

# The Feast of Pentecost

## A Description of the Feast (An Outline)

The Feast of *Pentecost* (Acts 2.1) was also called the *Feast of Weeks* (Exodus 34.22, Deuteronomy 16.10, 2 Chronicles 8.13), the *Feast of Harvest* (Exodus 23.16), the *Firstfruits of thy Labours* (Exodus 23.16), the *Day of Firstfruits* (Numbers 28.26) and the *Firstfruits of Wheat Harvest* (Exodus 34.22). Later Rabbinic writings called it the *Feast of the Fiftieth Day* and the *Feast of the Conclusion* (i.e. of Passover season).

The feast took place at the beginning of the wheat harvest (Deuteronomy 16.9). **Fifty days** (hence the word Pentecost) were to be counted *'from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days'* (Leviticus 23.15-16). So, counting from and including (as was Hebrew custom) the day of Firstfruits (17 Nisan, AD32), fifty days or seven weeks later was 6 Sivan, AD32. This was therefore a Sunday, the first day of the week.



On this feast day, a *new meal offering* was to be waved before the Lord (Leviticus 23.16-17, 20). This comprised two wave loaves of fine flour 'baken with leaven'. This was accompanied by various burnt, meal, drink, sin and peace offerings (see Leviticus 23.18-19; Numbers 28.26-31). Although Pentecost was a single-day feast it was associated with a period, i.e. fifty days. This suggests the type is related to a work of Christ done *for us* (single-day) and *in us* (period). This is the *ascension* of the Lord Jesus and subsequent *descent* and *indwelling* of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost was also a day of holy convocation (gathering) and rest from normal servile work (Leviticus 23.21).

At the time of Christ, it was universally held that the day of Pentecost marked the receiving of the law at Sinai. Scripture does not confirm this but it does tell us that it was the month Sivan, the third month of the year, when Israel came into the wilderness of Sinai (Exodus 19.1). Note. If the feast of Firstfruits, at barley harvest, was thanking God for *grain in the field*, then the Feast of Pentecost at wheat harvest was thanking God for *bread on the table*. This should be our constant practice. **1 Timothy 4.4:** *For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving.*

## The Details of the Feast (Its Fulfilment)

Luke expressly tells us that this feast was fulfilled in **Acts 2.1:** *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.* The word 'fully come' means to be 'completed', 'finished' or was 'now accomplishing' (JND). The Feast of Pentecost was fulfilled in the movement of Divine persons! This was the ascension of the Lord Jesus back to heaven and, ten days later, the descent of the Holy Spirit *from* heaven. If the barley harvest speaks of Christ in **humiliation** (drooping head), the wheat harvest has the thought of Christ in **exaltation** (erect head). The Lord had showed Himself alive after His suffering by 'many infallible proofs', being seen of the disciples **forty** days (Acts 1.3). He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promised Spirit of God whom could not be sent until He was glorified (John 7.39, Acts 1.4-5). This period of waiting (ten days) brought them to the Day of Pentecost. What is the significance of the descent of the Holy Spirit? **John Riddle:** *The coming of the Holy Spirit created a living body, which includes every Christian, and united that body to its Head in heaven. Christ and His church are one.* It is worth noting the way in which the book of Ruth illustrates this truth. At barley harvest, Boaz was *by himself*. By wheat harvest he had a bride *by his side* (Ruth 1.22, 2.21, 23).

How was the formation of the church foreshadowed in the feast of Pentecost?

- Seven Sabbaths were complete (Leviticus 23.15). God was now beginning something **new** on the first day of the eighth week. The church is God's new work (Ephesians 2.15). *It took many believers of apostolic days a long time to learn that Pentecost had ushered in a new order which meant goodbye to Sinai and its covenant of works and its special days.* At Sinai, Israel entered into covenant relationship with God. That was a ministration of death (2 Corinthians 3.7), and as Moses descended from Sinai and found idolatry in the camp, **3000 were slain** (Exodus 32.28). Yet at Pentecost, the body of Christ was formed, a people who now enjoy the spiritual blessings of the new covenant. This is a ministration of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3.8), and, following the preaching of Peter, **3000 were saved** (Acts 2.41).
- A new grain or meal offering was to be brought before the Lord in the form of two wave loaves. The 'regular' meal offering of Leviticus 2 speaks of the perfection of the life of Christ, but the **new** meal offering speaks of the Church.

