

Why a Monday Pentecost?

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Why a Monday Pentecost?

This article will address the current arguments which have embroiled the observance of Pentecost in a theological melee, namely, which day—Sunday, Monday, or Sivan 6—is the correct day for observing Pentecost. It is assumed the reader has already proven the necessity to observe God's annual Holy Days. If not, please ask for our article entitled, *God's Holy Days—Should They Be Observed?*

Most of the arguments that are current today go way back. There were at least four different dates on which Pentecost was observed in ancient times. Reference material regarding Pentecost points out that the Sadducees, Samaritans, and Karaites all began the count for Pentecost on Sunday, immediately following the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The Pharisees counted from the first high Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread, while the Falashas (a small sect in Ethiopia) counted from the last high day during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The problem is the precise meaning of the word Sabbath in Leviticus 23:11, 15 which determines the date for observing the festival. From time immemorial this issue has been a matter of dispute. Since the time of the second Temple the Sadducees and Boethusians (a branch of the Sadducees), and the Karaites (eighth century AD) have taken the word "sabbath" in Leviticus 23:11, 15 to mean the weekly Sabbath—the seventh day of the week. They maintained that the omer was offered on the day following the weekly Sabbath that might fall during the Days of Unleavened Bread (*New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Festivals").

Pentecost is the only Holy Day we must count in order to determine the date of observance. God tells us to count fifty days and then observe Pentecost. God does not instruct or do things that are purposeless (Isa. 45:18). If Pentecost is counted from either of the two high Sabbaths during the Days of Unleavened Bread there would be no need to count. Pentecost would always fall on a fixed date. The weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread falls on a variable date. Notice, God did not say count forty-nine days. He said count fifty. God *counts, declares, or numbers* days at their completion. For example, "And the evening was, and the morning was, the first day" (Gen. 1:5, margin).

The account of the Jubilee year (Lev. 25) shows how the count must be complete. Sunday advocates insist Pentecost should be counted just as the Jubilee year count. That would be fine if the Pentecost count was the same as the Jubilee count. But it is not. The Jubilee year count is forty-nine years; the Pentecost count is fifty days. Leviticus 25:8 states, "And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years." Note, the count is exactly forty-nine years, not one more. Is the Jubilee year the forty-ninth year, the last year of the count? Notice Leviticus 25:10, "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family." Not until the forty-nine years are complete is the Jubilee observed. God

is consistent (Jas. 1:17). He always counts the same. Leviticus 23 tells us to count fifty days, not forty-nine, and at the conclusion of the count observe Pentecost.

Leviticus 15 gives another example of how God counts time. Notice verse 13. "And when he that hath an issue is cleansed of his issue; then he shall number to himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean." Is the cleansing process completed on the seventh day? The answer is no. Look at verse 14. "And on the eighth day he shall take to him two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, and come before the Lord unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and give them unto the priest." Not until the eighth day, after a count of seven days, is he brought before a priest for an offering and proclaimed totally clean. See verses 18–19 and 28–29 for a parallel account of an unclean woman.

Another text to consider is Judges 14:12, 18. Samson gave the Philistine guests seven days to solve his riddle. The Philistines came to Samson with the answer on the seventh day "before the sun went down." The seventh day was not completely counted until it was over—at sundown. Generally, Biblical days are not counted as complete until the full twenty-four hours (sundown to sundown) are realized.

Setting aside all the party views regarding the count toward Pentecost, and looking at the Bible only, could it be possible to come up with four different ways to count Pentecost? Of course not! There is only one correct way to count Pentecost.

We can assume that during the time of Christ the disagreement continued. Even today it is believed that there is no way to tell from the Bible which day to count from, as there are three Sabbaths during the Days of Unleavened Bread. So, in modern times a consensus on the proper Pentecostal reckoning is still lacking. This uncertainty is discussed in the Talmud (Menahoth 65a, b, 66a). Comments there refer to "the re-establishment" of the date for Pentecost. So, there must have been some kind of a change made. Also, this section includes the argument which reflects the Pharisaic view that the weekly Sabbath cannot be intended because the numbering of the days depends on the decision of the Beth din (the central body representing the highest civil as well as religious authority of the Jews). The Sabbath of creation, therefore, could not be intended as the day to begin the numbering as it would then be in the hands of all men (meaning that there would then be no need for guidance). Both Biblical and secular history show that up to at least AD 65 religious observance was according to the Sadducee reckoning. It was not until very near the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 that the Pharisees gained control.

Various reference works such as the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* and the *Jewish Encyclopedia* tell of the contention that arose over the interpretation of Leviticus 23:15. According to the Pharisaic view, which is found in the Septuagint and later in the Talmud, the Pharisees accepted the Sabbath in question as the first high Sabbath during the Days of

Unleavened Bread, thus making Pentecost fall on Sivan 6. We are also told that the Sadducean way of reckoning was the "old Biblical view." Since they counted only forty-nine days instead of fifty, Pentecost was always celebrated on Sunday.

The Pharisees

The Pharisees emerged as a distinct group shortly following the Hasmonean revolt which occurred from 165–160 BC. The Pharisees produced an expanded system of Biblical interpretation, harmonizing the teaching of the Torah with advanced ideas. They were quite progressive in their thinking. They admitted the validity of an evolutionary and non-literal approach toward their legal decisions and regarded the Oral Law as valid as the written law. Based on the present information, it appears the Sivan 6 custom began during the inter-testamental period with the Hasidim. (*Encyclopedia Judaica*, s.v. "Pharisees"). The Hasidim were the precursors of the Pharisees. The later orthodox Jews followed the custom of reckoning the fifty days to Pentecost from the sixteenth of Nisan, as they assumed the Sabbath in Leviticus 23:11, 15 was the fifteenth of the month, or the first day of the feast of Massoth (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th edition, s.v. "Pentecost").

