



THE AMBASSADOR COLLEGE
Bible
CORRESPONDENCE COURSE



Slaves of "Sin"

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THE AMBASSADOR COLLEGE

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Lesson 26

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About Our Cover . . .

The scene on our cover, from the motion picture *The Ten Commandments*, depicts the ancient Israelites as slaves of Egypt. Helpless and powerless under Pharaoh's taskmasters, they were not allowed to obey God. Their deliverance from Egypt—a biblical symbol for sin—is commemorated by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This Feast, picturing the second step in God's Master Plan, has great meaning for true Christians today. In this lesson, we'll learn important details about this Festival, and how it pictures our part in God's plan of salvation!

Courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences

FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

Our Part in God's Master Plan

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ made possible the forgiveness of our past sins—the first step in God's Master Plan. The second annual festival of God pictures the NEXT STEP in His plan of salvation for mankind.

MOST of modern Christianity teaches that there is nothing more for us to do but *believe* in Christ's sacrifice for our sins.

No wonder He is portrayed as a *dead* Savior hanging on a cross!

Christ's death, pictured by the Passover, was necessary to pay the penalty of our past sins—to reconcile us to the Father. But His death *alone* will not save us! Think, for a moment, if Jesus Christ had died but not been resurrected. Would His death *alone* make eternal life possible?

Of course not!

Accepting Christ's sacrifice is only the *first step* in God's plan for bringing humans into His divine Family.

Shall We Continue to Sin?

What should we do once our past sins have been covered by the shed blood of Christ? "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" asked the Apostle Paul. "Certainly not!" was his emphatic answer (Rom. 6:1-2, RAV). "Shall we sin because we are not under [the penalty of the] law but under grace? Certainly not!" (verse 15).

We are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we *establish the law*" (Rom. 3:31, RAV).

Someone once asked Jesus: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus answered: "If thou wilt enter into life, *keep the commandments*" (Matt. 19:16-17).

As we learned in previous lessons, God is now in

the process of creating holy, righteous, perfect spiritual character in those whom He has called into His Church. Man, now only a clay model, is to be created in the character-image of God Almighty.

Since the Ten Commandments describe God's nature and character, keeping His Law is absolutely necessary for spiritual character growth. We must therefore obey the Master Potter, allowing Him to mold His character in us while we are still flesh and blood.

We Must Forsake Sin

Our acceptance of Christ's sacrifice in payment for the penalty of our sins is only the first step toward salvation. Once we have repented of our sins and been forgiven by God, He wants us to *forsake sin!*

God commands us to come out of this world's ways of sin (Rev. 18:4)—just as ancient Israel left Egypt, a symbol for sin (Heb. 11:25-26). We must be striving to *come out of all sin*. That is **OUR PART**, with Christ's help, in God's plan of salvation.

To keep us in the knowledge of the *second step* in God's plan, Christ, the LORD of the Old Testament, instituted the second annual festival—the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The observance of this Feast impresses upon us that we must do *our part* to keep the sins Jesus covered with His shed blood *out of our lives* henceforth.

Leaven is also a symbol for sin (I Cor. 5:8). God commanded the ancient Israelites to put all leaven out of their homes and off their property and eat



God Delivers Israel from Egypt

Just as God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, leading them safely through the Red Sea, so God, through the power of His Spirit, will deliver His people today from the slavery of sin and the sometimes seemingly insurmountable obstacles they will face in their Christian lives!



Top left and center, Courtesy of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences; top right, Illustration by Basil Wolverton; above, Z. Kluger

unleavened bread during this seven-day Festival. And so the Feast of Unleavened Bread is to remind God's people today that they are to strive to put SIN *completely out of their lives!*

After repentance and baptism, God expects us to strive to *keep* His Law—to spiritually “unleaven” our lives, just as we are to physically unleaven our homes before the Feast. The act of eating unleavened bread during the Feast teaches us the opposite of sin—OBEDIENCE to God!

The Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures the *keeping* of God's commandments, which is another way of saying the putting away of sin.

To observe only the Passover, and then fail to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread, is comparable to accepting Christ's sacrifice and then saying the Law of God is done away—that because we are “under grace” we have permission to continue to sin. Your Bible shows Christ is not a “minister of sin”! (Gal. 2:17).

“Let Us Keep the Feast”!

In the simplest and clearest New Testament command to observe God's annual festivals and Holy Days, the Apostle Paul wrote to the Gentile Christians at Corinth: “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us *keep the feast*” (I Cor. 5:7-8). The context, as we shall see in this lesson, makes it very clear that Paul was referring to the Feast of Unleavened Bread!

Christians today are not only to commemorate Christ's sacrifice by observing the Passover, they are also to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These two annual festivals are inseparable, both historically and in spiritual meaning for us today.

Let's begin to understand the full meaning of this second annual festival picturing the next step in God's plan. Let's learn what the Bible tells us about *our part* in God's Master Plan.

LESSON 26

The First Feast of Unleavened Bread

Our study of God's second annual festival begins with the events of the very first Feast of Unleavened Bread, instituted at the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt. As we learned in previous lessons, the Israelites had been slaves in Egypt. God, through a series of miraculous plagues, began to deliver them from their captors.

Recall that in the evening of the 14th of Abib each Israelite family killed the lamb it had selected, and then smeared some of its blood on the doorposts of their houses. This protected their firstborn from the plague of death (Ex. 12:6-7, 12-13). Each lamb was symbolic of “Christ our passover,” the “Lamb of God,” and its blood pictured Christ's blood, which would be shed much later to pay the penalty of our spiritual sins—eternal death.

1. For how long were the Israelites to remain in their houses on the night of the 14th? Ex. 12:22, last part. What were they to do early in the morning? Verse 10.

2. What did the people do during the night of the 15th? Verses 37, 42; Num. 33:3; Deut. 16:1. Was the 15th the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Lev. 23:6.

COMMENT: The Israelites were protected from the death angel as a result of applying lamb's blood

to the doorposts of their houses and remaining inside that night. Early in the morning they burned the leftovers of their roasted lambs. Then on “the morrow after the passover,” they started “out of Egypt *by night*.”

3. Were the Israelites to especially remember their deliverance from Egypt? Ex. 13:3-4. In what way did God, through Moses, command the Israelites to commemorate their deliverance? Verses 3, last part, 6-7; Ex. 12:15-20.

