



April 28, 2023

A Special Countdown

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

One of my favorite memories as a child was to watch on television when a rocket would be launched from Cape Canaveral, FL. In 1967 there were 172 alone! The excitement for me was when they would start the "countdown" until lift off!

I can still hear that voice in my ears from memory when NASA would say "T-minus..." The launch countdown contains "L Minus" and "T Minus" times. "L minus" indicates how far away we are from liftoff in hours and minutes. "T minus" time is a sequence of events that are built into the launch countdown. That countdown was special to me and I still on occasion will watch old videos of some of the rockets launched toward space.

During the Feast of Unleavened Bread that we just finished we also began a special countdown. It began on April 9, the Sunday that fell during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That count continues for seven perfect weeks and will end on the day after the seventh week. A perfect week begins with Sunday and ends with Saturday (using the Roman names for the days of the week). The count ends on a Sunday which is the fiftieth day of the count. Of course I'm referring to the count for determining the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. The name "Pentecost" is found in Acts 2:1. The Online Bible Greek Lexicon says the Greek word *pentekoste* means "the fiftieth day."

The beginning and progressing of the count is alluded to in both the Gospels and the Book of Acts. *"The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach . . . to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and*

speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." (Acts 1:1, 3) Then the count continues to the fiftieth day. (Acts 2:1)

We may ask, when was Jesus first seen by the disciples following His resurrection?

Matthew's Gospel describes the event when Jesus was seen by several women. *"Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb."* (Matthew 28:1) Clearly, this arrival of these two women at the tomb takes place early morning, just before dawn of the first day of the week (Sunday morning). The women were told by an angel that Jesus was already risen! (v.6) No Sunday morning resurrection here! After checking out the empty tomb, they quickly did what the angel said, *"tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead"* (v.7) Then Jesus appeared visibly to them. *"And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them . . ."* (v.9) This was only one of the several appearances of Jesus on the first day of the week.

Luke 24:10 lists *"Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and the rest with them"* as the women who came to the tomb. We can harmonize these different accounts by observing that the women did not all arrive at the same time. John's Gospel records the arrival of Mary Magdalene at the tomb *"on the first day of the week"* and *"while it was still dark."* (John 20:1) The *"other Mary"* may have arrived several minutes later and then other women arrived after her. After Mary runs to specifically tell Peter and John that the stone has been rolled away from the opening of the tomb, she returns to the tomb. (v.2-11) Then Jesus appears to her. (v.14-16) He makes an amazing statement that relates to the meaning of an ancient ritual associated with that Sunday during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. *"Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"* (John 20:17) Because Jesus appeared to the disciples later during the first day of the week (v.19-23) and spent some time talking with them, it is a logical assumption that Jesus ascended to the Father during the morning of the first day of the week.

Interestingly, when the Israelites arrived in Canaan, they were instructed to cut and wave a sheaf of grain of the early harvest (usually barley) before the LORD *"on the day after the Sabbath."* (Leviticus 23:10-11) The day that followed the weekly Sabbath (Sunday or the first day of the week), began the count to determine the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. *"And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD."* (Leviticus 23:15-16)

The count always places the fiftieth day on a Sunday. The wave sheaf offering instruction was followed and fulfilled when the Israelites crossed over Jordan into the land of Canaan. (Joshua 5) The symbolism of waving the grain wave sheaf was fulfilled by Jesus when He ascended to Heaven to the Father on that first day of week following His resurrection.

We find that the festivals of God are instructive in multiple ways, including prophecies of events which would fulfill the meaning and symbolism of these festivals.

So, yes this is a special count! Just as I did with rocket launches, I count each week as we draw closer to the upcoming Feast of Pentecost! Happy counting!

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.



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