
PENTECOST - THE FEAST OF SHAVUOT



Most Christians are aware that the Day of Pentecost (mentioned in the second chapter of Acts) is considered the day when the Christian church came into being, *after* the resurrection of Jesus. But most Christians are *not* aware that Pentecost is the Greek name for a Jewish feast called Shavuot. This feast *still* has symbolic meanings which are often overlooked by most Christians.

There are seven annual Jewish feasts ordained by God in the Old Testament. Today, most of these feasts are *still* celebrated by the Jewish people, but in a slightly different fashion since the Temple in Jerusalem no longer exists. Visit my website (ngcarraway.com) for lessons on the *other* annual Jewish feasts.

After the Jewish feast of Passover is celebrated, the feast of Unleavened Bread begins, followed by the Feast of First Fruits, which is *always* celebrated on a Sunday. On *that* specific Sunday, during Biblical times, the Jewish people were instructed to begin counting the days until they reached 50 days, which is the day for the Feast of Shavuot.

The Feast of Shavuot (Feast of Weeks)

The Feast of Shavuot is also called the Feast of Weeks because the Jewish people would count seven weeks (49 days) and then the following day would be Pentecost. The Feast of Shavuot is always on a Sunday, 50 days *after* the Feast of First Fruits. In Greek, the word 'pentecost' meant 50. But, it is important to understand that long before the Christians called this day Pentecost, the Jewish people celebrated this day as the Feast of Weeks (7 weeks after First Fruits). To know the symbolic meaning of the Feast of Shavuot (Pentecost), one must understand what the Feast of Shavuot represented to the Jewish disciples of Jesus.

In Luke 24:46-49, the scriptures state: 'He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city (referring to Jerusalem) until you have been clothed with power from on high."



Jesus arose from the dead on Sunday, on the Feast of First Fruits. The book of Acts states that Jesus appeared to his disciples for *more* than 40 days *before* he was taken up into heaven. This means that when Jesus told his disciples to stay in Jerusalem, they knew that the Feast of Shavuot

would take place in just a few days. But what did this feast represent to the Jewish followers of Jesus?

The first Shavuot (according to Jewish tradition)



Before the Jewish feasts were ordained by God in the book of Exodus, on the day which later became the Feast of Shavuot, Jewish tradition states that on *this* day, the rainbow appeared to Noah and his family, after the flood waters receded. The rainbow was a sign of the promise which God made with Noah, to never destroy the earth

by a flood again. So, in the mind of the Jewish people, this day became synonymous with a promise, or a covenant. But, the Bible mentions *another* event which also took place on this day.

Mt. Sinai and the Ten Commandments

According to Rabbinic tradition, the children of Israel left Egypt on the morning *after* they observed the first Passover dinner. They traveled for 50 days until they reached Mt. Sinai. Then, on that day, God came down on Mt. Sinai with fire and thunder, and gave the Torah (the first five books in the Bible) and the Ten Commandments to the Jewish people. So, the giving of the Law occurred on this day, Shavuot. Today in Israel, when Shavuot is celebrated, some Jewish people read aloud the Ten Commandments, in remembrance of this event.

Some people call this event the Covenant of the Law or the Covenant of the Torah. At Mt. Sinai, God made an everlasting covenant with the Jewish people. When God makes a covenant, it is everlasting on *His*

part. But, the covenant may come with conditions; for example, Israel must be a faithful 'bride' to God.

Unfortunately, while Moses was on the mountaintop with God, the people below built a golden calf and began to worship it. After Moses came down with the Ten Commandments, 3,000 people perished because of their sin of idolatry.



The giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai is seen as the sealing of the covenant between God and His bride, the Jewish people. Today, in some Jewish congregations, the ketubah (the ancient Jewish marriage certificate) is read prior to reading the Torah and the Ten Commandments. Scripture states that God wrote the Ten Commandments with *His own finger*, which in essence, is his

signature on the marriage contract! Undoubtedly, the Ten Commandments are the most important laws ever written and western civilization is based on these Ten Commandments.