COMMENT: Moses had told the people to put out all of their leaven according to God's instructions. And in their escape from Egypt, their dough did not have enough time to naturally ferment and rise (Ex. 12:33-34, 39). Therefore the eating of unleavened bread was to be an appropriate yearly reminder—a memorial—of the *haste* with which they fled Egypt.

But as we'll learn later in this lesson, much greater symbolic meaning is attached to leaven in the New Testament. We'll come to understand the *spiritual meaning* of putting leaven out and eating unleavened bread during the annual Feast of Unleavened Bread.

4. After camping at Succoth, where did God tell the Israelites to go? Ex. 13:20; 14:1-2. Did Pharaoh and his army pursue them? Ex. 14:5-8. Where did the Egyptian army catch up with the Israelites? Verse 9. (For details on the route of the

exodus, see the map and commentary on page 7.)

COMMENT: It was on the sixth day of Unleavened Bread that the Egyptian army overtook the Israelites encamped near Pi-hahiroth. Mountains made escape impossible to the south and west. The Red Sea, to the east, was nearly eight miles across at that point, and Pharaoh's army stood due north of the Israelites. They were trapped!

Knowing that Pharaoh would pursue his ex-slaves (Ex. 14:3-4), God told the Israelites to leave the normally traveled road. He led them into a *trap* for their own good to prove to them, and to us today, that He alone offers salvation—if we will trust Him. (This vital truth will be discussed again later in this lesson.)

5. When the people understood their predicament, what was their reaction? Ex. 14:10-12.

COMMENT: Elation and joy turned into fear and anger when the Israelites realized it was humanly impossible to escape from Pharaoh.

6. How did God provide an escape route for the trapped Israelites? Verses 13-16, 19-22. What did He do to the Egyptian chariots when Pharaoh's army tried to follow? Verses 23-25. What happened to the Egyptians? Verses 26-28.

COMMENT: The supernatural pillar of the cloud and fire, by which God led the Israelites (Ex. 13:21-22), moved behind them to *protect* them from the Egyptian army. Then God, altering the forces of nature, opened a pathway through the Red Sea to allow the people to walk across. God Almighty miraculously delivered Israel from Pharaoh's army!

Tradition has it that the miraculous opening of the Red Sea and the completion of the Israelites' escape from slavery took place before dawn on the *seventh* and last day of the first Feast of Unleavened Bread. Then on the daylight part of this annual Holy Sabbath, there was great rejoicing in celebration of their *complete* delivery from bondage in Egypt (Ex. 15:1-21).

The Feast in Ancient Israel

After the Israelites were delivered from slavery in Egypt, they promised to obey God. But they failed utterly except for the times God gave them a righteous ruler. Under the leadership of Joshua, who succeeded Moses, the Israelites obeyed God (Judg. 2:7). But after his death and the death of the elders of that generation, the next generation did not.

God punished the people for their disobedience, but when they cried out to Him for help, He sent a righteous ruler to deliver them. After he died,

however, the people went even further into sin, especially idolatry (verses 10-12, 18-19). This cycle was repeated many times during the period of the judges.

During the reign of righteous King David, the Israelites prospered greatly as they did in Solomon's reign. But all of the later kings of Israel and most in Judah disobeyed God, leading the nations further and further into sin. They were cursed and eventually taken captive; Israel first and then Judah more than 100 years later.

1. Prior to Judah's captivity, however, a king named Hezekiah did what was right in God's sight (II Chron. 29:1-2). Did Hezekiah realize that Judah's national troubles were the result of the nation having forsaken God? II Chron. 29:6-9.

2. What did Hezekiah therefore begin to do to the Temple of God, which had fallen into disrepair? Verse 3. And what did he command the Levites to do? Verses 4-5, 10-11.

3. What did Hezekiah do after the priesthood had been rededicated to the service of God? II Chron. 30:1-5. Did he know that the Feast of Unleavened Bread was also to be kept? Verse 21.

COMMENT: During the reigns of the wicked kings before Hezekiah, God's Temple had been closed. The people had forgotten God's laws and festivals, and were following the idolatrous practices of the heathen nations around them. But when Hezekiah became king, he restored the true worship of God, including the observance of His annual festivals.

However, the first Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread to be kept in many years were not observed in the month of Abib. The priesthood was not properly prepared in time, and the people had not yet gathered in Jerusalem to attend these festivals. Following the principle in Numbers 9:9-12 for observing the Passover one month later if necessary, they observed it and immediately afterward the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month.

God prospered the nation for returning to Him under the righteous rule of Hezekiah. But after Hezekiah's death, the Jews again forgot God and His festivals. They returned to idolatry under the wicked rule of kings Manasseh and Amon. Not until the reign of Josiah were God's annual feasts again restored.

4. Was Josiah a righteous king? II Chron. 34:1-3. Had the Temple again fallen into disuse and disrepair before his reign began? Verses 8-11. After the repair work had begun, what did the high priest find in the Temple? Verse 14. What did Josiah publicly promise to do? Verse 31. Did he

ROUTE OF THE EXODUS

Let's briefly examine, with the help of the map to the right, the route of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. Keep in mind that most Bible atlases and commentaries do *not* show the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. Many also misplace most other locations mentioned in the Bible. The route shown is as close as we can determine based on the biblical account.

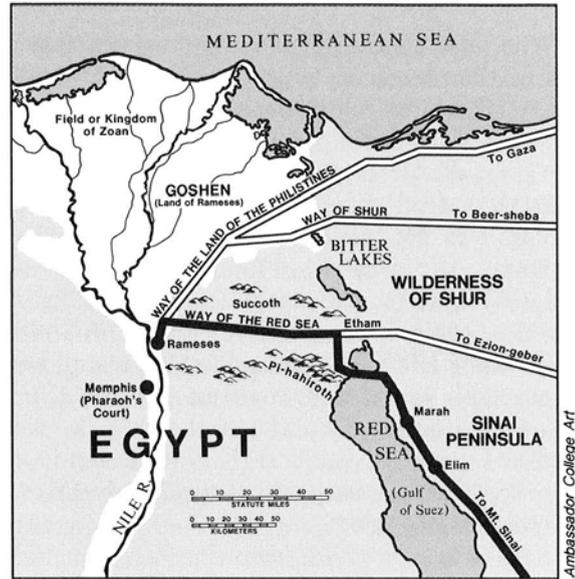
The Israelites, most of whom were living in the land of Goshen, kill and eat the Passover lamb on the evening of the 14th and stay in their homes until morning (Ex. 12:6-8, 22). Pharaoh, after midnight, calls for Moses to tell them to leave Egypt (verses 29-31). The Israelites then gather at Rameses during the daylight part of the 14th (verses 33-37).

