

PENTECOST IN THE FEASTS OF ISRAEL
IN GOD'S PLAN OF REDEMPTION
1240

INTRO: This Sunday we commemorate the day of Pentecost. Our subject this morning is, "Pentecost In God's Plan of Redemption." And this is shown to us most clearly in the seven biblical feasts God prescribed for Israel.

The name Pentecost derives from the words, 'fiftieth day'. The Jewish calendar is very interesting to me, as well as the seven feasts Israel was instructed by God to keep. In the Jewish Calendar, there are two new year's days. The secular year, beginning from creation, began with the month Tishri. It corresponds about to mid September to mid October our Calendar. But go to Exodus 12 (read 1-2). This is the month in which Passover fell and it was to be the first month of their sacred year. So the seventh month of their civil year was the first month of their sacred year and the first month of their sacred year was the seventh month of their civil year and so on.

And during their sacred year, in the middle of the first month, on the 14th Nisan, the Passover took place. The Passover began the eight day feast of Unleavened Bread of which I spoke to you when we commemorated the death of Christ this year in April. Then on the Sabbath after the Passover, was the feast of First-fruits. So these three feasts fall in one clump of eight days. All of this is significant of course, as we will see later. After the feast of First-fruits, 50 days were counted, and that day we know as Pentecost, or fiftieth day. Those first four feasts fall during the time of the grain harvest. First-fruits saw the first ripe barley offering and Pentecost the first ripe wheat.

The last three feasts came quite close together as well. In the seventh month, the month Tishri, equal about to our mid September to mid October, which is now the first month of the civil year, came the feast of Trumpets. On the 10th day of that month was the Day of Atonement, and beginning on the 15th day, and for eight days was the feast of tabernacles.

It is to this we want to give our attention this morning.

I. THE BIBLICAL HISTORY OF PENTECOST

A. Passover

Now to set Pentecost in its biblical history, we will do so by looking at it in light of the other feasts. So, let us begin with Passover. What is the Biblical history of Passover? Well, Israel was in bondage in Egypt. They were slaves to the Pharaohs. And their slavery came to a point where they found it unbearable and they cried out to God and God heard their cry. And God instructed them to take in a lamb without blemish on the 10 day of Nisan. And then on the fourteenth day of Nisan, in the evening, just before the sun went down they were to butcher the lamb. They were to take some of the blood of the lamb and put it on the doorposts of their homes. That evening they were to eat the lamb with their traveling clothes on.

And so they did that, and that night God struck all the firstborn in Egypt with death except in those homes where the blood had been placed on the door. When the death angel saw the blood, he passed over that home and so it is called the Passover.

That night a cry went up from every Egyptian home except those who had heeded God's instruction to Moses. Even Pharaoh's firstborn died. And that night, the night of the 10th plague, Pharaoh finally let Israel go. And as they finished eating the Passover lamb, the call came that they were free to go. With everything packed up and their traveling clothes on already, they left that night.

Now I want to ask you a question: What did the Passover lamb foreshadow? (Christ, the Lamb of God who would set sinners free.) And now tell me, on what day did Christ die? (Nisan the 14th in the evening, the very same day the Passover lambs died.)

B. Unleavened Bread

So Jesus died on the 14th in the evening. The fifteenth began the feast of unleavened bread. Leaven, in this case pictures sin as it often does in the Bible. Sin seeps through everything in the same way leaven works. And when Christ died, He died to

set us free from sin, and that is what this feast pictures. Now this is an eight day feast and I think the eight days picture something that endures for a long time. That is speculation, of course. It began with a Sabbath and the eighth day was a Sabbath. The night of the Passover, Israel was delivered from Egyptian bondage. The night Christ died, He set sinners free from bondage of sin. This feast found its fulfillment as well on the very days it was commemorated.

C. First-fruits

During the time of the feast of Unleavened Bread, the feast of First-fruits was commemorated. It was commemorated on the first day after the Sabbath. It is not quite certain if Sabbath is the Sabbath that began the feast of Unleavened Bread, which could fall on any day of the week, or the seventh day Sabbath. I have not yet thoroughly researched this. But historically, three days and three nights after Israel came out of Egypt, they passed through the Red Sea that God had opened for them and they entered a new land. And the Egyptians that had followed Israel into the Red Sea were drowned when God closed the waters up again. The coming out of the Red Sea on the far side pictures resurrection and it was on this very day Jesus arose from the dead. That is what this feast pictured, and so, it too found its fulfillment on the very day it was commemorated.

