

Wavesheaf Requirements and Joshua 5

More on Pentecost 2001

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We will begin this sermon by turning to Luke 10:29

Luke 10:29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

I think that you will recognize that this is taken from the Parable of The Good Samaritan, but the words that I am interested in right here are "justify himself."

Luke 16:14-15 And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him [Jesus]. And he said unto them, You are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knows your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Again we have somebody justifying himself. Have you ever noticed in yourself human nature's very flexible and ingenious proclivity for creating exceptions for itself? It usually shifts into gear whenever one is confronted with a rule that is found, or a circumstance that one finds one's self uncomfortable with, for the moment anyway, and so the one that is in this position says, "That doesn't apply to me."

It happens all the time with speed limits out on the road. I find myself battling this proclivity quite often, and so the speed limit can very easily become a mere suggestion rather than a law, and quicker than a wink my mind creates a justification for going faster than the law says. It says to me, "I'm late," or "I'm in a hurry," or "This law only applies at another time when there is less traffic on the road," or "The police allow a 5 minute mph over the speed limit."

We do this it seems almost constantly when we eat, regarding what we eat and how much we eat. The mind says, "I know that I shouldn't eat this, but, ..." or "I'm already full," or "I know I shouldn't eat any more, but it's my birthday," or "After all, I'm celebrating a great deal that I made six months ago," or "Just this once, and I won't do it anymore." But then we indulge ourselves once again.

You might recall the illustration Herbert Armstrong used about the time that he prohibited his daughter from taking any novels from out of the library. It wasn't long after that he found her again reading another novel. When he confronted her, she replied that she hadn't gotten the book from the library, but from a friend. She had created an exception.

On the overall scheme of things, these things that I used as illustration are not as important as areas of morality in our relationship with God and fellowman, but they do illustrate human

nature's ever quick proclivity to find exceptions in order to serve itself first.

In the realm of religion, church pastors are well aware, because it's a fairly consistent occurrence that somebody will think that he has found the loose brick—the exception that makes null and void a particular doctrine. The thought usually is that if this one verse or word-meaning or some particular thought that he has come up with is put into or taken away from a whole lot of scriptures that built the doctrine, then that whole mix of whatever it was that formed the doctrine will come down.

I don't mean that this is necessarily done maliciously. It's just that human nature is deceitful above all things, and it is always looking for anything that will give it any advantage, any comfort, any satisfaction, however small it might be, to itself. This is something that each individually must be aware of and deal with.

This thought came to mind in thinking about the Pentecost issue that we are now confronted with this year because Passover falls on a weekly Sabbath. Some think that changing the way Pentecost is consistently counted and used when Passover falls on a Monday, or a Wednesday, or a Friday, becomes a necessity. I can't help but thinking what the world has done regarding the Sabbath.

Turn to Deuteronomy 5:12 where the commandments are given. I'm going to read the first line of the fourth commandment to you.

Deuteronomy 5:12 Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify *it*, as the LORD your God has commanded you.

It's basically the same thing here that it says in Exodus 20, where it says, "Remember the Sabbath, to keep *it* holy." It is the Sabbath that is to be set apart. Could anything be more straight forward than the fourth commandment? The Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, not the first. Jesus kept the Sabbath. Are we not to follow in His steps, follow His example, and do what He did? Not only that, but beyond Jesus, the apostles kept the Sabbath. In addition to that, they kept the Holy Days besides, and they did this following Jesus' death and resurrection.

But a whole blizzard of exceptions has been produced by human nature to avoid having to obey that simple command and thus satisfy one's desire to believe and do what one wants to do. So they have rationalized that Jesus kept the Sabbath merely because He was a Jew, or they say that the law is done away, or that the Sabbath is merely a ceremony and that any day of the week will do, or that God would not be so unreasonable to require people to stop working in these modern times, or that the Ten Commandments are the Old Covenant, and it has been replaced by the New.

But brethren, the reality is that *nothing* following Exodus 20 has altered *when* the Sabbath is to be observed or used as God has assigned. Nothing has changed any of the other commandments. I think that something similar is being done within the church regarding Pentecost. A fairly simple statement regarding the correct time for observance of it is being complicated beyond measure in order to create exceptions.

Leviticus 23:10-16 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them: When you be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then you shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. And you shall offer that day when you wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the LORD. And the meal offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD for a sweet savour; and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin. And you shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that you have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. And you shall count unto you from the morrow [the morning] after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths [or weeks] shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall you number fifty days: and you shall offer a new meal offering unto the LORD.

I want you to consider this first of all within the context of the entire chapter. In this chapter we have a chronological listing of all of the festivals of God. I believe that we are told precisely *when* to observe every festival, including Pentecost, right within this chapter. There is nothing mysterious or exceedingly difficult about this.

