

THE FEAST OF WEEKS

Objectives:

- To identify some of the main components of the Feast of Weeks.
- To gain an understanding of how this feast was observed during the time of Christ.
- To gain an understanding of how this feast applies to believers today.

(Approach)

Birthdays are something every being on planet earth has in common. We can all look to a particular day when our life began. Children eagerly anticipate their special day while adults would just as soon forget them. Nations, corporations and even churches celebrate their beginnings. The Feast of Weeks is celebrated as a beginning point, a birthday of two very important groups: the nation of Israel and the church. Let's look at the origin of this feast and of course, at its' fulfillment.



I. GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE FEAST OF WEEKS

A **This is the fourth feast in the seven-feast cycle.** It concludes the feasts that are celebrated during the Spring. The Feast of Weeks was a pilgrimage feast, so all men, from age 13 on were to celebrate the feast in Jerusalem. Lev. 23:15-22 lists God's instructions concerning the Feast of Weeks:

1. The counting of the omer: "Omer" is a Hebrew word that means "sheaf, or measure". God instructed the Hebrews to count off seven weeks from Firstfruits and then to celebrate the Feast of Weeks.



2. A wave offering of two loaves of leavened bread was to be offered to the Lord. The bread was to be made from new grain. Two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour was to be used (equivalent to 16 cups). These loaves measured roughly 12" x 21" x 3"¹
3. Three other offerings were required: burnt offering (7 male lambs, 1 young bull and 2 rams, as well as grain and drink); sin offering (1 male goat); and fellowship offering (2 lambs). The lambs and the bread were a sacred offering for the priest.
4. This feast was a sacred assembly, a holy convocation. No regular work was to be done.
5. God instructed the Hebrews not to harvest the corners of their fields and to leave the gleanings of their harvest for the poor and aliens.



Valley of Jezreel

¹ Scarlata, p. 239.

B. There are several names that are used to refer to this particular feast:

1. "**Hag Hashavuot**" or "**Shavuot**" meaning "The Feast of Weeks," because seven weeks were counted from Firstfruits until observing this feast.
2. "**Yom Habikkurim**" or "**the Day of Firstfruits**" or "**Latter Firstfruits**" since this feast marked the day on which the firstfruit offerings of the summer wheat crop were brought to the temple.
3. "**Hag Hakatzir**" or "the Feast of Harvest" because this feast marked the official beginning of the summer harvest season.
4. "**Atzeret**" meaning "conclusion" since this feast marks the conclusion of the four Spring feasts.
5. "**Pentecost**," a Greek word, which means "fiftieth" since it was celebrated 50 days after Firstfruits
6. "**Zeman Mattan Toratenu**" or "the Time of the Giving of Our Law" since this feast coincides with the day on which God established His covenant with the Hebrews.²

II. JEWISH OBSERVANCE OF THE FEAST OF WEEKS

A. Observance of the Feast of Weeks during the time of Christ:

1. "**Counting of the Omer**" "Jewish literature maintains that when the Israelites were told of their forthcoming liberation from Egypt, they were also informed that fifty days thereafter they would receive the Torah. The Israelites were so excited that they began counting the days till then."³ "The link between Passover and Pentecost is the omer."⁴ This time is one of great anticipation--looking forward to the day God established His covenant with the nation of Israel.
2. **Pentecost is the anniversary of the giving of the Torah.** God took a group of ragged slaves and turned them into a nation at Mt. Sinai. When Moses told the people that the Lord desired to meet with them, their reply in Hebrew literally meant "We agree to do even before we have listened." The giving of the Torah sealed God's first covenant with His people.
3. **The Feast of Weeks is a time for charity and compassion.** According to Deut. 16:9-12, each man was to treat his neighbor with kindness. The fatherless, widows, servants and aliens are especially mentioned in this passage. God commanded that the "crops should not be completely harvested--the wheat in the corners of the fields was to be left unmolested, and any wheat that fell to the ground was to remain

² Howard, p. 89 and 95.

³ Scarlata, p. 199

⁴ Ibid, p. 232.

where it was. Strangers in the land and the poor could then glean the field and pick up the remaining grain, thus fending off starvation."⁵ Jesus and His disciples probably ate from the gleanings left in the fields.⁶

4. Because of the emphasis on caring for the poor and aliens, and God's instructions concerning the gleanings for the poor, the book of Ruth is read during the Feast of Weeks.