D. Pentecost

And so we come to Pentecost. Let me begin with this question: If the lamb offered in Egypt was the historical background for the feast of Passover; and if the unleavened bread was the historical background of freedom from Egyptian bondage, and if First Fruits was the historical background of deliverance out of Egypt, what is the historical background for Pentecost?

Well, the Jews hold that it was on this fiftieth day that Moses was given the law on Mount Sinai. I want you to turn to Exodus 19 (read 1-6). We are now in the third month of the sacred year. Remember, they left Egypt on the first month. In Exodus 19:1-6, we

are on the first day of the third month. If so, Passover was Nisan the 14th. The 15-17 were the three days and three nights. The 18th then would be the first day after the Sabbath and from there we need to go 50 days. That leaves 13 days in Nisan. The next month is Iyyar, which adds another 30 days, so we are at 43 days.

"The Talmud declares that "the rabbins propounded that the Decalogue was given to Israel on the 6th of Sivan" (Sabbath, 86 b), and this is deduced from Exodus 19, for, according to tradition, Moses ascended the mountain on the 2d of Sivan, the third month Exodus 19:1-3); received the answer of the people on the 3d (ver. 7); reascended the mountain on the 4th (ver. 8); commanded the people to sanctify themselves three days, which were the 4th, 5th, and 6th (vers. 12, 14, 23); and on the third of these three days of sanctification, which was the sixth day of the month, delivered the Decalogue to them (vers. 10, 11, 15, 16). This is the unanimous voice of Jewish tradition."

I am not yet sure on the precise math of all this but no doubt we are well in place to say that the giving of the law is the historical background for Pentecost. So, we have history on which these first four feasts are based. But the history for the next two feasts is uncertain, if there is any. I understand that the Jewish people wrestled with this as well. (Happened on same day)

E. Trumpets

The next three feasts fall, not in the harvest of grain, but in the harvest of the fruit and especially the grapes. The first of the last three is the feast of trumpets. The history of this feast, if there is any, is uncertain. McClintock and Strong say, "The fact that Tishri was the great month for sowing might thus have easily suggested the thought of commemorating on this day the finished work of creation, when the sons of God shouted for joy (Job 38:7). The Feast of Trumpets thus came to be regarded as the anniversary of the birthday of the world" (269).

It is possible that this feast falls on the first day of the month of the civil year, which may mark the day of creation.

F. Day of Atonement

The next holy day is the Day of Atonement, the highest holiest day of all Jewish holy days. Again, the historical background for this day is simply speculation. To quote McClintock and Strong again, they say, "Some have inferred from Leviticus 16:1, that the day was instituted on account of the sin and punishment of Nadab and Abihu. Maimonides regards it as a commemoration of the day on which Moses came down from the mount with the second tables of the law, and proclaimed to the people the forgiveness of their great sin in worshipping the golden calf" (McCl&Strong 68). **Leave out?

There is no certainty if there is any historical event that marked the beginning of this feast.

F. Tabernacles or Booths

The last of the seven feasts is the feast of tabernacles or booths. Once again, there is no historical event that is given for this day. But we may say this. The first four feasts fall in the grain harvest season. The last three feasts fall during the close of the fruit harvest. So, let us read (Ex. 23:15-17; *Lev. 23:39; and Deut. 16:13-17). If we have a day in our calendar that might roughly correspond to this day it would be Thanksgiving day. All the crops for the year, both grain and fruit had been harvested.

Again, this is an eight day feast. It begins with a Sabbath and ends with a Sabbath. These were not the regular seventh day Sabbaths. So if this Sabbath fell on a Friday, Friday would be a Sabbath and the next day would be the regular Sabbath and so on.

Now, ten times in Scripture the phrase 'corn and wine' is used. Israel is called a land of corn and wine. I think this would more accurately be called, grain and fruit. I am talking about fruit in the sense of sweet fruit like oranges and grapes and

pomegranates etc... you see, some land is good for grains, but not fruits; other land is good for fruits. But not often do you have a land that is good for both, and that is what Israel was.

II. THE PROPHETICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PENTECOST

Having looked at the biblical history of the feast days of which Pentecost is the middle feast, in light of the other feasts, let us now consider the prophetic significance of these days and thus Pentecost. It is clear that these feasts are prophetic in nature, and give to us God's plan of redemption.

