

# The Miracle of Pentecost

## On What Day Did God Tell Us to Keep the Feast of Weeks / Pentecost, and When Do We Begin to Count?

By Brett Gray

*“You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain. Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God...” — Deuteronomy 16:9-10*

### 1. God’s Gift

After Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection, He rejoined His disciples. For forty days, He walked among them, opened the Scriptures to them, and readied them for their Divine mission. The Book of Acts begins with these words:

1 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

2 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,

3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:1-3.)<sup>1</sup>

At the end of those forty days, moments before Jesus left the earth and ascended to His Father, He assembled His disciples on the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem and delivered some final instructions:

4 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;

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture references are from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.

5 “for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” (Acts 1:4-5.)

The conversation between the Master and His disciples continued for a few moments, and then we read,

9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,

11 who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:9-11.)

The Gospel of Mark says, “So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God” (Mark 16:19).

Obedient to their Master’s command, the disciples left the Mount of Olives and returned to Jerusalem (Acts 1:12). There they remained and “continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers” (Acts 1:14).

And then the day came. Let’s pick up the story in Acts 2:1-4:

1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The same day, “about three thousand souls were added” to the disciples (Acts 2:41). Convicted in their hearts by Peter’s preaching, they heeded the instructions given to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (v. 38).

From this day forward, the Lord's disciples "went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word" (Mark 16:20). The Gospel of the Kingdom of God began to be preached in all the earth.

And so it was, that on the Day of Pentecost God began to work through His people in a way never before seen. On the Day of Pentecost, the New Testament *ekklesia* (church or congregation) sprang to life.

Pentecost is the third of God's seven annual Holy Days listed in Leviticus 23 and Numbers 28-29, but you won't find the name "Pentecost" there. Instead, the Old Testament calls it by other names, especially "Feast of Weeks" (Ex. 34:22; Deut. 16:10, 16; 2 Chron. 8:13), but also "Feast of Harvest" (Ex. 23:16) and "day of the firstfruits" (Num. 28:26) because it coincides with "the firstfruits of wheat harvest" (Ex. 34:22).

Now, this Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, is a Holy Day for which God gave us no date — neither a day nor a month. Instead, He gives us two sets of instructions, which we find in Leviticus 23 and Deuteronomy 16.

Lev. 23:15-16 tells us, "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. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD."

Deut. 16:9-10 says, "You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain. Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God...."

As an aside, the name "Pentecost" stems from the Greek root word *pentekonta*. It literally means "fifty" and comes to us from the instruction to "count fifty days" (Lev. 23:16).

The "Feast of Weeks" is so named from the instruction to "count seven weeks" (Deut. 16:9). And the names "Feast of Harvest" and "day of the firstfruits" come from the fact that the Feast marks the beginning of wheat harvest (Ex. 34:22).

But how are we to understand God's instructions for counting Pentecost? When should we observe Pentecost? Why does God tell us to count seven weeks, to count seven Sabbaths, and to count fifty days?

And what about the Sabbath that our Creator tells us to count from? If we are to count from a weekly Sabbath, which one? There are 50-plus weekly Sabbaths each year! And if we must instead count from an annual Sabbath, that is, one of God's seven annual Holy Days, then which one?

Only God's Word can answer these questions. The Bible interprets the Bible, if only we allow it to do so. That's what we hope to accomplish in this writing.

God's Word demands careful inspection: "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little" (Isa. 28:10). We must put the whole testimony of Scripture together, or else we might find ourselves gazing at one of a thousand puzzle pieces and imagining we see the whole picture.

Remember the Bereans, who "were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). As Prov. 18:13 reminds us, "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him." If we're wise, we hear a matter and then examine it: "Prove all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thes. 5:21; KJV).

The Bereans were open-minded, but they weren't gullible. They listened with open ears and minds, but scrutinized what they'd heard and compared it to God's Word. Likewise, please do not believe us or any other human being, but believe your Bible and only your Bible.

O reader, are you a Berean? Will you commit yourself to hearing this matter before answering it? Will you promise to search God's Word diligently to see whether these things are so? The choice is yours!

## **2. The Season of Pentecost**

It's self-evident that, without understanding God's counting instructions, we wouldn't know when to observe Pentecost. We wouldn't know the right day, but more than that, we wouldn't even know the right month or season! So how do we know when to begin counting? How do we know what time of year Pentecost is? Can we prove it without relying on tradition?

Back in Bible days, the count to Pentecost began with offering some of the firstfruits of the harvest. God commanded Israel, "When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it" (Lev. 23:10-11).

The count ended fifty days later, on the Day of Pentecost, by offering loaves of the firstfruits of another harvest: "You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD" (Lev. 23:17).

Both the wave sheaf and the wave loaves, offered fifty days apart, represented the firstfruits of a harvest. It logically follows, of course, that these must be different harvests! If we can determine which harvests these were, then we can also determine what time of year these events happened.

The two primary grains of the Promised Land were barley and wheat, as we see throughout the Old Testament. Here's one example: "For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; **a land of wheat and barley**, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey" (Deut. 8:7-8).

The wave loaves on the Day of Pentecost represented the firstfruits of the wheat harvest. Here's Ex. 34:22: "And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest." Throughout the Old Testament, the Hebrew word translated "wheat" is *khittah* (Strong's # H2406), which simply means "wheat." To this day, it remains the Hebrew word for wheat.

So what about the other grain crop, barley? God's Word informs us that barley was the early crop, and wheat the late crop. Shortly before Israel's Passover in Egypt, God destroyed the Egyptian crops with hail. We read, "Now the flax and the barley were struck, for the barley was in the head and the flax was in bud. But the wheat and the spelt were not struck, for they are late crops" (Ex. 9:31-32).

Throughout the Old Testament, the Hebrew word translated "barley" is *se'orah* (Strong's # H8184), which *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon* defines as "barley" or "bearded grain." *Gesenius' Hebrew Lexicon* defines it thus: "barley, so called from its hairy ears." The root word means "rough" or "hairy." And to this day, *se'orah* remains the Hebrew word for barley.

So then, the wave sheaf represented the firstfruits of the early harvest, the barley harvest. Fifty days later on the Day of Pentecost, the wave loaves represented the firstfruits of the later harvest, the wheat harvest.

But at what time of year did these things happen? If the barley and wheat harvests marked the beginning and end of the count, then when were they? These crops ripen at different times in different parts of the world. In modern days, when God's people are scattered all around the world, how are we to understand these instructions?

Remember, God gave those instructions for the Promised Land only, for "when you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest" (Lev. 23:10). In the Middle East, agricultural cycles begin and end in the fall. The early rains begin around October or

November. That's also when plowing and planting begin, and continue into winter, the rainy season.

The early crops of flax and barley begin ripening in the spring, and the late rains conclude about this time. Wheat and spelt ripen over the summer. Grapes, olives, and figs are ready for harvest in late summer and early fall. Consequently, farmers harvest throughout the hot, summer months and finish in the fall.

This Middle Eastern agricultural cycle is well-documented, and we also find that the Bible refers to it often. Gen. 8:22 contrasts seedtime, cold, and winter with harvest, heat, and summer. Isa. 18:4 references "the heat of harvest." Thus winter is the time of planting, and summer the time of harvesting.

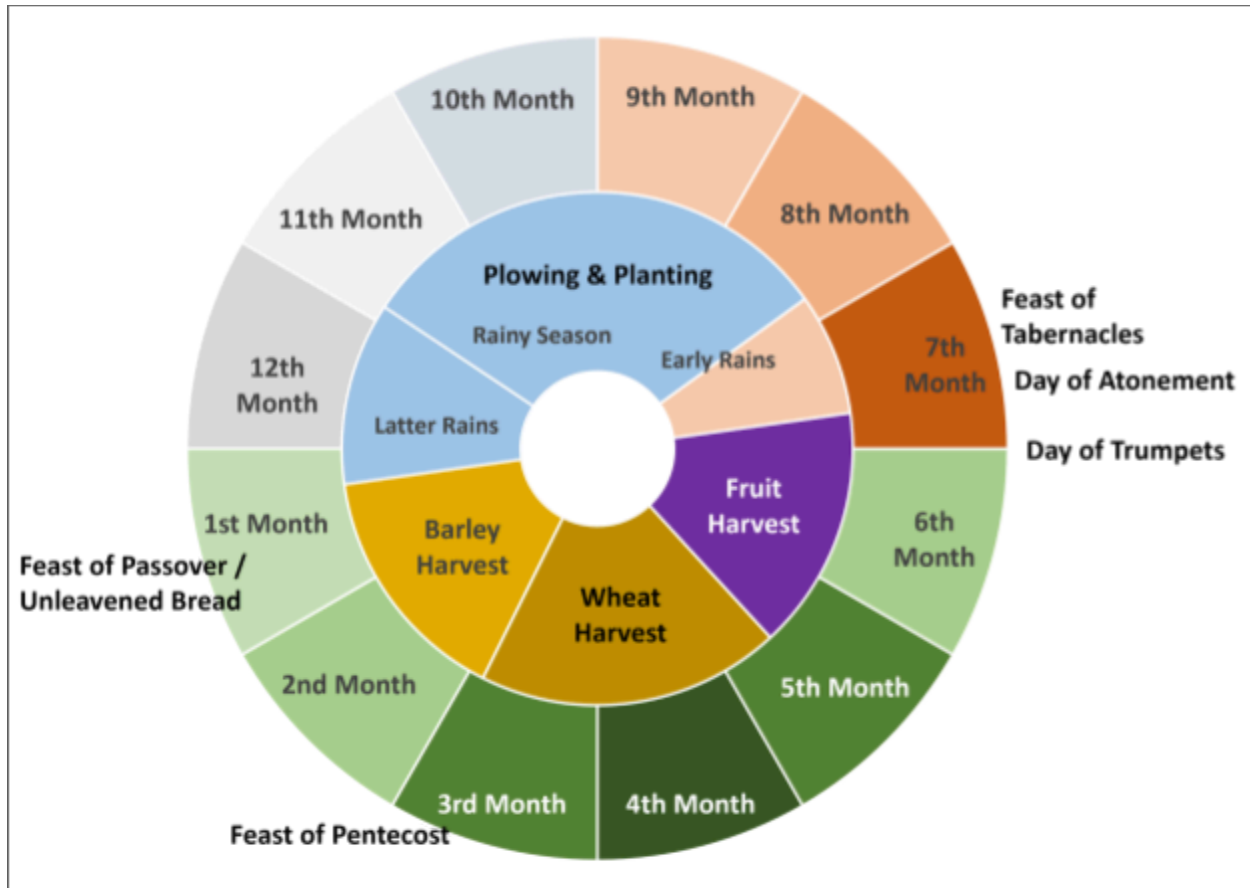
As for the "former rains" and the "latter rains," several verses speak of these. For example, Jer. 5:24 reminds us, "Let us now fear the LORD our God, who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest." Joel 2:23-24 adds that the latter rains fall "in the first," that is, the first month. Or, as we would call it, spring. The former rains come down in the fall, the latter rains in the spring.

Now, remember what we read moments ago in Ex. 9:31. God's seventh plague on Egypt, the plague of hail, crushed the barley in the head and the flax in the bud shortly before Passover. Verse 32 adds that wheat and spelt are late crops.

And when is Passover? Exodus 12, the Passover chapter, tells us, "Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, 'This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you'" (Ex. 12:1-2). Then, in v. 18, God said, "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening." So Passover falls in the beginning of months, the first month of the year. It's the same month in the spring that the latter rains conclude.

God called this month "Abib," telling His people: "The Feast of Unleavened Bread you shall keep. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, in the appointed time of the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt" (Ex. 34:18).

The meaning of "Abib" is important here. In Hebrew, Abib (or *aviv*; Strong's # H24) means "green, a young ear of grain." *Brown-Driver-Briggs* defines it as "fresh young ears of barley." Interestingly, the Bible uses this very word to describe the green ears of barley destroyed by the plague of hail: "Now the flax and the barley were struck, for the barley was in the head [*aviv*; # H24] and the flax was in bud" (Ex. 9:31).



*The Biblical calendar, the Holy Days, and the agricultural cycle of the Promised Land.*

Abib is the month the latter rains end, the month of Passover, and the month of green ears of barley. This is when the barley begins to ripen for harvest! The barley begins to ripen in the spring, in the first month of the year.

The Book of Joshua adds another clue. Israel crossed over the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land “on the tenth day of the first month” (Josh. 4:19), that is, Abib 10. Elsewhere, we discover that this was “during the time of harvest” (Josh. 3:15). Based on what we’ve already established, this was the early harvest, the barley and flax harvest. And indeed, a few days earlier, Rahab had hidden the two spies under “stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on her roof” (Josh. 2:6).

Abib, then, is not only the month barley begins to ripen, but the month the harvest begins. If the barley harvest begins in Abib, then this is also when the wave sheaf was offered! Pentecost must be counted from the month of Abib.

To narrow this down further, let’s go back and review God’s instructions for counting to Pentecost. Beginning in Lev. 23:9, immediately following the Passover sacrifice and Feast of Unleavened Bread (vv. 4-8), we read,

9 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

10 “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.

11 ‘He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.

14 ‘You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

15 ‘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.

16 ‘Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. (Lev. 23:9-11, 14-16.)

Again, Deut. 16:9 instructs, “You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain.” In other words, begin to count from the month of Abib, from the start of the barley harvest!

So God commanded the Israelites, when they entered the land, to offer a wave sheaf of the barley firstfruits. “When you come into the land which I give to you... You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God.”

Lev. 2:14 confirms once again that this offering must be from the firstfruits of barley. It says, “If you offer a grain offering of your firstfruits to the LORD, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits green heads of grain roasted on the fire, grain beaten from full heads.” The word for “green heads of grain” in v. 14 is *aviv* (Strong’s # H24) — the same as the name of the first month, Abib!

Notice that God gave His instructions for the wave sheaf for “when you come into the land” (Lev. 23:10). It couldn’t be any other way, for while the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, they had no harvest to offer.

So what happened when Israel entered the Promised Land? Let’s return to the Book of Joshua. In Josh. 5:10-12, we discover what happened right after Israel crossed the Jordan River:



10 Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight [lit. evening] on the plains of Jericho.

11 And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day.

12 Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year.

The Israelites “ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover.” They didn’t eat it before that, even though they’d already entered the land a few days earlier, on the 10th day of the month (Josh. 4:19). Why not? Because it was forbidden to eat the harvest of the land before offering the firstfruits: “When you come into the land... You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God” (Lev. 23:14). So if the Israelites ate the produce of the land, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the day after Passover, that means they first offered the wave sheaf “on the very same day.”

Now in Hebrew, the word “produce” is Strong’s # H5669, *avur*, which the Bible uses only in these two verses. Some translations render it “old grain.” Regardless of whether this was old grain or new grain, we still have God’s plain instructions for when Israel entered the land: “You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God.”

Nevertheless, both Brown-Driver-Briggs and Gesenius, the premier Hebrew lexicons, define *avur* as “produce” or “yield.” Strong’s notes that it’s the same word as # H5668, which means “for the sake of, on account of.” Gesenius further defines that word as “passing over, transition, cause (the passing over of the cause to the effect), the price (for which anything is transferred from one owner to another).”

In other words, the harvest of Canaan had passed over from the Canaanites to the Israelites. The Canaanites planted; the Israelites reaped. As God had promised shortly before this, He would give them “large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant” (Deut. 6:10-11). Psalms 105:44 recalls, “He gave them the lands of the Gentiles, and they inherited the labor of the nations.”

The day after Israel ate unleavened bread and roasted grain from the harvest of the land, the manna ceased. From that day forward, the Israelites ate the produce of the land. God had brought them into the land He promised and bestowed on them a new source of food to replace the manna: the bread of the land.

Fifty days after this would have been the Feast of Pentecost. Fifty days after Passover. And so we see yet again that Pentecost must be counted from the first month, Abib, the month of green ears of barley. More specifically, it must be counted from the time of Passover. Fifty days from the time of Passover places Pentecost within the first two weeks of the third month, which is called Sivan (Est. 8:9).

So we now have a season and a month for the Feast of Pentecost, but we haven't yet established an exact day. On the Hebrew calendar, the day after Passover is sometimes a Sunday and sometimes other days. We'll narrow it down shortly, but before we get there, there are other pieces of the puzzle to put together.

First, establishing the season of Pentecost allows us to discover something else. It allows us to find many more details about Pentecost in the Bible.

### **3. Pentecost Observances**

At first glance, it appears as though God's Word says little about the Feast of Pentecost. Observances of this day are seldom mentioned in Scripture by name. Only once, in fact. Only one time, in all of Scripture, are we specifically told that something happened on Pentecost, and that's in Acts 2:1-4, when God sent the Holy Spirit.

However, there ARE several other Pentecost observances detailed in Scripture as well! We just aren't specifically told. We have to put the puzzle pieces together to see it.

First of all, as we've just established, Pentecost is in the third month of the Hebrew calendar, "which is the month of Sivan" (Est. 8:9). This is true regardless of whether one observes Pentecost on Sunday, Monday, or Sivan 6th. Fifty days from the time of Passover in the first month brings us, without fail, to the third month, Sivan.

Secondly, Pentecost is a holy convocation: "Also on the day of the firstfruits, when you bring a new grain offering to the LORD at your Feast of Weeks, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work" (Num. 28:26). A holy convocation is, by dictionary definition, a sacred assembly — an assembly commanded by God.

But not only was Pentecost a commanded assembly, it was also, just like the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Tabernacles, a pilgrimage feast. God commanded His people to gather before Him at His sanctuary: "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed" (Deut. 16:16).

Elsewhere, we see that God didn't command men alone to appear before Him, but also their households with them:

5 “But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go.

6 “There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks.

7 “And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand, **you and your households**, in which the LORD your God has blessed you.

12 “And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion nor inheritance with you.” (Deut. 12:5-7, 12.)

This command shows why so many people assembled at the temple in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2! Not only were Jesus' disciples assembled together “with one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1), but so were countless pilgrims from faraway lands: “And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5).

So whenever the Bible mentions all God's people assembling at His sanctuary in the third month, from far and near, we know it was Pentecost! We don't have to be specifically told. All we have to know is that God's people gathered to worship Him in the third month.

Armed with this information, we then find many observances of Pentecost in Scripture! Let's take a quick look at these in chronological order.

Noah and his family departed from the ark on the 27th day of the second month, which is near the end of the month (Gen. 8:14-19). Shortly thereafter he built an altar, offered sacrifices, and made a covenant with God (Gen. 8:20-9:17). Since the second month was nearly over, it seems probable that this covenant happened early in the third month on the Day of Pentecost. At the very least, it was within a few days of it.

After departing from Egypt, Israel reached Mt. Sinai on the first day of the third month (Ex. 19:1, 9-11). “In the third month of the going out of the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt, in this day they have come into the wilderness of Sinai” (Ex. 19:1; YLT). Depending on the context, “month” is often translated as “new moon” (e.g., Num. 29:6; 1 Sam. 20) and thus refers to the first day of a new month. Notice that we're also told it was “in this day,” the day of the third month, that Israel came to Mt. Sinai.

A few days later, as the timeline in Ex. 19 reveals, Israel assembled before God and He came down on Mt. Sinai and began to deliver His law. God Himself had called this sacred assembly and commanded the Israelites to sanctify themselves beforehand (Ex. 19:10-15). So all Israel gathered in His very presence and heard His voice thundering from the mountain. This was the holiest of convocations, and it happened in the third month — the Day of Pentecost.

Shortly after Saul became king of Israel, the Israelites assembled with Samuel the prophet before God in Gilgal. “So all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. There they made sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD, and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly” (1 Sam. 11:15). On that day, Samuel reminded the people of God’s commandments (1 Sam. 12:14-15), the very commandments God delivered at Mt. Sinai. Then Samuel drew attention to the day itself, asking, “Is today not the wheat harvest?” (1 Sam. 12:17). And of the Day of Pentecost, we read that it is “the firstfruits of wheat harvest” (Ex. 34:22).

During the reign of King Solomon’s great grandson, King Asa, all the people of Judah assembled before God at Jerusalem in the third month. “So they gathered together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. And they offered to the LORD at that time seven hundred bulls and seven thousand sheep from the spoil they had brought” (2 Chron. 15:10-11). At this time, they made a covenant with the Almighty, which we’ll discuss in greater detail later.

A long time after this, during the reign of King Hezekiah, the people of Judah again assembled before God at Jerusalem during the third month, this time to begin bringing their tithes to the temple: “And the children of Israel and Judah, who dwelt in the cities of Judah, brought the tithe of oxen and sheep; also the tithe of holy things which were consecrated to the LORD their God they laid in heaps. In the third month they began laying them in heaps, and they finished in the seventh month” (2 Chron. 31:5-7).

After Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension, His disciples assembled together in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, as we’ve already seen. And on that day, God poured out the Holy Spirit on His people.

In 1 Cor. 16:8, Paul wrote of his desire to keep Pentecost with the congregation in Ephesus, “But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost.” And later, near the end of his recorded ministry, he was overcome with a burning desire to keep Pentecost in Jerusalem once more: “For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost” (Acts 20:16).

So that makes at least eight recorded observances of Pentecost in the Bible! Five in the Old Testament; three in the New Testament. There's also a common, vital theme that connects many of these, the theme of God's laws and covenant, as we'll see later on. These Pentecost observances will deeply enrich our understanding of the day.

At the moment, though, one pressing task remains: to pinpoint the Day of Pentecost. We don't yet have an exact day for beginning the count to Pentecost, nor for Pentecost itself. To find it, let us now take a careful look at the instructions for counting.

#### 4. Weeks or Sabbaths?

Let's return to Leviticus 23. Here are verses 15-16: "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. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD."

