

SABBATH SCHOOL

Level 5 • Unit 8 • Week 1

PLAN OF SALVATION

[Editor's note to teacher: The lessons of Unit 8 contain a great deal of information. You are not expected to present it in its entirety. We chose not to change what the writer had included, but just inform you that you may concentrate on those areas you feel would be helpful to your class without feeling the need to cover all the material.]

OBJECTIVE:

To make the connection between God's Holy Days and His seven-step plan of salvation and explain what each Holy Day—each step—means.

ATTENTION GETTER:

Say: Let's pretend that you have stepped into a time machine and the wrong button was accidentally hit. Whooooosh! The time machine whirls you "back to the past"—about 3,400 years ago and sets down in Egypt in a remote area where it is well-hidden. In the distance, you can see people working. Unknown to you, it is a slave camp and as you approach, Egyptian soldiers seize you, and put you to work making bricks. You are now Israelite slaves! What do you think your life, as a slave, would be like?

Ask: Where would you live? Would you be taken from your parents now that you are old enough to work?

Where would you sleep—a nice comfy bed or a straw mat on a dirt floor? Would you have to rise before daylight to get your day's work done?

Would you be able to have possessions, even necessary ones like extra clothes or a toothbrush?

What would mealtime be like? Would you be made to serve your master before you ate?

Would your only education be what you needed to know in order to do your job?

What is a taskmaster? Would you be allowed to rest if you got tired? Would you have time for yourself?

BIBLE LESSON:

Do: Make a copy of "God's Seven-Step Plan of Salvation" for each student.

Say: You are still slaves in Egypt and you begin to hear about a man named Moses who has been sent by God to free all the slaves. Wow! They're talking about Moses of the Bible. These slaves must be Israelites, you think to yourself. I don't know what they might do if they find out that I know a lot about Moses, God and the plagues. I also know their future—they will soon be freed from slavery and wander in the wilderness for 40 years. I think I'd better play like I don't know anything.

"Who is this man named Moses and who is God?" you ask.

"The only gods we have heard of are Egyptian gods—those with heads of animals and bodies of people," a young boy answers.

"I do remember one of the elders telling me something about the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but I wasn't paying much attention," said another. Suddenly, you are brought back to reality by the excitement in the camp. Everyone is talking about Moses, plagues, smearing lamb's blood on door frames, the death angel, God and freedom!

Right now they are still slaves, but soon they will be free. God will start teaching the Israelites about His Holy Days and much, much more. They will live through these events and by doing so they will learn and with each Holy Day they will be one step closer to understanding God's plan of salvation.

Do: Give each child a turn reading about the three spring Holy Days and the recap of the fall Holy Days.

GOD'S SEVEN-STEP PLAN OF SALVATION

PASSOVER—THE FIRST STEP IN GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

"These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD's Passover" (Leviticus 23:4-5).

God used the 10 plagues to destroy the belief in the pagan gods worshiped by the Egyptians and even many Israelites. The Egyptians were a very religious people—they had gods for everything. When God turned the waters of the Nile to blood, they feverishly prayed to Hapi, the goddess of the Nile. Only when Moses prayed to the true God did the crisis end. Each plague struck down another god. The 10th plague was against Pharaoh. The Egyptians believed he was descended from the god Ra who was thought to be the source of life. That night, the lives of all the Egyptian firstborn were taken by the death angel sent by God. Pharaoh was powerless to save the life of his first born son.

God removed all doubt in the minds of the Israelites as to who was the true God and which was the true religion. He was now ready to start teaching the Israelites about His plan of salvation.

After the sun had set, while it was still light, each Israelite family began the first step of God's plan of salvation by sacrificing an unblemished male lamb of the first year. The lamb's blood was to be smeared on the doorposts of their homes as a sign to the death angel to pass over and spare their firstborn. With doors tightly shut, they hastily ate their roasted lamb, unleavened bread and bitter herbs so that they would be ready to leave Egypt at a moment's notice. They were instructed not to leave their homes that night and when the death angel passed over, the firstborn in those homes that had the blood of the lamb on their doorposts was spared. Because the Egyptians did not have the protection of the lamb's blood on their doorposts, the firstborn of both man and beast died—even the firstborn son of Pharaoh. This convinced Pharaoh to "let God's people go, that they may hold a feast to Him in the wilderness." Pharaoh was beside himself—his oldest son was dead and the people were asking him to let the Israelites go. Fearing this was God's doing, he sent his swiftest messenger to Moses, commanding all Israelites to take their animals and leave Egypt at once.

