

First Fruits and Weeks

Introduction

Most of us have seen pictures of the Great Wall of China. It was about 1500 miles long, 25 feet high, and 12 feet thick. The purpose of the wall, was to create a barrier that invaders could not cross.

The Bible speaks of another wall, not tangible, but present. It is not made of brick and mortar. It is the Law of Commandments contained in ordinances (Eph. 2:15). The result was the same. It created a wall of separation between Jew and Gentiles.

God ordained that one day this would fall. This is foreshadowed in Shavuot or the Feast of Weeks.

The Feast of Weeks

Exodus 24:22

And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end.

The Feast of Weeks goes by many names.

It is referred to the “feast of harvest” in Exodus 23:16. Because it inaugurated the beginning of the wheat harvest, is is called the “day of first fruits” (Numbers 28:26).

The primary purpose was to bring a designated portion of the harvest the “first fruits” into the Temple as an act of dedication to God in recognition of His provision.

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The Feast of Weeks

To calculate the Feast of Weeks, you would go to the day of the celebration of First fruits (barley), just after Passover, and beginning with that day, you would count off 50 days. First Fruits is the beginning of the barley harvest and Weeks is the celebration of the beginning of the wheat harvest. Since 50 days equals seven weeks, it became a "week of weeks". Therefore, they either called it the Feast of Harvest or the Feast of Weeks.

First Fruits

Lets step back a moment. So Weeks is 50 days after First Fruits....
So when is First Fruits?

It is the Sunday (or first day of the week) after Passover.

Did you catch it.... This is the day that Jesus Rose from the Dead.

Listen to what Paul says...

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man *came* death, by

Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming.

The 17th of Nisan

There are a surprising number of key events in Israel's history that occurred on this date. The 17th of Nisan is the date associated with resurrection! Here is a list of the events that occurred on this day:

- The feast of first fruits (symbolizing new life) would occur on the first Sunday after Passover.
 - Noah's ark comes to rest after the flood on the 17th of Nisan (Genesis 8:1-4).
 - Israel came through the Red Sea on the 17th of Nisan.
- The manna which had fed the nation of Israel for the 40 years in the wilderness stopped on the 16th of Nisan and from the 17th onwards Israel feasted on the new grain of the promised land (**Josh 5:10-12**).
- The death sentence hung over the entire Israelite nation as their sworn enemy, Haman, had convinced the king to sign a decree to destroy them (**Esther 3:1-12**). The decree went out on the 13th Nisan (**Esther 3:12**). Esther then proclaimed a three day fast (**Esther 4:16**) for the 14th, 15th and 16th. On the 3rd day (5:1) Esther approached the king saying to herself 'If I perish, I perish!' (an attitude of death or resurrection... it's in God's hands!) On the 17th Nisan, the tables were turned on the enemy Haman and instead of the Jews being destroyed, his own life was taken!

The 17th of Nisan

Do you see the relationship of deliverance and new life?

- The feast of first fruits – Jesus' Resurrection – Death is conquered so man can live.
 - Noah's ark is a picture of Jesus' salvation. The flood was God's judgment of death on sinful mankind. Coming to rest represents new life for Noah and his family.
- Crossing the Red Sea represented the death to their old life (with the drowning of the Egyptians) and resurrection to a new life in God!
- The ending of manna again is a picture of the new life that existed in the Promised Land!
- In Esther, the Jews were again under the sentence of death, and were delivered to new life.

Pentecost

Another name for the Feast of Weeks is Pentecost because it is 50 days from First fruits. This was the celebration of the wheat harvest.

John 20:24

Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

This verse speaks of Jesus. He chose to die, and be placed into the ground (tomb). As a result of His sacrifice, he produced a great harvest. We see the beginning of this at Pentecost.

Pentecost was not the final reaping of believers, it was just the first fruits. The harvest of bringing others into a saving relationship with Jesus continues today!

Pentecost

Acts 2:1-12

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ²And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁵And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. ⁶And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. ⁷Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?" ⁸And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? ⁹Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." ¹²So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"

Pentecost

Many in the crowd thought that the disciples were drunk. Peter stood up and addressed the crowd (probably in Hebrew) and explained that they had witnessed the prophecy of Joel. Jesus had been crucified, and there were many signs and wonders that accompanied His death and resurrection. Peter concludes his message with a call for repentance and salvation.

Acts 2: 28-29

Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”

Pentecost

Look at the gathering of these “first fruits”.

Acts 2:40-47

And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about **three thousand souls** were added *to them*.⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. ⁴³ Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. **And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.**

Pentecost

Remember the Great Wall of China we started with? It was a wall of separation.

Think of what Pentecost did. It broke down the wall that separated Jew and Gentile. The door is open to all who will come. This is amazing! We are told that before the throne of God, every tribe and tongue will be there. God is Good!

Think about it. Languages were created by God at the Tower of Babel to divide mankind to slow down the spread of false. Now at Pentecost, those languages are broken down so the truth of Jesus can be shared to all men!

So What ...

Think about this.... The Jews of the Old Testament, celebrated the birth of the Church! As believers, we are part of that great harvest that will culminate in the great multitude of believers gathered before the throne of God.

People fall into two categories.

1. The saved who are part of the harvest of Christ's. Our job, to sow the seeds of the Gospel by word and deed!
2. Those who need to be saved. There is different harvest coming where the unsaved will be gathered in judgment.

What about you? In which harvest are you?

Who will you pray for an opportunity to share the gospel with this week?