Josephus wrote that the Pharisees were extremely influential with the townsfolk and that all prayers and sacred rites of divine worship were according to their exposition. He wrote that the Sadducees submitted unwillingly and by force of circumstance to the formulas of the Pharisees since to do otherwise would alienate the masses (*Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII, i, 3–4). But Professor Morton Smith in his work entitled *Israel: Its Role in Civilization* says there is something dubious about Josephus' portrayal of the Pharisees. His *Wars of the Jews*, written twenty years before *Antiquities* takes only brief notice of the Pharisees and Sadducees and says nothing of the influence the Pharisees had with the people. In fact, he says that when the Pharisees attempted to exert influence they failed. But twenty years later Josephus gives a different picture. He places the Pharisees first and continually mentions their popularity. Josephus' "discovery" of these important political facts, which he ignored twenty years earlier, appears to stem from a change in his personal relations with the Pharisees. In this twenty-year period the Pharisees had become the leading candidates for Roman support in Palestine and were negotiating for it. Obviously Josephus was playing politics, ready to jump on the bandwagon. As the Pharisees were asking the Roman authorities for recognition as leaders of the people Josephus suddenly became a Pharisee. He could extol the Pharisees as there were few contenders around to refute him. Professor Smith says it is impossible not to see a rewriting of history as a bid to the Roman government (*Israel: Its Role in Civilization*, quoted in the "Pentecost Study Material," 1974, 31). Josephus calculated the date for Pentecost as the fiftieth day after the first day of Passover, and, in time, this manner of calculation became standard (*Logos Library System*, s.v. "Pentecost").

Professor Jacob Neusner says some revealing things about Josephus' statements. Neusner tells us that with the Temple in ruin and for a period of twenty-five years the priesthood decimated and scattered, it was now possible to place the Pharisees in a position of power scarcely dreamed of in Temple times. It is an extreme allegation that the Sadducees at an earlier time were forced to do whatever the Pharisees told them. Neusner says this allegation is incredible (*From Politics to Piety*, 55, quoted in "Pentecost Study Material," 1974, 32). According to the *Encyclopedia Judaica* the Sadducean party had its stronghold in the Temple, and it was only during the last two decades of the Temple's existence that the Pharisees finally gained control. The Sadducees ceased to exist after the destruction of the Temple. Rabbinic Judaism is the product of Pharisaic Judaism and it is the only Jewish religion that survived (*Ency. Judaica*, s.v. "Sadducees").

Sadducees Controlled the Temple

The Sadducees, who dominated the Temple worship and its rites, were formed about 200 BC. Many were members of the Sanhedrin (*Ency. Judaica*, s.v. "Sadducees"). Much of what is believed today goes back to a record no older than 400 years *after* the time the Sadducees were formed. The Mishnah (a part of the Talmud) was not written down in the form we have it today until AD 200 (a process that took many years and which added teachings and interpretations). So, the question should be, does any particular teaching of the Mishnah go back to the time of Christ? Or does it contain those teachings which arose long afterward? How much reliance can we place on the teachings of Hillel or Shammai when their doctrines were transferred orally, for the most part, until AD 200? Rabbinic writings which should tell us what was taking place before the destruction of the Temple are not even found. The Gemara, a commentary on the Mishnah, was written between AD 200–500. How much reliance, then, can be placed on a fourth century rabbi who writes about events that took place in the time of Christ? Josephus' portrayal of the Pharisees is not even close to the way they were portrayed by the rabbis. The Pharisaic conflicts with the Sadducees, according to the rabbis, essentially involved rules for table-fellowship. Neusner states that if we are to rely on rabbinical traditions *only* regarding the Pharisees, we cannot construct a single significant public event before AD 70. The historical Pharisees of the period before AD 70 escape us (*From Politics to Piety*, Neusner, 34, quoted in "Pentecost Study Material," 1974, 34). The only information available relates to problems in the history of Judaism *after* the destruction of the Temple. What has taken place is that traditions have been reshaped and reinterpreted by later rabbis. The only major source of the history of that time is the New Testament (*ibid*). To rely on present Jewish testimony regarding the Sadducees and Judaism during the period of the second Temple presents a biased view. There are controversial references in rabbinical literature with regard to the Sadducean interpretation of the law, and the Sadducees have been depicted as worldly-minded aristocrats, interested primarily in maintaining their own privileged position and favoring Greco-Roman culture (*Ency. Judaica*, s.v. "Sadducees"). Josephus' testimony may be less

than trustworthy and nothing in his account in *Wars* indicates he was a Pharisee as he later claimed (Neusner, 55, quoted in the "Pentecost Study Material," 1974, 31).

The Sadducees observed Pentecost on the fiftieth day (inclusive counting) from the first Sunday after the Passover and their reckoning regulated public observance as long as the Temple stood. After AD 70 the Pharisaic method of reckoning became normative in Judaism (*Logos Library System*, s.v. "Pentecost, Feast of"). Various reference works point out that with the reign of Herod and direct Roman rule in Judea, the earlier political influence of the Pharisees declined. During the time of Christ and the first generation of Christians the Temple was controlled by the Sadducees. It was in the synagogues that the Pharisees were influential, but most of the members of the Sanhedrin, the central judicial authority of the Jewish people, were Sadducees. The *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* points out that the Sadducees were so closely associated with the Temple that after its destruction they ceased to be heard of (*Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1943 ed., Vol. IX, quoted in the "Pentecost Study Material," 1974, 39). While Matthew 23:2 indicates the scribes and Pharisees had a certain position of authority as teachers and leaders, they had not supplanted the priests. The book of Acts demonstrates that the priests and Sadducees were still in control of the Temple and the Sanhedrin until quite late (*ibid*). See Acts 4:1; 5:17. That leads to a question, though. Who were the scribes? The scribes were an upper class among the Jewish people at the time of Christ. Large numbers of priests were scribes. Some of the scribes were from among the Sadducees. Others came from every other class of people (*Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Scribes"). While the bulk belonged to the Pharisaic party there were obviously scribes of the Sadducee type who opposed the Pharisaic tendency. Bible passages speak of the "scribes of the Pharisees" which indicates there were "scribes of the Sadducees" (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Scribes").