These two wave loaves were **one** offering and speak of Jew and Gentile being brought together on equal ground in Christ (Ephesians 2.14-15). Some prefer to interpret the two loaves as symbolic of the **witness** the church gives to the risen and ascended Lord Jesus.

- These loaves each contained *two tenth deals of fine flour*. Something of the character of Christ is in us.
- The loaves also contained leaven, which as a symbol of sin and corruption, must never be placed upon the altar (Exodus 34.25, Leviticus 2.11). Every offering which speaks of Christ does not contain leaven for there is no sin in Him. As these loaves speak of the church we are reminded of indwelling sin (Romans 7.17-18) which soon appeared in the early history of the church (Acts 5). Note. Sin *dwelleth* (resides) in me, but Christ *liveth* (is active) in me.
- Whilst the loaves *contained* leaven, they were **baken**. Fire *deactivates* the working of the leaven. So whilst sin dwells within us, it has been judged at the cross (Romans 8.3). Sin should not be active in our lives as we walk in the power of the indwelling Spirit. **Galatians 5.16**: *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. Only as the leaven is thus kept neutral will the marks of the fine flour come to light.*
- The wave loaves are described as 'the firstfruits (plural) unto the Lord' (*bikkurim*, Leviticus 23.17). This is set in contrast to the wave sheaf which was the firstfruit (*resit*, Leviticus 23.10). The wave sheaf speaks of Christ, the pledge of a fuller harvest to come, i.e. the church, a *company* of people. **John 12.24**: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.* **James 1.18**: *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of **firstfruits** of his creatures.*

### The Doctrine of the Feast (Baptism in the Spirit)

The baptism **in** the Spirit is referenced *seven* times in Scripture. It is spoken of *prophetically* in the gospels (Matthew 3.11; Mark 1.8; Luke 3.16; John 1.33; cf. Acts 1.4-5), *historically* in Acts (Acts 2.1-4) and *doctrinally* in 1 Corinthians 12.13. The baptism in the Spirit was a once for all event which took place on the day of Pentecost. The Lord Jesus baptised the church into the element of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2.2). The significance of this event has already been noted above. This is the day the church was formed and united to its exalted Head in heaven.

The baptism in the Spirit is not the *filling* of the Spirit (the *Spirit in us*). Baptism in the Spirit is *us* (the church) **in the Spirit**. We are commanded to be repeatedly filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5.18) but never to be baptised in the Spirit. It is an event which cannot be repeated, is not to be sought or waited for and does not apply to the super spiritual only. Every believer in Corinth, many of whom were carnal, had been baptised in the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12.13)!

1 Corinthians 12.13 tells us that in one Spirit we were all (aorist passive) baptized into one body. Even though the Corinthians and Paul were not there on the day of Pentecost, God views every believer as *having been there*. **WE Vine**: *At Pentecost the whole church was, by the Holy Spirit's action, incorporated into one integral company, a spiritual entity, that those who were already believers on that day and those who would afterwards believe were thus actually and prospectively formed into the body of Christ, all the members having been in the mind of God according to His eternal counsel.* So, Pentecost is a once for all historic event, the blessing of which is reckoned to us at conversion (much like the blessings of the once for all event of Calvary, Galatians 2.20).

What does this truth mean practically? Read 1 Corinthians 12.14-27! *Once I am saved, I am no longer a solo individual. I have been brought into a new society where I must consider others and function as a member with them. There is no such thing as a non-functioning body member.* Paul describes the local church at Corinth under the figure of a human body. A human body has *many* members or parts (diversity), but there is *one* body (unity). There is no room for an **inferiority** complex (the 'I'm not important' syndrome). Every member is responsible to function (1 Corinthians 12.15-20). There is no room for a **superiority** complex either. Every member is vital (1 Corinthians 12.21-23). The function of the body (local church) is greatly impaired if members go missing, either *physically* or *spiritually*. What is your role in the local assembly? Are you fulfilling it? God has *blended* (as an artist) and *symphonised* (as a composer) us all together. There is no room for strife or division, but mutual care, sympathy and joy (1 Corinthians 12.24-26).