They leave Rameses on the night of the 15th and encamp at Succoth (Deut. 16:1; Num. 33:3; Ex. 12:37) on the weekly Sabbath during this first Feast of Unleavened Bread.

God does not lead the Israelites by "the way of the land of the Philistines," the shortest route to Canaan (Ex. 13:17). Instead, He leads them southeast, toward Mt. Sinai, at first along "the way of the wilderness of the Red sea" (verse 18). This is to fulfill His promise to take them first to Mt. Sinai (Ex. 3:1-12).

From Succoth, the Israelites go to Etham, at the edge of the wilderness (Ex. 13:20). God then tells them to turn south and go into the wilderness west of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:1-2).

On the sixth day of the Feast, the Israelites encamp by the seashore northeast of the



Pi-hahiroth range of mountains, which jut abruptly into the sea. There they are trapped by the mountains to the south and west, the Red Sea to the east and Pharaoh's army to the north (verses 3-10).

God then opens a pathway through the Red Sea, allowing the Israelites to walk across (verses 21-22). Pharaoh's army pursues and is drowned (verses 23-31). On the east coast of the Red Sea, there is great rejoicing in the camp of Israel on the seventh and last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 15:1-21).

The Israelites then travel southeast, roughly parallel to the Red Sea. Along the way they stop at a number of places, including Marah and Elim (Ex. 15:22-23, 27), before heading east, arriving at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:1-2) nearly seven weeks later. □

lead all the people to obey God? Verses 32-33.

5. What did Josiah command the people to do regarding the Passover? II Kings 23:21; II Chron. 35:1. Did he understand that God expected His people to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread also? II Chron. 35:17.

COMMENT: After Josiah died, most of the Jews again lost sight of God, ignored His weekly Sabbaths and rejected His annual festivals. To bring the people to repentance, God punished them by allowing the entire nation of Judah to be militarily defeated and taken captive by the Babylonians.

6. Seventy years later, God allowed as many

Jews as wanted to return to Jerusalem to do so and rebuild the Temple. What did they do after the Temple had been built and dedicated? Ezra 6:19-22.

COMMENT: Notice that each time the worship of God was restored, the keeping of His Holy Days was also resumed and emphasized. God was pleased with this national repentance because He knows that when people have the right attitude toward His Holy Days, they will learn to have the right attitude toward all His commandments, for it is on God's Holy Days that His people learn about His Law.

Kept by the New Testament Church

1. Who instituted the seven annual festivals, including the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Lev. 23:1-2, 6. Therefore whose feasts are they? Verse 2, last part. Are God's people to keep His feasts forever? Ex. 12:14, 17; 13:10.

COMMENT: God the Father is the supreme Lawgiver, but He gave His laws *through* His Spokesman, the One who later became Jesus Christ. As the LORD of the Old Testament, Christ delivered to ancient Israel the knowledge of God's laws, including His Sabbaths and festivals. And He made sure this knowledge would be preserved for His New Testament Church (Acts 7:38), as we learned in Lesson 23. God's early New Testament Church kept His annual festivals and Holy Days. Let's examine the proof.

2. Did Jesus, as a child, keep the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Luke 2:41-43. In the year Jesus was crucified, were His enemies expecting Him to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Mark 14:1.

3. More than 20 years after Jesus had been crucified and resurrected, is there clear indication that His disciples still kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Acts 20:6. Also notice the mention of these days in Acts 12:3.

COMMENT: In Acts 20:6, Paul and his companions plainly had observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread at Philippi. This Feast was still being kept by God's Church—it was not abolished at Christ's death! God would not have inspired this reference to the "days of unleavened bread" if, in His sight, His festivals had ceased to exist.

Notice what Hastings' *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church* says about these New Testament references to God's annual festivals and Holy Days: "Nothing could show better than these scanty notes of time how deep-rooted the custom was, how the feast was observed as regularly as the year came round. Men spoke naturally of 'the days of unleavened bread' as a significant point in the calendar. . . . Ordinary dates dwindle into insignificance beside these fixed, outstanding seasons. . . ."

"The question arises, as in the matter of keeping [the] Sabbath on the seventh day, whether the early Christians continued to observe these festivals. . . . In all probability they went on for years observing the festivals" (article "Passover," pages 132-133).

4. Did the Apostle Paul, inspired by God, say New Testament Christians should keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread? I Cor. 5:7-8. What did he say that clearly shows the Church of God at

Corinth was, at the time he wrote, keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Verse 7. Notice the words "as ye are unleavened."

COMMENT: The Apostle Paul was telling the Corinthian church members to put out *spiritual leaven*, just as they had already put out all physical leaven in preparation for this Festival. They were to *keep* the Feast not only with unleavened bread, but also with the spiritually "unleavened" attitude of righteousness, sincerity and truth.

This is a *direct command* from God's apostle to New Testament Christians to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread! Because "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us," we must also keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which pictures our putting the leaven of sin out of our lives. (More about the symbolic meaning of leaven later in this lesson.) But what about Paul's statements in verses 14 through 17 of Colossians 2? The verses most often quoted *against* keeping God's festivals are, when properly understood, *proof* that they were being kept by the New Testament Church!

Let's understand the context of Colossians 2 and see what Paul, who kept God's Holy Days and clearly commanded the Corinthians to keep them, actually wrote to the Colossians.

5. Were the Colossian Christians Gentile by birth? Col. 1:21; 2:13. Had they become *obedient* Christians? Col. 2:5-7.

6. Exactly what did Paul tell the Colossians about observing Holy Days and Sabbaths? Col. 2:16.

COMMENT: These Colossians were Gentile converts living in a Gentile city. They had previously known nothing of God and His Holy Days. Unless the ministers of the Church of God had taught them to observe these days, they would never have been "judged" by their pagan relatives and neighbors for doing so.

Paul did *not* say that Christians should not observe God's Holy Days. He merely said that they should not let anyone *judge* them for observing these days! Nevertheless, some have connected this reference to God's Holy Days and Sabbaths with a misinterpretation of verse 14, claiming that all of God's laws, festivals, Holy Days and Sabbaths were "nailed to the cross."

