

# The History and Truth About Pentecost!

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**Good News, May 1952** What is the REAL ORIGIN of Pentecost? Where did Catholics, Lutherans and others get the custom of observing "Pentecost Sunday" each year? Does God command us to observe Pentecost?

IT IS AN almost universal belief that the New Testament Church was founded on Sunday. Probably each of us has heard from childhood, too, that the coming of the Holy Spirit originated the day of Pentecost.

Have you really investigated the Bible and history to see if these doctrines really came from Scripture?

Did the New Testament Church really begin on Sunday? What does the Bible say about the origin of Pentecost?

Here for the first time are the startling facts which prove that the New Testament Church was NOT founded on Sunday, that Pentecost did NOT originate when the Holy Spirit came into the disciples, that the day of Pentecost did NOT occur fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus.

In this article you will learn that the inspired true church, under the guidance of the apostles, observed the correct day of Pentecost annually; and how the apostate universal — church thought to CHANGE THE DAY OF PENTECOST which most Protestants have totally forgotten.

Yes, I know you haven't heard the truth about Pentecost from the average pulpit, but it's time for you to get the chance to learn the truth which has been hidden from you for centuries. So let's understand the real meaning of Pentecost which is part of the faith once delivered to the saints.

## Pentecost Centuries Before A.D. 31

In writing the book of Acts, Luke gives us this significant statement: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they (the disciples) were all with one accord in one place." Notice that in this first verse of Acts 2, the day of Pentecost WAS ALREADY FULLY COME and the disciples WERE in one accord BEFORE the Holy Spirit descended into them that day.

This account proves that Pentecost existed BEFORE the Holy Spirit came on that day in A.D. 31. Also notice that there were thousands of devout Jews gathered together in Jerusalem for this day. (Acts 2:5-12) These Jews did not come to receive the Holy Spirit. They were unconverted, but devout men, who were not as yet the disciples of Jesus and who did not yet know the way of salvation. They had to ask Peter, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)

Now, WHY were all these people gathered together on this day!

To understand, we must know the meaning of the word Pentecost. It is from a Greek word and means "count fifty." All scholars and Bible students know that Pentecost — count fifty — is merely the Greek name for one of the annual holy days God revealed to the children of Israel. Peloubet's Bible Dictionary says: "Pentecost, that is, the fiftieth day... or Harvest Feast, or Feast of Weeks." It was also called the Festival of First Fruits and was appointed each year by counting fifty days from the day the wave sheaf was offered. (Lev. 23:11, 15)

So the origin of Pentecost was not at the coming of the Holy Spirit in A.D. 31, but over fifteen hundred years before that time! It was to celebrate this festive day, that devout Jews from many lands, as well as the disciples of Jesus, had assembled at Jerusalem.

Instead of abolishing the day of Pentecost, or feast of first fruits, or His death, as you have been falsely told by many churches, Christ told His disciples to be in Jerusalem that day so that they might receive the Holy Spirit, the divine power of God. (Acts 1:4) God honored His day of first fruits (Ex. 23:16; Deut. 16:10) or Pentecost, by giving the first fruits of His Spirit to those that obey Him. (Acts 5:32)

We shall soon see the special reason why God sent the Spirit this day and also the special meaning of the day of Pentecost FOR US TODAY!

## Pentecost in the New Testament Church

When originally given by God, the day of Pentecost was commanded to be observed forever. (Lev. 23:21) Jesus never abolished Pentecost — nor any of the other annual Holy Days. The day of Pentecost DID OCCUR after Christ death that year as Luke records.

None of these annual festivals had burnt offerings or sacrifices on them when originally instituted. (Jeremiah 7:22,23) The sacrifices were added to these days and to every day of the year (Exodus 29:38) as a part of the service of the Levitical priesthood.

When the sacrifices and offerings were consummated in the death of Christ once for all, these usual offerings ceased to be made for conscience (Heb. 9:13, 14) by those who were converted and who believed in Christ. But the command that Pentecost be observed forever as a Sabbath and convocation still remained. (Lev. 23:21) That is why the apostles and disciples were gathered together with all the devout Jews on this occasion. If the disciples had not gathered on this day which was sacred to God, they would not have been there to receive the gift of God, His Spirit.