We're going to go now to the New Testament to John 10: 35. There was a controversy going on between the Pharisees and Jesus.

John 10:34 Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, *I* said, You are gods? If he called *them* gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken.

The scripture cannot be annulled just because some think that they are inconvenienced to the way they *think*. Scriptures cannot be treated as though they do not exist.

Now has God changed the time of observance of any of the other festivals from what is given in Leviticus 23? Has Passover changed? Have the Days of Unleavened Bread changed? Or Trumpets, or Atonement, or Tabernacles, or The Last Great Day? None of them has changed. Nothing following Leviticus 23 has changed *any* of the dates on which they are to be observed. Some of the things *done* on the day may change, but not the dates.

Just as surely as nothing following Exodus 20 has altered the weekly Sabbath—that is, when it is to be observed—neither is anything given after Leviticus 23 going to change what is given there for Pentecost either. Is God guilty of flip-flopping His commands? Now if He is, does that not alter the consistent patterns that He establishes for our faith? God doesn't do those things. He

establishes patterns that will always remain consistent.

Leviticus 23:11 And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morning after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.

Pentecost is to be observed *after* the Sabbath, not *on* the Sabbath. This gives no permission for putting it on a Sabbath. Now *which* Sabbath? Specifically, God says, "After *the* Sabbath." The definite article "*the*" (even as it is written in the *King James Version*) is in the Hebrew, and that is a clue that it is the weekly Sabbath that He is speaking of. This is not conclusive, but it is a clue.

When we were in the Worldwide Church of God, I saw in one of their articles regarding Pentecost, that whenever that combination of words was given, and the definite article "*the*" was followed by the word "*Sabbath*," this indicated that it was the weekly Sabbath 95% of the time. There were a few exceptions. This is the statistic that they gave. That's why I say it is a clue. It's not conclusive, but it is a clue.

Are we simply to ignore this, or any other scripture, when it doesn't agree with our thinking? What thinking am I talking about here? I received a paper from somebody out there who said that this verse is not a rule. Can you understand that brethren? If this isn't a rule, I'd like to know what a rule is. So is this person simply ignoring it, denying that it is a rule in order to create himself some legal room so that he can create an exception? By God's own clear word the Sabbath is the anchor for determining when to begin the count. The count begins when the Wave Sheaf is done, and that has to take place "on the morrow after the Sabbath." That is a rule.

Now this is a Sabbath that falls within the context of the two festivals previously mentioned in order that the third festival, Pentecost, can be found Passover, though a festival, is not a Sabbath, so that eliminates it as a possibility as the anchor from which Pentecost is found each and every year. It is not a Sabbath. Now that narrows the search of which Sabbath down to three possibilities: two Holy Day Sabbaths and one weekly Sabbath that all fall within the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Leviticus 23:15-16 And you shall count unto you from the morning [or the morrow] after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths [or seven weeks] shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall you *number numberfifty days*, and you shall offer a new meal offering unto the LORD.

Counting is an absolute necessity, whether one does by counting weeks, or whether one does by counting individual days. It matters not. It's 49 days plus 1. It is 7 weeks plus 1. That's what those two verses require.

If one counts from a fixed-date Sabbath, which the two Holy Days Sabbaths are—the two Holy Days within the Days of Unleavened Bread—there is no need to count to locate Pentecost,

because counting from those fixed-dates starting points will always land Pentecost on the same date in the month of Sivan.

Counting from the First Day of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost will always be on Sivan 6. Counting from the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost would always be on Sivan 12. There is therefore no need to count each year. But it is necessary to count each year when one uses the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread because that Sabbath date is shifting each year, depending upon which day Passover falls on. The command to count *forces* one to use the weekly Sabbath to accurately locate Pentecost. We haven't left Leviticus 23, and we already know when Pentecost is to fall.

If one does not use the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread, then the command to count loses its anchor, and an exception is created, and inconsistency in counting for Pentecost is the result. That's important. Inconsistency in counting for Pentecost is the result.

If God did not want consistency in counting, why would He even make such a statement as appears in Leviticus 23.11? He says, "Count from the day after the Sabbath." That *rule* is specifically put in there so there will be consistency each and every year in counting for Pentecost. Now counting after *any* Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread will at the very least produce consistency, but any Sabbath is not correct. *Only one sabbath fits*. It's the weekly Sabbath *during* the Days of Unleavened Bread. That is the only one that fits.

Leviticus 23:1-2 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts.