According to McClintock and Strong, Christ never assailed the Sadducees with the same bitter denunciation which was uttered against the Pharisees; and the Sadducees did not seem to have taken active measures to put Him to death as did the Pharisees. The fact is, not one undoubted writing of an acknowledged Sadducee has come down to us. For an acquaintance of their opinions we must rely on the arguments of their antagonists. In reality, no religious or political party in any country would be content to accept the statements of an opponent as giving the correct view of its opinions. What must be kept in mind, however, as McClintock and Strong point out, is that the Sadducean rejection of tradition did not mean the Sadducees rejected all the traditional comments upon the law and ancestral practices found in the Old Testament. The theological views of the Sadducees and Pharisees were not so much at variance as might have been supposed. That the Sadducees rejected the prophets, the Writings, and only believed in the Pentateuch is utterly at variance with the Jewish records of this sect. Josephus said their belief was that souls perish with the bodies, but in the New Testament as well as the Talmud we are told they simply denied the resurrection. Josephus attempted to depict the Jewish sects as corresponding with the philosophical schools of the Greeks. He did a great disservice to assign the doctrine of the Stoics to the

Sadducees. But he was just as inaccurate in describing his own party. The New Testament tells us the Sadducees said there was neither angel nor spirit (Acts 23:7), yet they were firm believers in the divine inspiration of the Mosaic law, where in the Biblical account the appearance of angels is recorded over and over again. What they really denied was the incarnation and various manifestations of demonic powers and angelic beings of *later times* as was believed and described not only in Jewish writings but in the New Testament. The fact is, the differences between the Pharisees and Sadducees was, in theory, not as marked as Josephus depicts (*Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, s.v. "Sadducee").

Herod selected the family of Boethus, a priestly family to whom the high-priesthood did not belong, and made Simon Boethus high-priest. The Boethusians were Herodians for this reason and were called Herodians and Sadducees. We are told the Pharisees took counsel with the Herodians, that is, the Boethusian branch of the Sadducees, how they might destroy Jesus (McClintock and Strong, s.v. "Sadducees").

Why Pentecost Is Not on Sivan 6

It is believed by some that the Jews, at least as early as the time of Christ, connected Pentecost with Sivan 6 and the giving of the law on Mount Sinai (McClintock and Strong, s.v. "Pentecost"). Other authorities disagree, believing the concept was adopted much later. One fact is certain. Neither Philo nor Josephus have a word on the subject. Philo expressly stated that it was during the Feast of Trumpets that the giving of the law was commemorated. The rabbis were the ones who propounded the giving of the law on the sixth of Sivan. This is the unanimous voice of Jewish tradition. The early church fathers merely followed suit. Whitsunday came to be the first annual festival instituted by the Christian church. Since the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 the Jews have almost entirely made Pentecost to commemorate the giving of the law (ibid). There are no rabbinical writings stating the law was given on Pentecost until the second century AD (*Ency. Judaica*, s.v. "Shavuot"). The Old Testament does not give Pentecost the historical significance which later Jewish writers attached to it. In the Old Testament the Israelites are admonished to remember their bondage in Egypt on that day (Deut. 16:12) and to reconsecrate themselves to the Lord, but it does not commemorate the giving of the law at Sinai or the birth of its national existence. As noted, Philo, Josephus, and the earlier Talmudic writings are all ignorant of this new meaning which was given in later Jewish history. The idea originated with Maimonides (tenth century AD) and has been copied by Christian writers (*ISBE*, s.v. "Pentecost").

Jewish scholars now see a possible connection between the "traditions of the elders" and the observance of Pentecost on Sivan 6. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* says that it is possible that the Pharisees insisted that Shavuot be observed on a fixed day because they wished to affirm the festival commemorated the manifestation of God which occurred on the

fiftieth day after the Exodus (following the general Pharisaic belief in an oral Torah reaching back to Moses). Also, because the purely agricultural festival had little meaning for the city dwellers who made up the bulk of the Pharisees there was no need to stress the agricultural aspect. So, in rabbinic times a remarkable transformation of the festival took place; the festival became the anniversary of the giving of the law at Sinai (*Ency. Judaica*, s.v. "Shavuot").

Some say we should follow the Pharisaic mode of reckoning Pentecost on Sivan 6 because ". . . The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Matt. 23:2–3). Also, since Paul was a Pharisee, he too observed Pentecost on Sivan 6. The Sadducean mode of reckoning should be discounted because the Sadducees were "Hellenistic Jews" with a liberal bent. Furthermore, we are told the scribes and Pharisees were not condemned over major issues such as the weekly and annual Sabbaths. Christ condemned them for their hypocrisy only. Neither the Sadducees nor the Samaritans knew what they worshipped. The oracles of God were given to the Jews and the Pharisees were the ones who sat in Moses' seat.

