

The Day of Pentecost

There are three subheads in this lesson, so you can use it as three shorter lessons if you prefer. The referenced scriptures support the text and you may like to read a selection of these with your children.

In these Holy Day Lessons we have been learning that God has a plan for mankind - He wants EVERYONE to have the chance to live forever in His Kingdom and be part of His "Family"!¹ The Holy Days teach us about this plan and how it will come true.

The first Holy Days - or Feasts - that we celebrate every year are the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:4-8). Passover reminds us that Jesus died for us. He died so that our sins can be forgiven² and we can have the chance to live forever as God's sons and daughters.

The Days of Unleavened Bread remind us that because of what Jesus did for us, we can now be "unleavened" - or without sin in God's eyes. And that's why we eat unleavened bread during those days. Eating bread that isn't "puffed up" reminds us that we have to be "without sin" to be part of God's Family! It reminds us that we need to stop doing the wrong things and make sure that we always do what God wants.

This leads us to the next Holy Day, Pentecost, which shows us HOW we can do the things God wants us to, and teaches us more about His Plan.

Pentecost in the New Testament

The good news of the Bible is that after Jesus died for us, He didn't stay dead! He was dead for three days and three nights, and then God *resurrected* Him. This means that God made Jesus alive again - but as a Spirit Being, not a human being. And Spirit Beings live forever! This is the most wonderful thing that has ever happened - and it's an important part of God's Plan for us! You see, it's because Jesus was resurrected that we can have the chance to live again after we die (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

¹ The Bible reveals that God is creating a "family" and that His Plan is to make us part of that family. For example, 2 Corinthians 6:18; Ephesians 1:5; Hebrews 2:10-11 and 1 John 3:2 describe the "family" relationship God wants to have with us and 2 Peter 1:4 explains that God wants us to share in His divine nature.

² The second Holy Day Lesson in this series explains WHY He had to do that.

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After Jesus was resurrected, He appeared to His disciples (His followers) and they were overjoyed to see Him again! Jesus spent a lot of time with them and taught them many things about God's Kingdom (Acts 1:2-3). But after 40 days, it was time for Him to leave them and go to heaven to be with His Father.

At first the disciples were sad when they knew Jesus was going away (John 15:5-6). They had spent the last 3½ years with Him and He was their best friend and their teacher. WHO would teach them now? WHO would show them what God wanted them to do? Thankfully, God the Father and Jesus had already sorted this out - as we shall see!

Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the Day of Pentecost. Something very special was going to happen that day. They were going to receive the gift of God's Holy Spirit! (Acts 1:4-5). It would dwell in them and give them power (John 14:16-17; Acts 1:8). It would be their friend and teacher. It would show them what God wanted them to do and help them live God's Way of Life (John 14:26). And because the disciples would now have God's Spirit IN them, Jesus would always be there with them in Spirit - even if He wasn't there in person! (1 John 4:13; John 14: 18-20; Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 13:5-6). When the disciples realised this they weren't sad when Jesus left to be with His Father. They were happy (Luke 24:50-53).

The Arrival of the Holy Spirit

The disciples followed Jesus' instructions and waited in Jerusalem until Pentecost. And what a day that turned out to be! Let's see what happened:

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a noise came from heaven. It sounded like a strong wind blowing. This noise filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw something that looked like flames of fire. The flames were separated and stood over each person there. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they began to speak different languages. The Holy Spirit was giving them the power to speak these languages (Acts 2:1-4, International Children's Bible, New Century Version used throughout).

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Many other people had gathered in Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Pentecost that day. The people who had gathered there were all Jews³ or people who had become Jews (Proselytes). They came from different countries and spoke different languages. When they heard the disciples speaking about the great things that God had done, they were amazed! That's because they could understand what the disciples were saying in their own languages! It was a miracle!⁴ But it was also confusing because they didn't know what it meant. How could these men suddenly speak in different languages? It just wasn't possible! So some of the people started to make fun of the disciples and said they were drunk! But Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, set them straight. He stood up and said in a loud voice:

My fellow Jews, and all of you who are in Jerusalem, listen to me. Pay attention to what I have to say. These men are not drunk, as you think: it is only nine o'clock in the morning! But Joel the prophet wrote about what is happening here today: "God says: In the last days I will give my Spirit freely to all kinds of people...then anyone who asks the Lord for help will be saved" (Acts 2:14-17, 21, NCV; for a fuller version read verses 17-21).