Notice that the phrase "seven Sabbaths shall be completed" is followed by "count fifty days." What does that mean? It implies that the "Sabbaths" are weeks which must be completed, and not literal Sabbath days. Seven Sabbaths, or seven weeks, add up to forty-nine days. The next day, the fiftieth day, is Pentecost. So, "the day after the seventh Sabbath" is the day after the seventh week. The fiftieth day.

The Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, agrees. Here's how it renders Lev. 23:15-16: "And ye shall number to yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day on which ye shall offer the sheaf of the heave-offering, seven full weeks: until the morrow after the last week ye shall number fifty days, and shall bring a new meat-offering to the Lord."

So the Septuagint confirms what we already saw: the "Sabbaths" of the count to Pentecost are weeks. God's Word uses "Sabbath" to mean "week" in other passages, too.

#### About the Septuagint (LXX)

The Septuagint is the Greek Old Testament, translated from Hebrew during the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC. Most of Jesus' and His disciples' quotes from the Old Testament agree word-for-word with the Septuagint. For example, Stephen recounted that 75 of Jacob's descendants traveled to Egypt (Acts 7:14), following the Septuagint's version of Ex. 1:5 and Gen. 46. The Hebrew Masoretic Text says 70 instead. Both are true; the Septuagint counts some of Joseph's descendants, while the Masoretic Text does not.

The New Testament uses the Greek word *sabbaton* (Strong's # G4521) both for Sabbaths and for weeks. In all the New Testament, you'll find no other word for "week" but *sabbaton*, or Sabbath! In Luke 18:12, Jesus described a Pharisee boasting, "I fast twice a week [*sabbaton*]; I give tithes of all that I possess." Obviously one doesn't fast twice on the same day, so the word *sabbaton* is translated as "week" rather than "Sabbath."

In the Old Testament, we find another example. Regarding the Jubilee years, God said, "And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land" (Lev. 25:8-9). It's plain that "seven sabbaths of years" equals "seven times seven years," which in turn equals forty-nine years. We're expressly told this!

So by now, it should be plain that the seven Sabbaths of Lev. 23 are, in fact, seven weeks. Seven times seven days. Forty-nine days. But wait, there's more! Other passages, too, indicate the same thing.

Like Leviticus 23, Numbers 28-29 lists all of God's Holy Days in order. It doesn't describe the count to Pentecost, though. Instead, we find, "Also on the day of the firstfruits, when you bring a new grain offering to the LORD at your *Feast of Weeks*, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work" (Num. 28:26). Notice that the phrase "Feast of" is italicized; the translators added it for clarity, and it isn't found in the original text. This passage simply implies that Pentecost falls at the end of some weeks; the details are given elsewhere. In Hebrew, "weeks" is *shavuot* (Strong's # H7620), which is also the Hebrew name for Pentecost.

And in Deut. 16:9-10, we read, "You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain. Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you." Deuteronomy uses plain language: count seven weeks.

Notice, too, that Pentecost is the Feast of Weeks, not the "Feast of Sabbaths." Again, Ex. 34:22, Deut. 16:16, and 2 Chron. 8:13 all refer to this Feast as the Feast of Weeks. Or, as it's called in Hebrew, Shavuot.

So once we put all the Scriptures together, it becomes clear that Leviticus 23's instruction "seven Sabbaths shall be complete" simply means that seven weeks, or forty-nine days, must be completed. The morrow after the seventh week, the fiftieth day, is Pentecost. This remains true regardless of whether Pentecost is on Sunday, Monday, or Sivan 6.

What, then, is a week? Must it be a period of seven days ending in a Sabbath? Not necessarily. In the Bible, just as in modern English, any period of seven days may be called a week, regardless of which day it begins or ends. For example, Jacob fulfilled Leah's week before marrying Rachel (Gen. 29:27-28). If a woman gave birth to a son, she would be ceremonially unclean for seven days afterward (Lev. 12:2); if a daughter, then two weeks (Lev. 12:5).

Leviticus 25, where we read moments ago, defined "seven sabbaths of years" as "seven times seven years" (v. 8). The seventh year was always the Sabbatical year, of course; each sabbath of years ended in a Sabbatical year. Nevertheless, we're simply told that "seven sabbaths" is "seven times seven" or "forty-nine." When God's Word says "seven sabbaths," the purpose isn't to tell us about the weekly Sabbath, the purpose is to tell us how long the time period is.

So God told us to count seven weeks, or forty-nine days, and to celebrate the Feast of Weeks on the fiftieth day. This is the plain meaning of God's instructions for counting to Pentecost.

Now, then, when do we begin counting these seven Sabbaths or seven weeks? What specific day begins the count, and what Sabbath should we count from? Is it the weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, one of the annual Sabbaths, or some other day? Does God's Word show us? Surely it must, and indeed it does!

## 5. The Day After the Sabbath

Early in this study, we saw that Pentecost must be counted from the time of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That's when the barley harvest begins, and that's when the wave sheaf of the barley firstfruits must be offered. In addition, the Book of Joshua shows that the Israelites did just that after they crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

But that's not all. That same account in Joshua also pinpoints which Sabbath we should count from, whether an annual Holy Day or a weekly Sabbath, and leaves no alternative! So let's go back and take another look at the story, step-by-step.

The Book of Joshua picks up where Deuteronomy left off, with the death of Moses. At this time, Israel camped on the east side of the Jordan River, "in the plains of Moab near Jericho" (Num. 36:13). At their request, Moses had given some of this land to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh (Num. 32), but only on the condition that they also cross over the Jordan to help their brethren conquer the land of Canaan (Num. 32:29-32).

It's critical to note that, at the time of Moses' death, Israel stood on the doorstep of the Promised Land, **but had not yet entered!** Seven times in the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses

spoke to Israel these exact words: “Go in and possess the land” (Deut. 1:8; 4:1; 6:18; 8:1; 10:11; 11:8; 30:18). At least five other times, he used some variation of that phrase (Deut. 1:39; 4:5; 9:5; 11:31; 30:16).

Remember, God strictly prohibited Moses from entering the Promised Land:

48 Then the LORD spoke to Moses that very same day, saying:

49 “Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, across from Jericho; view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession;

50 “and die on the mountain which you ascend, and be gathered to your people, just as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people;

51 “because you trespassed against Me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah Kadesh, in the Wilderness of Zin, because you did not hallow Me in the midst of the children of Israel.

52 “Yet you shall see the land before you, though you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving to the children of Israel.” (Deut. 32:48-52.)

A couple of chapters later, Deut. 34:1-4 recounts the last moments of Moses’ life:

1 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land of Gilead as far as Dan,

2 all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea,

3 the South, and the plain of the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar.

4 Then the LORD said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.”

So Moses died there on that mountain, without entering the Promised Land, as God had said. After Moses’ death, “the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended” (Deut. 34:8).

Now the time arrived for Israel to enter the Promised Land. God said to Joshua, “Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land



which I am giving to them — the children of Israel” (Josh. 1:2). And so, in obedience to God’s instructions, “Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, ‘Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, “Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess”’” (Josh. 1:10-11).

### **Spying Out Jericho**

Shortly before this, as we all probably remember, Joshua had dispatched two spies to “view the land, especially Jericho” (Josh. 2:1). After entering Jericho, they tried to keep a low profile by staying at the house of Rahab the harlot, but the residents of the city discovered their presence and the king sent men to arrest them (vv. 1-3). So Rahab hid the spies on her roof under stalks of flax and told their pursuers they’d already left the city (vv. 4-6). After the soldiers left in pursuit, she waited until night and lowered the spies down the city wall by a rope, telling them to hide in the hills for three days before returning to the Israelite camp (vv. 15-16).

As she was about to let the two men go, Rahab pleaded with them,

9 “I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you.

10 “For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed.

11 “And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

12 “Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father’s house, and give me a true token,

13 “and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death.” (Josh. 2:9-14.)

They agreed to grant her request on one condition: if she and all her family stayed in her house and she tied a scarlet cord in the window (vv. 14, 17-20). Then they hid in the hills as she told them. When they returned to Joshua on the other side of the Jordan, they reported,

“Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us” (v. 24).

First, note that Rahab had spread stalks of flax on her roof to dry in the sun, as was common practice. This means it was the early harvest season, and indeed we’re later told that it was (Josh. 3:15). Secondly, the people of Jericho were terrified of the Israelites. They were on high alert, preparing for a siege and watching for any potential spies. They would’ve gathered as much food as they could into the city, both to endure a siege and to avoid feeding the enemy. Later, after Israel crossed the Jordan, we read, “Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in” (Josh. 6:1).

On the tenth day of Abib, the first month, the Israelites crossed the Jordan River (Josh. 4:19). Similar to what He did at the Red Sea when Israel left Egypt, God dried up the waters of the river, so that Israel crossed over on dry ground into the Promised Land (Josh. 3-4). This was forty years, to the very day, after Israel had selected lambs for the Passover in Egypt (Ex. 12:3; Josh. 5:6).

### **Keeping the Passover**

When the Israelites had observed that Passover in Egypt, God told them, “It will come to pass when you come to the land which the LORD will give you, just as He promised, that you shall keep this service” (Ex. 12:25). And now, here they were. They’d just crossed the Jordan River into the land of promise, and Passover was only a few days away.

But before they could keep the Passover, something else had to be done. God had also commanded, “For no uncircumcised person shall eat it [the Passover lamb]. One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you” (Ex. 12:48-49). The Israelites who had just crossed over the Jordan River were uncircumcised, so God said to Joshua, “Make flint knives for yourself, and circumcise the sons of Israel again the second time” (Josh. 5:2).

So there, in the Promised Land, the Israelites were circumcised. We’re told, “So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed” (Josh. 5:8). Since Israel crossed the Jordan on Abib 10, it seems likely that this happened the following day, on Abib 11.

Then we read, “And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho” (Josh. 5:10; KJV). Just as God had commanded the Israelites to observe the Passover when they came to the Promised Land, so they did.

It's critical to understand the timing of this event! As proven by many, including by this writer in the book *The Lord's Passover*, God ordained that the Passover lambs be killed on Abib 14, near the end of the day, on the same day and at the same hour that Jesus Christ would later fulfill the Passover sacrifice by dying as our Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). This day, Abib 14, was called "the Preparation Day of the Passover" (John 19:14). God further commanded that the lambs be roasted and, when fully cooked, eaten "on that night" (Ex. 12:8), that is, the 15th.

It's also noteworthy that the Hebrew text of Josh. 5:10 doesn't include the phrase *bayn ha-arbayim*, or "between the two evenings," that we commonly see in reference to Passover. Instead, the Hebrew phrase used here is *b'arbaah asar yom la-khodesh ba-erev*, which simply translates to "on the fourteenth day of the month at evening."

Interestingly, this phrase appears just one other time in the whole Bible: "In the first month, **on the fourteenth day of the month at evening** [*b'arbaah asar yom la-khodesh ba-erev*], you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses" (Ex. 12:18-19). Note that God commanded unleavened bread to be eaten for seven days only, not eight days or parts of eight days. Seven days! This is speaking of the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread.

So God's Word uses the same phrase for the timing of both Passover and the First Day of Unleavened Bread! Both begin at the same time: the fourteenth day of the month at evening. And indeed, the Bible also describes the Feast of Unleavened Bread as the Feast of Passover: "Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover" (Luke 22:1).

Ex. 34:25 identifies the Passover lamb as "the sacrifice of the Feast of the Passover." And of this sacrifice, God also commanded, "You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it" (Deut. 16:3). Again, we see that seven days of unleavened bread accompany the Passover sacrifice, and seven days only. If there's any doubt left, here's Ezek. 45:21: "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall observe the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten." Passover and Unleavened Bread are one, inseparable Feast!

Now, God also said that the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on Abib 15: "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" (Lev. 23:6). "And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast; unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days" (Num. 28:17).

But when does the 15th of Abib begin? At the end of the 14th, as the sun sets in the evening. And when does any other day begin? At the end of the previous day, as the sun sets in the evening.

God's instructions for the Day of Atonement illustrate this further. In Lev. 23:27, God said, "Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement." When does the tenth day begin? At the end of the ninth day, as the sun sets in the evening. And so we read a few verses later, "It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath" (v. 32).

So the Passover sacrifice happened late on the 14th of Abib as the sun declined in the western sky, foreshadowing Jesus Christ's death as our Passover Lamb. Each family roasted the lamb with fire and ate it that night after sunset, at the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This is when the Israelites observed the Passover in Joshua 5.

### **Offering the Wave Sheaf**

Now, in addition to the Passover, God had given the Israelites further instructions for their entry into the land: To give Him the firstfruits of the land as an offering. "When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God" (Lev. 23:10, 14). Again, "The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God" (Ex. 23:19; 34:26). And a third time: "When you come into the land to which I bring you, then it will be, when you eat of the bread of the land, that you shall offer up a heave offering to the LORD" (Num. 15:18-19).

And so we read in Joshua 5, "And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year" (Josh. 5:11-12). Until Passover, the Israelites avoided eating the produce of the land. On the day after Passover, they did eat, and so they continued from that time on. This happened DURING the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for we're specifically told that they ate unleavened bread.

Remember, God strictly commanded His people to eat "neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God" (Lev. 23:14). And we read that "they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day" (Josh. 5:11). These are the very things God told them not to eat UNTIL they offered the wave sheaf!

This means that the Israelites had, earlier that very same day, offered the wave sheaf as God commanded. Just as they celebrated the Passover as God told them to do when they entered

the land, so they also, on the day after Passover, offered the wave sheaf as He told them to do.

In turn, this means “the day after the Passover” in Josh. 5:11 is the same day as “the day after the Sabbath” in Lev. 23:11: “On the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave” the sheaf of the firstfruits. And from this day, they would have begun counting to Pentecost, as God also commanded.

### **“The Day After the Passover”**

But what day was “the day after the Passover”? The Hebrew word translated here as “the day after” is *makhorat* (Strong’s # H4283), which Brown-Driver-Briggs defines as “the morrow (the day following a past day).” It can mean either the day following the night, as it does in Gen. 19:34, or it can also mean the day following another day, as we already saw in Lev. 23:11: “On the day after [*makhorat*] the Sabbath.”

Now, among those who believe that the Passover lambs were killed at the beginning of Abib 14 rather than the end of that day, it’s also believed that the next day, the day of the wave sheaf offering, must have been Abib 15: the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We’ll examine this concept in a moment.

But remember, the phrase Josh. 5:10 uses for the Passover — “the fourteenth day of the month at even” — links Passover to the First Day of Unleavened Bread, which likewise begins on “the fourteenth day of the month at even” (Ex. 12:18). So Joshua 5 unmistakably links Passover to the 15th of Abib, the First Day of Unleavened Bread! The Israelites slew the Passover lambs near the end of Abib 14, and ate them that night on the 15th.

So we have only two possibilities for “the day after the Passover.” If “morrow” is to be understood as the day following the night, then the wave sheaf must have been offered on the morning of Abib 15. If, however, the “morrow” is the day following the 15th, when the lambs were eaten, then the wave sheaf must have been offered on Abib 16. Only Abib 15 or 16, and no other days, could be considered “the day after the Passover.”

But what about God’s instructions to offer the wave sheaf “on the day after the Sabbath”? Here in Joshua 5, “the day after the Passover” must also be “the day after the Sabbath.” If this “Sabbath” is the weekly Sabbath, then it just so happens that Abib 15 and 16 each sometimes fall on a Sunday. But if the “Sabbath” is instead the First Day of Unleavened Bread, Abib 15, then “the day after the Sabbath” can only be Abib 16.

No matter which way you look at it, the first wave sheaf after Israel entered the Promised Land could only have been offered on either Abib 15 or 16. If the wave sheaf was offered on a Sunday, it had to be one of those days. And if the wave sheaf was simply offered on the day after the annual Holy Day, it had to be Abib 16. There are no other possibilities.

So which is it? Let's start with the first possibility. Could the day after the Passover, the day Israel offered the wave sheaf, have been Abib 15?

Carefully note what we're told: "And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day" (Josh. 5:11).

Remember, shortly after crossing the Jordan River, all the Israelite males were circumcised, probably on the 11th of Abib. "So it was, when they had finished circumcising all the people, that they stayed in their places in the camp till they were healed" (Josh. 5:8). They did no foraging in the countryside, but stayed in their camp. Then they observed Passover.

Now in order to eat the produce of the land, unleavened bread and parched grain, the Israelites had to forage in the countryside, harvest and gather the grain, roast it with fire to dry it out, winnow it, grind it, sift it, and bake it into unleavened bread. Do you think it possible for all these activities to occur on Abib 15, the First Day of Unleavened Bread? On a Holy Day? I should say not!

God commanded His people concerning the Feast of Unleavened Bread, "On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. **No manner of work shall be done on them**; but that which everyone must eat — that only may be prepared by you" (Ex. 12:16). Necessary food preparation would be permitted on the Holy Day, but foraging, harvesting, winnowing, and the like would not! These things are **work** (Ex. 34:21; 1 Chron. 27:26). Twice more, in Lev. 23:7 and Num. 28:18, God said, "On the first day you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary [KJV: servile] work."

Up to this point, the Israelites had faithfully obeyed God's instructions, and God's Word finds no fault with their actions. It's unthinkable that they would've profaned God's Holy Day, in direct violation of His commands, and been held guiltless. Thus, the people could not have eaten the produce of the land on Abib 15, nor was the wave sheaf offered on that day!

That means they offered the wave sheaf on Abib 16, and on that day the Israelites ate the produce of the land. Abib 16 was both "the day after the Sabbath" and "the day after the Passover." Could Abib 16 have fallen on a Sunday that year?

To find out, let's go back and look at the timeline in these first five chapters of Joshua. If Abib 16 was a Sunday, then Abib 15 was not only the First Day of Unleavened Bread, but

also the weekly Sabbath. That means, in turn, that Abib 1 and Abib 8 would also have been weekly Sabbaths.

Now remember that Israel crossed the Jordan River on Abib 10 (Josh. 4:19). Before that, we find, “Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, ‘Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, “Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess”’” (Josh. 1:10-11).

“Provisions” is translated from the Hebrew *tsedah* (Strong’s # H6720), which *Brown-Driver-Briggs* defines as “provision for a journey, supply of food.” It sometimes denotes venison or other wild game, as when Isaac commanded his son Esau to “go out to the field and hunt game [*tsedah*] for me” (Gen. 27:3). In essence, Joshua told the people to gather and prepare food for the journey, perhaps even to hunt wild game.

“Within three days” is translated from the Hebrew phrase *b’od sh’loshet yamim*, and *b’od* is the word translated “within.” The root word is *od* (Strong’s # H5750), which means “still, yet, again, besides.” The *b’* at the beginning basically means “in” or “on.” So a literal translation of *b’od* would be “in yet”: In yet three days, you will cross over the Jordan.

An example is found in Gen. 48:7, where Jacob said, “And as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, **when yet [*b’od*] there was** but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath; the same is Bethlehem” (KJV).

But it also does indeed mean “within,” that is, before the specified time has passed. For example, “And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat while it was yet [*b’od*] day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down” (2 Sam. 3:35; KJV). So the people wanted David to eat within that day, before it ended. Here’s another example: “And he said, While the child was yet [*b’od*] alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell [whether] GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?” (2 Sam. 12:22; KJV). David fasted and wept while his son was still alive, but not after he died.

Both the literal meaning of the word and the Bible’s usage of it show the meaning of Joshua’s statement. He told the people they would cross the Jordan in three days, but within those three days, before they ended. Or, as we might simply say, “on the third day.” The Israelites would not cross on the first day or the second day, but during the third day.

The full phrase *b’od sh’loshet yamim*, “within three days,” reinforces this meaning. It occurs in just two other verses in all of Scripture, both in Genesis 40. Interpreting the dreams of the butler and the baker, Joseph told the butler, “Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your

head and restore you to your place” (Gen. 40:13). And to the baker, he said, “Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree” (Gen. 40:19). Then we’re immediately told that these events happened as prophesied “on the third day” (Gen. 40:20), obviously before the day ended.

So, getting back to the story in Joshua, Abib 10 was the third day from when Joshua told the people to prepare to cross the Jordan. That makes Abib 9 the second day and Abib 8 the first day.

Either Joshua gave his instructions on Abib 8 and the people began to prepare on the same day, or else he gave his instructions at the end of Abib 7, so that that day could not be counted as the first day. Either way, the day Joshua commanded the Israelites to begin preparing for the crossing was Abib 8.

Now remember that if Abib 16 was a Sunday, then Abib 15 was a weekly Sabbath, and Abib 8 was also a Sabbath. Do you suppose that Joshua would’ve commanded the people to begin preparing for a journey on the Sabbath day? To gather and prepare, perhaps even hunt, food on that day?

When God introduced the Sabbath to the Israelites, He told them to gather food on Friday and **not** on the Sabbath (Ex. 16:25-29). He told them to prepare their food on Friday and **not** on the Sabbath: “This is what the LORD has said: ‘Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning’” (Ex. 16:23). God prohibited even kindling a fire for such a purpose: “You shall kindle no fire throughout your dwellings on the Sabbath day” (Ex. 35:3).

Again, we read, “Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death” (Ex. 31:15). As Israel traveled through the wilderness, a man had been found gathering sticks on the Sabbath. God commanded that the man be stoned to death for breaking the Sabbath (Num. 15:32-36).

Would Joshua have commanded the people to break the Sabbath? To gather and prepare food on that day, contrary to God’s command? To spend the day, not resting, but preparing for a journey? Of course not! Again, the Israelites hadn’t disobeyed God’s commands in any way thus far. Later, when they did, and one of them took plunder from Jericho contrary to God’s instructions, we’re plainly told. And many people died for that disobedience (Josh. 7).

So Abib 8, the day Joshua sent officers throughout the camp to tell the people to prepare for the journey, wasn’t a Sabbath. It simply could NOT have been a Sabbath! If Abib 8 wasn’t a Sabbath, that means Abib 15 didn’t fall on a weekly Sabbath either, and Abib 16 therefore could not have been a Sunday!