The text in Matthew 23:2–3 bears an explanation. Jesus addressed the *scribes* and the Pharisees. We have already noted that scribes were a special class of skilled professionals who belonged to both parties—Sadducees and Pharisees. It was the chief scribe who occupied the seat of Moses. He had expertise in the law of Moses and traditions of the elders. The Gospel accounts make it clear Jesus himself did not do everything the scribes and Pharisees said to do. Notice, for example, Matthew 12:1–8 and 15:1–9. So, what did Jesus mean in Matthew 23:2–3? He meant to obey them only as long as they proclaimed the oracles of God but not if they taught traditions. The criticism is so strong against them in the remainder of the chapter it would be safe to assume they were not correct in many things. Jesus said many of their rules and regulations contradicted the inspired Word of God. On this basis should we assume they were correct on counting Pentecost? As long as the scribes and Pharisees read the law of Moses they should be obeyed, but certainly not their hypocritical example.

Some say Sivan 6 is the correct day for Pentecost because God commands that we eat unleavened bread seven days. Since the command in Leviticus 23:14 was not to eat of the produce of the land until the omer had been offered, in those years when the omer (wave sheaf) Sunday followed the weekly Sabbath it would be impossible to eat bread at all during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. An examination of the context in Leviticus 23 shows that "eating of bread" referred to the new harvest. There was no prohibition against eating stored grains from the previous year.

Paul has been touted by some as a Pharisee, and that as a Pharisee he must have kept Pentecost on Sivan 6. "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man

thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Ph'p. 3:4–7). But what did Paul really say about his Pharisee background? Notice, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but *dung*, that I may win Christ" (vv. 3:7–8). That does not sound like Paul was overly impressed with the Pharisees, does it? It also fails to take into consideration two factors: 1) Did Paul continue as a Pharisee after his conversion? And, 2) Who controlled the Temple ritual? The answer to the first question is a resounding *no!* The second point completely nullifies the argument that the Pharisees had any say about when Pentecost was observed during the time of Christ. The Sadducees were in control of the Temple and its rituals.

John the Baptist was the first to condemn the Pharisees and Sadducees, calling them a "generation of vipers." In his denunciation of their doctrines, Jesus grouped the Pharisees and Sadducees together (Matt. 16:6, 12). But the main target for His scathing attack was toward the scribes and Pharisees. The Pharisees stressed the traditions of the elders. These man-made rules replaced the true theology of God with all kinds of regulations. The people were ruled by man-made laws rather than the Law of God. When Christ warned against the "leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees" He was warning about their doctrine—their teaching—and their implicit lack of faith ("Phariseeism," an article by R.J. Rushdoony).

As long as the new moon was determined by observation there was no fixed date for Shavuot. Later, so that the day of the festival was not in doubt, a fixed date was adopted, always falling on the fiftieth day from the second day of Passover (*Ency. Judaica*, s.v. "Festivals"). The calendar, adopted in the fourth century AD, fixed the number of days each month without any consideration to the appearance of the new moon. Hence, Pentecost was fixed on a set date in the third month.

Those who observe Sivan 6 as Pentecost rely heavily on the interpretation of the historical data now available. Many scholars say there is much to be learned about Jewish customs and religious practices during the time of Christ. At the present we simply do not have all the facts. In order to sustain a Sivan 6 Pentecost the word "Sabbath/s" in Leviticus 23:15–16 must be interpreted to mean "week." But Sabbath/s never means week. The *Hebrew-English Lexicon to the Old Testament*, by Gesenius, is incorrect when it says Sabbath can mean "perhaps a week." This interpretation is employed to sustain the modern Jewish observance of Pentecost on Sivan 6. Other Bible translations, including the Septuagint, which do the same thing, are merely interpretations. The Hebrew word for "weeks" is *shabuot*, a plural noun which is usually translated "weeks." The singular *shabuah* means "week." Deuteronomy 16:9–10 does use the word weeks which is *shabuot* in the Hebrew. It is not translated from *Shabbat* (Sabbath). Deuteronomy 16:9–10 illustrates

another method of counting toward Pentecost. Those who say *Shabbat* can be translated "week" are simply interpreting the meaning to suit a purpose. The fact is, *Shabbat* is never translated "week" in the Old Testament of the Authorized Version and to do so in any other is not a literal translation.

Some say the word *sabbaton* is used when referring to the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles. Since *sabbaton* refers to the high sabbaths, *shabbat* can only be referring to the weekly Sabbath. If this reasoning were true it would be fine, but it is not. *Sabbaton* refers to both the weekly Sabbath and the high Sabbath days. See, for example Leviticus 23:32 where the expression "Sabbath of rest" is the same expression used in Exodus 31:15 for the weekly Sabbath, and for the land Sabbath in Leviticus 25:4–5. Also, *shabbat* is used for both the weekly Sabbath and the Holy Days (Lev. 16:31; 23:32).

