

COME CELEBRATE THE FEASTS OF THE LORD... THEY SHOW US JESUS

Teacher Introduction

Can you think of any holidays that are more important to Christians than Christmas and Easter? Probably not; yet, as important and meaningful as these two holidays are, God did not mandate them for his people to celebrate. Only in the Older Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures, do we find seven, "Holy Day" feasts. These festivals were established and set apart by God for his people to observe a time of worship and rest.

Why is it important for children to study the feasts today?

First, the Hebrew word for feasts means "appointed times." God has chosen them for a holy purpose. Therefore, carefully studying the feasts will help children understand God's love, purpose and plan for their lives.

Second, the feasts have both historical and prophetic significance. In the first feast, Passover, we see God's care, provision and protection for his people when he provided a Passover lamb. He delivered them from bondage in Egypt, and he delivers us from bondage today through Jesus, the Lamb of God. In the last feast, Tabernacles, we see how God faithfully led and lived among the Jewish people as they wandered the desert, living in temporary shelters. Today those who trust in Christ are "tabernacling" their way to the Promised Land, the new heaven and earth, as Jesus dwells with them in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Third, we cannot understand Jesus' ministry apart from the context of the Older Testament and these seven feasts. For example, when Jesus took the cup and broke the bread during what we now call the "Lord's Supper," "Communion" or "Eucharist" he was in the midst of celebrating Passover. Understanding the context of the Passover Feast can open our eyes to glorious truths of Scripture and open our hearts in worship to God.

Fourth, studying the *Feasts of the Lord* is a fun and exciting way for children to learn how the Older and Newer Testaments relate to one another.

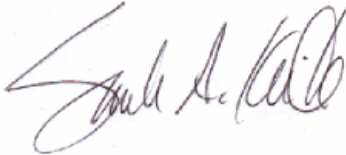
These ancient feasts are still celebrated today, but quite differently from the way God originally instructed them to be observed. One of the major reasons is that Jewish people do not and cannot offer sacrifices today, though that was a key component within the ancient feasts. Therefore, for them, the feasts are celebrated in a modified manner, and are seen as feasts that tell of their past and God's faithfulness. For Messianic Jews and believing Gentiles (those people who trust Jesus is the Promised Messiah, the Christ, predicted in the Older Testament), the feasts are more than history. They also tell of God's future redemption through Jesus Christ!

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Each lesson in this series is accompanied by a craft, game, memory verse and song-time suggestions (see below). If you use both the craft and game for each session, it will take seven, two-hour sessions to complete this series. However, if you split each lesson into two sessions (recommended), whereby you present the lesson, memory verse, craft and songs in the first session and the game with lesson review, memory recitation and songs in the next session, it will take fourteen, one-hour sessions to complete this series. At the back of the book, you will find the patterns to accompany the lessons.

There are two craft options for each lesson, to make either a related collage or yummy food devotion. Though collages are a bit more time consuming than my previous curriculum craft projects, they have the potential to become beautiful art pieces reflecting the seven Feasts of the Lord. If you customarily separate your age groups, you could have your older children create the collages and the younger children make the food devotions. Alternatively, if you opt to use both the craft and the food devotion on separate days, you could extend the series an additional seven lessons! It's really up to you.

God bless you in your ministry to children!



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Song Time Suggestions

Available with book purchase

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Class Introduction

When you think of holidays, which ones come to mind? How does your family celebrate them—in your home, in church, at school? (Receive answers.)

Easter, Christmas, our birthdays and anniversaries are all important holidays and occasions that we like to celebrate and remember. As important as these holidays are, God doesn't tell us that we *should* celebrate them. Don't get me wrong, it's not wrong to observe them, but God doesn't say we *must*.

However, there are seven holidays in the Older Testament, the part of the Bible written before Jesus came to earth, that God told his people, the Israelites, to celebrate. Some of these feasts were celebrated where the people lived. For others, the Jewish people traveled from all across the country to the capital city of Jerusalem to celebrate them.

Read Leviticus 23:1-4 from an easy-to-understand Bible.

