

Fifty Days to Pentecost

From Ronald L. Dart's Program Notes

You've probably celebrated the Passover and put leavening out of your house for seven days. So what's next? What is a Christian to do? Celebrate Pentecost! But how and when? What is Pentecost all about?

Let's understand what the Bible says about Pentecost

Did you know the New Testament church celebrated Pentecost? And that the British still celebrate Pentecost as a nation? It's called Whit Sunday, and Whit Monday is also a holiday there. It is a two-day weekend based on an ancient Jewish holiday. In Acts 2, the Day of Pentecost was a very big happening: the birthday of the New Testament church, the day the Holy Spirit was poured out on them—empowered to do a work. Yet, so many Christians let Pentecost go unnoticed. You might say, "I'm not Jewish and not Pentecostal, so why should I celebrate Pentecost? What's in it for me?"

Follow me, and let's see

Why should we as a church and individually celebrate Pentecost? Should the church come together on that day every year and speak in tongues? What message is there in the Feast of Pentecost that you need to understand?

Pentecost simply means 50th—50th what?

To answer that question we have to go back a way. The Jewish holidays as we're apt to call them, are outlined in the Book of Leviticus. "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 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. . ." (Leviticus 23:10). There isn't a lot of information there. Even the time of year would not be known to us except for one thing. It turns out that we're talking about the very first ripe grain of the new year. And historically, we know the grain in Palestine would be barley and we know that day is very close to the first Day of Unleavened Bread.

Later, "And ye shall eat neither

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bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings" (Leviticus 23:14). In a way, it's like saying, "You can't eat any of this crop until you first acknowledge that I gave it to you. Harvest a sheaf, just one, bring it in before me, have the priest wave it back and forth, admitting I gave you this and thanking me for it. After that you can eat the crop to your heart's desire. . ."

"When you enter the land," he

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Winners Join a Winning Team. . .

Excitement fills the air at CEM because of the new surge in growth! Three completely new families have joined our Sabbath Services at CEM and can't learn the truths of the Bible fast enough. High energy YEA Sabbath School classes are getting started for eager children. Two new websites are being built to keep you informed. And Feast plans at Granbury, Texas, are on the top burner. Your support of these winners is greatly appreciated.

Welcome to Granbury

Reprinted with permission from the Granbury Visitor's Guide

Granbury, a jewel full of southern charm, is nestled southwest of the Dallas-Forth Worth area in the Brazos River Valley. Home to over 8,000 friendly people, the city is comprised of plush golf communities, a thriving wine scene and the picturesque Lake Granbury, a 30-mile-long recreational haven. Fitting with the city's slogan, "Where Texas History Lives," Granbury is a prime destination for leisure tourists and *conventioneers* alike. For these reasons and more, Granbury was named fifth in *Southern Living's* Best Small Town Getaways and has become a desirable retirement destination while maintaining its vibrancy with younger generations.

History

GRANBURY AND HOOD COUNTY ARE RICH IN FRONTIER FOLKLORE AND TEXAS HISTORY.

Rooted with history, Granbury prides itself on preserving the past. Following the war between the states, scores of settlers began to make their way west stopping along

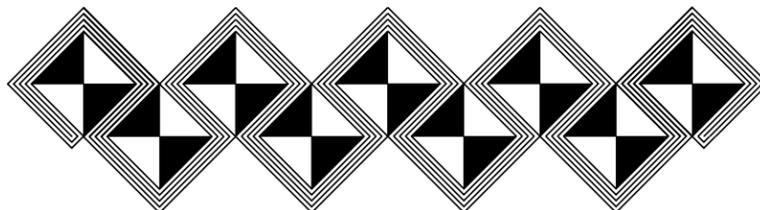
rivers and streams in search of fresh water. One such area was the fertile valley along the mighty Brazos River, which winds its way through present day Hood County.

Hood County was officially formed in 1866 by an act of the Texas Legislature. The county was named for General John Bell Hood and the county seat was named in honor of Brigadier General Hiram Bronson Granbury of the Confederate Army. Both namesakes had served during the Civil War and were therefore awarded this place of honor.

