



# *Imperial Academy Bible Lessons*



**Special Spring Festivals Lesson**

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**W**e live in a nuclear age with horrifying *new* weapons. This age started at the end of World War II, when atomic bombs were dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. For the first time in history, it was possible to kill every person on Earth. The number one problem facing mankind is now human survival!

After Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed, United States Gen. Douglas MacArthur delivered a strong warning to the world. “Men since the beginning of time have sought peace. ... Military alliances, balances of powers, leagues of nations, *all in turn failed*, leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war,” he said. “The utter destructiveness of war now blots out this alternative. We have had our last chance. If we will not devise some greater and equitable system, our Armageddon will be at our door.”

General MacArthur warned that mankind would destroy itself unless there was an “improvement of human character” to match mankind’s remarkable advances in science.

The great lesson of human history is that mankind doesn’t know the way to cooperation and peace. God desires to teach mankind the way to happiness and joy, but human beings ever since Adam and Eve have rejected God’s giving way of life and chosen Satan’s selfish way of life. The proof is all around you.

The Bible says mankind will face actual extinction before human beings will finally submit to God and try living by His way of life. In this lesson of the *Imperial Academy Bible Lessons*, you will learn how God is preparing to teach the entire world His way to peace once man is finally ready to listen.

God’s plan for saving human beings from mass annihilation actually connects directly to His holy days.

To understand what the Bible reveals about God’s spring festivals and what they mean for you, you will need your Bible, a pencil and an attitude that is ready to learn!

## **GOD’S MASTER PLAN**

In the Garden of Eden, the very first human beings had the opportunity to choose the way to peace. God explained His master plan to Adam and Eve. But instead of obeying His instruction regarding good and evil, they chose to define for themselves what was good and evil. Their descendants have done the same ever since.

Because mankind rejected God’s way of life, God cut off human beings for 6,000 years. He didn’t plead with them to try to convince them to turn their hearts back to Him. For century after century, millions and even billions of people have lived and died without having the opportunity to choose God’s way of life. God hasn’t even *tried* to bring them into His Family—yet. Instead, He is allowing mankind as a whole to learn the hard way that they don’t know how to define good and evil.

All of mankind’s selfish, evil choices are building up to a massive explosion of violence. This massive war will nearly exterminate human life. But Jesus Christ will intervene at the end of this 6,000-year period, overthrow Satan and his governments, and establish God’s rule on Earth. Then everyone in the world will have the opportunity to choose God’s way of life.

After accumulating 6,000 years of evil and suffering, the human race will finally be ready to listen!

But Jesus Christ will not rule and teach the world by Himself. He will have a group of individuals with Him who will have already proven and lived God’s

way, and who are ready to teach it! This group will consist of people who were called out of Satan's world during the 6,000-year period. They will be born into God's Family and will collectively marry Jesus Christ. Then they will help Him teach God's way to everyone on Earth (Revelation 20:4).

God's spring festivals reveal His three-step plan to transform His Church into this special group of teachers!

### JOSEPH IN EGYPT

About 2,000 years after Adam and Eve rejected God, the world was filled with evil and selfishness. God chose a faithful man named **Abraham** to be the father of a *new* nation. God revealed His law to Abraham's descendants and gave them an opportunity to follow Him and to become an example to other nations. The blessings God gave to this *chosen nation* would show the whole world the fruits of living a life of faith and obedience toward God!

Even with these advantages, this chosen nation did not obey God very well. Before Abraham's promised son was even born, God predicted that his descendants would turn away from God's laws and that they would be enslaved. But He also promised to deliver them, and He did it in a way that taught them, and teaches us today, about His family plan.

*Turn to Genesis 15:13-14; fill in the blanks to see God's promise to Abraham: "And [God] said unto Abram, Know of a surety that your seed shall be a \_\_\_\_\_ in a \_\_\_\_\_ that is not \_\_\_\_\_, and shall serve them; and they shall \_\_\_\_\_ them \_\_\_\_\_ years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I \_\_\_\_\_; and afterward shall they come out with \_\_\_\_\_."*

About 70 years after God made this promise, Abraham had a grandson named Jacob. God later changed Jacob's name to Israel. Israel had 12 sons, whose descendants became the **12 tribes of Israel**.

