



Pentecost

The Birthday of the Body of Messiah

Outline

Pentecost

I. Pentecost (Shavuot/Feast of Weeks)

A. Acts 2

1. 3,000 baptized; Acts 2:41

2. “fully come” = fulfillment; Acts 2:1; Luke 8:23

3. Formation of the Body of Messiah

B. Season of the Giving of the Law

1. Exodus 19:1

2. Season of the Giving of the Spirit

3. Noise and fire

a) Exodus 19:18–19

b) Acts 2:2–3

4. Golden calf

5. 3,000 died; 3,000 lived

a) Exodus 32:28

b) Acts 2:41

6. Law shows God's holiness, our sin

II. Pentecost Reveals the Messiah

1. Leviticus 23:15

2. Leviticus 23:16–17

A. Second Firstfruits

1. Barley harvest; wheat harvest

2. Believers are firstfruits

a) James 1:17–18

B. Dateless feast

1. Shavuot = “weeks”
2. Count 50 days from Passover

C. Pentecost Offering

1. Two loaves (Leviticus 23:17)
 - a) Two witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15)
 - b) Disciples sent out by two (Mark 6:7)
 - c) Jews and Gentiles (Deuteronomy 16:16; Acts 2:10)
2. Leaven (chametz)
 - a) Leviticus 23:17
 - b) Come as you are
3. Fine flour (solet)
 - a) Refined, crushed
 - b) Conforming us to him

Key Terms

Body of Messiah – A term for all those who have trusted in Jesus as their Savior through his blood atonement. Messiah is called the head and believers are the body (Eph. 4:15–16). Until Pentecost was fulfilled, the Holy Spirit came upon individuals for a period of time to accomplish the task God called them to fulfill (for example, Judg. 3:10; Ex. 31:3). But now since the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in Acts 2, every believer who comes to the saving knowledge of Jesus is permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Body of Messiah is a community of redeemed people indwelt by the Spirit.

Firstfruits – The first and best of the agricultural offering presented to the Lord.

Gentile – A non-Jew or non-Israelite. In Hebrew the term for Gentile is *goy* and the plural is *goyim* which is a biblical term for the nations.

Leaven – *Chametz* is the Hebrew term for “leaven” which is any food that is made of grain and water that has been allowed to ferment and rise. In Scripture, leaven is a corrupting agent that pictures sin.

Mosaic Law – The law that, according to the Old Testament, God gave to the Israelites through Moses. The Mosaic Law contains 613 commandments including many rules of religious observance given in the first five books of the Old Testament. In Judaism, these five books are called the Torah, or the Law.

Pilgrimage Feasts – In the Bible (Deut. 16:16–17) God commands all Israelites to appear before him or “come up to Jerusalem” three times a year: at Passover (the Feast of Unleavened Bread), Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

Proselyte – This biblical term comes from both the Greek and Hebrew idea for a “stranger,” a “newcomer to Israel,” or a “sojourner in the land.” In the rabbinical writings and in the New Testament, it is used for a convert to Judaism from paganism.

Shavuot – (Sha-voo-OTE) Hebrew word meaning “weeks.” Also called Feast of Weeks, Pentecost (from the Greek word for “fifty”), and the Season of the Giving of the Law. It is celebrated on the 50th day after Passover.

Ruach HaKodesh – Hebrew for the Holy Spirit. *Ruach* literally means “spirit,” *Ha* means “the,” and *Kodesh* means “holy.” Biblically, the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, who indwells each person who receives Jesus as his or her personal Savior.

Solet – (so-LET) Hebrew for “fine flour” that has been stripped and crushed to remove the inconsistencies and lumps. In Leviticus 23:17 it describes the flour that made up the two-loaf offering for Pentecost.

Torah – Hebrew word meaning “instruction,” translated as Law. This divine instruction refers to the Five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

Firstfruits Comparison

Firstfruits during Passover	Firstfruits during Pentecost
Spring barley harvest	Summer wheat harvest
Presented the day after the Sabbath of Passover Week.	Presented 50 days after Passover.
Pictures Messiah as our firstfruits from the dead (1 Cor. 15:21–23).	Pictures believers as the firstfruits of Messiah’s new creation, the “body” of Messiah (Acts 2).
Bread made without leaven.	Two loaves made with leaven.
Meaning: Jesus is the acceptable and perfect sacrifice.	Meaning: Believers are accepted by God because Jesus was accepted by his Father as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Giving of the Law and Spirit Comparison

Giving of the Law	Giving of the Spirit
Exodus 19:1–20:20; 32	Acts 2
Spiritual birthday of Israel	Spiritual birthday of the body of Messiah
Traditionally believed to have happened about 50 days after the Israelites left Egypt (Ex. 19:1).	Believers in Jesus were gathered together on the day of Pentecost, 50 days after they celebrated Passover.
Fire and noise as God descended Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:16–18).	A violent, rushing wind and tongues as fire descended upon the believers.
3,000 people died because of their idolatry (Ex. 32:28).	3,000 people were made spiritually alive because they believed in Jesus.
Law given to instruct the Israelites.	Spirit given to empower and guide the body of Messiah—including both Jews and Gentiles.

