

## PENTECOST-FEAST OF WEEKS/SHAVUOT

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Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures God told the children of Israel:

REMEMBER what I've done on your behalf (Deut. 6:4-25)

WORSHIP Me NOW!

ANTICIPATE what I will do.

The prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures, the feasts, the giving of the law all point to the Messiah JESUS!

Let's put ourselves in Jesus' day...

- Jesus celebrated His last Passover on earth with the disciples.
- The next day, ON the day of Passover, Jesus was crucified.
- Jesus' body was buried in a borrowed tomb on the Jewish Feast of Unleavened Bread.
- Three days later, on the day AFTER the SABBATH – ON SUNDAY during the Passover week – on the Jewish Feast of First Fruits – Jesus rose from the dead.

VICTORY!

- Acts 1:3 - Following Jesus' resurrection, ...*He/Jesus... presented Himself alive after His suffering...being seen by them* (the disciples) *during forty days....*
- Acts 1:4 - Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He told the disciples not to depart from Jerusalem.
- WHY?
- THEY HAD TO REMAIN in Jerusalem for the next feast – the Feast of Weeks.
- WHY?
- In Deut. 16:16 we read that God had commanded ALL Jewish men, no matter where they lived on this planet (!!)...ALL Jewish men in the KNOWN WORLD had to appear before God in the Temple in Jerusalem three times a year – at three feasts each year. One of those feasts was the Feast of Weeks which commemorated the end of the wheat harvest in Israel. AND, according to Jewish tradition, the Feast of Weeks celebrates God giving the law to the children of Israel at Mt. Sinai.
- AND – Jesus told the disciples that they needed to wait for the Promise of the Father (John 16:5-15). What was the promise of God the Father? The disciples would receive power when the Holy Spirit would come upon them – and they would be WITNESSES for Jesus in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:4-8)

PENTECOST, when the Holy Spirit descended and permanently indwelt the disciples and Jewish and Gentile people (about 3,000 that day) who came to faith in Jesus – the Church was BORN. PENTECOST occurred ON the JEWISH Feast of Weeks!

The Church was born on a Jewish feast!

As we study this Feast of Weeks we can understand how God prepared many of the Jewish people for the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

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In Acts 2 we read of those coming into Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Weeks according to God's command in Deut. 16:16. Many of the Jewish people lived in Israel. Many lived in and around Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). Many lived in Greece on the mainland and on the islands. Many lived BEYOND!

Acts 2:1-11 - *When the Day of Pentecost had fully come,...*<sup>5</sup> And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. BECAUSE GOD had told them to be in Jerusalem at that time. ...THERE WERE <sup>9</sup> Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes (Gentiles who came to believe in the one true God of Israel), <sup>11</sup> Cretans and Arabs....

JEWISH PEOPLE appeared in Jerusalem for Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles – those are the three feasts that they were commanded – by GOD – to appear before Him. At these three feasts each year - Jerusalem was BURSTING with Jewish people from points north, south, east, west. Historical documentation (Josephus) records that, in Jesus' day, OVER 2M Jewish people celebrated Passover in Jerusalem 2+M!!!!

Jesus was crucified ON the day of PASSOVER! ALL those Jewish people were in Jerusalem at that time. Did they see Him scourged...crucified? The sky turned BLACK for three hours (Matt. 27:45) (Lk. 23:44 – over all the earth). 2+M Jewish people were there!

Matt. 27:50-53 - When Jesus gave up His spirit on the cross – the HEAVY veil in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, <sup>52</sup> and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; <sup>53</sup> and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

Jesus rose from the dead three days later – ON the Jewish Feast of First Fruits. 2+M Jewish people witnessed these events. They heard firsthand about the EMPTY TOMB.

Do you think the Jewish people gathering at these feasts was orchestrated by God? ABSOLUTELY!

What a loving God we have Who ALWAYS makes Himself known. GOD INTENDS FOR HIS MESSAGE TO BE KNOWN – and many times in a MOST VISUAL WAY!!!!

And...then the next feast on the Jewish calendar following Passover – the Feast of Weeks. What is the time between Passover and the Feast of Weeks? What is the date of

the Feast of Weeks? There's NO DATE given in Scripture for the Feast of Weeks!!!!  
How would you know when to appear in Jerusalem to celebrate?

In Lev. 23:15-17 – we read that God told the people to count!!!!???? They were to begin counting from the day after the Sabbath in Passover week, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: they were to count seven Sabbaths (49 days) to the 50<sup>th</sup> day seven Sabbaths shall be completed....Count fifty days to the day after the

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seventh Sabbath (7 weeks – 49 days); then (on the 50<sup>th</sup> day) you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. <sup>17</sup> 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.

Israel was to count 50 days FROM the day after the Sabbath during PASSOVER week– in order to celebrate the Feast of Weeks. GOD intended for them to ALWAYS REMEMBER PASSOVER – to always remember their REDEMPTION from bondage through the BLOOD OF THE PASSOVER LAMB!

Back to Acts 2...

We read a bit ago in Acts 2 about ALL the nations that were represented by the Jewish people in Jerusalem 50 days following Jesus' resurrection.

Acts 2:1-4 – *When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they (the apostles) were all with one accord in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they (the apostles) were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. <sup>4</sup> And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues ([glo-sa] known languages - the language or dialect used by a particular people group) as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

Acts 2:6-8 - the multitude of Jewish people (with their proselytes [Gentiles who had come to faith in the God of Israel]) in Jerusalem were confused because everyone heard the disciples speak in HIS OWN LANGAGE. <sup>7</sup> *Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?" <sup>8</sup> And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?*

Jesus had told the disciples that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit would come upon them. And, on this 50<sup>th</sup> ("Pentecost" means 50 in Greek) day of the Feast of Weeks came a sound from heaven like a rushing mighty wind. And, it filled the house. Wind is frequently used in Scripture as a picture of the Spirit of God. This sound from heaven at Pentecost is the sound of the life-giving Spirit of God being poured out.

