

Lord of the Sabbath

Program #20

The Count to Pentecost

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In the last three programs, we have reviewed the sacred yearly calendar of God for worship by His people before Him. We discussed how to determine when to celebrate the appointed times and festivals of the LORD God.

For example, the LORD God commanded His people Israel to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days each year. The activity of observance was also clear. They were to eat no leavened bread, only unleavened bread, each day for seven days. And, He specified the specific days for this worship before Him. His Feast is to be celebrated in the first month, the month of the Abib, from the 15th day to the 21st day. And, He told us to mark out and proclaim these appointed days using the sun and the new moons. It is an ingenious calendar system designed for us by an awesome God.

With the first of the three annual Feasts of the LORD already behind us this year, just when is the second Feast? Well, can you count days? Can you observe and mark when the sun sets each day? Then it should be a piece of cake for you to know when the next holy day of the LORD will fall. After counting forty-nine sunsets the next day, the 50th day, is what we know as the “Day of Pentecost.” Pentecost is translated from a Greek word *Pentekoste* that translates to a numerical count of fifty. This is the LORD’S next appointed annual day for rest and for a holy convocation before Him.

However, this second feast, and its holy day, are more mysterious than His first feast. Little is said in Scripture about what the people are to do or not to do on this day. Even the historic event connected with this feast in the history of Israel is not plainly explained. And, unlike the other two Feasts of the LORD, no specific month or day of the month is even given for its observance!

Is God then the author of confusion? No, I don’t believe that. I can only assume that God intended to make us meditate on His written word as personally given to Moses and to supplement our understanding via the Holy Spirit of His living Word, Jesus, the Christ. We assume that Jesus, a sinless man before the LORD, kept this commanded Feast all His life as Lord of the Sabbath. He certainly made reference to it and so did the Apostle Paul several times. These statements help us understand that it was important for Christians to also keep the Feasts of the Lord of the Sabbath.

When people are surprised to find out that I keep the Feasts of the LORD, instead of the popular holidays of mainline Christian Churches, they often say, “Why are you keeping those Old Testament Jewish holy days and the Law of Moses? Don’t you realize they were done away by Jesus for the “Christian” Church of God?”

And, what can you say then? How about, “Let’s see what Jesus told His Apostles after

He had been resurrected and just before He ascended to heaven to be with our Father!”
Listen to the voice of Jesus as recorded in Acts 1: 4-5:

And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

Let’s make sure we have the big picture in focus. Who is relating these words of Jesus? It is believed to be the beloved physician Luke, a companion of Paul on several of his missionary journeys to the Gentiles. Luke is a Gentile who has been called to believe in Jesus as Savior and follows Him as Lord of the Sabbath.

And, to whom did Luke write the book of Acts? The author (whether Luke or someone else) clearly wrote to Theophilus, also a Gentile. It appears that Theophilus was either a companion, patron or benefactor of Luke. The Gospel of Luke, also written to the “most excellent” Theophilus, and suggesting he is a righteous man, is again referenced in the opening of Acts. Isn’t it a bit curious for a Gentile to be writing to a Gentile about the assembly of the people of God for the Day of Pentecost decades later if it had been done away by Jesus?

And, what is the Book of Acts all about? What does Luke want his Gentile acquaintance Theophilus to learn? Let’s ponder Luke’s own introductory prologue in Acts 1: 1-3:

The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Obviously, the Gospel Luke wrote was the account of what Jesus did and taught up to the time He ascended back into heaven to be with His Father. This account in Acts begins with the commandments Jesus gave to His Apostles AFTER His resurrection and JUST BEFORE His ascension. And, it includes what Jesus spoke to them pertaining to the coming of the kingdom of God on the earth.

The Acts of the Apostles covers the subsequent ministries of Peter and Paul, particularly in the Gentile world of the Roman Empire and even into Rome itself. However, I have no doubt that the other Apostles spread the gospel OF Jesus concerning the kingdom of God to all the places where they were sent by Jesus.

