

Lord of the Sabbath

Program #23

God's Day of Pentecost

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Last Sabbath, I reviewed the main religious groups known for keeping the Day of Pentecost ALWAYS on a Sunday. Two of those groups, the Sadducees and Samaritans were personally criticized by Jesus for their lack of understanding of the Scriptures. And, I described some other newer religious groups who even today still follow this doctrine.

When it comes to observing the Feasts and Holy Days of the LORD correctly, what group of people did Jesus commend? We find it clearly stated in Scripture in Mat. 23: 1-2:

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do."

The Greek word translated "observe" in English is "tereo - *tay-reh-o*" (Strong's #5083) and has the idea of guarding by "keeping an eye on." It has the idea of holding fast and keeping or fulfilling a command. Can you have any reasonable doubt that Jesus is saying that His disciples should keep and observe the Feasts and Holy Days as told to do by the Pharisees? Can you believe that Jesus was not aware that the Sadducees were promoting a different way to count the weeks in the Feast of Weeks to the Day of Pentecost?

The fact that Jesus acknowledged that the Pharisees sat in Moses seat is equivalent to saying they speak with the authority of Moses. And, Moses was given the Law regarding the Feasts of the LORD BY the LORD.

This is evidence enough for me, that Jesus gave His support and approval for the Pharisee's interpretation that the count to Pentecost was to begin based upon the high Sabbath day of Passover and not based upon the weekly Sabbath of Passover as taught by the Sadducees.

It is also clear from historic writings that, at the time of Jesus, the Pharisees dominated the Sanhedrin and the common people followed them in the observance of the Holy Days of the LORD rather than the aristocratic Sadducees. Some may point out that the high priest was typically a Sadducee and implying the high priest would therefore have a more correct understanding of when the Holy Days would be kept.

I could fill the rest of this program describing how corrupt the high priests, and their familial priesthood, had become during the time of Jesus. They had essentially become the minions of King Herod and were under his control. If you want more information on this, please contact me. But, I will ask you seriously if you are not already aware from

scripture of the corrupt schemes made against Jesus by the high priest along with the temple priests which led to the crucifixion of Jesus? And, please, also consider the plotting of the high priest and his temple guard against the Apostle Paul who proudly declared himself a Pharisee and a son of a Pharisee in Acts 23.

Despite all this circumstantial evidence plus the words of Jesus Himself, many Biblically astute Sabbath-keeping friends continue to insist that the Day of Pentecost is ALWAYS on a Sunday. How can this be? It is actually easy to understand. These believers, dedicated to the Lord of the Sabbath, and to keeping the commandments of God, see an ALWAYS on Sunday Day of Pentecost in their own Bible with their own eyes.

Anyone not willing to acknowledge that our English Bibles are NOT the infallible word of God is simply being naïve. I heard a preacher on the radio this week standing on the fact that the King James Version of the Bible is the ONLY true and reliable English version of the Bible. I had to turn off the station rather than listen to any other claims this preacher might make. That is a ludicrous claim.

Does that preacher know when the first English translation was made? Is he aware that it was over a millennium AFTER the original inspired manuscripts were written? A lot of Church tradition had already been established by then.

Does he know from what manuscript the first English translation was made? Does he realize that the early English translations of the Bible had the apocryphal books in them? Has he read the Bible that the first English speaking church of God disciples of Jesus read? Does he know that the original 1611 KJV contained a reference to Easter when the manuscript being translated clearly said “Passover?” Such biased malarkey of men taught as truth is so gross, that even the publishers of the KJV and NKJV had to correct that addition to Holy Scripture! We know what happens when the blind lead the blind. They both fall into the ditch!

So, what is wrong with the English version of most Bibles that leads sincere followers of the Lord of the Sabbath to think that the Sabbath referenced in Leviticus 23 for the start of the count to Pentecost is the weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread?

