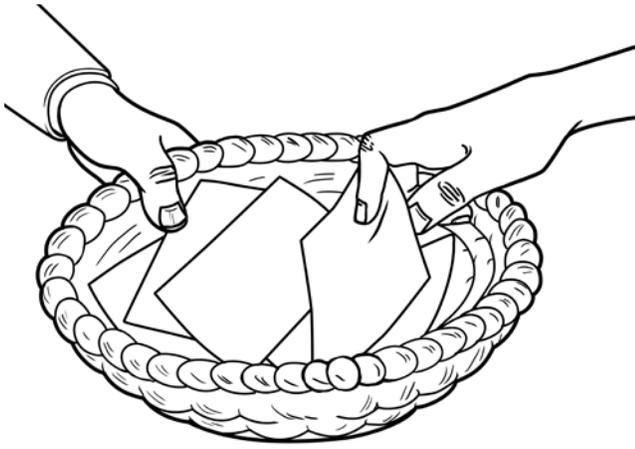
"Instead of eating them," Robert said.

"And honey badgers won't bite," Lou Ann added.

"That will be a miracle God will perform to change the nature of the animals," Mr. Sanders said. "It sort of symbolizes the entire Millennium: a time when even the wild and vicious animals will be gentle and tame."

"God will also work another big miracle," Mrs. Sanders said. "He will heal the sick."

"Like Grandma?" Robert asked.



Are you excited to give an offering?

“Yes, if Grandma were in the Millennium, God would heal the cancer she has,” his mother said. “Everyone who has cancer, is blind or deaf, or suffers from a handicap will be able to go to God and be healed!”

“That would be amazing!” Lou Ann said.

“That *will* be amazing,” her father gently corrected. “Peaceful animals, no diseases, no stealing, no killing, no war. Everyone living God’s way of life. Everyone happy and learning to be united with each other and with God! That is what the Feast of Tabernacles is all about.”

The suitcases were packed and lined up, ready for Mr. Sanders and Robert to stow in the car. Robert and Lou Ann began to change into their pajamas then brush their teeth.

“You’ll need to put your tithe into something more portable,” Mr. Sanders told Robert.

“Yes sir,” said his son, who was keeping his lawn mowing money in three jars: one

for first tithe, one for second tithe, and one for his savings. “I’ll put the second-tithe money in my wallet.”

“I have \$13 in my second-tithe jar,” Lou Ann said. “I’ll put it in my backpack. Now I can finally use it!”

“That’s good,” Mr. Sanders said. “You have been obeying God’s command to set aside 10 percent of your income throughout the year. God wants you to save it and use it at the Feast, and because you have obeyed Him, you have some extra spending money. Daddy and Mommy have saved our second tithe too; that’s how we have money to travel to the Feast site, pay for the hotel, and buy you a nice dress and some yummy meals during the Feast.”

“I want to buy some teddy bears for my friends!” Lou Ann said. She was so excited, so earnest, so eager to share her small amount of second tithe that Mr. and Mrs. Sanders almost teared up. Robert shared a knowing glance with his father that said: *Lou Ann doesn’t have enough money—but I’ll help her with mine.*

“That sounds fun,” Robert said. “I’ll go with you to the store and help you pick some out.”

“I love your giving attitude,” Mr. Sanders said. “That is what God loves, and that is what we will be teaching the whole world in the Millennium: to love and to give!”

THE GREAT FALL HARVEST

As the Sanders tucked their children into bed, Robert asked his father a question. “Dad, we talked about people

in the Church and people who have died in the Church and people who will live in the Millennium. But what about everyone else?”

“Everyone else’ means a lot of people, doesn’t it, son?” Mr. Sanders replied.

“Yes,” Robert said. “All the Israelites and all the Romans and the Greeks and the medieval people and the people who fight Christ at His return and everyone else. They weren’t in the Church, and they’re already dead.”

“That’s true,” Mrs. Sanders said. “And Grandma is very sick too; she has never been in God’s Church. If she dies before Christ returns, she will be like all those billions and billions of people who never knew God.”

“What will happen to all those people?” Robert asked.

“That is what the last holy day is about,” Mr. Sanders said. “The Last Great Day. That’s the day that comes right after the seven days of the Feast. This day pictures an awesome event: The time when God will resurrect all of those people!”

“They’ll be God beings?” Robert asked.

“No, not at first,” his father answered. They will be resurrected as human beings, just like they were before they died. There will probably be *100 billion* of these people! Some will be Adam’s children. Some will be from Noah’s lifetime. Some will be ancient Egyptians. Some will be from King David’s lifetime. Some will be your great-great grandparents. This resurrection is called the Great White Throne Judgment.

“Earth will be under God’s government, so these people will be resurrected into a much better world than the one they died in. The Bible says God will give each person 100 years to learn to live His way. At the end of the 100 years, God will judge these billions and billions of people. If they refuse to live His way, and that will probably be very few of them, they will die forever instead of living on in misery. But all those billions and billions of people who believe God and obey Him and live His way of life will be born into His Family as spirit beings!”

“Wow!” Robert exclaimed.

“It’s an amazing future, son,” said Mr. Sanders. “After the Last Great Day, everyone will be living God’s way of life and will be healed and happy and unified. Then God the Father will move His throne to Earth to be with us. God and Jesus Christ and His Bride will rule the universe for all eternity, and misery and selfishness won’t exist any more *forever*. We will help God create new worlds and do amazing things we can’t even imagine.”

“Wow,” Robert repeated, softly.

His father smiled as he turned out the light. He kissed his son’s forehead and said, “That’s what God’s holy days are all about.”

Fall Festivals Word Search

T T A X R T M U C L E T F L W O Y F
H X P T D H I Q P K L C W G K U E D
G U B N O G L E T O H V A N E A R J
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ATONEMENT

AUTUMN

FEAST OF TABERNACLES

FEAST OF TRUMPETS

HOTEL

LAST GREAT DAY

MILLENNIUM

OPENING NIGHT

PEACE

PLACE OF SAFETY

PLAN

REJOICE

RESURRECTION

RETURN

SERVICES

SHOFAR

TEMPORARY

TITHE

TRAVEL