

Feast of Weeks (Pentecost): First Things First

Scripture says that three times a year all the males of Israel were to keep a feast to the Lord: (Ex 23:14-17):

- 1) Feast of Unleavened Bread
- 2) Feast of Harvests
- 3) Feast of Ingatherings

The third Feast of **Leviticus 23**, The Feast of Harvests, or Feast of Weeks, we know better today as simply Pentecost.

Allow me to give a quick summary of what we have learned so far:

Passover: Christ was our Paschal Lamb – we are saved as long as we remain under His blood.

The day after that was the **Feast of Unleavened Bread:** Christ rested from His work in the tomb; and we should find true Rest in Christ – in observing His seventh day Sabbath we proclaim He is our Sabbath.

The day after that was the **Feast of First Fruits (Wave Sheaf Offering):** Christ is the first fruits of the grave. While not the first human to be raised from the grave, His resurrection is preeminent. It is first in importance, and makes the resurrection of all the saints who sleep in the grave possible.

An observation interesting to me: Israel had one week of no leaven, followed by 6 weeks of leaven; I see that as an interesting parallel to the one day of Sabbath rest and then the rest of the six work days of the week.

In ancient Palestine the grain harvest lasted about 7 weeks. The Wave Sheaf offering of the first cut barley began the spring grain harvest. The wheat harvest would be ready a few weeks later.

49 days after the wave sheaf offering (50 inclusive of that day), came **Pentecost**, also called the **Feast of Harvest** or the **Feast of Weeks**.

This one-day feast was an expression of gratitude to God for the grain He provided to be prepared as their food, two loaves baked with leaven were presented before God. The day of firstfruits was devoted to religious service {also see **PP 540.1**}.

Leviticus 23:15 “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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the Lord, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord.”

Obedience from a loving, & thankful heart is always pleasing to God (John 14:15). Unfortunately, Israel wasn't always remembering to be grateful. In **Jeremiah 5:29** God says: “They do not say in their heart, “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.””

Considering God's mighty deliverance, His provision of a promised land and food, why would Israel ever complain? Perhaps the devotion and sacrifice God requested became a burden to their fallen nature. **Did you know**, that for Israelites who lived at a distance from the tabernacle, more than a month of every year was occupied in attending the annual feasts. Maybe it cut into their “work time”, their “free/leisure time”, or even their “family time”.

Their example of devotion to God should have reflected their understanding and commitment to the importance of religious worship and the necessity of subordinating their selfish, worldly interests to those that are spiritual and eternal.

What about us today? Why do we ever complain?

In the book **Patriarchs and Prophets (PP) 541.2**, the author says we suffer a loss when we neglect the privilege of associating together to strengthen and encourage one another. The truths of God's word lose their vividness and importance in our minds. Our hearts cease to be enlightened and aroused by the sanctifying influence, and we decline in spirituality.

We're told in **PP 537.2** that the people were surrounded by fierce, warlike tribes that were eager to seize upon their lands. Yet, three times each year all the able-bodied men and all the people who could make the journey were directed to leave their homes and travel to the place of assembly, near the center of the land. What was to hinder their enemies from sweeping down upon those unprotected households, to lay them waste with fire and sword; to plunder and take them into captivity? **Simply this: God had promised to be their protector.** **"The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them." Psalm 34:7**

While the Israelites went up to worship, divine power would place a restraint upon their enemies. God promised He would: **"For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in the year."** **Exodus 34:24.**

Its possible the Feast of Weeks commemorated more than God's providence and protection: It may also have commemorated their Sanctification: notice **Exodus 19:1** **"In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai"** This puts it about 45 days since the Exodus, or Passover. God speaks to Israel, through Moses, and says in **Exodus 19:4-6** **"You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself."** ⁵ **Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.** ⁶ **And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." **God doesn't only want to just justify us, He wants to sanctify us and make us His holy special treasure, His holy priests and kings.**

After another 3 days of preparation & washing, God would offer Israel the New Covenant, but they countered with their own covenant proposal: **Exodus 19:7-8,10** **"So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him."** ⁸ **Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do."** (this happens three times – see also **Ex 24:3 & 7**) So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord. ¹⁰ Then the Lord said to Moses, **"Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes."** ¹¹ **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.**

You remember the rest of that story, the golden calf, the broken tablets cut from God's own sapphire blue throne. (**Ex 24:12; Ezek 1:26; 10:1; Ex 34:1,4**). **Hebrews 8:8** says the fault was with the people, not with God's law. What was their fault? It was in thinking they could do what God asked, in their own strength, instead of in His power and grace.

