



biblestudy

**The Feast of
Pentecost**

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

Introduction

This study will cover the third annual feast God proclaimed as His feast and holy convocation. Like Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost commemorates historic Biblical events and reveals vital parts of God's plan for man's salvation. Since these feasts are annual festivals, they are kept at different times throughout the year to give us a sense of order or time frame. Just like chapters in a book, these days build one upon another until the plan of God has been revealed. These festivals are celebrated each year as a reminder of God's plan for man – and that is, He is creating a family in His name, founded on His law; and His plan will be completed in His own time frame.

Exodus 23:14-16 shows there are three festival times or seasons during the year, and they are designated by the name of one of the Feasts that falls during that time period: 1) the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 2) the Feast of Weeks or Firstfruits, and 3) the Feast of Ingathering or Tabernacles. Notice also the time of year each festival season occurs: Unleavened Bread falls during the first month, Abib, of the Hebrew calendar, in the early spring (Leviticus 23:5-6). The Feast of First Fruits is celebrated in the late spring, during the month, Sivan (Leviticus 23:16). And finally, the Feast of Ingathering occurs during the 7th month, Tishrei, in the fall (Leviticus 23:34).

The feast days, also called annual Sabbaths, were purposely spread out thru the year to help us

better understand the important meaning of each season. The feast dates coincide with the seasonal crop harvests in the land of Palestine. God uses the feasts to show His plan of salvation or the "harvesting" of His people. By paralleling the crop harvests and festivals, God helps His people make the connection between a physical and spiritual harvest.

God's plan truly is a masterpiece of design and planning. Each festival gives us a better understanding of our purpose in this physical life. Let's now look into the third feast, the Feast of Pentecost.

The coming of the Holy Spirit

Luke, who was inspired to write the book of Acts, gives us this account of what was soon to pass following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ:

"The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which" He said, "you have heard from me; "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." Acts 1:1-5 NKJ

“Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come they were all with one accord and in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as a rushing mighty wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit ...” Acts 2:1-2, 4 NKJ

The New Testament Church began on that exact day in 31 AD, on the Day of Pentecost, when God’s Holy Spirit was poured out upon 120 people (Acts 1:13-15). Among the 120 were the apostles, Mary, other women and the brethren of Jesus. It is extremely important to note the disciples were gathered on this day of Pentecost well after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Acts 1 reveals that Christ had been with them for forty days after He was resurrected.

Comment: In today’s language the word “church” is often understood as the building in which the membership is gathered. We often refer to the building as the church. The word “church”, as used in the Bible carries a different meaning. The English word church is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means “called out” or “assembly”. God’s Church is the body of members – those He has chosen to be His people. Similarly, when the Israelites gathered the spring harvest into a building, the building was not considered to be the firstfruit – it was the harvest that constituted the firstfruit.

Many people believe the feast days mentioned in the Old Testament scriptures were abolished at the end of Jesus’ physical life when He died on the cross. Yet we find the disciples gathered together on this feast day just as God had commanded in

Exodus and Leviticus. This example is important for modern-day Christians. It points to the fact that the observance of each feast day was not only important in the Old Testament period, but their observance carries even greater importance for Christians today. God did not set an expiration date on these festivals, and neither should man abolish what God has ordained:

“...The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are MY feasts.”
Leviticus 23:2

“...it shall be a statute FOREVER throughout your generations in all your dwellings.” Leviticus 23:14

God states these are MY Feasts. God did not say these are man’s feasts or the feasts of the Jews only. God created the festivals of God not men. Too many today who call themselves Christian say these festivals no longer need to be kept because the festivals are merely Jewish days, but clearly God states that the festivals are MY feasts. Man does not have the authority to “do away” with the festivals of God. Notice another point.

The scripture above says FOREVER! These feasts were never abolished, but why? Now we will consider the importance of observing the Feast of Pentecost, which proclaims the coming of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of God’s Church with Jesus Christ as its head.

