

OLD TESTAMENT FEASTS

Scripture	Feast	Time of Year
Esther 9-10	Purim Feast of Esther	February/March
Exodus 12 I Cor 5:7; 15:3	Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bred	March/April
Leviticus 23 Matthew 28:1-10	Yom Habikkurim Feast of Firstfruits	May/June
Leviticus 23:15-22 Exodus 23:19 Deuteronomy 26	Shavuot Feast of Weeks Pentecost	May/June
Genesis 22:1-18	Rosh Hashanah Jewish New Year Feast of Trumpets	September/October (10 days before Yom Kippur)
Leviticus 16	Yom Kippur Day of Atonement	September/October
Leviticus 23:39-43	Sukkot Feast of Booths Feast of Tabernacles	September/October 4 days after Yom Kippur
I & II Maccabees	Hanukkah Feast of Dedication	December

Children's Church Grades 1-3 Special Lessons – O.T. Festivals

Lesson 1

Title: Esther – the Festival of Purim

Text: Esther 9:16 – 10:3

Theme: God's great deliverance offers reason to rejoice and to bring His mercies to others.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Participate in a Purim celebration.
2. Be able to share some of the traditions associated with Purim.
3. Rejoice in God's greatest deliverance accomplished through Jesus Christ.
4. Commit to giving gifts to the poor as a way of giving thanks to God for His mercies.

Memory Verse: *Psalm 105:1 Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done.*

Teacher Direction:

1. The O.T. feasts and festivals were a very important part of the yearly cycle for the people of Israel. Each festival would bring to remembrance some aspect of their Lord's character and works, such as His faithfulness and providence. These special times were times of gathering for God's people, when they could grow in unity with their God and with each other.

These appointed times, however, had significance for more than the people of Israel. In some way, though at times clouded to our understanding, these feasts pointed to the coming ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we study these feasts, our focus shall be on how they point to Christ and our relationship with him.

In this lesson, we want to focus on the celebration that followed the great deliverance of the Jews recorded in the book of Esther. That celebration is called the Festival of Purim. We would like to have the children enter into the spirit of this festival by participating in some of the traditional activities associated with Purim. More importantly, however, we want the children to think about God's great deliverance of them from their cruel enemy, sin. Hopefully, the spirit of joy and giving associated with Purim will transfer to their remembrance of Christ's death and resurrection.

2. Introduction

To introduce this lesson considering completing the following activities with the children:

A. As the children enter the room, take a black marker and write the name "Haman" on the sole of their shoes. If children do not want anything written on their shoes, you can place a mailing label on the sole of their shoes and then write the name on the label.

B. After the children have entered the room, tell them that today you are going to celebrate the festival of Purim. Explain to them that the word Purim comes from the Hebrew word "pur" which means "lot". Purim is the plural of pur meaning "lots". It refers to the time Haman cast lots (perhaps throwing pebbles or bits of pottery) in order to determine the most favorable day to exterminate the Jews. Tell the children that an important part of the Purim celebration was and is the reading of the Megillah, the scroll of Esther. Tell the children that you would like them to make a pictorial scroll of the story of Esther that can be used as the story is retold later in the lesson.

After giving this introduction assign each child or group of children a specific picture to draw. Examples might include: Esther becomes the new queen, Haman makes a law saying that people have to bow down to him, Mordecai refuses to bow to Haman, Haman asks the king for a new law to punish the Jewish people, Mordecai tells Esther

about the new law, Esther tells the king about Haman's law, Haman is punished, the Jewish people celebrate. When the children have finished their drawings attach them in order to a long piece of butcher paper rolled into a scroll.

Finally, invite the children to participate in the Festival of Purim.

3. Bible Story

As you share the story from the book of Esther again consider the following activities and suggestions:

A. Story Review – An important part of the tradition that has developed around the festival of Purim is the reading of the Scroll of Esther, which is essentially a reading of the biblical account. After the people had fasted in preparation for the celebration, they gathered together and listened to this great story of deliverance. As the story is being read, whenever the name "Haman" is mentioned, the people begin to boo or to make noise so that his name is drowned out. Likewise, when the name "Mordecai" is mentioned the people begin to cheer. Note: As you read the story from the sheet provided, encourage the children to respond. When Haman's name is spoken encourage them to stomp their feet (remember, Haman's name was written on the sole of their shoe), to shout, or to shake noisemakers (a few stones in a tin can will do). As Mordecai's name is spoken have them cheer and clap their hands.

B. Joy and giving – This festival is one of the most joyous festivals known to Jews. It certainly was for those who first celebrated it. They had been near death. Haman's edict was a very dark cloud over their heads. But when this cloud was lifted, there was exceeding great joy among the people. Encourage a climate of great joy in the classroom, but be sure to help the children understand that Israel's joy stemmed from the great deliverance they had just experienced. Also point out that this celebration was accompanied by much giving. The people gave gifts of food to one another and they gave gifts to the poor. In a sense, those who had been delivered from their distress were made more sensitive to those around them who were in distress.

C. Mordecai's greatness – The story of Esther ends with a description of Mordecai. God had greatly blessed him by making him second in the kingdom next to King Xerxes. Beyond that, Mordecai was highly esteemed by many fellow Jews. Why was this man so honored? The text tells us because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for their welfare. He continued to exemplify a self-giving love, a quality ordained by God to bring deliverance to those in distress. After all, this was the key characteristic of Christ who brought the greatest deliverance ever to sinners of all ages.

4. Application

A. Every Christian has reason to rejoice. He has been delivered from the greatest enemies: sin, death, and the devil. When this deliverance is brought to our remembrance, for example, at the Lord's Table, it is important to rejoice for what the Lord has done.

B. As was the practice of the Jews at Purim, to give gifts to others, especially the poor, it is equally important for us to remember those who are in distress around us. Whenever we are reminded of our former distress, our slavery to sin, we ought look around for ways to bring deliverance to others. This may compel us to give to the needy, to pray for the sick, or to encourage someone who is discouraged.

5. Review Questions

How did Esther come to be queen in Persia? (Queen Vashti disobeyed her husband and was removed. Esther, by divine providence became her replacement.)

In what great danger did the people of Israel find themselves? (Haman had convinced the king to write a law ordering the annihilation of the Jews.)

What important decision did Esther face and how did she decide? (She faced being quiet in order to save her life, or risking her life to save her people. She chose to risk her life believing that God had called her to this.)

How were the people eventually delivered? (Esther went before the king and invited him and Haman to a banquet. At the second banquet she disclosed Haman's plot to kill her people. Haman was hung for his treachery and then the king allowed new laws to be enacted to save the Jews.)

What are some of the things the Jews did to celebrate Purim? (They fasted and feasted, retold the story to their children, gave gifts to their friends and to the poor,...)

Why was Mordecai honored? (His life exemplified self-sacrificing love. He really cared for his people and worked for their deliverance.)

Who else worked for the deliverance of His people and was willing to die for them? (Jesus Christ)

In what way have all Christians been delivered? (We have been delivered from sin, death and the devil.)

When does the church take time to remember our deliverance? (At the Lord's Supper.)

What are some ways you can show your thanks for your deliverance from sin? (Remember others in their distress: give to the poor, encourage those who are discouraged, visit and pray for the sick,...)