The City of Granbury was established on land donated by influential county residents, the Nutt brothers. These two men became leading merchants on the town square, providing goods and wares for the local townspeople. In addition, one of the earliest families to settle in Hood County were the descendants of David (Davy) Crockett. Crockett's wife, Elizabeth, is buried in Acton State Historic Site, the smallest state park in Texas—miles from Granbury. Local legends and folklore pervade

our area. Famous names such as John Wilkes Booth and Jesse James spent time here. Today, you can experience the Granbury of yesteryear at local museums and landmarks that have restored the frontier lifestyle that once reigned, including the Hood County Jail Museum and the Granbury State Historical Cemetery, said to be the final resting place for General Hiram B. Granbury, Jesse James and many others. The charming Granbury square was also the first in Texas to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, a charge led by preservationist Mary Lou Watkins, whose statue can be seen in town today.

Watch for CEM's Feast of Tabernacles updates in upcoming issues of Living to Win. For online information please check www.cemfot.com. This website is updated daily. Call Linda Benton or Brooke Brookreson at 1-888-242-5344 for additional information about the Feast in Granbury, Texas.



In Memory

Christian Educational Ministries gratefully receives the generous donation made in memory of Beverly Lynn Dilworth of Gadsden, Alabama. Beverly, a lover of hiking in the outdoors, passed February 11, 2014. She was survived by Allie Dart's sister, Eloise, and Beverly's sister, Jan Cofield. Her father, Patrick N. Dilworth, preceded her in death. Beverly, a devout Christian, will be greatly missed and our prayers are with the family.

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said. Presumably during the 40 years in the wilderness this could not be done because they didn't plant nor harvest during that time. Now he says: "And you shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf and the lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering. And the meat (meal) offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD for a sweet savour: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin. And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. 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 shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD. "

This is done on Pentecost which is also called the Feast of Firstfruits

What does any of this have to do with Christianity? More than you might think. Take that word "firstfruits." The idea at first seems to be merely a requirement that before you indulge yourself in the fruit of the ground, you have to put God first. That lesson alone is worthwhile and so the ceremonial acknowledging of God as the source of every good and perfect gift is a good thing. But the concept of firstfruits took on special meaning to the early church. You might wonder where this came from as you read through the New Testament. How did

they arrive at this? For example, in 1 Corinthians 15 (people who know their New Testament well will call it "The Resurrection Chapter") the Apostle Paul says in verse 19ff, "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. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." Immediately we see this connection with the resurrection from the dead. Jesus Christ was the first one resurrected from the dead and, since it calls him the firstfruits, you will learn that this is suggestive that there are more "fruits" to follow.

When you understand what Pentecost is, you will wonder why it isn't a much bigger thing among Christians. Pentecost was the day the Holy Spirit was poured out in power on the early church, the day they baptized 3,000 souls in one day. I don't think the church has ever done that since. It has been called the birthday of the church and you would think it would be celebrated in fine style. But for most of Protestant Christianity it passes unnoticed. It's just another Jewish holiday that many don't even notice. We've learned that Pentecost is the Greek word for "50th." In Acts 2:1, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." What it's saying is, when the 50th day had arrived.

There were 50 days from that first Pentecost of the Christian church when the High Priest waved that sheaf of the firstfruits before God. We've discussed that they couldn't eat grain until they actually presented it to God—that sheaf, that one omer of grain. That curious ceremony is normally considered a Jewish ritual.

However, when you look at this, the harvest begins on that day when he takes that basket of first ripe grain and waves it before God, the harvest begins that day and for 50 days thereafter they worked six days, rested the Sabbath, worked six days and rested the Sabbath, for seven Sabbaths until Pentecost.

What else was going on here that same morning?

No one saw the moment of Jesus' resurrection so we have no testimony as to exactly when that took place. We do know from the Gospel accounts that Mary Magdalene came to the sepulchre while it was still dark and found the tomb open and Jesus gone.