Well, before we get into the problem of our English translation of Lev. 23, let’s first open our eyes and our minds to realize that no Bible translation and no verse in Scripture says that the barley wave offering, and the start of the count to Pentecost, is the morning after the weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. I can’t tell you how many times that believers who are sure that Pentecost is ALWAYS on Sunday also add that “weekly Sabbath during the Passover Feast” to their doctrine. It is just NOT there in the word of God. Not only are the words “weekly Sabbath” not in any verse of scripture, neither are the additional words “during the Passover” or “during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.”

Now, one good possible reason that neither of those phrases are found in scripture is that neither of those ideas are correct. But more damaging to that invented idea is the fact that

when the Last Day of Unleavened Bread falls on a Saturday (this equates to the First Day of Unleavened Bread falling on a Sunday), the day after the weekly Sabbath during the Feast is not during the Feast at all! You would need a magician to make that work.

Now, what is to be done? There are only two choices. Either it is the day after the weekly Sabbath that has to fall during the seven-day feast or it is the weekly Sabbath that always falls during the feast. The gymnastics that follow to make this decision are as close to slight-of-hand and pure human reasoning as you can get. And, neither argument is addressed in Scripture at all. Why? Did God make an error of omission? Did He not realize that His commanded day for the wave offering does not always work for His commanded feast? And, did He just forget to cover that exception in His instructions?

At least for me, it is one more convincing reason that the Sabbath referred to is the high Sabbath of Abib 15 and NOT the weekly Sabbath. Then, God's word creates no dilemma, no open-ended command and no ambiguity in His Law that must be resolved by human reasoning.

Another common argument for those believing in an ALWAYS Sunday Pentecost is that they claim that the word "Sabbath" that they see in the instruction by God ALWAYS refers to the weekly Sabbath. Anyone who says that has simply not studied their Bible. It is certainly true that most of the uses of the word "sabbath" is referring to the weekly Sabbath day. But, it does not take much effort to discover that the word "Sabbath" does not mean the seventh day of the week at all. It actually means a time of repose or rest. Indeed, the weekly Sabbath day is a time of rest from normal work and a day for a holy convocation. And, so are the seven annual holy day sabbaths of the LORD days of rest and holy convocation.

Some will tell you the word used in Scripture for a high, annual day of rest is ALWAYS "shabbaton" and not Sabbath. That is NOT correct either. But, one of the most compelling reasons to NOT think the word Sabbath ALWAYS refers to the weekly day of rest comes from the Apostle John. In his Gospel, believed to be written after the other four gospels, John puts that amazing parenthetical, clarifying statement in John 19: 31:

Therefore, because in was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

To Sabbath and Feast-keeping Christians, this is accepted as proof that Jesus died on Abib 14 (the Preparation Day), the day before the First Day of Unleavened Bread (Abib 15) and not on Friday, the day before the weekly Sabbath. Failure to understand the Feasts of the LORD has mislead most of the professing Christian church to believe that Jesus died on a Friday and rose on Sunday (the day after the weekly Sabbath).

And, why did John add this parenthetical? Apparently because without it, one could easily conclude that Jesus did die the day before the weekly Sabbath. Now, I would like anyone who accepts that John's parenthetical shows that the word "Sabbath" could mean

the high annual holy day of rest of Abib 15 (the first day of the Passover feast) regarding the time of the crucifixion of Jesus, to explain to me how they can be sure that the Sabbath mentioned in the count to Pentecost couldn't also mean the high Sabbath day of Abib 15? Just because there is no parenthetical does that make it a reference to the weekly Sabbath beyond any doubt? I surely can't conclude that.

Now, I say, why would it not be reasonably obvious that it COULD NOT refer to the weekly Sabbath? Let us carefully re-examine what Leviticus 23: 1 actually says. It says, "these are My feasts" which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations. Next, it says the seventh day, after working six days, is one of these feasts.