7. What actually *was* "nailed to the cross"? Verse 14.

COMMENT: The "handwriting of ordinances" was nailed to the cross. "Handwriting" is translated from the Greek *cheirographon*, which means a handwritten note of debt. So what was "nailed to the cross"? A note of debt—*guilt*—that was incurred as a result of breaking God's Law by follow-

ing human ordinances and traditions, including pagan holidays.

Verses 8 and 20-22 show which ordinances Paul was referring to: “the commandments and doctrines of *men*.” Those were the restrictive rules and traditions of ascetic Greek philosophy, which prohibited even the moderate use of many foods and drink. It was the false religious traditions of men, *not* God’s Law, that Paul said were “contrary to us” (verse 14).

The note of sinful guilt was “against us” until Christ lifted its penalty from us. His crucifixion allows us to be *forgiven* those sins. Christ symbolically nailed that note of sinful debt to the cross because He *paid* that debt for us!

What do these verses show us when we understand the context? The Christians at Colosse were being criticized by their pagan relatives and neighbors for violating their ascetic customs, which included the observance of pagan holidays. The Christians ate meat the pagans prohibited, drank what they did not allow, and observed God’s weekly Sabbath and annual Holy Days. (The new moons, the observation of which was then made necessary by the Jewish authorities over the calendar, determine the correct dates for God’s festivals. It is not necessary to observe new moons today because the Hebrew calendar has been authoritatively fixed worldwide and published in advance.) Paul told the Colossians to ignore the criticisms, and to *continue* in their Christian conduct just as they had been taught by the Church (verse 7).

8. Who did Paul say has authority to “judge” Christians? Col. 2:17, last part.

COMMENT: This part of verse 17 is not translated clearly in most English versions. The verb “is” is in italics in the King James Version, meaning that it does not appear in the original Greek text. The Greek simply reads: “. . . but the body of Christ.” The body of Christ, as we learned in previous studies, is the Church of God (Col. 1:18; 2:19).

Paul was declaring that *no unauthorized person* is to sit in judgment of a true Christian’s conduct. That is the responsibility of God’s Church—the “body of Christ.” The Church is to teach *from the Bible* the proper use of food and drink, the proper time and manner of observing God’s festivals and Sabbaths, and other doctrinally related matters.

Therefore the complete thought in Colossians 2:16-17 could be translated: “Let no man therefore judge you . . . but [rather let] the body of Christ [determine it].” Numerous Greek scholars recognize that the first expression “let no man” demands that there be a subsequent expression that tells *who* is to do the judging of the matter!

9. Why should we keep God’s annual Sabbaths? Col. 2:17, first part.

COMMENT: The most important reason to keep God’s Holy Days is simply because God has told us to do so. That is why Herbert W. Armstrong, the late editor in chief and Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God, began keeping God’s annual Sabbaths.

God gives understanding to those who show they are willing to obey Him (Ps. 111:10; Acts 5:32). After seven years of obedience, God revealed to Mr. Armstrong another reason to keep His Holy Days. They “foreshadow things to come,” as the phrase in Colossians 2:17 is better translated.

The seventh-day Sabbath pictures or foreshadows the seventh 1,000 years, during which man shall rest from his labors of sin. In like manner, the annual festivals were instituted by God as memorials and foreshadows of events to take place in His plan. They were given to His Church in order to keep it in the knowledge of the seven major steps in His Master Plan for reproducing Himself through mankind.

Only one festival has been entirely fulfilled in type—the Passover. Yet Jesus said we are to celebrate it each year in *remembrance* of His sacrifice for us.

Having established this foundation for our understanding, let’s see exactly how the Feast of Unleavened Bread vividly pictures the second vital step in God’s great Master Plan of salvation for mankind.

The Symbolic Meaning of Coming Out of Egypt

The annual festivals picture events of historic and future importance to ancient Israel, the world and the Christian. Recall that when God revealed His weekly Sabbath to the Israelites, it was a sign and a memorial so they would remember that He is the Creator and that they were His people. God also gave them the annual festivals of the Passover and Unleavened Bread as *memorials* to commemorate the nation’s deliverance from Egypt—a picture for His Church today of the plan of God in eventually delivering the entire world from *sin*.

Israel’s departure from Egypt has great symbolic meaning. The spiritual lesson that their deliverance from slavery teaches is vital to our complete understanding of what God intends the Feast of Unleavened Bread to picture to us today.

We learned that the Passover pictures the *death* of Jesus Christ—His shed blood for the remission of our sins upon real repentance. The second fes-

tival pictures our *coming out of sin* as the Israelites came out of Egypt, a symbol for sin, during the seven days of this Feast. Simply stated, the Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures *obedience* to God—keeping His commandments!

Let's understand as the picture unfolds for us in the Bible.

1. Is Egypt a *symbol* for sin? Heb. 11:24-27; Rev. 11:8. Are sinners the servants or slaves of sin? John 8:34; Rom. 6:16. Does God want us to escape the slavery of sin by obeying Him? Rom. 6:17-18, 22.

COMMENT: The ancient Israelites were slaves in pagan Egypt. They were not allowed to obey God. Therefore the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which commemorates their coming out of slavery in Egypt, also pictures their coming out of *sin*.

Sin enslaves! Those who are not God's Spirit-begotten children do not realize they are now the *slaves of sin*. Sin tends to increase in the one who indulges in it. Sin punishes! It brings sorrow, remorse and anguish. It afflicts us with physical injury, sickness and disease. It produces anxiety, frustration and hopelessness. It leads to *death*. Man does not realize that only real repentance—*turning from sin* to obedience to God through the living faith of Jesus Christ—can free him from that penalty! (Gal. 5:1).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures, through symbols, the fact that God wants New Testament Christians (spiritual Israelites) to come *completely out* of the slavery of sin into obedience to Him! Just as the Israelites had to walk out of Egypt, we must willingly, of our own accord, start out of sin. Even so, it is God's goodness and mercy that leads us to this repentance from sin (Rom. 2:4; John 6:65), just as He led His chosen people from Egypt to freedom.

Eternal life is clearly a *gift* of God (Rom. 6:23), but it is also clear that God wants us to be willing and actually *striving* to obey Him. That is *our part* in His Master Plan.