The count for Pentecost is from the morrow after the Sabbath. But what Sabbath? The word Sabbath is mentioned three times in determining the count for Pentecost. These are Leviticus 23:11, 15–16. How can we determine this is the weekly Sabbath rather than one of the high Sabbath days? The word Sabbath in Leviticus 23:11, 15–16 is translated from the Hebrew word *haShabbat*. When the *ha* is attached to a word it means the same thing as the English "the." *Ha* is the definite article in Hebrew. So, in Leviticus 23:11, 15–16, the word Sabbath should be translated "the Sabbath." What is the significance of this? The answer is that *in the Old Testament haShabbat refers to the weekly Sabbath only*. The reader is asked to examine the following texts. All contain the word *haShabbat*. The root *שבת* with the definite article *ha* has other meanings but when vowel pointed as *haShabbat* it refers to the weekly Sabbath only. These are Exodus 16:29; 20:8, 11; 31:14, 15, 16; 35:3, Numbers 15:32, Deuteronomy 5:12, 15, Nehemiah 10:31, 33; 13:15, 17, 18, 19, 22, Jeremiah 17:21, 22, 24, 27, Ezekiel 46:1, 4, 12, and Amos 8:5. An examination of the texts will clearly show they all refer to the weekly Sabbath. The following texts use *haShabbat* but are not quite as clear. (As you can see Leviticus 23:11, 15–16 are among them.) These are: Leviticus 23:11, 15–16; 24:8, Numbers 28:9, II Kings 11:5, 7, 9; 16:18, and II Chronicles 23:4, 8, and Psalm 92:1 (superscript). An examination of these texts demonstrates that while they do not pinpoint the weekly Sabbath, neither do they apply to any high Sabbath day. These texts, therefore, must be interpreted in the light of the clear-cut decisive Scriptures that show *haShabbat* refers to the weekly Sabbath. Leviticus 23:11, 15–16 refers to the weekly Sabbath only and the proper day to begin the Pentecost count from is the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread, not either of the two annual high Sabbath days. *What this means is that Pentecost cannot fall on Sivan 6!*

McClintock and Strong list some of the arguments used to support a Sivan 6 Pentecost. One of these arguments states that *Pesah* (Passover) used in Joshua 5:11 is the equivalent of *haShabbat* and that *haShabbat*, therefore, refers to one of the high Sabbaths. We have already seen that *haShabbat* cannot refer to a high Sabbath day, so the argument is fallacious.

Why Pentecost Is Not Sunday

Sunday advocates tell us the disciples were observing Pentecost on the very same day that thousands of Jews from all over the world were observing it in Jerusalem. And since the Sadducees were in charge of the Temple, it is obvious Pentecost was being observed on a Sunday. Therefore, the historic day of Pentecost in Acts 2 must have been a Sunday. Yet, the old rendering of *sumplerousthai* (fully come) in Acts 2:1 was taken by Lightfoot to signify the Christian Pentecost did not coincide with the Jewish. The tradition of the ancient church placed the first Pentecost on Sunday and the Karaites took the Sabbath of Leviticus 23:11, 15 to be the weekly Sabbath, always celebrating Pentecost on Sunday. *But it is very uncertain whether the custom existed in Christ's day, and moreover it would be impossible to prove the disciples followed this custom, if it could be proved to have existed (ISBE, s.v. "Pentecost")*.

Something should be said about Acts 2:1 since it is frequently quoted to "prove" Pentecost falls on Sunday. This is because the word "Pentecost" means fifty. The fact is, Acts 2:1 offers no support for Pentecost being on the fiftieth day. The New Testament does not instruct us how to count Pentecost. This is done in Leviticus 23:15–16. The Greek text in Acts 2:1 should read, "And during the accomplishing of the day of Pentecost they were all with one accord in the same place." The text is merely telling us they were observing the day of Pentecost when the various events described in the chapter took place. The text does not tell us which day of the week was being observed.

Also, there is a problem in Exodus 19 for those who observe a Sunday Pentecost. The sequence of events in the chapter indicates "the same day" in verse 1 to be a Thursday. Verse 7, then, indicates a Friday. Verse 10 refers to Saturday and Sunday (Sunday was designated as a wash day), while verse 11 is speaking of a Monday. The wash day preceded the appearance of God on Monday as He came down in the sight of the people upon Mount Sinai. If Sunday was Pentecost, then Saturday was the wash day. The weekly Sabbath cannot be a wash day.

The Council of Nicea fixed Easter on the Sunday immediately following the new moon which was nearest to the Vernal Equinox. Whitsunday (Pentecost) was fixed to fall on the seventh Sunday after Easter. The habit of dressing in white and being baptized gave it the name of Whitsunday (*ISBE, s.v. "Pentecost"*). The church made Whitsunday the principal occasion on which baptisms were performed. Whitsunday or Whitsun (meaning white Sunday) was eventually expanded into a week-long festival in the seventh century AD. In the eleventh century it was shortened to three days. In the eighteenth century Pope Clement XIV abolished Whit Tuesday as a church holy day and in 1911 Pope Pius X ordered Monday dropped. In most European countries Whitmonday is still a legal holiday (*American Book of Days, 3rd ed., compiled and edited by Jane M. Hatch, 463*).

There are some strong accusations made against a Sunday Pentecost. In the *Age of Faith* (Will Durant, Vol. 4, p. 75), a description of pagan celebrations is given which equates the Feast of Pentecost with the ancient pagan festival of Floralia. Durant says that both Passover and Pentecost were accepted into the Christian calendar, however altered in content and date. Accordingly, anyone who keeps a Sunday Pentecost is keeping the feast of Flora. One Sivan 6 advocate tells us that Whitsunday is derived from the sacred festival of the ancient pagan goddess Flora. About a month after the festival of Easter, the pagans celebrated the festival of Flora, in honor of Flora, the goddess of spring and flowers. In Rome, her feast was celebrated from April 28 to the beginning of May. She was annually honored at the May Day festival called Floralia. This accusation may or may not be valid. Biblically, Pentecost is assigned to come after a count of fifty days following the day after the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. If there were no Bible precedence for this count and its coinciding with a period near the end of April and the first of May, there may be some validity to the argument. But, the truth is the Passover occasionally occurs near the Easter date and the day of Pentecost at times coincides with the beginning of May, depending on the length of the Hebrew year. Unless there is direct proof that Whitsunday was deliberately chosen to take the place of Floralia, the argument is thin. The fact that Whitsunday often coincides with the first of May is no real proof that Whitsunday is a pagan celebration.

