

The Facts About Pentecost

To determine the proper day for Pentecost there must be a count. Pentecost is the only holy day that must be counted. The Bible instruction tells us to count fifty days before Pentecost is observed. This count is for a purpose. If the count toward Pentecost begins immediately after either one of the two holy days during the Days of Unleavened Bread, it would not be necessary to count. The date would always fall on the same day in the Hebrew calendar. Only the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread falls on a variable date. Keep in mind the Bible instruction is to count fifty days, not forty-nine. Biblical days are counted at their completion. For example, notice Genesis 1:5, 9 (margin), "And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day" (Gen. 1:5).

Most of the arguments that are in vogue today are not new. They go back before the beginning of the AD period. During ancient times Pentecost was observed on four different days. A look at encyclopedias and other reference works demonstrates that the Sadducees, Samaritans, and Karaites began the count for Pentecost on the weekly Sabbath that fell during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The Pharisees, however, began the count from the first high Sabbath day during the Days of Unleavened Bread. A small sect in Ethiopia-the Falashas-began the count from the last high day during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The problem has always been a question of the precise meaning of the word "Sabbath" in Leviticus 23:11, 15. This argumentation has been going on so long that the beginning is unknown. After the time of the Second Temple (515 BC) the Sadducees and Boethusians, a branch belonging to the Sadducees, and the Karaites (eighth century AD) took the word Sabbath in Leviticus 23:11, 15 to mean the weekly Sabbath. It was their view that the wavesheaf was offered on the day after the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread (New Unger's Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Festivals").

This article will consider the present arguments that have embroiled Pentecost into a theological brawl. Which day, Sunday, Monday, or Sivan 6 is the correct day for observing Pentecost? Those interested in reading this article more than likely have already proven the need to keep Pentecost, but may be unsure as to the correct day.

Most of us are familiar with the Jubilee year. What the Jubilee year shows is that its observance is based on a complete count. Those who advocate a Sunday Pentecost insist that Pentecost should be counted in the same manner as the Jubilee year. The difference is, however, that the two counts are not the same. Jubilee has a count of forty-nine years, while the Pentecost count is fifty days. The Jubilee count is as follows: "And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years" (Lev. 25:8). The count is exact-forty-nine years. What year, then, is the Jubilee year? Not the forty-ninth year, but the fiftieth. "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family" (Lev. 25:10). The Jubilee is observed after the forty-nine year count is completed. Regarding Pentecost, we are told to count fifty days, not forty-nine. When the count is complete Pentecost is to be observed. God is consistent.

Judges 14:12 and 18 demonstrate the same thing. The Philistines were given seven days to solve Samson's riddle. On the seventh day they came to Samson with the answer "before the sun went down."

Bethel Church of God

The Facts About Pentecost

The seven days were not complete until the end of the seventh day, that is, until it was over at sundown. The Philistines came with the answer within the allotted time. Biblical days generally are not counted until they are complete, until the full twenty-four hours are over.

There is another example of how God counts time in Leviticus, chapter fifteen. The instruction regards a man who is ceremonially unclean. "And when he that hath an issue is cleansed of his issue; then he shall number to himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in running water, and shall be clean" (Lev. 15:13). But he is not clean until he completes the ritual. "And on the eighth day he shall take to him two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, and come before the Lord unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and give them unto the priest: And the priest shall offer them, the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord for his issue" (Lev. 15:14-15). After the seven days are completed, he comes before the priest and is proclaimed clean on the eighth day. See also verses 18-19 and 28-29 for parallel texts.

The question that needs to be asked is: Is it possible to come up with four different ways to count Pentecost and all be correct? Hardly. There can be only one correct way to count Pentecost.

The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia and the Jewish Encyclopedia describe the argument that arose over how to interpret Leviticus 23:15. The Pharisaic view seen in the Septuagint and the Talmud regarded the Sabbath from which to mark the count as the first high day during the Days of Unleavened Bread. As a result Pentecost always fell on Sivan 6. However, these reference works also reveal that the Sadducean count, which began on the day after the weekly Sabbath was the "old Biblical view." Since the Sadducees counted, as we shall see, only forty-nine days, Pentecost always fell on a Sunday.