And now we begin to learn a little about what the Day of Pentecost pictures in God's Plan. You see, all of the followers of Jesus so far had been Jewish. But on this Day of Pentecost, the very BEGINNING of God's Church in the New Testament, God showed that salvation (the opportunity to have our sins forgiven and live forever in God's Family) wasn't just for the Jews! It was for EVERYONE (see Acts 2:21; Acts 28:28 and Titus 2:11).

God's Plan has always been that one day EVERYONE will have the chance to receive His Holy Spirit and become part of His Family.⁵ This is something that the prophets wrote about in the Old Testament (see for

³ The Jews were God's people, some of the descendants of Abraham, God's friend in the Old Testament.

⁴ What happened on that Pentecost and the fact that the disciples were able to speak in foreign languages when they received God's Spirit was a special miracle that God allowed for that particular Day of Pentecost. This isn't what usually happens when people receive the Holy Spirit!

⁵ Only those people who have God's Spirit in them will be resurrected to live forever (Romans 8:8-11) The Holy Spirit is our guarantee of eternal life! (Ephesians 1:13-14).

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example, Joel 2:28-32; Isaiah 49:6). This plan is also revealed in the names that are used for the Day of Pentecost in the Old Testament.

Old Testament Names Reveal God's Plan

One of the names used for Pentecost in the Old Testament is the *Feast of Weeks*. From the Feast of Weeks we learn that we have to COUNT to find out WHEN we should celebrate Pentecost (see Deuteronomy 16:9-10; Leviticus 23:15-16). God tells us exactly WHEN we should keep the other Holy Days, but to find out when Pentecost is we need to count 50 days from the day AFTER the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. When we do that we discover that Pentecost is always on a Sunday!

On that day after the Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread, the Israelites had to make a wave sheaf offering (Leviticus 23:9-12). This was an offering of the first grain or fruit (called the firstfruits) from the barley harvest. This offering looked forward to - or was a picture of - Jesus Christ, who God calls the firstfruits! He was called the firstfruits because He was the first person to be resurrected to eternal life (to live forever) after He died (1 Corinthians 15:20).

The Day of Pentecost is also called the *day of the firstfruits*⁶ in the Old Testament (Numbers 28:26). From this we learn that Jesus is not the only firstfruit. There are more! Jesus is the first of the firstfruits, but everyone who obeys God and has God's Spirit in them is also a firstfruit (2 Thessalonians 2:13; Revelation 14:4-5). The Bible tells us that the firstfruits will be resurrected so they can live forever when Jesus returns to rule this earth (1 Corinthians 15:20,23).

Pentecost was called the day of the firstfruits because it fell at the time of the smaller, early harvest. During this harvest, the farmers gathered in the first crops, which were called the firstfruits! This teaches us something else about God's Plan - He isn't calling the whole world to

⁶ "Firstfruits" with an "s" on the end of it is a plural word - meaning more than one.

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understand His truth now! God is only calling a few people⁷ at this time - people He calls the "firstfruits" (see 1 Corinthians 16:15, NKJ; James 1:18).

The last name used for Pentecost in the Old Testament is the *Feast of Harvest (or Ingathering)*. You can read about this in **Exodus 23:16**. This verse reminds us that there were two harvests in the year; the smaller one in the spring (just before Pentecost) when the first crops or firstfruits were harvested - and a larger one in the fall (just before the Feast of Tabernacles) when the rest of the crops were harvested. In God's Plan for mankind there are also two harvests - two SPIRITUAL harvests!⁸ These harvests picture the time when God's Plan comes true and people are resurrected to become part of God's very own Family.

The first harvest happens when Jesus Christ returns to this earth. That's when the firstfruits (God's people throughout the ages) are resurrected and become part of God's Family.⁹ The second harvest happens during and after the Millennium (pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day).¹⁰ That's when EVERYONE else who has ever lived will have their chance to become part of God's Family.

The Feast of Pentecost teaches us many things about God's Plan and when and how we will become part of God's Family. What a WONDERFUL day it will be when it all comes true!

⁷ Acts 2:39; 2 Timothy 1:9 and Hebrews 3:1 are some of the scriptures that show us that God CALLS us to be His people and understand His truth. In Luke 12:32, Christ describes these people - His Church - as a SMALL flock.

⁸ Exodus 23:14-16 reveals a connection between the harvests and the Holy Days. Luke 10:2; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; John 12:48; and Revelation 14:14-15 shows a connection between these physical harvests and a future "spiritual" harvest to come. See the 13+ version of this lesson or "The Day of Pentecost" lesson for more information about this.

⁹ You can find information about this in "The Holy Days and God's Plan" and "The Feast of Trumpets" Holy Day lessons.

¹⁰ You can find information about this in "The Holy Days and God's Plan" and "The Last Great Day" Holy Day lessons.