Comment: In chapter 2 of Acts, we read about the first Pentecost that is celebrated after Christ’s resurrection. In this chapter the coming of the

focused on the observance of this special day.

Comment: Holy Days are sometimes referred to as Sabbaths in the Bible (Leviticus 23:39). Besides the regular weekly Sabbath, there are 7 other days throughout the year that are observed in a special manner, similar to the regular weekly Sabbath. In general, observers of these days refrain from their normal work and convene together to worship God. The annual Holy Days are, however, distinctly different because they each reveal an important stage in the salvation of mankind. In the New Testament these days may also be referred to as High days (John 19:31).

QUESTION

What is meant by the name Pentecost or Count Fifty?

In order to arrive at the date when Pentecost is to be observed each year, one must count fifty days. Counting for Pentecost actually starts during the previous festival, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Feast of Unleavened Bread started on the fifteenth day of the first month, called Abib, on the Hebrew calendar. This feast lasted for seven days and ended on the twenty-first day of Abib (Leviticus 23:6). Like the modern western calendar, the fifteenth of Abib does not fall on the same day of the week each year.

A special offering called the wave sheaf offering was commanded to be offered by the priest on the morning of the first Sunday that fell during the seven-day feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:1). This represented Christ's ascension.

Beginning with the day the wave sheaf was traditionally offered, we must count fifty days, which brings us to the day of Pentecost. (Leviticus 23:15-16). Because the starting point of the fifty days begins on the first day of the week, Pentecost will also always be kept on the first day of the week, which is designated as Sunday on western calendars.

QUESTION

In the Old Testament certain rituals occurred during this Feast. What was the significance of the offerings?

The priest offered two loaves made of fine flour baked with leaven to God during the Feast of Weeks. The leaven in the loaves caused them to rise to make a loaf similar to the loaves of bread we eat today. They were to be brought from the dwellings of the Priest. These two loaves represented the people of God. Unlike unleavened bread that is a symbol of Jesus Christ, these two loaves were leavened, meaning they symbolically had imperfections in them. The loaves were waved before God for his acceptance and as an offering of those who would be servants to the Lord.

In addition to the loaves, animal sacrifices were also offered to God as burnt offerings (Leviticus 23:18-20). In this ceremony the blood of certain animals that were sacrificed would symbolically cover or pay for the sins of all the people gathered before God. Thus, though the people were still imperfect, they could be symbolically reconciled to God by blood. Grain offerings and drink offerings were also offered for a "sweet aroma" to God.

These were offered by the priest and foreshadowed the New Testament sacrifice of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and helped establish a humble, reverent attitude while observing this important fiftieth day.

It is important to note that animal sacrifices eventually were no longer necessary to atone oneself to God. A greater sacrifice later replaced the need for the sacrificing of animals (Hebrews 9:11-14).

QUESTION

Why is the word “firstfruit” used to describe both the wave sheaf offering during the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the two loaves during the Feast of Weeks?

Please review Leviticus 23:10, 17. As mentioned in the introduction to this Bible Study, God’s feasts were centered upon the agricultural harvests that took place in the spring and fall in the land of Israel. No harvesting of the smaller, early spring harvest could start until after the wave sheaf was offered on the first day of the week during the week of Unleavened Bread. The newly cut sheaf of grain for the wave offering was the very first sheaf cut from the spring barley harvest throughout all the land of Israel – this sheaf representing Christ was truly the very first fruit of this harvest. Exactly fifty days later on the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, the two loaves were offered as the firstfruit of the first annual harvest in Palestine. This officially ended the spring harvest. On this day the smaller of the two annual harvests was complete.

Review: The week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread started on the fifteenth of Abib and ended on the twenty-first. On the first day of the week (Sunday) that fell during this feast, the wave sheaf was waved before God. Once that was accomplished, the spring harvest could begin. Fifty days later (on a Sunday) the two loaves were waved before God, which ended the spring harvest. This parallels the spiritual harvest that is the main theme of the Feast of Pentecost. In Israel, two harvests were gathered: a small harvest in the spring and a much larger harvest in the fall. The early spring harvest was also referred to as the first fruit harvest.