6. Special notes

- ◆ Try to make this class a real celebration. Begin with the activities outlined in the introduction. Then read the story while the children respond. Be sure to take time to bring home the application at this time. Next, take time to sing joyous songs that speak of our deliverance. Finally, end with the activities suggested below.
- ◆ Make "Hamantashens", triangle-shaped cookies eaten at the festival to remind the people of the shape of Haman's hat (so states some tradition). After explaining the tradition, pass one out to each child for their snack.
- ◆ Since Purim is about lots being cast, a game of casting lots could be devised. Mark off with masking tape a square on the floor. Divide it into 8 equal sections, giving each a distinct number. Have children cast a lot (a pebble or fragment of pottery) into the square. Whatever number their lot lands on is the number of the question they must answer. Link the review questions with each number, then when the child lands on a given number, he is to be asked the corresponding question.

THE FEAST OF PURIM

The Feast of Purim is founded upon the story of the Feast of Esther, especially the events of Chapter 9. It is another Post-Mosaic Festival but no reference is found in the New Testament concerning it.

However, there are spiritual and moral lessons, which the church may learn from this Feast, which is still kept by modern Jewry.

Purim, after the name Pur, in the Persian language, signifies "lot". The Feast of Purim, or Feast of Lots has a reference to the time having been pitched upon Haman through the decision of the lot (Esther 3:7).

Although the Feast was a Post-Mosaic Festival, it was a yearly celebration and a joyous time in Jewry. As we consider the story of Esther and the inauguration of this Feast, we will discover spiritual truths for the church in these last days.

During the reign of Ahasuerus, the king of Persia, the queen Vashti had displeased the king and had been deposed from her royal throne. Certain virgins were chosen to go through months of purification and preparation out of which one would be chosen to replace Vashti. The fair and beautiful Esther was chosen to be the bride, the royal queen (Esther 1-2).

In the King's palace was an Agagite, a descendant of Amalek, of Esau, by the name of Haman. He carried within his heart an evil hatred for the Jewish nation. Mordecai, Esther's uncle, would in no way bow to this wicked Haman (Esther 3:1-6).

In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, which was the Feast of Passover, lots were cast before Haman from day to day and month to month through to the twelfth month, Adar (Esther 3:7).

Haman, at this time told King Ahasuerus that there was a certain people scattered throughout his 127 Provinces who had their own laws and who failed to keep the laws of the Persian kingdom. He suggested that the king write a decree that these people be destroyed. He himself would help finance the business. The king sealed the decree with his own ring. Letters were written throughout the Provinces that all Jews, men, woman and children, were to be destroyed on the 13th day of the month, Adar. The letters were delivered in haste by the posts to all Provinces (Esther 3:8-15).

Great mourning fell upon the Jews throughout the Provinces as they realized the death-decree, which hung over their heads and their days were numbered.

When Mordecai found out he called upon Esther to endeavor to change the decree. He said to her that enlargement and deliverance could come from another place if she held her peace at this time. The great challenge to Esther was "And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for a time as this?" (Esther 4:1-14).

Esther, along with the Jews at Shushan, fasted 3 days and 3 nights without food or water. At the end of the days she would risk her life by appearing before King Ahasuerus (Esther 4:15-17).

On the third day she appeared before the King as he sat on his royal throne. She found favor in his sight and he held out to her the golden scepter.

In the following days, upon her request, the King, along with Haman, attended banquets that Esther had prepared (Esther 5:1-14).

Providentially after the first banquet the king could not sleep. Someone was asked to read him some of the Chronicles of the kingdom. The account of Modercai saving the king from assassination was read. The king asked if this person had been rewarded at all. The answer was in the negative. In the morning the king called Haman in and asked him what he thought should be done to a person the king desired to honor. Haman, filled with pride and egotism thought the king would like to do honor to him. So he described in glowing terms what rewards should be given to such a person. With amazement and bitter disgust the king told him to all he said to Mordecai (Esther 6:1-14).

The next banquet the king and Haman attended, the king asked Esther what her request would be and it would be granted, even to half of the kingdom (Esther 7:1-2). Queen Esther took advantage of the whole situation. She begged for her own life and the life of the Jewish people who had been sold to destruction. The king, horrified, asked who dared to do such a thing. The wicked Haman was pointed out. Haman stood to plead for his life, even throwing himself upon Esther's divan, which was the greatest of insults in a Persian palace (Esther 7:3-8). The end result was that Haman hung from the very gallows, which he had prepared for Mordecai to hang on (Esther 7:9-10).

The king gave to Esther all of Haman's possessions and his own ring which he had given to Haman (Esther 8:1-2).

However, the great problem remained and that was the saving of the Jews as a nation in the Provinces. The law of the Medes and -Persians could not be reversed. The king therefore gave permission to write another law by which the Jews could stand to preserve their lives and to destroy all those who would seek to destroy or assault them (Esther 8:3-14). Thus there was a counter-decree without nullifying the previous decree.

The Jews had great joy and gladness in the Provinces when they received this counter-decree. Great fear fell on the people and many became Jews when they saw this (Esther 8:15-17).

On the 13th day and the 14th day of Adar, the Jews stood and defended their lives and possessions through- out the Provinces. Seventy five thousand people were slain. In Shushan palace 500 people were slain. Thus the Jewish nation was providentially preserved from annihilation. Haman's ten sons were slain and hung on the gallows also.

The Jews at Shushan then set aside the 13th, 14th, and 15th day of Adar as days of feasting, resting and rejoicing and sending portions one to another to commemorate this great deliverance (Esther 9:1-19). Mordecai wrote letters and made a decree that year-by-year the Jews should establish the 14th and 15th days of Adar as a Festival time, the Feast of Purim (Esther 10:1-32; 11:1-3).

This is the story behind the Feast of Purim, the Feast of Esther, and the Feast of Lots. Although the name of God is not mentioned in the Book of Esther, His providential hand is manifest throughout.

Children's Church Grades 1-3
Special Lessons – O.T. Festivals

Lesson 2

Title: Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread

Text: Exodus 12, Leviticus 23:5-8, 1 Cor 5:7

Theme: Christ, our Passover, delivers us from bondage to sin unto a life of sincerity and truth.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Be able to relate how Israel was in bondage and how all people are in bondage.
2. Be able to share the main activities that surrounded the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread.
3. Be able to tell how the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread point to Christ and our relationship with Him.
4. Come to Christ for deliverance from sin and for power to live in sincerity and truth.

Memory Verse: *1 Corinthians 5:7b-8 For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.*

Teacher Direction:

1. The O.T. feasts and festivals were a very important part of the yearly cycle for the people of Israel. Each festival would bring to remembrance some aspect of their Lord's character and works, such as His faithfulness and providence. These special times were times of gathering for God's people, when they could grow in unity with their God and with each other.

These appointed times, however, had significance for more than the people of Israel. In some way, though at times clouded to our understanding, these feasts pointed to the coming ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we study these feasts, our focus shall be on how they point to Christ and our relationship with him.

In this lesson we shall look at the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We shall see that Christ is our spotless Passover lamb who protects us from the wrath of God by cleansing us from sin, and who gives us power to live free from bondage to sin. It is hoped that this lesson will be used by God to draw the children to a saving knowledge of Christ, and to spur them on to a life of holiness.