These verses tell us that God wants his people to set aside one day a week for rest and worship. However, he has also selected seven extra holidays or feasts as Holy Days. This means they are set apart and chosen by God for special occasions of worship and rest for his people. Over the next several weeks, we will learn about these unique holy day feasts and how they relate to Jesus, his ministry, and our lives today.

The first four Holy Day Feasts take place in the springtime, around the time of Easter. As you will soon learn, Passover, the first feast, is what Easter is really all about!

Come along with me as we celebrate the Feasts of the Lord!

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(Before beginning, please see the Class Introduction on the previous page. If you choose, there is enough material in lesson one to cover three, one hour sessions.)

Lesson Focus: God Rescues Us

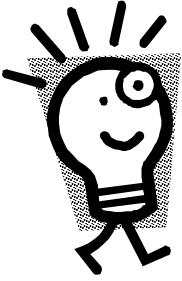
Overview: When God rescued Israel from bondage in Egypt, he provided a Passover lamb. Today, God delivers us from bondage to sin by providing Jesus, our Passover Lamb.

Bible Reference: Exodus chapters 6-13.

Passover is the first of the special holy day feasts God commanded his people to celebrate (Exodus 12:1-5). It is observed on the 14th day of the first month of the Hebrew calendar, our March or April. The next six feasts are built upon this one special feast! In the same way, Easter follows Christmas. If Jesus hadn't been born, we couldn't celebrate Jesus' resurrection. Likewise, without Passover, the other feasts could not have happened either. The Feast of Passover is a day when the Jewish people, the Israelites, remember how God delivered them from slavery in Egypt.

Today's skit will help you understand what happened to them thousands of years ago.

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Enrichment Idea: Let My People Go Skit

Based on Exodus Chapters 3-11

Actors: Choose children to act out the parts of Moses, Aaron, Pharaoh and a few more children as the Egyptians.

Props: rod for Moses, a clear pitcher of water, red food coloring, a small baggie containing a handful of confetti and color-coded stick-on dots. To make Pharaoh's headdress, twist aluminum foil into a headband, then wrap the end into a "snake-head" shape.

Before beginning, whisper instructions to the child acting out the part of Aaron. When the part about the frogs and gnats is read, "Aaron" is to toss a small handful of confetti onto the children playing the part of the Egyptians. When the part about the plague of boils is read, "Aaron" sticks a few of the color-coded dots onto the "Egyptians" faces and arms.

Teacher dramatically narrates while the children act out their parts (instructions are bolded and italicized text).

Narrator: "Thousands of years ago Pharaoh, an Egyptian king, enslaved the Jewish people, also known as the Israelites. Pharaoh was very cruel to them. He forced them to work very hard, making bricks from straw and clay to build his pyramids.

Look cruel and mean, Pharaoh.

But God was faithful to the Israelites. He told Moses he would rescue them from Pharaoh and lead them safely out of Egypt.

Stand at attention, Moses.

God told Moses to say to Pharaoh, 'Let the Israelite people go'. But Moses was scared and stuttered when he spoke, so he begged God to use someone else to talk to the Israelites.

Moses, beg God to use someone else.

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So God allowed Moses' brother, Aaron, to tell the Jewish people what God wanted, and God told Moses what to say to Pharaoh.

Stand at attention, Aaron.

Moses told Pharaoh that God wanted his people to leave Egypt, so they could worship him in the wilderness.

Moses, say, 'Let my people go!'

But the Pharaoh was stubborn and would not obey God.

Pharaoh, say, "No way, you can't go!"

So God sent nine terrible plagues "a curse or disease" on the Egyptians to force Pharaoh to let the Jewish people go. This was to show God's supernatural power over all the Egyptian's false gods, because each plague was aimed at one of their gods.

The Egyptians worshipped the Nile River. So God first turned the river into blood so the Egyptians couldn't drink from it.

(Teacher, put a few drops of red food coloring into the pitcher of water.)

But Pharaoh was stubborn. He would not obey God and let the Israelites go.

