



*"The Churches of God Outreach Ministries provides leadership, information, and biblical teaching in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19-20"*

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## Mini Study

### Spring Harvest

*"...unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days" (Leviticus 23:16).*

*"Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (James 1:18).*

The Biblical "types" can be based on historical events (*Passover*, for example). Or, as in this case, in a natural event - the early grain harvest. Our physical life depends on the produce of the ground, and it is surely right that we recognize the source of this abundance with thanksgiving to the Creator. But the types have a spiritual fulfillment, and the seven weeks of the grain harvest in ancient Palestine are of momentous significance.

- The Biblical festivals are rooted in the physical laws that govern our planet: *"...and God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years"* (Genesis 1:14). Note that word "seasons." In Hebrew it is *mo'ed*, denoting a "fixed time." The word is used of the divinely-appointed feasts: *"... These are the feasts [mo'ed] of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons [mo'ed]"* (Leviticus 23:4). They are appointed times for the people of God to assemble before Him in worship, and their place on the religious calendar is governed by those "lights."
- Earth's produce, too, is dependent on these "lights," our sun and moon. The Creator uses these harvests as an object lesson for His creation. They depict His plan for mankind, and the spring grain harvest is at its heart. In Israel, the new corn could be consumed only after special offerings were presented before the LORD. It was called the *Firstfruits* or the *Wave-Sheaf*. Jesus fulfilled this ancient type on the Sunday morning after his resurrection. Because of the Christian's place as the *"brethren of Christ"* (Hebrews 2:11), we are called *"a kind of firstfruits"* (James 1:18). [Request the Mini-Study: **Why Easter Sunday?**]
- It is these latter - faithful Christians - who represent the "fifty days" of the spring harvest: *"... ye shall count unto ye from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days"* (Leviticus 23:15-16). The fifty days of the early harvest represent the present era, when the Father is inviting the willing to be the firstfruits of His spiritual harvest. The symbolic fifty days of harvest represent the need for the people of God, throughout the year, constantly to be spiritually nourished, to grow to Christ-like maturity: *"... but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ..."* (II Peter 3:18). And to *"be fruitful and multiply,"* evangelize (Matthew 13:8).
- The apostle Paul explains the significance of the *Firstfruits* offering: *"...now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept"* (I Corinthians 15:20, 23). It represents the resurrection from among the dead. He continues: *"...for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every*

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*man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end"* (vv.22-24). Jesus was the first to be resurrected in spirit form. Then, at his return, all those in whom is the Spirit of God will be resurrected, in the same spirit form, to reign alongside the returned Christ (I Thessalonians 4:14-17, Revelation 20:6).

- The fiftieth day, Sunday, is the *Feast of Pentecost*, familiar to most Christians as the day the Holy Spirit came with power upon the disciples (Acts 2:1). The word means *fiftieth*. (This "seven plus one" theme is common in Scripture. 7 days of *Unleavened Bread* plus 1 (Pentecost); 7 day of *Tabernacles* plus 1; 7 x 7 years plus 1 to the *Jubilee* year.) The *Day of Pentecost*, also called the *Feast of Weeks* (eg II Chronicles 8:13), represents the culmination of the divine plan for this age. It is also the forerunner of the time of Christ's return, when the entire remnant of mankind will have the veil of deception removed (Acts 2:17, Isaiah 25:7, II Corinthians 4:4), the late harvest, the ingathering of the nations.
- *Pentecost* is the only Bible festival for which no calendar date is given in Scripture. It has to be calculated, counted. Contrary to this, in Judaism the date is fixed at the sixth day of the third month, based on fifty days from the first annual High Day of the *Feast of the Passover* (Nisan 15). Note that the *Day of Pentecost* is a "holy convocation," a High Day, but is not here (Leviticus 23) termed an annual Sabbath, thus making clear that the Sabbath referred to is the weekly one. Jesus, however, fulfilled the typology as the first of the *Firstfruits* harvest. On the day following that High Day (that year a Friday) he was still in the grave having been crucified on Wednesday. He could not therefore have fulfilled the type. God always acts "on time"; He does nothing prematurely. For example: "...when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son" (Galatians 4:2, 4; also Ephesians 1:10; Acts 2:1; Exodus 12:17, 41; Daniel 12:7).
- In sum, Jesus as the firstfruits to God by His resurrection was accepted by the Father the next day, on the "morrow of the Sabbath," Sunday morning. From that day we are to count fifty days, and that (Sun)day is *Pentecost*. He is "...declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). As ever Jesus Christ is the focus of the festival. The seven weeks represent Christians of this era, "a kind of firstfruits."

(All Scripture references are KJV unless otherwise noted.)

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