



May 2, 2025

The First Feast of Weeks

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

My wife and I sure enjoyed being with the brethren here in Spanish Fort and online for the “double Sabbath” we just observed On April 19. The buzz in the air with conversation and fellowship was infectious. The online chat also was active during this service. I mentioned that day that “the next Holy Day Festival of God is Pentecost”.

In reflecting upon that inspiring experience of meeting on a regular weekly Sabbath that was also the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, I thought about a question I’m often asked “when was the first feast of weeks celebrated?”

A study of Pentecost reveals important Old Testament symbolism. What happened to ancient Israel was, after all, recorded for our benefit. The Apostle Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 10:11 that many Old Testament events and situations were intended as types that are instructive for us today.

The term “Pentecost” itself is not used in the Old Testament. Rather, it’s a Greek word referring to the 50 days counted from the offering of the wavesheaf during the Days of Unleavened Bread until the Holy Day that celebrates the harvest of the firstfruits. The Jews commonly call that day Shavuot, meaning “weeks.” Comparing Exodus 23:16 with Exodus 34:22 shows that “Feast of Weeks” and “Feast of Harvest” were interchangeable terms referring to this Holy Day.

Technically it could not be celebrated until the children of Israel entered the Promised Land - Canaan. The feast of weeks had to be counted from the day that the barley harvest wave sheaf was offered. *"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the Firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.'" (Lev 23:10) "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)

Joshua 3 & 4 records the crossing of Israel over the Jordan River into the Promised Land of Canaan. Joshua 5 records the Passover observance followed by eating the produce of the land on the day after the Passover. That had to be the day of offering the wave sheaf and was also the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread that year.

There is no specific mention of celebrating the Feast of weeks fifty days later, and there are very few references to celebrating any of the Holy Days in the historical record of the Old Testament. I have to wonder if the events of Joshua 8 might have taken place around the time of the Feast of Firstfruits? *"Now Joshua built an altar to the LORD God of Israel in Mount Ebal."* (Joshua 8:30) *"And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written. And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law."* (Josh 8:32, 34) It indeed seems reminiscent of the events at the time of the giving of the law at Sinai which was during the third month at the time that Pentecost would have been observed. We can't know for sure, but it's logical.

One reference to the time of year when Pentecost would be observed is Exodus 34:22: *"And you shall observe the Feast of Weeks, of the Firstfruits of wheat harvest."* This wheat harvest would have taken place in May and later.

Deuteronomy 16 refers to the Feast of Weeks several times. *"Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you. You shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your gates, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are among you . . ."* (Deuteronomy 16:10-11).

Looking at the Old Testament, we are struck by some remarkable parallels with the story of the New Testament Church. The seven lamps of both Testaments point to God's firstfruits and to their story through the centuries.

Pentecost reminds us that God is calling out a firstfruits now, in this age. The great "ingathering" harvest pictured by the fall festivals lies yet ahead.

The firstfruits are called out for a purpose, to accomplish a work, and also ultimately serve with Him for eternity. In the course of carrying out God's commission (Matthew 24:14; Mark 16:15)—one of the purposes for our calling now—we are to be a light to this world. That's a very important reflective task!

The beginning of His New Testament church was another incredible event along with the giving of His Holy Spirit on that Day of Pentecost in 31 AD.

So, this upcoming "feast of weeks" (June 1 this year) indeed offers plenty to study, meditate, and reflect upon.

I hope and pray that you've had a joyful celebration as you came together on these special holy convocations and appointed times. What a blessing to be called as part of the firstfruits and understand the wonderful meaning of this upcoming day of Pentecost! *"Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."* (James 1:18)

Christ fulfilled the early barley harvest firstfruits wavesheaf offering. We are destined to fulfill the symbolism of the later summer harvest of firstfruits. Let us

live vibrantly with Christ in us, (Galatians 2:20) and make our calling and election sure! May you have a blessed upcoming Sabbath as you worship and fellowship with one another.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. S. Hoefker', with a stylized, cursive script.

T. S. Hoefker

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