Therefore, it is simply impossible for the wave sheaf in Joshua 5 to have been offered on Sunday. “That dog don’t hunt,” as the saying goes. It doesn’t fit, no matter which way you look at it. And if the wave sheaf wasn’t on Sunday, then neither was Pentecost.

We are left with one conclusion: “the day after the Sabbath” simply means “the day after Passover.” Not just once when Israel entered the Promised Land, but always! The Sabbath that we must count from is none other than the First Day of Unleavened Bread.

It’s critical to note that this is the very same day the Gospels refer to as “the Sabbath” when recounting Jesus’ crucifixion. Jesus died on Abib 14, the day before the First Day of Unleavened Bread. Mark 15:42 describes it as “the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath.” Luke 23:54 observes, “That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near.” John 19:14 calls it “the Preparation Day of the Passover” and John 19:31 notes that it was also the preparation day for a Sabbath before adding, “for that Sabbath was a high day.”

So the day Jesus died was both the preparation day of the Passover and the preparation day of a high Sabbath, the First Day of Unleavened Bread. It was the day the Passover lambs were slaughtered in preparation for the Feast. And Passover, in this context, IS a Sabbath, the First Day of Unleavened Bread, just as it was in Joshua 5! We might call it the Passover Sabbath.

But that’s not all. Just from a basic reading of Leviticus 23, wouldn’t it make sense that “the day after the Sabbath” would apply to a readily identifiable Sabbath? One that can be distinguished from all the others? There’s nothing in God’s instructions for counting to Pentecost that mentions the Feast of Unleavened Bread; He simply says “the day after the Sabbath” as if we’re supposed to know which one. As if it’s one that’s readily identifiable.

When God gave those instructions, there was nothing inherently unique about the weekly Sabbath that falls during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Nothing to distinguish it from any other weekly Sabbath in the first month, or during the whole year, for that matter.

But the First Day of Unleavened Bread is unique in an important way. Not only is it a day we cease from work, which is a Sabbath by definition, but it’s also the day we cease from leaven for seven days. Here’s Exodus 12:15 (YLT): “Seven days ye eat unleavened things; only —

### Crossing the Jordan

*Abib 8* — Early this day, Joshua tells the people to prepare to cross the Jordan

*Abib 8-9* — Israel prepares “today and tomorrow” for the crossing

*Abib 10* — Israel crosses the Jordan River

*Abib 14* — Passover sacrifice

*Abib 15* — Passover Sabbath, the First Day of Unleavened Bread

*Abib 16* — Israel offers the wave sheaf and begins to eat the produce of the land

in the first day ye cause leaven to cease out of your houses; for any one eating anything fermented from the first day till the seventh day, even that person hath been cut off from Israel.”

The Hebrew word for “cause to cease” is a form of the verb *shavat* (cease), which is the word used in Genesis when God ceased (or rested) from His work on the seventh day! “And God completeth by the seventh day His work which He hath made, and ceaseth [*shavat*] by the seventh day from all His work which He hath made” (Gen. 2:2; YLT). *Shavat* (cease) is in fact the root word of Shabbat, or Sabbath!

A Sabbath means ceasing from work, by definition. To take a Sabbatical means to take a break from a given task, that is, to cease. But the First Day of Unleavened Bread is also a Sabbath of ceasing from leaven! It’s unique among God’s Sabbaths.

So when God said to count from the day after the Sabbath, without identifying which Sabbath, it only stands to reason that it would be one that stands out from the others. Of all the Sabbaths near the beginning of the Biblical year, none are as readily identifiable as this one. The First Day of Unleavened Bread alone, of all the Sabbaths in the first month, is the one that fits the bill!

Now the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, agrees that the First Day of Unleavened Bread is the Sabbath from which we begin counting to Pentecost. Here are the instructions in Lev. 23:6-11, as found in the Brenton English translation of the Septuagint:

6 And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast of unleavened bread to the Lord; seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread.

7 **And the first day shall be a holy convocation to you:** ye shall do no servile work.

8 And ye shall offer whole-burnt-offerings to the Lord seven days; and the seventh day shall be a holy convocation to you: ye shall do no servile work.

9 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

10 Speak to the children of Israel, and thou shalt say to them, When ye shall enter into the land which I give you, and reap the harvest of it, then shall ye bring a sheaf, the first-fruits of your harvest, to the priest;

11 and he shall lift up the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you. **On the morrow of the first day the priest shall lift it up.**

The Greek word translated “on the morrow” is *epaurion* (Strong’s # G1887), which is translated “next day” throughout the New Testament.

Based on the context, what is the first day? The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (v. 7). So the Septuagint states that the wave sheaf is to be offered on the day after the First Day of Unleavened Bread — that is, it is to be offered on the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread!

What we find, then, is a direct link between Passover and Pentecost. Not between Pentecost and whichever weekly Sabbath happens to fall during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but between Pentecost and Passover itself! Pentecost is to be counted directly from Passover, beginning on the day after the Passover Sabbath. On the calculated Hebrew calendar, this means that we begin to count on Abib/Nisan 16, the second day of Unleavened Bread,<sup>2</sup> and observe Pentecost on the fiftieth and final day of our count, which is Sivan 6.

Now, this is a fascinating thought, but is there any additional evidence for a direct link between Passover and Pentecost? That Pentecost is to be counted from the First Day of Unleavened Bread? There is, and in fact, we've barely begun to scratch the surface!

## 6. The Redemption and the Covenant

On the Day of Pentecost, God sealed His covenant with His people and gave them a guarantee of His promise. That seal and guarantee of His covenant is the Holy Spirit. Here's Eph. 1:13-14: "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, **you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise**, who [which] is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." Again, we read, "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, **who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit** in our hearts as a guarantee" (2 Cor. 1:21-22).

"Guarantee" is the Greek *arrabon* (Strong's # G728). *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* defines it as "an earnest; a pledge, i.e. part of the purchase-money or property given in advance as security for the rest." Interestingly, this Greek word stems from a Hebrew word, *aravon* (Strong's # H6162), which signifies a pledge or surety.

If you intend to buy a house, you sign a contract and put down earnest money. If you get engaged to be married, you enter into a promise and either give or receive an engagement ring, depending on which party you are. This ring is a token or pledge of the engagement, a seal of the promise.

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<sup>2</sup> The Bible uses both Abib and Nisan as the name of the first month. Abib was the name before the Babylonian Captivity, and Nisan the name afterward.

Likewise, the Holy Spirit is the seal of God's covenant and the pledge of our future inheritance. It's a downpayment, a guarantee. We are betrothed to Jesus Christ, but the wedding is still to come. This is why Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2).

Those betrothed to Christ in this present age and sealed by His Spirit are called firstfruits (Jam. 1:18; Rev. 14:4). The firstfruits are few, but one day, God will extend His covenant and His Spirit to many others, to the rest of the harvest! Of that day, we read, "'As for Me,' says the LORD, 'this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who [which] is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants,' says the LORD, 'from this time and forevermore'" (Isa. 59:21).

God is faithful; He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5; Deut. 31:6, 8). If we are faithful to His covenant, He will also be faithful to us, and His Spirit and His words will never depart from us. This covenant is the new covenant spoken of in Jer. 31:31-33:

31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah —

32 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

33 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

This is the covenant that God sealed with His Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. It is through His Spirit that He puts His laws in our minds and writes them on our hearts! As God has said, "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezek. 36:27).

So if the Holy Spirit seals God's covenant, then what initiates that covenant? Jesus Christ initiated the New Covenant when He died and shed His blood for us as our Passover Lamb. As He told His disciples on the night before His death, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20).

The New Covenant is a covenant of blood. "Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot,

counted the **blood of the covenant** by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Heb. 10:28-29).

Jesus Christ “is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death” (Heb. 9:15). Without His death and His shed blood, we have no covenant! “For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives” (Heb. 9:16-17).

So Jesus’ blood initiated His covenant with us, and the Holy Spirit seals it. When we accept Christ’s sacrifice, get baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit, we enter into a covenant with our Creator, and there can be no turning back. Thus Pentecost, the day God sent the Holy Spirit, cannot be separated from Passover, the blood of the covenant. Without Passover, there is no Pentecost!

Throughout the Bible, in fact, we see many links between Passover, Pentecost, and God’s covenant. Remember that God gave the Old Covenant at Mt. Sinai on the Day of Pentecost. And in light of what we’ve just seen, it should be no wonder that God’s first words to Israel on Pentecost pointed back to Passover: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Ex. 20:22).

In many ways, the Old Covenant paralleled and foreshadowed the New. God gave the Old Covenant and declared His laws from Mt. Sinai on the Day of Pentecost. Likewise, God sent the Holy Spirit to seal the New Covenant and write His laws on the hearts of His people on the Day of Pentecost. The New Covenant required blood, the blood of Jesus Christ. The Old Covenant also required blood. Here’s Heb. 9:18-22:

18 Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood.

19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people,

20 saying, “This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.”

21 Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry.

22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

In answer to His summons, God’s people assembled before Him at Mt. Sinai: “And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain” (Ex. 19:17). In the New Testament, the Lord’s disciples assembled before Him on

the Day of Pentecost as He'd instructed in the Old Testament: "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1).

God spoke His laws from Mount Sinai. And from Mount Zion, from His sanctuary in heaven, He wrote them on the hearts of His people. Here's Heb. 12:18-24:

18 For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest,

19 and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore.

20 (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.")

21 And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling."

22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,

23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

There's another parallel between the Old and New Covenants in the day itself. Pentecost is the fiftieth and final day of the count from Passover. The Bible uses the number 50 to represent liberty and redemption: "And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family" (Lev. 25:10).

So 50 is liberty. And what are we told of God's law? That it is a law of liberty! The apostle James declared, "But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (Jam. 1:25).

God's Holy Spirit writes His laws on our hearts and through this, they bring liberty. As the apostle Paul wrote, "Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:17-18).

And in this, we see yet another link to Passover and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus announced His mission, quoting from the Book of Isaiah: “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18; quoting Isa. 61:1).

Through His death at Passover, Christ gave us liberty and redeemed us from spiritual bondage: “You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:18-19). And how was Israel redeemed from bondage and death in Egypt? By the blood of the Passover lambs on the doors of their houses!

God redeemed our forefathers and granted them liberty from bondage at Passover. Fifty days after that Passover Sabbath, the First Day of Unleavened Bread, He gave them His laws at Mt. Sinai, “just ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments” (Neh. 9:13). God redeemed mankind and set us free from bondage by the Passover sacrifice of His Son. Fifty days after that Passover Sabbath, He sent the Holy Spirit to write His laws on our hearts, the perfect law of liberty.

So God gave the Old Covenant on the Day of Pentecost, and He also gave the New Covenant on the Day of Pentecost, with many parallels between the two. But this isn’t all. In fact, no less than five of the eight Pentecost observances we’ve seen recorded in Scripture relate to a covenant between God and man! We’ve now seen two of these. Let’s look at the other three, beginning with the first one.

As we saw earlier in this study, Noah and his family stepped off the ark near the end of the second month, on the 27th day of that month (Gen. 8:14). Shortly thereafter, he built an altar to God: “Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar” (Gen. 8:20). This is the season of Pentecost, and it was at this time that God made a covenant with Noah:

8 Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying:

9 “And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you,

10 “and with every living creature that is with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth.

11 “Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” (Gen. 9:8-11.)

Many centuries later, Israel assembled before Samuel the prophet at Gilgal on the Day of Pentecost, the firstfruits of wheat harvest (Ex. 34:22; 1 Sam. 12:17). On this day, Samuel reminded the people of God’s covenant, the commandments delivered to their forefathers. He warned them that neither Saul, whom they had just crowned king, nor any other man could save them if they broke their covenant with God:

13 “Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note, the LORD has set a king over you.

14 “If you fear the LORD and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the LORD your God.

15 “However, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you, as it was against your fathers.” (1 Sam. 12:13-15.)

In a scene somewhat reminiscent of Mt. Sinai, God punctuated Samuel’s words with thunder and rain as a sign to the people. “So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. And all the people said to Samuel, ‘Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we may not die’” (1 Sam. 12:18-19).

Finally, during the period of the Divided Kingdom, all the people of Judah assembled together with King Asa in Jerusalem at Pentecost to renew their covenant with God. Here’s the full account:

10 So they gathered together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.

11 And they offered to the LORD at that time seven hundred bulls and seven thousand sheep from the spoil they had brought.

12 Then they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul;

13 and whoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel was to be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.



14 Then they took an oath before the LORD with a loud voice, with shouting and trumpets and rams' horns.

15 And all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and sought Him with all their soul; and He was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around. (2 Chron. 15:10-15.)

So in no less than five Pentecost observances, there emerges a common theme of God's covenant with man! God made a covenant with Noah at Pentecost. He made a covenant with Israel at Mt. Sinai on Pentecost. Through Samuel, He reminded them of that covenant on Pentecost. King Asa and the people of Judah renewed their devotion to that covenant on Pentecost. And God poured out the Holy Spirit and sealed the New Covenant on the Day of Pentecost.

But that's not all. God's very instructions for arriving at this day give us another glimpse of the covenant. Remember, God told us to count seven weeks, that is, seven sevens or forty-nine days, and the fiftieth day is Pentecost (Lev. 23:15-16; Deut. 16:9-10). Interestingly, the Hebrew word for "seven," *sheva* (Strong's # H7651), stems from the root word *shava* (H7650), or "oath." Brown-Driver-Briggs explains that it means oath "probably, so to say, [to] seven oneself, or [to] bind oneself by seven things."

When Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech, he set aside seven female lambs as a sign of that covenant (Gen. 21:27-30). The place they made the covenant came to be called Beersheba (Gen. 21:31), that is, "well of seven" or "well of oath."

When God made His covenant with Noah, He gave the rainbow as a sign of the covenant (Gen. 9:12-17). The rainbow has seven colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet.

Of the Sabbath, God said, "Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you" (Ex. 31:13). The Sabbath, of course, is the seventh day of the week.

So the number seven relates to, among other things, God's covenant with His people. When He tells us to count seven weeks of seven days to keep the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, it's yet another reminder of the link between Pentecost and His covenant!

But remember that Passover, too, is tied to the covenant, and without Passover, there is no covenant! Jesus Christ shed His blood of the New Covenant at Passover. God's covenant with Abraham happened at Passover, 430 years before Israel came out of Egypt (Gal. 3:17) "on that very same day" (Ex. 12:41). God told the Israelites that they must be circumcised

before eating the Passover (Ex. 12:48) because circumcision was a sign of His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:1-14).

Passover, too, is connected to the number seven. As we've already seen, the Passover lambs were slain toward the end of Abib/Nisan 14, in the evening, each year. This foreshadowed the death of Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb, on the very same day and at the very same time of day. The 14th is two sevens, or seven times two.

The sacrifice of the Passover lambs ushered in the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread: "You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it" (Deut. 16:3). "For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast" (1 Cor. 5:7-8).

Again and again, wherever we look, we see an unbroken line from Passover to Pentecost! God redeemed His people and granted them liberty from bondage at Passover; He gave His Holy Spirit and wrote His perfect law of liberty on their hearts at Pentecost. There are fifty days from Passover to Pentecost, picturing that very liberty.

God initiated His covenant with His people at Passover through the blood of His Son, the Passover Lamb without blemish and without spot. He sealed that covenant on the Day of Pentecost by filling His people with the Holy Spirit. And between the Passover Sabbath and Pentecost, there are seven sevens, or forty-nine days, picturing that very covenant!

God's covenant with His people is tied to both Passover and Pentecost, and thus the two are joined together. Pentecost cannot be separated from Passover and the blood of the covenant! Passover is the initiation, and Pentecost the sealing of that covenant. It is no wonder, then, that Pentecost must be counted from Passover, as we already saw in the Book of Joshua. It could be no other way!

## **7. Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension**

From everything we've seen so far, it seems plain that God tied Passover and Pentecost together by an unbroken line, counting forty-nine days and ending on the fiftieth day. God commanded for the wave sheaf to be presented on the day after the Passover Sabbath, on the second day of Unleavened Bread, Abib/Nisan 16. So Nisan 16 is the day we begin counting to Pentecost, we count forty-nine days, and we conclude on the fiftieth day, Sivan 6.

This leaves a question: What about Jesus Christ's crucifixion and resurrection?

Jesus died as our Passover Lamb late in the day on Nisan 14, “the Preparation Day of the Passover” (John 19:14), and He was buried moments before sunset at the day’s end (John 19:31; Luke 23:54). The Gospels’ timeline reveals that Nisan 14 fell in the middle of the week that year, on a Wednesday. Three days and three nights later, He rose from the grave as the weekly Sabbath drew to a close, on Nisan 17. The next day, Sunday, Nisan 18, He appeared to His disciples.

This timeline seems to be almost universally accepted among the Churches of God. For those with a different understanding, please refer to Appendix D for a full explanation.

Now, those who believe in a Sunday wave sheaf offering and a Sunday Pentecost assert that Jesus fulfilled the wave sheaf offering shortly after rising from the dead. They proclaim that He briefly ascended to God the Father and returned to earth on Sunday, Nisan 18, which they believe to be the day of the wave sheaf offering, and they assert that this event fulfilled the wave sheaf offering.

They further assert that Jesus ascended to heaven on this day to be inspected for blemishes by the Father. After all, to be an acceptable sacrifice, He had to be unblemished. They add that if the Father didn’t inspect Him after His death and resurrection, His sacrifice would be unacceptable and we’d still be dead in our sins! And finally, they say that this series of events proves that the wave sheaf was offered on Sunday, and that Pentecost is to be counted from the weekly Sabbath rather than the Passover Sabbath.

So how about it? Is this true? Did Jesus Christ ascend to God the Father on Sunday, shortly after His resurrection, and then return to earth later that same day? If He did, would this have fulfilled the wave sheaf offering? Is Jesus Christ Himself the wave sheaf? Was Jesus Christ, as the wave sheaf, presented before the Father on Sunday morning to be inspected for blemishes?

All these questions deserve to be answered, and God’s Word provides the answers. So let’s take a look!

Earlier in His ministry, Jesus spoke of the day He would ascend to heaven and return to the Father, implying that His disciples would witness it. He asked them, “What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?” (John 6:62). Again, during the Feast of Tabernacles in John 7, He told the Jews, “I shall be with you a little while longer, and then I go to Him who sent Me. You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come” (John 7:33-34).

At the Last Supper, shortly before His death, Jesus knew His return to the Father was now imminent: “Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the

world, He loved them to the end” (John 13:1). Several times that night, Jesus told His disciples that He was going away, but would return. Here’s one example: “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2-3). He also promised that after He departed, He would send the Holy Spirit, the Helper (John 16:7-15).

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples early Sunday morning, the first day of the week. First, He appeared to the women, including Mary Magdalene: “And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, ‘Rejoice!’ So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me’” (Mat. 28:9-10).

At this time, He spoke once again of His imminent ascension: “Jesus said to her, ‘Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, “I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God”’” (John 20:17). Later that day, He appeared to the rest of His disciples.

Luke picks up the story in the Book of Acts, writing,

1 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

2 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,

3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:1-3.)

At the end of forty days, Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives and His disciples saw Him, just as He’d told them earlier in His ministry:

9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,

11 who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:9-11.)

Mark 16:19 tells us, “So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.” This is echoed in Eph. 1:19-20, where we read of the Father’s “mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly.” Likewise, the apostle Peter wrote that Jesus Christ “has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him” (1 Pet. 3:22).

Now, every major event of Jesus’ ministry, from His baptism to His ascension, was observed by witnesses. As Peter told his fellow disciples, “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection” (Acts 1:21-22). Though no one witnessed the exact moment that life returned to Jesus’ body and He rose from the dead, many witnesses saw Him after His resurrection.

Yet if Jesus ascended to the Father and returned to earth on Sunday morning, shortly after appearing to Mary Magdalene, there were no witnesses! Nor was this event ever spoken of by anyone, neither before nor after. In fact, the Bible nowhere states that Jesus ascended to the Father on that day. Search the Scriptures for yourself, please, and see!

Prior to His death, Jesus spoke of His ascension several times, but each of these foretold the moment He would return to the Father and remain with Him. After He did so, the Bible speaks of His ascension many more times, and each of these refers to that day when He ascended from the Mount of Olives in the presence of His disciples. If there was another ascension at any time, the Bible simply doesn’t mention it!

But does that mean Jesus did NOT ascend to the Father and return to earth on Sunday morning? Does the Bible say it DIDN’T happen?

Yes, in fact, it does tell us just that! The Word of God plainly tells us that, after His resurrection, Jesus ascended to the Father only once.

Notice that Acts 1:2, which we already read, speaks only of “THE DAY in which He was taken up.” Peter made a similar statement in Acts 1:22, speaking of “THAT DAY when He was taken up from us.” Just one day, and one ascension.

The Book of Hebrews speaks even more plainly. In Heb. 9:11-12 (KJV), we find, “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood **he entered in ONCE into the holy place**, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

Lest there be any dispute about what the holy place is, we read again a few verses later, “For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb. 9:24). So Christ ascended into heaven ONCE, and that one time was THE DAY He ascended from the Mount of Olives in the presence of His disciples!

“Once” is translated from the Greek word *ephapax* (Strong’s # G1278), which *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* defines simply as “once, at once.” Strong’s defines it as “upon one occasion (only).” In modern Greek, it likewise means “once.”

The word is used five times in the New Testament. Rom. 6:10 tells us that Jesus died for our sins once, that is, one time only. In 1 Cor. 15:6, we’re told that, after His resurrection, He appeared to “over five hundred brethren at once,” an event that happened one time only and in one place only. Heb. 7:27 and Heb. 10:10 echo Romans in declaring that Christ died for our sins once. He didn’t die for our sins twice, but one time only.

