



Overview of Pentecost

by Randall Ricker

The title of this sermon is "Overview of Pentecost." During this overview, we will look at when Pentecost should be celebrated, and we will look at Pentecost as when God's Holy Spirit was first given to the Church. I think most people know that. We will get into a lesser-known meaning of Pentecost having to do with something called the first fruits.

Countdown to Pentecost

First, let's talk about when to observe Pentecost. In Leviticus chapter 23, after we are given the dates of Passover and days of unleavened bread, we read this.

Leviticus 23:9-11

9 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 10 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring **a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest** to the priest. 11 He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; **on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.**

There are instructions about something called the wave sheaf offering. Let's read verse 10 again:

Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring **a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest** to the priest.

I read verse 10 again because it is very important for verse 14, which says "**You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God;** it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings."

It says not to eat bread or grain until the day that they brought the wave sheaf offering. We will see a little bit later that the Israelites obeyed that when they were led by Joshua as they entered the promised land.

Leviticus 23:15-17

15 And you shall **count** for yourselves **from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering;** seven Sabbaths shall be completed. 16 **Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath;** then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. 17 You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the **firstfruits** to the LORD.

The firstfruits is this holy day. This what we are talking about, also called Pentecost in the New Testament. To determine the day that we are going to have Pentecost, we have to count from the day after a Sabbath. It is a Sunday. It is not an established day of the month like the other holy days you have in the Hebrew calendar. You have Passover on the 14th day of the first month. You have the First Day of Unleavened Bread the 15th day. The Last Day of Unleavened Bread becomes the 21st day. The Feast of Trumpets is the first day of the 7th month. The Day of Atonement is the 10th day of the 7th month. The Feast of Tabernacles is the 15th day of the 7th month, and the Last Great Day comes out to be the 22nd day of the of the 7th month.

The day of Pentecost is more complicated than that. It has to be counted, and it is going to be from the day after a Sabbath, in other words, a Sunday. What Sabbath are we talking about here? It cannot be an annual Sabbath like the First or Last Day of Unleavened Bread, because if that was true, it would be on a specific day of the month every year. You would not have to do any counting. You know it must be a weekly Sabbath, but then the question becomes which weekly Sabbath? You have the weekly

Sabbath. Then you have the day after the Sabbath when the wave sheaf offering is offered. Add 50 days to that for Pentecost.

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Sabbath |
|-----------|-----------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|-----------|
| | | | | | | A Sabbath |
| Wavesheaf | | | | | | |
| ----- | + 50 days | | | | | |
| Pentecost | | | | | | |

But where are we starting? The Bible tells us. We have to look at the example of Joshua and the Israelites when they came into the promised land. Remember they were wandering for 40 years in the desert. Then they came to the promised land. They crossed the Jordan River.

Joshua 5:10-11

10 Now the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. 11 And **they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover**, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the



very same day.

The day after the Passover, the First Day of Unleavened Bread, they ate the produce of the land. They must have offered a wave sheaf offering on that day, or they should not have eaten the produce of the land. They had to offer that wave sheaf offering before they could eat the produce. They were offering the wave sheaf and eating the produce on an annual Sabbath, the 15th day of the first month, which is the First Day of Unleavened Bread. They were not doing it on the day after an annual Sabbath, but on the day after the Passover.

First Month c.1400 BC

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Sabbath |
|---|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|------------------------------|
| | | | | | | 14 th Passover |
| 15 th First Day of Unleavened Bread. Wavesheaf, then they ate. | | | | | | |

+ 50 days

| | | | | | | |
|------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Pentecost | | | | | | |
|------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|

We are counting from the day after a weekly Sabbath, that is a Sunday. For Joshua the wave sheaf was on the Sunday after Passover. Passover the 14th had to be on a Saturday for this to work. The wave sheaf offering was on a Sunday, the First Day of Unleavened Bread. Then you count 50 days, and you come to Pentecost on a Sunday. Take the Sunday after Passover plus 50 days, and you end up with Pentecost on a Sunday. That is how you count Pentecost.

The Church began on Pentecost.

I think a lot of people know that the Church began on the Pentecost after Jesus Christ's resurrection.

