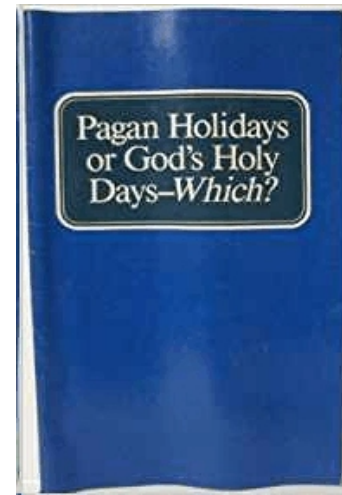


WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT PENTECOST



The following article is a reprint of the 2nd Chapter of the booklet "Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days." Original text By Herbert W. Armstrong, published by Ambassador College.

IS THIS the only "day of salvation"? Most churches generally teach that all who die "unsaved," or do not "get saved" before the second coming of Christ, can never receive salvation.

They assume there is a great contest in progress between Christ and Satan. They believe Christ came to save the world, and by means of all these churches, through which He is desperately trying to "get the world saved."

On the other hand, the clever deceptive devil is doing all he can to prevent people from being "saved." And they seem to believe there is a time limit on the contest.

We are now near the time for the Second Coming of Christ, but when Christ returns to earth in person He will find Himself helpless -- utterly unable to save the world from Satan's clutch -because then "it will be too late. "Probation will be closed," as one denomination expresses it. This paganized teaching represents Satan as far more powerful than God.

The Answer Revealed

The New Testament Church of God was founded on a Sunday. It started on the annual Sabbath day called "Pentecost" or "Feast of First fruits." Also called the "Feast of Weeks."

The New Testament Church continued, year after year, to keep this annual Sabbath, Pentecost, as we shall show. And God gave this festival to His people in order to reveal, and to keep them continually informed, that the present dispensation is only the first, preliminary "harvest of souls."

As already explained, God's purpose in giving His Church His annual holy days was to keep His children constantly in true understanding of God's great plan.

To accomplish this, God took the yearly material harvest seasons in ancient Israel as the picture of the spiritual harvest of souls.

In the Holy Land there are two annual harvests. First, is the spring grain harvest. Second, comes the fall harvest. God intended His holy days to picture to His Church repeatedly year by year the fact that only those He Himself calls during this age can become His begotten children now! And we are merely the firstfruits of the great spiritual harvest!

The Wave Sheaf

But let us continue the central passage which summarizes all the holy days -- Leviticus 23. Here we find all of God's festivals proclaimed holy convocations, in the one chapter. First is the weekly convocation day, the

Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. Then, beginning verse 4, follows a list of the annual festivals, also commanded assemblies, "which ye shall proclaim in their seasons."

First of these is the Passover, followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread with the two annual Sabbaths. Beginning verse 9, we find instructions for the wave-sheaf offering. The Israelites were not allowed to harvest any of the early grain crop until this day (verse 14). Then, on the day following the weekly Sabbath, in a solemn ceremony of the Levitical priesthood (the rituals were mere substitutes and therefore not practiced today), the first sheaf of grain was cut. This event always occurred during the days of unleavened bread (see Joshua 5). The sheaf was then brought to the priest. The priest solemnly waved it before the Eternal to be accepted for them. This pictures the resurrected Christ ascending to heaven to be accepted by His Father as the very first human to be actually born of God -- the firstfruit of the first harvest of souls! By comparing John 20: 17 with Matthew 28:9, you will see that Christ presented Himself before the Father on the morning after His resurrection the previous evening (I Cor. 15:20,23; Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15, 18). This fulfillment of the wave-sheaf offering actually occurred on Sunday, the morrow after the Sabbath during the days of unleavened bread.

How to Figure Pentecost

Next comes Pentecost. The word "Pentecost" is a Greek word, used in the New Testament, but not in the Old. It signifies "fiftieth (day)." In the Old Testament this feast is called "Feast of Firstfruits," and "Feast of Weeks."

Notice the properly translated plain instruction beginning Leviticus 23: 15: "And ye shall count unto you from [on, or beginning with] 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 " And that fiftieth day is Pentecost!

"And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations" (verse 21). All other holy days or festivals come on definite days of definite months. But this one annual Sabbath must be determined by counting. It is very simple and plain.

It is of very grave importance that we figure the right day. This day, and this only, is made holy by the Eternal Creator. Suppose at the same time the Church of God was founded, the apostles had miscounted, And "when the day of Pentecost was fully come" (Acts 2.1) they, instead of being all with one accord in one place were in discord, some having observed the day preceding, and some waiting until the following day!