A. Passover

Passover, then, historically spoke of the sacrificial lamb which saved the firstborn in the family and caused Egypt to let Israel go, because all their firstborn had died. But it is not hard for us to determine what it spoke of prophetically. Can you tell me? (Yes, it spoke of the death of Christ for mankind.) It is the day we call 'Good Friday'.

Now, it is interesting that this day took place on exactly the same day that the historical event it pictures took place, Nisan 14th.

B. Unleavened Bread

Now the feast of Unleavened Bread spoke, historically of Israel's deliverance from bondage. And prophetically it speaks of mankind's deliverance from the bondage of sin through the death of Christ. This feast too, was fulfilled on the same days it was kept historically. And since this was an eight day feast, I believe it speaks of a long period of time. And so it is still being fulfilled today. So Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 5, that we should keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, or a sanctified life, an unleavened life.

C. First Fruits

Historically, First Fruits marked the beginning of the barley harvest. But prophetically it pictured the

first fruits of the resurrection (See 1 Cor. 15:21-24). Now first fruits always speaks of more to come. Christ was the first fruits of the resurrection, which assures us there is more to come and assures us of our own resurrection. Once more, First Fruits was fulfilled precisely on the day it was historically kept. It was prophetic of the resurrection of Christ and of His being the first fruits of the resurrection.

D. Pentecost

So, we have looked at three of the seven feasts, and all three were fulfilled on the very day they were historically kept. We saw that it is believed that the historical event behind this day is the giving of the law. Then we saw that all three of the previous feasts spoke prophetically of a future event. Does Pentecost also speak of a future event, and if so, what is it?

Well, we had an account read for us earlier in Acts 2. Let us turn to it. Let me now give you the events immediately preceding Acts 2. The four Gospel accounts have closed with the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. There we have Passover, Unleavened Bread and Resurrection. Now look at Acts 1:1-3 (read). So we are now at day 40 after the resurrection of Christ. Now look at Luke 24 (read 49). So after the 40 days, Jesus ascended to heaven. That is what we commemorated 10 days ago. That was 40 days after the resurrection.

Then after the ascension, go now to Acts 1:12 (read). Here they are now, waiting in Jerusalem as they had been instructed. Jesus had told them that they would be endued with power from on high. And when they had waited and prayed for 10 days, we come to Acts 2 (read 2:1-2).

I have pondered the prophetic significance of this day for a long time. I have come to the conclusion that the birth of the Church is the fulfillment of the OT feast of Pentecost. I do not believe there is something left in the future to be fulfilled on this day. It is fulfilled. And I believe the very next day

to be fulfilled in these prophetic feasts is the feast of trumpets. So let us go to it briefly.

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E. Trumpets

For this we turn to Leviticus 23 (read 23-25). We have noted earlier that it has been speculated that this day historically commemorates the creation of the universe. This is the new years day of the civil calendar and would have been viewed as beginning from creation. However that may be, what could this day speak of prophetically? You see, this was a day of blowing trumpets. Many trumpets were blown. Trumpets were blown all day long.

Could it be that Christ will return to earth to take care of world problems at the end of the tribulation in order to set up His kingdom on this day? Well, it has been speculated that if Passover was fulfilled on precisely the day it was historically commemorated, and if First-fruits was fulfilled on precisely the day it was commemorated, that maybe Christ will return to earth on this very day. Some have speculated that the rapture will happen on this day, but Jesus said that no one could know the day or the hour of His return, which I believe speaks of the catching up of the Church. But for those who believe the Bible, when the tribulation begins they will know how long until the end of the tribulation.

So, I have no doubt that the feast of trumpets does not refer to the rapture, but rather to the time when Christ comes to earth to set up His kingdom. I believe that the second coming of Christ will be on the day of the feast of Trumpets! Just as the other feast days were fulfilled on the precise day they were historically kept, so I believe this day will be fulfilled on that day. I am talking here about the second coming of Christ, not the catching up of the Church. No man can know that day. Turn to Matthew 24 (read 29-31).

