

Counting Pentecost

From the Day after the Sabbath

The Feast of Weeks/Pentecost is the only annual holy day for which a fixed date for its observance is not given, but rather, “Seven weeks shall **you number to you: begin to number** the seven weeks from such time as you begin to put the sickle to the grain. And you shall keep the Feast of Weeks...” (Deuteronomy 16:9, 10).

The correct day for observing this festival is disputed. The two primary times for observing this holy day are the 6th day of the third month (Sivan), or Sunday with no fixed date. The sixth of Sivan is arrived at by counting seven weeks from the annual Sabbath of Passover that is on the fifteenth day of the first month. Sunday Pentecost is arrived at by counting seven Sabbaths from the Sabbath that usually, but not always, falls between the two annual Sabbaths of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the 50th day is Pentecost Sunday.

Which Sabbath do we count from? The Feast of Weeks/Pentecost pictures the giving of the covenant. The covenant is dependent on Passover, because without the shedding of blood there cannot be a covenant. We are going to show that the correct Sabbath to count from is the annual Sabbath of Passover on the 15th day of the first month.

The Instructions for Counting

“And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, **When you be come into the land which I give to you**, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then you shall bring a sheaf [6016, *omer, a dry measure* (approx. two quarts)] of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest” (Leviticus 23:10). The instructions are specifically for the time that the children of Israel would enter into the Promised Land.

“And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted [7522, *delight, satisfaction, favor*] **for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath** the priest shall wave it” (v. 11). The offering could not be offered on a holy day because of the amount of labor involved in preparing the grain offering. A grain offering “... shall be of fine flour ...” (Leviticus 2:1). If it was a firstfruits offering, which the wave sheaf offering was, then it had to be “... green ears [24, *abib*] of corn [*grain*] dried by fire, corn [*grain*] beaten out of full ears. And thou shalt put oil upon it, and lay frankincense thereon ...” (Leviticus 2:14, 15).

The entire process of preparing the wave offering involved a substantial amount of manual labor, which was forbidden on a holy day. The grain had to be harvested, threshed, winnowed, and dried by fire before it could be ground into flour, and sifted. No “servile [5656, *customary*]” work was to be done on any holy day (Leviticus 23:7, 8, 25, 35, 36); therefore it had to be on the day after a Sabbath.

“And you shall eat neither bread, nor parched grain [7039, *roasted, dried by fire*], nor green ears, until the selfsame day that you have brought an offering to your God...” (v. 14). They were explicitly forbidden to eat the produce of the land until they brought their grain offering which, had to be offered on the day **after the Sabbath**. On the day after the Sabbath, when they began harvesting the grain, is when they began to count seven weeks. You shall “...begin to number the seven weeks from such time as you begin to put the sickle to the grain” (Deuteronomy 16:9).

The three main points for the wave offering are: the instructions were specifically for when they entered the Promised Land; the offering had to be prepared by the people on the day after the Sabbath; and they were forbidden to eat any of the produce until they had brought their offering to the priest. These instructions were fulfilled after they entered the land of Canaan.

Passover and the Wave Sheaf

“And the people came up [5927, *to ascend*] out of Jordan on the **tenth day of the first month**, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho” (Joshua 4:19). Their entrance into the land was on the fortieth anniversary of the taking up of the Passover lambs on the tenth day of the first month in Egypt (Exodus 12:3). On that same day all of the males were circumcised in the Promised Land (Joshua 5:2-9).

“And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept [6213, *to labor, to make, to prepare*] the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho. And they did eat of the old corn [5669, *produce*] of the land on **the morrow after the Passover**, unleavened cakes, and parched corn [7033, *dried by heat*] in the selfsame day” (Joshua 5:10, 11).

On the day after Passover they were eating the produce of the land, which they were forbidden to do until after they had presented the wave offering to the priest. The instructions were “**you shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that you have brought an offering to your God**” (Leviticus 23:14).

The wave offering was offered on the day after Passover, which had to be the day after the Sabbath. “And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: **on the morrow after the Sabbath** the priest shall wave it” (v. 11). Was this Sabbath an annual Sabbath or the weekly Sabbath?

The fourteenth day of the first month is not an annual Sabbath. If the Passover ceremony was on the fourteenth, then the fourteenth would have had to be on the weekly Sabbath that year in order for the wave sheaf to be offered “on the day after the Sabbath.” In most years the fourteenth does not occur on the weekly Sabbath.

The fourteenth Passover scenario presents a problem, because the day after the fourteenth is the fifteenth, and the fifteenth is an annual Sabbath. Therefore, if the Passover ceremony was on the fourteenth, then the grain offering **would have been offered on the annual Sabbath, and that**

was forbidden, because “...you shall have a holy convocation: **you shall do no servile [5656, labor, work] work therein**” (Leviticus 23:7).