The Pharisees, who gained complete control of Jewish religious observances shortly after the middle of the first century A.D., figured (incorrectly -- that is, from the wrong starting point) beginning with the day after the first annual Sabbath. Before that time, however, the high priests of the family Boethus, who were Sadducees, had been in control of matters concerning the festivals in Jerusalem. The Boethusians always counted beginning with the morrow after the weekly Sabbath, the day we call Saturday, which fell within the days of unleavened bread. This historical information has been preserved for us in the Mishna. which was set in writing about A.D. 200: The Boethusians say: "The cutting of the sheaf does not take place at the end of the day of the feast [the first of the seven days of unleavened bread], but only at the end of the next regular Sabbath" (Menahoth, 10,3).

This practice had been handed down among the priests from generation to generation. And their method of counting was done as long as they remained in control of the Temple and its rituals. Samaritans and Karaites (Jewish sect dating from the eighth century A.D.) have also continued to count from the weekly Sabbath, the seventh day of the week.

On a Sunday

Starting then to count from the offering of the wave sheaf, with that Sunday as day number one, we will always come out on another Sunday -- but NOT always on the same day of the month. It is something which must be "counted" each and every year. Neither in the Hebrew (or biblical) calendar, nor in the Roman calendar which is commonly used today, can the day of Pentecost ever become fixed on a set day of the month.

Quoting again from the Mishna, and speaking about the traditional practice which had been followed in

Jerusalem before the Pharisees took complete control, "[The Boethusians say:] Pentecost always falls on the day after the Sabbath" (Chagigah, 2, 4).

This makes very clear the meaning of the last part of Leviticus 23: 15 and the beginning of verse 16 "seven Sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days."

Deuteronomy 16:9

A second and perhaps for some a simpler instruction for counting to Pentecost is found in Deuteronomy 16:9-10: "Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the com. And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks [Pentecost] "

This means of counting is also referred to in Numbers 28:26: "Also in the day of the firstfruits [Pentecost], when ye bring a new meat offering unto the Lord, after your weeks be out, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work." Because seven weeks were counted, the festival of Pentecost was also known as the "feast of weeks" (Deut. 16: 10).

Meaning of Pentecost

Passover symbolized Christ's sacrifice for the remission of our sins, and the days of unleavened bread the putting away of sin. Pentecost pictures the first part of the spiritual harvest -- the calling out of the Church -- the called-out ones -- which, for the New Testament dispensation, began on Sunday -- Pentecost. On that day the Holy Spirit came to dwell within flesh, as prophesied by Joel.

On the fiftieth day (Pentecost) in Old Testament times, two "wave loaves" (Lev. 23: 17,20) were brought out of the habitations of the congregation as the firstfruits unto the Lord. Just so the New Testament Church was gathered out of this world as the firstfruits of His salvation, in fulfillment of the meaning of the wave loaves.

We have all, if we have been converted, become a part of that New Testament Church. We have become part of what was symbolized by those wave loaves. And just as the wave sheaf was lifted up into the air and waved, symbolizing Christ's trip to heaven and return, so the wave loaves were lifted up and waved, symbolizing that we too shall for a moment leave this solid earth when we ascend to meet Him in the air (I Thess. 4: 16-17) before we return with Him to stand on the Mount of Olives as He begins His millennial rule (Acts 1:11; Zech. 14:3-4).

Most Not Now Called

God has not cast away His people, Israel. But He blinded them for a temporary period of time so that through their fall, salvation came to the Gentiles, who, through Christ, are individually grafted in, or spiritually adopted into, the family of Israel (Rom. 11).

This is the dispensation when God is calling a people for His name to be kings and priests, reigning with Christ in the Kingdom during the thousand years (Rev. 5: 10).

"After this" -- after this dispensation of taking out of the Gentiles a people for His name -- "I will return," promises the Eternal. What for? "And will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I [Christ, not men] will set it up."

Why? "That the residue of men might seek after the Lord" (Acts 15: 14-17 -- study this again!). During this present Church age, the descendants of ancient Judah and Israel are blinded. After this, Christ will return, and then the rest of men -- blinded Israel, and Gentiles alike, will seek after the Lord when Satan is chained and Christ reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords! Those of the firstfruits of His salvation, made immortal, will then reign with Him as kings and priests building a new civilization.

Now, in this dispensation, Israel has not believed, and the tabernacle of David is fallen down (Rom. 11: 31-32), that, through the mercy of the Gentiles and the small "elect" in Israel, picked out in this age, acting as kings and priests with Christ, they, also, then, may obtain mercy! How wonderful is God's great plan of redemption, when we understand it, as we see it pictured in these annual holy days! ☞

