

May 2023

Greetings Brethren:

Very shortly we will be observing Pentecost. For some it will be their first observance since being baptized. For others, it will be one of many times that Pentecost has been observed. Importantly, this will be the 49th observance of a Monday Pentecost by Church of God, The Eternal. That may not seem significant if you simply think that this is just what we do. But for those who believe the Almighty God revealed His Truth to an end-time servant, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong, it is a unique and significant event. Not because a man said it, but because we believe God spoke through that servant. The vast majority of organizations claiming historical roots in the Worldwide Church of God have corrupted Pentecost by accepting and embracing doctrinal changes. The reality is that by so doing this they have turned their backs to Jesus Christ and cut themselves off from the Holy Spirit. Oh yes, a spirit still guides them, but it is a demon spirit.

Does that sound like a strong or bold statement? To some it may, but it is the truth because the foundation of any organization that changes revealed doctrines is demonism. And, principally, the children of Satan are those individuals who are called by God yet depart from that Way of Life. As prophesied in the book of Daniel, chapter 11, they are some of the ones who, in the last days, will aggressively turn on those holding on to originally-revealed Truths. Your adherence to the correct day of Pentecost is one of the reasons they will revile you and cause persecution to befall you. God's Holy Days depict His Master Plan of salvation. Pentecost, which pictures the giving of the Spirit of God, is one that makes Satan exceedingly angry. By your understanding of and holding on to these days, Satan will attack you and try to get you to corrupt them by any means possible. He will do whatever he can to prevent you from being born of the Holy Spirit. My dear brethren, correctly observing Pentecost is that significant.

With that in mind, a review of the basics of Pentecost may serve us well in helping prevent anyone, or any evil spirit, from confusing us or influencing us to believe a false concept or cause us to question the truth about this Holy Day. Be prepared. At some point in the future, you very likely will be challenged on it, ridiculed or mocked for it. It may even be used against you in an attempt to cause you to question other fundamental Truths if you cannot defend this one. Are you prepared? It may be one of the pressures you must be able to withstand.

Spring Harvest

The agricultural cycle of ancient Israel revolved around two harvests, the smaller one in the spring and the larger one in the fall. Before any grain could be harvested in the spring, a special ceremony took place. The Sunday after the weekly Sabbath that falls during the Feast of Unleavened Bread is Wavesheaf Sunday. On this day the Israelites were commanded to bring a sheaf, or small bundle, of the spring harvest to the priests. The ceremony was the waving of the first sheaf of grain, or the first of the firstfruits, which had to be accepted by God before the general spring harvest could begin.

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 it (Leviticus 23:10–11).

Wavesheaf Sunday also marked the day in which the count to the Feast of Weeks began. This period of time, beginning on Wavesheaf Sunday and ending at the Feast of Weeks, was the time allotted for the spring harvest. The next general period of time for a harvest did not occur until the fall with the second and larger harvest. Keep this in mind as it pictures elements of God's spiritual plan of salvation. The day we know today as *Pentecost* was observed long before the Holy Spirit was given in A.D. 31. It was then known as the Feast of Weeks.

And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the LORD thy God, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee (Deuteronomy 16:10).

A freewill offering was made on the Feast of Weeks. But in order to make that offering on the correct day, God provided a specific count by which the day would be known. That then leads to the questions: "Why do we have to count?"; "What is the count?"; and "How exactly do we count?" What is different about this Holy Day is that it does not fall on a fixed date on the calendar. The other Sabbaths that God commands have fixed dates. For example, the weekly Sabbath is the 7th day of the week, the 15th day of the first month begins the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the 10th day of the seventh month is Atonement. The Feast of Weeks is different because it requires a count in order to determine the observation day.

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 [then] 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 (Leviticus 23:15–17).

The Starting Point

That sounds simple—count and then at the end of the count make an offering. So why has there been so much confusion among many as to the correct day to observe at the end of the count? Let us start with what is commanded, which is to begin the count "from the morrow after the sabbath." Simple, but which Sabbath? The weekly Sabbath, the first High Day of Unleavened Bread, or the Last High Day of Unleavened Bread? They are all Sabbaths, but not everyone agrees on the same one for the starting point.

The first item of importance to know is that the Sabbath referred to is the weekly Sabbath. Not just any weekly Sabbath, but the one that falls within the days of Unleavened Bread. It is not the first nor the last High Day of Unleavened Bread. Of course, this means that Wavesheaf Sunday may not always fall within the Feast of Unleavened Bread. If the weekly Sabbath is also the last High Day of Unleavened Bread, then Wavesheaf Sunday will fall outside of the Feast. This is permissible and correct, and what was originally revealed.