How many times have you heard it said that the gospel is about the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus? Well, this is certainly good news. But it is good news ABOUT Jesus. Don’t be misled! The gospel that Jesus actually spoke and taught, both before and after His resurrection, was about the kingdom of God and was NOT about Himself.

So, what did Jesus command His Apostles to do and NOT to do? We already have read what Jesus told them NOT to do. They were NOT to depart from Jerusalem but were to wait for the baptism with the Holy Spirit. It was to happen “not many days” later. And, what were they to do AFTER this baptism? We see Luke quoting Jesus in Acts 1: 8:

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.

The resurrected Jesus was with His Apostles during the forty days before He ascended into heaven. When did this baptism with the Holy Spirit occur? Scripture shows us it happened just ten days later when the LORD’S holy day of Pentecost had fully come. We all have heard about the incredible miracle of the “speaking in tongues” that morning. One could preach fifty sermons about what took place that day, what it probably meant to those present, and what it should mean to us who accept it as fact by faith.

I am going to dedicate the next three programs to the Day of Pentecost and the LORD’S Feast of Weeks. I am going to discuss several fascinating aspects of this feast that fills my heart with wonder and joy as I celebrate it to honor the Lord of the Sabbath and God.

Some of these teachings may be things you have never heard before. A couple of the observations are new insights to me that came upon me only as I prayed about and prepared these programs. Please, if you are edified by these observations, or have questions about them, won’t you contact me? It means so much to know that your work is edifying to others in their walk with the Lord of the Sabbath. I thank you in advance.

Well, let’s start with this observation. Most Christian scholars and religious leaders will tell you that the Day of Pentecost was the beginning of the church of Jesus Christ. Many mainline Christian Churches still make a special memorial of this event each year on what they call Pentecost Sunday.

Here we have one of the Holy Days of the LORD, given by God to Moses for Israel, still being remembered and celebrated at religious services in “Christian” Churches of God some two thousand years later!

Do you comprehend the irony in this for me? Many of my Christian friends wrinkle their noses if I mention keeping the Feasts of Passover or Tabernacles like a Jew, yet many of them (perhaps unknowingly) are also keeping one of the Old Testament Feasts of the Lord which was, and is still, kept by the Jews today.

Of course, there is so much more to each Feast of the Lord than what it meant originally to the nation Israel in a historic or agricultural sense. In truth, there is also more to the Feasts of the Lord than what they meant historically to His disciples at the time of Jesus.

For example, the historic origin of the Passover Feast of Unleavened Bread for the people

of Israel relates to their miraculous redemption from the death angel and the deliverance from slavery in Egypt by the power of God and the blood of the Passover lamb. And, the first feast had obvious agricultural significance in the barley wave offering and beginning of the harvest of the firstfruits from the Land of Israel given to the Israelites by God.

However, when Jesus became our Passover Lamb sacrifice, all people could now receive redemption from the death penalty of sin through His shed blood. They could partake in a new, or renewed, marriage covenant with their Creator. In fact, we can see the future connection of this Feast in prophecy yet to be fulfilled as the Lamb is described in Revelation as being in heaven waiting for a wedding supper with His bride before returning to the earth in judgment as King of kings and Lord of lords when He will once again drink of the fruit of the vine with us in His Kingdom.

That is a mouthful; and much more could be added. How rich and comforting this first Feast of the Lord is to the people of God with its two annual Sabbaths of rest with holy worship convocations. It is a great treasure for me given freely by God to all who will accept His gift of His only begotten Son. This feast is a mystery to most of the world, but it is a joy to our faithful and hopeful hearts for those who know the Lord of the Sabbath.

But, what about the Feast of Weeks? Where is the comparable meaning and value to the people of God? Is Jesus really in this Feast at all? When I first began keeping this Feast, it was a one-day observance...a wonderful summer Holy Day to mostly commemorate the giving of the Holy Spirit in the renewed covenant in our Savior and Lord.

