

Imperial Academy Bible Lessons



Special Spring Festivals Lesson

hen two teams play a game of football, the players on one team wear one color of jersey, and the players on the other wear a different color. When two ships pass each other at sea, the sailors on each ship fly their national flag.

These football jerseys and maritime flags are *identifying signs*. There are many other signs you can wear or display to signify a greater meaning. An action you take can also be a sign.

Did you know that God gave His Church an identifying sign?

In this spring festivals lesson of the *Imperial Academy Bible Lessons*, you will learn about the *identifying sign* God gave His Church, and what it teaches about the God Family plan. To understand these biblical truths, you will need your Bible, a pencil and a prayerful attitude!

AN IDENTIFYING SIGN

God gave the ancient nation of Israel the same identifying sign that He gave His Church. It's an action that God's people take that is markedly different from the actions other people take. It's like flying a different flag or wearing a different color.

Read Exodus 31	; use verses	12-13 to fill in the
blanks and discover	r this identify	ring sign: "And the
Lord spoke unto Mo	ses, saying, S	peak you also unto
the	of	, saying,
Verily my	you s	hall keep: for it is a
between	and _	throughout
your	; that	you may know that
am the	_that does	you."

The word **sanctify** used in verse 13 means to set apart. God told Moses that keeping His weekly **Sabbath** would be a sign setting His people apart from all others. This identifying sign identifies God's people through all time, "throughout your generations."

In Moses's generation, the Israelites were God's chosen people. God did not love the Israelites more than He loved other people. A parent does not love his second child any less than his first. God simply chose the nation of Israel to be an example to other peoples.

After the Israelites rejected God, He established *spiritual Israel*, which is the New Testament Church. Only the people God the Father chooses can be part of His Church (John 6:44). Like the ancient Israelites, the Church is to be an example of God's way of life.

Keeping the weekly Sabbath was a sign that identified Israel as God's. Now it is a sign that identifies the true Church as God's!

GOD'S ANNUAL SABBATHS

Notice that Exodus 31:12-13 say that God commands His people to keep His *sabbaths* (plural). God again refers to His *sabbaths* in Ezekiel 20:12, 20. Why is *sabbaths* plural? The reason is that the Sabbath that occurs every seventh day is not God's only Sabbath! He also commands His people to keep seven *annual* sabbaths, known as holy days!

Keeping these days sets you apart, as anyone who goes to public school or who works with people who are not in God's Church knows. Keeping God's sabbaths is like flying a different flag.

God commanded ancient Israel and now His Church to keep the *weekly* Sabbath and the *annual sabbaths*. God established seven annual sabbaths to reveal the seven steps of His master plan. By observing these sabbaths, we learn how humans can be born as spirit beings in God's universe-ruling Family!

THE SPRING HOLY DAYS

God explained His plan to Adam and Eve, but they rejected Him. Rather than obeying God's instructions

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on good and evil, they chose to decide for themselves what was good and evil. Their descendants have made the same choice ever since.

God was prepared for this: When Adam and Eve sinned, He cut off mankind from Himself for 6,000 years. God isn't trying to bring most people into His Family now. Instead, He is allowing them to learn the hard way that they don't know the way to peace and happiness.

About 6,000 years after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, Jesus Christ will return. He will dethrone Satan and take over rulership of Earth. When He restores God's government on Earth, He will teach everyone on the planet how to submit to God's definition of good and evil. He will enforce God's way of life; gossiping, lying, hating, stealing and killing will stop. This 1,000-year period will be a millennium of resting from sin.

Jesus Christ won't do this alone. He will have thousands of God beings helping Him as His Bride! Together, He and the Bride will care for their children and bring them into God's Family. To do this, God must prepare this special group of people ahead of time, before Christ's return—now!

See what God prophesies about this 1,000-year sabbath in Isaiah 30:20-21 and fill in the blanks:

"[Y]et shall not your	be removed
into a corner any more, but your e	yes shall see your
: And your ears	shall hear a word
behind you, saying, This is the	, walk you in
it, when you turn to the	hand, and when
you to the left."	