It would be safe to assume that this was a running argument even in the time of Christ. Since there are three Sabbaths during the Days of Unleavened Bread, many today believe it is not possible to determine which day to count from—the reason being that there are three Sabbaths during this time period. Even in our day there is no consensus on how to properly reckon Pentecost. When the Talmud was being written this uncertainty was discussed (Menahoth 65a, b, 66a). What is significant in these discussions is that there was a "re-establishment" of the date for Pentecost. Obviously, some kind of a change was made. The Talmud covers the Pharisaic view that the weekly Sabbath could not have been intended because the numbering of the days depended upon the decision of the Beth din—the body that represented the civil as well as religious authority. The Pharisaic view was that the Sabbath of creation, that is, the weekly Sabbath, could not have been intended as the day to begin the count because it would fall in the hands of all men to determine when to begin the count and there would be no need for religious guidance by the authorities. Up to at least AD 65 what is clear is that the reckoning for Pentecost followed the Sadducean method, counting from the weekly Sabbath. The Pharisees did not gain control of the Temple until very near its destruction.

Who Controlled the Temple?

The Sadducees were formed as a body around 200 BC. They were the ones who directed the Temple worship and its rites. Many of the Sadducees were members of the Sanhedrin (Encyclopedia Judaica, s.v. "Sadducees"). The problem today is that much of what is believed does not extend beyond 400 years after the time the Sadducees were formed, or to about AD 200. Parts of the Talmud (the Mishnah) were not written in the form we have today until AD 200. The writing of the Talmud involved a process that took many years and many teachings and interpretations were added during this time. So, the questions that need to be asked are: Are there any particular teachings in the Talmud that go back to the time of Christ? Do its teachings represent that which is quite late? Can we really rely on the teachings of Hillel and Shammai when what they taught was for the most part handed down orally until AD 200? There are no rabbinic writings that even tell us what was transpiring before the destruction of the Temple. A

Bethel Church of God

The Facts About Pentecost

commentary on the Mishnah, called the Gemara, was not even written until between AD 200-500. So, how much reliance can we place on fourth century rabbis who tell us about events that took place during the time of Christ?

Josephus' description of the Pharisees does not even closely resemble those of the rabbis. According to the rabbis, the differences between the Pharisees and Sadducees hardly amounted to more than rules for fellowship at the table. Professor Jacob Neusner in a work entitled, *From Politics to Piety*, page 34, quoted in the "Pentecost Study Material," 1974, states that it is not possible to construct a single public event before AD 70 if we rely on rabbinical traditions which only regard the Pharisees. He says the historical Pharisees of the period before AD 70 escape us. The only knowledge available concerns itself with problems in the history of Judaism after the destruction of the Temple. What has really happened is that traditions have been reinterpreted and reshaped by rabbis many years later. The only real source of history during the period prior to the destruction of the Temple is the New Testament. It is a fallacy to rely on Jewish writings regarding the Sadducees and Judaism during the period of the Second Temple. These writings give us a biased view. Rabbinical literature depicts the Sadducees as worldly-minded aristocrats who esteemed Greco-Roman culture and determined to maintain their privileges. Even the writings of Josephus cannot be considered reliable, and there is no indication in his *Wars* that he was a Pharisee as he later declared (Neusner, 55, quoted in the "Pentecost Study Material").

The Gospels indicate that Christ did not criticize the Sadducees in the same manner as He did the Pharisees. Also, the Sadducees do not seem to have taken the vigorous steps to kill Christ as did the Pharisees. As far as history is concerned, not one undisputed writing has been preserved of an avowed Sadducee. The historical statements regarding them come from their foes, and people in political or religious circles generally do not accept as accurate the views of one's enemies. McClintock and Strong point out that the rejection of tradition by the Sadducees did not include all the traditions of the law. The view that the Sadducees and Pharisees were vehemently opposed on most issues is inaccurate; the division was not as great as is generally believed. Jewish records of the Sadducees show they did not reject the Prophets and the Writings, nor did they believe only in the Pentateuch. Josephus' view that the Sadducees believed that the soul perishes with the body seems to be an addition to what the Gospels indicate; the Gospels indicate that they simply denied the resurrection. Josephus depicted the Sadducees as being similar in their orientation to the Greek philosophical schools, particularly the Stoics, but there is no real historical support for this. Josephus was not even reliable in describing the Pharisees, of which he claimed to be a member. The Sadducees certainly believed in the divine inspiration of the Mosaic law even though they said there was neither angel nor spirit. Their chief denial was the incarnation of Christ and the various manifestations of spirits and demons as was believed in later times of Jewish history. The actual differences between the Sadducees and Pharisees were largely in theory and not as great as Josephus depicts (*Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, s.v. "Sadducee").