This peculiarity has been noticed before. In a work entitled, *Observations on Popular Antiquities*, by John Brand, page 119, we read, "Polydore Vergil says that 'at the Calendes of Maie,' not only houses and gates were garnished with boughs and flowers, but 'in some places the Churches, which fashion is derived of the Romaynes, that use the same to honour their goddesse Flora with suche ceremonies, whom they named Goddesses of Fruites.'" On page 120 we read, "In the old Calendar of the Romish Church we find the following observation on the 30th of April—the boys go out and seek May trees." In a footnote on page 123 we read, "Some derive May from Maia, the mother of Mercury, to whom they offered sacrifices . . . the bush of *Hawthorn*, or as it is called May, placed at the doors on this day, may point out the first fruits of the Spring, as this is one of the earliest trees which blossoms." Why is a Sunday Pentecost alone suspect? Since Floralia coincided with the time Pentecost was observed, the festival often lasting several days, the accusation that a Sunday Pentecost is pagan could just as well apply to a Monday Pentecost, or even Sivan 6.

What should be remembered regarding both a Sunday Pentecost and Sivan 6 is that in both cases, the Pharisaic count from the first high Sabbath day and the Sadducean count from the morrow after the weekly Sabbath, the count is only forty-nine days and Pentecost is observed on the fiftieth day (McClintock and Strong, s.v. "Passover"). The Bible does not say to number forty-nine days; it says to number fifty days. The question is: When does the fifty-day count end? The answer: When the full fifty days are completed!

According to the Hebrew numeration rule, when the preposition *min* is used with respect to counting time, the count is inclusive (*Gesenius' Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, pp. 484–485). What this means is the count begins on the day following the high Sabbath for the Pharisees, or the day following the weekly Sabbath—Sunday—for the Sadducees. We have already demonstrated in this article that the Pharisees are incorrect in beginning the count from the first high Sabbath day. The correct count begins with the Sunday following the weekly Sabbath. Sunday, then, is day one of the count. But notice again Leviticus 23:15–16. "And ye shall count unto you *from the morrow* after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even *unto the morrow* after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord." The italicized words immediately above contain the preposition *min*. What we see is that Sunday—day one—is the beginning of the count and day fifty is the end of the count. The count does not end until the fiftieth day is completed! How do we know this? Because the fiftieth day of the count—*unto the morrow* after the seventh Sabbath (v.16)—which is Sunday, also contains the *min*. What this means is that both the beginning and end of the count—a full fifty days—must be included. *Pentecost, therefore, cannot fall on a Sunday.* To observe Pentecost on Sunday means one has counted only forty-nine days, not fifty! What is wrong with those who keep a Sunday Pentecost? They are inconsistent. They acknowledge the *min* at the beginning of the count by including day one as the start of the count, but then exclude the *min* at the end of the count by refusing to count the full fifty days. They count forty-nine days and keep Pentecost on the fiftieth day. No wonder Jesus said, ". . . beware . . . of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. 16:12). Neither of them is to be trusted in the matter of counting Pentecost. Pentecost should not be observed until the fifty-day count has been completed. Archbishop Cranmer, no doubt, was aware of this. In his 1539 English translation he rendered Acts 2:1 as follows: "*When the fifty days had come to an end*, they were all with one accord together in one place." For those who say the key to Pentecost is the number "fifty," it would be more accurate to say, "the key to Pentecost is *how* to count fifty."

Pentecost Is on Monday

Sunday advocates tell us it only makes sense to rely on the ancient understanding of the Jewish people who preserved the "oracles of God." Only the Jews have preserved the important elements of the Hebrew calendar. The Jews have always understood that the wave-sheaf offering must fall within the Days of Unleavened Bread. To take the last high day for the Sabbath marker, wave-sheaf Sunday would be outside the Days of Unleavened Bread. According to the Jews the wave-sheaf offering must occur during the Days of Unleavened Bread, never outside it. But the fact is, it is the Sabbath that must be within the Days of Unleavened Bread; this is proven by the usage of *haShabbat*.

The accusation has been made that those who observe a Monday Pentecost count fifty-one days rather than fifty. By observing Pentecost on Monday they are keeping Pentecost on the fifty-first day. What is wrong with this reasoning? What is wrong is that there is no fifty-first day in the Pentecost count. There are only fifty days. Pentecost day is not a part of the count. The count has been completed when the full fifty days are counted. Then, the following day is Pentecost. To follow this line of reasoning we can say those who keep a Sunday Pentecost count only forty-nine days, and then keep Pentecost on the fiftieth day. What we must keep in mind is that Hebrew numeration always includes the day which is the *terminus a quo* (beginning) as well as the *terminus ad quem* (ending) (*Ency. Brit.*, 11th ed., s.v. "Pentecost"). The Bible clearly states fifty days must be completely counted. Forty-nine days is one day short. The Jews have long recognized the inconsistency in their manner of counting Pentecost and observing it on Sivan 6. If fifty days are counted inclusively, beginning with Nisan 16, then Sivan 7 would be the correct date. Jewish scholars since the time of Maimonides (twelfth century AD) have interpreted Leviticus 23:15 to mean that one should reckon forty-nine days from the time of the cutting of the wave sheaf (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "The 613 Commandments"). Amazingly, Sunday advocates tell us that the preposition *min* when used in reference to time makes the count inclusive, that is, the beginning segment of time as well as the concluding segment is included. Both the starting point and the ending point are included in the count. Thus, the beginning and ending points are frequently included and the fifty days of Leviticus 23:16 have to include both the beginning day and the ending day. But when it comes to counting *they completely overlook the last Sunday of the fifty days as a part of the count and only count forty-nine days*. The fact is, all the groups which admit to an inclusive count with Pentecost falling on a Sunday, without exception, omit "unto the morrow" (*mimaharat*) in Leviticus 23:16, thereby keeping Pentecost on Sunday after a forty-nine day count.