B. Additional traditions related to the observance of this feast:

1. Dairy products are eaten during this feast for two reasons:
 - a. After God gave the Hebrews the Law, they were left with a perplexing problem: what could they eat that was "kosher"? Since these were new laws for them and they did not know them well, and since their cooking utensils could not be used until after they had been "koshered" the simplest solution was to eat dairy products.
 - b. Scripture is often described as "pure spiritual milk" (1 Peter 2:2) and since the Torah is so central to this feast, it is appropriate to feature meals made with dairy products.
2. The night before the feast is spent in Torah study.
 - a. "The tradition of staying awake all of Pentecost eve is said to go back to the days of Moses and Mount Sinai. According to a midrashic story, God made Himself manifest on Sinai at noon, but the children of Israel were still asleep at the time, so Moses had to go to their tents to wake them. Therefore, Jews stay awake on Shavuot eve to demonstrate that there will be no need to rouse them to receive the word of God."⁷
 - b. The Ten Commandments are read and portions of the beginning and end of each book of the Torah, Prophets, and the Mishnah (the first section of the Talmud--an oral tradition interpreting the Torah) are recited. The book of Ruth is also read.
 - c. Exekiel 1:1-28; 3:12; and Habakkuk 2:20-3:19 are the ancient Scripture readings for Pentecost. "They describe the brightness of God's glory. In Ezekiel's vision he witnessed wind, fire, and voices. . .Habakkuk saw the Lord revealed at the Messiah's coming in fire and bright light."⁸



⁵ Hagee, p. 75.

⁶ Levitt, p. 10.

⁷ Hagee, p. 83.

⁸ Howard, pp. 95-96.

3. The homes are decorated with flowers and greens to commemorate the tradition that says that although Mt. Sinai is located in a desert, it bloomed in honor of the Torah.
4. Two loaves of wheat bread are baked and served with the meal.
5. Guests and strangers are welcome at this feast.

III. THE FEAST OF WEEKS FULFILLED

A. Many years after the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, God gave a prophecy to Jeremiah that relates to the feast of Weeks. Jeremiah 31:31-33 READ

B. Look at a comparison of the Mt. Sinai experience with the Mt. Zion fulfillment:⁹

<i>SHAVUOT AT MT. SINAI</i>	<i>SHAVUOT ON MT. ZION (in Jerusalem's upper room)</i>
<i>Occurred on the 50th day after Red Sea</i>	<i>Occurred on the 50th day after Firstfruits</i>
<i>Commandments of God were written on tablets of stone</i>	<i>Commandments of God were written on human hearts (Jere. 31:33; 2 Cor. 3:3)</i>
<i>The commandments were written by the finger of God.</i>	<i>The commandments were written by the Spirit of God. (Heb. 8:10)</i>
<i>Three thousand were slain (Ex. 21:1-8, 26-28)</i>	<i>Three thousand were born again (Acts 2:38-41)</i>
<i>The letter of the Torah was given.</i>	<i>The Spirit of the Torah was bestowed (Rom. 2:29, 7:6).</i>
<i>The earth shook, fire descended, a mighty rushing wind blew, and they heard God's voice (Exodus 19)</i>	<i>A mighty wind blew, tongues of fire descended and many voices proclaimed God's message (Acts 2).</i>
<i>God took a group of slaves and made them into a nation that has survived persecutions, pogroms, disperation, and the Hollocaust.</i>	<i>God took a group of illiterate Galileans and made them into a church that has survived and thrived for over 2,000 years.</i>
<i>Jewish tradition holds that when God spoke to Moses, He not only spoke in Hebrew but His voice split into 70 voices so that all the nations should understand.</i>	<i>All of the strangers from distant lands that were in Jerusalem during this celebration understood the message in their own language.</i>

⁹ Adapted from Hagee, p. 81, 74.

C. The lessons from the book of Ruth are especially significant to Pentecost.

1. Ruth, an alien in the land of Israel, embraced the God of Israel and was welcomed by Him. She is in the ancestral line of Christ. "Gentiles who accept the God of Israel are welcomed by Him."¹⁰
2. "Ruth's story also portrays the work of Christ as redeemer. . . According to Scripture, in order for a kinsman to redeem a soul in need, he must meet 3 conditions: he must be able to pay the price of redemption; he must be willing to redeem; and he must be free himself-- just as Christ was free from the curse of sin."¹¹

D. The two loaves of leavened bread that are central to this feast represent the church and Israel. They do not represent the Godhead since they are leavened. They are of equal weight and are called firstfruits. "Obviously God was predicting here that the Church would be comprised of two parts, Jew and Gentile. We seem to think of the Church today as entirely Gentile, but of course it has always been part Jewish, since the Lord inevitably retains a remnant of His people."¹²