Let's notice a few more parallels that will help us better understand the spiritual meaning of this Festival.

2. Upon our repentance and baptism, all our past sins are blotted out by the sacrifice of Christ our Passover (Acts 2:38; Rom. 3:25; I Cor. 5:7). When Paul asked if we, after being forgiven, should continue in sin, what did he answer? Rom. 6:1-2, 6, 15. What was his apostolic command? Verses 11-13.

COMMENT: If Christians keep the Passover, yet fail to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread, what they have done, symbolically, is accepted Christ's

sacrifice and then continued in the slavery of sin. But Paul said Christ is *not* a minister of sin (Gal. 2:17). Therefore we must *come out* of sin—quit sinning—by keeping God's Law!

The Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures the Christian's part in God's plan of salvation—the *keeping of God's commandments*, which is another way of saying the putting away of sin. Anyone who ate leavened bread or had leaven, a symbol for sin, in his home during this Festival was to be put out of the nation or congregation of Israel (Ex. 12:15, 19). Similarly, God will not allow unrepentant sinners in His spiritual nation—the Kingdom of God! (I Cor. 6:9-10).

3. After the ancient Israelites had begun to leave Egypt, who pursued them? Ex. 14:5-8.

COMMENT: Just as Egypt is a type of sin, Pharaoh is a type of Satan the devil! And just as Pharaoh did not want the Israelites to escape his bondage, Satan does not want sinners to escape his bondage, which is slavery to sin.

Baptized Christians are often pursued by Satan. He will set obstacles in their way in an attempt to cause them to stumble and discourage them from obeying God. The devil will do anything he can to keep God's Spirit-begotten children from receiving eternal life. The devil will try to deceive them into thinking God's way is too difficult in order to get them to quit striving to overcome—to return to the life of sin they have forsaken.

As it was *humanly impossible* for the Israelites to escape from Pharaoh, so it is humanly impossible for Christians to overcome Satan's influence. But with God, all things are possible (Matt. 19:26).

Just as God made it possible for Israel to escape from Pharaoh's army through His miraculous power, God, through His Holy Spirit, makes His children's spiritual obedience, overcoming and growth possible. This is pictured by the third annual festival in God's Master Plan, to be thoroughly covered in Lesson 27.

A Warning Not to Look Back!

1. Did Christ foretell that the modern society of our end-time generation would be much like the wicked city of Sodom? Luke 17:28-30. What is His warning for Christians living in the end time? Verse 31, last part. Who should we remember in connection with His warning? Verse 32.

COMMENT: Christ was referring to the destruction of sinful Sodom and Gomorrah, the escape of Lot and his two daughters from Sodom, and Lot's wife being turned into a pillar of salt.

Tradition says that these events happened dur-

ing the season of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (although they occurred several centuries before the Festival was commanded by God). It is interesting to note that unleavened bread is mentioned in connection with the departure of Lot and his daughters from that sinful society (Gen. 19:3).

God had determined to destroy those two exceedingly sinful cities, which, like Egypt, are symbolic of sin (Rev. 11:8). He sent two angels to warn Lot and his family to leave the city (Gen. 19:1, 12-13).

2. Did everyone who was warned heed the warning? Gen. 19:14. Were Lot, his wife and their two daughters warned not to look back? Verse 17. Who looked back, and as a result did not make it to safety? Verse 26.

COMMENT: Lot and his family were commanded to leave—utterly forsake—the wicked city in which they lived. Only by leaving could they avoid being destroyed with its sinful inhabitants.

But Lot's wife disobeyed. She *looked back*. She wanted to return to sinful Sodom. Perhaps she had grown accustomed to Sodom's sins, and didn't think they were all that bad.

God will not save such a person!

Salt is symbolic of something that is enduring. God turned Lot's wife into a pillar of salt as a perpetual symbol of one who was *not willing* to completely and permanently forsake sin and submit to Him. Her example is a WARNING for us to leave and not return to the temporary pleasures of sin this present evil society has to offer, lest we be *destroyed* with it!

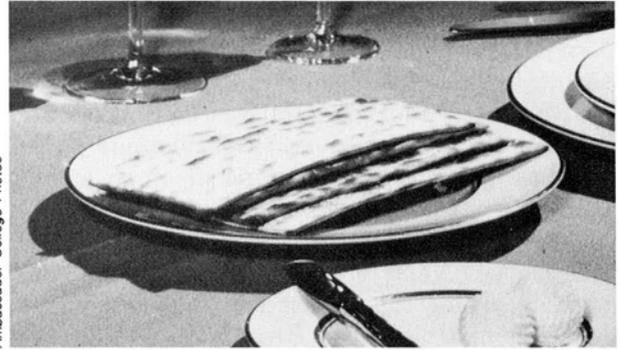
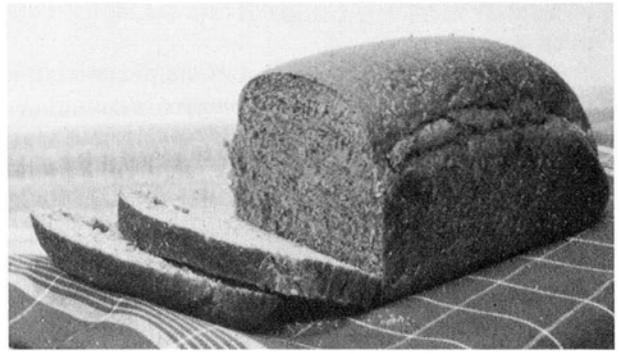
3. What does God say about a Christian who begins to live God's way but later returns to the slavery of sin? Luke 9:62; II Pet. 2:20-22; Heb. 6:4-6.

COMMENT: God's Spirit-begotten children must live in this evil world, but they must not be overcome by its sinful ways (John 17:14-15; Rom. 12:2). Just like Lot, God's people must come out of and *utterly forsake* the sins of this world to escape the plagues He will pour out upon the rebellious (Rev. 18:4). Those who heed the warning before it's too late will be *protected* by God (Rev. 3:10; 12:14-17).

God wants those He has called and begotten to be overcoming sin—to be growing in His character by striving to put sin out of their lives through obedience to Him. He wants them to be doing *their part* in His Master Plan!