2. Introduction

To introduce this lesson try the following activity which in some form is practiced by Jews in their celebration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread: Before the children arrive spread bread crumbs (small squares of bread) or small oyster crackers around the room. Instruct the children before going into the room that you have a job for them to do. Tell them that an inspector is going to come into the room and check it for cleanliness. Their job is to go into the room and during the next two minutes clean up all the breadcrumbs that "somebody" has spread around the room. After the two minutes gather the bread fragments from the children and have them sit down. Then choose one student from the group to be your inspector. Have the inspector carry a candle or lantern and look around the room for any missed crumbs. If he finds any have him pick it up with a wooden spoon.

After this activity tells the children that what they have just done is something that Jews do on a very important feast day known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Tell the children that in today's lesson they will look at this feast and the celebration that precedes it, called Passover. Encourage the children to listen well to see what these special celebrations have to teach us about Jesus Christ and our relationship to Him.

Also challenge them to see if they can figure out what the activity was supposed to teach them about being a Christian.

3. Bible Story

As you share with the children about the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, be sure to emphasize the following:

A. Background of the feast – For 430 years the people of Israel were slaves in the land of Egypt. Their lives were hard. They worked for Pharaoh constructing buildings according to the dream he had for his land. Those who were assigned to supervise the work were at times very oppressive and unkind. In fact, at the time of Moses they had been assigned to “afflict the people with hard labor” (1:11). Because the people of Israel kept growing despite these efforts to subdue them, the king of Egypt commanded that the Israelite baby boys be put to death at birth. Life indeed was difficult for the people, and all they could do was cry out to God for deliverance. In themselves they were powerless to do anything about this severe bondage (2:23-25). Note: As you share the bondage and helplessness of the people of Israel, help the children see that they, too, are helplessly in bondage, not to the Egyptians, but to sin. Help them to see that their only hope, as well, is to cry out to God for deliverance.

B. Explanation of the feast – Fortunately God heard their cry and responded. He raised up Moses to lead the people out of Egypt. The climax of this deliverance centered around the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. God instructed the people to kill a spotless, one-year old lamb and to take the blood and apply it to the lintel and the doorposts of their house. When God sent his death angel over the land of Egypt, only the houses where blood had been applied would be saved from the judgment of that night. In addition, God instructed the people to clean out all the leaven in their homes, and for seven days to only eat unleavened bread. This ordinance (the activities of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread which God commanded the people to observe) was to be repeated throughout all generations as a reminder of God’s great deliverance and of the great haste with which the people left Egypt (12:33-41).

C. Christ in the feast – The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread has a very clear reference to Christ and our relationship to Him. According to Paul, Christ is the Passover lamb. He was the perfect, spotless Lamb of God who died to enable God’s people to avert the judgment of God. Those who apply the blood of Christ through faith are freed from the wrath of God and from the bondage of sin. Christ not only frees the soul from wrath, but He also cleanses from sin. This is where the symbolism behind the unleavened bread comes in. Leaven stands for sin. When a person embraces Christ, he is made clean (unleavened). From that point on in his life he is to pursue, by God’s grace, holiness, or as Paul states it in 1 Corinthians 5:8, “sincerity and truth”. Thus, the Feast of Unleavened Bread reminds us that Christ’s death for us was for the purpose of making us a holy people unto God.

4. Application

A. All of us, like the Israelites, are in bondage and are helpless to do anything about it. Our bondage is to sin. Sin is our terrible taskmaster. Like the Israelites all we can do is cry out to God for deliverance. Thankfully, God has already anticipated our call, and has sent His Son who died on the cross for us. Now all who will put their trust in Christ can have forgiveness of sin, and freedom from sin’s bondage. If God is calling you today, then you must respond. Come to Christ and be transformed from a son of wrath to a son of God.

B. When God saves us from bondage to sin He does not desire that we return to a life dominated by sin. He calls us to be holy as He is holy. We should take the instruction of Paul and celebrate the Feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. We should give our lives wholly to the Lord seeking to be unmixed in our affections for Him,

not having one foot in the world and the other with God. Ask the Lord to help you remove the leaven in your life so that you can present to Him a pure heart.

5. Review Questions

What was life like for the people of Israel while they were in Egypt? (Life was very hard. Pharaoh assigned taskmasters over the people whose job it was to afflict the people. They were slaves in terrible bondage and could not do a thing to change this.)

In what way are all of us in bondage? (We are all slaves to sin that rules us.)

What was the Passover? What were the people of God to do? (It was the final plague God used before freeing the people from bondage. They had to kill a lamb without blemish and apply its blood to the doorposts and lintel. The death angel passed over every house where he saw the blood.)

What was the Feast of Unleavened Bread? (At Passover celebrations and for 7 days afterwards, the people of God had to clear out all leavened bread from their houses and eat only unleavened bread.)

How is Christ our Passover? (He is the sinless lamb who was slain so that we might not face the judgment of God. Those who apply His blood by faith are safe.)

What do we learn about the Christian life from the Feast of Unleavened Bread? (When God saves us, He saves us to be a holy people. We should seek, by God's grace, to remove every trace of sin in our life, and live wholly for God.)

Is Christ your Passover lamb? Is His blood covering you from the judgment of God? Has the Lord made you clean? Are you seeking daily to live a clean life with God's help?

Children's Church Grades 1-3
Special Lessons – O.T. Festivals

Lesson 3

Title: Feast of First fruits

Text: Leviticus 23:9-14, Matthew 28:1-10, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, Romans 8:23

Theme: Christ, the first fruit from the dead, gives us hope of resurrection life and a resurrected body.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Be able to recount the specific activities surrounding the OT Feast of First fruits.
2. Be able to show how Christ fulfilled the Feast of First fruits.
3. Offer praise to God for the hope of the resurrection.
4. Receive encouragement from knowing that he has the first fruits of the Spirit.

Memory Verse: *1 Corinthians 15:20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

Teacher Direction:

1. The O.T. feasts and festivals were a very important part of the yearly cycle for the people of Israel. Each festival would bring to remembrance some aspect of their Lord's character and works, such as His faithfulness and providence. These special times were times of gathering for God's people, when they could grow in unity with their God and with each other.

These appointed times, however, had significance for more than the people of Israel. In some way, though at times clouded to our understanding, these feasts pointed to the coming ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we study these feasts, our focus shall be on how they point to Christ and our relationship with him.

In this lesson we shall look at the Feast of First fruits when the people of Israel would take the first sheaf of the new grain and present it to the priest. Thanks to the Apostle Paul we do not have to wonder how this feast points to Christ because he clearly links it to Christ's resurrection from the dead. It is hoped that the children will receive great encouragement from the hope of the bodily resurrection of believers and the experience of the first fruits of new life by the Spirit.

2. Introduction

To introduce this lesson ask the children if they know what a down payment is. Explain to the children that when a person wants to buy a house, one of the things he must do is to provide some money, usually at least ten percent of the total cost of the house. This money represents the buyer's pledge that he definitely wants to buy the house. In a sense, by providing the down payment, the buyer is saying that he is interested and that there will be more interest to come. Or to put it another way, the buyer is saying with his down payment that there will be more money to come until he is able to completely purchase the house.

Tell the children that in today's lesson they shall study the Feast of First fruits. Explain to the children that first fruits is like a down payment in that it is a promise of something more to come. Encourage the children to listen well to try to find out what this feast tells us we can expect more of.