One of Israel's sons was Joseph. Joseph's 10 older brothers became jealous of him and sold him into slavery in the Egyptian empire. But Joseph believed God and obeyed Him. He worked hard, and God miraculously blessed him. The king of Egypt, **Pharaoh**, eventually appointed him to the office of prime minister, second-in-command over the whole empire.

God revealed to Joseph that Egypt and the whole region would suffer a massive famine. Under Joseph's leadership, Egypt harvested and stored massive quantities of food. When the famine came, Jacob and the rest of his large family traveled to Egypt and reunited with Joseph.

As decades passed, the family of Israel grew until there were hundreds of thousands of Israelites. The Israelites were blessed in Egypt. They grew in wealth and prosperity.

But after Joseph died, a new Pharaoh came to the throne. He feared that if these foreign Israelites allied with one of Egypt's enemies, they could destroy his empire from the inside out. So Pharaoh decided to enslave them.

Under slavery, the Israelites lost much of their heritage that linked them back to Abraham and to God. For over a century, they lived under oppression with minimum freedom and maximum hard labor. The Egyptians turned the Israelites into property that they could buy, sell, abuse and even murder!

The Israelites needed a miracle. Finally, after decades of suffering, they began to cry out to the true God for deliverance!

### PLAGUES IN EGYPT

The Egyptians believed in river gods, earth gods and sky gods. They believed in serpent goddesses that protected Pharaoh. They believed in a goddess with the head of a frog and a god who looked like a golden calf. During their time in Egypt, the Israelites also started to believe in these gods.

When the time came for God to deliver the Israelites, He chose to do so in a way that would prove all the gods of Egypt were nothing but myths. God chose a man named **Moses**. When Moses was 80 years old, God sent him and his older brother, Aaron, to deliver His message to Pharaoh.

*Use Exodus 5:1 to fill in the blanks below to read God's ultimatum: "And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus says the LORD God of Israel, Let my \_\_\_\_\_, that they may hold a \_\_\_\_\_ unto me in the \_\_\_\_\_."*

God wanted the Israelites to go into the wilderness to keep a special festival that would teach them about Him, the true God. Pharaoh rejected God's command. Instead of letting the Israelites go, he took away their



God turned the great Nile River into blood as the first plague He brought on Egypt.

straw supply so that they had to glean it themselves at night in order to continue manufacturing their quota of bricks during the day.

Because of Pharaoh's rebellion, God sent 10 supernatural **plagues** to devastate Egypt. When a plague came, Pharaoh would panic and promise to free the Israelites. As soon as God removed the plague, however, Pharaoh would change his mind. Then the process would repeat with a new plague.

Each of these plaques was unique. When you realize the number and types of gods the Egyptians worshiped, you realize that these plagues were discrediting the false gods of Egypt! The Egyptians worshiped river gods—God turned the Nile into a river of blood. The Egyptians worshiped gods who looked like frogs, so God filled the whole country with millions of frogs.

You can read about each of the 10 plagues in Exodus 7-11. List the plagues below in the order they occurred:

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) \_\_\_\_\_

### THE FIRST PASSOVER

As with the other plagues, God told Moses in advance about the 10th plague, which involved the firstborn.

Through Moses, God told Pharaoh that the Israelites were like His firstborn child. If Pharaoh did not free the Israelites, God would kill every firstborn man, woman, child and animal in Egypt. Moses publicly warned the Egyptians and the Israelites that this catastrophe was coming. But Pharaoh ignored it.

God gave special instructions to the Israelites about how to escape this deadly plague. To save their lives, they had to follow these commands carefully and specifically. God began by telling the Israelites that the first month of His calendar, Abib, begins in the spring.

Turn to Exodus 12:2 to see God's commands to the Israelites: "This \_\_\_\_\_ shall be unto you the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_: it shall be the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ to you."

