

The Feasts of the Lord: The Comforter - The Holy Spirit in the Feast of Pentecost

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Introduction

The last study looked at the resurrection of Jesus Christ as shown in the feast of firstfruits. So what do you think would be the next big historical event that God would want to advertise in advance through the feasts? That's right - Pentecost! This feast, also known as the feast of weeks, would speak about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the start of the Church. Again, like the previous feasts, there are some great nuggets of truth here as we investigate the Jewish and prophetic significance of this feast. Let's have a look.

The Biblical commands concerning the feast

Leviticus 23:15-22 'From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. (16) Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD. (17) From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, baked with yeast (leaven), as a wave offering of firstfruits to the LORD. (18) Present with this bread seven male lambs, each a year old and without defect, one young bull and two rams. They will be a burnt offering to the LORD, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings--an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. (19) Then sacrifice one male goat for a sin offering and two lambs, each a year old, for a fellowship offering. (20) The priest is to wave the two lambs before the LORD as a wave offering, together with the bread of the firstfruits. They are a sacred offering to the LORD for the priest. (21) On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. (22) 'When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.'

The instructions from God were to count 50 days from the day after the Sabbath, which was the feast of firstfruits, until the next feast takes place. Hence from where we get the name 'Pentecost' which means 'fiftieth'. So the count of 50 days begins on the day after the Sabbath (the Sunday) following the Passover. Hence it starts and ends on the 1st day of the week - Sunday. This is obviously significant in relation to the day on which the church now meets. Jesus rose on the first day of the week, the Holy Spirit came on the first day of the week and the Church began officially on the first day of the week. It all speaks of new life and a new beginning.¹

The feast of Weeks/Pentecost was a celebration of the wheat harvest that was coming to a close at this time. Now from the passage above you will see that the number two is very prominent at this feast. There are two wave offerings to the Lord. These are of the two loaves and the two lambs. We will look at what this is all about in the next section on the prophetic fulfillment of this feast but for now I just want to draw it to your attention so you can think about it! And while you are using your brain, how about thinking on this... the two loaves of bread that are waved before the Lord contain leaven! From what we have seen about leaven in the

previous study on 'Unleavened bread' where it is clearly used in the Bible as a type of sin, why would this offering be specifically commanded to include leaven?

The last point worth mentioning as we look at the biblical instructions concerning this feast is that the day of Pentecost is to be a special Sabbath on which they do no work. This also is instructive as we shall see. Ok... enough clues. Let's start solving this mystery!

The Prophetic Fulfillment

There are several aspects to the Biblical instructions that have prophetic significance. They are:

- The specific prophetic fulfillment of this day
- The fifty days unto the feast
- The wave offering of two loaves and two lambs
- The leaven being included in the loaves as well as fine flour
- The special Sabbath on the day of this feast



The specific prophetic fulfillment of this day: This is perfectly clear for it is given us in scripture. The specific day on which this feast met its fulfillment is on the day of Pentecost following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. This day was the start of the church and the coming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had instructed His believers to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Comforter, the power from on high. And so we read in the word of God that:

Acts 2:1-4 When the day of Pentecost came², they were all together in one place. (2) Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. (3) They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. (4) All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

The fifty days unto the feast: The wording mimics that of the year of Jubilee. The year of Jubilee comes after 7 periods of 7 years (49 years) and then the following year, the 50th, is the year of Jubilee which is about liberty. Amongst other things those in debt were released from those debts. It was the year of freedom and redemption. Pentecost is the same as this but on a day scale instead of years. They would count 7 lots of 7 days (49 days) and then the following 50th day was the day of Pentecost. It too was a day of liberty and freedom with the coming of the Holy Spirit.



The wave offering of two loaves and two lambs:

The day of Pentecost was not only about the coming of the Holy Spirit - it was the birth of the church. It is the believers making up the church that are represented by the two loaves. But why two? The two loaves speak of the two groups of people that make up the church - Jewish and Gentile believers.

“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

And what of the lamb sacrifice? This was not required when the unleavened bread was waved before the Lord in that feast. Why? Because that represented the Lord Jesus who had no sin. But two lambs were offered to the Lord as a sin offering at this time showing that both people groups, Jews and Gentiles, are accepted through the sacrifice of the lamb of God.