3. Bible Story

As you share the specifics of the Feast of First fruits be sure to emphasize the following points:

A. The Background of the feast – The instructions for this feast were given when the people of Israel were still in the wilderness. They, in their recent past, had experienced God's mighty deliverance. After 430 years of bondage in Egypt the people had finally

been set free. Though the people were not presently in the land, this feast anticipated the time when they would enter the land and enjoy its fruits.

It is important to note that this feast was closely connected to the Passover celebration that occurred at the beginning of the barley harvest in the spring of the year. As the people remembered their deliverance from bondage as part of the Passover celebration, just a few days after, they were to present the first fruits of the new grain. The close proximity of these celebrations was no accident, for the timing was ordained by God to foreshadow coming events in His Son's life.

B. The Specifics of the feast – When the people entered the land and were ready to reap the early barley harvest, they were to take a sheaf of the first fruits and to present it to the Lord. (Note: a sheaf is a quantity of the stalks and ears of cereal grains often tied together.) The first fruits were to represent the choicest, the best, the foremost, and the pre-eminent of the present harvest and all that was to follow. It was the portion that was holy to the Lord, which belonged exclusively to Him. The priest was to take the sheaf and wave it before the Lord (a wave offering). Presumably, with this action the one presenting this offering was said to be acceptable to the Lord. The command specified that this offering be done the day after the Sabbath, and should be followed by a burnt, meal and drink offering. Once the person had completed this presentation to the Lord they were free to enjoy the fruit of the harvest. They also left with the anticipation that the Lord would give them a full harvest.

C. Christ in the feast – Since the Passover is the context for this feast, it is important to remember its significance. It is a marvelous picture of Christ (the Passover lamb) who died in order that sinful man might avert the wrath of God. It was a foreshadowing of the shed blood of Christ which when applied keeps men safe. Additionally, it speaks of man coming out of bondage from sin.

The Feast of First fruits, on the other hand, points to the resurrection and perhaps to the ascension of Christ. It is interesting to note that the sheaf was waved on the day after the Sabbath. Thus, we have the Passover, when the lamb is slain, followed by a Sabbath, and then the presentation of first fruits on the next day. This parallels perfectly the last week of Christ who was crucified and then rose again on the day after the Sabbath. This is exactly what the Apostle Paul suggests in 1 Corinthians 15:20 when he says that Christ is the first fruits of those who are asleep.

Now as the first fruit of the resurrection, Christ is not only the choicest, best and foremost, but He is also a promise of more to come. Again Paul suggests this in 1 Corinthians 15:23 when he says, "But each in his own order: Christ, the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming." Christ serves as the first of many who will be raised from the dead when He returns again.

Note: Some suggest that when the priest raises up the sheaf that this act is symbolic of Christ's ascension into heaven. This may be, however, it may also merely be symbolic of the resurrection. Also when the sheaf is raised, the text in Leviticus suggests this is done "for you to be accepted". Truly when God raised up Christ, He was declaring that His Son's sacrifice was acceptable, and when God raises us up, He will be declaring that in Christ we are acceptable as well.

4. Application

A. Since Christ is the first fruits of those who are asleep, we have hope of resurrection. Indeed when Christ returns He will raise up all those who have trusted in Him for salvation, and He will transform their bodies and fit them for eternity. For this hope we ought all praise our God. If we do not have this hope, then we must first come to Christ trusting in Him as our Passover lamb.

B. In Romans 8:23, Paul says that we have the first fruits of the Spirit. This means that as Christians we not only have the hope of heaven in the future, but we also have the

hope of resurrection life in the present. Christ came not only to give us a hope of heaven, but also a hope of living free from the bondage of sin. It must be remembered, however, that what we have are the first fruits. We do not have the full harvest, but we do have the hope that every day the harvest will be fuller until the day that we are swallowed up in resurrection life.

5. Review Questions

How is the Feast of the First fruits to be celebrated? (When the people entered the land they were to take from the first of the new grain and offer it to the Lord.)

When does this feast occur in relation to the Passover? (There is Passover, then a Sabbath, then the day after is First fruits.)

How does Passover and First fruits relate to the life of Christ? (Passover relates to the death of Christ to free us from the bondage of sin. First fruits relates to His resurrection 3 days later.)

How does the Feast of First fruits give us hope? (Since Christ is the first fruits, we know that a greater harvest is coming.)

When will our resurrection occur? (When Christ returns)

What is meant by the "first fruits of the Spirit"? (We have been given the first fruits of resurrection life. We can live increasingly free from bondage to sin, expecting one day to be fully immersed in resurrection life.)

Do you have hope of the resurrection? Talk with a leader if you are not sure.

Children's Church Grades 1-3
Special Lessons – O.T. Festivals

Lesson 4

Title: Pentecost – Feast of Weeks

Text: Leviticus 23:15-21, Acts 2, Deut 16:9-12, Exodus 19

Theme: The coming of the Spirit began the formation of God's new community and provided hope for the coming harvest.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Be able to share how OT saints celebrated the Feast of Weeks.
2. Be able to share how the giving of the law is related to Pentecost.
3. Be able to share how Christ's ministry fulfills the OT picture of Pentecost.
4. Thank God for His gift of the Spirit and ask God for grace to live obediently to the Spirit.

Memory Verse: *Ezekiel 36:27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.*

Teacher Direction:

1. The O.T. feasts and festivals were a very important part of the yearly cycle for the people of Israel. Each festival would bring to remembrance some aspect of their Lord's character and works, such as His faithfulness and providence. These special times were times of gathering for God's people, when they could grow in unity with their God and with each other.

These appointed times, however, had significance for more than the people of Israel. In some way, though at times clouded to our understanding, these feasts pointed to the coming ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we study these feasts, our focus shall be on how they point to Christ and our relationship with him.

In this lesson we shall look at the Feast of Weeks which is commonly called Pentecost (meaning fiftieth) because it is celebrated on the fiftieth day after the Feast of First fruits. This feast has a connection to God's meeting the people at Sinai to give them the law. It also is a feast that focuses on the concept of first fruits (as the Feast of First fruits), only this time it is the first fruits of the wheat harvest that is offered to God. All of these historical realities point to the extraordinary time when Jesus sent His Spirit to form His new community and commence His work in the present age. It is hoped that the children will receive great encouragement as they gain a glimpse of how God's plan has unfolded over the years, and as they contemplate the reality of the Spirit in their own lives.

2. Introduction

To introduce this lesson ask the children if they have ever seen a "magic eye" book. (Allow for discussion) Explain to the children that these books have pages full of different designs on them, and that in each design something is hidden. In other words, hidden in the midst of the design is some sort of object that is recognizable. Tell the children that sometimes it is very hard to see what is hidden in the design. In fact, though some people can see the object after careful examination, others can't see it at all.

Next, tell the children that sometimes artists do the same thing. They paint a picture, but very secretly they hide something in the picture. Some artists write the names of their loved ones in their paintings, but most people do not even see it unless they are shown what the artist has done.

Finally, tell the children that our Bible, especially the O.T. is like a painting of this sort. It tells a story, but hidden in the story is the name or life of a very important person. That

person is Jesus. Encourage the children to listen to today's story in order to try to see what it might be telling them about Jesus and His ministry.

3. Bible Story

As you share the specifics about the Feast of Weeks be sure to emphasize the following points.