"Proclaiming" or "setting." Is the proclaiming or the setting of any other festival done in an inconsistent manner? Neither is Pentecost. The intent of the command in Leviticus 23: 11 is "*to count*." Consistency unifies. Inconsistency creates diversity, and ultimately confusion. To the best of my knowledge nobody, until the Worldwide Church of God came along in 1974, ever began counting from anywhere except a Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Now *why* does every other group clearly see the Sabbath to be located there? This does not mean that individuals *within* those groups do not express their thinking that the Sabbath could fall *outside* the Days of Unleavened Bread in writing, because they did. You can find these things in writings like the *Talmud*, but the sect or the group did not *practice* the opinions of those people even though they are written in the manner that these people expressed them.

You all heard the saying, "The Devil is in the details." It is in the details of things following Leviticus 23 that some believe alters what is so clear in Leviticus 23. I believe it was the Spanish philosopher Santayana who has been given credit for saying, "Those who fail to learn the lessons of history are condemned to repeat it." There are several out there who are making efforts to do just that, saying that history doesn't count, that only scripture counts. That is something that sounds good at first, but it loses some of its strength on closer examination.

Are God's words to be completely detached from secular history? Is not God involved in secular

history? Is it not God who sets up kings? Is it not God who determines the strength and power and energy and wealth of nations? Is it not He who moves people in massive immigrations from one place on the earth to the other? He brings to pass whatever His purpose is. God is involved in history, and many of these things are recorded, not from a godly point of view granted, but from a human point of view. But don't ever detach God completely from history.

Is God completely detached from the record left by *our* ancestors—the Israelitish people—as if they had no religion at all, or what they did have did not have one shred of truth in the practice of it? Are we supposed to believe that what has been passed on to us in history has no truth in it at all? Such an approach I feel is dangerous to say the least, especially when one considers that the Bible itself is a record of past events, mainly of the Israelitish people, and what is given in any Bible translation can be at variance with what is in another translation.

In other words, nobody has the original manuscript, so nobody can claim that the particular version that he is using is absolutely accurate. Now is the Bible going to have a higher degree of accuracy than secular history? Absolutely! Does this mean that secular history has no value because they are always wrong? That's another extreme. Absolutely not. What is interesting is that the very people who say secular history should be ignored, or is of no value, will use it at other times to support their arguments on other issues.

My use of the word *history* can include such writings as *Josephus*, the *Mishnah*, the *Gemara*, which are the two divisions of the Talmud, and many modern commentaries as well, such as renown scholars as *Gibbon* and *Durant* and a multitude of others.

Why are secular histories of some importance in this particular issue? This may come as a shock to you. There is no historical record—*not even one in the Bible*—of the Israelites actually waving the Wave Sheaf. What do the secular histories show regarding counting to Pentecost? They reveal that every Jewish group, including the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Falashas, the Karaites, and the Essenes, all using the Old Testament as the basic guide to their religion and having a living familiarity with the language of the Bible and living millennia closer to the ancient tradition of the Israelitish people, *never* consistently used any Sabbath except one within the Days of Unleavened Bread lest the Wavesheaf fall on another Sabbath.

How do those people who are claiming that history does not matter get around what secular history reveals? By simply claiming that those whose history is recorded, and those who wrote it, were all unconverted, and therefore that disqualifies them as automatically wrong. Now by the same line of reasoning they would have to say that the example of modern Jews and Seventh Day Adventists, and Messianic Jews keeping the Sabbath and/or the Holy Days, is disqualified as a practice of truth because those people, they say, are unconverted. With the Jews, especially the Sadducees and the Pharisees, there is a solid witness of always using a Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread regardless of when Passover fell.

Have you ever listed the requirements given in the Bible for making the Wavesheaf Offering? Most people have never done this. I mean actually writing them down. Now chronologically they do not begin in Leviticus 23, but rather in Exodus 23, and I want you to turn there.

Exodus 23:14-15 Three times you shall keep a feast unto me in the

year. You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread: (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, in the time appointed of the month Bib: for in it you came out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty).

Some Bibles translate that "empty handed." You come before God on His Holy Days with an offering in your hand. That's what it means. We're going to talk about offerings here. The Wavesheaf is an offering.

Exodus 23:16-19 And the feast of harvest [Pentecost], the first fruits of your labours, which you have sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when you have gathered in your labours out of the field. Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD. You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice [that's the Passover] with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning. The first of the first fruits [the Wavesheaf] of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God. You shall not see the a kid in his mother's milk.

We're looking here at some of the requirements. Just so you understand that we're talking about the Wavesheaf here, I want you to turn to Deuteronomy 26: 1-2.

Deuteronomy 26:1-2 And it shall be, when you are come in unto the land which the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance, and possess it, and dwell therein; That you shall take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which you shall bring of your land that the LORD your God gives you, and shall put it in a basket, and shall go unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose to place his name there.