F. Day of Atonement

The sixth feast is the day of atonement. As for the feast of trumpets, we did not find an historical event, so for this day there is also no historical event. But this day is the highest holiest day in Judaism. Each year, on this day, the sins of the nation of Israel were atoned for. Two goats were brought to the temple. Lots were cast over the two goats and the goat on which the lot fell was the Lord's goat. It was sacrificed as a sin offering. Then the sins of Israel were confessed over the goat we call the scapegoat, and it bore their sins into the wilderness.

And so our question is, what does this feast speak of prophetically? It speaks of Israel's salvation at the end of the tribulation when Israel once more turns to God nationally. I would like to spend some time here, but must leave that for another time.

G. Tabernacles or Booths

So, if the feast of trumpets speaks of the return of Christ to earth, and the day of atonement speaks of the day Israel's sins are atoned for and they are saved as a nation, what does this last feast, the feast of tabernacles speak of? Well, let us briefly summarize what we have up to here. We have the death of Christ; Passover, Christ's death for the world; Unleavened Bread, freedom from the bondage of sin made available through Christ's death. Then First Fruits, the resurrection of Christ, and thereby assurance that there is more to come. Then Trumpets, the return of Christ. Then the Day of Atonement, the salvation of Israel. And now, last, the feast of booths. Historically we saw it was a kind of thanksgiving day for a harvest brought in. Prophetically, it speaks of the rejoicing of a harvest brought in and entrance into the millennium. This feast speaks of the millennium. Since it is a feast of eight days once more, I believe those eight days speak of a long time, like the feast of unleavened bread did. And this time period lasts 1000 years.

And thus, in these feasts, we have the plan of redemption pictured for us from historical events that speak prophetically of the future.

III. THE PRESENT SIGNIFICANCE OF PENTECOST

Now I would like to just briefly mention the present significance of Pentecost. The first thing I want us to notice is in Leviticus 23, where these seven feasts are spoken of (read 15-17). Here we have, what we call in our German, Tweekbaak. Twin loaves, if you like. Now what is simply fascinating to me is that in all of the temple's experiences, this is the only one where leaven enters its precincts.

And here is the big question: what is the significance of this? What do the two loaves and the leaven picture? Well, let us first consider the two loaves. Over the years, as I have pondered this, I have come to think these two loaves represent the Church, which was born on this very day, as we have read from Acts 2. And what is most interesting in this light is that in the Church, God makes of two groups of people one body, and that one body is called the Church.

I have mentioned this to you numerous times, but this is what I see. In all of the events that are happening on earth today, the most significant thing from God's point of view is the Church. God's primary focus is on the Church. It is true that since 1948, as the Church age is coming to a close, God is preparing for another very important time and that is the 70th week of Daniel. But the Church age is not yet closed, though in its final days, a new work has already begun in Israel.

This Church, that began on Pentecost is most significant for us in one major point. It included as the children of God, both Jew and Gentile. The great commission was for the whole world. Jesus gave that to the disciples in Matthew 28. In Acts 1, just before Jesus ascended He said this to His disciples, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." You will remember what a great crisis Peter was put to when he was to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles for the first time, and it was to a Roman centurion, one of the last people a Jew

would have wanted in the kingdom. So, the Church is made up of Jew and Gentile. Consider in this light Ephesians 2:14-3:7 (read). So there we have the two loaves as I see it.

So that gives a potential answer to the two loaves. Now to the leaven. Chaim Richman, in his wonderful book, 'The Holy Temple Of Jerusalem' says, "This, the only leaven ever brought into the temple, represented God's blessing on man's earthly physical needs throughout the year" (88). That may be true of the bread, but, I ask, what of the leaven? Well, in Scripture leaven generally signifies sin. Sin works like leaven. Once it enters it seeps through everything and into everything. In Romans 1, Paul shows that all Gentile peoples are sinners. Then in chapter 2, he shows that Jewish people are all sinners. And in chapter 3 he summarizes thus, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." And the apostle Paul, a Jew, said in 1 Timothy 1:15 "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." And so, the Church is made up of the two major groups of people, Jews and Gentiles, and it is made up of saved sinners, and there, I believe, is the leaven pictured in this feast.

CONCL: And so, in conclusion, in brief, we can say that these seven feasts prescribed by God for Israel speak prophetically of the death of Christ, Passover; His provision of freedom from sin, Unleavened Bread; His resurrection from the dead, First Fruits; the birth of the Church, Pentecost; His return to earth, Trumpets; the salvation of Israel, Day of Atonement; and the setting up of His kingdom for the millennium, the feast of Tabernacles.