Before the Session

Prepare

- Ask God for guidance and pray for each participant.
- Watch the Pentecost video on your own (30 minutes).
- Familiarize yourself with the *Key Terms* and their definitions.
- Study the passages listed in *Key Bible Verses*.
- See the *Additional Resources* for further study.

Checklist

- *Pentecost DVD* (Be sure to set up and test all electronic equipment beforehand.)
- Bible (You may want to tag the key verses to find them easily.)
- If you are serving refreshments following the Bible study, you may want to provide some bread or wheat products for this session.

Opening the Session (10 minutes)

- Begin with prayer.
- Have a volunteer read Romans 15:5–7. These verses highlight two important themes: We are all one in Messiah, and God accepts all believers just as we are.

Watch the DVD *Session Three* (30 minutes)

Refer class members to the outline in their Participant Guides for note taking. Remind them that if they aren't sure what a word means, their Participant Guides have concise definitions of the key terms in each session.

Group Discussion (15 minutes)

If the class is large, divide participants into small groups. If time allows, have a spokesperson from each small group share with the rest of the class some of the insights discussed in their group. (These questions are also found in the Participant Guide.)

1. Why is there an emphasis on counting 50 days to determine the date of the observance of Pentecost?
2. What is the significance of the two loaves that had to be presented for this feast?
3. What is the importance of the two loaves being made with leaven, and why was this unusual offering only accepted on the day of Pentecost?
4. What Scriptures come to mind when you think of giving your first and your best (your “firstfruits”) to God in your relationship and your service to him?
5. What questions do you still have about the Feast of Pentecost?

Wrap it up (5 minutes)

Reflection Questions

Encourage participants to reflect on the following questions in the coming week. (These questions are also found in the Participant Guide.)

1. Imagine if you were there at the foot of the Mount Sinai when the Law was given. Think how terrifying it must have been first to witness Moses coming down the mountain from the presence of the Lord and then to be found guilty of idolatry and deserving of judgment and death. Then imagine the striking contrast of being with the disciples of Jesus in the temple when the Holy Spirit was given. Take a minute

to thank God for his grace that has been poured out on you through the redemption of Jesus, the gift of salvation!

2. In Jewish tradition there is a custom to read the book of Ruth during Pentecost because Ruth's redemption story took place during harvest time and features the Pentecost portion from Leviticus 23:22. Take some time this week to read the book of Ruth. Reflect on how God redeemed Ruth the Moabite and how through Ruth's testimony her bitter mother-in-law was restored back to the God of Israel. Can you think of how God used your faithfulness (or the faithfulness of someone you know) to restore another believer back to the Lord?
3. Leaven is seen as a corrupting agent, but it is allowed in the Pentecost offering. How does this leaven in the offering display God's mercy and acceptance of each of us as sinners? How does this teach us to love and accept others in the body of Messiah?

Close the session in prayer.

Prayer Over Bread: This ancient Jewish blessing is recited before partaking of bread products. You may want to recite as a group the below prayer. (This prayer is also in the Participant Guide.) Then serve some bread or wheat products for refreshments.

English

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the ground.

Hebrew

Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech ha'olam hamotzi lechem min ha'arets.

Key Bible Verses

Read: Leviticus 23:15–22

Study Question: There are many instructions for this feast in the Bible. Write down all the aspects of this feast that you can find in this passage of Scripture.

Read: Acts 2:1–41

Study Question: When the believers in Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit, what were the different responses from the crowd?

Read: James 1:17–18

Study Question: According to this passage, what does it mean that we as believers are “firstfruits”?

Going Deeper

1. In Scripture, there are different kinds of offerings for Pentecost. What is the difference between the types of offerings in the Bible?