And there appeared unto them tongues as of fire (Acts 2:3) that rested on the disciples. Tongues represent speaking. Jesus had told the disciples (Acts 1:8) that the Holy Spirit would come upon them – and they would be witnesses – they would SPEAK of Him. Jesus told them, . . . *and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth* (Acts 1:8).

What about the fire? Fire in Scripture often speaks of God's presence.

- When Moses led the children of Israel to Mt. Sinai following the exodus from Egypt at that first Passover, they were told to prepare to meet God and receive His law!
- Exodus 19 - at Mt. Sinai...*there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. <sup>17</sup> And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. <sup>18</sup> Now Mount Sinai was completely*

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*in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly.*

- A Jewish person in Jerusalem on this Feast of Weeks, I'm thinking, would be specifically REMEMBERING the giving of the law at SINAI...because they had been told that account by their ancestors - year after year – perhaps day after day!

Aside from fire speaking to God's presence, fire in the OT also speaks of judgment and of purification – of purging – of refining! At Pentecost God sent fire from heaven to show His POWER – His PRESENCE – and His desire to PURGE and REFINE these new believers in the Jewish Messiah, Jesus. AND, the fire that God sent on Pentecost descended upon LIVING sacrifices - not on animal sacrifices that would die. HE, the Holy Spirit, descended upon and permanently indwelt INDIVIDUALS who were ALIVE - who died to self and surrendered to God as they came to faith in Jesus.

Acts 2:11 - the Jews from every nation along with Gentiles said, *we hear them* (the disciples) *speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.*

Acts 2:37-39 When the people heard Peter's sermon *they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" <sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."*

God's desire is that His message of salvation be taken to the world.

And, that message of salvation – has always been for both the Jew and the Gentile through the Jewish Messiah – the Promised One of Israel (Gen. 12:3).

What happened at the giving of the law? We read in Ex. 32 that while Moses was communicating with the Lord and receiving God's law...

Ex. 32:25 tells us the people were unrestrained! The children of Israel were out of control down below. They were worshipping a golden calf.

Ex. 32:26, when Moses came down to the people and witnessed this perversion, he said, *Whoever is on the Lord's side, come to me.*

The sons of Levi moved toward Moses.

Ex. 32:27 - *And he said to them, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'Let every man (of you sons of Levi) put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor''* Moses instructed the Levites to kill their fellow Israelites!

And when did this happen? At the giving of the law!

Ex. 32:28 - *So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day – about 3,000 DIED that day – at the giving of the law!!!*

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On the Feast of Weeks/on Pentecost, 50 days following the resurrection of Jesus, Acts 2:41 tells us - *about three thousand* – those who came to faith in Jesus - were given eternal life – when the Holy Spirit descended.

What an amazing contrast is taught within this one Feast. The Jewish community celebrates the giving of the law on the Feast of Weeks. The law is called the ministration of death in II Cor. 3:7 – because the law reveals our sin. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). What a graphic picture of the truth that the law could never save because man can't keep the law. We're sinners.

In Gal. 3:24 we're told that the law was intended to be a tutor/an instructor to bring men to the Messiah. The law reveals SIN – the law reveals our NEED of Jesus so that we could be justified/declared righteous by FAITH!

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was given and “about 3,000” were given eternal life. II Cor. 3:6 tells us that the Spirit gives life.

I want to hasten to say that Scripture teaches that the law is perfect. So, how can the law be called the ministration of death?

The law reflects Who God is – He is perfect, righteous, holy – and we are NOT!

And the law is perfect because it restores the soul (Psa. 19:7) – because it shows us our sin and our NEED for salvation.

The law condemns – it cannot give eternal life – because in our flesh we cannot keep the law (Rom. 8:3).

The law shows us our NEED for the Messiah Who would come to REDEEM – to forgive – to remove sin.

In Leviticus 23:16, God instructed the children of Israel to offer a NEW GRAIN offering to the Lord on the Feast of Weeks – in the form of two loaves baked with leaven. Leaven is a symbol of sin in the Scripture.

On the day of PENTECOST when the Church was born, what would TWO loaves with leaven presented to the Lord represent?

The Church is comprised of Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus. The two loaves may very well represent Jew and Gentile coming before the Lord – ONE NEW MAN (Eph. 2:15) – placed in the body of Christ – the CHURCH – that was born on this Feast of Weeks, on Pentecost!!

BUT why two loaves with leaven? Leaven symbolizes sin. Jew and Gentile – coming into the body of Christ - sinners BUT sinners SAVED by GOD’S GRACE!

AND – TODAY – in synagogues - on the Feast of Weeks – the Book of Ruth is read. What does the Book of Ruth teach? The Book of Ruth tells us of God’s plan of redemption for both Jew and Gentile through the kinsman REDEEMER!

In the book of Ruth, Naomi represents Israel and Ruth represents the Gentiles.

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Boaz, the kinsmen redeemer, represents JESUS. In the book of Ruth, Boaz redeems BOTH Naomi, the Jew, and Ruth, the Gentile, who were destitute!

The Feast of Pentecost that we are celebrating speaks to the promise of eternal life to both Jew and Gentile baptized into the body of Christ by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:13).

The Feast of Pentecost speaks to God’s PRESENCE and POWER in our lives as believers in the Messiah Jesus. May God use us in the lives of others to share the good news of salvation...of eternal life through the blood of the perfect Passover Lamb - through the blood of Jesus!