A. Background – The people of Israel were slaves in Egypt for over 400 years. They were hopelessly in bondage unable to do anything but cry out to the Lord. Gratefully, the Lord heard their cry and sent deliverance. He instructed the people to kill a lamb and apply the blood to the lintel and doorposts of their homes. Those who did this were saved from the death angel that passed over each home. In the years that followed the people of Israel celebrated the Feast of Passover to commemorate this significant event.

After the Passover, the people were delivered from bondage in Egypt. They left the land and made their way to the Red Sea. God miraculously opened the Red Sea and allowed the people to pass through to the wilderness. In the third month the people arrived at Mount Sinai where God met with them. God came with thunder, smoke, a shaking mountain and other signs, in order to give them the Ten Commandments and enter into covenant with them. It is believed that this occurred fifty days after Passover. While on the mountain, God gave to Moses and the people instructions for celebrating various feasts.

B. The Practice of Pentecost – After arriving in the Promised Land, the people were to celebrate the feasts for which God gave instruction. One of those feasts was Pentecost. The feast of Pentecost was to be celebrated fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits that occurred shortly after the Passover celebration. Each person was to take the first fruits of the grain (wheat) harvest and offer it to the Lord. They were to take the grain, and make two loaves of leavened bread and offer it to the Lord. Along with this wave offering, they were also to present burnt, sin, and peace offerings. This day was to be treated as a Sabbath unto the Lord; a day of rest and remembrance of God's favor on His people.

C. The Meaning of Pentecost – Hidden in the events related above is the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. The following are at least a partial uncovering of what God, the Master Artist, intended:

- Passover, First fruits and Pentecost foreshadowed the death and resurrection of Christ, and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Passover spoke of the blood of Christ shed for sinners to keep them safe from the judgment of God. First fruits, occurring as it did in such proximity to Passover, spoke of the resurrection of Christ. He is the Firstfruits of those raised from the dead. Pentecost, occurring fifty days after First fruits, corresponds to the coming of the Holy Spirit, which occurred fifty days after Christ's resurrection.
- As the law was written with the finger of God fifty days after Passover and then given to the people to guide their covenant relationship, so the law was written on the hearts of new covenant believers (this is what the coming of the Spirit accomplishes) fifty days after the resurrection of Christ. The giving of the law to Israel commenced the formation of the OT community, as did the giving of the Spirit commenced the NT community.
- Since Pentecost is a first fruits offering it signals more to come. In the life of the church it signals a continued harvest as is seen in the book of Acts. More and more would come to acknowledge Christ until His final return. In the life of the believer it signals the promise of more resurrection life. Every believer experiences the power of the resurrection, but not in full measure. There is a hope of full resurrection life when Christ finally returns.

- Two leavened loaves are taken and waved before the Lord. The focus on two may point to the joining of Jew and Gentile in the NT community. The focus on leaven may point to the fact that the new community, though indwelt with the Holy Spirit, is still in need of sanctification. There will still be an influence of sin in the life of the believer until Jesus returns and restores all things completely.

4. Application

A. The Spirit was given at Pentecost to begin the formation of God's new community and to enable this community to fulfill the purposes for which it was called. Give thanks to Jesus for sending His Spirit to live in His church (including you), and ask God for grace to be sensitive and obedient to that Spirit. Pray for God's new community, the church, that God's Spirit would fully have His way in it.

B. Marvel at the wisdom and power of God. He controls all things, working them according to His wise plan. He even has the ability to "hide" His plan in the history of His people and then to bring to pass its fulfillment at just the right time.

5. Review Questions

How were the people of Israel finally able to escape slavery in Egypt? (God sent the death angel who killed the first born sons in all of Egypt, but passed over the sons of all those who had blood on their doorposts. This convinced the Egyptians to let Israel go.) What happened to Israel after escaping Egypt? (They passed through the Red Sea and then met with God at Mt. Sinai. At Sinai God gave them His law and entered into covenant with them.)

What did the people of Israel do to celebrate the feast of Pentecost? (They offered the first fruits of the wheat harvest by presenting to the Lord two leavened loaves of bread. Along with this they presented burnt, sin and peace offerings.)

How are the giving of the law and Pentecost related? (The giving of the law 50 days after Passover foreshadowed the giving of the Spirit – the law written in man's heart – fifty days after Christ's resurrection. Both events commenced the formation of God's special community.)

How do Passover, First fruits, and Pentecost related to the life and ministry of Christ? (Passover points to Christ's death; First fruits to the resurrection; and Pentecost points to Christ sending the Holy Spirit.)

What is the significance of the practice of offering two leavened loaves? (The focus on two may point to the combining of Jew and Gentile in the new community. The focus on leaven may focus on the fact that the new community is still in need of sanctification, even though the Spirit dwells in it.)

In what way was and is Pentecost a Firstfruits offering, that is, a hope of more to come? (For the church it was the hope of more people coming to acknowledge Christ and becoming part of His body. For the individual it was also a hope of greater fullness of God's resurrection life.)

Children's Church Grades 1-3 Special Lessons – O.T. Festivals

Lesson 5

Title: O.T. Festivals – Rosh Hashana

Text: Numbers 10:1-10, Leviticus 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Theme: Rosh Hashana or the Festival of Trumpets was a sacred time of reflection designed to encourage repentance and purity of faith among God's people.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Be able to relate several uses the trumpet had in the life of the people of Israel.
2. Be able to relate what function the trumpet served during Rosh Hashana.
3. Be able to relate what function a trumpet will play at the return of Christ.
4. Respond to God's call by coming to repentance and faith.

Memory Verse: *Lamentations 3:40* *Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD.*

Teacher Direction:

1. The O.T. feasts and festivals were a very important part of the yearly cycle for the people of Israel. Each festival would bring to remembrance some aspect of their Lord's character and works, such as His faithfulness and providence. These special times were times of gathering for God's people, when they could grow in unity with their God and with each other.

These appointed times, however, had significance for more than the people of Israel. In some way, though at times clouded to our understanding, these feasts pointed to the coming ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we study these feasts, our focus shall be on how they point to Christ and our relationship with him.

2. Introduction

As you begin this lesson ask the children to tell you about different sounds in their world that communicate to them. The children may suggest that the fire alarm at school communicates a warning. The bells in their school communicate the beginning and ending of class. The siren of an ambulance going down the street communicates an emergency that requires drivers to move off to the side of the road. Even computers make certain sounds to tell us if we have pushed a wrong button or if we are beginning or ending a program. As you discuss this with the children remind them how important sounds are in communicating important information to us.

Next, if you have access to a horn of some sort, teach the children to move in a certain way in response to different blasts of the horn. For example, instruct the children to stand up when they hear a short blast of the horn. Teach them to sit down after hearing a long blast of the horn. To a series of blasts instruct them to get on their knees. Practice these response actions for a few minutes. Feel free to add a few of your own. Finally, tell the children that in today's lesson the sound of a trumpet plays a very important role. Encourage them to listen well and see if they can learn what the trumpet was meant to communicate to the people of Israel. Also urge them to try to find out what a trumpet has to do with their own future.

3. Bible Story

As you share with the children the significance of Rosh Hashana or the Festival of Trumpets, utilize the following points.