Now, what does the rest of Lev. 23 describe? It describes the feasts of the LORD, which are to be holy convocations, are to be proclaimed AT THEIR APPOINTED TIMES. Do you see the difference? The seventh-day weekly Sabbath feast is different from the other seven holy convocation feast days which required a proclaimed appointed time. And, with the exception of the Day of Pentecost, all the other six holy days have both a month and a day of the month clearly specified as their appointed time.

Why did the days for the holy convocations have to be proclaimed? Because their timing was not known for certain in advance. It took observation of the moon and the sun and the abib barley to be able to know the correct holy days of the month for the current year. And, at the time of Jesus, that is exactly what the Sanhedrin did according to historic records. They announced the holy days for the people of Israel and proclaimed them days of rest (Sabbaths) along with participating in the commanded holy convocations.

These seven annual holy day Sabbaths would almost certainly be on different days of the week the next year. Yet, we have this wide-spread belief among Christian Feast and Holy Day keepers that Pentecost stands alone among them all, sticking out like a sore thumb, and ALWAYS on the first day of the week or on what we now call Sunday. I can't buy it. The evidence is too strong that something is wrong, something is amiss, something about ALWAYS on a Sunday does not fit God's way of worship for the annual holy days.

Notice further, that in Lev. 23: 11 that it is "on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it." The first two annual holy day Sabbaths and their appointed times, with the month and day of that month clearly set forth, are specifically described in verses 5-8. Nothing at all is said about the weekly Sabbath during the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. There does not seem to be anything more special about that weekly Sabbath day than the other fifty-one or fifty-two Sabbath days during the year.

So, I ask you in all honesty, why would you not believe it possible, if not probable, that when the Sabbath is mentioned in the subsequent verses concerning the wave offering and the Feast of Weeks it refers to the previously mentioned high, annual, appointed Sabbath and NOT the unmentioned weekly Sabbath that does not even have associated with it any appointed time (month and day)?

Now, my dear fellowship friend, Brother Bob, says, “Brother Kenny, it MUST be the weekly Sabbath because it says seven Sabbaths shall be completed before you reach the 50th day! There surely are NOT seven high days to be counted before the 50th day!

Well, at first blush, Brother Bob seems to have a “got-you.” At first I was speechless; as difficult as that may be to contemplate. How can this be explained, I thought? I found that it helps if you get out a Gregorian calendar, especially one that allows you to look at two consecutive months at once.

Let’s say that Abib 14, the day the Passover lamb is slain, and the day Jesus died, fell on Wednesday, the fourth day of the normal week. Abib 15, the high Sabbath day, is on Thursday. The day after this high Sabbath is Friday, Abib 16, when the wave offering would be made by the priest. This would be the first day of the fifty-day count to Pentecost. Now count off forty-nine more days to the 50th day and mark it on the calendar. It will be in the next month. The Day of Pentecost would also be on a Friday.

Now, carefully observe on your calendar that when this 50th day comes, there are also seven weekly Sabbaths complete. No matter what day begins the count to Pentecost, when you count to the 50th day, there will ALWAYS be seven Sabbaths completed. The Pharisees were correct in how they observed Pentecost, just like Jesus said they were.

All the tests regarding the count; seven weeks, seven Sabbaths and fifty days all are met without any confusion or complication when we follow the Law of God given to Moses. Confusion comes with the law of men whether they are Sadducees, Samaritans, Karaites or followers of the late Herbert Armstrong, who began the Worldwide Church of God. He taught that the disciples of Christ should keep the Sabbaths, both the weekly and annual ones, that the Lord of the Sabbath kept.

And, however great a man his followers think Herbert Armstrong was, history shows how he originally taught Pentecost was ALWAYS on a Monday. Then, with study, he changed his mind and taught that Pentecost was ALWAYS on a Sunday. Well, at least he admitted he was wrong publicly and changed both what he thought and what he did.