Likewise, He did not ascend to heaven twice after His resurrection, but only once. One time only. And that one time happened in the presence of many witnesses, just like every other important event in His ministry! It was this one time that He spoke of during His ministry, it was this one time that He spoke of at the Last Supper, and it was this one time that the Scriptures speak of afterward.

At the Last Supper, Jesus had told His disciples, “I am going away and coming back to you” and “I am going to the Father” (John 14:28). When He said He was going away and coming back, was He saying He would do this on the Sunday He appeared to His disciples? Did Jesus ascend and come back, then ascend once more to again come back? No. He ascended once, and will return once.

When He ascended, He sat down at the right hand of the Father, as we read in Mark 16:19. And when He ascended, He sent the Holy Spirit, just as He’d promised at the Last Supper. Here’s Eph. 4:7-10:

7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

8 Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.”

9 (Now this, “He ascended” — what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?

10 He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

What were these gifts? The Holy Spirit, for one! “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38). Peter also connected the gift of the Holy Spirit with Jesus’ ascension: “Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear” (Acts 2:33).

So when Jesus told Mary Magdalene on Sunday morning, the morning after His resurrection, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God’” (John 20:17), what ascension did He speak of? The same one He always spoke of, for there was only one! The day He departed from this earth and returned to the Father.

Why, then, did Jesus tell Mary, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father,” yet later allow Himself to be touched by His disciples? This passage is the sole reason that many believe Jesus ascended to the Father on Sunday morning, for aside from this, no passage in Scripture even hints of such an ascension. To answer this question, let’s take another look at Jesus’ encounter with Mary.

“Cling,” as the NKJV translates it, is always translated as “touch” in the KJV, but this doesn’t truly capture the meaning of the word. It’s translated from the Greek word *aptomai* (Strong’s # G680), which *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* defines as “to fasten to, make adhere to, to fasten oneself to, cling to.” In other words, Jesus told Mary not to handle Him, not to fasten herself to Him, not to cling to Him.

In fact, “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary” (Mat. 28:1) had already seized hold of Him, as the Gospel of Matthew informs us. “And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, ‘Rejoice!’ **So they came and held Him by the feet** and worshiped Him” (Mat. 28:9). Jesus wasn’t telling the two Marys not to touch Him; He was simply saying, “Stop clinging to Me.” At the same time, He reminded them that He would be ascending to His Father, not staying here on earth.

Nowhere does the Bible say Jesus ascended to His Father for inspection on Sunday morning. Nowhere does it say He needed to be inspected after His resurrection. Nowhere does it say His sacrifice would only be accepted if the Father inspected Him afterward. He had already been resurrected. He had already been perfected!

Like all sacrifices, Jesus was inspected for blemishes before being slain. From the time He entered Jerusalem until He was handed over to Pontius Pilate, the Jewish leaders scrutinized Him, cross-examined Him, and searched for some fault in Him. As He reminded them after His arrest, “I was with you daily in the temple” (Luke 22:53). Yet, try as they might, they

could find no fault in Him. “Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none” (Mat. 26:59-60).

When they handed Him over to Pilate, they made many false accusations, but Pilate replied, “You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him” (Luke 23:14). Three times, he declared, “I find no fault in Him” (John 18:38; 19:4, 6). After intense scrutiny by those who were about to kill Him, it was proven that Jesus Christ was “a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:19).

And God the Father accepted Jesus’ sacrifice at the moment He died. “From the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land” (Mat. 27:45), meaning that the light returned when Jesus died at the ninth hour. At that same time, “the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom” (Mat. 27:51), opening the way into the Father’s presence. “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh...” (Heb. 10:19-20).

Folks, if we stop and think about it, would it make any sense at all for Jesus to be inspected after He’d already offered His sacrifice? How many times in the Old Testament, do you suppose, were sacrifices inspected for blemishes after being offered? Was it the priest’s custom to take a stick and poke around in the ashes to see if the animal had been unblemished or not? Of course not! Neither was our Messiah inspected for blemishes after He’d already been sacrificed.

A sacrifice had to be inspected for blemishes BEFORE being offered, not afterward! Offering a blemished sacrifice dishonored God: ““And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?” says the LORD of hosts” (Mal. 1:8).

So did Jesus’ ascension fulfill the wave sheaf offering? The answer is simple, plain, and obvious: No! He ascended to the Father forty days after His resurrection, not on the day of the wave sheaf offering. This was the only time He ascended after His resurrection, and when He ascended, He sat down at the right hand of His Father. Shortly thereafter, He bestowed the gift of the Holy Spirit upon His disciples.

If the wave sheaf offering didn’t picture the ascension of Jesus Christ, then what was its real meaning? What does it mean for us today? And why did God place it on the day after the Passover Sabbath?



Was it still, in some way, connected to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as our Passover Lamb? Yes, and we'll soon see how! But first, let's examine the process of offering the wave sheaf. Once we understand what it was and how and why it was offered, we'll be better able to understand what it pictured.

## 8. Preparing to Wave the Sheaf

If we had only the instructions in Leviticus 23, we might assume that offering the wave sheaf was simply a matter of walking out to the nearest barley field, grabbing a handful of stalks, cutting them, and carrying this handful of grain back to the sanctuary to wave before God. This assumption would be very much mistaken!

In fact, God gave detailed instructions for preparing the wave sheaf. It involved major labor and preparation.

First, the wave sheaf was to be cut. The count to Pentecost would begin from this time, "from the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain" (Deut. 16:9). A "sheaf" implies a rather large quantity and not a mere handful, but more on this in a moment.

Lev. 2:12-16 gives us the rest of the steps:

12 'As for the offering of the firstfruits, you shall offer them to the LORD, but they shall not be burned on the altar for a sweet aroma.

13 'And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt.

14 'If you offer a grain offering of your firstfruits to the LORD, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits green heads of grain roasted on the fire, grain beaten from full heads.

15 'And you shall put oil on it, and lay frankincense on it. It is a grain offering.

16 'Then the priest shall burn the memorial portion: part of its beaten grain and part of its oil, with all the frankincense, as an offering made by fire to the LORD.'

Notice that there are two different types of firstfruits offerings here. The one in v. 12 was **not** to be burned on the altar, but the one in vv. 14-16 was to be partially burned. At the moment, it's the second offering which concerns us.

You may recall that the word for “green heads of grain” in v. 14 is *aviv* (Strong’s # H24), which is the same as the name of the first month, Abib, the month of Passover. Brown-Driver-Briggs defines it as “fresh young ears of barley,” and Ex. 9:31 uses it to describe the green ears of barley destroyed by the plague of hail.

These instructions, then, concern the wave sheaf offering! First, the green heads of barley must be roasted with fire, then beaten from the heads. Earlier in Lev. 2, we’re told that every grain offering “shall be of fine flour” (Lev. 2:1). So this roasted grain had to be ground up, sifted, and ground some more, until it formed fine flour.

At this point, we must observe that the word translated “sheaf” is the Hebrew *omer* (Strong’s # H6016), which is also a unit of measure. Ex. 16:36 tells us, “Now an omer is one-tenth of an ephah.” In modern terms, an omer is generally thought to be about two liters, or a little over half a gallon.

So we can conclude that the “sheaf” of grain contained enough barley to produce half a gallon of flour. Or, at the very least, half a gallon of beaten grain.

Let’s return now to the instructions in Lev. 2. After being roasted, beaten from the heads, ground, and sifted, the wave sheaf was to be anointed with oil and frankincense. Only then was it ready to be offered before God.

As for the offering itself, there are some additional and important details which we haven’t yet covered. God told the people to bring some of ALL of their firstfruits before the priest:

1 “And it shall be, when you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it,

2 “that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the LORD your God is giving you, and put it in a basket and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide.

3 “And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days, and say to him, ‘I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come to the country which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.’

4 “Then the priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God.” (Deut. 26:1-4.)

“All the produce” naturally applies to every harvest, beginning with the barley harvest. These instructions apply to every firstfruits offering, including the wave sheaf. Therefore, it was the people’s responsibility to bring the wave sheaf before the priest. It was the people, also, who

were to prepare it for offering, because all of the instructions of Lev. 2 address the people rather than the priests. And Lev. 23:10 specifies, “When **you** come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then **you shall bring** a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.”

Now let’s continue where we left off in Deut. 26:

5 “And you shall answer and say before the LORD your God: ‘My father was a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous.

6 ‘But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us.

7 ‘Then we cried out to the LORD God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression.

8 ‘So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders.

9 ‘He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, “a land flowing with milk and honey”;

10 ‘and now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, O LORD, have given me.’ Then you shall set it before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God.

Notice that each firstfruits offering, including the wave sheaf and wave loaves, involved thanking God for His blessings, focusing special attention on Passover, when He redeemed His people from slavery in Egypt. After redeeming them, He brought them into “a land flowing with milk and honey,” a land of abundant harvests, just as He’d sworn to their forefathers.

Then the priest “shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it” (Lev. 23:11). In the next section, we’ll examine the wave offering itself, for if we are to understand its meaning, we must first know what it was.

But it should be clear by now how God expected His people to prepare the wave sheaf. He didn’t make a vague statement and let the Israelites do it however they wanted; He laid everything out in detail and preserved those details for us in His Word. “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4).

To recap, here was the process:

- Cut a sheaf of barley, large enough for about half a gallon of flour or beaten grain
- Roast the green ears with fire
- Beat the barley grains from the heads
- Grind and sift the grain into fine flour
- Bring the offering to the priest
- Give thanks to God for His redemption and for all of His blessings
- The priest waves the offering before God

So now we know how the wave sheaf was prepared. But all this begs another question: What, exactly, was a wave offering? And how was it offered, and why?

## 9. What Was a Wave Offering?

Under the Old Covenant, God taught His people to offer Him the firstfruits of each harvest in the Promised Land. This included, as we've seen, the two primary grain crops: barley and wheat. Because the Creator showered upon His people an abundance of all things, it was only fitting to offer an expression of gratitude to Him!

As we've also seen, God's people offered the firstfruits of barley as a wave sheaf when beginning the count to Pentecost. Fifty days later, on the Day of Pentecost itself, they offered the firstfruits of wheat as wave loaves.

All this begs a question: What, exactly, was a wave offering? A wave offering both began and ended the count to Pentecost. The Bible mentions several other wave offerings, too. So what were these "wave offerings," how were they offered, and what was the reason for them?

Understanding the details of these offerings will help us unlock their spiritual meaning, but misunderstanding them keeps their meaning hidden from us. Misunderstanding begets misunderstanding. If you start out on the wrong foot, you'll end up on the wrong foot. So let's dive in and see what God's Word has to say about wave offerings!

### Types of Wave Offerings

In Leviticus 23, where we discover the wave sheaf and wave loaves, "wave offering" is translated from the Hebrew word *tenufah* (Strong's # H8573). It describes swinging, waving, or shaking. *Tenufah* springs from the root word *nuf* (Strong's # H5130), which Gesenius defines as "to wave up and down, to agitate," and Brown-Driver-Briggs defines as "move to and fro, wave, besprinkle."

Both words appear in Lev. 23:20, describing the wave loaves and other sacrifices on Pentecost: “The priest shall wave [*nuf*] them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering [*tenufah*] before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest.”

If you try to shake your pet’s hair off your favorite shirt, you’ll normally shake the shirt up and down violently. Or, if shaking the dirt off a throw rug, you likewise shake it up and down. So it seems reasonable to think that a wave offering would’ve been waved up and down rather than side to side or back and forth. In a moment, we’ll see that was indeed the case.

So what about the other wave offerings? The Bible mentions six key wave offerings:

1. Grain offerings such as the wave sheaf and wave loaves
2. Waving animal parts during the consecration of priests
3. Waving a ram’s breast as a peace offering
4. Waving a trespass offering for cleansing from leprosy
5. “Waving” the Levites to dedicate them to God
6. Contributing items for constructing the tabernacle

Again, we must understand the wave offerings if we are to understand the wave sheaf and wave loaves, so let’s take a brief look at the other five.

The first example of a wave offering is found in Ex. 29, where Aaron and his sons waved many items before God while being consecrated as priests. In Ex. 29:22-24, the Almighty said,

22 “Also you shall take the fat of the ram, the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the fatty lobe attached to the liver, the two kidneys and the fat on them, the right thigh (for it is a ram of consecration),

23 “one loaf of bread, one cake made with oil, and one wafer from the basket of the unleavened bread that is before the LORD;

24 “and you shall put all these in the hands of Aaron and in the hands of his sons, and you shall **wave them as a wave offering** before the LORD.”

In this passage, we witness grain, unleavened bread, and various animal parts all waved as a wave offering before the Almighty.

For the second example, wave offerings formed an essential part of peace offering. Peace offerings could be offered as thanks for a blessing, for completion of a vow, or simply as a freewill offering (Lev. 7:12, 16). For any peace offering, God instructed:

29 ‘He who offers the sacrifice of his peace offering to the LORD shall bring his offering to the LORD from the sacrifice of his peace offering.

30 ‘His own hands shall bring the offerings made by fire to the LORD. The fat with the breast he shall bring, that the breast may be **waved as a wave offering** before the LORD.

31 ‘And the priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be Aaron’s and his sons’. (Lev. 7:29-31.)

So the ram’s breast would be waved before God, and then given to the priests. In a moment, we’ll see the importance of this detail.

The third example involved healing. Lepers, upon being healed, were commanded to present an offering to God. As Jesus Christ told a leper after healing him, “See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them” (Mat. 8:4). Here was the offering:

10 “And on the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish, one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, and one log of oil.

11 “Then the priest who makes him clean shall present the man who is to be made clean, and those things, before the LORD, at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

12 “And the priest shall take one male lamb and offer it as a trespass offering, and the log of oil, and **wave them as a wave offering** before the LORD.” (Lev. 14:10-12.)

The next wave offering consisted not of animals or grain, but of building materials. When God told Moses to build the tabernacle, He also told him to ask the people for donations of gold, silver, bronze, cloth, and other materials. And so we read in Ex. 35:22, “They came, both men and women, as many as had a willing heart, and brought earrings and nose rings, rings and necklaces, all jewelry of gold, that is, every man who made an offering of gold to the LORD.” The word “offering” is the Hebrew *tenufah* (Strong’s # H8573), or “wave offering.”

Again, in Ex. 38:24, we find, “All the gold that was used in all the work of the holy place, that is, the gold of the offering, was twenty-nine talents and seven hundred and thirty shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary.” And once again, “offering” is *tenufah*, or “wave offering.” Likewise, Ex. 38:29 adds, “The offering [*tenufah*; wave offering] of bronze was seventy talents and two thousand four hundred shekels.”

So these donations for the tabernacle were, in fact, wave offerings! The people, “as many as had a willing heart,” donated them to Almighty God.

Our final example of wave offerings consisted of men. When God set apart the Levites to serve in the tabernacle and help the priests, here’s what He told Moses to do:

9 “And you shall bring the Levites before the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall gather together the whole congregation of the children of Israel.

10 “So you shall bring the Levites before the LORD, and the children of Israel shall lay their hands on the Levites;

11 “and Aaron shall **offer the Levites before the LORD, like a wave offering** from the children of Israel, that they may perform the work of the LORD.

12 “Then the Levites shall lay their hands on the heads of the young bulls, and you shall offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering to the LORD, to make atonement for the Levites.

13 “And you shall stand the Levites before Aaron and his sons, and then **offer them like a wave offering** to the LORD.

14 “Thus you shall separate the Levites from among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be Mine.

15 “After that the Levites shall go in to service the tabernacle of meeting. So you shall cleanse them and **offer them, like a wave offering**.

16 “For they are wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel; I have taken them for Myself instead of all who open the womb, the firstborn of all the children of Israel.” (Num. 8:9-16.)

Three times in eight verses, God instructed that the Levites be offered to Him as a wave offering. It seems improbable, of course, that these men were literally picked up and waved. They were simply presented to God as a gift from the rest of the Israelites.

So that’s a brief overview of each of the other wave offerings, besides the wave sheaf and wave loaves. Now let’s keep these in the back of our minds for a moment, and consider some additional details.

## Wave Offering or Heave Offering?

In the Old Testament, you'll read of both wave offerings and heave offerings. In a moment, we'll find the difference between the two, but first, it's noteworthy that some wave offerings are also called heave offerings.

For example, the firstfruits offerings of grain (that is, barley and wheat) are also called heave offerings. That means the wave sheaf and wave loaves! They were both wave offerings **and** heave offerings! Here's Num. 15:17-21:

17 Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

18 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land to which I bring you,

19 'then it will be, when you eat of the bread of the land, that you shall offer up a heave offering to the LORD.

20 'You shall offer up a cake of the first of your ground meal as a heave offering; as a heave offering of the threshing floor, so shall you offer it up.

21 'Of the first of your ground meal you shall give to the LORD a heave offering throughout your generations.

The Hebrew word translated "heave offering" is *terumah* (Strong's # H8641), which Brown-Driver-Briggs defines as "contribution, offering; properly something lifted off, separated." The root word is *rum* (Strong's # H7311), which means "be high, exalted, rise."

God's Word calls the donations for the tabernacle both heave offerings and wave offerings. Here's Ex. 35:21-24:

21 Then everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and they brought the LORD's offering [*terumah*; heave offering] for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments.

22 They came, both men and women, as many as had a willing heart, and brought earrings and nose rings, rings and necklaces, all jewelry of gold, that is, every man who made an offering [*tenufah*; wave offering] of gold to the LORD.

23 And every man, with whom was found blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats' hair, red skins of rams, and badger skins, brought them.



24 Everyone who offered [*rum*; lifted up] an offering [*terumah*; heave offering] of silver or bronze brought the LORD's offering [*terumah*; heave offering]. And everyone with whom was found acacia wood for any work of the service, brought it.

When God first told Moses to ask for donations, He called them a heave offering: "Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering [*terumah*; heave offering]. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering [*terumah*]. And this is the offering [*terumah*] which you shall take from them..." (Ex. 25:2-3). As we saw already, God's Word also describes these very same contributions of gold and bronze as a wave offering (Ex. 38:24, 29).

So we find multiple examples of the same offering being called both a wave offering and a heave offering. Why are there two different terms, then? What's the difference between the two?

Remember, a wave offering was waved up and down, or shaken. A heave offering was lifted up, but not necessarily waved. Here's Ex. 29:27 to illustrate this point: "And from the ram of the consecration you shall consecrate the breast of the **wave offering which is waved**, and the thigh of the **heave offering which is raised**, of that which is for Aaron and of that which is for his sons."

Both offerings were lifted up before the Most High. A wave offering was waved up and down, or raised and lowered. A heave offering was simply raised up. Thus a wave offering was also a heave offering, but a heave offering wasn't necessarily a wave offering.

What was the meaning? Why were these offerings presented this way? Why were they raised up toward the heavens?

## Giving a Gift

Here's where we really come to the purpose of these offerings, and the purpose of this examination. Both the wave offerings and the heave offerings simply functioned as gifts. By lifting the offering up high toward the heavens, one presented it to God. By waving it up and down, one offered it to Him for acceptance. We can see this through each example.

The wave offerings during the consecration of a new priest served as part of his dedication to God. He was not only giving an offering, he was giving the rest of his life to the service of his Creator.

The wave offerings for a peace offering represented either a token of thanksgiving, a voluntary gift, or a gift upon completion of a vow. Interestingly, if the peace offering was a

thank offering, then the part to be waved before God included both unleavened bread and leavened bread (Lev. 7:13-14). Similarly, the wave sheaf at the start of the count to Pentecost was unleavened, and the wave loaves at the end were leavened.

Waving an offering before God upon being cleansed from leprosy served as a token of thanksgiving for His mercy and healing. Speaking to a leper He'd just healed, Jesus Christ plainly called this offering a gift (Mat. 8:4).

When the children of Israel presented the Levites to God for the service of His sanctuary, they “waved” them before Him. The Levites were a gift to God and to the priests: “For they are wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel... And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting” (Num 8:16, 19).

All the donations for building the tabernacle are not only called wave offerings and heave offerings, but also freewill offerings. Why? Because they were given freely as a gift to God. “Then everyone came whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and they brought the LORD’s offering for the work of the tabernacle of meeting, for all its service, and for the holy garments” (Ex. 35:21).

Now what became of these gifts? What became of all the Israelites’ wave offerings and heave offerings that they gave to God? Portions were sometimes burned on the altar, but God gave the rest to the priests. Here’s Num. 18:11-12:

11 “This also is yours: the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel; I have given them to you, and your sons and daughters with you, as an ordinance forever. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it.

12 “All the best of the oil, all the best of the new wine and the grain, their firstfruits which they offer to the LORD, I have given them to you.”

The wave sheaf (barley firstfruits) and wave loaves (wheat firstfruits) differed in no way from the rest of these wave offerings and heave offerings. They were gifts to God from the people, an expression of thanks for the bounty He bestowed upon them. Remember the description of a firstfruits offering that we read a few pages back. Here, once again, is Deut. 26:1-11:

1 “And it shall be, when you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it,

2 “that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the LORD your God is giving you, and put it in a

basket and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide.

3 “And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days, and say to him, ‘I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come to the country which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.’

4 “Then the priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God.

5 “And you shall answer and say before the LORD your God: ‘My father was a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous.

6 ‘But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us.

7 ‘Then we cried out to the LORD God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression.

8 ‘So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders.

9 ‘He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, “a land flowing with milk and honey”;

10 ‘and now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, O LORD, have given me.’ Then you shall set it before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God.

11 “So you shall rejoice in every good thing which the LORD your God has given to you and your house, you and the Levite and the stranger who is among you.”

In addition, Deut. 16:9-10 explicitly describes the wave loaves as a freewill offering given in gratitude for God’s blessing: “You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain. Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you.”

Having heard the offerer’s expression of gratitude for the Eternal’s deliverance and blessings, the priest would then wave the offering before Him for acceptance. “He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf” (Lev. 23:11). “You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. The priest shall wave them... as a wave offering before the LORD” (Lev. 23:17, 20).