Christ, the Lord of lords, will make the members of His Bride kings and priests who will teach the entire world God's way of life (Revelation 20:4). This will occur throughout the **Millennium** and on into the **Great White Throne Judgment**, when all who have ever lived and not received God's Holy Spirit will be resurrected (verses 11-12).

God's spring festivals focus on the beginning of His plan: preparing a Bride for Jesus Christ (Revelation 19:7).

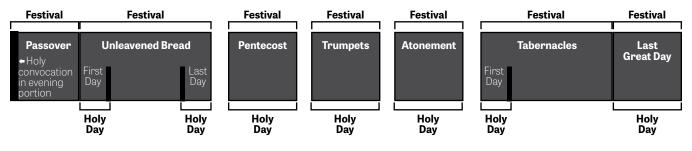
When Christ and His Bride rule, everyone will keep God's sabbaths. Use Isaiah 66:23 to fill in the blanks: "And it ______ come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one _____ to another, shall all _____ come to _____ before me, says the LORD."

In the Millennium, God will teach everyone in the world about His way of life. The members of God's Church today are only the **firstfruits** of God's family plan!



Nations use flags as symbols of identity.

ARE ALL FESTIVALS HOLY DAYS?



MEMORY TEST

Circle the letter next to the correct answer.

God's weekly and annual sabbaths:

- a. Are ancient rituals with no spiritual significance.
- b. Are no longer to be kept, because Jesus Christ died for our sins.
- c. Are a sign that identifies God's one true Church.

In God's master plan:

- a. The spring holy days teach that God is calling everyone on Earth right now.
- b. Nobody except those in God's Church today can ever be part of God's Family.
- c. Members of God's Church today will help teach everyone after Jesus Christ returns.

FESTIVALS AND HOLY DAYS

The chart at the top of the page shows that God has **seven annual festivals**. Five of these festivals last for one day; the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** and the **Feast of Tabernacles** each last seven days.

God also has **seven annual holy days**. Each of these lasts only one day. The Passover, which is God's first festival, is actually not a holy day; it is a special memorial.

The Days of Unleavened Bread is a festival that has two holy days: one on its first day and one on its last day. The Feast of Tabernacles is also a festival that begins with a holy day on its first day. Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement and the Last Great Day are one-day festivals that are also holy days.

All holy days are annual sabbaths on which

no normal work may be done. These sabbaths are sometimes called high days to distinguish them from the weekly Sabbath.

PASSOVER

God lists His seven annual festivals in Leviticus	23. Use
verses 4 and 5 to fill in the blanks to learn about	ıt God's
first annual festival: "These are the	
of the, even holy convocations,	which
you shall proclaim in their	In the
fourteenth day of the first month at	_ is the
LORD'S	

Modern, human-devised calendars count days from midnight to midnight, but God counts days from sunset to sunset. This is important to note, because God commands that His people observe Passover on the evening of the 14th day of Abib (the first month on God's calendar). That means He is instructing us to observe Passover right after the sunset that ends the 13th day of Abib.

Baptized members of God's Church gather for a special memorial service just after this sunset every year. To understand the full significance of this service, you have to understand its origin.

SLAVES IN EGYPT

More than 3,500 years ago, the Israelites were enslaved by the Egyptian empire. For over a century, Egyptians forced men, women and children to labor without pay and without freedom, cutting straw, digging in the soil, hauling water and lifting heavy loads by hand and by primitive machines to build the cities of the empire. The Egyptians regarded the Israelites as beneath them, to be used, oppressed and beaten as they pleased. **Pharaoh**, king of Egypt, even ordered the mass murder of thousands of Israelite infant boys.

Egyptians also forced Israelites to observe their culture, which included a myriad of gods, one of which was Pharaoh himself. The Egyptians did not allow the Israelites to rest on the Sabbath or to worship the God of their ancestors. Pharaoh even commanded that all Israelite male babies be thrown into the Nile River—a horrible, nightmarish effort to control them! It appears Pharaoh planned to eventually erase the Israelite identity and race!