One doctrinal change made by our parent organization in 1974 was to claim that Wavesheaf Sunday had to fall within the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It just happened to be that in that year—the year the doctrine of Pentecost was corrupted—the last High Day of Unleavened Bread fell on the weekly Sabbath and meant Wavesheaf Sunday would fall outside of the Feast. Because of this, the weekly Sabbath starting point was changed to be one week earlier so that Wavesheaf Sunday would fall within the Feast. The result was that Pentecost was kept one week too early! Additionally, because of the change from Monday to Sunday, Pentecost was now eight days too early. Unfortunately, a lot of people assembled that year to give an offering, but God was not there to accept it. This is how He viewed their Holy Day observance and offering that year:

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols (Amos 5:21–23).

God despised what they did in changing and corrupting His Holy Days and Law. So much so that even the hymns that were sung in honor of Him, He considered noise.

Two Hebrew Counts

Even when some use the correct weekly Sabbath as the starting point, why does disagreement still exist? It is because of the count itself. God provided Israel with two ways to count in order to properly observe Pentecost. The first was a count of fifty. The second was a count of forty-nine. One key point to remember is that regardless of the count, Pentecost is always observed on a Monday. The count itself is not holy, but the day of Pentecost is holy. The second point to remember, and without getting into technicalities, is that the Hebrew words used in these verses illustrate the use of inclusive counting for both the beginning and the end of the count. In Hebrew that means the first day of the count as well as the last day of the count are *included* in the count, and *then* the activity takes place. The activity does not take place on the last day of the count.

- The count of fifty:

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 (Leviticus 23:15–16).

The morrow after the Sabbath is Wavesheaf Sunday and the starting point. In Hebrew that day is labeled day number one. Starting with Sunday as day number one, fifty days later is Sunday. With inclusive counting, the first and last days are both included in the count, and *then* the activity takes place. This means that the last Sunday is number fifty of the count, and then the next day the activity takes place, which is a Monday Pentecost.

- The count of forty-nine:

Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn (Deuteronomy 16:9).

In the count specified in Deuteronomy 16, seven weeks must be counted. Since a week contains seven days, seven weeks of seven days total forty-nine. The Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, follows the count. How can a count of forty-nine and a count of fifty both end in the same place? The fifty count begins with Sunday as day number one, and the forty-nine

count begins with Monday as day number one. Both, however, are anchored by Wavesheaf Sunday. Why?

Wavesheaf Sunday was the day that the first of the firstfruits was offered. The general spring harvest, or the rest of the firstfruits, could not begin until the next day. That is the day Israel was able to "begin to put the sickle to the corn" and start the general spring harvest. The day after Wavesheaf Sunday is Monday. Therefore, the count of forty-nine begins on a Monday. With that day labeled as number one, forty-nine days later is a Sunday. Inclusive counting is used here too which means the first and last days are *included* in the count, and *then* the activity takes place. This means that the last day of the count, Sunday, is number forty-nine, and then the next day the activity takes place—a Monday Pentecost.

Two English Counts

If you do not speak Hebrew and if you count in English (exclusive counting), the result is still a Monday Pentecost. You can equally use the fifty count or the forty-nine count just as previously described. God's counting instruction gives the same result with either Hebrew or English. The starting point when counting fifty is Wavesheaf Sunday. The starting point when counting forty-nine is the Monday after Wavesheaf Sunday. The difference is that English counting is exclusive while Hebrew is inclusive. In English, Sunday is the starting day to count fifty. From Sunday to Monday is number one. Continue the count and when you reach fifty it is Monday. With the forty-nine count Monday is the starting day. From Monday to Tuesday is number one. Continue the count and when you reach forty-nine it is Monday.

For example, you are at weekly Sabbath services and are asked: "After today, when do you go back to work?" If you work on Monday, your answer will be, "In two days." The weekly Sabbath is the starting point. That day is not labeled as number one like it is with inclusive Hebrew counting, but the next day is. Therefore, Sunday is labeled as day one. Monday is labeled as day number two. In English, the last day of the count is the day that the event or activity takes place. Monday is day two, and the day you go back to work.

The method of counting in English is different than the method of counting in Hebrew. What is important to know, is that both counts lead to a Monday Pentecost.

Meaning of the Spring Harvest

The spring harvest began on the Sunday following the weekly Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread and lasted until the Feast of Weeks. This physical harvest

represents the harvest of the firstfruits. It typifies the harvest of those begotten of God and ultimately born of the Holy Spirit. It is a spiritual harvest that will take place at the return of Jesus Christ.