While there is no calendar rule determining how late in the spring Passover may fall, there is a calendar rule which indirectly limits how late in the year it may fall. The rule is that Pentecost must be observed in the spring, not the summer. The feasts of God must fall in their proper seasons. This was the basic reason underlying the calendar adjustment made in AD 161. The tenth year of the nineteen year cycle during the time of Christ was an intercalary year, but it is not an intercalary year today. The average tropical solar year in the Hebrew calendar is six minutes and 39.371 seconds longer than the true astronomical magnitude. The result is that after a thousand years, a given Hebrew month will be approximately 4.6 days behind the actual sun time which governs the seasons. Passover occurs one day later every 216 years so that eventually Pentecost would fall in the beginning of summer. A calendar adjustment was made during the Patriarchate of Simon III because if left alone Pentecost would have fallen for the first time in summer. The solution was the postponing of the intercalary year from the seventh to the eighth year of the nineteen year cycle. What is significant is that in AD 161 Pentecost would have been in the summer only if it were observed on Monday. Had Pentecost been observed on a Sunday, it would not have been necessary to make a postponement until the time of Constantine. Simon III

determined this postponement by a Monday Pentecost, not by the Pharisaic reckoning of Sivan 6 (*A New Look at Pentecost in Light of the Calendar Adjustment in the Second Century*, adaptation of a Bible Study by Herman L. Hoeh on April 20, 1973).

Deuteronomy 16:9–10

Deuteronomy 16:9–10 has been quoted in order to sustain a Sivan 6 Pentecost. It reads: "Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn. And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the Lord thy God, according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee." According to the argument, the word "weeks" (*shabua*) refers to the seven-week count beginning with the morrow after the first high day during the Days of Unleavened Bread and ending on Sivan 6. "Weeks" could not refer to a week that goes from Sabbath to Sabbath; it refers to a week that begins on a non-Sabbath day and ends on a non-Sabbath day. Therefore, "seven Sabbaths" in Leviticus 23:15 refers to seven weeks that do not begin with a Sabbath, not seven weeks from Sabbath to Sabbath. There is a problem with this. Leviticus 23:15–16 uses the word *haShabbat*, which refers to the weekly Sabbath only. The key to understanding Deuteronomy 16:9–10 is found in "from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn." When was the sickle put to the corn? The answer: Wave-sheaf Sunday. "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. . . . And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings" (Lev. 23:10–11, 14). Since harvesting could not begin until the completion of the wave-sheaf ceremony, the day after wave-sheaf day would be day one of the count toward Pentecost. The count, then, in Deuteronomy 16:9–10 is seven weeks plus one day, making a total of fifty days in the count. The count in Leviticus 23 and Deuteronomy 16 are not the same, but both end with the lapse of fifty completed days.

Joshua 5:10–11

Joshua 5:10–11 is another text used to "prove" the Pentecost count begins on the morrow after the first high Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. First, let us notice the context of Joshua 5. On the tenth day of the first month, the children of Israel crossed the Jordan river and set up camp at Gilgal, west of the Jordan river (Josh. 4:19). Notice what happened immediately after. "At that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time. And Joshua made him

sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins. . . . And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, *till they were whole*" (Josh. 5:2–3, 8). With that background, notice Joshua 5:10–12. "And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho. And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." It is argued that the command given in Leviticus 23:14, "And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God . . ." indicates that the Passover in Joshua 5:10 fell on a Sabbath and the following day—Sunday—was the wave-sheaf day. It is true that the Passover in Joshua 5 fell on a Sabbath, but what those who argue for a Sivan 6 Pentecost fail to consider is Joshua 5:2–3, 8. Could it have been possible for the men to have done the necessary preparation for the Passover immediately after circumcision? Not according to the Bible. Genesis 34:25 tells us the third day after circumcision is the most discomfiting. The men of Shechem were helpless during this period and were easily slain. God told the Israelites in Joshua 5:8 to abide in their tents until they were whole. It is unlikely they were able to prepare and partake of the Passover under these circumstances. The logical conclusion is that the account in Joshua 5:10–11 refers to the Passover of the second month (Num. 9:10–11). Therefore, the morrow after the Passover in Joshua 5 is not the wave-sheaf day. Wave-sheaf day occurred one month earlier, but due to the exigency of their march toward the land of Canaan they did not keep the Passover in the first month. Keep in mind that during the Days of Unleavened Bread there are three Sabbaths, two annual Sabbaths and a weekly Sabbath. Pentecost is counted from the first month only. In some cases the annual Sabbath and weekly Sabbath fall on the same day. This is what has been assumed in Joshua 5:10, so that the wave-sheaf count began on Sunday following the Passover which fell on the weekly Sabbath—thus making the weekly Sabbath and first high Sabbath fall on the same day. But, this is not the case here. The context of Joshua 4 and 5 prove that the Passover is that of the second month.