Pharaoh, say, 'No, you can't go!'

Then God sent ...the rest of this skit is **Available with book purchase**

Read Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14 from a child-friendly Bible. (Optional: draw a door on butcher paper and then use a small leafy branch to sprinkle washable red paint onto it when reading the part of applying blood to the doorframes.)

Can you imagine buying a pet, taking care of it for four days and then having to kill it? Just think how attached everyone in the family would have become to this sweet little animal! The sacrifice of the lamb was to be a striking reminder to the Israelites of the punishment for disobeying God.

(It is interesting to note that on the day Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, being hailed as King, it was *lamb selection day*, the day Jewish families chose their lamb for Passover. Today we call that day Palm Sunday.)

When God *passed over* the homes of Egypt and the firstborn males of every family died, because they hadn't obeyed God by sprinkling blood on the doorframes of their homes, Pharaoh begged the Israelites to leave. So about

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600,000 men and their women and children, as well as all their livestock of cattle, sheep and goats, left Egypt that day.

However, even after all those terrible plagues and the supernatural power God showed to Pharaoh, he changed his mind and sent his army to try to capture them. But God was faithful to his people, and he then performed one of the most amazing miracles of all time!

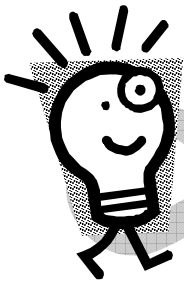
Let's read what happened as it is told in Exodus 14.

Read Exodus 14:10, 13-16, 21-31 from a child-friendly Bible.

(This is a thrilling passage of Scripture. Read it with excitement!)

Ever since that first great and terrible Passover day, the Jewish people have celebrated this event every year for thousands of years. Initially it was a simple, one-day dinner feast. God said to observe it on the fourteenth day of the first month (during our March or April). The Israelites were forbidden to work on this day. They were to roast a lamb and eat it—to remember the lamb that was killed and the blood used to mark the doorframes of their homes. They were also commanded to eat unleavened bread*, to remember how quickly they left Egypt, and bitter herbs, to recall the bitterness of their slavery in Egypt.

As time went on more food items were added to the dinner to help remember the events of that first Passover. During the dinner, known as a Seder, meaning "order," special Seder plates are now used to help retell the story of God's great rescue of the Jewish people. Children are especially important to this feast and they are always welcomed and included in the retelling of the Passover story.



Enrichment Idea: The Seder Plate

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Today, when we celebrate communion or the Lord's Supper, we are remembering Jesus' last Passover Seder before his death and resurrection. Jesus brought newer meaning to the Passover celebration when he took the unleavened bread and said, "This is my body broken for you." Keep in mind, unleavened bread symbolized the Jewish people's hasty escape from slavery in Egypt. When Jesus made this statement using unleavened bread, it also represented the removal of sin by his death on the cross. Because leaven or

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yeast in the Bible oftentimes represents sin. Now, when we trust in Jesus, he immediately frees us from our slavery to sin.

When Jesus took the cup and said, "This is my blood shed for you." he was sipping the "Cup of Redemption," served during the Seder Meal. Redemption means to "buy back," as in *buy back or rescue from slavery*. You see, the Passover Feast not only looks back to the time when God rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt, but also to when God sent Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, to be our Passover Lamb, shedding his own blood and rescuing us from our slavery to sin. He makes it possible for us to live in Heaven with him forever!

Bible Memory Verse

"...Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." 1 Corinthians 5:7

Pray

Craft: Available with book purchase

Yummy Devotion: Available with book purchase



Lesson Review

(Use when dividing the lesson into two or three sessions.)

Song Time - Choose from our song time suggestions or your own song choice.

Discussion Questions

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Game: Hide n' Seek the Afikomen!

Available with book purchase

After the Game Discussion

Available with book purchase

Pray

Review Lesson One Memory Verse

"...Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." 1 Corinthians 5:7

(Score children's progress by placing stickers on the Memory Verse Tracker.)

Get our [Bible Lesson Plans on the Feasts of Israel!](#)