The Israelites needed a miracle.

God saw what was happening to the Israelites. In fact, centuries earlier He warned **Abraham**, their patriarch, that they would be enslaved. He also promised Abraham that He would deliver them. When the right time came, God sent someone who had survived Pharaoh's infanticide 80 years earlier. His name was **Moses**. Moses delivered God's message to Pharaoh: *Free the Israelites*.

Pharaoh refused, and as punishment, God sent 10 **supernatural** plagues against Egypt.

Read about these 10 plagues in Exodus 7-11 and list them in order below:

1) _	
2).	
4)	
,	
•0,	

These plagues devastated Egypt's society, agriculture and infrastructure, and even its religion. After the ninth plague, Pharaoh became so angry that he threatened to kill Moses if he spoke to him again.

"In the day you see my face again, you shall die," he said.

"You have spoken well," Moses replied. "I will see your face again no more."

Moses knew that the next plague would force Pharaoh to free the Israelites. He went and told the people to start preparing to leave Egypt!

As with the earlier plagues, God told His servant in

advance what the next disaster against Egypt would be. God had told Pharaoh before the first plague even began that Israel was like His firstborn child. Pharaoh refused to free Israel, so God would send the death angel to kill every firstborn in Egypt: man, woman, child and beast.

In ancient societies, a firstborn son had an important role. A firstborn son, for example, usually received a double portion of his father's inheritance; he became the head of the family when his father died. In Egypt, the firstborn son of Pharaoh was destined to become the next pharaoh.

But God was about to send the most terrifying plague of all against the evil empire of Egypt.

BLOOD OF THE LAMB

God protected the Israelites from most of the first nine plagues. To be protected from the 10th plague, the Israelites had to follow some special instructions: On the 10th day of the month of Abib, the father of each family had to select a male lamb less than one year old. The lamb couldn't have any markings or bruises. The man had to put the lamb in a separate pen and care for it until the 14th of Abib. Then, after sunset, he had to kill the lamb and smear its blood over the doorposts of his family's house—as a *sign*.

Each family had to roast the lamb and eat it that night along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Every family member had to be ready to leave Egypt the next day, but they couldn't leave the house all through the night. In the middle of that night, God sent the death angel to kill the firstborn.

The only families who were spared from this terrible plague were those inside a house marked with the blood of a lamb. Since the death angel passed over the houses marked with blood, the night was called **Passover**.

Use Exodus 12:13 to fill in	the blanks below to see
what God said about the sign	that saved the Israelites'
lives: "And thes	hall be to you for a token
upon the houses where you	are: and when I see the
, I will	you, and
the plague shall not be upon yo	ou to destroy you, when I
theo	of Egypt."

The blood on the doorposts was a token (a sign) that those inside the house had obeyed God.

Most of the Israelites didn't understand the full significance of the Passover lamb. The blood of the



This map shows the path the Israelites took as they fled Egypt.

lamb was a type of the blood of **Jesus Christ**, the sinless **Savior** who would come 1,400 years later and die for the sins of mankind!

Turn to 1 Corinthians 5:7. Fill in the missing words below to see what Jesus Christ is called: "For even ______ is ____ for us."

When the blood of a lamb saved the lives of the Israelites, it was a symbol of what Jesus Christ would do to save mankind from the penalty of sin. Sin is breaking God's law (1 John 3:4). Sin brings misery, and God does not want us to live forever in misery. So the penalty for sin is eternal death (Romans 6:23). Everyone who has ever lived has sinned and rejected God's way of life (Romans 3:23)—except for Jesus Christ—and has to pay the death penalty!

But Christ is the Word of God, who existed eternally with God and who helped Him *create* humanity. Because of this, His life is worth more than all human lives put together. Consider what this means. It is an amazing truth to think about!

Jesus Christ never sinned. Just like the Passover lamb had no spot or blemish, Christ had no sins or spiritual faults (1 Peter 1:19-20). Throughout His life on Earth, He *never* incurred the death penalty for sin!