How Leaven Is Symbolic of Sin

The departure of ancient Israel from Egypt is clearly a physical type of the Spirit-begotten



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SYMBOLS—Leaven, a biblical symbol for sin, causes bread dough to become puffed up. Sin likewise puffs people up. Flat, or unleavened bread, pictures the absence of sin—obedience to God.

Christian's departure from *sin*. But why is this commemorated by seven days without leaven or leavened foods? We know that leaven itself is not harmful, for God allows it during the other 51 weeks of the year.

God prohibits the presence and use of leaven during the Feast of Unleavened Bread because it, like Egypt, is a symbol for *sin*. Let's understand how this is revealed in the New Testament.

1. Is leaven clearly symbolic of sin? Matt. 16:6, 11-12; Luke 12:1; I Cor. 5:8.

COMMENT: Leaven is referred to in the Bible as a type of or symbol for sin. For those who have been called to Christ by the Father, putting all leaven and leavened products out of their dwellings and off their property for the seven days of this Festival pictures their *putting sin out of their lives*. And since seven is the number God uses to denote completeness and perfection, the seven days of the Feast remind us that God wants His people to work at putting sin *completely* out of their lives.

In writing to the Church of God at Corinth, the Apostle Paul explained the *spiritual* meaning and symbolism of the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Gentile converts there. Let's notice what Paul teaches New Testament Christians about leaven,

and exactly why we need to become spiritually “unleavened.”

2. Were the Corinthian Christians permitting a person who was actively and openly practicing sin to fellowship with God’s Church? I Cor. 5:1.

3. Was this sin in their midst causing them to feel guilty, or was it rather causing them to become vain—to be “puffed up”? Verse 2.

COMMENT: This sin of fornication was known to everyone in the Church of God at Corinth, but no one had done anything about the problem. By their actions, they seemed to think they could be more forgiving and therefore more righteous than God by allowing this unrepentant fornicator to remain in their fellowship.

4. Knowing that this sin was causing certain members to swell with vanity and become puffed up, Paul gave the Church specific instructions. What were those instructions? Verses 3-5.

5. Did Paul compare the sinning member to a little leaven? Verse 6. Again, what was his command regarding this sinner and their keeping of the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Verses 7-8.

COMMENT: Paul explained that just a small amount of leaven—one sinful person, by analogy—can cause the whole lump of dough—the whole Church, again by analogy—to become saturated with sin. Tolerance of this blatant, unrepented sin would eventually have caused other members to gradually let down and *return to their former sins*, thus DISQUALIFYING them from being born into God’s Kingdom! (I Cor. 6:9-10).

Moreover, the whole Church had become guilty of vanity—pride—and was just as guilty of sin as the fornicator in its midst! Paul, using his God-given authority as apostle, commanded the Corinthian church members to *put out* the sinful, spiritually “leavened” member so the Church would become spiritually “unleavened.”

By putting out the sinning member of their congregation, they put out the *spiritual leaven* that had begun to permeate the Church. Otherwise, sin would have spread in the lives of other Christians by the bad example of only one person, just as certainly as a little leavening in bread dough eventually causes the whole loaf to rise—to become “puffed up.”

This was a spiritual quarantine, so to speak, intended to prevent someone with a contagious spiritual illness from infecting others. Happily, this action helped the sinner see the seriousness of his sin. He repented, and in Paul’s next letter to the Church at Corinth, he admonished the members there to readmit the repentant man to their fellowship (II Cor. 2:4-10).

Paul commanded the Corinthian Christians to keep the Feast without the spiritual “leaven” of sin, just as they were *already* without the physical leaven of yeast (I Cor. 5:7). One is clearly a type of the other. They were to keep the Feast not only by eating unleavened bread, but also by having a spiritually “unleavened” attitude of sincerity and truth (verse 8), which is the result of obedience to God.

6. Does God want Christians to *continually strive*—expend effort and energy—to put the leaven of sin out of their lives? Heb. 12:1, 4.

COMMENT: If we are to become Spirit-born members of God’s Family, we must prove that we will obey God here and now by striving with all our heart, mind and strength, together with God’s help, to get the *spiritual* leaven of sin out of our lives and keep it out! This is *our part* in God’s great Master Plan. It’s a full-time job that continues for the rest of our natural lives.

Thus every spring the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread specially reminds Spirit-begotten Christians of their continual need to keep God’s commandments. It is a time when they symbolically renew their resolve to live in harmony with God’s Law—to *rededicate* their lives to continual spiritual growth and overcoming.

Keeping the Feast Today

1. Are the first and seventh days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread annual Sabbaths or Holy Days on which God’s people are to rest and assemble for worship? Ex. 12:16; Lev. 23:6-8.

COMMENT: The Feast begins on the evening of the 15th of Abib, the beginning of the day after the Passover. It continues for seven days, ending with the 21st of Abib. Both the 15th and the 21st are special Sabbaths—annual “holy convocations”—days of rest from regular work, though cooking is permitted (Ex. 12:16). Ordinary work may be done on the intervening days, except on any intervening weekly Sabbath.

A “holy convocation” is a commanded religious assembly—commanded by God Almighty Himself. Today, members of God’s Church assemble on the annual Sabbaths much as they do on the weekly Sabbath (Lev. 23:3). Those few who live too far away from other members to attend weekly Sabbath services are often able to meet with God’s Spirit-begotten children on these annual Sabbaths. God’s ministers use these opportunities to explain more about the meaning of God’s festivals and His Master Plan.

2. What special observance did God institute on

the evening of the first day of the Feast? Ex. 12:42.

COMMENT: Every year on the evening of the 15th of Abib (the evening after Passover), the Israelites were to have a *special observance* in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt. Today, true Christians (spiritual Israelites) also celebrate the "Night to Be Much Observed" on the anniversary of Israel's deliverance from slavery.

Gathering in small family groups for an evening meal, God's people give thanks to Him for having called them out of the slavery of sin into His Church. They rejoice in the fact that God has revealed to them His Law, His Holy Days and their meaning. Then on the daylight part of the 15th, they assemble with the rest of their local congregations to be instructed by God's ministers.

3. Is all leaven and leavened food to be *removed* from our homes and property, and *kept out* during the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Ex. 12:19-20; 13:7.

COMMENT: Leaven is any substance used to cause dough to rise by fermentation. Yeast, bicarbonate of soda (baking soda), baking powder and sourdough are leavening agents. Leavened foods include most breads, crackers, cakes, cookies, biscuits, pastries and some pies and prepared cereals. A few candies and other foods are also leavened. If one is in doubt about any product, he should check the list of ingredients on its package. If still not sure about a particular food, it should not be eaten during the Feast (Rom. 14:23).