The leaven being included in the loaves as well as fine flour: The two loaves included two specific ingredients that are mentioned: Leaven and fine flour. Why include leaven for the first time? Because the wave offering of these loaves speaks of the Jews and Gentiles that make up the church and they still have sin (though that sin is covered by the sacrifice of the lamb.) But it also has fine flour. This is the righteousness of Christ that is evident in the new nature. What amazing truth this offering gives us! As believers, have we not all seen that there is a new nature as well as the old? There is still leaven (sin from the old nature) but also fine flour (righteousness of Christ)

The special Sabbath on the day of this feast: God wanted this day of Pentecost to be a special Sabbath. No work was to be done. The reason is obvious - the salvation that we obtain, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, cannot come through works. All works must cease and the gift must be received by grace through faith.

*Titus 3:4-7 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, (5) **he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.** He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, (6) whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, (7) so that, **having been justified by his grace,** we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

The Historical Jewish Significance



For the nation of Israel, the feast of weeks (Pentecost) looked back as a celebration of their history when they were given the law. According to the Jewish writings, this feast occurs on the exact day that Moses received the law on Mount Sinai³. So it is interesting to contrast the events of the giving of the law with the parallel events on the day of Pentecost in the New Testament. Let's look at some passages plus one comment from the Jewish writings.

*Exodus 19:9-22 The LORD said to Moses, "I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you." ... On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. (17) Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. (18) **Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire.** The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, (19) and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him. (20) The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain. So Moses went up (21) and the LORD said to him, "Go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the LORD and many of them perish. (22) Even the priests, who approach the LORD, must consecrate themselves, or the LORD will break out against them."*

Exodus 20:18 Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.

Commenting on verse Exodus 20:18 Edward Chumney makes the following comment about the Jewish tradition concerning this:

'Note that it does not say "the thunder" but "the thunderings"; wherefore, R. Johanan said that G-d's voice, as it was uttered split up into seventy voices, in seventy languages, so that all the nations should understand... The 70 voices as interpreted by R. Johanan represented all the nations of the world, based upon Deuteronomy (Devarim) 32:8 and Exodus (Shemot) 1:1-5. So, it was seen that G-d's voice split up into the languages of all the people on the earth to be a witness to them.'

*Exodus 32:19-28 When Moses approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, his anger burned **and he threw the tablets out of his hands, breaking them to pieces at the foot of the mountain.** (20) And he took the calf they had made and burned it in the fire; then he ground it to powder, scattered it on the water and made the Israelites drink it... Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. (26) So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, "Whoever is for the LORD, come to me." And all the Levites rallied to him. (27) Then he said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.'" (28) **The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died.***

So what have we seen above? We have seen that at the giving of the law, which is traditionally believed to be the same day as the day of Pentecost, God descended from Heaven upon Mount Sinai in fire, thunderings and the sound of the trumpet. It was a fearsome sight! According to Jewish tradition, the voice of the Lord was actually heard in 70 different languages so that all nations could hear the law. But the people still rebelled while Moses was away and built and worshipped a golden calf. This led to a confrontation where 'about three thousand of the people died'.

Let's contrast this with the fulfillment on the feast of Pentecost...

Acts 2:1-8 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. (2) Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. (3) They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. (4) All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. (5) Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. (6) When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. (7) Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? (8) Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?"

Acts 2:41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

On the day of Pentecost the presence of God again came down upon His people. The 'fire' this time were 'tongues of fire' that rested upon the people and enabled them to speak in other tongues. Instead of the sound of thunder this time it was the sound of a violent rushing wind. Like Sinai where the voice of God was heard by the 70 nations in their own language (according to Jewish tradition) the word of God was heard by all the nationalities present, again in their own language, as the Holy Spirit spoke through the disciples. Amazing! And in contrast to the giving of the law, where 'about 3000' people died, on the day of Pentecost 'about 3000' were saved! Awesome!

The Personal Fulfillment of Pentecost

The feast of Pentecost reminds us of the incredible importance of relying upon the work of God's Spirit to both enter and live the Christian life. We should avoid at all costs the error that the Galatian church fell into where Paul had to rebuke them with the following question:

Galatians 3:2-3 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? (3) Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

There are several contrasts which show how much better it is through the New Covenant and the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell believers. Whereas the law given to Moses was written on tablets of stone, the church is founded on the New Covenant where the law is written into our hearts (Jer 31:33, 2 Cor 3:3). Just having the law brings death (Rom 7:10) but the Spirit brings life (John 6:63, 2 Cor 3:6). The law was called a ministry of death and condemnation (2 Cor 3:7,9) whereas the Spirit is a ministry of glory (2 Cor 3:8-9). The law was based on blood sacrifices but the blood of Jesus through the New Covenant speaks a far better word (Heb 12:24).

Thus when Paul writes to the Ephesians he reminds them again of the source of their victory saying:

Ephesians 5:18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

The Greek tense for 'be filled' is a continuous action. In other words, it is telling you to keep on being filled with God's Spirit. It is not a one off occurrence. It is continuous..⁴

Conclusion

To sum it up pretty briefly:

1st Pentecost for Israel – there were signs, wonders and the presence of God. God gave His law - 3000 died!