The holy days and ceremonies were instituted by God as yearly reminders of His blessings to His people. At the same time, they annually remind us of God’s plan that He is orchestrating for man. The physical firstfruit harvest of grain is symbolic of God’s first spiritual harvest of His people.

QUESTION

Who is represented by the wave sheaf?

Please read Acts 26:23. This scripture tells us Christ was the first of all those who have ever lived to be resurrected from death to a spiritual body. He was literally born again, this time not as a fleshly human being but as a spirit-born member of God’s family. After being in the grave for three full days and nights, Christ was raised Saturday evening, just before the sun set; then he left the tomb where he had been buried by Joseph of Arimathea (John 20:1). On the following day, Sunday, Christ had to ascend to Heaven before the throne of God to be accepted as the firstborn or firstfruit of the family of

God -- who was now His true Father (John 20:17). Christ's ascension is represented by the waving of a sheaf of grain on the Sunday that falls during the feast of Unleavened Bread.

"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." 1 Corinthians 15:20

"And He is head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first born from the dead, that in all things He may have preeminence." Colossians 1:18

Let's take time here to rehearse the progression of the events of Jesus' death and resurrection (Matthew 26:26-28): Jesus kept the Passover with His disciples. The Passover was kept on the evening of the fourteenth day of Abib (Leviticus 23:5).

The following day Jesus was bound and taken to Pontius Pilate (Matthew 27:1-2). This day is still considered the fourteenth day of Abib. God's days begin and end at evening time or sunset. (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19).

Jesus was crucified and buried just before the evening of the 15th, still on the fourteenth day of Abib (Luke 23:50-54). Notice that "the Sabbath drew near". This was not the weekly Sabbath; it was the beginning of the fifteenth day of Abib, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, an annual Sabbath. The first and last day of this festival were holy days, sometimes referred to as a Sabbath or High days. Exactly 3 days later Jesus was resurrected, just before the Sabbath day ended (Matthew 12:40).

By early morning on the first day of the week when some disciples came to look for him, Christ had already left the tomb (Luke 24:1-2).

On the first day of the week Christ ascended to the Father and then later returned to meet with His disciples (John 20:17, 19). On this day Jesus Christ fulfilled the symbolic wave sheaf offering. He became the first born into the family of God. One more step in God's plan of salvation had been completed.

QUESTION

How are the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Wave Sheaf Offering and Pentecost tied together?

God uses physical symbols in the Bible to help us understand spiritual concepts. Leavening in the Bible, as explained in our Bible Study about the Feast of Unleavened Bread, is used to represent sin (1 Corinthians 5:8). The Feast of Unleavened Bread was instituted as a reminder to Israel that God had freed them from the cruel bondage of Egypt. Because the Israelites fled from Egypt in haste, they could not take the time to let the dough rise for their daily bread, but instead had to eat unleavened bread, which could be quickly baked over a cook fire. Because bread was a main staple of their diet, the Israelites ate their daily fare of bread in the form of unleavened bread as they marched out of Egypt.

Once the Feast of Unleavened Bread was instituted as an annual observance, a wave sheaf was offered during the seven-day period when no leaven could be found in the homes of the Israelites. Today, the

seven-day feast represents a time of focusing on living a life of righteousness, as we consume the “unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” while we are, at the same time, to be very vigilant not to engage in any sin. Since sin is represented by unleavened bread during this feast, the Christian is not to eat anything that has leavening in it. The feast establishes how a Christian is to live his or her life throughout their entire lives. Christ lived His whole life without ever committing a sin – He was truly an unleavened offering (1 Peter 2:21-22).

The wave sheaf offering was waved before God to represent Christ’s ascension to his Father’s throne to be officially received and accepted as the firstborn into the family of God. It was waved during the Feast of Unleavened Bread because it was during that feast that Christ rose from death and then ascended to His Father’s throne, symbolizing the beginning of the spring harvest, which culminates at Pentecost.