Fill in the following instructions from God's words in verses 3-8: God instructed the Israelites to take a young \_\_\_\_\_ without blemish on the 10th of Abib and pen it up until the \_\_\_\_\_ day. Then, after sunset, they had to \_\_\_\_\_ the lamb, roast it, eat it and smear its blood over the \_\_\_\_\_ of their homes.

God told the Israelites to kill the lamb after sunset, but before it became too dark to see. (God's calendar counts days from sunset to sunset. So, the 14th of Abib starts at sunset.)

Read a startling and remarkable instruction God gave in verses 8-11 (fill in the blanks): After smearing blood on the doorposts, the Israelites had to \_\_\_\_\_ the lamb along with unleavened \_\_\_\_\_ and bitter \_\_\_\_\_. Any meat that wasn't eaten that night had to be \_\_\_\_\_ with fire. They had to eat in \_\_\_\_\_, with \_\_\_\_\_ on their feet and \_\_\_\_\_ in their hands.

That night, God sent the death angel to kill all the firstborn in Egypt, just as He had warned. Only those who were inside a house marked with the blood of a lamb were spared. Since the death angel *passed over* the houses marked with blood, the night was called **Passover!**

Read verse 14 to see how long God commanded His people to keep the Passover: "And this day shall be unto you for a \_\_\_\_\_; and you shall keep it a \_\_\_\_\_ to the LORD throughout your generations; you shall keep it a \_\_\_\_\_ by an ordinance \_\_\_\_\_."

## NEW PASSOVER SYMBOLS

Roughly 1,400 years after the Israelites kept this first Passover service, a God Being came to Earth. This was the Word who had created mankind (John 1:1-3). He came to Earth and became a human being. His name was **Jesus Christ**.

The Word had obeyed God perfectly for eternity; when He was a human being, Satan pressured and tempted Him to **sin**. Jesus Christ faced every type of **temptation** possible—and He never sinned. His record of obeying God remained *perfect*.

This meant that, among many other deeds, Christ kept Passover every year, just the way that God had commanded.

*Fill in the blanks with proof from Luke 2:41-42: “Now [Jesus’s] parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the \_\_\_\_\_. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to \_\_\_\_\_ after the custom of the \_\_\_\_\_.”*

Jesus observed the Passover even as a 12-year-old child. About 21 years later, as the Passover neared, Christ made preparations to keep His last Passover as a human being (Luke 22:8). He knew He would soon be illegally captured, convicted, tortured and executed.

On this Passover that occurred just hours before His death, Christ showed His disciples a *new way* to keep this memorial from that time forward. In this ceremony, He did not kill a lamb. Sacrificing lambs had been a symbol of the sacrifice Jesus Christ would make. Since Jesus Christ was about to make that ultimate sacrifice, lambs were no longer necessary; new symbols were needed.

*Fill in the blanks using John 6:53-54 to see more detail: “Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Son of man, and \_\_\_\_\_ his \_\_\_\_\_, you have no \_\_\_\_\_ in you. Whoso \_\_\_\_\_ my \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ my \_\_\_\_\_, has eternal life; and I will \_\_\_\_\_ him up at the last day.”*

The people listening to Christ didn’t understand what He meant. It sounded like they had to literally eat Christ’s flesh and drink His blood if they wanted to be resurrected as spirit beings. But the *new* Passover service Christ instated just before His death explains the deep meaning behind these verses!

## FOOT WASHING

The first thing Christ did during this new Passover service was to wash His disciples’ feet (John 13:4-7). Since people wore open-toed sandals in Christ’s time, their feet were dusty and dirty. The job of washing the feet of visitors went to one of the subordinate servants.

At first, the disciples were astonished that the *Son of God* was performing such a menial task!