The Sadducees, counting inclusively from the first Sunday following the Passover, observed Pentecost on the fiftieth day. As long as the Temple stood, public observance was according to their method of counting (*Logos Library System*, s.v. "Pentecost, Feast of"). The earlier political influence of the Pharisees had declined when Herod and the Romans assumed control over Judea. The Sadducees gained the ascendancy and during the time of Christ and the first generation of Christians they controlled the Temple. The Pharisees dominated the synagogues, but the majority of the members of the Sanhedrin were Sadducees. So closely associated were the Sadducees with the Temple that when it was destroyed by the Romans they were lost from sight historically (*Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1943 ed. Vol. IX, quoted in the "Pentecost Study Material," 1974, 39). Yet, they maintained their power and authority until quite late, and the scribes and Pharisees had not been able to supplant the priests. The book of Acts makes this plain. See for example Acts 4:1 and 5:17.

But, who were the scribes? The scribes had developed into an upper class and were members of both the

Bethel Church of God

The Facts About Pentecost

major religious sects. Large numbers of the priests themselves were scribes. The bulk of the scribes, however, were Pharisees, but there were scribes found within the sect of the Sadducees who opposed the Pharisees. Scribes came from all the levels of society and made up a class of students and interpreters of the law. The Bible mentions “scribes of the Pharisees” which indicates there were “scribes of the Sadducees” (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, s.v. “Scribes”).

A Look at the Pharisees

According to Josephus, in *Antiquities of the Jews*, the Pharisees held sway over the people in the towns and the prayers and rites were according to their wishes. As a result the Sadducees had to follow the Pharisees or else the multitudes would be alienated. Professor Morton Smith is highly suspicious of Josephus' evaluation. He says it is dubious because Josephus' work, *Wars of the Jews*, written twenty years earlier, takes little notice of the Pharisees and Sadducees and mentions nothing about the Pharisaic influence over the masses. In fact, Josephus says that when the Pharisees tried to gain control they failed. Twenty years later, however, Josephus changed his story. He extols the Pharisees and mentions over and over again their popularity. The motive, Professor Smith says, had to be political. In this twenty-year period between writing the two works mentioned above, the Pharisees were coming to terms with the Romans for their support in Palestine. Josephus was now jumping on the bandwagon as the Pharisees were vying to become the leaders of the people. Josephus now became a Pharisee, lauding them as there were no other rivals around. Professor Smith says it is impossible not to see history rewritten as a bid to the Roman government (Israel: Its Role in Civilization, quoted in the “Pentecost Study Material,” 1974). Josephus' calculation of the date for Pentecost eventually became the standard. He fixed it as the fiftieth day after the first day of Passover (Logos Library System, s.v. “Pentecost”).

The Pharisees had originated as a separate group shortly after the Hasmonean revolt in 165-160 BC. They came up with an extended system of interpreting the Bible in the quest to unify the teaching of the Torah with more progressive ideas. They advocated an evolutionary and non-literal view in legal decisions and considered the Oral Law as valid as the Scriptures. The custom of observing Pentecost on Sivan 6 began with the Hasidim who were the forerunners of the Pharisees (Ency. Judaica, s.v. “Pharisees”). Orthodox Jews followed this tradition reckoning Pentecost to be fifty days after the sixteenth of Nisan. They took the Sabbath in Leviticus 23:11, 15 to be the first high Sabbath day of the Days of Unleavened Bread (Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th ed., s.v. “Pentecost”).

What needs to be realized is that with the Temple in ruins and the priesthood scattered and largely destroyed the Pharisees came into their own. They were now in a position of power of which they had dreamed. Professor Jacob Neusner says it is an extreme assertion that at any time earlier the Sadducees were forced to do the bidding of the Pharisees. In fact, Professor Neusner says, this view is incredible (From Politics to Piety, quoted in the “Pentecost Study Material,” 1974). The Encyclopedia Judaica states that the Sadducees controlled the Temple as their stronghold and that it was only in the last two decades of the Temple (AD 50-60) that the Pharisees gained the upper hand. After the destruction of the Temple the Sadducees ceased to exist. What we have today in the Jewish community is rabbinic Judaism which is the result of Pharisaic Judaism (Ency. Judaica, s.v. “Sadducees”).