Feast of Oaths

But, there is another meaning for the Hebrew word 'shavuot'; it means 'weeks', but it can also mean 'oaths' or 'covenants'. This is important to understand, since the Feast of Shavuot is tied to events where God made a covenant with the people on earth. After the flood, God made a covenant to never destroy the earth by water and the rainbow is the sign of that covenant. On Mt. Sinai, God made a covenant with the children of Israel. He would be their God and they would be His people. Receiving the Torah directly from God meant that the Jewish people were to live as God's people, set apart from the rest of the world. They were to live holy lives and worship only one God, as instructed in the Torah.



So, when Jesus told his disciplines to wait in Jerusalem until they received power from on high, they knew that the Feast of Shavuot would soon take place. Perhaps they remembered the previous covenants which God made with their ancestors. They may have been expecting *something* to happen on the Feast of Shavuot (Pentecost). But, they were probably *not* prepared for what happened on that fateful day.

Pentecost (Feast of Shavuot)

On Sunday, on the Feast of Shavuot, as the disciples waited, they suddenly heard the sound of a mighty rushing wind. Supernatural tongues of fire appeared above their heads and they began to speak in other languages! The Holy Spirit was poured out and they were given 'power from on high'; their lives were changed forever. The Christian church was birthed on that day and God made an everlasting *covenant of grace*, with those who believe in His son.



When a crowd gathered to see this unusual event, Peter stood up and preached Jesus to them. Three thousand people believed what Peter preached and became followers of the teachings of Jesus. When the Covenant of the Law was made at Mt. Sinai, 3,000 people *perished*. This time, 3,000 people were *saved* by the grace of God. The almighty God in heaven, made an everlasting Covenant of Grace with those who believe in His son, Jesus.

The Holy Spirit (Ruach HaKodesh) came to dwell *within* the believers and to empower them to live a holy, Spirit-filled and Spirit-led life. When a follower of Jesus allows the Holy Spirit to lead him, he moves *out* of the natural realm (trying to follow the commandments of God by natural means) and *into* the supernatural realm (empowered by the Holy Spirit to follow the commandments of God by spiritual means). What could *not* be done in the natural was now possible in the spirit.

With the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, the disciples of Jesus were able to do the *same* supernatural and miraculous things that Jesus did! Again, they moved out of the natural realm, into the supernatural realm. They healed the sick, cast out demons and performed miracles. They had visions from God (Peter had a vision on the rooftop) and they received prophetic words through other believers (Agabus prophesied to Paul).



These supernatural events continued for several hundred years *after* the church was birthed at Pentecost. But slowly, these supernatural manifestations almost completely disappeared. Seemingly, only a few 'saints' could perform a miracle, and only on rare occasions. The only 'spiritual' manifestation which continued for 2,000 years seems to be the ability to keep the commandments of God and share the love of God with others. This has been demonstrated by the thousands of missionaries who have traveled the world, to carry the Gospel of the kingdom to all nations.

We *have* seen a resurgence of supernatural miracles and healings in the past 100 years, and hopefully these manifestations will become as common as they were in the New Testament. If someone had the

gift of healing, by the power of the Holy Spirit, they could possibly heal everyone with cancer. Wouldn't that be wonderful! Or, someone with the gift of miracles could multiply food (with the help of the Holy Spirit) in countries where people are starving because of famine.

I do *hope* we will see these supernatural signs as we get closer to the return of Jesus. But, I also hope that Christians will have a new supernatural Pentecost experience and return to the original commandments of God. Galatians 5:14 states: 'For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" And honestly, to love those who are unlovable, requires a supernatural empowerment from the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:16 states: 'I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.'

Let us pray for another outpouring of the Holy Spirit, on Pentecost, so that the church can be 'clothed with power from on high'!



For more teaching from N. G. Carraway, visit ngccarraway.com. This primary purpose of this website is to share the Good News of Jesus Christ and to educate and enlighten those who put their faith and trust in him, as their Messiah and soon coming King.

Shalom and God bless!