Even after the Holy Spirit came, Pentecost did not cease. Instead of being a memorial of the material harvest of the first fruit of the land alone, Pentecost, or the Festival of Harvest or First Fruits, had now a greater meaning. It became a memorial also of the first fruits of the Holy Spirit which makes possible the first harvest of human beings for the Kingdom of God.

Not only did the Jewish Christians know this, but also Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, understood that this annual Sabbath was still commanded by God for His spiritual church. He "determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost." (Acts 20: 16)

Paul, the teacher of the Gentiles, wanted to keep Pentecost thirty years after the death of Christ!

At another time Paul spent the day of Pentecost in Ephesus, a Gentile city. (1 Cor. 16:8) Yes, Pentecost, together with the other annual festivals, was observed by all those of the true original church which was under divine instruction from the apostles. (Acts 18:21; 12:3; 20:6; 27:3; 1 Cor. 5:8; 11:20-34) Gentiles received the praise of Paul for following the churches of God in Judaea — the Jewish brethren. (1 Thess. 2:14)

### **Pentecost Centuries After A.D. 31**

With the death of the apostles, a great change occurred, which most of you have never been told about. A terrible apostacy set in among the churches of God. Paul warned the Ephesians with whom he observed Pentecost, as we have already seen, that "after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw disciples after them." (Acts 20:29, 30) "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Tim. 4:3)

Here is the place Paul warned Christians about the very fables that most of you have been taught since childhood by an apostate Christianity.

By the time Jude wrote his epistle, the fables of which Paul warned had already started. He exhorts: "YOU should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares." (Jude 3, 4) There were both Jewish and Gentile deceivers as we shall see.

Almost every church history will contain the information proving that many Christians of Jewish parentage returned to the tradition of the elders. (Titus 1:10) This tradition was not the true Old Testament practice, but the fables and errors of the uninspired Jewish teachers who made the law of God of no effect (Mark 7:13) Because of tradition, the Jews kept the passover a day late, as they do to this day. (John 18:28) The Jews ALTERED the day on which Pentecost should fall, making it always the sixth day of the third month of the sacred calendar. Later they also altered Pentecost into two days. The Jewish Encyclopedia gives all the information on the beginnings of these "feasts of the Jews" as the apostle John spoke of them.

Since the Jews attempted to pervert the days of God by their traditions, WHAT ABOUT THE GENTILES? Did they adhere to the truth of the Bible, or did they corrupt the teachings of the apostles and change the day of Pentecost, too?

Remember, the Gentile Christians in the original inspired church observed Pentecost as we have seen. Therefore, we will naturally expect some PROOF IN LATER HISTORY that the church either kept this day pure or changed it.

If the Gentiles NEVER kept this day, as you have so often heard from the pulpits of the land, then we should NOT expect to find any record of Gentile churches observing a "Pentecost." What are the facts?

### **How Pentecost Was Changed**

The following extracts from histories obtainable at most libraries PROVE THAT THE EARLIEST GENTILE CHURCHES DID KEEP PENTECOST! These records speak of keeping Pentecost — a Pentecost that was changed in the immediate years that followed the death of the last apostles. This Pentecost, so-called, had become corrupted with SUN WORSHIP. It always fell on Sunday, the same as the pagan Easter substituted for the passover. (For the truth about Easter, write for Mr. Armstrong's free booklet "Easter Is Pagan.")

Here is a plain statement of Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible, article "Pentecost":

"In the Christian Church the importance of Pentecost was continued and its significance emphasized by the outpouring of the Spirit on that day (Acts 2). The day of the week on that occasion is TRADITIONALLY represented as Sunday... Wieseler (Chron. d. Apostl. Zeitalter, p. 20) plausibly suggests that the festival was fixed on Sunday by the later Western Church to correspond with Easter.

