

## A Christian Pentecost

From Ronald L. Dart's Program Notes

When you hear the word "Pentecost" do you automatically relate it to what happens among charismatic Christian groups today? Pentecost is actually older than the New Testament church. Considering the significance of what happened on this day, it's astonishing that so many Christian churches know so little about this most important day, and so few even keep it or take note of it.

Let's consider one statement from the Book of Acts. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they [Jesus's disciples] were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). But to do what? It is beyond dispute that they were there to observe the Feast of Pentecost. These were all Israelites. So, the disciples had observed this festival all their lives, and there was nothing in all the teachings of Jesus to suggest any change in that practice.

In fact, there were three pilgrimage festivals, or feasts, when they were expected to come to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple. These were Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Passover and Tabernacles occur on specific

dates on the Jewish calendar. There is one curious thing about the Feast of Pentecost. No calendar date is specified for Pentecost. So, how do you know when Pentecost has finally arrived and if you should celebrate it, and when?

### When should Pentecost be celebrated?

The Bible says you have to count. "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the

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priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it" (Leviticus 23:9-11).

The Law says that this was on the day after a Sabbath at the beginning of the grain harvest. That places it in the Spring, early in the year. The Jews understood it to be connected to Passover. So, on the day after the first day of the Passover season was the day they offered the sheaf of firstfruits.

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### *Who Benefits from Your Giving? . . .*

How can you give to God when He owns everything? Then when *you* do make your offering to God, who is the beneficiary—God or *you*? God has given you the awesome opportunity to "store up treasures in heaven" and reap eternal rewards. It takes faith, especially in hard times. But tithing is a command from God, and the obedient Christian cheerfully obeys. Christian Educational Ministries looks for every opportunity to spread the Gospel, and we can only go through the doors God opens with the resources given to us by your tithes and offerings. We are so grateful to each one of you for giving generously so everyone can benefit.

## Strangers and Pilgrims

Excerpts from *The Thread*, by Ronald L. Dart

*On Jordan's stormy banks I stand  
and cast a wistful eye, To  
Canaan's fair and happy land  
where my possessions lie. I am  
bound for the promised land, yes  
I am I am bound for the promised  
land. Oh who will come and go  
with me, I am bound for the  
promised land.*

It seems to me that we in the Christian faith have lost touch with our roots in important ways. We are so comfortable in the modern world, so at home in it, that some of our old hymns really don't mean much to us any longer. Take the fine old hymn above. We may cast a wistful eye, but it is as likely to be toward next year's Mercedes sitting in the showroom as it is to be toward "Canaan's fair and happy land where our possessions lie." Our possessions are in the garage. What do Jordan and Canaan have to do with the Christian faith, anyhow? Then

there is this old gospel song: "This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through. If heaven's not my home, O Lord what shall I do? The angels beckon me From heaven's open door, and I can't feel at home in this world any more."

One of the most fundamental Christian beliefs is that we are not at home here. We are strangers, we are pilgrims, and we look for a better world to come. This idea is deeply rooted in the Bible, and it was around before there ever was a Jew and persisted all the way into Christianity. Look at Father Abraham. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in *tabernacles*

with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:8-10).

In an important way, the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles is a *confession* that we are strangers and pilgrims, that we are not at home here, that we look for something far better. Join CEM and other like-minded people of faith to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles in Sevierville, Tennessee this Autumn from October 12 though 20. Visit our website at [www.borntowin.net](http://www.borntowin.net) for more information by clicking on Feast of Tabernacles 2011 on the home page.

## Calendar of Events

**2011 YEA Summer Camp—Important changes!** Camp dates have been changed to July 3-10. The deadline for applications has been extended to June 10, 2011. Some scholarship funds are available. We would love to see you there! Look on [www.borntowin.net](http://www.borntowin.net) under Events for more information and to download an application.

**Feast of Tabernacles 2011** - Join us in celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles! This year Christian Educational Ministries will be holding the Feast of Tabernacles at the Sevierville Events Center in Sevierville, Tennessee October 12-20, 2011. Opening night services begin at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, October 12, 2011. You will also be able to view all services at Sevierville, Tennessee, via video live streaming at: <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/cem-network>. More information will soon be available under the Feast of Tabernacles section of the website. Please check often, or call the office at 1-888-BIBLE-44 or email Paula Hughes at [paulahughes@borntowin.net](mailto:paulahughes@borntowin.net).

### *In Memory*

A memorial gift was received in memory of William Norrod of San Antonio, Texas, who passed away March 16, 2011. A WWII veteran, Mr. Norrod was preceded in death by his wife, Mary Norrod. He is survived by his children, Teeka Glasgow of Dallas, Byron Norrod of Los Angeles, Rebecca Norrod of New York, Rachel Norrod of Austin, and Laura Alcott of San Antonio. Our prayers and sympathies are with the family and their friends.