And, as with every other wave offering or heave offering, the portion that wasn't burned would be given to the priest. "All the best of the new wine and the grain, their firstfruits which they offer to the LORD, I have given them to you" (Num. 18:12).

So all the wave offerings and heave offerings, including the wave sheaf and wave loaves, were simply gifts to God and, in turn, gifts from God to the priests. That's why they were presented to Him by raising them up high or waving them up and down!

Now, what does all this mean for us today? What is the spiritual meaning of the wave sheaf and the wave loaves? If the wave offerings were gifts to God from the people as an expression of gratitude, then what do we give Him today?

## **10. The Spiritual Wave Sheaf**

Again, everything starts with Passover. Upon presenting a wave offering of the firstfruits to the priest, the offerer thanked God not only for the abundant crops, but especially for His redemption at Passover: "Then we cried out to the LORD God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression. So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders" (Deut. 26:7-8).

God redeemed Israel from bondage in Egypt by the blood of Passover lambs. He said to Moses, "Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" (Ex. 12:13). God bought the firstborn for Himself: "On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast. They shall be Mine: I am the LORD" (Num. 3:13).

When Jesus died on the cross as our Passover Lamb, He redeemed us from spiritual bondage by His own blood. As the apostle Peter reminded us, "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Our Redeemer bought us for Himself: "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:20).

The Old Testament is the blueprint for the New, and Israel's Passover in Egypt foreshadowed Jesus Christ and His Passover sacrifice. "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 Cor. 10:11). All the sacrifices and all the temple ceremonies pointed to "Christ and Him

crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). Just as God redeemed Israel, so He has redeemed us. Just as He purchased Israel, so He has purchased us.

Later, God chose the Levites to serve before Him instead of the firstborn, for the Levites had remained faithful when Israel worshiped the golden calf (Ex. 32:25-29). So God said, “Now behold, I Myself have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel. Therefore the Levites shall be Mine, because all the firstborn are Mine” (Num. 3:12-13).

As we saw a few pages back, the Israelites presented the Levites to God as a wave offering. In turn, God gave the Levites to the priests to help them in the service of the tabernacle: “For they are wholly given to Me from among the children of Israel... And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the work for the children of Israel in the tabernacle of meeting” (Num 8:16, 19).

Remember, too, that not only did the Israelite firstborn and their representatives, the Levites, belong to God, but so did the firstfruits of their harvests. These, too, God gave to the priests. To Aaron, Israel’s first high priest, God said, “All the best of the oil, all the best of the new wine and the grain, their firstfruits which they offer to the LORD, I have given them to you” (Num. 18:12).

And all these, when presented to God, were waved before Him. The Levites were waved as a wave offering. The wave sheaf of barley firstfruits was waved as a wave offering. The wave loaves of wheat firstfruits were waved as a wave offering. All these were gifts to God from the people. All were, in some way, an expression of thanks for God’s redemption.

So what does all this mean for us today? What is all this telling us?

God speaks of His people as firstborn. “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven” (Heb. 12:22-23). Like the firstborn of Israel and like the Levites, we belong to God. He has redeemed us.

God also describes His people as firstfruits. The apostle James wrote, “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” (Jam. 1:18). Rom. 8:23 describes the redeemed as having “the firstfruits of the Spirit.” And of those in the First Resurrection, we read, “These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb” (Rev. 14:4).

This imagery isn’t unique to the New Testament, either. It continues a theme from the Old Testament. God described Israel as “My son, My firstborn” (Ex. 4:22). He also spoke of Israel as His firstfruits: “Israel was holiness to the LORD, the firstfruits of His increase” (Jer.

2:3). In the New Testament, all God's people of every nation are grafted into Israel, as Romans 11 tells us, and are therefore firstborn and firstfruits.

But firstfruits of what? In Lev. 23:10, God commanded the Israelites to offer "a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest."

What is the harvest? In Mat. 13:39, Jesus said, "the harvest is the end of the age." Again, we find, "But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest'" (Mat. 9:36-38).

So the crops picture people, and the harvest is a harvest of people. The firstfruits of the harvest are those who "were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb" (Rev. 14:4).

Now, the people of Israel presented their firstfruits to God in gratitude for His deliverance. They presented the Levites as a wave offering instead of their firstborn, whom God had redeemed. If we are God's firstborn and His firstfruits, then what do we present to Him in gratitude for His deliverance and redemption? Why, we give ourselves to Him!

As part of his prayer of repentance in Psalm 51, King David wrote, "For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart — these, O God, You will not despise" (Psa. 51:16-17).

Yes, we give ourselves to God. We offer Him our repentance. We offer Him "a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart." God doesn't force us to do this; rather, like the wave offerings, this is a freewill offering that we give. We are the firstfruits that we give to God!

The apostle Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:1-2).

This is why God told the Israelites to offer the wave sheaf of barley firstfruits on the day after the Passover Sabbath. He further told them, "You shall not delay to offer the first of your ripe produce and your juices. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me" (Ex. 22:29). This pictured God's people, newly redeemed by the blood of Christ, offering themselves as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. As soon as we accept that blood, we must offer ourselves to Him! "You shall not delay."

Again, we read, “And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Rom. 6:13). And again, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

Now remember that the Israelites didn’t present the firstfruits directly to God, but rather presented them to the priest, who then waved them before God for acceptance. In turn, God gave the firstfruits to the priest.

Under the New Covenant, Jesus Christ is our High Priest. “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation” (Heb. 9:11).

It is Jesus Christ who presents us: “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, **that He might present her to Himself** a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25-27). We read again, “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, **to present you** holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight” (Col. 1:21-22).

But what makes it possible for us to be accepted? Why is our broken and contrite heart accepted by our Creator? Certainly not by our own merits. No, it is by the blood of the Lamb! “We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son” (Rom. 5:10). “For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). And indeed, when offering the wave sheaf, the priest also offered “a male lamb of the first year, without blemish” (Lev. 23:12). A lamb just like the one slain for Passover!

Christ gave Himself for us as a blood sacrifice; we give ourselves to Him and to the Father as a living sacrifice. There is nothing else we have to offer.

There’s a beautiful Old Testament type of this in the story of Joseph. Heeding a Divine warning, Joseph prepared for seven years of famine by storing up grain, enough grain to feed all the people of Egypt and the surrounding areas. Before the famine ended, the Egyptians had traded their money, their animals, their lands, and even their bodies to Joseph and Pharaoh in exchange for food (Gen. 47:15-21). Joseph bought the people for a price, just as our Savior bought us for a price. Pharaoh owned everything and everyone in Egypt, just as our heavenly Father owns everything and everyone, having created them all.

When the famine ended, Joseph gave the people seed to plant crops, and told them to give a portion of the harvest to Pharaoh (Gen. 47:23-24). The Egyptians owed Joseph everything,

even their lives. So they said, “You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh’s servants” (Gen. 47:25).

Likewise, we owe everything to our Creator, even our lives. So we offer ourselves to Him with a grateful heart, saying, in essence, “You have saved our lives; let us find favor in Your sight, and we will be Your servants.”

God’s people have been redeemed from among men, to be “firstfruits to God and to the Lamb” (Rev. 14:4). They have offered themselves to God with a willing heart. They have been sanctified and accepted by the blood of the Lamb. God’s people are the wave sheaf!

But the picture isn’t quite complete yet. How is it possible for God’s people to be firstfruits and firstborn? Once again, it is through Jesus Christ.

God’s Word also describes Jesus Christ as the firstborn. “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29). “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation” (Col. 1:15). “Jesus Christ [is] the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead” (Rev. 1:5).

He, too, is spoken of as firstfruits. “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20). “But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor. 15:23).

But firstfruits of which harvest? Remember, there are three harvests: the early harvest (flax and barley), the middle harvest (wheat), and the late harvest (olives, grapes, figs, etc.). Which firstfruits represent Jesus Christ?

As a matter of fact, they all do! Christ is the firstfruits of each harvest. He fed the 5,000 with barley bread (John 6:9-13), and the next day told them, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven” (John 6:51). Shortly before His death, He likened Himself to wheat: “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain” (John 12:23-24). He is “the true vine” (John 15:1), and told His disciples that the cup of wine represented His blood (Mat. 26:27-29). Jesus is the Messiah, “Messiah” (Strong’s # H4899) means “anointed,” and anointing oil was made from olives. So Jesus Christ is the firstfruits of barley, the firstfruits of wheat, and the firstfruits of wine and oil.

Yet each of these also applies to the firstfruits of God’s people. Grain in general, without distinguishing between barley and wheat, often pictures God’s people (Hos. 14:7; Amos 9:9; Mark 4:26-29; 1 Cor. 15:37; etc.). “The harvest of the field,” which pictures the gathering of



God's people, includes both barley and wheat (Joel 1:11). God's people are also pictured as vine branches (John 15:1-8), olive branches (Psa. 52:8; Rom. 11:17-24), and fruit trees (Mat. 3:10; 7:16-20).

When God's Word speaks of Jesus Christ as the firstfruits, it doesn't specify the firstfruits of which crop. It simply says "firstfruits." Likewise, when it speaks of God's elect as firstfruits, it doesn't specify the firstfruits of which crop, but simply says "firstfruits." And as we've already seen, ALL firstfruits must be given to God and to the priests: "The firstfruits of your grain and your new wine and your oil, and the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him" (Deut. 18:4).

How can both be the firstfruits? How can the firstfruits of every crop picture both Jesus Christ and His people? The answer is that God's people are firstfruits only through and because of Jesus Christ. We have life only because of Him. We bear fruit only through Him.

He died to produce much fruit, to bring forth new life for His people. "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain" (John 12:24).

Through Him, we grow and bear fruit: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5).

When we symbolically partake of His flesh, we become one with Him. "For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17). We are His body: "For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30). We are firstfruits precisely because, and only because, He is!

Jesus Christ is our forerunner. "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6:19-20; NASB).

He led the way before us by His example, and we follow in His footsteps. "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me'" (Mat. 16:24). "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:6).

Like all firstborn sons under the Old Covenant, Jesus was presented to God the Father by His earthly parents. Luke records, "Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is

written in the law of the Lord, ‘Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD’)” (Luke 2:22-23).

And from His birth, Jesus Christ lived a holy, sinless life, a life dedicated to serving His Father. He led the way by example. He endured the trials and temptations of this life, just as we must. “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

He lay down His life and was crucified for us. In return, we lay down our lives for Him and give ourselves to Him. As the apostle Paul wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). This, you will note, is directly connected to Passover!

Just as Jesus Christ died as our Passover Lamb to bring forth abundant fruit, so we also must die to ourselves to bring forth abundant fruit through Him:

24 “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

25 “He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

26 “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. (John 12:24-26.)

He was buried in a tomb, and we, through baptism, have been buried with Him. Paul explained, “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death” (Rom. 6:3-4).

He rose from the dead, and we, after baptism, begin walking with Him in newness of life: “That just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). And when we are at last resurrected and changed into spirit beings, it will be because He led the way before us: “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection” (Rom. 6:5).

Just as the Spirit of God returned to Him and He rose from the dead, so He gives us that same Spirit as a guarantee of our future resurrection and inheritance: “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will

also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who [which] dwells in you” (Rom. 8:11).

And we see all these things pictured in one day, on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. When Peter preached about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, many of those in the audience “were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’” (Acts 2:37). They bore “fruits worthy of repentance” (Mat. 3:8), enabled by Christ’s Passover sacrifice.

So Peter told them to repent and forsake their old, sinful way of life. He told them, in essence, to lay down their lives as Christ had done at Passover and to follow Him. He said, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

And they did as Peter told them. “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41). They presented themselves to God as living sacrifices, following Christ’s example of laying down His life. They were crucified with Him, buried with Him in baptism, and given new life through His Holy Spirit. They were accepted and reconciled to God by the blood of Christ.

Each of us must go through the very same process. We repent of our sins and accept Jesus’ sacrifice as our Passover Lamb. In gratitude for His grace, we follow His example and offer ourselves to God as living sacrifices, pictured by the wave sheaf offering. We are crucified with Christ, buried with Him in baptism, and then rise from the waters of baptism as a new creation. We receive His Spirit, which He sent on Pentecost not long after His ascension, and begin to walk in newness of life. We have the firstfruits of the Spirit and are firstfruits to God and to the Lamb, redeemed from among men.

We are firstfruits with our Savior, who led the way before us. He was presented to the Father and dedicated at birth. He lived as a living sacrifice. He was offered to the Father as a Passover Lamb, dying to bring us life. “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain” (John 12:24).

This is what the wave sheaf pictures, not an ascension to heaven, but an offering of oneself to God, following the example of our Savior. And by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, we are accepted when we offer ourselves to Him!

The process of preparing the wave sheaf, which we’ve already examined, illustrates this further. Let’s go back and take another look.

One would begin, of course, by cutting a sheaf of barley from the field. This happened on the day after the Passover Sabbath, on the second day of Unleavened Bread, as Joshua 5 shows us.

Now, in Scripture, barley is somewhat less desirable than wheat. When the two are valued, wheat is priced much higher than barley (Rev. 6:6). And unlike wheat, barley was used not only for human consumption, but also as horse feed (1 Kings 4:28).

Remember that the Hebrew word for barley is *se'orah* (Strong's # H8184). It describes the rough, hairy, or bearded appearance of barley heads. *Se'orah* is related to "Seir" (H8165), the place where the hairy Esau and his descendants settled, and also to *sa'ir* (H8163), which describes a hairy goat. The root word is *saar* (Strong's # H8175), which means "to bristle, sweep or whirl away, shudder, or shiver."

Barley heads bristle with "hair," and God's Word often uses hairiness to picture sin. The Hebrew word *sa'ir* describes a hairy, shaggy goat, and goats represent sinful people: "And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left" (Mat. 25:33). Under the Old Covenant, goats were offered as sin offerings. And Esau, a man so hairy his arms felt like a goat's hide (Gen. 27:16-23), appears throughout Scripture as an archetype of sinners. As God said in the Book of Malachi, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated" (Mal. 1:2-3).

But when the green ears of barley were roasted and hardened by fire, some of the "hair" would be removed. Roasting by fire pictures part of the refining of God's people: "I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them" (Zech. 13:9).

Next, the barley would be winnowed to separate any remaining "hair" and the rest of the chaff from the grain. As John the Baptist prophesied of Jesus Christ, "His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Mat. 3:12).

After being winnowed, the barley would be ground and sifted. Sifting, too, pictures part of God's refining process for His people: "For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground" (Amos 9:9).

When barley is ground into flour, it becomes white. Whiteness, of course, represents purity. Jesus promised, "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels" (Rev. 3:5).

So the whole process of refining and preparing the wave sheaf pictured God's purification process for His people. Just as the barley for the wave sheaf had to be refined and cleansed of impurities, so does each one of us!

The Passover lamb did not have to be purified; it was already pure and unblemished. The lamb offered with the wave sheaf offerings did not have to be purified; it was already pure and unblemished. Likewise, Jesus Christ did not have to be purified before being offered, for He was already "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:19).

But the wave sheaf DID have to be purified, and we as God's people DO have to be purified! And that's not all. The people presented the wave sheaf to the priest, who thereupon presented it to God on their behalf. We do not present Jesus Christ to God the Father in gratitude for His sacrifice. Rather, we present ourselves to Him, He presents us to the Father, and we are accepted by His blood!

It makes little sense, then, to identify the wave sheaf as the resurrection or ascension of Jesus Christ. Such a conclusion ignores the very nature of the offering and every detail of it!

Now, to further discredit any notion that the wave sheaf pictured Jesus' resurrection or ascension, we might point out that even a Sunday wave sheaf would have no real connection to His death and resurrection. Some years, the Sunday during the Feast of Unleavened Bread is six days after Abib/Nisan 14; in others, it is two days afterward; and in still others, it is the very next day, the First Day of Unleavened Bread. This last one sparks confusion among Sunday Pentecost observers over whether to begin the count to Pentecost on that day, or on the first Sunday after Unleavened Bread. How, may we ask, can the wave sheaf be linked to Jesus' resurrection if it seldom lines up with His resurrection?

But the truth is, the wave sheaf was never linked to Sunday. Instead, it was always offered on the second day of Unleavened Bread, Abib/Nisan 16, the day after the Passover Sabbath. Every year without fail, it represented a connection to Jesus' sacrifice and to the partaking of His sacrifice.

And the true meaning of the wave sheaf, as we've now seen, reaffirms this connection to Passover and to Christ's sacrifice. He died on Nisan 14, and we partake of His sacrifice that night on Nisan 15. The wave sheaf on the next day, Nisan 16, pictured God's people presenting themselves to Him as living sacrifices and being accepted by the blood of Jesus Christ. It pictured us offering ourselves to God without delay (Ex. 22:29), the very next day after accepting the blood of the Lamb.

So what, then, of the wave loaves offered on the Day of Pentecost? What was their meaning?

## 11. The Spiritual Wave Loaves

Like the wave sheaf, the wave loaves were firstfruits, but firstfruits of a later and better harvest, the wheat harvest. “And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest” (Ex. 34:22).

Remember, though, that the wave loaves, unlike the wave sheaf, were to be offered with leaven: “You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD” (Lev. 23:17).

It’s commonly understood that the wave loaves represent us, God’s people; this seems to be seldom disputed. Grain, including wheat, often pictures God’s people, as it does in Jesus’ parable of the tares among the wheat (Mat. 13:24-30). Like the wave sheaf, the wave loaves also picture God’s people being presented before Him. In this writer’s view, however, the reason for it is often misunderstood.

Upon reading that the wave loaves contain leaven, many assume that the leaven pictures sin, as it so often does. Therefore, they argue, the unleavened wave sheaf pictures Jesus Christ, who had no sin, while the leavened wave loaves picture us, who are sinful by nature.

There are major problems with that interpretation. Firstly, Jesus’ sacrifice makes all who partake thereof unleavened also, for we “are one bread and one body” (1 Cor. 10:17) and “we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones” (Eph. 5:30). Through Passover, we, as God’s people, become unleavened by partaking of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ: “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, **since you truly are unleavened**. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7).

If we become unleavened at Passover, do we become filled with sin once again on Pentecost? One should certainly hope not! And indeed we do not, for though we do sometimes sin, we’re blameless in the eyes of God because we’re covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight — if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast” (Col. 1:21-22).

We still have our sinful human nature to contend with, but in the eyes of God, we ourselves are no longer sinful creatures once we accept the blood of His Son. We’re justified by His blood: “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11). Now, Satan attempts to prey on our sinful nature, and he’s described as “the accuser of our brethren, who accused them

before our God day and night” (Rev. 12:10). But how do we overcome him? By the blood of the Lamb and by offering ourselves to God: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” (Rev. 12:11).

Nor is it possible for sin to be presented before God, or to be accepted by Him. God will not dwell with sin: “For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You” (Psa. 5:4). Our sins separate us from Him: “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isa. 59:2). This is precisely the reason Jesus died for us! “When we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son” (Rom. 5:10).

It’s important to remember the words of the apostle Paul:

11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. (Rom. 6:11-13.)

No, we do not become filled with sin once more after accepting Jesus’ sacrifice. If we do, it’s only because we’ve willfully turned our backs on Him, and will accordingly perish. “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries” (Heb. 10:26-27).

What, then, is the meaning of leaven in the wave loaves? If both the wave sheaf and the wave loaves represent us, God’s people, then why is the first unleavened, but the second leavened?

Though it’s true that leaven often pictures sin, it doesn’t always. In Mat. 13:33, Jesus used leaven to illustrate something else entirely: “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.” In this case, leaven pictures the growth of God’s Kingdom and His family, just like the preceding parable of the mustard seed. Similarly, the Book of Daniel described a dream in which a stone “cut out without hands” (Dan. 2:34) “became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” (Dan. 2:35). This foretold the second coming of Jesus Christ, when He will destroy the kingdoms of man and reign over the whole earth.

So leaven can picture the Kingdom of God. When we get baptized and receive the Holy Spirit, we become citizens of that Kingdom. As the apostle Paul wrote, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20). And again, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19).

We’re sealed by God’s Spirit: “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Cor. 1:21-22). The Book of Hebrews tells us that our names are registered in heaven: “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven” (Heb. 12:22-23).

Since the wave loaves offered on the Day of Pentecost represented God’s people, then the leaven within them pictured His Spirit. The seal and downpayment of God’s Kingdom. Our mark of citizenship.

On the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, all the disciples presented themselves before God: “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1). And on that day, God poured out the Holy Spirit, the seal of His Kingdom, upon them:

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:2-4).

The sending of the Holy Spirit was the very event pictured by offering the wave loaves! This offering pictured the sealing of a covenant that Christ initiated at Passover. On the day after the Passover Sabbath, the wave sheaf was offered *without* leaven, symbolizing God’s people cleansed by the blood of Christ. Fifty days later, on the Day of Pentecost, the wave loaves were offered *with* leaven, symbolizing God’s people now filled, not with sin, but with His Holy Spirit!



## 12. A Historical Debate

When it comes to the observance of Pentecost, as in all other matters, we may ask ourselves, “What did Jesus do?” When did Jesus Christ and His disciples observe Pentecost? The answer, of course, is simple: He did what the Bible commands.

But is there any historical context we can look at? Is it possible to know how the Jews of Jesus’ day counted Pentecost, and whether He endorsed or rejected their method of counting? Indeed it is!

Among the Jewish sects of that day, the Pharisees’ view on counting Pentecost is clear and well-documented. At least three eye witnesses give their testimony.