*Christ explained His actions in verses 13-16: “You call me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, have washed your feet; you also ought to \_\_\_\_\_ one another’s \_\_\_\_\_. For I have given you an \_\_\_\_\_, that you should \_\_\_\_\_ as I have \_\_\_\_\_ 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.”*

Christ was the *Word of God*, but He humbled Himself by becoming a mere human, ready to serve to the point of sacrificing His own life. If Christ was willing to give His own life to serve others, we should also be willing to humble ourselves and serve each other.

*What did Christ say would happen if His disciples followed His example? (verse 17).*

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## SYMBOL OF CHRIST’S BODY

The next thing Christ did at this new Passover service was to take a piece of unleavened bread and break it into small pieces. He gave these pieces to His disciples to eat. *What did Christ say this unleavened bread symbolized? (Matthew 26:26).* \_\_\_\_\_

This broken piece of bread represents Christ’s body, which was severely beaten just hours after this ceremony took place (Mark 15:15). Christ suffered a horrible flogging by a Roman torturer. The flogger used a whip with nine strands of leather connected to a wooden handle. Each strand of leather was entwined with shards of metal and bone. These shards ripped off pieces of flesh each time the whip struck the body. Christ was whipped until His ribs showed through His flayed skin and He no longer looked like a human (Psalm 22:17; Isaiah 52:14).

*Turn to Isaiah 53:3-5 and fill in the blanks below: “He is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_*

of men; a man of \_\_\_\_\_, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was \_\_\_\_\_, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our \_\_\_\_\_, and carried our \_\_\_\_\_: yet we did esteem him \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ of God, and \_\_\_\_\_. But he was \_\_\_\_\_ for our \_\_\_\_\_, he was \_\_\_\_\_ for our \_\_\_\_\_: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his \_\_\_\_\_ we are \_\_\_\_\_.”

Years before it happened, Isaiah prophesied this beating—and the reason for it. Christ suffered this terrible beating so we could be healed when we are sick or injured (1 Peter 2:24). We become ill or hurt when we break God’s physical health laws, like eating unhealthy food, not exercising or neglecting sleep. Sickness and injury are penalties for breaking God’s physical laws, just like eternal death is the penalty for breaking God’s spiritual laws. Because Christ was beaten to pay the penalty for our physical sins, God will heal us if we believe in His sacrifice and we follow God’s instructions.

Turn to James 5:14-15 and summarize these instructions: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**SYMBOL OF CHRIST’S BLOOD**

After giving His disciples a piece of unleavened bread, Christ gave them a small cup of wine to drink.

Turn to Matthew 26:27-28 to learn what this wine represented: “And he took the \_\_\_\_\_ [of wine], and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, \_\_\_\_\_ you all of it; for this is my \_\_\_\_\_ of the new testament, which is \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ for the remission [forgiveness] of \_\_\_\_\_.”

After Christ was beaten, He was crucified. His hands and feet were nailed to a stake; He was raised up on it and left there to suffer and eventually die. After hanging there all day, Christ was still alive. A soldier then stabbed Him in the side with a spear so that His blood gushed out onto the ground—and the Son of God died!

Turn to Hebrews 9:22 to find out why Christ’s blood had to be shed: “And almost all things are by the law purged

with \_\_\_\_\_; and without \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ is no \_\_\_\_\_ [of sins].”

Why did Jesus Christ die? The Bible says that all human beings who have sinned are under the death penalty: There is no way for us to have eternal life. Jesus Christ was a human being. He suffered the death penalty. But He *never sinned*. This meant that His death could be applied to *others*. And because He was the Creator of all human life, His death can apply to every human being who has ever lived!

Without Jesus Christ sacrificing His life, human beings cannot be saved from the death penalty of sin!

Sin is the breaking of God’s law (1 John 3:4). It brings misery into our lives. God doesn’t want us to live forever in misery, so the penalty for sin is *eternal death* (Romans 6:23). That basically means that after a normal life span, a person dies and never lives again. Everyone who has ever lived has sinned and rejected God’s way of life (Romans 3:23), except for Jesus Christ, so everyone is under this penalty.

