

# Holy Days: Pentecost

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As we study the meaning of God's holy days, a logical pattern emerges, unlocking truths that remain a mystery to most people around the world. The day of Pentecost symbolizes a major key to spiritual understanding because, on this day, God sent His Holy Spirit to His church, providing Christ's disciples with the power, love, and understanding to carry out the church's work. This regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the key to understanding the spiritual principles of God's Word, opens our understanding of the plan that God is working out among humanity.

God established His holy days around the two major harvests of the year, a small one in the spring and a larger one in the fall. These harvest seasons typify two spiritual harvests. Pentecost, occurring in late spring, symbolizes the first spiritual harvest and reveals that this present age is *not* the only day of salvation. Those whom God calls now are a "pilot group" that He has specifically selected to be His "firstfruits." This day is also the anniversary of God's church—the beginning of the portion of God's master plan in which He calls people out of this evil world to create in them His holy, perfect, spiritual character.

1. During what three periods of the year did God command Israel to appear before Him? Exodus 23:14-16.

**Comment:** The "three times" are three general periods during which God's holy days fall. Passover and Unleavened Bread occur in early spring, the "Feast of Harvest" in late spring, and the "Feast of Ingathering" in the fall.

2. How did the spring harvest begin? Leviticus 23:10-11, 14.

**Comment:** Before the Israelites could reap the spring crop, God commanded them to bring a sheaf of grain to the priest, who waved

it before God for acceptance. This "wavesheaf offering" occurred on "the day after the Sabbath" that falls during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Israelite harvest commenced immediately thereafter.

**3.** How do we determine when to observe Pentecost, also called "the Feast of Weeks"? Leviticus 23:15-16, 21.

**Comment:** Unlike all the other holy days, this late spring holy day must be counted each year. God instructs us to count fifty days beginning on the day the wavesheaf was offered. This explains why this day is commonly called Pentecost, which means "count fifty." The Sabbath (verse 15), the day after which we start to count, is not an annual holy day, but the weekly Sabbath that falls during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We know this because Pentecost must be counted every year. If this Sabbath were an annual Sabbath, Pentecost would always fall on a fixed date. However, it always falls on the same day of the week—the first day, Sunday—because one begins to count on a Sunday.

**4.** What special offering did God command to be offered on Pentecost in the Old Testament? Leviticus 23:17.

**Comment:** God commanded that two wave loaves of bread be offered as firstfruits to God. Traditionally, the church has taught that these two loaves represent the Old and New Testament churches. However, it may be more helpful to see them as symbolizing our human, imperfect, diverse, and sometimes even divisive works that God accepts on the basis of Christ's perfect and pure sacrifice (see [Pentecost's Two Leavened Loaves \(Part One\)](#) for further details).

**5.** Are the members of God's church regarded as firstfruits? James 1:18; Revelation 14:4.

**Comment:** Pentecost, the Feast of Firstfruits, represents the first part of God's spiritual harvest. God is now calling a small number

of people, the firstfruits, into His church. These people, who live in the world but are not part of it (John 17:15-16), are training to be the leaders after Christ's return when God will work to save the whole world.

6. Is the end time a spiritual harvest? Matthew 13:24-30, 37-43.

**Comment:** "End of the age" (verse 39) refers to the time of Christ's second coming and the resurrection of the dead when God will reap the firstfruits of His harvest! The fifty days between the wavesheaf offering and Pentecost symbolize the time from the founding of the church to the end of the age when the small harvest of the firstfruits occurs. It can also symbolize the span of an individual's converted lifetime, during which he or she works to grow into the image of Jesus Christ (see "[Why Count Fifty Days?](#)" for further information).

7. What did the wavesheaf offering symbolize? I Corinthians 15:20-23.

**Comment:** Jesus Christ, the first of the firstfruits, willingly gave His life so others may receive forgiveness of sin. He was a holy, sinless sacrifice, and three days later, He was the first person resurrected to eternal life! In this, He fulfilled the symbolism of the wavesheaf offering.

8. Did Jesus have to be accepted just as the wavesheaf offering was? John 20:17.

**Comment:** Jesus was crucified on the day of the Passover in AD 31, which fell that year on a Wednesday. God resurrected Him at the end of the weekly Sabbath (Saturday). He appeared to Mary Magdalene the next morning, the day after the weekly Sabbath during Unleavened Bread, when the priests presented the wavesheaf offering. He did not permit her to cling to Him because He had not yet ascended to the Father. Just as the High Priest had to wave the sheaf of grain before the spring harvest began, so our Savior had to ascend to the Father that day to be accepted before Him and thus begin the spiritual harvest.

9. Did Christ's disciples observe Pentecost? Acts 2:1.

**Comment:** This was the Day of Pentecost exactly fifty days after Christ ascended to heaven to be accepted by the Father on the day the sheaf of grain was waved.

10. What happened then to fulfill a promise that Jesus had made to His disciples? Acts 2:2-4; John 14:16, 26.

11. Was the Holy Spirit to be IN the disciples as contrasted to dwelling WITH them? John 14:17.

**Comment:** During Jesus' life on earth, the Holy Spirit was *with* the disciples. After the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, the Spirit was *within* them as it had been in Christ. At this time, the disciples were born from above by the Holy Spirit, marking the beginning of the church of God.

12. Did the early church continue to keep Pentecost after the Holy Spirit came? Acts 20:16; I Corinthians 16:8.

**Comment:** About a quarter-century after Christ's ascension into heaven, Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, hurried to be in Jerusalem in time for Pentecost! Just as the early church kept Pentecost every year, so the true church of God continues to keep it today as a continual reminder of our part in God's great master plan of salvation!