The sacrificial offerings in Leviticus were all meant to point to the Messiah and his fulfillment of them. The heart of the gospel is that Jesus died for our sins. But in order to appreciate his sacrifice on our behalf we need to understand what these offerings represented. The word for offerings or sacrifices in Hebrew is *korbanot*. The root of this word means “to draw near” and indicates the primary goal of these sacrifices: to draw near to God. God is holy; therefore we can only draw near to him according to his appointed sacrifices.

Sin Offering: The Hebrew word is *chatat*, meaning “to sin.” This offering was the basis of all offerings and it was the most important of all the sacrifices. The sin offering symbolized redemption or atonement for the wrongs the people had committed. Because atonement is foundational to restoring relationship with God, the sin offering was the sacrifice that made all the other offerings possible. Messiah Jesus who was sinless himself became the once-for-all sin offering for us: “[God] made Him who knew no sin to be sin [offering] on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

Burnt offering or whole offering: The Hebrew word is *olah*, meaning “going up” or “ascension.” *Olah* offering was completely burnt on the altar; no part was eaten by anyone. This offering represented complete submission to God’s will and dedication to God; therefore the entire offering was given to God. The apostle Paul teaches how Jesus was that burnt offering as he totally gave himself as a sacrifice to God, a fragrant aroma. Burnt offering is that fragrant aroma of total surrender and dedication that brings delight to the heart of God. “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma” (Eph. 5:1–2).

The grain offering: The Hebrew word is *mincha* and refers to an offering from the produce of the ground. Grain was the staple of people’s diets, and unlike today, most physical sustenance and nourishment came from grain. Therefore, it represented dependence on God to provide rain and

favorable climate to produce a bountiful harvest as well as health and strength to be able to toil in the fields. This grain offering points to Messiah's perfect life and ministry and how he went about his Father's business. He was able to say, "It is finished" and report to the Father that he completed the work he came to do. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger" (John 6:35).

The Peace Offering: The Hebrew word is *zebach sh'lamim* which comes from the word *shalom*, meaning "peace" or "wholeness" or "completeness." The peace offering brings restoration and peace with God. It is through this offering that the fellowship between humanity and God is restored. This particular offering was burned on the altar, a portion was given to the priests, and the rest was eaten by the person making the offering and his family. The peace offering was fulfilled in Messiah, who became our peace offering, reconciling us with God and with one another. "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace [offering], who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph. 2:13–14).

2. What does it mean to be "firstfruits"?

All believers from the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) until now are the firstfruits of Messiah's work. The firstfruits of Passover point to Messiah as the firstfruits from the dead; the firstfruits of Pentecost point to the harvest of his labor. All believers together are the result of his complete work of redemption. Firstfruits conveys the idea that everything belongs to God. Presenting the firstfruits offering was a way of acknowledging and giving thanks to the Lord as the provider of all things.

In Romans 8:23 Paul says, "And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body." In this verse, Paul is assuring us that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God is a guarantee or surety that our earthly bodies will be eternally redeemed. In other words, having the Holy Spirit in our lives is a pledge or down payment upon all the future promises that will be ultimately fulfilled when we reach our eternal home in heaven.

Just as Jesus was accepted as the firstfruits of Passover, so we are accepted by God as the firstfruits of Pentecost. Therefore we are to live out that

acceptance and love of God, having confidence that we are dedicated to God's use only. When we put God first in our lives we testify to the world that we belong to him.

Additional Resources

Names of the Holy Spirit pamphlet, PowerPoint® and wall chart (Rose Publishing)

Christ in the Feast of Pentecost by David Brickner and Rich Robinson (Moody Publishers, 2008)

Messianic Life Lessons from the Book of Ruth by Sam Nadler (Word of Messiah Ministries, 2006)

The Temple: Its Ministry and Services (Updated Edition) by Alfred Edersheim (Hendrickson, 1994)