Why No Sunday Pentecost

Some make strong accusations against a Sunday Pentecost. They link it to the pagan festival of Floralia. See *Age of Faith*, by Will Durant, Volume 4, page 75. Durant says regarding Passover and Pentecost that both were adopted into the Christian calendar but altered in content as well as the dates. The accusation is that anyone who keeps a Sunday Pentecost is observing the Feast of Flora. One Sivan 6 advocate even goes so far as to assert that Whitsunday comes from the ancient pagan goddess Flora. The festival of

Bethel Church of God

The Facts About Pentecost

Flora, goddess of spring and flowers, was held about a month after Easter and celebrated from April 28 to the beginning of May-honored as the May Day festival of Floralia. According to the Bible, Pentecost is to be held after a fifty-day count beginning with the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. It often occurs during the Easter date and at times coincides with the beginning of May, depending on the length of the Hebrew year. There must be direct proof that Whitsunday was deliberately chosen by the church to replace the festival of Floralia to make the argument valid, otherwise the entire assertion is thin. The fact that Whitsunday often falls around the first of May is no proof that Whitsunday is pagan. Actually a Sunday Pentecost should not be the only day chosen for this accusation. The fact is: The accusation could also be made against a Monday Pentecost or even Sivan 6.

The Council of Nicea fixed Easter on the Sunday that followed the new moon nearest the Vernal Equinox. Whitsunday (Pentecost) was fixed to fall on the seventh Sunday after Easter. The name Whitsunday comes from the tradition of dressing in white and being baptized on that day (ISBE, s.v. "Pentecost"). Whitsunday means "white Sunday" and was expanded into a seven-day festival in the seventh century AD. By the eleventh century it was down to three days, and in the eighteenth century Pope Clement XIV eliminated Whit Tuesday as a holy day and Pope Pius X had Monday dropped in 1911. Whitsunday is still a legal holiday in most European countries (American Book of Days, 3rd ed., compiled and edited by Jane M. Hatch, 463).

Those who observe a Sunday Pentecost tell us that the Christians were observing Pentecost on the same day thousands of Jews gathered in Jerusalem were observing it. And since the Sadducees were controlling the Temple, Pentecost must have fallen on a Sunday. Yet some authorities, Lightfoot for example, regard the old rendering of "fully come" in Acts 2:1 to mean that the Christian Pentecost did not coincide with the Jewish. Keep in mind the tradition of the ancient church placed the first Pentecost on Sunday as is seen in the custom of the Karaites who took the Sabbath of Leviticus 23:11, 15 to be the weekly Sabbath. But it is very uncertain whether the custom existed in Christ's day, and moreover it would be impossible to prove the disciples followed this custom, if it could be proven to have existed (ISBE, s.v. "Pentecost").

A look at Exodus, chapter nineteen, creates another problem for Sunday advocates. The events of the chapter indicate that "the same day" in verse one is a Thursday. Verse seven indicates a Friday. Verse ten refers to Saturday and Sunday. If this is the case Sunday is a wash day-a work day. Verse eleven refers to Monday. The wash day took place just before Monday, the day the Lord appeared in the sight of the people upon Mount Sinai. If Pentecost fell on Sunday, then Saturday was the wash day-a work day. The weekly Sabbath cannot be a work day. Keep in mind, however, that Exodus 19 is often interpreted to suit the arguments of which ever view one is expounding. Sunday advocates reject what the church taught for many years about the time sequence of the events in this chapter. So, they would not be convinced regardless of the proof.

Acts 2:1 is often quoted to prove Pentecost falls on Sunday. The word "Pentecost" means fifty, so the assumption is fifty days after the beginning of the count Pentecost falls on Sunday. We are not instructed in the New Testament how to count Pentecost. This is found in Leviticus 23:15-16. The Greek text in Acts 2:1 should read: "And during the accomplishing of the day of Pentecost they were all with one accord in the same place." This merely tells us the Christians were observing Pentecost as the various events recorded in Acts, chapter two, took place. It does not tell us which day of the week is meant.