The historian Josephus, born about seven years after Jesus’ crucifixion, was a Pharisee, the son of a priest, and a witness to the temple ceremonies during the first three decades of his life. He documented many Jewish religious practices of his day, and wrote that the Jews offered the wave sheaf on the second day of Unleavened Bread, Abib 16, the day after the Passover Sabbath. Here’s his statement:

But on the **second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth**, for before that day they do not touch them. And while they suppose it proper to honor God, from whom they obtain this plentiful provision, in the first place, they offer the first-fruits of their barley, and that in the manner following: They take a handful of the ears, and dry them, then beat them small, and purge the barley from the bran; they then bring one tenth deal to the altar, to God; and, casting one handful of it upon the fire, they leave the rest for the use of the priest. And after this it is that they may publicly or privately reap their harvest. They also at this participation of the first-fruits of the earth, sacrifice a lamb, as a burnt-offering to God.

When a week of weeks has passed over after this sacrifice, (which weeks contain forty and nine days,) on the fiftieth day, which is Pentecost, but is called by the Hebrews Asartha, which signifies Pentecost, they bring to God a loaf, made of wheat flour, of two tenth deals, with leaven; and for sacrifices they bring two lambs....  
(*Antiquities of the Jews* 3:10:5-6.)

Josephus’s testimony is plain, and fully agrees with what we’ve already seen from the Scriptures. But he wasn’t alone.

Philo of Alexandria was a Jewish philosopher who was born around 20 BC and died around AD 50. He was thus a contemporary of Jesus Christ, though he lived in Egypt rather than Judea. Philo testified that the wave sheaf was offered on the day after the First Day of

Unleavened Bread: “There is also a festival on the day of the paschal feast, which succeeds the first day, and this is named the sheaf, from what takes place on it; for the sheaf is brought to the altar as a first fruit...” (*The Special Laws*, Book II, Chap. 29).

So we have at least two witnesses so far. But there’s another. As we’ve seen previously, the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, agrees that the First Day of Unleavened Bread is the Sabbath from which we begin counting to Pentecost. Here are the instructions in Leviticus 23, from the Brenton English translation of the Septuagint:

6 And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast of unleavened bread to the Lord; seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread.

7 **And the first day shall be a holy convocation to you:** ye shall do no servile work.

8 And ye shall offer whole-burnt-offerings to the Lord seven days; and the seventh day shall be a holy convocation to you: ye shall do no servile work.

9 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

10 Speak to the children of Israel, and thou shalt say to them, When ye shall enter into the land which I give you, and reap the harvest of it, then shall ye bring a sheaf, the first-fruits of your harvest, to the priest;

11 and he shall lift up the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you. **On the morrow of the first day the priest shall lift it up.** (Lev. 23:6-11.)

The Septuagint was the work of seventy Jewish rabbis who translated the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek, beginning in the third century BC. Whether a literal translation or not, this rendition of the wave sheaf instructions clearly represents Jewish understanding of the day.

So the Pharisees’ view was that the wave sheaf must be offered on the day after the Passover Sabbath, on the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Nisan 16. This, of course, is the same view that we’ve already established from the Word of God!

Now, it’s widely believed and stated as fact that the other major Jewish sect of the day, the Sadducees, disagreed with the Pharisees’ teaching, and that they observed Pentecost on Sunday. In a moment, we’ll consider whether this is actually true. But for now, let’s assume that it is. Let’s assume, for the sake of argument, that the Sadducees did indeed offer the wave sheaf on the Sunday during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, count fifty days from thence, and celebrate Pentecost on Sunday.

Did Jesus or His disciples ever weigh in on the matter? Not directly, but Jesus affirmed the Pharisees' general interpretation of God's law: "Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do'" (Mat. 23:1-3).

He didn't say, "Whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, except for counting Pentecost. They've got that one wrong." No, He simply said, "Whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do." At no time did Jesus say that the Pharisees kept ANY of God's Holy Days on the wrong day!

As for the Sadducees, Jesus dismissed them with these words: "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Mat. 22:29). The Sadducees, in fact, are little more than an afterthought in the New Testament. The words "Sadducee" or "Sadducees" are mentioned 14 times in the New Testament; "Pharisee" and "Pharisees" are mentioned 98 times.

The Bible mentions virtually nothing about the Sadducees' beliefs. To the extent that it does, it simply points out their ignorance of God's Word: "For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection — and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both" (Acts 23:8). These are two of the most basic doctrines in Scripture, yet the Sadducees rejected both! As Jesus told them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God."

Furthermore, the apostle Paul described himself as a Pharisee (Acts 22:2-5, 23:6; Phil. 3:5) who kept the law blamelessly according to its physical requirements (Phil. 3:6). Even many years after his conversion, Paul still identified himself as a Pharisee, proclaiming, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" (Acts 23:6). Like Jesus Christ Himself, Paul found no fault with the Pharisees' interpretation of God's instructions about Pentecost or any of the other Holy Days.

Not on any matter does the Word of God ever tell us to follow the Sadducees. At no time did Christ or His disciples ascribe any Scriptural authority to the Sadducees, but to the Pharisees alone. How could they do otherwise? The Sadducees were ignorant of the Scriptures and the power of God!

None of this is to deny that the Pharisees had their own faults. They had many faults, but Scriptural ignorance wasn't among them. Throughout His ministry, Jesus lambasted the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy and fake piety, yet He commanded His disciples to follow their teaching of the law.

That the New Testament speaks often of the Pharisees but not the Sadducees also reflects another historical truth: the Pharisees were the majority party and wielded influence over the people. The Sadducees claimed followers mostly among the rich and powerful, and Acts 5:17 counts the high priest among them. Josephus observed,

[The Sadducees'] doctrine is received but by a few, yet by those still of the greatest dignity. But they are able to do almost nothing of themselves; for when they become magistrates, as they are unwillingly and by force sometimes obliged to be, they addict themselves to the notions of the Pharisees, because the multitude would not otherwise bear them. (*Antiquities of the Jews* 18:1:4.)

In other words, it was the Pharisees who taught the people and directed the religious practice of the nation. The Sadducees had little interest in such things. They were more interested in social status and enjoying the things of this life, since they had no hope of any resurrection or afterlife.

So if indeed the Sadducees observed Pentecost on Sunday, it's of little consequence. In public matters, they acquiesced to the dictates of the Pharisees. And Jesus and His disciples ascribed no Scriptural authority to the Sadducees.

But is it really true that the Sadducees observed Pentecost on Sunday? No writings from the Sadducees have survived, and no records of that time document the Sadducees keeping Pentecost on Sunday. Nor is there any contemporary record of a dispute between the Pharisees and Sadducees over when to observe Pentecost.

Though the Bible mentions the Sadducees, it says nothing about a dispute over Pentecost. Josephus, when describing noteworthy differences between the Pharisees and Sadducees, never mentioned any dispute over Pentecost. Philo, living in Egypt rather than Judea, neither mentioned any Jewish sects nor any dispute over Pentecost. If the Sadducees really kept Pentecost on Sunday, there are no eyewitness accounts.

The Talmud, a collection of Jewish oral traditions and rabbinical debates compiled more than 100 years after the temple's destruction, mentions a sect called the Boethusians. It says that this sect believed the wave sheaf to be on the Sunday during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and observed Pentecost fifty days later on Sunday (Menachot 65a:11). But just who these Boethusians were, isn't entirely clear.

The Boethusians and Sadducees appear to have held similar beliefs on some things, such as rejecting the resurrection, which has led many to assume that the Sadducees also observed Pentecost on Sunday. Nevertheless, the Talmud never ascribes Sunday Pentecost observance to the Sadducees. It does, however, make a distinction between the Sadducees and Boethusians, describing them as two similar but distinct sects (Avot DeRabbi Natan 5).

No matter how widely it might be proclaimed, there's no proof that the Sadducees observed Pentecost on Sunday! There's no evidence that the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day ever disputed how to count Pentecost. There's no evidence that offering the wave sheaf on Nisan 16 was rejected by anyone, and certainly not by Jesus or His disciples!

What IS certain is that the Samaritans, Karaites, and other fringe groups over the centuries have observed a Sunday Pentecost. The Samaritans freely mixed paganism with the Word of God, as documented in 2 Kings 17:2-41, so that Jesus told a Samaritan woman, "You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22).

It is also certain that the so-called "early church fathers," the apostates who departed from the faith once delivered and whose followers eventually formed the Roman Catholic Church, also observed Pentecost on Sunday, as the Catholic Church does to this day! And it is certain that the Sunday Pentecost is still observed to this day by Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants alike. But that doesn't make it Biblical!

On the other hand, it is equally certain that the Pharisees observed Pentecost fifty days after the First Day of Unleavened Bread, not on Sunday. And all the evidence shows that Jesus and His disciples agreed!

### **13. From Adam to Acts 2**

There are a few more clues we can glean from God's Word that point to a Sivan 6th Pentecost. All these clues add up and help to complete the picture. They show that only a Sivan 6th Pentecost fits the patterns God has established in His Word, from Creation to the day He sent the Holy Spirit.

God created mankind on the sixth day of the week, which we know today as Friday. "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7). These events foreshadowed the creation of a new man thousands of years later!

When God sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost in Acts 2, that day was also a Friday, the sixth day of the week. Let's count it out to see.

As we've already noted, Jesus Christ was crucified on a Wednesday, Nisan 14, "the Preparation Day of the Passover" (John 19:14), and buried just before sunset at the end of the day (Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-54; John 19:42). Three days and three nights later, He rose

from the dead near the end of the Sabbath, on Nisan 17. The following day, on Sunday, He appeared to His disciples.

Now if Nisan 14 was on a Wednesday in the year of Jesus' death and resurrection, then the First Day of Unleavened Bread, the Passover Sabbath, was on a Thursday. The following day, Nisan 16, the day of the wave sheaf offering, would have been a Friday. Fifty days later, the Feast of Pentecost would have likewise fallen on a Friday, Sivan 6.

On that day, God's Spirit appeared to the disciples as wind and fire: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:2-4). It was as if God breathed upon them.

When we get baptized, our old self, the old man, is put to death. When God gives us His Spirit, we receive the breath of life and become a new man. "You have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Col. 3:9-10). As Job 33:4 says, "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life."

Interestingly, on the day after Jesus' resurrection, we read that He appeared to His disciples and "He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:22). Obviously, the disciples didn't receive the Holy Spirit at that moment; they wouldn't receive it until the Day of Pentecost. But Christ breathed on His disciples and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. And then, on a Friday, the sixth day of the week, they received it as a rushing, mighty wind!

Just as God created man on the sixth day of the week and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so He created the new man on the sixth day of the week, which was Pentecost, and breathed upon him the breath of spiritual life. The original creation foreshadowed the new!

But this isn't all. Remember, as we've seen previously, that the Old Covenant, given at Mt. Sinai on the Day of Pentecost, foreshadowed the New Covenant given from Mt. Zion on the Day of Pentecost. So it should be no surprise that God likewise delivered the Old Covenant on Friday, the sixth day of the week!

Examining the Exodus timeline shows us which weekdays certain events fell on, including Pentecost. Let's start in Ex. 16:1. Here, we discover that Israel "came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt." That day, God sent them quail (v. 13), and the next day He sent manna (vv. 12-15). He sent manna for six consecutive days (vv. 4-5, 21-22). The seventh

day, the 22nd of the month, was the Sabbath (vv. 23-30), which God introduced to Israel for the first time.

Counting back from there, we discover that the 15th, 8th, and 1st days of the second month were also Sabbaths that year. Since the first month, Abib or Nisan, has 30 days, then we can continue counting back and find that the 24th, 17th, and 10th days of Abib were likewise Sabbaths. That means that Abib 14, the day of the Passover sacrifice, fell on a Wednesday, just as it did in the year of Jesus' crucifixion. That means that Abib 16 fell on a Friday, and fifty days later, Pentecost likewise fell on a Friday, Sivan 6.

When Israel came to Mt. Sinai, we read that it was "in the third month of the going out of the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt, in this day" (Ex. 19:1; YLT). As we've already seen, this means that Israel came to Mt. Sinai on the first day of the third month, the month of Sivan. On that day, the first day of the month, they set up camp.

From this point, every day seems to be accounted for, with major events occupying each day. First, Moses climbed the mountain to speak with God, and brought back God's words to the elders of the people (Ex. 19:3-7). The elders spoke to the people, and the people said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do" (v. 8). Given the time required to do all these things, it seems almost certain that this occupied much of the next day after Israel encamped, beginning in the morning of the 2nd of the month.

It would've been the following day, then, on the morning of the 3rd, that Moses returned up the mountain and told God what the people had said. Then God answered him and he returned with God's message to the people (vv. 8-9). After this, which would logically be on the morning of Sivan 4, God told Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people" (vv. 10-11). The third day, when God came down to Mt. Sinai, would thus have been Sivan 6.

This timeline simply confirms what we've already established, that God delivered the covenant from Mt. Sinai on Sivan 6, the day of Pentecost. It matches perfectly, like a hand in a glove! And, as we also saw moments ago, Sivan 6 fell on a Friday that year, just as it did in the year of Christ's crucifixion.

Now, as a side note, the day God gave the covenant could NOT have been a Sunday. Notice what we read: "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Go to the people and consecrate them **today and tomorrow**, and let them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people'" (Ex. 19:10-11). God would never have told His people, "Consecrate yourselves and wash your clothes on Friday and Sabbath, and be ready for Sunday." No, He would never tell His

people to break the Sabbath! Therefore, we have yet more proof that Pentecost has never been fixed on Sunday!

And there's still more evidence that Pentecost was on Friday that year. The day Israel gathered before God at Mt. Sinai was by definition a holy convocation. Almighty God called an assembly and told the people to consecrate themselves for two days beforehand, so they'd be clean when they appeared in His presence. It just so happens that Pentecost IS a holy convocation!

The next day, too, was a holy convocation. Again, Israel assembled before God, this time to hear and affirm the covenant that God had delivered to them. On this day, we read,

4 And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

5 Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD.

6 And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient."

8 And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words." (Ex. 24:4-8).

Following the covenant, "Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel" (Ex. 24:9-10). They also ate and drank there on the mountain before God (v. 11). All this would have happened on the Sabbath day, Sivan 7. This was a holy convocation, and the Sabbath is indeed a holy convocation (Lev. 23:3).

So in the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai, we see back-to-back holy convocations on Sivan 6 and Sivan 7. The first was Pentecost, the second was the weekly Sabbath.

After this, God called Moses up the mountain once more (Ex. 24:12). But the elders did not go; they had returned to the camp, and there they would stay among the people. This indicates it was the following day, a Sunday, and there was no holy convocation on this day. "So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. And he said to the elders, 'Wait here for us until we come back to you. Indeed, Aaron and Hur are with you. If any man has a difficulty, let him go to them'" (Ex. 24:13-14).



After Moses ascended the mountain on Sunday, we read, “Now the glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud” (Ex. 24:16). So the next time God spoke to Moses, it was once more on the Sabbath. Moses ascended the mountain on the first day of the week, waited for six days while the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day God spoke to Him.

To recap, here’s the full timeline of the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai:

- *Sunday, Sivan 1* — Israel arrives at Mt. Sinai and encamps before the mountain.
- *Monday, Sivan 2* — Moses ascends the mountain to speak with God, then returns and delivers God’s words to Israel.
- *Tuesday, Sivan 3* — Moses ascends the mountain to bring Israel’s response to God, speaks with the Eternal, and then returns with His response to Israel.
- *Wednesday, Sivan 4* — God tells Moses to consecrate the people and have them wash their clothes today and tomorrow and be ready for the third day.
- *Friday, Sivan 6* — Pentecost, a holy convocation. God comes down on Mt. Sinai and speaks to Israel; Israel is afraid and asks Moses to speak with God from then on.
- *Sabbath, Sivan 7* — A holy convocation. Moses reads the covenant before Israel, Israel agrees to obey, and the covenant is sealed with the blood of a sacrifice. Moses and the elders eat and drink on the mountain with God.
- *Sunday, Sivan 8* — Moses leaves the elders in the camp and ascends the mountain to God.
- *Sunday, Sivan 8 to Friday, Sivan 13* — The glory of the LORD covers the mountain for six days.
- *Sabbath, Sivan 14* — God speaks to Moses out of the cloud.

So it’s abundantly clear that, in the year of the Exodus, Pentecost fell on a Friday. On that day, God gave His laws to His people. And when God sent the Holy Spirit and wrote His laws on His people’s hearts, it was again on the Day of Pentecost and again on Friday!

Notice all the sevens in this timeline. Not only is Pentecost itself a feast of sevens, but the Israelites committed themselves to God’s covenant on Sivan 7, the seventh-day Sabbath. Then, seven days later, again on the seventh-day Sabbath, God spoke to Moses out of the cloud. As you’ll recall from earlier in this study, the number 7 relates to God’s covenant.

This brings us to another point which helps to confirm the timing of Pentecost. Under the Old Covenant, the inauguration of a Levitical priest lasted seven days. Speaking through Moses, God instructed Aaron the high priest,

33 “And you shall not go outside the door of the tabernacle of meeting for seven days, until the days of your consecration are ended. For seven days he shall consecrate you.

34 “As he has done this day, so the LORD has commanded to do, to make atonement for you.

35 “Therefore you shall stay at the door of the tabernacle of meeting day and night for seven days, and keep the charge of the LORD, so that you may not die; for so I have been commanded.” (Lev. 8:33-35.)

So upon taking office, the priests remained at the door of the tabernacle for seven days to be consecrated. Afterward, they would begin their priestly duties.

Now when Aaron began his service as high priest on the eighth day (Lev. 9:1), after being consecrated for seven days, he offered sin offerings and peace offerings and he poured the animals' blood on the altar. Then he blessed the people: “And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of meeting, and came out and blessed the people” (Lev. 9:23).

Immediately after this, we read, “Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces” (Lev. 9:23-24).

### **From Jesus' Death to Pentecost**

*Wednesday, Nisan 14* — Jesus is crucified, dies, and is buried

*Thursday, Nisan 15* — Passover Sabbath, the First Day of Unleavened Bread

*Friday, Nisan 16* — Wave sheaf offering

*Sabbath, Nisan 17* — Jesus rises from the dead as the day draws to a close

*Sunday, Nisan 18* — Jesus' empty tomb is discovered; He appears to His disciples

*Sunday, Nisan 18 - Thursday, Iyar 27* — Jesus

The New Testament reveals the same pattern for the inauguration of Jesus Christ as our High Priest. Jesus rose from the dead on the Sabbath, Nisan 17; appeared to His disciples on Sunday, Nisan 18; and was subsequently “seen by them during forty days” (Acts 1:3). So His disciples saw Him during the last thirteen days of Nisan, from Nisan 18-30, and also the first twenty-seven days of Iyar, the second month of the Hebrew calendar. On Iyar 27, He ascended to heaven and returned to the Father.

spends 40 days among His disciples  
*Thursday, Iyar 27* — Jesus ascends from the Mount of Olives and returns to the Father  
*Friday, Iyar 28 - Thursday, Sivan 5* — Jesus inaugurated as High Priest for 7 days  
*Friday, Sivan 6* — As High Priest, Jesus blesses His people with the Holy Spirit

After this, seven days passed, Iyar 28-29 and Sivan 1-5. Fulfilling the Old Covenant ceremony, Jesus Christ remained in the heavenly tabernacle for seven days after His ascension, where He was inaugurated as our High Priest. He entered, “not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all” (Heb. 9:12).

On the eighth day, Sivan 6, Pentecost, He began His service as High Priest and blessed His people with the Holy Spirit! Just as the glory of the Lord appeared as fire in the Old Testament, so it also did in the New: “Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:3-4).

When we establish the correct timing of Pentecost, we see a glorious picture! On the sixth day of the week, God created man and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. After His resurrection, Jesus Christ breathed on His disciples and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. And on the Day of Pentecost, the sixth day of the week that year, the Holy Spirit entered them as a mighty, rushing wind and as fire. It was the breath of God!

When Israel stood before Mt. Sinai and heard God speak His laws, it was on the Day of Pentecost, which fell on the sixth day of the week that year. When God wrote His laws on the hearts of His disciples through His Holy Spirit, it was again on the Day of Pentecost and again on the sixth day of the week.

When the priests of the Old Covenant were inaugurated, they remained in the tabernacle for seven days before beginning their service. When Jesus Christ, the High Priest of the New Covenant, ascended to the heavenly tabernacle and returned to the Father on Iyar 27, He remained there for seven days before beginning His service. On the eighth day, the Day of Pentecost, He began His service as High Priest and blessed His people with the Holy Spirit!

## 14. Weighing the Options

Now that we've examined the case for a Sivan 6th Pentecost, let us weigh the options. Let us compare Sivan 6 to Sunday and see which one fits the Word of God. How does a Sivan 6th Pentecost fit the Biblical facts, and how does a Sunday Pentecost fit the Biblical facts?

Let's begin with the Sunday Pentecost. Please understand that this examination is **not** designed to mock anyone who believes in a Sunday Pentecost. To illustrate why a doctrine doesn't fit God's Word, it's sometimes necessary to point out the absurdities inherent in that doctrine, but there's no intention here of mocking the people who believe it.

### Implications of a Sunday Pentecost

The entire edifice of a Sunday Pentecost rests upon two key pillars: 1) That the Sabbath in Lev. 23:11 is the weekly Sabbath and not an annual Sabbath, and 2) That Jesus Christ ascended to His Father on Sunday as a fulfillment of the wave sheaf offering. Sunday Pentecost observers link the wave sheaf, and therefore Pentecost, to Jesus' resurrection and ascension.

But these two pillars are made of sand, crumbling and blowing away in the wind as we speak. The only Sabbath that Scripture associates with the wave sheaf offering is the Passover Sabbath and not the weekly Sabbath (Josh. 5:11). As for the idea that Jesus ascended to His Father on Sunday, not only does the Bible nowhere say such a thing, but that concept actually contradicts the Word of God! Jesus offered ONE sacrifice, ascended to His Father ONCE, entered the Most Holy Place in heaven ONCE, and sat down at His Father's right hand.