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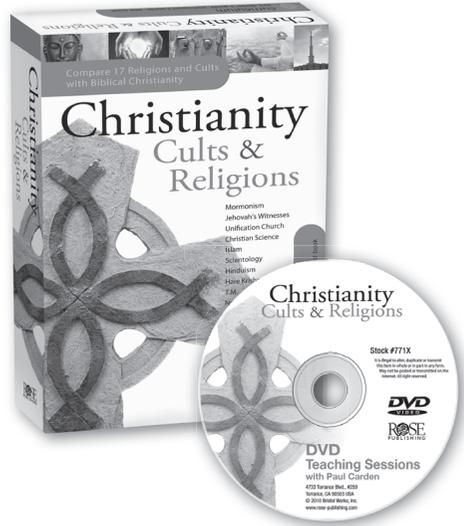
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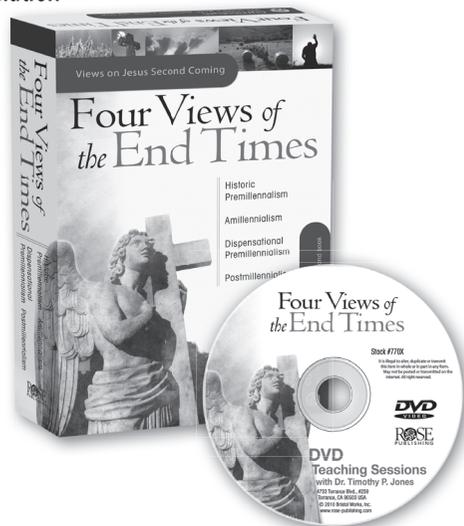
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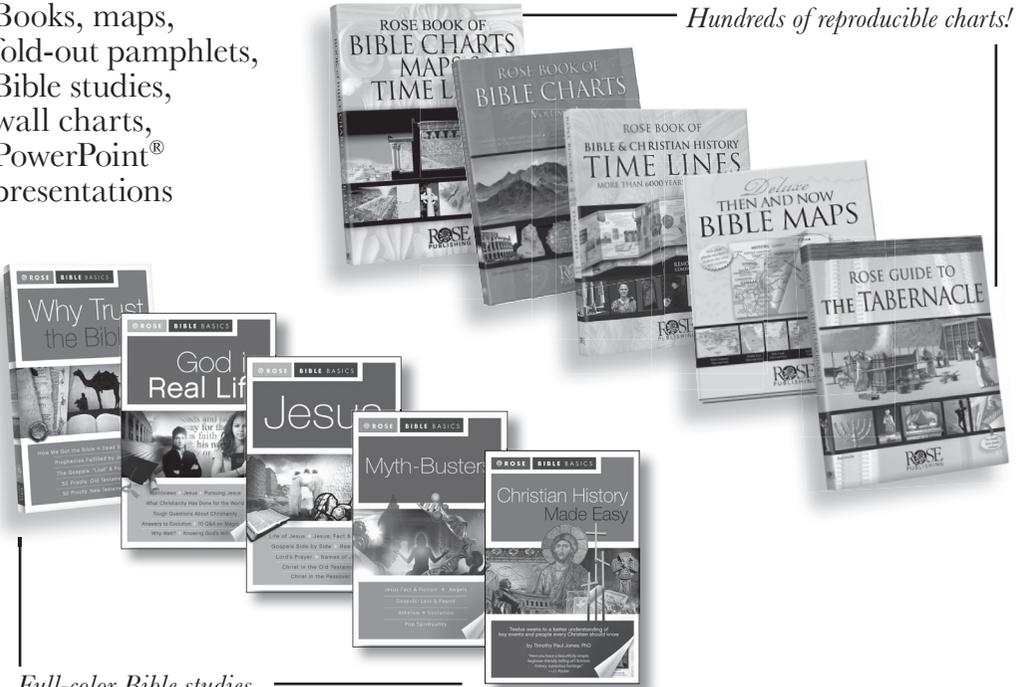
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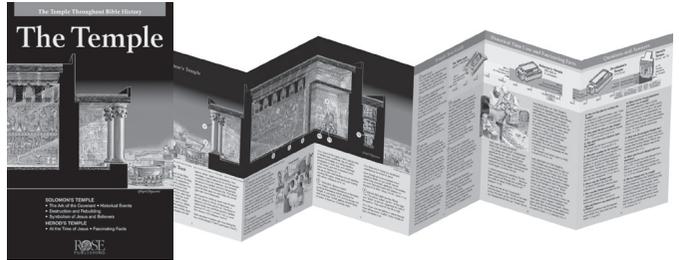
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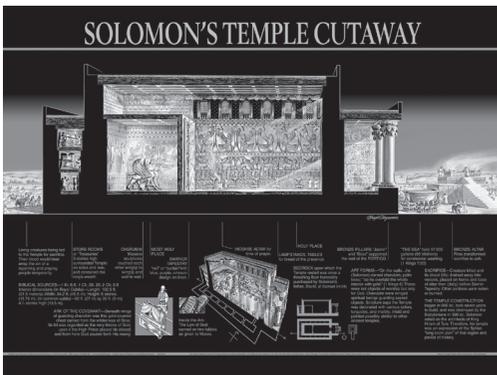
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