On Monday, June 18, A.D. 31, the Holy Spirit was given. From that day forward, all called of God who are baptized and have had the laying on of hands receive a down payment of the Holy Spirit dwelling *within* them. They become part of the firstfruits of God's Master Plan of salvation. They are part of the general spring harvest, or the harvest of the firstfruits.

The first sheaf offered on Wavesheaf Sunday is part of the firstfruits, but it is different than the general harvest. It depicts the *resurrected* Christ who was to be accepted by God the Father as the first human being born of God. When Mary Magdalene saw Jesus Christ early on Sunday morning, He said that she could not yet touch Him:

Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God (John 20:17).

The reason is because Christ had not yet ascended and been accepted by His Father as our High Priest. Christ became the first of the firstfruits harvest to be born of the Holy Spirit and became our Elder Brother. He was the first part, or the beginning, of the spring harvest.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept (1 Corinthians 15:20).

The Two Loaves

God the Father accepted Christ, the Wavesheaf, before *any part* of the rest of the firstfruits. If Jesus Christ was first, what about the rest of the firstfruits and how are they represented?

Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals; they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baken with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD (Leviticus 23:17).

The two loaves represent all of those who will be part of the general firstfruits harvest. This harvest includes all who are called by God, repent of their sins, receive a down payment of the Holy Spirit at baptism, and qualify for eternal life through their successful conversion

process. These are the firstfruits that will be part of the first resurrection and begin the Millennial reign with Jesus Christ. Remember, the general harvest of firstfruits began on the day after Wavesheaf Sunday. Jesus Christ had to be accepted by God and born of the Holy Spirit first, before anyone else could be eligible or qualify for eternal life. He was first, before anyone else.

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming (1 Corinthians 15:23).

The two loaves were leavened because those begotten firstfruits of God were sinful. They had sin in their lives and had to fight their carnal natures through personal mastery and overcoming. They had to demonstrate a love for God's Truth and a desire for His righteousness. They had to repent of their sins in order to be cleansed by Jesus Christ and accepted by God the Father.

Importance of the Holy Spirit

At the return of Jesus Christ, qualifying begotten children of God will be born of God by the Holy Spirit. That will be the culmination of our life's work. Everything for which we worked, hoped, and sacrificed will be fulfilled at that moment. It is a requirement to receive the Holy Spirit in order to be saved. We cannot be resurrected unless we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, which is accomplished by baptism and the laying on of hands, and that is why receiving the Holy Spirit is so important.

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you (Romans 8:11).

Even though one has received the Holy Spirit, it is still possible to quench, and ultimately reject, that Spirit. This is done by refusing to use it as a power of influence for doing good and changing our personal lives. Jesus warned of this when He instructed us that all sins can be forgiven. However, a rejection of the Holy Spirit, or God's work in our lives, will not be forgiven.

Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy [Spirit] shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy [Spirit], it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come (Matthew 12:31–32).

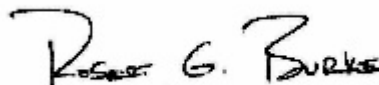
So how might we speak against the Holy Spirit and not be forgiven? According to God's perfect plan, there is no sin that cannot and will not be forgiven if we acknowledge it and truly repent. The only sin that will never be forgiven is the one that we refuse to acknowledge and repent of. Today, do not look for that "one" sin that has the potential to take us away. Analyze the many sins we commit each day by not using the power of the Holy Spirit to control our minds. Ultimately, the most dangerous sin is suppressing God's mind in order to live and react according to our natural, carnal minds and emotions. Oh yes, we want God's mind. We put in some amount of effort to emulate that mind. But in this case, we hold onto our minds rather than make the effort to add God's mind. This is a sin of idolatry. This is a sin of rebellion, because we know better yet make the wrong choice. It is the same as the sin of witchcraft. Which mind do we let dominate?

It is the responsibility of each Christian to stir up the Spirit of God and use the power it gives us to overcome the pulls of the flesh and to someday qualify for the Kingdom of God. We prove to God our proper use of the Holy Spirit by personal overcoming and the manifestation of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The simple fact is that if we do not use His power correctly, we reject Christ. Not the name, not the concept, but Him. And if by actions we reject Christ, we will not be part of His Kingdom.

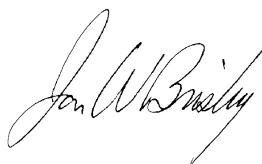
Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Peter 1:22–23).

Brethren, we have been taught the Truth. There is no confusion. Correctly observing Pentecost is one of the many means by which we stay connected to God through the Holy Spirit and allows us to look forward to the appearance of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our hope is to be born incorruptible. Do not let anyone take that away from you.

Your brother in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert G. Burke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "R" at the beginning.

Robert G. Burke

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "J" at the beginning.

Jon W. Brisby