Morning finally came and according to God's command the Israelites went to the Egyptians and demanded that they be paid with gold, silver, jewels and precious gifts for their long and bitter slavery. They were given whatever they wanted because God gave them favor with the Egyptians. The Israelites were now ready and that evening they began gathering at Ramses.

Passover has great meaning. Putting the lamb's blood on the doorposts signifies the blood of Christ being applied to our lives. "Christ our passover" gave His perfect, sinless life as a sacrifice to pay the death penalty we have all earned. And Israel coming out of Egypt is symbolic of our coming out of sin.

DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD—THE SECOND STEP IN GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

"And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it. But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD for seven days. The seventh day shall be a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it" (Leviticus 23:6-8).

As the sun set, the First Day of Unleavened Bread began. That night was a Night to Be Much Observed—they were free from slavery and had much for which to be thankful. They brought no leavening with them and for the next seven days they would eat bread that was flat and not puffed up.

Leavening symbolizes sin during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Eating unleavened bread for seven days symbolizes continuing to avoid sin after having our sins forgiven by Christ's sacrifice.

Pharaoh regretted having let the Israelites go and immediately pursued them. He caught up with them on the sixth day, just as darkness was setting in and the Last Day of Unleavened Bread was beginning. Pharaoh thought he had them trapped—the Red Sea was in front of them and there were mountains on each side. The cloud that had guided them by day became a pillar of fire at night and this night it moved between the Israelites and Pharaoh and his army. That night God miraculously parted the Red Sea and Moses led the Israelites across dry ground. As the day dawned, Pharaoh could see the Israelites in the far distance crossing the dry seabed with water billowing high on each side. Losing no time, Pharaoh and his army followed in hot pursuit, but were stopped in their tracks when God caused the chariots to lose their wheels. As the last Israelite climbed up out of the dry seabed onto the shore, God said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." Moses did as God told him, and at daybreak the two walls of water rushed together destroying Pharaoh's army all at once—never to trouble the Israelites again (Exodus 14:13, 17-18, 23, 26, 28, 30)!

What does the eating of unleavened bread for seven days symbolize?

PENTECOST—THE THIRD STEP IN GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

"And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be completed" (Leviticus 23:15).

"And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations" (Leviticus 23:21).

Seven weeks had passed since the Israelites left Egypt and it was now time for God to teach them about His third Holy Day, Pentecost. The cloud that had been guiding them came to a halt right over Mount Sinai, a rocky mountain. At the foot of the mountain was an area with numerous water springs, a level area for pitching tents and grass for the animals. Shortly after the people were settled in, God asked Moses to come up to Mount Sinai alone to receive instructions directly from the Creator. As Moses climbed a distance up the mountain away from the people, a Voice spoke out, "Remind the Israelites that I, the Creator of all, have freed them from the Egyptians and have brought them safely here. Tell them if they obey My laws, they will become a special people that I will treasure above others. They shall become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation!" Moses hurried down to deliver the message.

Upon hearing what God had said, the excited Israelites solemnly agreed to obey whatever God asked

of them. When Moses delivered the Israelites' answer, God told Moses to instruct the people that they should bathe and put on clean clothes and that in three days He would come down unusually close.

On the third day, there was a spectacular show of thick dark clouds, lightning bolts and ear-splitting thunder. A blast that sounded like a giant trumpet announced that God was descending Mount Sinai. The peak broke out into giant flames that spiraled upward. Then all became still and quiet. A thunderous Voice said to the people, "I am the Eternal, your God, who brought you out of slavery in Egypt." His voice filled the air as He communicated the Ten Commandments to the Israelites—one by one, revealing the way to happiness, good health, protection and prosperity. When He was finished, God said to Moses, "Come up the mountain alone."

For 40 days and nights Moses listened intently as God instructed him in the many things he must teach the people. God gave him rules covering many circumstances and situations requiring God's wisdom. At the end of the 40 days God presented Moses with two stone tablets on which were written the Ten Commandments.