Acts 2:1-4

1 When the Day of **Pentecost** had fully come, they were all with one accord in one

place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And **they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The Church was the first big group being given God's Holy Spirit. There were 120 people, although as we read later, there were many more on that day. They were speaking with other tongues, meaning other languages. The purpose of that, if we were to read a little bit further in Acts chapter 2, is that there were people in Jerusalem for the festival of Pentecost, the firstfruits as it is also known. People from all over the world were there. The 120 were speaking, and people were hearing them in their own languages. The miracle in this case was more in the hearing than the speaking. Peter had given an inspired sermon, and this is part of it.

Acts 2:38

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

One hundred and twenty had received the Holy Spirit already, and Peter spoke to the rest of the crowd.

Acts 2:39, 41-43

39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day **about three thousand souls were added to them**. 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

The truth about the Holy Spirit

As the Church began on Pentecost, they were given God's Holy Spirit. Let's understand the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ, in His instructions to His disciples after that last Passover meal with them and before He was crucified, said this:

John 16:13

However, when He [1565 that one (or thing)], **the Spirit** of truth, has come, He **will guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

People might think "he," the Holy Spirit, is a person. Here "he" is #1565 in the Strong's Concordance. We use a book called the Strong's Concordance which helps us to

understand deeper meanings of words. If something appears to be contradictory in the Bible (which really is not, but it may appear to be), we can look it up in the Strong's Concordance. In the Greek section it is number 1565. Instead of the word "he," they translate as "that one (or thing)." When that one, the spirit of truth, or that thing, the spirit of truth has come. Therefore we should not attempt to use this verse as a proof of a Trinity where the Holy Spirit is a person. We cannot do that with this verse. What we do find is this:

1 Corinthians 8:6

yet for us there is only one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

There is one God, the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ. It does not say there is a third person and a Trinity.

Here is where Peter was later speaking to the Gentiles.

Acts 10:44-45

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the **Holy Spirit fell upon** all those who heard the word. 45 And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the **Holy Spirit had been poured out** on the Gentiles also.

The Holy Spirit is something that can fall upon people, not a person. And it is poured out, again not a person. It is a gift, the gift of the Holy Spirit, just as Peter said in Acts 2:38, you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Another verse that people try to use to prove that there is a Trinity is:

1 John 5:6-8

6 This is He who came by water and blood--Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. 7 For there are three that bear witness [*in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.* 8 *And there are three that bear witness on earth:*] the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

This looks like a Trinity, doesn't it? But reliable sources say that the portions that I have in italics *in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. 8 And there are three that bear witness on earth* were added centuries later. This Scripture was written sometime around 90 AD, and hundreds of years later somebody added those words. The Companion Bible and other sources say this. We cannot use this as proof of a Trinity. The Holy Spirit is the power of God. It is something that is poured out on us, put into us, but not a person.

Let's think about what the Holy Spirit does for us. The Holy Spirit gives us understanding of the Bible, understanding of spiritual things.

1 Corinthians 2: 9-10

9 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 10 But **God has revealed them to us through His Spirit.**

That is how we learn, how we understand more deeply. You can read the Bible and get a lot of good information without God's Holy Spirit. With God's spirit, you can learn so much more.

1 Corinthians 2: 10-11

For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

Elsewhere in the Bible, it shows that we have a spirit essence in us that gives us our intelligence, more than just the brain. That spirit essence in us gets combined with God's Holy Spirit to where we can really understand things.

We also get power from the Holy Spirit. Besides getting spiritual knowledge, we get power.

Luke 24:49

Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with **power** from on high.

We receive power, power to overcome sin, power to live God's way of life. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. We are strengthened through the Holy Spirit that he puts in us. Also, the Holy Spirit conceives us as future members of God's family, to be born again as spirit at the resurrection.

Some are called now

One of the many aspects of Pentecost is that some which we call the firstfruits are called now in this life, with everyone else to be called later on. You may remember in Leviticus 23 it talked about the feast of Firstfruits. In Exodus 23 it is called the "Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits."

Exodus 23:16

and the **Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits** of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the

fruit of your labors from the field.