The truth is, Sunday has nothing whatsoever to do with either Jesus' resurrection OR ascension. He rose on the weekly Sabbath and appeared to His disciples the next day, but there's no mention of an ascension on that day. He ascended to the Father from the Mount of Olives after He had appeared to His disciples for forty days, and this is the only ascension ever mentioned in Scripture!

If we follow the scenario of a Sunday Pentecost all the way through to its logical conclusions, here's what we end up with:

- Every year, Sunday is one of God's Holy Days or Sabbaths. Evidently, God made another day of the week holy besides the Sabbath.

- During the Last Supper, Jesus told His disciples He was about to ascend to His Father and promised to return, meaning that He would ascend and then return, and then ascend again and return again.
- Jesus Christ had to be inspected for blemishes by His Father after He'd already been sacrificed and resurrected, despite the Biblical command to inspect each sacrifice for blemishes **before** offering it.
- The wave sheaf offering represented Christ's supposed "first" ascension, but it usually happened on a different day of the month than that "first" ascension.
- It's vitally important that Jesus rose to His Father on Sunday after being resurrected, even though the Bible nowhere says that He did so or that He needed to, and no one witnessed it.
- The firstfruits of the barley harvest represented Jesus Christ and the firstfruits of the wheat harvest represented God's people, even though barley is the inferior grain and Jesus compared Himself also to wheat.
- We're cleansed of sin by Christ's sacrifice and become unleavened, but the leaven in the wave loaves pictured us being filled with sin once more.
- When Jesus dismissed the Sadducees as being ignorant of God's Word and instructed His disciples to observe whatever the Pharisees commanded, He meant "except for Pentecost."
- We should actually follow the Sadducees' teaching by keeping Pentecost on Sunday, even though there's no proof or eyewitness accounts that they did so.
- When the Israelites arrived at Mt. Sinai, God gave them a one-time pass to purify themselves and do their laundry on the Sabbath. Alternatively, God didn't give the law on a Holy Day and that holy convocation wasn't actually on a holy convocation.
- When Israel entered the Promised Land, they harvested grain and worked on the Holy Day, even though God had told them not to. Alternatively, they didn't offer the wave sheaf before eating the produce of the land, even though God had told them to.
- God made a covenant with Noah on Sunday.
- Since it's commonly accepted that God gave His laws to Israel on Pentecost, then He did so on Sunday.
- God's prophet Samuel reminded Israel of God's covenant on Sunday.
- Asa and the people of Judah reaffirmed their covenant with God on Sunday.
- Jesus Christ ascended to the Father on Sunday.
- God started His church and sealed the New Covenant with the Holy Spirit on Sunday.
- Given that at least five Biblical covenants happened at Pentecost, Sunday is connected to God's covenant. One could even call Sunday a sign of the covenant between God and His people, a title that's reserved for the Sabbath and Holy Days.
- Despite Passover and Pentecost being linked together through God's covenant, Pentecost is actually tied to Sunday and not Passover.

If all these things sound absurd, it's because they are! Yet they're vital parts of the Sunday Pentecost doctrine. Pull out one of those threads, and the whole garment disintegrates. Quite simply, the Sunday Pentecost makes no sense. It fits no Biblical patterns or evidence, and it's wholly based on unfounded assumptions that contradict the Scriptures.

So what about the Sivan 6th Pentecost?

### **Implications of a Sivan 6th Pentecost**

A Sivan 6th Pentecost falls fifty days after the Passover Sabbath, the First Day of Unleavened Bread. It's directly linked to Passover and the blood of the covenant, both literally and symbolically. Passover represents the initiation of God's covenant by the death and blood of Jesus Christ; Pentecost represents the sealing of that covenant by the Holy Spirit.

A Sivan 6th Pentecost may fall on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, or Friday. It isn't fixed to any day of the week, but is fixed to Passover. It's built on the foundation of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice.

So if we look at the whole picture, here's what we have:

- None of God's Holy Days are fixed to a specific day of the week, and God made no day of the week holy except the Sabbath.
- Pentecost is built on the foundation of Passover, built on the foundation of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice.
- Just as the Last Day of Unleavened Bread is counted from Passover (Lev. 23:5-8), so is Pentecost. Counting to Pentecost from Passover reinforces the link between them.
- Pentecost is counted from the Passover Sabbath, the First Day of Unleavened Bread, which is the only Sabbath that God's Word ever links it to (Josh. 5:11). It's the very same Sabbath that immediately followed Jesus' death — the "high day" (John 19:31).
- God delivered the covenant to Israel on Pentecost, and Israel accepted it the next day on the seventh-day Sabbath, which is itself a sign of God's covenant (Ex. 31:13).
- After entering the Promised Land, Israel offered the wave sheaf and ate the produce of the land on the day after the Passover Sabbath, just as God had commanded.
- Jesus Christ is the forerunner and we follow in His footsteps as both firstfruits and firstborn.
- Christ is the firstfruits, not merely of barley, but of all, and we are firstfruits with Him (Rev. 14:4). After partaking of His Passover sacrifice, we are one bread with Him (1 Cor. 10:17) and "members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30).
- He is the High Priest, and we are to be priests with Him (Rev. 20:6).

- His resurrection was the first, and the firstfruits will likewise be resurrected into the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5-6). As He said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11:25).
- Jesus Christ ascended to the Father once, from the Mount of Olives on Iyar 27, and sat down at His right hand, just as the Scripture says.
- After fulfilling a seven-day inauguration as High Priest, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit on the next day, the Day of Pentecost.
- Wave offerings were gifts to God. They were offerings of gratitude and given with a willing heart.
- Offering the wave sheaf with a lamb represented God’s people offering themselves to Him as living sacrifices in gratitude for His redemption, and being accepted by the blood of Christ.
- Preparing the wave sheaf — through roasting by fire, winnowing, grinding, and sifting — represented the purification of God’s people.
- After becoming unleavened through Christ’s sacrifice, we do not become filled with sin once more on Pentecost, but rather filled with the Holy Spirit. We become citizens of the Kingdom of God.
- The leaven in the wave loaves therefore represented God’s Spirit which He filled His people with on the Day of Pentecost.

Everything about this scenario fits together and paints a beautiful picture! It agrees with every Scripture, and fits all the Biblical patterns and evidence perfectly. It lays out a coherent process by which we enter into a covenant with our Creator, from sanctification to being sealed by His Spirit.

## **15. The Story of Pentecost**

Here, then, is the story of Pentecost and its part in God’s plan of redemption, fully assembled. All the facts and all the verses join together to paint this picture, like a puzzle in which every piece fits perfectly.

Sin polluted the pre-Flood world and brought all flesh under the death penalty; God planned to destroy everything He’d made (Gen. 6:5-7). “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen. 6:8), and God promised to make a covenant with him (Gen. 6:18). So God saved Noah in the ark and brought him and his family through the waters of the Flood, which the apostle Peter informs us was a type of baptism (1 Pet. 3:21). Shortly after the Flood, at the time of Pentecost, God made His covenant with Noah.

Centuries later, the Israelites languished in slavery in Egypt. But God showed them grace and mercy, remembered His covenant with their forefathers (Ex. 2:24-25), and promised to redeem them from bondage. At Passover, He slew the firstborn of their oppressors, but spared the Israelites by the blood of lambs. Since He redeemed them from bondage and death, their firstborn and their firstfruits would henceforth belong to Him.

After Passover, God brought Israel out of Egypt and led them through the Red Sea, another type of baptism (1 Cor. 10:2). Their oppressors, pursuing after them, perished in the sea, symbolic of our old, sinful way of life perishing at baptism. Then God led His people through the wilderness and brought them to Mt. Sinai.

There at Mt. Sinai on Sivan 6, the Day of Pentecost, God spoke His laws, the words of His covenant, to the Israelites and they agreed to obey (Ex. 24:3). This was a Friday. On the following day, the seventh day Sabbath, the Israelites confirmed their commitment to God's covenant, and Moses sprinkled the people with the blood of the covenant (Ex. 24:4-8).

Almost a full forty years later, at the time of Passover, Israel crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land. At last, the Israelites entered the land God had promised their forefathers, a land for which they did not labor, a land of milk and honey, a land with fields and vineyards and olive groves. On the second day of Unleavened Bread, the day after the Passover Sabbath, they offered the wave sheaf of the barley firstfruits in gratitude for God's blessing. From that day forward, the manna ceased and they ate the produce of the land.

But Israel didn't remain faithful to her covenant with God. For centuries afterward, the Israelites wavered between obedience and idolatry, vacillating back and forth like the tides of the sea. Many times, the Israelites turned away from God and worshiped idols, God allowed their enemies to afflict them, they repented and cried out to Him, and He raised up a judge to lead and deliver them. Whenever the judge died, the cycle began anew.

At last, the Israelites gathered before the last judge, Samuel the prophet, and requested a king. So God gave them Saul as their first king. Soon thereafter, the Ammonites invaded Israel and laid siege to the city of Jabesh Gilead, threatening to put out the right eye of each person in the city (1 Sam. 11:1-2). But through King Saul, God delivered Israel and routed the Ammonites. Giving credit where it was due, Saul said, "Today the LORD has accomplished salvation in Israel" (1 Sam. 11:13).

At this time, Samuel summoned the people before God, saying, "Come, let us go to Gilgal and renew the kingdom there" (1 Sam. 11:14). So the people gathered at Gilgal, offered peace offerings, and rejoiced in God's salvation. At Pentecost, Samuel addressed the people and reminded them of their covenant with God. He sternly warned them that, if they turned away from the covenant, neither Saul nor any other man could save them.



Many years later, a new crisis loomed. By this time, Israel had split into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. And now the Ethiopians had gathered an army of one million men and invaded Judah (2 Chron. 14:9). But King Asa and the people of Judah cried out to God, and He delivered them from the Ethiopians. “So the Ethiopians were overthrown, and they could not recover, for they were broken before the LORD and His army” (2 Chron. 14:13).

In gratitude for God’s mercy, King Asa set out to purge his kingdom of wickedness and he “removed the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin” (2 Chron. 15:8). At Pentecost, the people of Judah gathered in Jerusalem at the temple and renewed their covenant with Almighty God. “And all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart and sought Him with all their soul; and He was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around” (2 Chron. 15:15).

Again and again, we see God’s deliverance and grace in the midst of bondage, torment, and looming destruction. Each time, God saved His people by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. And again and again, we see this deliverance and grace followed by a covenant between God and His people at the time of Pentecost.

All this, of course, pointed to something greater. “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 Cor. 10:11). These events foreshadowed the greatest deliverance and grace of all.

From the time of Adam, the death penalty has loomed over all humanity, “for the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). We all were sentenced to die, and we all have languished in bondage while alive. As the apostle Paul wrote, “You were slaves of sin” (Rom. 6:17).

But by the grace of God, Jesus Christ came to die for us, to bear upon Himself the penalty for our sins. On the afternoon of Nisan 14, at the time of the Passover sacrifice, He died as our Passover Lamb. “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7). Just as God redeemed the Israelites in Egypt by the blood of lambs, so He has redeemed us: “You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

He purchased us for Himself: “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20). He has offered to us His covenant: “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Mat. 26:28).

If we accept His sacrifice and His redemption, then we belong to Him. Just as the firstborn and the firstfruits of the Israelites belonged to God because He redeemed them, so we also belong to God because He redeemed us.

And so we offer Him our whole selves, holding nothing back. As Jesus Christ lay down His life, so we lay down ours. This must become our attitude: “Here I am, Lord, I’m yours. Do with me what seems good in your sight.” As King David prayed, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart — these, O God, You will not despise” (Psa. 51:17). The apostle Paul exhorted, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1).

Through the sacrifice and blood of Jesus Christ, we are accepted when we offer ourselves to God. Our sins separated us from Him (Isa. 59:2), but now we are reconciled. “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 5:18).

This was the picture painted by the wave sheaf offering under the Old Covenant. It was a gift given with a willing heart, both an offering of gratitude and also an offering of what rightfully belonged to God already. The Israelites presented the wave sheaf on the second day of Unleavened Bread, on the day after the Passover Sabbath, and the priest offered it with the blood of a lamb.

The wave sheaf pictured us offering ourselves to God immediately after accepting the blood of Christ, without delay. We offer ourselves with a willing heart, grateful for God’s deliverance. And yet, in so doing, we offer Him what is rightfully His already, for He bought us with the blood of His Son!

Having accepted Christ’s Passover sacrifice, having repented, and having laid down our old life and offered ourselves to God, the next step for us is baptism. This is pictured by the next Holy Day, the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, the time when Israel crossed the Red Sea. Just as the wicked perished in the Flood and the Egyptians perished in the Red Sea, so our sins are washed away in the waters of baptism. And just as Jesus Christ was buried after His death, so we are buried with Him at baptism: “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death” (Rom. 6:4).

After baptism and the laying on of hands, we receive God’s Spirit, which He poured out on the Day of Pentecost. This seals His covenant with us: “You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13). The Holy Spirit is a downpayment and guarantee of our future inheritance, just as an engagement ring is the promise of a future marriage.

The laws which God gave our forefathers at Mt. Sinai, He has now written on our hearts. “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the

LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Heb. 8:10; quoting Jer. 31:33).

The sending of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was foreshadowed in the Old Covenant by offering wave loaves on that same day. The leaven in the wave loaves didn’t picture sin, which could never be accepted by God, but rather the Kingdom of God (Mat. 13:33). Upon receiving God’s Spirit, we become citizens of His Kingdom. “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the LORD Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20).

After being filled with the Holy Spirit, we begin to walk in newness of life. As the apostle Paul reminded us, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4).

When God created the first man, Adam, on the sixth day of the week and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, that physical creation foreshadowed the spiritual. On the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, which fell on a Friday that year, God sent the Holy Spirit as a “rushing mighty wind” (Acts 2:2). It was the breath of God — the very same breath we receive when He gives us His Spirit! It is the breath of new life.

Thus, we are saved through the blood of Christ, the water of baptism, and the Spirit of God. As the apostle John wrote, “For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement” (1 John 5:7-8; NASB). These three are symbolized by the first three Holy Days: Passover (blood), Last Day of Unleavened Bread (water), and Pentecost (Spirit).

Similarly, the apostle Peter proclaimed to the assembled crowd on the Day of Pentecost: “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). Once again, we see the first three Holy Days: Passover (repent), Last Day of Unleavened Bread (be baptized), and Pentecost (receive the Holy Spirit). The first three Holy Days lay out the first three steps in God’s plan of salvation.

But it all begins with Passover. Without Passover and the blood of Christ, there is no baptism, nor any receiving of the Holy Spirit. Both baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit are built upon the foundation of Passover. The foundation of Jesus Christ.

Likewise, both the Last Day of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Pentecost are built upon the foundation of Passover, and are counted from that day. The Last Day of Unleavened Bread is seven days from Passover. Pentecost is fifty days from the Passover Sabbath.

Everything begins with Passover, and apart from Passover there is nothing. Everything must be built on the foundation of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice. “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). As the apostle Paul further wrote, “For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

When we count Pentecost from the day after Passover, we build on that foundation, the foundation of Jesus Christ. This is a sure and stable foundation, a ROCK which never moves. Anything else is a foundation of sand.

For everything begins with Jesus Christ. He is the forerunner who led the way before us. He redeemed us by His blood. He died so that we might live anew. He is the firstfruits and the firstborn, and by partaking of His sacrifice we are likewise firstfruits and firstborn. He dedicated His life to doing the will of the Father, and so must we. He endured every temptation just as we must. His is the first resurrection, and through Him, we have the hope of that same resurrection.

Before He ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives, He left us with the promise of His return: “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:18). When He ascended, that same message was repeated: “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

On Iyar 27, after spending forty days among His disciples, He ascended from the Mount of Olives and returned to the Father. He went ahead of us to prepare a place for us, as He told His disciples during the Last Supper: “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2-3).

He entered the heavenly sanctuary to be inaugurated as our High Priest. “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:11-12; NASB).

On the day after fulfilling the seven-day inauguration of a priest — on Sivan 6, the Day of Pentecost — He blessed His people with the Holy Spirit. He is our High Priest, and those who are His firstfruits will be priests with Him. “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6).

Through His Spirit, we are sealed to Him. Betrothed to Him. “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His” (Rom. 8:9). The apostle Paul wrote, “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor. 11:2).

The betrothal is now; the wedding awaits! The covenant has been sealed; the Promised Land lies ahead. The Kingdom of God awaits. We eagerly wait for Christ’s return: “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the LORD Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Phil. 3:20-21).

This is the beautiful picture painted by the Day of Pentecost. A day of sealing the covenant with our God. A day of betrothal to Jesus Christ. A day that pictures receiving His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee (2 Cor. 1:22). A day that pictures His laws written on our hearts by that same Spirit.

But it must not and cannot be separated from Passover and Christ’s sacrifice! Without Passover, there is no Pentecost. And that’s why the counting must begin from Passover. It must begin on Nisan 16 and conclude on the fiftieth day, Sivan 6. This is what God’s Word shows us, both in type and in reality.

## **16. Closing Thoughts**

As we wrap up this study, allow me to repeat the message at the beginning: Please do not simply believe me or this paper. Believe your Bible. Open your Bible, search these things out, and see whether they are so. Pray for wisdom and discernment from the Almighty, “who gives to all liberally and without reproach” (Jam. 1:5).

Ask questions. Question everything. Seek Biblical answers. The truth will withstand any honest examination, for “the word of our God stands forever” (Isa. 40:8). But a lie hates to be examined, lest it be exposed. As Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thes. 5:21; KJV).

Find the opportunity to discuss this matter with brethren and ministers. Perhaps they have insight you or I have overlooked. Examine their counsel in the light of Scripture. Are their responses to you Scripturally sound, or are they based on misconceptions, emotion, or church tradition?

Above all, follow God and Him alone. Wherever He may lead you, follow Him. Whatever He commands you, do it. Whatever He teaches you, learn it.

When we follow God wherever He leads, there may be times that friends and relatives think we're weird or ignorant or even that we've forsaken the truth. We must not allow this to stop us. We must never let the fear of man outweigh our fear of God. "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

We may be outnumbered. But remember, truth is never decided by a majority vote. "Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Mat. 7:14).

We may go against what our church or our pastor has taught us. Does any church or pastor have greater authority than the Word of God?

Changing from the date we've always observed as a Holy Day might seem scary. It's a huge step. Israel leaving Egypt was also a huge step. Peter stepping out of the boat was a huge step. When you committed your life to God and got baptized, that, too, was a huge step!

If you search your Bible thoroughly and are convicted, then you must make any change God requires of you, no matter how daunting it might seem! Remember Isa. 66:2: "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word." Remember Rom. 14:23: "Whatever is not from faith is sin." Remember Jam. 4:17: "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."

If we want God's favor, we must obey Him! As the prophet Samuel told King Saul, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king" (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

God didn't call us to an easy life filled with easy choices. He called us to take up our cross and follow Christ (Mat. 16:24). As Jonah learned, it's possible to run from God, but it's impossible to hide. The truth doesn't go away if we choose to ignore it.

Let us also not keep the truth a secret, as if ashamed of it. The apostle John recorded, "Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43). Let us not love the praise of men more than the praise of God!

In fact, our Savior warned us, “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26). In contrast, “Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man’s sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets” (Luke 6:22-23).

Nevertheless, let us remember that God’s Word warns us again and again to be humble, even when we learn something new. The apostle Paul wrote, “...[though I] understand all mysteries and have all knowledge... but have not love, I am nothing” (1 Cor. 13:2). Again, “Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know” (1 Cor. 8:1-2). Finally, “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

Understanding is a gift from God that we ought to share with others, but we must not use it to exalt ourselves over others. Rather, let the apostle Peter’s instructions guide our conduct: “But sanctify the LORD God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed” (1 Pet. 3:15-16).

May God our Father be with you and guide you in all things. May He grant each of us the wisdom to understand His truth, and the strength and courage to follow it at any cost!

# **APPENDICES**

## **Scripture References & Additional Notes**



## **Appendix A: Scriptures on the Feast of Pentecost**

Gen. 8:14-9:17 — God's covenant with Noah at the time of Pentecost

Ex. 19:1-20:21 — God speaks the words of His covenant to Israel at Mt. Sinai on Pentecost

Ex. 23:16 — Pentecost also called the Feast of Harvest

Ex. 34:22 — you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, the firstfruits of wheat harvest

Lev. 23:9-22 — instructions for calculating and observing Pentecost

Num. 28:26-31 — offerings on the Feast of Weeks

Deut. 16:9-12, 16 — review of instructions for the Feast of Weeks

Josh. 5:10-12 — Israel observes the Passover; wave sheaf offered the next day and harvesting begins

1 Sam. 11:14-12:25 — Samuel reminds the people of their covenant with God at the time of Pentecost

2 Chron. 8:13 — Feast of Weeks to be celebrated at the temple

2 Chron. 15:10-15 — King Asa and the people of Judah renew their covenant with God at the time of Pentecost

2 Chron. 31:7 — the people of Judah begin bringing their tithes into the temple at the time of Pentecost

Acts 2 — God sends the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost; 3,000 people added to His congregation

Acts 20:16 — late in his ministry, Paul hurries to Jerusalem for Pentecost

1 Cor. 16:8 — writing to Corinth, Paul expresses his intention to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost

## **Appendix B: Scriptures on Jesus' Ascension**

John 6:62 — Jesus pointed ahead to the disciples witnessing His ascension

John 7:33-34 — Jesus spoke of leaving this world and returning to the Father

John 13:1, 3 — before Passover, Jesus knew His hour had come to depart this world and return to the Father

John 14:2-3 — during the Last Supper, Jesus speaks of one ascension and one return

John 14:12; 16:16 — Jesus to return to the Father

John 16:28 — when Jesus returned to the Father, He would leave the world

John 20:17 — after His resurrection, Jesus again spoke of His ascension

Luke 24:50-51 — Jesus' ascension

Acts 1:2-3 — THE day in which Jesus was taken up, after being seen for 40 days

Acts 1:9-12 — Jesus ascends from the Mount of Olives after spending 40 days with His disciples

Acts 1:21-22 — the disciples witnessed Jesus' ministry from the baptism of John to the day He was taken up into heaven

Heb. 1:3 — when Jesus had purged our sins, He sat down at the Father's right hand

Heb. 10:12; 12:2 — Jesus sat down at the Father's right hand after offering His sacrifice

Mark 16:19; Eph. 1:20-22; 1 Pet. 3:22 — when Jesus ascended to heaven, He sat down at the Father's right hand

Heb. 9:12 — Jesus entered the Most Holy Place one time only

Eph. 4:7-10; John 16:7; Acts 2:33 — Jesus' ascension connected with sending the Holy Spirit

## **Appendix C: Scriptures on the Wave Sheaf and Wave Loaves**

Lev. 2:12-16 — instructions for preparing a grain offering of the firstfruits

Lev. 23:9-14 — instructions for the wave sheaf; must be offered before eating the produce of the land

Num. 15:17-21 — wave sheaf must be offered before eating the produce of the land

Deut. 16:9 — count to Pentecost must begin with harvesting the wave sheaf

Deut. 26:1-11 — giving thanks when offering the firstfruits to God

Josh. 5:11-12 — Israel eats the produce of the land on the day after Passover

## **Appendix D: Pinpointing the Days of Jesus' Death and Resurrection**

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus performed many miracles, many signs and wonders. But the Jews weren't satisfied with either His miracles or His teachings; they wanted some further sign that He was their long-awaited Messiah. As the apostle Paul wrote, "Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:22).