Fortunately, as I have grown in the grace and knowledge of the Lord of the Sabbath, this Holy Day has exploded in meaning and value to reveal amazing things about God, His ways and His prophetic plan of salvation for mankind. Halleluyah! Praise the LORD!

So, let's search for what God is trying to reveal to us by His Feast of Weeks. First, let us realize that the Day of Pentecost is only the completion of this Feast. Sure, it is a holy day of rest from work and a commanded holy convocation before the LORD. It is the third of His seven annual holy days. So, how do the weeks come into play? Do you know? If not brethren, you are about to also grow in the knowledge of Jesus and the grace of God.

We can start with the idea that perhaps this feast also had something to do with the exodus of Israel from slavery in Egypt. If you recall, many scholars and Jewish rabbis teach that the Last Day of Unleavened Bread (a commanded holy day) coincides with the miraculous crossing by the children of Israel through the Reed Sea on dry ground. Perhaps it was a type of water baptism commanded by Peter on the Day of Pentecost? I had suggested that this Holy Day may represent the subsequent miracle done at Marah, when the bitter water was made sweet by God to keep His people healthy as they entered the Promised Land.

However, either way, we are watching the children of Israel, the original chosen people and nation of God, progressing to the Promised Land under God's direct guidance. So,

what, if anything, happened to Israel after fifty (50) days on the way to the Promised Land that would call for a memorial? Let's check the word of God carefully.

First, we know the month and day when the Israelites began their journey out of Egypt. We find it clearly stated in Num. 33: 3:

They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the day after the Passover the children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians.

We can follow their progress and see another time reference in Ex. 16: 1:

And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt.

It was at this point that God responded to complaints by the children of Israel and gave them manna from heaven to eat. Next, we finally see the children of Israel arrive at Sinai according to Ex. 19:1:

In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai.

Here is a bit of a puzzle. Does "on the same day" refer to the same day that the children of Israel began their journey out of Egypt in the first month? That would mean the 15th day of the third month. That would be two full months of elapsed time, a period of 58 to 60 days depending on the moon cycle. If this is the correct rendition in the New King James Version, the traditional Jewish understanding that the ten commandments were given on the Day of Pentecost would clearly be incorrect.

Other English translations give the impression that when the third month came, on the same day that it came, the children of Israel also came into the Wilderness of Sinai. In the New American Bible translation, we find Ex. 19: 1 translated as follows:

In the third month after their departure from the land of Egypt, on its first day, the Israelites came to the desert of Sinai.

Here, we would have no doubt that this day was the first day, not the 15th day, of the third month. I am NOT trying to find a version that says what I want it to say. Unfortunately, I do not read Hebrew to be able to decipher for myself the writing. When I see different translations with material differences by experts who supposedly can accurately translate Hebrew and render English, all I can do is turn to other scriptures to try to understand the alternatives and allow the Holy Spirit lead me to the Truth of God.

Next, we find Moses going up to God on the mountain. Listen carefully to what takes place as recorded in Ex. 19: 3-6:

And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and Keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

For Israel to be God’s special treasure above all people on the earth, they had to obey God and keep His covenant. The covenant is actually a marriage covenant. Next, in Ex. 19: 7-9, we see that Moses obeys God and takes the covenant to the children of Israel.

So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.”

After Moses relays to God the acceptance by Israel of the terms of His proposed covenant, then we see another important timing clue in Ex. 19: 10-11:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.”