A. The Use of Trumpets in the O.T. (Numbers 10:1-10) - After delivering His people from Egypt, God ordained the use of trumpets to communicate a number of things. Utilizing different sounds from the trumpet as well as using multiple trumpets, God was

able to gather His people or leaders, break camp and set out to a new destination, prepare the people for battle, and prepare the people for times of rejoicing or solemn assemblies. The system would work well so long as the people responded to the trumpet blasts. In many ways an immediate and obedient response showed that the people's hearts were attune to their God.

B. The Festival of Trumpets (Lev. 23:23-25, Numbers 29:1-6) – Rosh HaShana, the Jewish New Year, occurred on the first day of the month of Tishri. It began a very significant time for God's people. It was announced with trumpet blasts. The sound of the trumpet called the people to a sacred assembly, to desist from their own labors, and to offer to the Lord prescribed sacrifices. This would be a pleasing aroma to the Lord. It should be noted that the above actions begin a time of evaluation for the people as they considered the coming Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement was the holiest day of their calendar, when the High Priest would enter into the Holy of Holies and make sacrifice, which covered the sins of the nation. During the ten days leading up to this holiest of days, the people were to examine their lives and repent where necessary. Thus the trumpet blast was also a call to repentance and faith in a merciful God.

C. A Coming Trumpet (I Thess. 4:13-18) – There is a time coming when another trumpet sound shall be heard. It will announce the coming of a King, the Lord Jesus, and will be a call for all of God's people (dead and alive) to be gathered to Him. When the trumpet sounds, the dead in Christ will rise first and meet the Lord in the air. Then those alive at His coming will be raised and gathered to the Lord with all the elect. All those who had repented and come to Christ, their atoning sacrifice, during their life will then forever be with the Lord.

4. Application

A. As the Festival of Trumpets was a call to God's people to examine their lives and repent, so God's people today should often take time to examine their lives. It is so easy to live each day forgetful of God, resulting in transgression of our Lord's will. Periodic evaluation (such as at the Lord's Supper) should assist the child of God in walking with a pure faith.

B. Paul said that knowing Christ is coming again with trumpet sound should be a great encouragement. All of God's children should eagerly await His return and seek, with God's help, to live wholly for Him.

5. Review Questions

What kinds of things did God communicate to the people of Israel with a trumpet? (When to assemble before the tent of meeting, when to break camp and set out, when it was time to prepare for war, when it was time for rejoicing or a solemn assembly,...j)

What does Rosh Hashana mean? (It means the head or beginning of the year, thus is known as the Jewish New Year.)

Why is the Rosh Hashana also called the Festival of Trumpets? (This time of assembly begin with blasts of the trumpet.)

To what kinds of activities did the trumpet call God's people? (To desist from their work, to offering prescribed sacrifices, to evaluate their lives and repent of their sin.)

Is there any kind of a trumpet sound that Christians today should be listening for? (Paul taught that when Jesus returned, He would be accompanied by the sound of a trumpet.)

What will happen when Jesus returns? (Those who had repented and turned to faith in Christ will be gathered to their King and then forever be with Him.)

How often do you take time to think over how you are living?

Children's Church Grades 1-3
Special Lessons – O.T. Festivals

Lesson 6

Title: Tabernacle - The Day of Atonement

Text: Leviticus 16, 23:26-32, Hebrews 9:11-10:25

Theme: The Day of Atonement pointed to the sacrifice of Christ for the forgiveness of sin.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Understand what took place on the Day of Atonement and what this meant to the people of Israel.
2. Be able to show ways that the Day of Atonement points to Christ.
3. Give thanks for the perfect and full salvation available only through Jesus Christ.
4. Place his trust in the shed blood of Christ for forgiveness of sins.

Memory Verse: *Psalm 86:5* You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you. **OR Hebrews 9:22** And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Teacher Direction:

1. The O.T. feasts and festivals were a very important part of the yearly cycle for the people of Israel. Each festival would bring to remembrance some aspect of their Lord's character and works, such as His faithfulness and providence. These special times were times of gathering for God's people, when they could grow in unity with their God and with each other.

These appointed times, however, had significance for more than the people of Israel. In some way, though at times clouded to our understanding, these feasts pointed to the coming ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we study these feasts, our focus shall be on how they point to Christ and our relationship with him.

In this lesson we shall look at the Day of Atonement. This day was the highest of all holy days for the nation of Israel. Again it is hoped that the children will not only come to understand the day as the people of Israel did, but that they will also see Jesus Christ in the rich symbolism of the day.

2. Introduction

Ask children to name all of the non-religious holidays that we celebrate in this country. After obtaining a response, ask children which they believe to be the most important.

Next, have children name all the Christian holidays that we celebrate (see the sheet, "The celebration of the life of Christ in Worship"). Again ask which they believe is the most important holiday we Christians celebrate. Hopefully children will decide that our celebrations centering in the death and resurrection are our most important ones.

Suggest to the children that the people of Israel had numerous holidays as well (Passover, First-fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement and Tabernacles). Of these Yom Kippur was their most important and holy day. Encourage children to learn of the importance of this day and how it teaches us ultimately of Jesus Christ.

3. Bible Story

The following ideas should help you in your presentation of the Day of Atonement.

A. The first priority for this lesson is to help the children understand what the Day of Atonement was like for the people of Israel. To assist children gain insight you might want to show the second half of the video "The Tabernacle and the Day of Atonement" by AVM Presentations. If this video is not available walk children through the

instructions found in Leviticus 16. As you talk about this special day it might be good to have a diagram of the tabernacle available and to chart out the movement of the high priest. Above all help children see that this day was a very significant day whereby the people felt they were starting anew having had their sins forgiven.

B. Next relate how this special feast points to Jesus. The following will help:

- As only the High Priest could enter the holy of holies, so only Christ, the ultimate High Priest, chosen of God, could enter in the heavenly holy of holies on our behalf.
- As the High Priest removed his colorful, more glorious garments and dressed only in linen, so Christ came dressed in His humility, covered with humanity.
- As the sacrifice was killed and its blood applied to the mercy seat, so Christ was killed and His blood was shed. His blood now acts as a satisfying sacrifice for our sins assuring us of the mercies of God.
- As hands were laid on the scapegoat and the goat sent away, so our sins are laid upon Christ and are taken away as far as the east is from the west.
- As the bodies of the sacrifices were burned outside the camp (a place of reproach), so Christ suffered for us outside the city gate bearing the reproach of our sin.

C. Finally share how Christ far supercedes the picture set forth in the Day of Atonement. The following will be helpful:

- Sacrifice for sins had to be made each year, but Christ's sacrifice was done once for all.
- The blood of bulls and goats never really atoned for sin, but Christ's blood truly atoned for sin. That is why He only needed to die once.
- The High Priest had to sacrifice for himself as well, but Christ needed no sacrifice for Himself because He was perfect.
- When the High Priest offered sacrifice the veil still remained, but when Christ died the veil was torn down opening access to God for all God's people.

Note: It is not necessary to cover every comparison above, but rather to show the wonder of Christ in His fulfillment of all God set forth in His word.

4. Application

Toward the end of the Day of Atonement the High Priest put on all his glorious garments and then sacrificed the burnt offering. In like manner, since Christ has returned to His Father's right hand in all His glory, it is right for us to offer up ourselves as living sacrifices. It is also appropriate for us to enjoy the access to God that we have through the blood of Christ.