E.. Let me **read an eyewitness account of the Feast of Weeks fulfilled.**
READ PGS. 98-100 in "The Feasts of the Lord"

IV. THE FEAST OF WEEKS MADE PERSONAL

A. The feast of Pentecost stresses that God intended for the Church to be comprised of both Jew and Gentile.

1. Gentiles were welcomed during this feast. Many were present in Jerusalem when God birthed the church.
2. The two loaves that were waved and that are served with the meal remind us that both Jew and Gentile, equal and yet distinct, make up the Church.
3. We should have "grown up in the faith" celebrating these feasts. They should be as familiar to us as Sunday School and Vacation Bible School.

B. Pentecost is best summed up by the word "revival". Those 3,000 converts in Jerusalem are but the firstfruits of the harvest God is continuing to gather.

1. God is beginning to draw His people, Israel, to Himself in unparalleled ways. More Jewish people have come to believe in Jesus as Messiah in

¹⁰ Hagee, p. 76.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Levitt, p. 9.

the last 19 years than in the previous 1900 years. This is fulfilling prophecy. Zech. 12:10 says *"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son."*

2. Rev. 7 indicates that there will be a major revival during the Great Tribulation.

3. Could it be that the many great revivals that are ongoing in our world today is part of the Lord's last ingathering of the harvest before the fall feasts begin?

4. "The firstfruits of believers at Shavuot virtually guarantees a revival in the latter-day spiritual harvest for Messiah. Now we can understand why God included Shavuot in the 3 required festivals for every Jewish male. As Passover speaks of redemption, Shavuot speaks of revival, especially during this era."¹³

C. Evangelism is an outgrowth of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

1. *"According to Acts 2, the first convert was added to the body of Christ at Pentecost. What an occasion that must have been, with 3,000 answering Peter's 'altar call'! And God had provided 120 'personal workers' to deal with them. We know that God Himself keeps all records. Perhaps someday at the judgment seat of Christ one of these 120 will hear the Master say: 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant. you led the first individual into that spiritual body!'"*

If this be true, and if Christ's coming is at hand, it is entirely possible that a soul-winner reading these very words might one day hear similar words from Jesus: 'Well done thou good and faithful servant. You led the last individual into that spiritual body!'"¹⁴

2. The gift of the Holy Spirit empowers us for one basic purpose: to win others to our Messiah.

D. We are living in the time between the feasts of the Former Rain and those of the Latter Rain. *OVERHEAD FROM LESSON 1* Pentecost is the conclusion to the Spring feasts that began with Passover--the death of the Messiah, Unleavened Bread--the burial of the Messiah, Firstfruits--the resurrection of the Messiah and finally the birth of the church, the seal of the New Covenant--the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at the Feast of Weeks.

1. "Accordingly, there is now a gap of time during the long summer in which there are no biblical holy days. The crops will grow during the

¹³ Kasdan, p. 56.

¹⁴ Willmington as quoted by Hagee, pp. 91-92.

summer months until the arrival of the fall holidays that speak of events just prior to the second coming of Messiah." ¹⁵

2. Jesus said of these days, "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door." (Matt. 24:32-33)

3. "We are presently in that long, hot summer in which God is growing what will be harvested. Many signs indicate that the summer is quickly drawing to a close and the fulfillment of the fall holidays is about to begin. Are we ready for the return of Messiah? Are we working to help bring in the harvest of these latter days?"¹⁶

(conclusion)

When Peter addressed the crowd that gathered in Jerusalem that feast day so long ago, he quoted a passage of scripture from Joel 2 that is very familiar to all of us. But just prior to that familiar passage, he prophecies concerning the regathering of Israel to her homeland. We have just celebrated the 50th anniversary of that historic day when Israel became a nation once again. Joel, as the mouthpiece for God, says that afterward--after that momentous occasion, God will pour out His Spirit on all men. I believe we are living in Joel 2:28-32. I would like to conclude our study today by reading this passage of Scripture in unison. **READ AND THEN PRAY:**

Lord Jesus, make us vessels through which you can draw all men unto yourself. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, pour out Your Spirit upon our children, may we dream dreams and see visions that we might be empowered to fulfill the Great Commission while there is yet time. In Jesus' name. Amen.

¹⁵ Kasdan, p. 62.

¹⁶ Ibid.

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