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The first day of the Passover season (the first day of Unleavened Bread) always falls on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the first month, and it is a Sabbath. This could fall on any day of the week, and not on the seventh day Sabbath, but there is something interesting to note here. The Bible speaks of all holy days as Sabbaths or “high days,” when no ordinary work is to be done, so in the sense that it is a holy day, the first day of Unleavened Bread is a Sabbath.

But there was another tradition, and it arises from what follows. “And ye shall count unto you 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; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD. And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations” (Leviticus 23:15-17, 21).

But did you notice that the festival of Pentecost falls on the day after the seventh Sabbath? It is for this reason that some Jews and Christians will observe Pentecost on Sunday, 50 days from the day after the Sabbath following

Passover. The day Jesus first appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, as the firstfruits from the dead, was the day the countdown to Pentecost began, and so it has remained.

### **A Harvest Festival**

Pentecost is a feast with three names. Pentecost is a Greek word that means fiftieth. The Feast of Weeks is an obvious name because of the seven week countdown. The Old Testament name is Feast of Firstfruits. “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him” (1 Corinthians 15:20-23 NIV).

“What would the first Christians have made of all this? Seven weeks after Jesus rose from the dead as the firstfruits, yet another offering is made that is also called firstfruits. How would they have understood it? We know how James understood it because he states it outright in his letter.

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created” (James 1:17-18 NIV).

“Make no mistake about it. James, like all of the apostles,

was well versed in the Scriptures, and this comparison to the Feast of Firstfruits is deliberate. Not only is Christ the firstfruits, so are we . . .” (*The Thread, God’s Appointments with History*, by Ronald L. Dart).

So why is there a Christian connection? To understand that, we have to cast our minds back to the Passover when Christ died—more specifically, to the day when he first appeared to his disciples, alive from the dead.

The Resurrection of Jesus is the pivotal event in the history of God’s dealing with man. Oddly, it was a matter of controversy in the early church. In addressing the controversy, Paul says something very important and often overlooked. “Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Corinthians 15:12-19).

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By remembering that 1 Corinthians was written at the Passover season, at the beginning of the Firstfruits season, you will see why Paul uses the term firstfruit. But it is more than that.

**A fascinating, and meaningful ceremony**

At the end of the Sabbath after Christ died, a little band of men made their way down to a spot where several sheafs of first ripe barley had been selected. As soon as the sun was down, ending the Sabbath, a sheaf of that grain was cut. That is probably the moment Jesus opened his eyes in the tomb.

During that night, the sheaf of barley was threshed, and the grain parched and prepared to be offered by the priest the next day. The priest took an omer of grain into the Temple and waved it before God.

This timeline will help clarify the order of events.

- Jesus rose from the dead at sunset on the Sabbath (the seventh day Sabbath) at the time the wave sheaf was being cut.
- The next morning, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb, saw the resurrected Jesus, but was not to touch him because he had not presented himself to the Father as the firstfruits from the dead.
- Jesus ascended to heaven and presented himself to the Father as the firstfruits at the same time the wave sheaf was offered in the Temple.

- Later that day, Jesus appeared to his disciples and they touched him.

The presumption is that at the moment the priest was offering the firstfruits, Jesus presented himself to the Father as the firstfruits from the dead. Thus begins the 50 day countdown to Pentecost. It is a harvest season, and Jesus' chosen metaphor for the work of his disciples was a harvest of people for the kingdom.

At the end of the 50 days, the two loaves of bread are offered. Are these two loaves symbolic of the remainder of the firstfruits? So, as Jesus was presented before the Father on a Sunday morning, so the church was gathered on Pentecost Sunday, the day after a Sabbath, as detailed in Acts 2. What happened on this day was the beginning of a revolution.

**Everyone understood the Gospel in his own language**

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them distributed tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every

man heard them speak in his own dialect. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own dialect, wherein we were born?” (Acts 2:1-8).

And what were these dialects? They were not unknown tongues. The dialects were known and named. Moreover, the message was clearly understood by everyone present—“we do hear them speak in our dialects the wonderful works of God.” There were 120 disciples there on that day, men and women. And the Holy Spirit fell on all of them. Their sons and their daughters prophesied. The door of access to God was being kicked open.

This pivotal event is thoroughly explored in *A Christian Pentecost*, by Ronald Dart. Get this most important CD and have your eyes opened to many important and exciting things that God would have you know. What were the 13 dialects spoken on that day? Why should you celebrate Pentecost? Ask for your *FREE* CD copy by checking the box on the enclosed card and returning it to us.

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*That the man of God may be proficient  
and equipped for every good work.*