Use 1 Peter 1:18-19 to	o fill in the blank spaces to learn
about Christ's sacrifice	: "Forasmuch as you know that
you were not	with corruptible
things, as silver and	gold But with the precious
of	, as of a
without	and without"

Jesus Christ did not have to die, but He willingly died anyway. He did this so that *His* death could take the place of *our* deaths! Just as the death angel passed over the Israelites because of the blood of a lamb, the penalty of eternal death can pass over us because of the blood of *the* Lamb, Jesus Christ!

In the same way that the Israelites had to accept God's command to mark their doorposts with blood, we must accept Jesus Christ's sacrifice in order for it to save us from eternal death. This is an ongoing process of repenting of our sins, believing and obeying God. It includes being baptized (when mature enough), receiving God's Holy Spirit, and working to overcome sin so God can redeem us from the death penalty by paying that penalty with the shed blood of His Son (Romans 5:10).

Repentance means turning away from Satan's way of selfishness and striving with your whole heart to live God's way. When God calls someone to His truth and that person repents, he or she can be baptized and receive God's Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Upon baptism, God forgives that person's past sins by symbolically covering them with the blood of Christ. As long as that person keeps repenting and striving to live God's way of life, he or she is not under the death penalty!

NEW PASSOVER SERVICE

Baptized adults in God's Church today don't kill a lamb on Passover. Why not? The lambs that were sacrificed were symbols of *the* Lamb, Jesus Christ. Christ came approximately 2,000 years ago and fulfilled the meaning of the Passover lamb. During the Passover that He kept just hours before being tortured, crucified and killed, Christ showed His disciples a new way to keep the Passover. God's people have kept it this new way ever since.

The first thing Christ did during this new Passover service was wash His disciples' feet (John 13:4-7). Since people wore open-toed sandals in Christ's time, their feet became dusty and dirty. It was the job of a subordinate servant to wash the feet of visitors before

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The unleavened bread used at the Passover ceremony symbolizes the broken body of Christ.

allowing them to come into the house. At first, the disciples could not understand why the *Son of God* was performing this menial task!

Fill in the blanks using verses 13-17 to see how

Jesus explained this unusual action: "You call me
______ and ______: and you say well; for
so I am. If I then, your _____ and ____
have _____ your _____; 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. If you know these
things, ______ are you if you _____."

By washing His disciples' feet, Christ showed that He, the Creator of life, had come to *serve* mankind. He was God, but He humbled Himself by becoming a mere human, ready to serve to the point of giving His own life. Christ, our example, was willing to give His own life to serve others. We should be willing to humble ourselves and serve each other as well!

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 then gave these pieces to His disciples to eat.

Read Matthew 26:26 to see what this bread represents and fill in the blanks: "And as they were eating, Jesus took ______, and ______it, and ______it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, _____; this is my _____."

This broken piece of unleavened bread represents Christ's body. Jesus was whipped and beaten so badly that His skin and muscles tore open until His ribs were visible (Isaiah 52:14; Psalm 22:17). Why did He voluntarily submit Himself to this torture? So that *His* broken body could pay the price for *our* broken bodies. This part of His sacrifice makes it possible for God to forgive our physical sins that result in injury, sickness and even death (1 Peter 2:24).

When we eat unhealthy food, fail to get adequate sleep, neglect exercise, have a serious accident or do other such acts, our bodies deteriorate. Sickness and injury are penalties for breaking God's physical health 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 when we follow the instructions in James 5:14-15 and believe that God will heal us because of

Christ sacrificing His body to be broken.

Turn to James 5:14-15 to see God's instructions
for applying this sacrifice: "Is any among
you? let him call for the of the
; and let them over him
him with oil in the name of the
Lord: And the of shall
save the sick, and the Lord shall him up
and if he have committed, they shall be
him."