However, since Christ is the Word of God who created all humanity, His life is more valuable than all human lives combined. He did not die to pay the penalty of His own sins; He died to pay the penalty for *our* sins. We are saved from the penalty of eternal death by the blood of Jesus Christ, like the ancient Israelites were saved from the death angel by the blood of the Passover lamb (1 Peter 1:19-20).

Of course, God doesn’t want us to live forever in sin, selfishness and misery. We have to *repent* of our sins and be baptized before God can “buy us back” from the death penalty using the shed blood of His Son! But when we repent, God symbolically takes the blood of Christ and covers our sins. This process of repentance is an ongoing, lifelong process.

Summarize the following Bible verses that show how God redeems us from our sins:

1 Corinthians 5:7 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
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Hebrews 10:10-12 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
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1 Peter 3:18 \_\_\_\_\_

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When Christ said that no one could have eternal life unless he or she eats His flesh and drinks His blood, He did not mean that people had to literally eat human flesh and blood. He meant that no one could be healed until he or she accepted that Christ's body was broken to pay the penalty for his or her physical sins. He meant that no one could be resurrected a spirit being until he or she accepted that Christ's life was taken from Him to pay the penalty for his or her spiritual sins.

### THE MOST SOLEMN NIGHT OF THE YEAR

After Christ's death and resurrection, the baptized members of the New Testament Church continued to follow His example. They faithfully kept the Passover and other festivals each year.

Around A.D. 55, the Apostle Paul wrote a letter to Church members in the city of Corinth, reminding them of the deep spiritual meaning behind the symbols of the bread and wine. The congregation in Corinth was keeping the Passover on the right day, but they were keeping it in a very casual way. Some were stuffing themselves with food and drinking wine until they were drunk. Paul had to correct the brethren for taking the Passover in an unworthy manner. Taking a casual approach to Passover meant they were taking a casual approach to Jesus Christ's sacrifice!

*Fill in the blanks using 1 Corinthians 11:26-27: "For as often as you eat this \_\_\_\_\_, and drink this \_\_\_\_\_ [of wine], you do show the Lord's \_\_\_\_\_ till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this \_\_\_\_\_, and drink this \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord, \_\_\_\_\_, shall be \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord."*

It is deeply insulting to God when people take the sacrifice of His only begotten Son lightly. No human being is worthy of Christ's sacrifice. But God wants us to approach that sacrifice in a worthy manner. He wants us to think deeply about what Christ and the Father have done to redeem us from sin. He wants us to follow His instructions closely. He wants us to constantly repent of our selfishness and to strive to live His way of give.

The Son of God had to *die* because of *our* sins. Passover focuses on this event, and it is the most solemn, serious night of the year!

### FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

The Feast of Unleavened Bread starts at sunset the day after Passover. This seven-day festival begins and ends with a holy day. It represents the second step in God's plan!

*To see God's special instruction for this feast, fill in the blanks using Exodus 12:15-17: "Seven days shall you eat \_\_\_\_\_ bread; even the \_\_\_\_\_ day you shall put away \_\_\_\_\_ out of your houses: for whosoever \_\_\_\_\_ bread from the \_\_\_\_\_ day until the \_\_\_\_\_ day, that soul shall be \_\_\_\_\_ from Israel. And in the first day there shall be an \_\_\_\_\_, and in the seventh day there shall be an \_\_\_\_\_ to you; no manner of \_\_\_\_\_ shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you. And you shall observe the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_; for in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall you observe this day in your generations by an ordinance \_\_\_\_\_."*

After the Israelite slaves in Egypt finished eating the Passover lamb, they remained in their homes all night as the death angel carried out the final plague against Egypt. When the sun rose the next morning, the Egyptians were mourning the loss of their firstborn. God instructed the Israelites to receive silver, gold and clothing from the Egyptians and then start traveling eastward out of Egypt!

That night, the 15th of Abib, the Israelites started their journey to freedom. Since God starts His months with a new moon, there is always a full moon on the 15th day of each month. Under the light of this particular full moon, the Israelites began their **exodus** (mass departure) from Egypt. Just as God had said, this exodus occurred exactly 400 years after His promise to Abraham to deliver his descendants.

