

THE INTERCONTINENTAL CHURCH OF GOD

SPECIFIC BIBLE STUDIES - COUNTING PENTECOST

QUESTION: How do you count Pentecost when, during the Days of Unleavened Bread, the second Holy Day is the Sabbath and there is no Sabbath Day during the Days of Unleavened Bread? Such is the case for years 2001, 2005 and now 2008.

ANSWER:

Regarding when to begin the count for Pentecost, the Scriptures specifically state the count must always begin FROM the morrow after the Sabbath (Leviticus 23:15). The Hebrew term moh-ghorahth (Strong's # 4283) is found in the original text, can also be understood as ON THE MORROW after the Sabbath. The term generally means tomorrow. Stating tomorrow after the Sabbath is clearly understood. This specific day, on the morrow after the Sabbath, is also the wave sheaf offering day (Leviticus 23:11).

Regarding the meaning of Sabbath and which Sabbath to refer to in order to begin the count, going back to the intertestamental period and even while Jesus Christ walked the earth, there was a controversy among the competing Jewish parties. The Sadducees regarded the Sabbath as the weekly Sabbath whereas the Pharisees regarded the Sabbath as the Holy Day, the First Day of Unleavened Bread and consequently the count would begin on the 16th day of the first month.

The word Sabbath as found in Leviticus 23:11, 15 and 16 is translated from the Hebrew shabath (Strong's # 7676) which is specifically the weekly seventh day, Sabbath. Also found within the Leviticus 23 legislation is the Hebrew word shabathohn (Strong's # 7677) which refers to a High day. Shabathohn is clearly different from shabath. You will not find the Hebrew word shabathohn associated with the phrase on the morrow. Therefore the counting for Pentecost is never to begin on the 16th day of the first month, as the Jews currently practice. We are only to refer to a weekly Sabbath when locating the morrow on which to begin the count for Pentecost. The morrow after the Sabbath will always be on the first day of the week or a Sunday (as we call it today). The first day of the week is the key day, the day on which to begin the count.

Regarding any idea that the count has to begin within the Days of Unleavened Bread, the Scriptures specifically say no such thing. Both the Sadducees and the Pharisees understood the association with the Days of Unleavened Bread and this association is correct, but once again from actual, recorded Scriptural legislation, the Bible is silent pertaining to a requirement that the count has to begin within the Days of Unleavened Bread. Most every year however it will and rightly so!

Now, in the year 2008, the First Day of Unleavened Bread is on a Sunday and the Last Day of Unleavened Bread is on the weekly Sabbath. Technically, there is no combination of a Sabbath and the morrow after the Sabbath (wave sheaf offering day) within the Days of Unleavened Bread in the year 2008. What day then does one use to begin the count for Pentecost? Is it correct to begin the count (which must begin on a Sunday - the first day of the week) on the First Day of Unleavened Bread in the year 2008 and not on the Sunday after the Last Day of Unleavened Bread?

It is correct to begin the count for Pentecost on the First Day of Unleavened Bread. The Scriptures reveal a precedent setting occurrence similar to what will occur in 2008. Refer to Joshua 5:10-11.

To understand these verses, let us first read a command (Leviticus 23:14) God gave to the Children of Israel. The Children of Israel could not eat any bread, nor the parched corn, green ears (barley) of the land (which they now occupied (which was given to them by God, cf. Leviticus 23:10)) until the self same day they brought forth an offering (the wave sheaf).

The children of Israel could only start eating the corn of the land after they offered the wave sheaf. On that selfsame day as they offered the wave sheaf they could then begin to eat the produce of the land. With that said notice now the chronology of events in Gilgal as they are associated with this Levitical legislation.

First, Joshua 5:10 specifies the Passover sacrifice at even. The Passover is the 14th day of the first month. Next, Joshua 5:11 specifies the 15th day of the first month or the First Day of Unleavened Bread. This day is called by Joshua the morrow after the Passover and rightly so. The 15th is one day after the 14th. Naturally, on the First Day of Unleavened Bread unleavened cakes and parched corn could only be eaten.

However notice also that on this 15th day of the first month, the First Day of Unleavened Bread, the children of

Israel under Joshua not only began to eat UNLEAVENED cakes, etc., but they also began to eat the old parched corn, etc., of the land in THE SELFSAME DAY as Joshua 5:11 states. Two events were accomplished that same day.

What's the significance of this statement? We can clearly learn that the wave sheaf offering was also performed on that First Day of Unleavened Bread. The Children of Israel began to eat the old corn of the land (which they could only do after the wave sheaf offering was accomplished) and that old corn was unleavened (as it had to be) on the First Day of Unleavened Bread.

On that particular calendar year, the Children of Israel under Joshua's command offered the wave sheaf and began to eat both the old corn of the land and unleavened cakes and parches corn in that selfsame day (once again a reference to Leviticus 23:14). That selfsame day that year saw the wave sheaf performed on the First Day of Unleavened Bread, the 15th day of the first month, which of course would have been the first day of the week (a Sunday). This year a calendar configuration parallels that which exactly occurred for the Children of Israel under Joshua when they first entered the Promised Land.

To conclude: Joshua 5:10-11 sets the precedent that the First Day of Unleavened Bread and the Wave Sheaf offering day can occur on the same day. The Wave Sheaf offering day is the day to begin the count for Pentecost. The Wave Sheaf offering day will always occur on a Sunday (the first day of the week - the morrow after the Sabbath). The First Day of Unleavened Bread can occur on a Sunday and when it does, it is on that First Day of Unleavened Bread when the count for Pentecost begins. Therefore the ICG is correct to start the count for Pentecost on April 20th, 2008.

Count fifty [50] days from 20 April 2008 and you arrive at Sunday, 8 June 2008. 8 June is Pentecost in 2008.

-Jim Josephsen