QUESTION

What is the significance of the small harvest that is associated with Pentecost?

God is not trying to convert the world at large to His way of life now. That is very evident if we consider the multitude of religions that exist all around us. Why has God allowed so many to remain ignorant of His way of life? God has a plan. That plan involves a sequential process by which He will establish his Kingdom on this earth. If you have not read our booklet, *The Gospel According To Christ*, you need to do so to clearly understand that God really is bringing his Kingdom to this

earth. Christ taught the gospel of the kingdom of God throughout his ministry. He told his disciples that if he left them to be with the Father, alluding to his **coming** death, he would some day return (John 14:3). The Bible tells us that once Christ returns, he will set up his Father’s Kingdom, and he will need assistants to work along with him. The Church, the relative few, represented by the small harvest, who have been and still are being called into God’s church today, are being trained to assist Christ. They will serve humanity by teaching them the purpose for their lives and will bring the way of salvation to them (See Revelation 19:11-16 and 20:4-6).

Many have been falsely taught that if people are not saved before Christ returns, they will have lost their opportunity for salvation. The Bible, however, refutes this idea and **negates** it with the clear teaching that once Christ returns to this earth, his purpose will be to bring the way of salvation to all humanity. Those who have died before he returns will have their opportunity following the first thousand years of Christ’s rule on earth. They will be resurrected to physical life, taught the way of God, and given their opportunity for salvation (Revelation 20:12-13).

QUESTION

Since Christ was offered and accepted as the first of the first fruits, what method is God using to harvest the remaining firstfruits?

Now we come to the purpose for the church. The church was begun on Pentecost, 31 AD. It was founded upon Jesus Christ:

Notice in the above scripture we are told the two loaves that are offered at the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost were taken from the homes of the priests, not from the temple. They were not represented as being spiritually perfect as they contained leaven. Yet, they were referred to as the Firstfruits unto the Lord. As we have already seen, the New Testament tells us these Firstfruits are the people of God's church (James 1:18).

QUESTION

How is the membership brought into the Church?

Let's take a close look at John 6:44 – please read it carefully:

“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.” KJV

In the above scripture Christ states clearly that he was sent by the Father. And he also states clearly that no one can come to him, to be a part of his church, unless the father draws him or her. The last part of the verse plainly shows he is talking about those who are to be spiritually born again at the resurrection. So now we know God the Father draws people to the church, they do not come on their own. This again helps us understand why the first resurrection is a smaller harvest. Not everyone is called to be a part of this resurrection. God is only calling those who He knows can bear fruit – growing in their ability to serve as an assistant to Christ in the Kingdom. This is more difficult than it may seem.

Comment: So far we have taught in this lesson

that the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost points to the time when the New Testament church began. We have also shown it also points to another great historical event, the giving of the Ten Commandments. Once God gave his laws to the Israelites and they agreed to follow them, they became a physical nation with God at its head. Later on they broke their covenant with God by not following His laws. Being human, they simply could not prove obedient. To obey God, they needed something more.

In the New Testament, once the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples, they became God's church, led by Jesus Christ, who was also the God of the Old Testament, serving under the supreme God, his Father (John 1:1-3). The Holy Spirit, working within the hearts and minds of people, can empower them to obey God's laws, not only in the letter but also in the spirit of the law (Hebrews 8:10). That is what was lacking for the ancient Israelites, and that is why they failed.

But receiving the Holy Spirit is not all that is required to be a member of God's church. Members must also grow in the spirit of God, learning to exercise it in their lives so that they demonstrate the fruits of the Holy Spirit working in them (Galatians 5:22-26, Philippians 1:9-11). Those who are a part of the Firstfruits have a more difficult calling than those who come after them because they do not live in a world governed by Jesus Christ. That is why God is not calling many now into His church. For most, the calling would prove to be too difficult.