Deuteronomy 26:10 And now, [this is what you say when you do this] behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land which you, O LORD, have given me. And you shall set it before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God.

Exodus 22:29 You shall not delay to offer the first of your ripe fruits, and of your liquors: the firstborn of your sons shall you give unto me.

What do we have here? We have these following points:

Point 1:

Exodus 23 shows that the offerings had to be from *their own labors*; "And the feast of harvest, the first fruits of *your labors*..." (verse 16). And then to make doubly sure that they understood, He says, "...which you have sown in *your* fields." That's pretty clear.

We could toss this off and says that this is not a rule, but we're not going to do that, so pardon my sarcasm.

Point 2:

When the circumstances of Joshua 5 are fed into this, it becomes clear that these offerings had to be first fruit, not spoils [like the spoils of war]. The offering had to be from their own land, and it had to be from their harvest.

Leviticus 23:10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When you be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then you shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest unto the priest.

Point 3:

One thing that this does, up to this point, is it makes it clear that when they were in the wilderness they were not making this offering. They couldn't meet any of these qualifications.

Point 4:

The Wavesheaf was to be waved before both harvesting and eating of the crop.

Deuteronomy 16:9 Seven weeks shall you number unto you: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as you begin to put the sickle to the corn.

Leviticus 23:14 And you shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears until the selfsame day that you have brought an offering [talking about the Wavesheaf offering] unto your God: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

Point 5:

The Wavesheaf offering was to be accompanied by the specifically designated offering given in Leviticus 23:12-13. It was not just laid all by itself. It was accompanied by this offering on the altar.

Leviticus 23:12-13 And you shall offer that day when you wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the LORD. And the meal offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD for a sweet savour: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin.

Point 6:

Something offered can come neither from the stranger's hand, or in any way be blemished. Some like to say that this does not apply to the Wavesheaf. That is utter nonsense. The

principle applies to all offerings. You don't create exceptions for other offerings. God always gets the best.

Leviticus 22:17-25 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and to his sons, and unto all the children of Israel, and say unto them, Whatsoever he be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, that will offer his oblation for all his vows, and for all his freewill offerings, which they will offer unto the LORD for a burnt offering; You shall offer at your own will a male without blemish, of the beeves, of the sheep, or of the goats. But whatsoever has a blemish, that shall you not offer: for it shall not be acceptable for you. And whosoever offers a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD to accomplish his vow, or a freewill offering in beeves or sheep, it shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein. Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen [a running sore], or scurvy, or scabbed, you shall not offer these unto the LORD, nor make an offering by fire of them upon the altar unto the LORD. Either a bullock or a lamb that has anything superfluous [in this case it means something wrong with their limbs, maybe even two many of them, or not enough of them] or lacking in his parts, that may you offer for a freewill offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted. You shall not offer unto the LORD that which is bruised, or crushed, or broken, or cut; neither shall you make any offering thereof in your land. Neither from a stranger's hand shall you offer the bread [a broad symbol for whatever is offered to God, because God was seen as eating it] of your God of any of these because their corruption is in them, and blemishes be in them: they shall not be accepted for you.

Point 7:

This point is a bit more complex, mostly because we have to do a little bit of jumping around, but it is still easily understandable. Turn to Deuteronomy 12.4 and listen to these instructions. Remember what Deuteronomy is as I read through this. Deuteronomy is final instructions written in the last month before going into the land, and then given to the children of Israel.

Deuteronomy 12:4-14 You shall not do so unto the LORD your God. But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall you seek, and *there* you shall come: And *there* you shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: And *there* you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice in all that you put your hand unto, you and your households, wherein the LORD your God has blessed you.

You shall not do after all the things that we do here [in the wilderness] this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. For you are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the LORD your God gives you. But when you go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God gives you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies round about so that you dwell in safety: *Then* *Then* there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall you bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which you vow unto the LORD: And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you, and your sons and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he has no part nor inheritance with you. Take heed to yourself that you offer not your burnt offerings in every place that you see: But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of your tribes, *there* you shall offer your burnt offerings, and *there* you shall do all that I command you.

When they entered the land, commands regarding the worship of God changed regarding procedure. This is why I said a little bit earlier the dates never change, but some of the ways that they observed it changed. That's what the announcement is here. The way that things are observed, and the place where they are observed is changing. What is involved here is the establishing of a headquarters and the centralization of ceremonies involved in the worship of God, with the exception of Passover which would continue as a home-based observance. All other parts of the ritual were confined to the Tabernacles first, and of course later the Temple. This includes all of t