What must be remembered about both a Sunday Pentecost and Sivan 6 is that while the count for a Sunday Pentecost began on the Sunday following the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread, and the count for a Sivan 6 Pentecost began on the day following the first high Sabbath day during this same period, both counts are only forty-nine days and Pentecost is observed on the fiftieth day. But notice Leviticus 23:15-16. It says to number or count fifty days, not forty-nine. According to the Hebrew

Bethel Church of God

The Facts About Pentecost

numeration rule when the preposition *min* is used with respect to time, the count is inclusive (Gesenius' Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament, 484-485). This means for Sunday advocates that Sunday, the first day of the count, should be day one of the count. As was pointed out, the Sivan 6 count from the first high Sabbath day is completely unnecessary since Pentecost would always fall on a fixed date. God does not give us unneeded rules to go by. The correct count should begin with the Sunday following the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. But there is something that has largely been overlooked in Leviticus 23:15-16. The text states, "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" (Lev. 23:15-16). The italicized words above both contain the preposition *min*. According to the numeration rule when *min* is used the count should be inclusive. This means that day one of the count is Sunday and day fifty is also Sunday. If day one of the count is Sunday because the numeration rule makes it inclusive, then day fifty should also be inclusive. This means the count is not completed until the full fifty days are counted. To count forty-nine days and observe Pentecost on the fiftieth day is incorrect because it makes the beginning of the count inclusive and the end of the count exclusive. A full fifty days must be counted before the count is complete. Pentecost cannot be observed until the following day-Monday. Pentecost, therefore, cannot fall on a Sunday. To do so is to count forty-nine days, not fifty. To observe Pentecost on Sunday means to make day one-Sunday-inclusive but day fifty-Sunday-exclusive. The *min* in Leviticus 23:16 is being ignored and fifty days are not counted, only forty-nine. Jesus warned about both the Pharisees and the Sadducees. "Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matt. 16:12). Neither of these sects could be depended upon for counting Pentecost. Pentecost should not be observed until the full fifty days are counted. The accusation that those who observe Pentecost on the fifty-first day is invalid. Why? Because the count ends with the completion of the fiftieth day. There is no fifty-first day. It appears Archbishop Cranmer had an insight into this. His 1539 translation of Acts 2:1 is as follows: "When the fifty days had come to an end, they were all with one accord in one place." Those who regard the key to Pentecost to be the number "fifty" need to realize the real key is how to count the fifty.

Sunday advocates insist that when *min* is used in Leviticus 23:15-16, it points to the beginning of the day. Thus, the count should be from the beginning of day one (which would be Sunday) to the beginning of the fiftieth day (which is also a Sunday). Pentecost, therefore, should be kept on Sunday. A look at Leviticus 23:15-16 shows that the word "even" at the beginning of verse 16 is the preposition *ad*. This same preposition is used in Exodus 12:18 where we read, "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even" (Exodus 12:18). The italicized word "until" is the preposition *ad*. No one thinks that the twenty-first day should be excluded from the count. Why? Because we are told to keep the feast for seven days-the fifteenth through the twenty-first inclusive. This should provide an important clue to the Pentecost count. Since *ad* is used in Leviticus 23:16, the indication is that the fiftieth day should also be included as a part of the Pentecost count.

But, we would be quickly reminded by Sunday advocates that the *min* limits the count from the beginning of day one to the beginning of day fifty, so that the fiftieth day is Pentecost. Keep in mind that both *min* and *ad* are used to give us the Pentecost count. There are a number of Bible examples that show the use of *min* and *ad* together in counting. Look at 1 Samuel 8:8. Should we assume that the Israelites had forsaken God up to this day, but on this day were no longer idolaters? Clearly this day is included in the time period spoken of here. We see the same thing in various other passages. Notice 1 Sam 12:2. Should we assume Samuel walked before the Israelites "unto this day," but was not doing so on that particular day? Jeremiah 3:25 states the Israelites sinned from their youth to this day. Were they not sinning on this day also? When Moses prayed to God for Israel's pardon in Numbers 14:19, he stated that God had forgiven Israel "until now." Should we assume they were not forgiven now? Not at all. God states in the following verse that He

Bethel Church of God

The Facts About Pentecost

had forgiven them. In Exodus 10:6 Moses told the Egyptians the land would soon be filled with locusts, and that they had seen nothing like it since they were upon the earth until this day. The plague came a day later (verse 13), so was “until this day” in verse six excluded? In 1 Samuel 30:17 it tells us that David smote the Philistines “from twilight even unto the evening of the next day.” Should we assume “the evening of the next day” was excluded from this time period? When the priests of Baal called on Baal “from morning even until noon” was noon excluded from this demonstration? (1 Kings 18:26). All these texts clearly show that when *ad* was used with *min* to delineate a duration of time, the end of the period was included as a part of that time. This is a powerful reason for including the fiftieth day as a part of the Pentecost count.