That is the Feast of Tabernacles at the end of the harvest year. But we are talking about the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits which occurs in the springtime. We know that because we just counted as to when we should be establishing Pentecost, 50 days after the Sunday during the days of Unleavened Bread. There is a small springtime harvest that people might want to call the firstfruits. We have it in this country to some extent. We have the wheat, oats, barley and things like that. In the promised land they had a firstfruits harvest as well, and then a larger autumn harvest. We have in this country the corn, soybeans, and all the other things that come later on. It is like that in many parts of the world. That is a parallel to what happens with people. There is a small firstfruits harvest of people, with everyone else to be called later. The people who receive God's Holy Spirit include the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament Church. They are all the first to be given God's Holy Spirit, to be offered salvation.

1 Peter 4:17

For the time has come for **judgment to begin at the house of God**; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

The Church is being judged now. It is serious because the Church has to fight Satan. We have to fight his temptations, his deceptions. When the rest of the people are called during the Millennium, when Jesus Christ is ruling, Satan will have been put away. Those who are called in the Great White Throne judgment will resurrected again. Satan will not be there to deceive them. The Church has the Holy Spirit now, and it is not favoritism at all to be part of the Church. Now it is a difficult situation to be in, but yet with potential for reward.

How did we get to this point where some people are called now? Why isn't everybody called? We will go back to the incident of the two trees in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were created, and the Bible said everything was good that God created. They were good. There was nothing wrong with them. They were told not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Well, they did. They sinned in that way. They disobeyed God.

Genesis 3:22-24

22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"-- 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. 24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, **to guard the way to the tree of life.**

Most people have been cut off from salvation for now, but they are not judged either.

And lest than anyone think we are being too exclusive, just realize what the world is like. So many people have no knowledge of Christianity. Many who do have knowledge of Christianity do not act like it. It is the situation right now. It is a temporary situation where most are cut off, but not everyone. God has chosen some people, the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament Church to be given God's Holy Spirit. Jesus said this:

John 6:44

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

People have to be drawn by God. That is what this means. Not everybody is being drawn by God in this time. The Church does not try to convert everybody because people have to be drawn to God. The Church preaches the Gospel of the kingdom of God, sometimes more by actions than by words. We have a website. People can see the gospel of the kingdom of God being preached, but we have to do it by example, too. Sometimes it is a quiet example. We realize that. As part of living God's way of life, we need to be giving to other people, taking care of other people, showing love for other people. One way our group does this is to contribute to various charities that are providing people's needs and jobs and even counseling at times. We do things that help people have a better life, help them experience just a little bit of the kingdom of God now. Maybe someday when they are called, they can look back on it and say, Oh yes, I see now what the kingdom of God is like, and someone was good to me and gave me something years ago. That is a little bit like what the kingdom of God is like. We want to do that by our actions as well as by our words. Not everybody who the church preaches to is going to be interested. Some will have no interest in religion. But we do what we can. James mentioned firstfruits.

James 1:18

Of His own will He brought us forth [Interlinear: begat us] by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of **firstfruits** of His creatures.

James is writing to the church. The church is to be a kind of firstfruits like that firstfruits harvest. Revelation 14 talks about first fruits also. It talks about them having God's name written on their foreheads and not being defiled. They follow God, they follow Jesus, they are redeemed. Let's read this.

Revelation 14:1-4

1 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him **one hundred and forty-four thousand**, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. 3 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the

elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. 4 These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being **firstfruits** to God and to the Lamb.

He is talking about people who are faithful to God and calling them the firstfruits. Those firstfruits are mentioned earlier in Revelation.

Revelation 7:1-4, 9

1 After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, 3 saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." 4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed. **One hundred and forty-four thousand** of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: ...9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

First we have the firstfruits, then this innumerable multitude, this great multitude which no one could number, as it says in verse 9. The firstfruits are only the beginning of people to become part of God's family.

Today we studied Pentecost. We studied the well-known fact that the Holy Spirit was given to the New Testament Church on the Pentecost after Jesus Christ resurrection. Lesser-known things we studied are how to count the day of Pentecost, what day of the year, to celebrate it. Also, one of the meanings of Pentecost is that there is a small harvest of people in this age, with the rest to be called to salvation later.