"Among the early Jewish Christians observance of the Hebrew feasts continued, doubtless with fresh significance derived from the new revelation." Let's notice these statements. Pentecost was continued in the early true Christian Church. It is TRADITION, not Revelation, that places Pentecost on Sunday according to Wieseler. Later in this article we shall prove from the Bible that Pentecost can NEVER occur on Sunday!

Now let us also take note of the Catholic Encyclopedia,

"Whitsunday, or Pentecost, a feast of the universal Church which commemorates the Descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, fifty days after the Resurrection of Christ, on the ancient Jewish festival called the "feast of weeks" or Pentecost... Whitsunday, as a Christian feast, dates back to the first century, although there is no evidence that it was observed, as there is in the case of Easter; the passage in I Corinthians (16:8) probably refers to the Jewish feast."

Here is one of the plainest admissions that the Pentecost observed by Gentile converts, as the Bible records in I Corinthians 16:8, was NOT THE SAME as the "Christian" feast which later developed in the universal church. It was the Biblical Pentecost incorrectly named "Jewish" because most authors don't know that Jewish tradition has altered and rejected the true Bible Pentecost.

Another fact we glean from this statement is that there is NO RECORD OUTSIDE THE BIBLE that Gentiles continued to observe the true day. But the FACT that there are records of a false day corroborates the Bible by indicating that the Gentiles originally kept the true, but after the death of the apostles, it was perverted. If no day had been observed originally, there would have been no Pentecost to alter.

Before we proceed further, we want to catch the erroneous statement that Pentecost occurred fifty days after the resurrection. We shall later notice exactly how many days later Pentecost really did occur.

### **Early Confusion Among Catholics About Pentecost**

As usual, with the introduction of error wholesale, there is always a period of adjustment until the error is finally established. We notice just such a situation in early Catholic records before their Pentecost or Whitsunday was firmly established. Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church, page 1157, 1158, says:

"The next great festival was that of Pentecost, which is taken in a double sense among the ancients. For sometimes it signifies the whole space of fifty days between Easter and Whitsuntide ... In the former acceptation Tertullian speaks of it, when he tells the Christians...

That Pentecost was a large space of time APPOINTED BY THE CHURCH for administering of baptism ... And hence it became a standing rule over the whole church to read the Acts in these fifty days of Pentecost, as appears from many other places of Chrysostom, Austin, Cassian, and the fourth council of Toledo."

In his *On Fasting*, Chapter XIV, Tertullian says this: "Our solemnities too will be bound to be new: else, if the apostle has erased all devotion absolutely ... why do we celebrate the passover by an annual rotation in the first month? Why in the fifty ensuing days do we spend our time in all exultation?" (From *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 4, pp. 111-112.) Obviously, Tertullian recognized that the Apostle Paul did NOT abolish all these days.

At other times, Pentecost was used to mean the specific day that ended the season of fifty days, during which "the newly-baptized wore their white and shining garments" — hence, Whitsunday. At one time the confusion over the day of Pentecost led the Council of Elvira, Spain, in 305 A.D., to condemn the tendency to celebrate it forty days after Easter.

The reason for the preservation of passover and Pentecost to a great extent in the apostatizing church was the meaning these two annual holy days originally possessed. One pictured the death of Christ, the other the coming of the Spirit of God to ripen the FIRST HARVEST of human beings.

The fact that the Jews nationally speaking rejected Christ, our passover, and spurned the Holy Spirit, made the false universal church cling to the name of the festivals commemorating these two portions in God's great plan.

Since, however, the apostates of the universal church were almost wholly Gentiles, these men gradually developed their own customs to distinguish themselves from the Jews, and yet to retain the Christian or Jewish names. Both the Passover and Pentecost were TRANSFERRED GRADUALLY TO SUNDAY. And the name Passover was at last dropped for Easter. Even Pentecost has been greatly obscured by the name Whitsunday. And along with the perversion of these two days, the apostate church LOST ALL REMAINING KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUE PLAN OF GOD which these days picture.