SYMBOL OF CHRIST'S BLOOD

After giving His disciples a broken piece of unleavened bread, Jesus gave them a small cup of wine to drink. This wine represented His blood, which was about to be spilled to make possible the forgiveness of our spiritual sins.

See the account in Matthew 26:27-28 (fill in the blanks): "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 _____ [forgiveness] of _____."

After Christ was beaten beyond recognition, His broken body was nailed to a stake. He was left there to die. When He didn't die after hanging on it all day, He was stabbed in the side with a spear. He bled profusely, His blood pouring out onto the ground—and the Son of God *died*.

To this day, baptized members of God's Church commemorate the Passover as a memorial of Christ's death. They listen to a special sermon from one of God's ministers. They wash each other's feet. They eat a broken piece of unleavened bread, and they drink a small glass of wine in this solemn yet awesome observance.

The Passover symbols Christ instituted remind us of the tremendous price of sin. Because of Christ's sacrifice, it is possible for us to become part of the God Family if we accept His sacrifice, repent and obey God!

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

After Christ's death and resurrection, the New Testament Church continued to follow His example and keep the Passover and the holy days each year.

About 20 years after Christ died, the Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Church members in the city of Corinth, reminding them of the deep spiritual meaning behind the symbols of the bread and wine. In his first letter to the Corinthian congregation, he wrote, "For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:26-27).

FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

The sunset following Passover marks the start of the Days of Unleavened Bread. This seven-day festival begins and ends with a holy day. It represents the second step in God's family plan.

To see God's special instruction for this feast, use
Leviticus 23:6-8 to fill in the blanks: "And on the fifteenth
day of the same month is the feast of
unto the Lord:
you must eat In
the day you shall have an
: you shall do servile
[laborious] therein. But you shall offer
an offering made by fire unto the LORD
days: in the day is an
: you shall do no servile
therein."

The two holy days that occur during the Feast of Unleavened Bread are the first two holy days of the year. (Remember that Passover is not a holy day, but a special memorial.) As with the weekly Sabbath, God commands that we refrain from laborious work during these two annual sabbaths. These days are set apart by God as holy time for us to learn about His plan for mankind.

EXODUS FROM SIN

The death of the firstborn plunged the Egyptians into grief and fear. After this terrible night, Pharaoh finally released the Israelites.

The Israelites quickly packed their belongings and got ready to leave that night, the 15th of Abib. Under the light of a full moon, the Israelites began their **exodus** out of Egypt. God showed them the way to travel using a guiding cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

The Israelites left Egypt with hands raised high in celebration as God delivered them from slavery. God

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commanded the Israelites to remember their first night of freedom.

Use Exodus 12:42 to fill in the blanks to see this special command from God: "It is a ______ to be _____ unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt"

The ancient land of Egypt is a symbol of sin in the Bible. Pharaoh is a type of Satan. The Israelites could not free themselves from slavery in Egypt without miracles from God, and we cannot free ourselves from slavery to sin without God's intervention!

Even with God's power helping us, it takes time to overcome sin. The Israelites did not completely leave Egypt in a single day, and we cannot come out of sin all at once. This is why the Feast of Unleavened Bread is seven days long. Seven is God's number of completion. It takes time to come completely out of sin!

Read verse 15 and fill in the blanks below to see God's special instructions regarding this festival: "Seven days shall you eat ______; even the first day you shall put away ______ out of your ______: for whosoever eats _____ from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be ______ from Israel."

Leaven is another symbol for sin in the Bible (1 Corinthians 5:8). Any ingredient that causes dough to rise and become puffed up with air is considered leaven. Just like leaven puffs up bread with air, sin puffs up people with vanity. Someone who is vain is not humble enough to admit that he or she needs God to show him or her what is right and wrong. This puffed-up attitude leads to breaking God's law!

God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden because they became vain and chose to decide for themselves what is right and wrong. If we are going to help Jesus Christ teach the whole world how to be truly happy, we must be humble and admit that only *God* knows what is right.