The Israelites left Egypt celebrating with hands in the air as God freed them from a century of slavery. God commanded the Israelites to *remember* this, their first night of freedom.



A full moon occurs on the 15th day of the first month on God's calendar.

Fill in the blanks from verse 42 to see this special command from God: "It is a \_\_\_\_\_ to be \_\_\_\_\_ unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt...."

Members of God's Church today gather together with physical and spiritual family on the Night to Be Much Observed and share a special dinner. While the Passover is the most solemn night of the year, the Night to Be Much Observed is the most joyful. It is a celebration of our deliverance from sin!

**A SYMBOL OF SIN**

The ancient land of Egypt is a symbol of sin in the Bible. Pharaoh is a type of Satan the devil. Just as the Israelites could not free themselves from slavery in Egypt without miracles from God, we cannot free ourselves from sin without miracles from God!

God also uses leaven as a symbol for sin in the Bible (1 Corinthians 5:8). This is why He instructs His people to put all leaven out of their homes for the seven days of Unleavened Bread.

Just like leaven puffs up bread with air, sin puffs up people with vanity. Someone who is vain thinks he knows all the answers. He is not humble enough to admit that he needs God to tell him how to live.

If we are going to help Jesus Christ teach the whole world how to be truly happy, we have to be

humble enough to admit that only God knows the way to happiness!

A little bit of leaven spreads through a whole loaf of bread, just like a little sin spreads through your whole life. God commands us to remove leaven from our homes during these days to remind us how important it is to put sin out of our lives. We cannot tolerate even the smallest sin in our life!

Fill in the blanks from Paul's warning to the Corinthian congregation (1 Corinthians 5:6-8): "Your \_\_\_\_\_ is not good. Know you not that a little \_\_\_\_\_ the whole lump? \_\_\_\_\_ out therefore the \_\_\_\_\_, that you may be a \_\_\_\_\_ lump, as you are \_\_\_\_\_. For even \_\_\_\_\_ our \_\_\_\_\_ is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the \_\_\_\_\_, not with \_\_\_\_\_, neither with the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_; but with the \_\_\_\_\_ bread of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_."

This passage shows us that we need to work hard to get sin out of our lives, just as we have to work hard to get leaven out of our homes. It's important to help your parents clean your home before the Days of Unleavened Bread. When you vacuum the corners of your room and search for crumbs under the seats of the car, you

are obeying God's command and learning to diligently observe this symbol of laboring to get sin out.

Before and during the Days of Unleavened Bread, you will also want to examine yourself for sins that you need to put out of your life. Your parents may want you to make a list of these so that you will be mindful of ways you can better obey God's commandments.

You have to labor and work hard to live God's way of life. But even with a huge amount of effort, you will always fall short if you do not have special help from God. The next annual festival shows how God gives this special help!

## **PENTECOST**

The third festival is Pentecost. Unlike other festivals, Pentecost does not fall on a specific date on God's calendar. To find out when Pentecost falls, you have to count.

*Paraphrase the instructions in Leviticus 23:15-16 that show you how to count the days to Pentecost:*

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The Israelites were not allowed to begin harvesting their spring grain until the Feast of Unleavened Bread, specifically, the Sunday after the weekly Sabbath during that festival.

On this day, the priest waved a small bundle of newly cut grain stalks to be accepted by God (verses 10-11). This solemn ceremony was called the **wavesheaf** offering. The sheaf of grain that the priest waved before God was the first produce from the first harvest of the year. It was the first of the firstfruits.

Why wave this sheaf of grain? The wavesheaf symbolized Jesus Christ! Christ was killed to save mankind from our sins. He was dead for three days and three nights. After He was resurrected, He presented Himself to God the Father to be accepted. God accepted Jesus Christ, and Christ became the first human being to become a glorified, eternal member of God's Family. He became *the first fruit* of God's *first-fruit harvest*. (God's Church today does not observe a wavesheaf ceremony, because Christ has already come as the ultimate fulfillment of that symbol.)