The Reformation failed to restore the Holy Days of God. All the multiplicity of churches today either follow the pagan custom of observing Pentecost on Sunday or else NEGLECT the day altogether. The time has come for us to get back to the faith ONCE DELIVERED to the saints. Let's begin to keep holy, the days God made holy. It is time we quit this Babylon of religious confusion and human tradition and follow the paths of the saints through all ages who have remained faithful to the truth of God.

## **What Pentecost Means in the Plan of God**

To keep us in mind that this present age is only the preliminary or first harvest of human beings, God took the yearly material harvest of Palestine as the picture of the spiritual harvest. As you probably have already learned, there are two harvest seasons in the Promised Land. The first small harvest is produced by an early rain, the second great harvest by a later rain.

Pentecost was ordained forever at the end of the spring harvest season, so that we might remember year by year and never forget, that this present church age is not the great day of Salvation for all the world, but the day of salvation for only the few who are called out of this present evil civilization and given the Spirit of God. In I Corinthians 1:26 we find that "not many" of the great in this world are called. Everywhere, the Christians are spoken of as called out from the world. Not all the world is being called today. It is the "elect" or chosen who are called in Israel today; the rest are blinded so that God could IN THE FUTURE have mercy upon ALL. (Romans 11:7, 32)

The "harvesting" of human beings who are called in this church age to be heirs of the Kingdom of God is explained in Leviticus 23 beginning verse 9. Here the material harvest of grain was originally used as a type of the spiritual harvest.

The Israelites were not permitted to harvest their grain until the day the wave, sheaf was offered. (Lev. 23:10, II; Deut. 16:7) This ritual, given to the Levitical priesthood to perform and therefore not practiced today, pictured the resurrected Christ being accepted by the Father as the very first human being to be born of God.

But notice this, the wave sheaf was merely the first part of the first harvest. It was a sheaf

of the firstfruits of the harvest. (Verse 10) Thus Christ is the "firstfruits of them that slept." (1 Cor. 15:20) And Christians who are called in this age are also said to be the firstfruits. (James 1:18; Romans 8:23) Christ is the first of the firstfruits of God's harvest of human beings. Pentecost pictures, then, the coming of the Holy Spirit and the ripening of the rest of the firstfruits for harvesting at the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:23). This church age is merely the first harvest.

The great final "fall" harvest after Christ returns will be explained in future articles. Also write for our free booklet "Predestination" which will explain when the great day of salvation will really come for all mankind.

### **Was the New Testament Church Founded on Sunday?**

Is the Catholic Church correct in establishing the day of Pentecost on Sunday? Or are the Jews right in permitting Pentecost to fall on almost any day of the week, but always on a fixed day of the month?

The truth is that neither is right! Pentecost can never fall on a Sunday, and neither does Pentecost occur on a specific day of the month. Therefore the New Testament Church was not founded on Sunday and Pentecost did not occur fifty days after the resurrection. Let's prove these facts.

First, the day of Pentecost is the ONLY annual Sabbath that must be counted year by year. THEREFORE, THE JEWS ARE WRONG IN PLACING, IT ON A FIXED DAY OF THE MONTH. The Jewish date for Pentecost is incorrect because it does NOT need to be counted each year. If the Jews were right, Moses would have said that Pentecost shall be observed on the sixth day of Sivan.

The Jewish error developed, as we have seen, when the Pharisees used the day after an annual sabbath instead of "THE SABBATH" — the WEEKLY sabbath — as Moses said. (Lev. 23:15) By using the morrow after the weekly sabbath which comes during the days of unleavened bread, the day of Pentecost will always fall on a certain day of the week, but the day of the month will have to be counted because the weekly sabbath does not always fall on the same day of the month each year.

Now let us consider the customary view that Pentecost must occur on Sunday — a paganized view which crept into the church from sun-worship and which Protestants and Catholics have inherited alike.

The cause for placing Pentecost on Sunday is based on the error of counting "Saturdays" instead of weeks. Pentecost is not the feast of "Saturdays" but the feast of weeks. (Exodus 34:22). Moses says to count seven full WEEKS (Deut. 16:7) and the day after that is Pentecost. This feast is not in the end of the seventh week, but "after your weeks be out," the fiftieth day (Num. 28:26).