Another name for God's third Holy Day is "Feast of Firstfruits." This signifies that only a few are being called to salvation now. They are the firstfruits of God's spiritual harvest. It was on the first Pentecost after Christ's death and resurrection that the Holy Spirit was given to the New Testament Church. The Holy Spirit is God's power that enables us to obey His law. These first three Holy Days are celebrated in the spring.

What two things did God give on Pentecost?

FEAST OF TRUMPETS—THE FOURTH STEP IN GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

"Then the LORD said to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, saying, "In the seventh month on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD."'" (Leviticus 23:23-25).

Ancient Israel used melodic silver trumpets that could be heard great distances to communicate important messages, such as announcing each feast and calling God's people to assemble. A ram's horn trumpet called a shofar, was loud and harsh and was used to sound a warning of danger and warfare. Both the silver trumpets and the shofar were blown on this Holy Day, the Feast of Trumpets.

The Feast of Trumpets gets its name from the trumpets that will be used when Christ returns to earth. He will put an end to the wars and suffering of mankind under Satan's rule and establish the Kingdom of God! Christ will replace Satan at this time. (Satan has been ruling the earth since the time of Adam and Eve.) The Feast of Trumpets is a day of great happiness because it is the day that pictures the beginning of true peace, happiness and abundance for everyone.

At Christ's return those chosen by God, both living and dead, will be given eternal life. This is the first resurrection.

This fourth step represents the beginning of a new era. It will be the ending of this present evil age of mankind and the beginning of a time when Christ will play a more direct part in world events. The time in history that these four last steps represent has not yet occurred.

What does the Feast of Trumpets picture?

DAY OF ATONEMENT—THE FIFTH STEP IN GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION

“And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering by fire made to the LORD. And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God’” (Leviticus 23:26-28).

God gave certain instructions to ancient Israel on how to observe His Holy Days in order to provide a deeper understanding of His plan for saving mankind from the destruction brought on by Satan. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest was to offer a sin offering for himself and his family so that he could represent Christ, our High Priest. Then he was to select two goats and present them before God. Lots were then cast to ask God to identify the two goats. These two goats were to represent Christ and Azazel (Satan). The goat that God selected by lot to represent Christ was to be slain—just as Christ was slain (crucified). The other goat representing Azazel (Satan) was to be driven alive into an uninhabited wilderness just as Satan will be driven away from the presence of God (Leviticus 16).

The first goat representing Christ was slain as a sin offering for the people. After the high priest finished the ceremony of reconciliation, Azazel, the goat representing Satan, was brought in. The high priest laid both hands upon the goat and confessed over him all the sins of the children of Israel, symbolically putting them upon the head of Azazel (Satan). And Satan, after all, is the originator of all sin. When this was done the Azazel goat was led away by a qualified man into the wilderness. Afterward, he washed his clothes and bathed before returning to camp. The ancient Israelites also fasted on this day.

This fifth step of God’s plan symbolically pictures deposing—removing from office—Satan the devil from his present position as world ruler, to a place completely apart and away from mankind. He will be bound for 1,000 years, no longer able to deceive mankind.

What happened to the goat that represented Christ? What happened to the goat, Azazel, that represented Satan?

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES—THE SIXTH STEP IN GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying, ‘The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the LORD’S Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it’” (Leviticus 23:33-35).

The word “tabernacles” means temporary dwelling places. And God tells us to live in temporary dwelling places—motels, tents, campers, condominiums, etc.—during the Feast. We are to stay in temporary dwellings to remind us of the ancient Israelites who lived in tents after they were brought out from slavery in Egypt by God. He guided and protected them during the 40 years in the wilderness and

gave them the land of Canaan, a land of bountiful harvests.

This sixth step of God's plan of salvation pictures a time when the earth will be restored to the way it was when God first created Adam and Eve. This festival lasts seven days and pictures the 1,000 years when Jesus Christ will reign on earth. This period is also called the Millennium. This is a time when all people will learn God's way and the land will again produce a bountiful harvest. People will live in peace and harmony because Jesus Christ will be ruling instead of Satan. Even the nature of the wild animals will be peaceful. They, too, will not fight and kill but will be tame and make wonderful pets.

During the Millennium, those who are alive at Christ's return, as well as their descendants, will be offered the opportunity for salvation.

Would you like to live during the 1,000 years when Christ will rule? Why?

LAST GREAT DAY—THE SEVENTH STEP IN GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

"For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it" (Leviticus 23:36).