1st Pentecost for Church – there were signs, wonders and the presence of God. God gave His Holy Spirit - 3000 saved!

We have seen that the feast of weeks, or Pentecost, what fulfilled to the exact day as well like the previous feasts. I've said it before but I'll say it again - How amazing is God to give us this amazing outline of His calendar in His word? From this point on however, things get even more interesting. You see, from this point on we move from historically fulfilled feasts to prophetic events that are still to be fulfilled. The next feast is that of Trumpets. And how amazing it would be to be the generation that sees this feast fulfilled!

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1. J. Vernon McGee writes: *'There are several things we need to note about Pentecost because there is so much being made of it today that is absolutely unscriptural. The Feast of Pentecost always fell on the first day of the week. They counted seven Sabbaths, which would be seven weeks or forty-nine days, then the fiftieth day, the day after the seventh Sabbath, the first day of the week, was Pentecost. This was fifty days after the offering of the wave sheaf of firstfruits. The church was born on the first day of the week. It was on the first day of the week that our Lord arose. Doesn't that tell us something? Wouldn't it be rather odd for the church to go back and observe the old Sabbath which belonged to the old creation when the church is a new creation? When the church meets on the first day of the week, we are celebrating our Lord's resurrection and the birthday of the church. This festival is also called the Feast of Weeks.'* [↪](#)
 2. Again McGee writes *"When the day of Pentecost was fully come" doesn't mean at twelve noon or at six in the evening. "The day of Pentecost was fully come" means the fulfillment of that for which it was given in Leviticus. It denotes the coming of the Holy Spirit to baptize believers into the body of Christ and to begin the calling out of the church. Pentecost is the birthday of the church. It was fifty days after the resurrection of Christ that the Holy Spirit came. God was running according to His calendar and on time.'* [↪](#)
 3. Gill's commentary on Exodus 19:1 states the following concerning the timing of the giving of the law: *'Jerom and others say it was on the forty seventh day after their coming out of Egypt, three days after which they received the law on Mount Sinai, it being a generally received notion that the law was given fifty days after the passover; hence the feast of weeks is called from thence the feast of pentecost, or fifty days: or rather this was the first day of the month, as Jarchi and R. Moses; with which agrees the Targum of Jonathan; and so was the forty fifth of their coming out of Egypt, five days after which they received the law; it being a tradition with the Jews, as Aben Ezra observes, that that was given on the sixth of Sivan, and may be*

accounted for thus; on the first day they came to Sinai, and encamped there, on the day following Moses went up to God, Exo_19:3, on the third day Moses gathered the elders together, Exo_19:7, and declared to them the words of God, and on the third day after that, which was the sixth, the law was delivered to them.' ↵

4. The Believers Bible Commentary states the following on the all important question of how this takes place:

'How then can a believer be filled with the Spirit? The Apostle Paul does not tell us here in Ephesians; he merely commands us to be filled. But from other parts of the word, we know that in order to be filled with the Spirit we must:

- 1. Confess and put away all known sin in our lives (1Jo 1:5-9). It is obvious that such a holy Person cannot work freely in a life where sin is condoned.*
- 2. Yield ourselves completely to His control (Rom 12:1-2). This involves the surrender of our will, our intellect, our body, our time, our talents, and our treasures. Every area of life must be thrown open to His dominion.*
- 3. Let the word of Christ dwell in us richly (Col 3:16). This involves reading the word, studying it, and obeying it. When the word of Christ dwells in us richly, the same results follow (Col_3:16) as follow the filling of the Spirit (Eph_5:19).*
- 4. Finally, we must be emptied of self (Gal 2:20). To be filled with a new ingredient a cup must first be emptied of the old. To be filled with Him, we must first be emptied of us.*

An unknown author writes:

Just as you have left the whole burden of your sin, and have rested on the finished work of Christ, so leave the whole burden of your life and service, and rest upon the present inworking of the Holy Spirit. Give yourself up, morning by morning, to be led by the Holy Spirit and go forth praising and at rest, leaving Him to manage you and your day. Cultivate the habit all through the day, of joyfully depending upon and obeying Him, expecting Him to guide, to enlighten, to reprove, to teach, to use, and to do in and with you what He wills. Count upon His working as a fact, altogether apart from sight or feeling. Only let us believe in and obey the Holy Spirit as the Ruler of our lives, and cease from the burden of trying to manage ourselves; then shall the fruit of the Spirit appear in us as He wills to the glory of God.' ↵