So, Jesus is risen, he's not there, and Mary Magdalene is standing there puzzled and hurt and confused. You'll find this in John 20. Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent to look inside and saw two angels in white seated where Jesus' body had been—one at the head, the other at the foot. They said, "Woman why are you crying?" And she said, "They've taken my Lord away and I don't know where they've put him." At this she turned and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize it was him. It may have been that his appearance had been altered, but also it may still have been dark.

"Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who are you looking for?" She said (she thought he was the gardener), "Sir, if you've carried him away, would you tell me where you've put him and I will get him?" Jesus called her by name, "Mary." And she turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic "Rabboni." And Jesus said, "Don't hold on to me for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them I

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am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”

This is very important to understand

Jesus would not actually ascend from the earth to the Father permanently for another 40 days. What did he mean when he said, “Go tell my disciples I’m returning to my Father and your Father?” Well, between the time he appeared to Mary Magdalene and later saw his disciples that same day and let them touch him, hold him, and handle him, he had ascended and presented himself to the Father. Probably at the same time the priest was waving that sheaf of the firstfruits in the Temple before God, Jesus was appearing before the Father in heaven. You know, the striking thing about so much of the Old Testament ritual is that it is all about Christ. This happened on a singular day of the year. It is the first day of the seven weeks of harvest leading up to Pentecost, also called the Feast of Firstfruits. This underlines one of the most common errors people make about the New Testament. This was on a Sunday morning to be sure, but the Jewish manner of speaking of Sunday was to call it the morrow after the Sabbath or, in the NIV, the day after the Sabbath. They did not call it the “first day of the week.” It’s a term not used in either Old Testament or New Testament by Jews. So what were they saying when describing this day as the “first day of the week”? It is the first day of the seven weeks of harvest. Day One of the 50-day countdown to Pentecost. Literally, in Greek, it is the first day of the Sabbaths and the word is plural. There’s no word here for “week.” The Jews basically used the term “seven” for that. But this is the

first day after the Sabbath. It’s odd how the idea of the “first day of the week” entered into Christian tradition when it is really not in reference to a day of the week, but a day of the year when the wave sheaf was offered.

Let’s walk back down that 50 days to the first Christian Pentecost

Jesus had told his disciples, “Don’t go home; wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit comes upon you with power.” Now they weren’t entirely clueless what this meant. The Holy Spirit came upon men of old, and usually the result of it was they prophesied. They had a word from God that they passed on to men. But there was no way that they could have anticipated what was about to happen and what it was going to mean. They didn’t have long to wait. A mere ten days after Christ’s ascension when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all together in one place which is, of course, exactly what you would have expected the disciples to do.

One of God’s appointed times

They kept this day, the Feast of Shavuot, the Feast of Firstfruits, what we call Pentecost, all their lives. It was one of the appointed times of God. They knew that God acted in history on these appointments and they must have expected the fulfillment of what Jesus promised in terms of being empowered by the Holy Spirit would come at this time. So they were all together in one place and in some anticipation.

Suddenly a sound like a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house and they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each one of them. You might call this a “hair raising experience”! What a moment! And there’s no way that they

could have anticipated the physical manifestations of the Spirit they saw and felt on this day.

All were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them

This underlies a longstanding belief of speaking in unknown tongues; “glossolalia” as it is otherwise called. Speaking in tongues is thought to be a manifestation of the Spirit—a proof or baptism of the Spirit. On this occasion it was a manifestation, but it was not merely that. You need to order your *FREE* copy of this CD titled *Fifty Days to Pentecost* to understand once and for all what happened on this Pentecost, what speaking in tongues really was, and the Pentecost message for you. Mr. Dart will make it clear.

This harvest festival gives you a job you must do

There is a message in the Fifty Days to Pentecost for Christians today—your job description. Pentecost is a Harvest Festival—a time when people will be brought to Jesus Christ. For too long we’ve hid behind “they are not being called.” Maybe so, but maybe they haven’t been because you haven’t done your Christian work. This is an eye-opening sermon, one to spur you on in your Christian growth and the job you’re called to do.

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