

The Day of Pentecost

Read through this lesson with your parents (in stages if you prefer), looking up as many of the referenced scriptures as you can. Reading them in your own Bible will enable you to prove this material for yourself.

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 picture the steps that have to take place for it to be accomplished.

The first Feasts that we celebrate every year are the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread (**Leviticus 23:4-8**). The Passover reminds us that Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins so that we can have the chance to live forever as God's sons and daughters.² This is the first step in God's Plan and it's something that had to happen for God's Plan to be fulfilled. "Salvation" is only possible through Jesus Christ and what He did for us! (**Acts 4:12**).

The Days of Unleavened Bread remind us that because of Jesus' sacrifice our sins can be forgiven and we can be "cleansed" of sin (**1 John 1:7**). God then considers us as "unleavened" or without sin (**1 Corinthians 5:7**) - something we have to be if we want to be in God's Kingdom and part of His Family (**1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Revelation 21:7-8**). Eating unleavened bread during this Feast reminds us that we need to stop sinning and make sure that we always do what God wants!

We find out what God wants us to do in the Bible. It is full of instruction explaining HOW to live a godly life, based on the Ten Commandments (**Exodus 20:1-17**). And this leads us nicely to the next Holy Day and the next step in God's Plan, the Day of Pentecost - the day on which, according to Jewish tradition, God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses!

I'm sure you all realise by now that the Ten Commandments were not just for the Israelites. They are God's Law for ALL mankind, for ALL time, everywhere! And the Day of Pentecost shows us HOW we can obey these Commandments in the way God wants us to!

You can read **Leviticus 23:9-22** to discover how the Day of Pentecost was kept in the Old Testament, but to find out what part Pentecost plays in God's plan of salvation we need to start in the New Testament.

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 Peter 1:4 explains that God wants us to share in His divine nature and 2 Corinthians 6:18; Ephesians 1:5; Hebrews 2:10-11 and 1 John 3:2 describe the "family" relationship that He wants to have with us.

² You can find more information about why He had to die for us in the "Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread" lesson in this series.

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Pentecost in the New Testament

The good news of the Bible is that three days and three nights after Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins, God resurrected Him. This is the most wonderful thing that has ever happened in the history of mankind! And the Bible tells us that it is because Jesus was resurrected after His death that we can have the chance to live again after we die (1 Corinthians 15:20-22). Because Jesus lives forever, we can live forever too! (John 14:19). If Jesus had not been resurrected, there would be no hope for us (1 Corinthians 15:12-14). God's Plan would have failed and there would be no Millennium and no Kingdom! But God's Plan will NEVER fail! And what He wants WILL come to pass! That's why God sent Jesus to this earth. He came to die for us and be resurrected (raised to life), so that EVERYONE can have the chance to live forever (John 3:16-17; Romans 5:8-10; Romans 6:23).

After Jesus was resurrected, He appeared to His disciples and they were overjoyed to see Him again! He spent 40 days with them and during this time He taught them about God's Kingdom (Acts 1:2-3). But all too soon the day came for Him to go to heaven to be with His Father.

The disciples were sad when they realised that they wouldn't see Jesus again until He returned to set up God's Kingdom on this earth (John 15:5-6). After all, they had spent 3½ years living and working with Him - and He was their best friend and their teacher. *Who* was going to teach them now? *Who* would comfort them? *Who* would show them what God wanted them to do? Thankfully, God the Father and Jesus had already sorted this out!

Jesus reminded His disciples of this and told them 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, just as God had promised! (Acts 1:4-5). And the *Holy Spirit* would be their friend and teacher. It would show them what God wanted them to do (John 14:16-17, 26; John 16:13) and it would help them keep God's commandments because God's Law would now be WRITTEN on their hearts and minds! (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 10:15-17). The Holy Spirit would *empower* them (Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 1:7) and help them become like Jesus in character. And because the disciples would now have God's Spirit IN them, Jesus would always be there with them in Spirit, even though He was no longer there in person (1 John 4:13; John 14:18-20; Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 13:5-6). When the disciples realised this, they stopped feeling sad and were able to rejoice when Jesus left to be with His Father (Luke 24:50-53).