Accordingly, we find in John 2:18-22,

18 So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?"

19 Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

20 Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

21 But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

22 Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

Mat. 12:38-40 adds some additional details:

38 Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You."

39 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

40 "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

Luke 11:29 confirms that Jesus offered His questioners only one sign, "the sign of Jonah the prophet." All His hearers would've known what He meant, that Jonah had been "in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (Jon. 1:17).

And later, in Mat. 16:4, Jesus repeated His first statement, saying, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah."

So the one and only sign Jesus offered His doubters was that He would be in the grave for three days and three nights, and that He would rise again afterward. The question is, what days were these? What day was Jesus crucified and buried? And what day did He rise from the dead?

Was He crucified on Friday? Thursday? Wednesday? Did He rise from the dead on Sunday? Or some other day?

Let's continue, and we'll find out!

### **More Details**

To what we've already seen, Mark 8:31 adds, "And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again."

This confirms what we could already deduce from the other accounts: that Jesus would only rise after He had fulfilled the sign He gave, the sign of Jonah. He would only rise after three days.

The Jewish leaders never forgot Jesus' statement. In fact, it caused them great worry after they'd murdered Him! We read in Mat. 27:62-64,

62 On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate,

63 saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.'"

64 "Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first."

Again, we see that Jesus' hearers understood what He was telling them, that He would rise from the dead after fulfilling the sign of Jonah.

Numerous other Scriptures, too numerous to quote here, add yet another detail: that Christ would rise "the third day." They are the following: Mat. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; Mark 9:31; 10:34; 14:58; Luke 9:22; 13:32; 18:33; 24:6-7; 24:46; Acts 10:40; and 1 Cor. 15:3-4. That's 13 passages!

Adding all this together, we know that Jesus was to be dead and in the ground for three days and three nights, that He would rise after fulfilling this sign, and that He would rise the third day.

And consider how important these facts are, that they're repeated so many times. If Jesus did not fulfill the sign of Jonah, then He could not be the Messiah! It was the sign that He Himself gave.

### **When Was Jesus First Seen?**

Now, when Jesus was first seen after His resurrection, what day was it? All four Gospels tell us it was the first day of the week, Sunday. We find these accounts in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20.

Based on this fact, most of the world has concluded that Jesus was also resurrected on Sunday. More on this later. However, the Gospels simply tell us that Mary Magdalene and Jesus' other disciples came to the tomb early Sunday morning, only to discover that His tomb was already empty (Mat. 28:5-6; Mark 16:3-6; Luke 24:1-6; John 20:1-7).

Furthermore, John 20:1 tells us that it was still dark when Mary discovered the empty tomb. Mat. 28:1 agrees that it was at dawn, and therefore well before sunrise.

Luke gives no specific time of day, but Mark says, "They come unto the sepulchre, at the rising of the sun" (Mark 16:2; YLT). The NKJV has mistranslated this as "when the sun had risen," thereby creating a conflict with Matthew and John that doesn't actually exist. Even at dawn, the sun is in the process of rising.

As *The Lamsa Bible*, based on Aramaic manuscripts, rendered this verse, "Early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb, as the sun was just rising."

So when Mary Magdalene and Jesus' other disciples came to the tomb at dawn on Sunday morning, Jesus had already risen and the tomb was empty. We can conclude, then, that Jesus had already risen by dawn on Sunday morning, if not earlier.

We'll get much more specific than this, but this is a start.

### **When Was Jesus Buried?**

Let's go back now to the day of Jesus' death and see if we can narrow this down a little more. We know that He died as our Passover Lamb on Nisan 14, "the Preparation Day of the

Passover” (John 19:14), at the 9th hour (Mat. 27:45-50; Mark 15:34-37; Luke 23:44-46). The 9th hour is midway between noon and sunset, or about 3 PM by modern time.

Now, all four gospels say this was the preparation day for the Sabbath, so many assume it was a Friday. However, John adds some crucial details, telling us not only that it was “the Preparation Day of the Passover” (John 19:14), but also that “that Sabbath was a high day” (John 19:31).

Being a high day, or “great day,” this Sabbath was no ordinary weekly Sabbath, but rather one of God’s seven annual Holy Days listed in Lev. 23 and Num. 28-29. Specifically, it was the First Day of Unleavened Bread, which always fell on the 15th of Abib/Nisan (Lev. 23:6). Both Ezek. 45:21 and Luke 22:1 show that the Feast of Unleavened Bread is also called the Feast of Passover.

So Jesus died on Nisan 14 at the 9th hour. When, exactly, was He buried? Let’s consider a few facts.

Jesus “suffered outside the camp” (Heb. 13:11), that is, outside Jerusalem. It can also be established that Jesus died on the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem, overlooking the temple, but that’s beyond the scope of this writing. For now, the important thing to know is that He died far from Pontius Pilate’s headquarters in the Praetorium. From the Mount of Olives to the nearest buildings in Jerusalem would be at least 15 minutes’ walking distance, probably more.

After Jesus died, we read this in Mark 15:43-45:

43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

44 Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time.

45 So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph.

Consider that it would have taken a little time for Joseph to know that Jesus was dead, unless he was actually on-site, and then more time for him to go and seek an audience with Pilate. Consider also the amount of time it would take to see Pilate and for Pilate to verify whether Jesus was dead, to buy linen, to get Jesus’ body down from the cross, to transport it to the sepulcher, to wrap it in linen, to put it in the tomb, and to roll the stone in front.

No wonder none of the women had time to prepare spices or anoint His body with perfume; there was no time to spare! Indeed, Luke 23:54 says that, as Jesus was buried, “the Sabbath

[Holy Day] drew near.” And John emphasizes that Jesus was buried in Joseph’s tomb because of time constraints: “So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews’ Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby” (John 19:42).

We can conclude from all this that Jesus was buried shortly before sunset on Nisan 14, as the day drew to a close. There was very little time to spare.

We don’t yet have a day of the week for Jesus’ death and burial, though. This is where the three days will come in.

## **The Count**

As we’ve seen, the Gospels repeat three times that Jesus gave only one sign that He was the Messiah: “the sign of Jonah,” that is, that He would be in the ground for three days and three nights. Numerous other passages add that He would rise on the third day, after three days.

Much of the world believes Jesus’ death and burial happened on Friday, and that He rose on Sunday. So, just for the sake of argument, let’s count the few minutes that Jesus was in the ground on Friday before sunset as Day 1. Friday night would be Night 1. The weekly Sabbath, Saturday, would be Day 2. Saturday night would be Night 2.

As we’ve seen, Jesus’ tomb was already empty before sunrise on Sunday morning. Counting from a Friday crucifixion, the third day hadn’t even begun yet! It was still night. But even more devastatingly, there is no possible third night.

A **Friday crucifixion** would make our Messiah a liar. It would render the sign He gave, the sign of Jonah, utterly meaningless. So we can rule out a Friday crucifixion. It is mathematically impossible.

This leaves us with just two options: Wednesday or Thursday.

A **Thursday crucifixion** would allow for three full nights and parts of three days:

- A few minutes of Thursday (Day 1)
- Thursday night (Night 1)
- Friday (Day 2)
- Friday night (Night 2)
- Sabbath day (Day 3)
- Saturday night (Night 3)

The next morning, Sunday morning, He was seen by His disciples.



A **Wednesday crucifixion** hinges on interpreting three days and three nights as literally that: three full days and nights — 72 hours. The last few minutes of Wednesday are not a full day. Here's the count:

- Wednesday night (Night 1)
- Thursday (Day 1)
- Thursday night (Night 2)
- Friday (Day 2)
- Friday night (Night 3)
- Sabbath (Day 3)

Jesus then rose from the dead on the third day near the end of the Sabbath, just before sunset, a full 72 hours from the moment He was buried. And the next morning, Sunday morning, He was seen by His disciples.

So which is it? Wednesday or Thursday?

### **Luke 24:21**

Before we even get into this discussion, one verse seemingly rules out a Wednesday crucifixion by identifying Sunday, not Sabbath, as the third day after Jesus' crucifixion. So let's look at this first.

In Luke 24, after His resurrection, Jesus appeared to two of His disciples as they traveled from Jerusalem to Emmaus. We're told this was the first day of the week, a Sunday (Luke 24:1, 13).

In Luke 24:18-21, we find an exchange between Jesus and these two disciples, who did not yet recognize Him:

18 Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?"

19 And He said to them, "What things?" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,

20 "and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him.

21 “But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, **today is the third day** since these things happened.

“Today [Sunday] is the third day.” Incidentally, this verse seems to refute both a Wednesday and a Thursday crucifixion, for they both count the Sabbath as the third day. It seems to affirm a Friday crucifixion, which we’ve already seen is mathematically impossible.

So what’s the answer?

The answer is found in the original Greek. Here it is, translated word-for-word from Greek, as found in the *Emphatic Diaglott New Testament*: “We but hoped, that he it is the being about to redeem the Israel; but besides all these third this day goes away to-day, from of which these occurred.”

In plain English, we might read this as, “But we hoped that He is the one about to redeem Israel. But besides all these [things], this third day goes away today from whence these [things] occurred.” “This third day goes away” is simply another way of saying, “It’s already been three days!”

The Aramaic manuscripts agree. Here’s *The Lamsa Bible*: “But we were hoping that he was the one to save Israel; and behold, it is three days since all these things happened.”

*Murdock’s Syriac Peshitta New Testament* reads, “But we expected that he was to deliver Israel. And lo, three days have passed, since all these things occurred.”

The disciples knew that three full days had passed, but not yet four full days. Therefore, they said “it’s been three days.” Or, “three days have passed.”

Luke 24:21, then, is compatible with either a Wednesday or a Thursday crucifixion.

## **Mark 16:9**

Now, as we’ve seen, a Wednesday crucifixion lines up with a Sabbath evening resurrection; a Thursday crucifixion lines up with a Saturday night/Sunday morning resurrection. There’s one more verse that seems to indicate a Sunday resurrection.

It’s Mark 16:9, which reads, “Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.”

This, however, is the literal, word-for-word translation, as found in the *Emphatic Diaglott New Testament*: “Having risen and early first of week he appeared first to Mary the

Magdalene.” Or, in plain English, “Having risen, then early on the first of the week He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.”

Again, there’s no statement of a Sunday resurrection here. There’s no statement anywhere in the Bible that Jesus was resurrected on Sunday, but only that His disciples first saw Him on that day. Search your own Bibles, please, and see!

### **Three Full Days, or Three Partial Days?**

Now, we come at last to the heart of the matter. What does “three days and three nights” mean? Is it a full 72 hours? Or does it mean just parts of three days and three nights?

Consider that “day and night” means a full day, a 24-hour period. There would be no other way to express this in Bible days. Nor would there be any other way to express “three full days” other than by saying “three days and three nights.” It’s as precise a term as the ancients could use.

Did it rain on the earth in Noah’s day for 39 days and half an hour? No, it was 40 days and 40 nights.

Did Moses fast in God’s presence for 39 days and half an hour? No, it was 40 days and 40 nights.

Did Jesus Christ fast for 39 days and half an hour? No, it was 40 days and 40 nights.

Was Jonah in the belly of the fish for two days and half an hour? No, it was three days and three nights.

And was Jesus Christ dead and buried for two days and half an hour (or less)? No. He was buried for three days and three nights.

Likewise, the phrase “after three days” found in Mat. 27:63 and Mark 8:31 means “after three full days,” not “after two days and half an hour.”

At the end of this age, when the two witnesses are martyred, Rev. 11:9 says that they will be dead for “three-and-a-half days,” not three days or four days. A partial day is counted as a partial day, not as a whole day.

So when Jesus Christ told us He would be dead and buried for three days and three nights, He meant a full three days and three nights. Not two-and-a-half days. Not two days and half an hour. He meant exactly what He said.

These are very basic concepts.

Thus, we can rule out a Thursday crucifixion as well. The crucifixion happened on Wednesday, and the resurrection on Sabbath.

There are some additional, fascinating clues. They aren't rock-solid evidence all by themselves, mind you, but they do help to paint the overall picture.

## **The Sabbaths**

In the original Greek, Matthew tells us that when Mary Magdalene and the other women went to the tomb on Sunday morning, it was after "the Sabbaths" (Mat. 28:1). Plural. Thus we have indirect confirmation that there were indeed two Sabbaths that week, the first being a high day (the First Day of Unleavened Bread) and the second being the weekly Sabbath.

Here's something else interesting. In Mat. 27:59-61, Mark 15:45-47, and Luke 23:50-55, Joseph of Arimathea buried Jesus in his own tomb, while Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" watched. John 19:38-42 says that Nicodemus helped Joseph bury Him, and that they wrapped Him in linen with myrrh, aloes, and spices. He doesn't mention the women at all.

So, all four gospels agree that the women didn't put spices on Jesus' body at this time. They also all agree that Joseph of Arimathea buried Jesus; John adds that Nicodemus helped and that they put myrrh and aloes on His body. The women only observed where and how Jesus was buried so that they could prepare and bring spices later.

In Mark 16:1, we find, "Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him." Here, "Sabbath" is singular in the original Greek. So after one of the Sabbaths, the women went to buy spices.

In Luke 23:56, we read, "Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment." The word "Sabbath" is again singular.

So the women bought spices after the Sabbath (singular), rested on the Sabbath (singular), and then came to the tomb after the Sabbaths (plural). What does it all mean? It means that after the First Day of Unleavened Bread (the high Sabbath) had ended, they bought and prepared spices the next day on Friday, rested once more on the weekly Sabbath, and then came to the tomb early Sunday morning after both Sabbaths had passed.

Again, we have confirmation of the Wednesday crucifixion timeline!

To conclude, a Friday crucifixion is mathematically impossible. A Thursday crucifixion is likewise impossible, and so is a Sunday resurrection. None of these fit the sign of Jonah, the sign that Jesus Christ is the Messiah.

Jesus died on Nisan 14 at the 9th hour, and was buried shortly before sunset as the First Day of Passover/Unleavened Bread approached. After resting on this day, Mary Magdalene, Jesus' mother Mary, and the other women bought and prepared spices the following day, on Friday. Then they rested on the weekly Sabbath.

Jesus rose from the dead at the end of three days and three nights, as the Sabbath drew to a close. It was just before sunset on this, the third full day since His burial. The following morning at dawn, on Sunday, the women came to the tomb to anoint His body, but found the tomb empty. And later that morning, Jesus appeared to His disciples for the first time.

This is the true Gospel timeline, and it's the only one that doesn't contradict itself or any of the Scriptures!

## Appendix E: The Hebrew Calendar

God's calendar, the Hebrew calendar, is the one on which the dates of all the Biblical holy days are determined. It is a lunar-solar calendar, meaning (to oversimplify) that the months are calculated by the moon, while the years are calculated by the sun.

Here are the months of the Hebrew calendar, along with other details:

	Month	Length	Other Names	Time of Year
1	Nisan	30 days	Abib	Spring
2	Iyar	29 days	Ziv	Spring
3	Sivan	30 days		Late spring-early summer
4	Tammuz	29 days		Summer
5	Av	30 days		Summer
6	Elul	29 days		Late summer-early fall
7	Tishri	30 days	Ethanim	Fall
8	Cheshvan	29 or 30 days	Bul	Fall
9	Kislev	29 or 30 days		Late fall-early winter
10	Tevet	29 days		Winter
11	Shevat	30 days		Winter
12	Adar	29 days; 30 in leap year		Late winter-early spring
13	Adar II (only leap years)	29 days		Late winter-early spring

## Appendix F: Answering Objections

### **Objection: If Pentecost is on a Fixed Date, Then Why Count?**

*OBJECTION: If Pentecost is always on Sivan 6, or any other fixed date for that matter, why did God tell us to count? Why doesn't the Bible just tell us the date like it tells us the date of every other Holy Day or feast day?*

To a large extent, this was addressed in the main body of this work, but it's worth addressing separately and in greater detail. Though it's commonly taken for granted that the Bible explicitly tells us the date of each annual Holy Day except Pentecost, the surprising truth is that it does not! If you look through Leviticus 23 and Numbers 28-29, you'll notice that only four Holy Days are given specific dates: the First Day of Unleavened Bread (Abib/Nisan 15), the Day of Trumpets (Tishri 1), the Day of Atonement (Tishri 10), and the First Day of Tabernacles (Tishri 15).

No calendar date is given for either the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread or the Last Great Day, even though they always fall on the same calendar date every year. The only way to know when they are is to count from the first day of those respective feasts. By counting seven days, beginning with the first day of Unleavened Bread, we know the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread is Abib/Nisan 21. By counting eight days, beginning with the first day of Tabernacles, we know the Last Great Day is Tishri 22.

To be fair, Ex. 12:18 associates the last day of Unleavened Bread with "the twenty-first day of the month at evening," but the wording could be misunderstood, since some folks believe that "evening" can only mark the beginning of a day and not the end. So even with this, we can only pinpoint the day by turning to Leviticus 23 or Numbers 28, reading that the feast begins on Abib/Nisan 15, and counting seven days.

The fact that we have to count to those Holy Days doesn't mean they don't have fixed dates. In this respect, Pentecost is no different.

So what's the reason for counting? As explained in the main body of this work, counting to Pentecost has great spiritual and symbolic significance due to the numbers (7×7, 50). Counting to Pentecost from the day after the First Day of Unleavened Bread also reinforces its spiritual connection to Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

## Objection to Joshua 5 Based on Sabbatical Years

In Joshua 5, Israel ate the produce of the land on the day after Passover, indicating that the wave sheaf was offered “on the very same day” (Josh. 5:11). The “day after the Passover” corresponds to “the day after the Sabbath” in Lev. 23:11.

*OBJECTION: The year Israel entered the Promised Land was a Sabbatical year, and therefore they could not have harvested the produce of the land or offered the wave sheaf.*

ANSWER: When Israel entered the land, it could not have been considered a sabbath year, nor would they have begun the count with a sabbath year. They would begin with year one, just as God had told them. Here’s Lev. 25:1-5:

1 And the LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying,

2 “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a sabbath to the LORD.

3 ‘Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit;

4 ‘but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard.

5 ‘What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land.’”

The seventh year was the sabbath year, and that year we read that “the land had rest from war” (Josh. 14:15).

We know that this was the seventh year because of Caleb’s age at the time (Josh. 14:7-10). Caleb said that he was forty years old when Moses sent him to spy out the land, and Israel subsequently wandered in the wilderness for another thirty-eight years after rebelling (Deut. 2:14). When Caleb spoke to Joshua, he said that forty-five years had passed since the rebellion, showing that Israel had been in the land for seven years.

Nor did the land in any way have rest when Israel entered, as it had already been plowed and sown by the Canaanites, and was about to experience the ravages of war. It is thus impossible for this to have been a Sabbatical year.



### **Objection to Joshua 5 Based on When Israel Ate the Produce of the Land**

*OBJECTION: Israel would have already eaten the produce of the land on the east side of the Jordan, and therefore it was unnecessary to offer the wave sheaf after they crossed.*

ANSWER: The east side of the Jordan was **not** part of the Promised Land, as established earlier in this paper. Nor is there any evidence whatsoever that the Israelites ate any of the land's produce on the other side. God continued to feed them with manna even after they crossed the Jordan, and the manna ceased only after they ate the produce of the land (Josh. 5:12).

### **Objection Based on the Sabbatical Cycles**

*OBJECTION: The Sabbatical years illustrate the correct pattern for counting Pentecost. There were six years and then a Sabbatical year. This cycle was repeated seven times, with the forty-ninth year being the seventh Sabbatical year. The next year, the fiftieth year, was the Jubilee.*

ANSWER: This is an analogy and not direct evidence. Pentecost and the Jubilee may have some similarities, but they're still two different things.

For example, the year after a Jubilee would be the first year of the next cycle, but the day after Pentecost is never the first day of the week. As God told the people, "Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD" (Lev. 25:5-6). So the year after a Jubilee was the first year of the next cycle and the people would once more sow their fields for six years before resting in the seventh.

Furthermore, a Sabbatical or Jubilee year always begins on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 25:9), which isn't fixed to any specific day of the week. So if the Sabbatical and Jubilee years aren't fixed to any specific day of the week, they can hardly be used to prove that Pentecost is fixed to any specific day of the week.