All leaven and leavened foods should be *removed* from one's premises before the beginning of the first Holy Day. They should not be stored in

another room. The morning after the New Testament Passover service, which is still the Passover day, is a convenient time to finish removing any leavening agents or leavened bread. It is wise to arrange purchases so that when Passover comes, there will be little leaven to discard. Removing these inexpensive products is one way God tests us to see how much we value obedience to Him.

If during the Feast some accidentally overlooked leaven is found in the home, it should be thrown away immediately. This is a good lesson for us as it is a type of the hidden sins we aren't aware of at baptism. As we grow in spiritual knowledge and understanding, we become aware of more sins to overcome. We must immediately put the leaven of sin out of our lives when it is discovered!

Unleavened bread can be made at home or bought in stores (often called "matzos," which comes from the Hebrew word *matstzah*, which means unleavened), but one should check the label to make sure it is unleavened. We may also enjoy unleavened cereals and desserts, together with all the meats, drinks, fruits and vegetables we normally eat. Many unleavened products are delicious as well as nutritious and can be enjoyed year-round.

It should be noted that "brewer's yeast" and "yeast extracts" are not active, and therefore are not leavening agents. Cream of tartar, by itself, is not a leavening agent either. Beaten egg white used in meringue on pies and other desserts is not a leavening agent, but when used as a substitute for leavening to puff up any flour or meal product, it violates the spirit of God's command.

But what about beer or other fermented drinks?

"Night to Be Much Observed"

Every year at the beginning of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, God's people gather in small family groups for an evening meal, giving thanks to God for calling them out of the slavery of sin into His Church.

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There is no restriction on the kind of beverages consumed during the Feast of Unleavened Bread—no mention in the Bible of this being the “Feast of Unleavened Beverages.” Naturally fermented wine was customarily consumed by the Israelites at all of God’s festivals. The Bible does not refer to leaven in connection with beverages. Reference is made only to the example set by the children of Israel when they came out of Egypt without any leaven in their *dough* (Ex. 12:39).

Difficulties sometimes arise when family members disagree with the observance of God’s festivals. In this age in which God is calling only a few, one should *never try to force his will on others!* This Festival is a matter between you and God. The family member who does want to keep God’s Feast of Unleavened Bread should avoid eating leavened products and do his or her best to remove leavening from those areas of the house he or she has authority over, which may be only a bedroom.

4. Does God *command* His people to eat unleavened bread during this Festival? Ex. 13:7; Lev. 23:6.

COMMENT: God’s people do not merely remove all leaven and leavened foods from their property during these seven days. That would symbolize only the putting away of sin. We are commanded to *eat* unleavened bread during this Festival. That symbolizes righteousness—*active obedience* to God!

However, it is not required of every person to eat unleavened bread *every* day of this Festival. Some people rarely eat any type of bread. There may be reasons why someone may not want or be able to eat bread every day of the Feast. Some few might even find it necessary to fast for a day or two during the Feast.

But whenever bread or other flour products are eaten during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it must be *unleavened*. This requires alertness and attention to detail, especially in restaurants, for the use of leaven is very common. Sin is also very common, and forgetfulness of God’s Law will lead to sin in our lives.

God’s people should always keep firmly in mind the vital *lesson* taught by this annual Festival: God wants His Spirit-begotten children to live righteously, keeping His perfect spiritual Law, forsaking the *spiritual leaven of sin!*

Saved by the LIVING Christ

The seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread following Passover picture the putting away of sin—the keeping of God’s Law—after past sins

are forgiven. This Festival of God also pictures the life and work of the *resurrected* Christ, who ascended to the throne of God, where He is now actively working on our behalf as our High Priest, *helping* us put the leaven of sin out of our lives. Understanding this vital aspect of the Feast is crucial to our developing the character of God and being born into His universe-ruling Family at Christ’s Second Coming.

1. What did Christ’s death make possible for us? Rom. 5:10, first part. But does His death save us? Same verse, last seven words.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ’s death does *not save us*—it merely reconciles us to God. Those so reconciled are no longer cut off from God. Through acceptance of Christ’s sacrifice they have been restored to *contact* with God the Father—the One who can give us eternal life.

Passover pictures the crucified—the *dead*—Christ. But Christ is not a dead Savior. He rose from the dead. He is our *living* Savior! Notice how this fact is also pictured in the symbolism of baptism.

2. Is baptism symbolic of Christ’s death and resurrection? Rom. 6:3-4. In the context of baptism, are we saved through Christ’s death, or through His resurrection? I Pet. 3:21-22.

COMMENT: If Christ had not been raised from the dead, we would still be in our sins (I Cor. 15:17). That could be symbolized by being immersed in water and never coming back up—symbolically *drowning* in our sins! But coming up out of the water of baptism is symbolic of Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Clearly, we can be saved only by Christ’s *life*.

Part of God’s instructions to ancient Israel for observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread included the ceremony of the “firstfruits wavesheaf offering” (Lev. 23:9-11, 14). God told the Israelites that the spring grain harvest could not begin until this offering was made. But God does not require this offering today. The Bible reveals that its symbolism was fulfilled by the *resurrected* Christ (I Cor. 15:20).

Jesus Christ was the first resurrected Son of God—the first harvested product of God’s Master Plan. He became the “*firstborn*” Son of God (Col. 1:18)—the first human to be born into God’s divine Family. (The complete meaning of the wavesheaf offering relates also to the third annual festival and will be explained thoroughly in the following lesson.)

It is fitting that Christ, who was completely without sin, was resurrected and born of God *during* the festival that pictures the absence of sin.

Therefore the Feast of Unleavened Bread, in addition to picturing the putting of sin out of our lives, also, through the symbolism of the firstfruits wave offering, pictures the resurrected *living* Christ, for it is the living Christ who gives us the spiritual power we need to be *able* to overcome sin! We must understand.

3. Do Christians still sin occasionally after having accepted Christ's sacrifice in payment for their past sins? I John 1:8. (Notice that John included himself by using the word "we.")

COMMENT: We are still flesh and blood beings. We can still be tempted. Satan can still broadcast his attitudes of sin to our minds and influence us to break God's commandments.