As noted earlier, Sunday advocates tell us that *min*, when used with time, denotes the beginning of the day. Is this true? A number of Bible examples using *mimaharat* (on the morrow) indicate otherwise. In fact, only one text clearly shows it refers to the beginning of the day. Notice Genesis 19:34-35. The events here make it clear that “morrow” refers to the daylight portion of the day, not to the beginning which would have been the previous evening. The same thing can be seen in Exodus 18:13, Judges 9:42; 21:4, 1 Samuel 20:27; 31:8. In Exodus 32:6 “morrow” refers to early in the morning and on into the day. Judges 6:38 and 1 Samuel 5:3-4; 11:11 refer to early in the morning only. In all these cases they do not refer to the beginning of the day. The only text that makes the beginning of the day plain is Numbers 33:3. We know this means the beginning of the day because the Israelites did not leave the land of Egypt until the night of the fifteenth. Biblical days include evenings and mornings (night and day) as a single day. So, when we refer to *mimaharat* (on the morrow) what do we mean? And what is Pentecost counted from? The previous evening, early in the morning, or anytime during the day? To insist that *mimaharat* means the count is from the beginning of the day is strictly an interpretation. There is no biblical proof to support this notion.

The fact is that Leviticus 23:15-16 is the only text in the Bible that uses *mimaharat* in tandem, that is, at the beginning of the count and the end of the count. Sunday advocates may say that it is a specious argument to say that those who keep a Sunday Pentecost count only forty-nine days, but this is exactly what the Jews themselves admit they do in their count to Sivan 6.

There are numerous Bible examples which show how God counts time. Let us notice a few. In Genesis, chapter one, we find days are not counted until they are complete with both the evening and the morning included. In Genesis 7:4 God said the rain would last for forty days. This is confirmed in verse twelve where we find the rain was upon the earth for forty days. The rules for firstborn offerings in Exodus 22:30 and Leviticus 22:27 show a complete seven days must be counted before any offering could be made. Only on the eighth day was it appropriate to do so. A complete period of seven days was required for the cleansing of a leper. Only after that, on the eighth day, could the leper be pronounced clean by a priest (Lev. 14:9-11, 23). This same kind of counting is seen in the cleansing of a Nazarite (Num. 6:8-10). Jephthah’s daughter was given two months to bewail her virginity. At the end of two months her father did with her according to his vow (Judges 11:38-39). A famine was prophesied for a seven year period under the hand of Elijah. Only when the seven years was up did the famine cease (2 Kings 8:1-3). In Ezekiel 43:25-27, the altar is purged for seven days. The priests could use the altar on the eighth day but only after the seven days are complete. Daniel and his friends were allowed to eat pulse for ten days. After the ten days were complete, it was seen that their diet was healthful (Dan.1: 12-15). Jonah was in the whale’s belly three days and three nights. Jesus was in the tomb three days and three nights. No one who understands the truth concerning the crucifixion and the resurrection would believe this time period was any less than three full days and nights (Jonah 1:17, Matt. 12:40). All these examples of time show how the Bible counts days. They are counted to their completion, not when the last day of the count is incomplete. Those who say these examples have no relevancy to the Pentecost count simply refuse to face the facts. The Bible does not support the kind of a count advocated by those who keep a Sunday Pentecost.

Bethel Church of God

The Facts About Pentecost

No matter what may be said one way or the other about how to count Pentecost, there will be no changing for those who already have made up their minds. Technical arguments will continue to arise and conclusions will be based on how each individual views truth. The question, however, that needs to be answered is this: How is the truth of God revealed? Does it come by means of the Holy Spirit, or does it come by the mental prowess of scholars? A considerable number who hold to a Sunday Pentecost came into the Church of God after 1974. As a result they have no idea what was the basis for the church's original teaching. They assume that what was done in 1974 was of God, and that an error the church had held for forty years was now corrected. What does the Bible say about revelation? Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:44-45). What did He mean by this remark? What Jesus meant is that spiritual understanding comes by means of the Holy Spirit.