A little bit of leaven can spread through a whole loaf of bread, just like a little sin can spread through your whole life. The Apostle Paul warned the Corinthian congregation against this in 1 Corinthians 5:6: "Your glorying is not good. Know you not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?"

God commands us to remove leaven from our homes before the Days of Unleavened Bread to remind

us how important it is to put sin out of our lives. We cannot tolerate even the smallest sin in our life. Even a little lie, for example, will lead to other lies, until your whole life is full of deceits.

The Apostle Paul further instructed the Corinthians in verses 7-8: "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as you are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

You might want to make a list of bad habits and sins you want to eliminate so you can be mindful of what leaven represents and work to put *sin* out the same way you work to put *leaven* out. The process of eliminating sin requires continuous hard work even after you receive God's Holy Spirit, which is the only power strong enough to remove sin completely!

PENTECOST

The third festival is Pentecost. Unlike other festivals, Pentecost doesn't fall on a specific date on God's calendar. Pentecost means "count 50." To find out when Pentecost falls, we count 50 days from the day after the weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:15-16). Counting Sunday as day one, Pentecost always ends up on another Sunday 50 days later.

God descended on Mount Sinai with thunder and lightning and gave the Israelites His Ten Commandments. It is believed that this occurred on the Israelites' first Pentecost. To commemorate this event, God commanded the Israelites to offer two loaves of bread to Him every Pentecost. One loaf represented those few who received God's Holy Spirit in Old Testament times (like Noah and Moses). The other loaf represented God's New Testament Church, which was established by Jesus Christ.

Pentecost is also called the **feast of firstfruits**. The spring holy days occur around the time of the small spring grain harvest in the Middle East. This firstfruits harvest is much smaller than the great fall harvest. This symbolizes the fact that the special group of people God is working with now is small compared to the billions of people whom He will work with after Christ returns.

God's special team of teachers includes both Old Testament prophets and members of the New Testament Church. In the age before Christ was crucified and resurrected, God didn't give His Holy Spirit to all of the Israelites—only to a very few leaders. After Christ was resurrected, God gave His Holy Spirit to every member of His New Testament Church.

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. (You can read about it in Acts 2.) This is when the New Testament Church officially began!

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 have 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 to overcome their carnal human nature!

Like the first and last days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the day of Pentecost is also a holy day. In Leviticus 23:21, God commands His people to observe this day forever. It is a time for God's Church to gather together in a *holy convocation* and learn about their role in God's family plan.

The spring festivals represent the first three steps in God's plan. Christ had to die on Passover to pay for the sins of mankind. Members of God's Church have to repent of their sins and leave the evil ways of this world behind them—pictured by the Days of Unleavened Bread. Then God must give these members the power of His Holy Spirit—as depicted by the day of Pentecost—so they can overcome sin and qualify to be teachers in the Millennium!

In a future lesson, we will learn about the

remaining four festivals and God's plan to bring the vast majority of mankind into His Family in the great fall harvest!

MEMORY TEST

For each que provided.	estion, write True or False in the space
_) All of God's annual festivals are also
ŀ	noly days.
2	a) Members of God's Church keep
I	Passover every week, using bread and
V	vine to symbolize the body and blood of
J	esus Christ.
3) The ancient Israelites could not have
1	eft Egypt without mighty miracles from
(God.
4).) We can be forgiven of our spiritual sins
a	after we repent of them and are freed
f	rom the death penalty because Christ
Ċ	lied in our stead.
5	3) We can be healed of our sicknesses and
i	njuries because of Christ's shed blood.
6	3) Until we repent and are baptized, we
a	re all under the death penalty because
_	of our sins.
	The seven days of the Feast of
	Jnleavened Bread signify that it takes
	ime to come completely out of sin.
	3) It takes a lot of leaven to puff up a loaf
	of bread with air, just like it takes a lot of
	sin to puff up a person with vanity.
)) The day of Pentecost shows that God
	s calling only a small number of people
	nto His Church before the Second
	Coming of Jesus Christ.
1	o) God's way of life is the only way that

leads to true happiness.

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Notes	

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