

SHAVUOT/PENTECOST

Shavuot/Pentecost – 7 weeks or on the 50th day following the Feast of First Fruits – which always occurred the day after the Sabbath following Passover.

This day we know as PENTECOST which means “50” in Greek. . . Jewish people call this same day the FEAST OF SHAVUOT – Shavuot means “weeks” in Hebrew. . . .

So – 7 weeks following the RESURRECTION OF JESUS – or ON the 50th day. . . the roads UP to Jerusalem are crowded with Jewish pilgrims. Why? Because God commanded all Jewish males to appear before HIM in Jerusalem (Jerusalem - which GOD has chosen for His name to be [II Chron. 6:6]) THREE times each year – at the Feast of Passover, at the Feast of Shavuot (which we know as Pentecost), and at the Feast of Tabernacles. And, Jewish men often traveled to Jerusalem for these feasts with their families (Luke 2:41 – Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem every year to celebrate the Passover and Jesus traveled with them at age 12).

God told the Jewish men, when they traveled to Jerusalem for the 3 feasts that they were not to appear before the Lord empty (Dt. 16:16-17), and, every man was to bring what he was able to give according to the blessing of God on his life.

God gave the children of Israel 7 feasts in all to. . .

REMEMBER what God had done in the past and to REJOICE in His power to DELIVER. . .

THANK HIM for His sustenance and provision. . .

LAY BEFORE Him a sacrifice. . .

And to ANTICIPATE the Promised One – the Messiah.

Acts 2:5 tells us that there were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost – Jews – devout men – from EVERY nation under heaven.

Jewish tradition teaches that Shavuot is the commemoration of the giving of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

Acts 2:2 – there was a powerful sound from where the disciples were gathered - “like the blowing of a violent wind. . . .”

Acts 2:6 – “When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.”

Acts 2:14-15 - “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel.”

The disciples – being Jewish – were being obedient to God’s Word. Not only should they have been in Jerusalem for Shavuot, but Jesus had told the disciples directly

before He ascended into heaven – that they were not to depart from Jerusalem – but to wait for the Promise of the Father. Jesus told them, “You shall receive POWER when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. . . .” They were to wait for the promise of the Father.

In John 14:16-17 we read that Jesus told the disciples that the Father would give them another Comforter – a Comforter Who would abide with them forever – the Spirit of Truth – Who would dwell within them.

The rushing mighty wind probably has connection with the fact that in both the Hebrew (ruwach) and Greek (pneuma) languages, the word for Spirit (as in Holy Spirit) is the same word for breath or wind. The sound from heaven is the sound of the Holy Spirit – the life giving Spirit of God - being poured out on the disciples.

And there appeared unto them tongues as of fire (Acts 2:3) that rested on each of the disciples.

Acts 1:8 - Jesus had told them that the Holy Spirit would come upon them – and they would be witnesses – they would SPEAK of Him. Jesus told them, “. . . and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

And the fire? Fire in Scripture often speaks of God’s presence.

- The Shekinah glory of God Who appeared to the children of Israel in the wilderness in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night following that first Passover. The Shekinah glory is the very presence of God.
- God appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.

You know that “fire” in the Tanakh, the Hebrew Scriptures, also speaks of purification – of purging.

In the Hebrew Scriptures we’ve seen that God showed His special pleasure with a sacrifice by kindling the fire for it Himself (Elijah). Fire from heaven came down and consumed the sacrifice. At Pentecost we have another example of God sending fire from heaven to show His pleasure and power, but this time, it descended upon LIVING sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). HE, the Holy Spirit, descended upon and permanently indwelt INDIVIDUALS – as the tongues of fire sat upon each.

And so, on this Feast of Shavuot/Feast of Pentecost the 50th day following Jesus’ resurrection – God empowered the disciples – Jewish men - to follow their destiny to bless all the nations of the world by sharing the message of REDEMPTION, DELIVERANCE through the MESSIAH JESUS.

Consider this - the power of God at PENTECOST reversed the curse of Babel.

At the Tower of Babel – when mankind wanted to make a name for himself – when man turned against God because of PRIDE - God took the gift of language which He had given man to communicate with him – and divided mankind.

At PENTECOST, God opened the way of communication so that His message of salvation could be taken to the world.

And, that message of salvation – it was always for both the Jew and the Gentile. Gen. 12:3 – and through you, Abram, all the families of the earth would be blessed.

At PENTECOST we see the door opened wider. . .to the nations. Jesus told the disciples, “You shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

We need to see that Pentecost points to past events – and this will help us understand God’s purpose in moving forward.

Pentecost points back to Mt. Sinai and the giving of the Law. Jewish tradition believes that God gave the Jewish people the Law on Shavuot.

Exodus 20 tells us that when Moses went to receive the Law, the entire nation of Israel was in fear over the smoking mountain the sounds of thunder and trumpets that accompanied the sight.