Here, we read of a today, a tomorrow and a third day. Is this just three consecutive days? Or, if the “same day” is the first day of the third month, then it would be the third day of the third month when the LORD would come down in the sight of the ritually clean, assembled and waiting children of Israel. Indeed we find in Ex. 19: 16 that in the morning of this third day, God spoke to Israel from the mountain:

Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

The exact words that God spoke to Israel are shown in Ex. 20-23. They are the Ten Commandments, or what are called the Ten Words in the Greek. They are the requirements of the covenant with God later written in stone by the very finger of God. In Ex. 24: 6-8, we find Israel affirming the covenant and having half the blood of the sacrificed animals sprinkled on the altar and half on them to consummate the marriage.

And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient.” And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according

to all these words.”

You can't be a regular Bible reader and not know how similar the words that Jesus said at the Lord's supper were as He announced the New, or Renewed, marriage covenant with Him and His church sealed in His own shed blood.

But back to the timing issue of what took place on the fiftieth day since the children of Israel left Egypt. Let's summarize and count the days as Scripture leads us. We know that the Israelites left Egypt on the 15th day of the first month. That month would have either 29 or 30 days before the new moon of the second month would appear. So, if we begin our count on the 15th day, we would have accumulated either 15 or 16 days in our count. Now, the second month would most likely also have either 29 or 30 days. However, from our study of the lunar calendar of God, we know that the New Moons by observation tend to alternate between 29 and 30 days. So, we can assume that 45 days will have elapsed to the day before the third month of the year of the exodus had begun.

And, we think that God told Moses and the people that He would come down on Mount Sinai that the children of Israel could see Him on the third day of the third month. This would bring our day count to 48. At first, it appears that the Ten Commandments were given BEFORE the 50th day and the Jewish traditional understanding is wrong. However, we must be careful about what transpired once God made His presence and voice perceivable by the Israelites on what seems to be the morning of the 48th day.

According to Ex. 19: 20, God calls Moses to the top of the mountain. Then the LORD tells Moses to go back down and warn the people not to come up to the mountain to gaze at the LORD. And, after warning them, Moses is told by the LORD to return to the top of the mountain with Aaron.

It is not clear from scripture exactly when these various goings up and down the mountain by Moses occur. It should be noted that the mountain range has peaks from 6,000 to 9,000 feet above the plain. Since ascending and descending a steep mountain without prepared paths could be difficult, it is reasonable to assume these trips were tedious. Coupled with meeting the LORD and getting His instructions, it is not unreasonable to think that multiple trips by Moses were not all done on the third day of the third month.

No time or exact day is given for when God spoke the Ten Commandments audibly to the assembled Israelites. It could have been later on the 48th day, or perhaps first on the 49th day. But, whenever it was, it frightened the Israelites so that they trembled to the point of fearing they would die. They even asked that Moses speak to them rather than God!

We find Moses soothing the people and telling them not to be afraid, that God merely wants to test them and make sure they do fear God so they do not sin. Then Moses goes near the thick darkness where God was. This sounds like another trip up the mountain AFTER God had spoken audibly to the Israelites. Could it be the 49th day by now or even the 50th? Could the thick darkness also be on the night of the 50th day? Now the

LORD gives even more instructions for Moses to tell the Israelites as found in Ex. 20-23. These are seen as a code of conduct for the marriage covenant with God providing details of behavior for His people beyond the Ten Commandments both for relationships with Him and for relationships among one another and even with other nations.

I urge you to read Exodus 20-23 this Sabbath day. You will find fascinating topics that were important to the LORD for His people. They include the law of the alter, of Hebrew slaves and servants, of violent acts, even the killing of the child still in the mother's womb! Such topics are front page headlines of famous trials even to this day.

In addition, we find laws concerning domestic animals, the stealing or destruction of the property of another person, what is to happen if a man lies with a virgin and other interesting principles regarding religious ceremonies and justice. Unfortunately, I see my time is about up for this Sabbath. But, please tune in next week as we will see more of the amazing historic and prophetic significance of celebrating the Feast of Weeks and counting the 50 days until the Day of Pentecost has fully come each year.

This is Brother Kenny praying that the Lord of the Sabbath will be gracious to you until the next Sabbath day.