4. How can Christians be forgiven the sins they commit after baptism? I John 1:9; 2:1-2. In what other ways does the *living* Christ now help God's Spirit-begotten children? Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25-26; 4:14-16.

COMMENT: Christ, our ever-living High Priest, Advocate and Intercessor, acts as a "bridge" between imperfect humans and our perfect Father in heaven. Our High Priest can sympathize with our weaknesses because He, as the human Jesus, was tempted just as we are, yet He overcame and promises to help us overcome too (John 16:33; Phil. 4:13). Therefore, through our High Priest, we can come boldly to God's throne and find grace, mercy, forgiveness and the help we need to continue putting sin out of our lives.

5. Does Christ give us permission to pray directly to the Father, using Christ's name in making those requests? John 15:16. Does Christ, acting as God's administrative assistant, also *answer* those prayers? John 14:13-14.

6. Does Christ, through the Holy Spirit, live in God's Spirit-begotten children? Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:9-10; Col. 1:27; Phil. 2:5; I John 3:23-24. Must Christians not only have God's Spirit, but also be led by it so their thoughts may become more like Christ's and the Father's? Rom. 8:14; II Cor. 10:5.

COMMENT: The true Christian's hope of glory—the hope of attaining membership in God's glorious Family—is in Christ, our Savior, *living in us* through the Holy Spirit! Christ is not only the Author or Beginner of our salvation, but He is also its Finisher—He is the One who completes our salvation (Heb. 12:2).

Jesus Christ told His disciples He had to go to His Father's throne in heaven to send God's Spirit to them (John 16:7). They received the Spirit through the resurrected, glorified, *living* Christ. As we learned in a previous lesson, the Spirit of the

Father is also the Spirit of Christ. Thus it was Christ entering them—not in person, but in *spirit*. Christ is a *living* Savior, who does His saving work from WITHIN!

God's Spirit also imparts to us His love, which enables us to fulfill His Law (Rom. 5:5; 13:10). It's not just us, through our own strength, striving to keep God's commandments. It is the *living* Christ in us, in spirit, keeping His Father's commandments by divine love, just as He did when He was the human Jesus.

We know we cannot obey God on our own power and strength. But CHRIST IN US CAN! Our living Savior *gives* us the POWER to become righteous—to become spiritually unleavened! Through that power we are being prepared for our spiritual harvest into the universe-ruling Family of God!

The Next Step in God's Master Plan

God's Law is a *spiritual* law (Rom. 7:14). Consequently we must have God's Holy Spirit to fully understand and keep it (I Cor. 2:11). God's Spirit imparts to us the love of God and the faith of Christ. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that God's holy, righteous character can be built in us. And it is only by God's power that we will be born of God, if we have first been begotten by His Spirit. God's Spirit is a *vital part* of God's Master Plan of salvation.

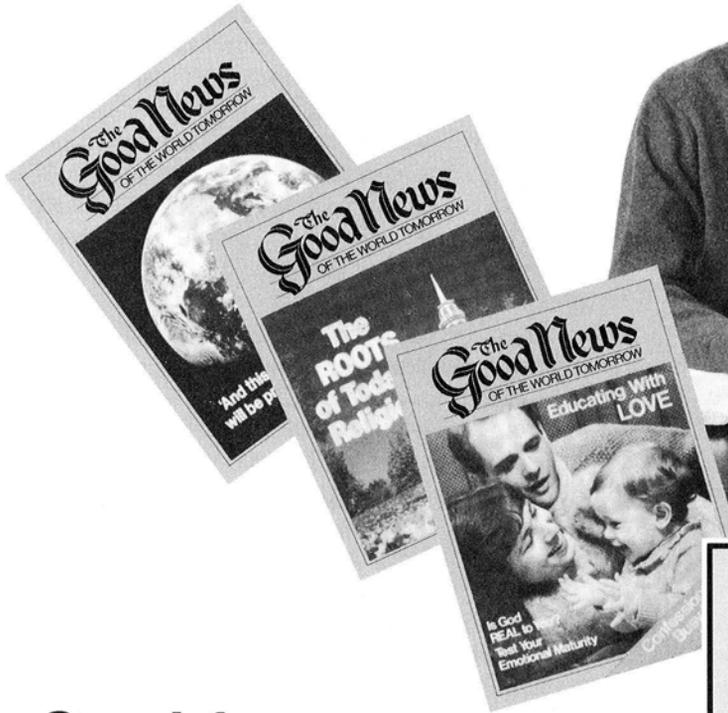
It is also through the Holy Spirit that God places us into His Church—His Spirit-begotten Family—His Kingdom in embryo. God is not working through isolated individuals, nor through the many religions of this world. He is working through an organized, unified body of thousands of true Christians whom He has called *out* of the world. God's Church is also a *vital part* of His plan of salvation.

In our next lesson, we'll learn how God's Church began and how His Spirit empowers His Church, enabling it to perform the tremendous commission God has given His people to do. We'll learn how God is now using His Church to prepare this world for Christ's return.

We'll also learn how God is now preparing those whom He has put into His Church, readying them for spiritual "harvesting" into His soon-coming Kingdom—for being born as the "firstfruits" of His divine Family to become the rulers and teachers in the wonderful World Tomorrow!

All this is pictured by the *third* annual festival in God's Master Plan, the "Feast of Firstfruits," known in the New Testament as the day of Pentecost.

Supplementary Reading for all our Students



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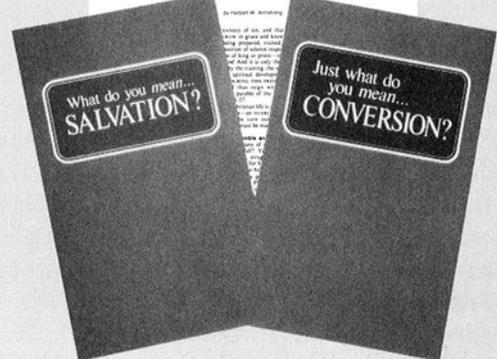
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ADDITIONAL READING FOR THIS LESSON

HOW TO BE AN OVERCOMER

WHY are we not more successful in living up to God's standard? WHY do we slip and fall occasionally? Here is how YOU can overcome where you are weakest and hardest tempted!



The above literature is related to the subject of this lesson and is highly recommended reading. Use the enclosed coupon and envelope to request your free copies.