We are told that at Mount Sinai, a sound from heaven, like that of a ram’s horn or trumpet, increased in volume so that it was inescapably loud. I don’t know if it’s fair to compare the sound of the ram’s horn to “the blowing of a violent wind.” Ex. 19:16 tells us that the people who were in the camp trembled .

In Exodus 19:18 we’re told that Mt. Sinai was completely in smoke because the Lord descended upon it in FIRE and the entire mountain quaked greatly.

God’s “special effects” at Sinai grabbed the attention of the children of Israel and ETCHED the giving of the Law into their memories! They were to always REMEMBER!

AND – why were the Jewish people to count 7 weeks from the Feast of First Fruits which was the day after the Sabbath OF PASSOVER – on the 50th day following those 7 weeks? Lev. 23:15-17 (READ) Why doesn’t Scripture just give a date? Wouldn’t that be easier?

Israel was to count 50 days after PASSOVER – in order to celebrate Shavuot/Pentecost. GOD intended for them to ALWAYS REMEMBER their REDEMPTION from bondage through the BLOOD OF THE PASSOVER LAMB!

PASSOVER is always the foundation!

Let’s take a look at what happened that first Feast of Shavuot in the wilderness. You’re going to be amazed at how the OT and NT come together – how the pieces of the puzzle all fit.

Jewish tradition – NOT the Hebrew Scriptures – but Jewish traditions teaches that the Feast of Shavuot commemorates God giving the commandments – the Law - to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The Rabbis have taught this down through the centuries.

They actually base this tradition on Ex. 19:1 – which talks of the children of Israel coming to the wilderness of Sinai IN the 3rd month – ABOUT 7 WEEKS FOLLOWING PASSOVER!!! (But Ex. 19:1 does not record a specific day)

What happened at the giving of the law? We read in Ex. 32 that while Moses was communicating with the Lord and receiving God’s law – it was PARTY CITY down below!

The children of Israel were out of control down below. They were worshipping a golden calf. After they had experienced first hand the miracles of God – after their lives were spared by God – they were worshipping a golden image?

When Moses came down to the people and witnessed this perversion, he said in Ex. 32:26, “Whoever is on the Lord’s side, come to me.” The sons of Levi moved toward Moses. What did Moses instruct them to do?

Ex. 32:27, “And he said to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor’”

Moses instructed the Levites to kill their fellow Israelites!!!

Ex. 32:28, “So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day” – about 3,000 DIED that day – at the giving of the Law!!!

On the Feast of Shavuot/Pentecost – 50 days following the resurrection of Jesus – what does Acts 2:41 tell us? “About 3,000” people were given eternal life.

What an amazing contrast is taught within this one Feast.

The law is called the ministration of death in II Cor. 3:7 – because the law revealed to the children of Israel their sin. II Cor. 3:6 states that the Spirit gives life.

Let’s consider for a moment ANOTHER amazing connection between the OT and the NT. In Leviticus 23 God instructs the children of Israel to offer a NEW GRAIN offering to the Lord on the Feast of Shavuot/Pentecost. Lev. 23:17 tells us, “You shall bring from your dwellings TWO WAVE LOAVES. . . they shall be baked with LEAVEN. . .” These two loaves of bread baked with LEAVEN (symbol of sin in the Scriptures) were to be WAVED before the Lord on the Feast day.

The children of Israel waved the two loaves of bread before the Lord, expressing their dependence upon God for the harvest.

This was a celebration. This was a thanksgiving offering. What were they celebrating? They were celebrating the present harvest – they were thankful that God had provided for them. But, they were also celebrating the future harvest.

The Jewish mindset is that - as God has given us an ingathering now – as God has blessed us with a harvest now – He will bless us with a future harvest. Future harvest?

This is how the Jewish people celebrated Shavuot since God gave them this feast in Moses' day.

They were REMEMBERING Passover – counting 50 days from that DELIVERANCE of God until Shavuot.

They were CELEBRATING God's sustenance/His provision – the harvest.

They were anticipating a FUTURE HARVEST!

What is the future harvest? WHO is the future harvest?

Jew and Gentile – ONE NEW MAN – in the body of the Messiah – in the CHURCH – that was born on this Feast of Shavuot/Pentecost!!! (Eph. 3:6)

ONE NEW MAN – Jew and Gentile – sinners (leaven is a symbol of sin) saved by GOD'S GRACE!

AND – TODAY – in synagogues - on the Feast of Shavuot – the Book of Ruth is read. What does the Book of Ruth teach? The Book of Ruth tells us of God's plan of redemption for both Jew and Gentile.

The Feast of Pentecost speaks to the promise of eternal life – to both Jew and Gentile – baptized into the body of the Messiah – by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Hine ma tov umin ayim shevit achim gum ya chad - Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity (Psalm 133:1)

I'm praying that we can CELEBRATE in HIM today – and FOREVER!