Its interesting that the Feast of Unleavened Bread was seven days without leaven, but the Feast of Weeks bread offering was bread made with leaven ([Lev 23:17](#)). At Mt. Sinai, God's people still had the leaven of sin in them.

But God wanted, and still wants, to make a new covenant with His people: [Hebrews 10:15-17](#) "But the [Holy Spirit](#) also [witnesses to us](#); for after He had said before,¹⁶ "This is the [covenant](#) that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: [I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,](#)"¹⁷ then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

The Holy Spirit creates a new heart and mind in us and writes in us God's law! [2 Corinthians 3:2,3](#) "You are our epistle (letter) written in our hearts, known and read by all men; ³ clearly [you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.](#)"

On Passover and on the feast of unleavened bread they ate unleavened bread. Because Jesus, that perfect unblemished Savior, rested and did not rise that day after His work was finished.

The barley wave offering was made the next day, representing Christ's ascension to heaven to present Himself as our forever perfect Savior.

Twice in [1 Corinthians 15](#), Paul calls Jesus our first fruits: "²⁰ But now [Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits](#) (Grk: aparche - ap-ar-khay – Preeminent/Superior) [of those who have fallen asleep.](#)"²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For [as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.](#) ²³ But [each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits](#) (aparche - or The most important portion), [afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.](#) ²⁴ Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power."

On the feast of weeks the **2 wave loafs** were **made from leavened wheat flour. Why leavening?** When Christ rose on resurrection Sunday and went to heaven to present Himself as the wave offering, the first fruit offering, He took something else - **someone else** – with Him: [Matthew 27:51-53](#) "Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,⁵² and the [graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;](#)⁵³ and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many."

[Ephesians 4:8](#) "Therefore He says: ["When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men."](#)

Those resurrected saints were a type of first fruits, not perfect, they had contained leaven, but still overcomers through faith in the Messiah who hadn't yet come but who they knew through the Scriptures and typology given them and accepted by faith.

I wonder: Could they be some of those mentioned in the Hebrews hall of faith chapter? We don't know.

Scripture didn't record the Father's conversation with Jesus or with those resurrected saints. But it does record God's response:

Just as Jesus is our example and sanctifying power/influence, God's people were always supposed to be a sanctifying influence on the world around them.

Beginning with Israel - the firstfruits of God's harvest. They were to be a sanctifying influence on the world around them.

Jeremiah 2:3 “Israel was holiness to the Lord, The firstfruits of His increase. All that devour him will offend; Disaster will come upon them,” says the Lord.”

Those who wouldn't listen would meet with disaster. **Unfortunately, Israel didn't listen (Hosea 9:10).**

Christians, particularly Adventists, are now called to be God's first fruit. **Revelation 14:4-6** says the 144,000, those living in the last days after 1844, are to be God's firstfruits:

“These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.” ⁵ And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

In the daily example of our life, and in proclaiming the 3 angels eternal gospel message, we are to be the salt to the world to influence it, and a light to the world to illuminate God's truth and lead people to Jesus. **Because Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is a guarantee for all who would accept it.**

But we can't be effective firstfruits while we are filled with leaven!

So what does Scripture record as God's response?