The Sabbath referred to in God’s instructions is the annual Sabbath of Passover that is on the fifteenth. The wave offering was presented on the sixteenth of Abib, which is always the day after the Sabbath, but it is never on a Sabbath. According to the Hebrew calendar, the sixteenth of Abib can occur on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, or Friday. There is never a conflict with a Sabbath. God designed the calendar to fit His holy day plan.

The wave offering on the day after Passover connects Passover (the blood) directly to Pentecost (the covenant).

The Blood (Passover) and the Covenant (Pentecost)

On the night He was betrayed, Jesus “...took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; for this is **My blood of the New Covenant**, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:27, 28). The New Covenant could not be instituted until after Jesus’ death, because **without the shedding of blood there cannot be a covenant**.

“For where a testament is, **there must also of necessity be the death of the testator**. For a testament is of force **after men are dead**: otherwise it is of **no strength at all while the testator lives**. Whereupon neither the first covenant was dedicated [1457, *instituted*] **without blood**....And almost all things are by the law purged [2511, *purified, cleansed*] with blood; and **without shedding of blood is no remission**” (Hebrews 9:16-18, 22).

Jesus’ death occurred at the ninth hour, which is approximately 3:00 P.M., on the fourteenth day of the first month. The New Covenant could not have been instituted prior to His death, as the scriptures make clear, which rules out any possibility of Passover being observed at the beginning of the fourteenth. The Passover observance has to be held after the death of “Christ our Passover.”

The Passover ceremony pictures the forgiveness of sin through the blood of Jesus Christ, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). What is sin? “Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). To transgress the law is to break the covenant. Therefore all are under the death penalty, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

When we repent of our sins we have redemption **through His blood**, even the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:14). Jesus purchased us with His blood. “For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:20). When we repent and are forgiven, we have also agreed to live by the terms of the covenant. If we then turn away from walking according to the covenant, then we are subject to death.

“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:26, 27). The knowledge of the truth is the covenant that we agree to obey, and whosoever willfully breaks the covenant “...has trodden underfoot the Son of God, and **has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified**, an unholy thing, and has done despite [1796, *insult, outrage*] to the Spirit of grace [5485, *a generous gift*]” (v. 29).

The “blood of the covenant” means that Passover (the blood) and Pentecost (the covenant) are inextricably tied together. **Without Passover there cannot be a covenant!** That is why the seven weeks are counted from the day after Passover to the Day of Pentecost.

Do We Count Seven Sabbaths or Seven Weeks?

Instead of weeks, the word for Sabbath is used in Leviticus 23. “And you shall count to you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete [8549, *whole, entire, perfect*]: even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall you number fifty days...” (vv. 15, 16).

We have determined that the counting is to begin with the day after the annual Sabbath that is on the fifteenth, which can occur on Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, or the Sabbath. Therefore Sabbaths, as used here, would have to mean weeks. Seven weeks will always contain seven Sabbaths, but counting seven Sabbaths does not necessarily contain seven full weeks.

The first month of the Hebrew calendar has thirty days, and the second month (Iyar) has twenty-nine days. When Passover is on Tuesday, the first Sabbath is on the 19th of Abib, and the seventh Sabbath is on the 2nd of Sivan. This is $(15 + 29 + 2) = 46$ days after Passover. When Passover is on Thursday, the first Sabbath is on the 17th of Abib, and the seventh Sabbath is on the 29th of Iyar. This is $(15 + 29) = 44$ days after Passover. When Passover is on Sunday, the first Sabbath is on the 21st of Abib, and the seventh Sabbath is the 4th of Sivan. This is $(15 + 29 + 4) = 48$ days after Passover. Counting seven Sabbaths from Passover does not necessarily equal the 49 days that we are to count, but seven full weeks after Passover do equal 49 days every time it is tried.

In the *Septuagint* (Greek O.T.) and in the N.T., the Greek word used for Sabbath and week is *Strong's* 4521, *sabbaton*, of Hebrew origin [7676]; the Sabbath. In the New Testament it is translated nine times as meaning a week. For example, “I fast twice in the week [4521, *sabbaton*]...” (Luke 18:12). A person wouldn't fast twice on the Sabbath. That wouldn't make any sense. The word for Sabbaths, in this case, is to be understood as weeks. It is called the Feast of Weeks, not the Feast of Sabbaths.

Conclusion: Seven weeks are counted from the annual Sabbath of Passover to Pentecost. Thus Passover (the blood) is tied directly to Pentecost (the covenant). Without Passover there cannot be a covenant.