I can’t help but wonder if he studied the issue more, as we have done together, whether he might change his mind again? He can’t. But, you and I can. Let Jesus have the glory of when the Feasts and Holy Days of the LORD are to be kept. And, Jesus kept them according to the method and timing proclaimed by the Pharisees who sat in the seat that Moses would have sat in if he were still alive.

Well, all these things had made me leery of an “ALWAYS on Sunday” Pentecost. But, it was not until I discovered this next fact that I could understand why that belief which so many friends held dear was indeed wrong: our English text of Lev. 23 is faulty! It misleads and can fool even the most sincere Sabbath-keeper.

Here is what has happened. The inspired text of Leviticus was written in Hebrew by Moses. After Alexander the Great of Macedonia conquered all of Greece, Asia, and then

Egypt, he gradually became infatuated with Egypt and the Persian culture, even to the chagrin of his own people in Greece. Alexander was crowned as Pharaoh and declared a god, even possibly the son of Zeus.

Known most for his military strategy and bravery, Alexander was also an intellectual and was educated by no one less than Aristotle himself, regarded as a great scientist and philosopher of the ancient world. After Alexander's death from a fever in 323 BC, a power struggle ensued and the great Greek/Macedonian world empire was split up between four of his generals. Ptolemy Philadelphus took control as King of Egypt.

Ptolemy continued the cultural Greek trait of desiring knowledge and wanted "all the books of the world" in the library at Alexandria, Egypt. With many exiled Jews living in Egypt, Ptolemy was aware of the Jewish Law and teachings known as the Torah. He was so determined to get a copy of the Torah for the library, he offered Eleazar, the high priest in Jerusalem, 100,000 Jewish captives and much wealth, if Eleazar would send six scholars from each of the tribes of Israel to Cairo to help translate the Hebrew Bible into Greek. These seventy-two or so Jewish leaders were the first to translate the Law of Moses into the Greek language in about 270 BC. It is called the Septuagint Bible version.

The Septuagint, also referred to as the LXX (Greek for 70) version, is the Bible that would have been used at the time of Jesus and the one quoted in Greek by the Apostles. Now, hang on to your hats as I read its version of Lev. 23: 4-11:

*In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, between the evening times, is the Lord's passover. And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast of unleavened bread to the Lord. . . And **THE FIRST DAY** shall be a holy convocation to you . . . And the Lord spoke to Moses . . . When ye shall enter into the land which I give you, and reap the harvest of it, then shall ye bring a **SHEAF**, the first-fruits of your harvest, to the priest; and he shall lift up the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you. On the morrow of **THE FIRST DAY** the priest shall lift it up.*

Now, how does this compare with your own Bible translation or the NKJV which I had used earlier? Notice first that the word Sabbath is not in there at all! The first day is clearly the high Sabbath day of Abib 15 the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Second, notice that the sheaf is lifted up or waved by the priest on the morrow of the first day; NOT on the morrow after the weekly Sabbath!

This may be a difficult pill to swallow if you were sure your Bible said the morrow after the Sabbath and assumed that it meant the weekly Sabbath. But, if you want to observe the Feast of Weeks as given to Moses by God, the one observed by the Pharisees at the time of Jesus, and the one kept by Jesus without any admonishment to the Pharisees, then isn't it time you end this "Pentecost ALWAYS on Sunday" teaching, belief and practice?

Look at what the Septuagint says about what to count in Lev. 23: 15-16:

And you shall number to yourselves from the day after the sabbath, FROM THE DAY ON WHICH YE SHALL OFFER THE SHEAF of the heave offering, SEVEN FULL WEEKS: until the morrow after the LAST WEEK ye shall number fifty days.

Notice it is seven full weeks that are to be counted until the morrow after the last week as you number the fifty days! It is NOT the morrow after the seventh Sabbath! Are you as amazed as I was to discover this? But, how can our English versions be so different from the LXX? How can your Bible be so wrong and so misleading?