Acts 1

- **Vs 4** Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem for the promise
- **Vs 5** the promised gift was the Holy Spirit
- **Vs 8** who would give power and ability to be firstfruit witnesses
- **Vs 14** they prayer and humbled their hearts to each other/God
- **Vs 15** 120 disciples total were assembled in the upper room.
- **2:1** 50 days later, came the day of Pentecost
- **Vs 2** The Holy Spirit's arrival filled the house
- **Vs 4** and fell on all/each of the 120 disciples and gave them spiritual gifts
- **Vs 41** Resulting in 3000 baptisms - in one day
- **Vs 42-47** The Spirit's baptism enabled continued unity/growth

In **Acts 2:16,17** Peter claimed the promise of **Joel 2:28** was being fulfilled. But there are fall harvest festivals yet to come. **Joel 2:28** has not been fully fulfilled. Some have referred to it as the “early rain”, while the complete fulfillment of **Joel 2:28** will be the “latter rain” as seen in **Rev 18:1-8**.

In **Psalm 81:3,13** God says: “Blow the trumpet at the time of the New Moon, At the full moon, on our solemn feast day.” ¹³ “Oh, that My people would listen to Me, That Israel would walk in My ways!”

May I make an appeal to you my friends? Do we or don't we want to be firstfruits to God? If so, the only way we can is to plead for the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our greatest need, without Him, we cannot be convicted of sin, of Christ, or of the judgment. Without Him Christ cannot abide in us. Without Him we cannot become overcomers.

The Holy Spirit is also God (**Acts 5:3-5**). He is not some nebulous “force”, but rather is a Being, the third Person of the Godhead! Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit with a masculine pronoun – He, not It.

In **John 14:15-18** Jesus said He would pray that the Father would send us another Helper – an Advocate, Someone like Him – The Holy Spirit, who would dwell with us and in us. Jesus described the eagerness with which God wants to give us the gift of the Holy Spirit in **Luke 11:9,10,13**, “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives,

[and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened...](#)¹³ If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!**"

Through whom Jesus would be with and in us. **Vs 26** says the Spirit will teach us all things and help us remember Christ's words; and give us Jesus' peace. The work of the Holy Spirit is further described in **John 16:5-15**. The Spirit works on us convicting us of our sin, of Christ's righteousness, and of God's judgment. He brings us to repentance. Then He works in us bringing Christ's abiding presence (**John 15:5**) and transforming grace. Then He works through us giving us gifts/talents so we can be effective witnesses of Christ to the world. And finally through the final outpouring of the Holy Spirit in full Pentecost power we can take and live the gospel to the world (**Rev 18:1**).

The Spirit will sanctify us by writing the new covenant in us, giving us new hearts and minds (**Heb 8:10-12; 10:15-17**). He will show us our leaven and bring us to repentance (**Jn 16:8-11**). He will give us gifts, equipping us to finish the work (**Heb 2:4; Rev 18:1-8**)

Galatians 4:4-7 "But [when the fullness of the time had come](#), (the prophecies and the typology, including the feasts, was also to help the people know the times) **God sent forth His Son, [born of a woman](#)** (not directly from or seed from a man), **[born under the law](#)**,⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.⁶ And because you are sons, **[God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"](#)**⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

To the Romans Paul said (**8: 17**) "**[joint heirs with Christ](#)**, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."

At Pentecost, the apostles and disciples received the gift. Their hearts were filled with a benevolence so full, so deep, so far-reaching, that it compelled them to go to what they thought were the ends of the earth, testifying of the cross of Jesus Christ and living His truth, even to the death if need be. They were filled with an intense desire to add to the church those who would be saved. But there was "more world" than they were aware of that needed, and still needs, to hear the gospel. If God's servants are to go forth today, in the same fashion and power, they must be filled with the same Spirit. All around us are fields white ready for harvest, Jesus said it is the laborers that are few (**John 4:35**).

God has bound Himself to an eternal pledge to supply power and grace to every one who is sanctified through obedience to the truth. If we believe and claim His promised Gift, a saint in God's church on earth, united with the "church in heaven", can and will accomplish all things God calls of it.

So who wants to put First Things First?

Benediction:

1 Corinthians 15:20-24 " But now **[Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep](#)**.²¹ For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.²³ But each one in his own order: **[Christ the firstfruits](#)**, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.²⁴ Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power."