The *Sabbaton* Theory

Much has been said about Luke 4:16, supposedly proving that Jesus went into the synagogue on the Feast of Pentecost. This is called the "*Sabbaton* theory." According to this theory the Greek phrase "day of the Sabbath" translated "Sabbath day" in Luke 4:16, refers to Pentecost. Texts which supposedly prove this theory include Acts 13:14 and 16:11–13. Luke 4:16 reads, "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read." The *Analytical Greek Lexicon* points out on page 361 that *sabbaton* is both singular and plural and is used this way in the New Testament. The *Word Study Concordance*, page 679,

shows that *sabbaton* is simply the word *shabbat* with a grammatical ending. There is nothing in the context of Luke 4:16 that supports the notion that the day of the Sabbath/s refers to Pentecost. An examination of Acts 13:14 and 16:11–13 indicates the same thing. Acts 16:11–13 states, "Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither." The reasoning behind the notion that this refers to Pentecost is that Paul abode at Philippi several days and did not meet with the believers until Pentecost. Pentecost did not fall on a Sunday or Monday here, but rather Sivan 6, because they would have met on the Sabbath prior to Pentecost which surely would have been mentioned. At best this is wishful thinking. There are many things not mentioned in the Bible, so this idea is no proof whatsoever that Acts 16:11–13 refers to Pentecost.

Value of the Septuagint

The Septuagint is the most commonly known Greek translation of the Old Testament. Some who support a Sivan 6 Pentecost refer to the Septuagint for proof of their argument because "Sabbath/s" is translated as "week/s" in Leviticus 23:15–16. It is believed the Septuagint (LXX) was the version Christ and the apostles quoted from about ninety percent of the time when referring to Old Testament passages. Others disagree, saying that two out of every three Old Testament quotations in the New Testament do not agree verbally with the LXX. Whatever the case, *New Unger's Bible Dictionary* states that the LXX cannot be used in a mere mechanical manner to revise or correct the Masoretic text. The varying quality of its translation necessitates great caution. Extreme literalism and freedom of rendering often occur in the same verse or in close contact. By their various viewpoints translators changed the original at times and in comparing it with the Masoretic text it has suffered where the two differ. The scholar Paul Kahle did extensive work on the LXX and does not believe there was one original Greek version. As a result, the manuscripts of the LXX cannot be traced back to one archetype. Kahle takes the position that there were earlier renderings of the Pentateuch before the revision was made during the time of Ptolemy, which version became the standard Greek Torah.

While it is believed that the LXX was translated from the Hebrew in the first half of the third century BC, there are a number of indications that it was written at about 100–80 BC. It was produced at Alexandria. Its main value is its witness to an older Hebrew text than what we now possess. We cannot reconstruct this older Hebrew text because we do not have a pure Greek text to work from. The Greek Pentateuch has survived in a relatively pure form, but everywhere else we must be on guard for interpolations, sometimes extending to whole paragraphs. Not a verse is without its array of variant readings. There is a mixture

due to "doublets" or alternative renderings of a single Hebrew word or phrase which appear side by side in the transmitted text. It is reasonably conjectured that even before the second century AD the LXX text had been discarded and was replaced by another version (Theodotion's), which is but a working over of an older alternative version. The task of restoring the original text of the LXX is beset with difficulties. Sources for this task are all the result of "mixture" and the principles for reconstruction are not yet securely established (*ISBE*, s.v. "Septuagint").

The LXX is free rather than literal and frequently misses the sense of the original. It is useful in settling the original text, but is more valuable for its interpretation, although it often fails in difficult passages from the freedom of its renderings, the carelessness and ignorance of its translators, and the absence of fixed rules of translation (*Bible Handbook*, Joseph Angus, 30–31). By the side of slavish and false literalism there is great liberty, if not license, in handling the original. Gross mistakes occur along with happy renderings of very difficult passages, which suggests the aid of some able scholars. Greek elements include Greek mythological terms and the adaptations of Greek philosophical ideas (*Life and Time of Jesus the Messiah*, Alfred Edersheim, Vol. I, 27–28). Manuscripts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as other early manuscripts and quotations from the LXX in ancient writings, indicate that revisions were constantly being made to the LXX. Thus, the LXX often witnesses to a Hebrew manuscript different and earlier than the Masoretic text. Later, several Greek translations were made and parts of these have found their way into the LXX (*Harper's Bible Dictionary*, s.v. "Septuagint"). With these facts in mind we need not be too concerned with the translation of Leviticus 23:15–16. It clearly represents an interpretation that supports the Pharisaic view.

Revelation Is the Key to Truth

The accusation has been made that people keep Pentecost on the wrong day because they failed to consult authorities and knowledgeable scholars. This is the notion that truth comes by scholarship, not by revelation. This is contradictory to what the Bible says about truth. The Bible clearly states that truth comes by revelation only. True, scholarship and technical proof can confirm revelation but they are not the basis for it. If scholars have the truth today, why are they all in disagreement? It is difficult to find even two who agree on any of the really hard issues of the Bible. The Bible does not substantiate the notion that truth comes by scholarship. While truth is revealed to each individual over a period of time, new truth will not contradict previous truth; it will add to it and supplement it. Revealed truth is absolute. It does not change. Subsequent truth that is revealed will not alter that which was previously revealed. Added truth will augment original truth; it will never be contrary to it. To say that after forty years of keeping Pentecost on Monday, the Worldwide Church of God suddenly had the truth regarding the correct day for Pentecost (Sunday) would mean one of two things: 1) The church never had the truth to begin with, and consequently it was never the true church; or 2) What is now called truth is, in fact, heresy.

What the Bible does reveal is that Pentecost should be counted from the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. After a *complete* count of fifty days, Pentecost should be observed on Monday. To observe Pentecost on Sivan 6 is to follow the error of the Pharisees whose decision to choose the first high Sabbath day during the Days of Unleavened Bread was based on the need to control the people. To follow the Sadducean reckoning by counting from the correct day but failing to complete the count of fifty days is refusing to heed the warning that Jesus gave to beware of the doctrine of the Sadducees. Both parties are incorrect. Let us follow what was originally revealed to the Church of God and what can be substantiated technically from the Bible!