The answer is surprisingly simple. Your English Bible is probably translated from the Masorete' Hebrew text of the Old Testament. And, when did that version come along? How about in the sixth century AD! Are you surprised by that knowledge? That is about 750 years after the Septuagint! Can you believe it? And, there were Masorete groups in Babylon, Palestine and Tiberias. A number of revised versions were issued. It was actually first in the 12th century AD that the ben Asher text version gained ascendancy as the preferred basis of the Old Testament for translation into other languages. WOW!

And, who were the Masoretes? A group of Jews who strongly opposed the idea that Jesus was the Messiah. These men deplored the new "Christian" Church. These men purposely deviated from the much earlier and unbiased LXX. They were men who turned to other corrupted Hebrew texts to make their own editorial revisions to remove or change verses that could be used as proof that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Early church fathers such as Origen and Justyn Martyr spoke in favor of the LXX against the Masorite text.

If such non-Biblical sources do not convince you that something is awry with the "ALWAYS on Sunday" Pentecost interpretation, perhaps other verses of your own Bible will? I am referring to the Book of Deuteronomy which repeats much of the Law and the history of Israel. It is believed to have been written by Moses at the end of his life. If anyone should know what God intended regarding how to determine the Day of Pentecost, it would be Moses and NOT some 20th century leader of a religious sect.

Here is the instruction for the Feast of Weeks as recorded in Deut. 16: 14:

You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain. Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you.

Now, why does Moses NOT mention anything about counting seven Sabbaths in this verse? Has Moses forgotten the correct law given to him by God verbally? Or, has Moses merely stated what was also in the LXX, that it was a count of seven weeks to the fiftieth day that really mattered? And, the count begins when the sickle is put to the grain. There is NO requirement that the Feast of Weeks be kept, along with the freewill

offer of the loaves to be waved, on the morrow after the weekly Sabbath. Why? The answer seems obvious. Pentecost was never intended to be observed ALWAYS on a Sunday.

Do you think the inspired word of God in two different books both written by Moses would contain such different and confusing directions for an important statute of God? Or, do you believe the problem may be in the uninspired Masorete text for Leviticus prepared some six hundred to a thousand years AFTER Jesus rose from the dead?

In closing, I would just like to remind you that in our tracking of the first Pentecost, when the Ten Commandments were given at Mount Sinai, that it was counted FROM the day that the Israelites left Egypt. That day was clearly Abib 15, the high Sabbath day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And, so should it be each year today. The count to Pentecost ALWAYS starts on the morrow after that high Sabbath. There is even a possibility that it was on the morning OF the Sabbath. This makes the Day of Pentecost ALWAYS on the same day of the week as Abib 16 falls, seven weeks later which can be any day of the modern week from year to year.

Don't forget, the name of the second Feast of the LORD is the Feast of Weeks. It is not the Feast of Sabbaths. The Hebrew word translated as "weeks" is Strong's #7620, shabuwa, meaning something "sevened." The weekly Sabbath, or a time for rest, seems to be simply irrelevant to the timing of the Day of Pentecost.

It grieves me deeply that those who are led by the Holy Spirit to observe the Feasts of the LORD can't seem to be of one mind on this issue. I urge you to study the word of God and the evidence that I have presented to determine your own future celebrations. I can't continue to keep a Sunday Pentecost because of church tradition or "adding to Scripture."

God gave to Moses His appointed times for our rest and worship before Him. He DID NOT change the days; EVER. Jesus did not abolish or change them EITHER. From historic documents we know Jesus kept them with a Pentecost that was fifty days after the high Sabbath of Abib 15.

Don't be deceived. Satan has been hard at work to mix up the truth with lies. Jesus DID NOT rise from the dead on Sunday. The resurrected Jesus WAS NOT the wave sheaf offering. The count to Pentecost DID NOT begin on Sunday and end on Sunday.

The Babylonians worshipped the SUN god Rah. We worship the SON of God, Jesus, and NOT on the venerable day of the SUN, the first day of the week. The difference is profound for those with ears to hear and eyes to see.