You count 50 days from the day of the wavesheaf offering to come to the date for Pentecost. Because Pentecost occurs at the conclusion of the firstfruit

harvest, it is often called the **feast of firstfruits**.

*Turn to James 1:18 and fill in the blanks below to see how the New Testament emphasizes this symbol: "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of \_\_\_\_\_ of his \_\_\_\_\_."*

The wavesheaf offering represented Jesus Christ, the *first of the firstfruits*. The entire spring grain harvest represents the Church of God, the *rest* of the firstfruits.

Jesus Christ's sacrifice opened up God's Family to mankind. But God is only working with a small "harvest" of human beings today. These are individuals He has called into His Church. This small group of those with God's Holy Spirit (living or dead) will be harvested into God's Family when Jesus Christ returns. They will help Christ teach God's way of life to everyone on Earth—and eventually to everyone else who has ever lived!

The firstfruit harvest is much smaller than the fall harvest. This symbolizes the fact that those whom God "harvests" into His Family first are a small group of people. The fall harvest is much larger. This symbolizes the fact that *after* God brings a small number of people into His Family, He will bring in a gigantic number of people. Those represented by the fall harvest include almost everyone who has ever lived.

## **IMPORTANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Pentecost represents the third step in God's plan. First, Christ had to die on Passover to pay for the sins of mankind. Second, members of God's Church have to repent of their sins and leave the evil ways of this world behind them. Third, God has to give these members the power of His Holy Spirit so they can overcome sin and qualify to be teachers in the Millennium!

Fifty days after Christ was resurrected, on Pentecost in A.D. 31, the Holy Spirit was given to Christ's disciples. In an awesome display of power, God sent His Spirit to the disciples who gathered together for a Pentecost service as Christ instructed. This is when the New Testament Church officially began!

*Use Acts 2:1-3 to fill in the blanks below about this spectacular event: "And when the day of \_\_\_\_\_ was fully come, they were*



The early grain harvest pictures God's firstfruits, those He is calling now.

*all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ as of a rushing mighty \_\_\_\_\_, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven \_\_\_\_\_ like as of \_\_\_\_\_, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all \_\_\_\_\_ with the \_\_\_\_\_ [Spirit], and began to speak with other tongues, as the \_\_\_\_\_ gave them utterance.”*

Receiving God's Holy Spirit is what makes someone a member of God's Church. God gives His Spirit as a special gift to those adults who have repented of their sins, been baptized and had hands laid on them by one of God's ministers. No one has the power to come out of sin without God's Spirit guiding and helping him or her. God's Spirit helps those who have it overcome their carnal human nature!

As a young person in God's Church, you are set apart for a special purpose. Since you are too young to have the full maturity you need for baptism, you do

not yet have the Holy Spirit dwelling *in* you. However, you do have the Holy Spirit working *with* you. It helps you understand the Bible. It helps you understand the deep meaning of God's spring festivals. It helps you understand this very lesson!

You have the awesome potential to be part of God's special firstfruits. If you respond to this calling, you will help Jesus Christ show the whole world the way to peace and happiness!

It is important that you understand the seven steps of God's plan. This lesson explains the first three steps, symbolized in Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost. In a future special lesson of the *Imperial Academy Bible Lessons*, you will learn about the remaining four steps, which picture God's plan to bring the vast majority of mankind into His Family in the great fall harvest!



## Decrypt Your Assignment

Decipher the cryptogram below to discover your assignment. To break the code,  
figure out which letter has been substituted for the correct one by noticing letter repetition.

Hint: a, e, l, n and t are the most frequently used letters in the English language.

O X A W T   Y   E L U X W   T E E Y J   Y G U P W   L U O

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J U P   D I Y H   W U   K T I T G X Y W T   W L T

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H A B L W   W U   G T   C P K L   U G E T X Z T Q

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O L Y W   Y X T   J U P X   V Y Z U X A W T   V Y C A I J

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W X Y Q A W A U H E   V U X   W L A E   T Z T H A H B

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