5. Review Questions

What is the most important holy day to the people of Israel? (The Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur)

What was the significance of the Day of Atonement for the people of Israel? (It was the day that they started anew having had their sins forgiven.)

Name several ways that Jesus fulfills the symbols that are part of the Day of Atonement. (See 3B above)

Name several ways Jesus surpasses the symbolism that is part of this special day. (See 3C above)

In what way does the burnt offering at the end of the Day of Atonement suggest we respond to the risen Christ? (We should offer our lives as a living sacrifice and take advantage of our access to the Father.)

Celebration of Christ's Life in our Worship

Four Sundays of Advent
The Coming of Christ

Christmas
The Birth of Christ

Sunday before Epiphany
God's Declaration of Christ
(in the Star and in His Baptism)

Palm Sunday
The Triumphal Entry of Christ

Maundy Thursday
The Last Supper

Good Friday
The Crucifixion of Christ

Resurrection Sundays
The Resurrection of Christ

First Sunday after Ascension
The Ascension of Christ

Festival of Pentecost
The Coming of the Holy Spirit

Christ the King
The Reign of Christ

Children's Church Grades 1-3
Special Lessons – O.T. Festivals

Lesson 7

Title: Feast of Tabernacles, Booths, and Ingathering

Text: Leviticus 23:33-44, Numbers 29:12-38, Deuteronomy 16:13-16, Matthew 13:30,39, John 1:14, 7:1-2, 37-39, 2 Corinthians 5:1-10, Revelation 21:1-3

Theme: At the end of the age Christ will return to reap the final harvest and to set up His Kingdom where He will tabernacle among His people forever.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Be able to share how the OT saints celebrated the Feast of Booths.
2. Be able to share how this feast points to the life and ongoing ministry of Christ.
3. Be able to share what future events this feast may foreshadow.
4. Thank God for His redemption and provision, and wait expectantly for the return of Christ.

Memory Verse: Revelation 21:3 *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."*

Teacher Direction:

1. The O.T. feasts and festivals were a very important part of the yearly cycle for the people of Israel. Each festival would bring to remembrance some aspect of their Lord's character and works, such as His faithfulness and providence. These special times were times of gathering for God's people, when they could grow in unity with their God and with each other.

These appointed times, however, had significance for more than the people of Israel. In some way, though at times clouded to our understanding, these feasts pointed to the coming ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we study these feasts, our focus shall be on how they point to Christ and our relationship with him.

In this lesson we shall look at the Feast of Tabernacles, which is also called the Feast of Booths or Ingathering. This feast was meant to be a time of rejoicing for the final harvest and a time of remembrance of God's care of Israel while in the wilderness. Being the final feast of the sacred calendar, it is natural to consider links between this feast and the final activities of our Lord Jesus Christ revealed in His Word. It is hoped that the children will find great joy in knowing Jesus' plan to one day come, gather His saints to Himself, and to dwell eternally among them.

2. Introduction

Note: It would be very effective to build a "booth" in the front of the classroom. Perhaps a simple structure with sheets on three sides, and palm branches for a roof would suffice. The teacher may want to share the lesson from inside the "booth". If it is not practical to build a booth, perhaps pitching a tent in one corner of the room may provide adequate environment for this lesson.

To introduce this lesson ask the children if they have ever gone on a camping trip and if they have ever before slept in a tent. Ask the children to tell you why people sleep in tents when they go camping. Help the children see that the biggest reason people use tents is because they cannot take their permanent home with them. Help the children see how ridiculous it would be if everyone took their homes with them when they went camping. Tents were made to be temporary shelters or homes for people.

Tell the children that in today's lesson tent-like structures called booths play a very important role. Encourage the children to listen well in order to find out what these booths had to do with a very important festival of the Jews. Encourage them also to try

and find out what this feast tells us about Jesus and to what all Christians have to look forward.

3. Bible Story

As you share the elements of the Feast of Tabernacles, be sure to emphasize the points that follow:

A. Tabernacles and Israel – After Israel was freed by God from Egypt and passed through the Red Sea, they found themselves in the wilderness. Having no permanent dwelling place the people built booths that provided temporary shelter. God, too, provided for Himself a temporary house called the Tabernacle. Thus, Israel was a people dwelling in temporary houses, living among a God whose presence was symbolized by a temporary dwelling place.

When God met with this people at Mt. Sinai He gave them instructions concerning an annual feast, which they were to celebrate upon entering the land of promise. This feast was designed to bring to remembrance their time of living in booths. The feast was called the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles). The people were to celebrate this feast in the 7th month of the year after the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement. After the people had gathered in the fruit of the final harvest, they were to construct booths and then for seven days live in them while they rejoiced in the Lord's abundant provision. They were also, at this time, to be making daily burnt and sin offerings (see Numbers 29).

The purpose of these feasts days was two-fold. First, it was meant to be a time of great thanksgiving. God had again provided the rain that resulted in a fruitful harvest. For this He was to be greatly praised. Secondly, it was meant to be a time of remembrance for God's redemption from Israel. Israel had been slaves in Egypt, but God had redeemed them and brought them out to the wilderness, where they for a short while lived in booths.

B. Tabernacles and Christ – In the OT the presence of God was symbolized first by a tent-like structure called the Tabernacle (temporary in nature because Israel was then wandering in the wilderness), and later by the temple (a more permanent structure designed for Israel's days in the land of promise). In the opening pages of the NT, John 1:14 speaks of God coming in the person of Jesus to "tabernacle" or dwell among men. After Jesus' departure, God's presence was directly related to the believing community, who was considered the temple of God. Finally, our Scriptures (Rev. 21) point to the time when God will again dwell among man in the new heaven and earth. Thus, this Feast seems to foreshadow God's dwelling among men first in the person of Christ, then in the church, and finally in heaven.

C. Tabernacles and the believer – This feast points to the final harvest (it was the final harvest of the sacred year) when Christ shall return to judge all mankind. At this harvest time He will gather to Himself those who are His (the fruit of the harvest) and will judge those who rejected Him. Then Christ will form a new heaven and earth, and will from this point on dwell (tabernacle) among His people. Man, likewise, will experience transformation, as he sheds His temporary dwelling (2 Cor. 5) and is clothed with the permanent. At this time our redemption will be complete, and we will have reason for exuberant joy.

4. Application

A. The Feast of Tabernacles is very similar to our Thanksgiving celebration today. It is a time of rejoicing and giving thanks for God's abundant provision. Certainly an application from this lesson is to give God thanks for His past and future redemption and for His daily and abundant provision.

B. Since Jesus will return one day to gather His children and set up His final kingdom, we should not live for this world and its enticements, but we should live for God and His

glory. We should seek to live in a holy manner while we joyfully await the coming of our King.

5. Review Questions

How were the people of Israel to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles? (The people were to live in booths for 7 days while they sacrificed burnt and sin offerings each day.)

When was this feast to be celebrated? (After the people gathered in the fruit of the harvest in the 7th month of the year.)

For what purpose were they to celebrate this feast? (It was to be a time of thanksgiving to God, and a time of remembering God's redemption.)

How does this feast point to the life and ministry of Jesus? (Jesus came and tabernacled among men. Now He dwells in men through the Spirit. In the future He will dwell among men in the fullness of His glory.)

What hope does this feast offer for us today? (It provides hope that one day Christ will return, gather us to Himself, and set up His kingdom. He will then dwell among us as He never has since the Garden of Eden.)