The seventh and last step in God's master plan of salvation depicts the Great White Throne Judgment. It follows right after the Millennium when billions of people will be resurrected (brought back to human, physical life) and given a chance to learn God's way for a period of 100 years. Most of the people who have lived throughout history have not understood God's Plan. Many have not even heard about God or Jesus Christ. God, being absolutely fair, will give everyone the opportunity to be born into His family and receive eternal life. Those who are training now to be in God's family will be able to help teach all those billions who have lived and died without learning His truth. They will then have to decide whether to live His way or not. God wants everyone to be in His family. Only after every single human being has had his or her chance to know and accept God's way of life will God's plan for mankind be completed.

Name God's festivals in their proper sequence. Give the seven steps of God's plan of salvation in order. God's festivals and the steps in God's plan of salvation are one and the same.

LESSON APPLICATION:

Say: Throughout the Bible God uses symbols to teach or explain His truth. His Holy Days are rich in symbols. When we think of Passover, we think of an unblemished lamb which is symbolic of Christ, the Lamb of God. When we think of the Days of Unleavened Bread, we naturally think of unleavened bread or leavening which is symbolic of sin. The Feast of Trumpets brings to mind the silver trumpets and the shofar.

But there is another kind of symbolism that God uses. It is called symbolic narration or allegory. God uses those events that happened to the Israelites long ago, to give us a deeper, fuller, understanding of His plan of salvation. I will first read the event and then read three

different answers. You tell me which correctly tells what it pictures—a, b or c.

1. The Israelites were instructed to kill an unblemished male lamb and smear its blood on the doorposts as a sign to the death angel to pass over and spare their firstborn.
 - a. God gave these instructions to see if the Israelites would obey.
 - b. Jesus Christ was sacrificed of so that our sins can be forgiven by His shed blood.
 - c. The doorposts had to be marked with blood so that the death angel could see it.

2. God parted the Red Sea, and Moses led the Israelites across dry ground with water high on each side.
 - a. God wanted to impress the Israelites with His power.
 - b. God parted the Red Sea to show the Israelites that He could protect them by giving them a way of escape from Pharaoh.
 - c. The Israelites crossing of the Red Sea was symbolic of baptism.

3. Pharaoh and his army followed in hot pursuit. God said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.” Moses did as God told him, and the two walls of water rushed together destroying Pharaoh’s army all at once—never to trouble the Israelites again!
 - a. Pharaoh realized that if he let the slaves go there would be no one to do the work so he pursued them to get them back.
 - b. God drowned Pharaoh’s army because they kept the Israelites in slavery.
 - c. God destroyed Pharaoh’s army to teach the Israelites to rely on Him alone—and not *their* strength or wisdom or planning.

4. God asked Moses to tell the Israelites, “If they obey My laws, they will become a special people that I will treasure above others. They shall become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation!”
 - a. In the first resurrection God’s people will be made kings and priests and will reign on the earth.
 - b. Those who obey God’s laws will be treated as special.
 - c. As a reward for being obedient, God will give you treasures and a kingdom.

ANSWERS: 1.-b; 2.-c; 3.-c; 4.-a

Music:

Teacher’s choice from the United Church of God hymnal.

MEMORY VERSE:

“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

family activity

THE POINT:

The lesson for this week explained God's festivals, which are the seven steps of God's plan of salvation.

FAMILY TOGETHER TIME:

One of God's many qualities is planning. Help your child develop this quality.

Use a yearly calendar large enough to write on to plan for Holy Days. Let him/her circle each festival for the year on the calendar.

Assist your child in making a list for each Holy Day detailing what they need to do in order to be prepared. (This will help eliminate last minute rushing around or forgetting something.) Some things will be general and can be used for each Holy Day—for example, get clothes ready; polish shoes; get Bible; get offering envelope ready; have notebook, pen or pencils ready; etc.

There are also specifics that need to be done for each Holy Day. For the Days of Unleavened Bread, for example, help remove leavening from the house and the car, help mom in preparing unleavened lunches, etc. For the Feast of Tabernacles, get school assignments, help in getting clothes and others items ready for packing, etc. Post each list next to the appropriate Holy Day. When each Holy Day approaches, encourage your child to follow through on his/her planning. The good results of being prepared will reinforce the idea of planning.

MEMORY VERSE:

"Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).