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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, NCV).³

Many other people had also gathered in Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Pentecost. They had come from different countries and spoke different languages, but they were all Jews by birth or Proselytes (non-Jewish people who had converted to the Jewish religion). When they heard the disciples speaking about the great things that God had done, they were amazed because they could understand what the disciples were saying in their own languages. It was a miracle! 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! Some of the people marvelled at what they were hearing, but others started making fun of the disciples and said they were drunk! So Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, 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 here 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 Jews or Proselytes. 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 (Acts 2:21; Acts 28:28; Titus 2:11).

³ 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!

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The Bible tells us that it's only those people who have God's Spirit in them who will be resurrected to eternal life (Romans 8:8-11; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 4:13-14). But God's Plan has always been that one day everyone will have the chance to receive His Holy Spirit and live forever as part of His Family. This is something that the prophets wrote about in the Old Testament (see for example, Joel 2:28-32; Isaiah 49:6). And it's something that is also revealed in the names that are used for the Day of Pentecost in the Old Testament.

The Feast of Weeks

One of these names is the *Feast of Weeks*. From this name 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. This is where the name Pentecost comes from. It is the Greek word (the language the New Testament was written in) for "50th". And when we "count 50" as God instructed, 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 (firstfruits) from the barley harvest. We understand today that this looked forward to - or was a picture of - Jesus Christ, who was the "first fruit" of God to be resurrected to eternal life (to live forever) after He died (1 Corinthians 15:20).

The Day of the Firstfruits

The Day of Pentecost is also called the *day of the firstfruits* (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 is also a firstfruit (Romans 8:23; Revelation 14:4).

Pentecost was known as 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. And this teaches us something else about God's Plan - He is not calling the whole world to understand His truth at this time. God is only calling a few people⁴ - the "firstfruits" (1 Corinthians 16:15,

⁴ 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. See also Matthew 7:14, which explains that the way that leads to life is narrow and difficult - and only a few find it.

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NKJ; James 1:18) - who are being prepared now to help Jesus Christ when He returns to rule the world (1 Corinthians 15:20-23; Revelation 5:10; Revelation 20:6).

The Feast of Harvest

The final name used for Pentecost in the Old Testament is the *Feast of Harvest* or *Ingathering* (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. But these are SPIRITUAL harvests⁵ and they 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. At this time the firstfruits (God's people throughout the ages) will be resurrected to eternal life and will help Jesus rule the earth.⁶ The second harvest happens during and after the Millennium (pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day) when EVERYONE else who has ever lived will have the chance to become part of God's Family.⁷

Conclusion

The Day of Pentecost is a very special Holy Day that teaches us many things about God's Plan. It reminds us that God has given us His Holy Spirit to help us keep His commandments and live His Way of Life now - and to make it possible for us to be part of His Family in the future. It also shows us that God is only giving His Spirit to relatively few people at this time - those who are the firstfruits - people He has called to be part of His Church. But most importantly, the Day of Pentecost reveals that God wants to give His Spirit to EVERYONE in the world. And one day He WILL make it available to ALL those who choose to live His Way of Life.⁸ What a wonderful day it will be when EVERYONE in the world has had the opportunity for salvation - and God's Plan to build His Family has been finally accomplished!

⁵ 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 show a connection between these physical harvests and a future "spiritual" harvest to come.

⁶ You can find information about this in "The Holy Days and God's Plan" and "The Feast of Trumpets" Holy Day lessons.

⁷ You can find information about this in "The Holy Days and God's Plan" and "The Last Great Day" Holy Day lessons.

⁸ This is also covered in "The Holy Days and God's Plan" and "The Last Great Day" lessons in this series.