How should this hope affect the way we live? (It should make us a thankful people who eagerly await the Lord's return.)

Children's Church Grades 1-3
Special Lessons – O.T. Festivals

Lesson 8

Title: Hanukkah – Feast of Dedication

Text: Daniel 8, 1 Maccabees 1-4, John 10:22-39

Theme: The Feast of Dedication brings to remembrance deliverance, cleansing and light, all symbols of the Lord's ministry to a needy world that dwells in darkness.

Teaching Objectives: By God's grace, each child will

1. Be able to relate the historic situation behind the Feast of Dedication.
2. Be able to tell what a nine-stemmed menorah has to do with this feast.
3. Relate how this feast points to the ministry of Christ.
4. Come to Christ for deliverance, cleansing and the light of life.

Memory Verse: ***John 12:46** I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. **OR Luke 2:30-32** For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."*

Teacher Direction:

1. In this lesson we shall look at a post-Mosaic feast known as the Feast of Dedication, or more commonly called Hanukkah. It's origins stem from the inter-testamental times when the Jews were wonderfully delivered from their enemies, and were able to cleanse the temple and miraculously light its lampstand. Though some suggest this is not a biblical feast, the situation which prompted its beginning is well documented in the book of Daniel. Furthermore from John 10 it seems obvious that our Lord participated, in some way, in its 1st-century celebration.

As with all the feasts our main purpose is to show how these events and celebrations point to our Lord Jesus Christ. This feast offers great insight into the deliverance, cleansing, and life Christ came to give to us. It is hoped that through this study the children will receive the deliverance and cleansing that comes only through Jesus, who was and is the Light of the world.

2. Introduction

To introduce this lesson do what you must to darken the room. Close all the blinds and doors, and cover them if necessary. Try to create as dark an environment as possible. After sitting a few seconds in the dark, light a small oil lamp. Allow the children to enjoy the illumination for a few seconds without interruption.

Next, ask the children how long they think this lamp will stay lit. Help the children understand that even though we do not know exactly how long the lamp will stay lit, we do know that as soon as the oil is used up the lamp will go out. (If you know how long the oil will burn in the lamp you bring to class, give the children this information.) Ask the children how they would feel if after lighting the lamp and waiting a whole day, the lamp did not go out. Ask them how they would feel if it didn't go out for a whole week.

Tell the children that in today's story some oil for a very special lamp lasted for 8 days when it was only supposed to last for 1 day. Encourage the children to listen in order to find out when this occurred. Also encourage them to think about what this story might be teaching us about God, especially in His Son, Jesus Christ.

3. Bible Story

As you share the biblical and historical facts surrounding this feast, be sure to emphasize the following:

A. Daniel's prophecy and the feast – During the time of Daniel the people were exiled in the land of Babylon. They had seen Jerusalem and their temple destroyed, and they wondered if there was any hope for them as a people. Daniel wrote especially to remind the people that their God was sovereign and that He was still in control. He wrote as well to inform them of some of the things God intended to do in the future.

In the 8th chapter Daniel shared a vision of a ram with two horns, one horn longer than the other, which was overcome by a male goat. This goat magnified itself greatly, but its large horn was broken and four horns came up in its place. One of these horns grew great and magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host. Apparently this horn removed the regular sacrifice and threw down the place of the sanctuary. This vision, later interpreted by Daniel, was meant to encourage the people.

B. History and the feast – What Daniel prophesied, at least in part, came to pass in the next several hundred years. The ram with the two horns represented the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians. This kingdom defeated Babylon, but was later overcome by the kingdom of Greece under the leadership of Alexander, the Great. Alexander expanded his kingdom and did become very great, but upon his death, his kingdom divided into four. Prominent among the four was the kingdom of the Seleucids, who were led at a very strategic time by Antiochus (later known as Epiphanes).

Antiochus had a vision of expanding his kingdom both in Egypt and in Israel. His tactics were harsh, especially in Israel where he sought to eradicate the Jewish faith. His abominations (seen in 1 Mac 1) included desecrating the temple by sacrificing swine. Many of the Jews put up with Antiochus' abominations, but the Maccabee family would not submit to him even if it cost them their life. Under the leadership of Judas Maccabee, the Jews were able to overcome great odds and defeat the armies that threatened them.

During one of the battles, Judas and his men went to the temple and began to cleanse it. While cleansing it, they found a jar of consecrated oil. This they used to light the lamp stand in the temple, and though they only had 1 day's worth of oil, the lamp miraculously burned for 8 days. After their deliverance from the Seleucids and after this miraculous provision of oil to keep the light burning in the temple, the Jews decided to commemorate this event annually with a feast lasting 8 days. In modern day celebrations a menorah with 9 stems is used – 1 stem used to light the others; the other 8 to remember the 8 days the oil lasted.

C. Christ and the feast – At the Feast of Dedication recorded in John 10 Jesus stood in the portico (porch) of the temple. He represented the fullness of all that the Jews remembered during these feasts days, and all that they desired throughout their history. Sadly, those present that day did not understand this. Jesus was the great Deliverer. Just as the Jews were reminded of the great deliverance from the Seleucids at this feast, so Christ stood there as the only One who could deliver them from their greatest and most powerful of enemies: sin, death and Satan. He was also the great Purifier. Just as the Jews sought to purify the temple, which has been desecrated by Antiochus, so Christ came to cleanse us from our sin and rebellion, and make us a suitable dwelling place for God. Finally, Jesus was and is the Light of the world. As the Jews were surprised and delighted by the oil that provided light for 8 days, so Christ is our Light who shines through us unto eternity as we give our lives to His service.

4. Application

A. Just as Judas Maccabeus trusted God to deliver him and his people from seemingly impossible odds, so we must place our trust in Jesus Christ to deliver us from seemingly impossible odds. Sin, death and Satan are great enemies, but our God is greater than they are and is able to deliver us from their grip. We must all look only to Jesus for deliverance.

B. As we look only to Jesus for deliverance, He will come into our lives and cleanse us. He will make us suitable to be His dwelling place. As He lives in us He will provide us with all we need, and will cause His light to shine through us. May each of us look to Jesus, and Him alone, to perform this work in and through us.

5. Review Questions

How did Daniel try to encourage the people of Israel who had been uprooted from their land? (He shared a vision from God with them that told about future events. This was designed to show them that God was in control.)

What was the name of the person referred to in Daniel's vision who became very powerful after the death of Alexander the Great? (Antiochus Epiphanes)

What did Antiochus do that angered certain Jews? (He commanded the Jews to worship idols. He desecrated the temple. He threatened to kill those who did not obey him.)

Who led the Jews in their revolt against Antiochus and his armies? (Judas Maccabeus)

How successful was Judas, and why was He successful? (He won many battles against armies much larger than his. He trusted the Lord. That was the key to his success.)

What did Judas do with the temple? (He cleansed it and made it fit for worship.)

What miracle occurred as Judas and his men were cleansing the temple? (The oil lasted 8 days instead of only 1.)

Why do Jews celebrate with feast with a 9-stemmed menorah? (8 stems are for the eight days the oil lasted. The ninth stem is used to light the other eight.)

How does this feast point to Christ? (He is our Deliverer. He cleanses us from sin making us a fit dwelling place. Then He shines His light through us.)