Notice what the Apostle Paul wrote.

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. . . . Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy [Spirit] teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:4-5, 12-14).

Jesus promised that He would make the truth known through the Comforter-the Holy Spirit. "But the Comforter, which is the [Spirit], whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26). "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come" (John 16:13). Either Jesus Christ kept that promise to His church or He didn't. To say the church was in error on the proper day of Pentecost is to make Christ out to be derelict or to be a liar! We are not called into error. True Christians are called into the truth, not into a forty year mistake! Was the Worldwide Church of God led into the truth or was it not? If not, then it was never the true church. And if it were never the true church, all those who accepted a Sunday Pentecost are admitting they were never led by the Holy Spirit, and what they now embrace as doctrine came from the scholars!

Some may reason that the above argument is invalid because the churches in Revelation, chapters two and three, contain doctrinal error. The book of Revelation is a prophetic book. Whether these are church eras or attitudes found in the churches of the time of the end is strictly open to interpretation. One may argue one way or the other about that, but one cannot argue against the clear-cut statement by Jesus who said the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth. Where does the Bible tell us we must go to the scholars? Yet, to justify the change to a Sunday Pentecost, this is exactly what was done in 1974.

What does the Bible say about scholars? Can we have confidence in the mental capabilities of men in spiritual matters? ". . . I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Cor. 1:19-20). "But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Great men are not always wise: neither do the aged understand judgment" (Job 32:8-9). Of God, we read that He ". . . frustrateth the [signs] of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish" (Isa. 44:25).

Bethel Church of God

The Facts About Pentecost

And, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness . . ." (Job 5:13). "How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain. The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?" (Jer. 8:8-9). One has two choices in the matter of truth. Either one has faith in the revelation God promised, or one is left to his own devices to determine truth. Those who rely on scholars to determine the truth are left to their own devices.

What is not generally realized about the Pentecost change is that those who were behind the changes were not really after Pentecost. They were out to change the doctrine of divorce and remarriage. They knew Pentecost provided the weakest link in the doctrines of the church. It was the chink in the impregnable armor. In order to repudiate the concept of divine revelation, those behind the changes turned to scholars. By this means they could discredit the power of the Holy Spirit to lead God's people into the truth. In effect, they have rejected the Holy Spirit. And in this light what could have been the most significant doctrine to repudiate? Pentecost-the very day the Holy Spirit was given!

For forty years the church of God kept a Monday Pentecost. During that time it grew amazingly. It was blessed in growth and spiritual benefits of all kinds-miraculous healings, for example. But what happened after the doctrinal change on Pentecost and divorce and remarriage. It was as though someone had placed blinders on the eyes of all but a few of the church members. It was as though God had removed His Spirit from His church. Those who kept a Monday Pentecost had a long spiritual precedent-forty years of blessings with faith and confidence in the truth. But those who went to a Sunday Pentecost had only scholars to rely on. What has been the track record ever since? The Worldwide Church of God is now little different from the Protestantism it is trying to emulate. Those who keep a Sunday Pentecost have a mere technical argument to rely on. They have no confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit and their actions reflect a departure from revealed truth! But, what about those who have turned to a Sivan 6 Pentecost?

Why No Sivan 6 Pentecost

What is now realized is that Jewish scholars see the possible connection between the "traditions of the elders" and a Sivan 6 Pentecost. According to the Encyclopedia Judaica it is possible the Pharisees insisted that Pentecost be observed on a fixed date because of their desire to link it to God's manifestation on Sinai which supposedly occurred fifty days after the Exodus. In rabbinic times this transformation took place and the festival became the anniversary of the giving of the law at Sinai (Ency. Judaica, s.v. "Shavuot"). As early as the time of Christ some Jews believe this connection with Pentecost and the giving of the law can be seen (McClintock and Strong, s.v. "Pentecost"). Other authorities believe the concept was adopted much later. What is clear is that both Philo and Josephus omit any word on the subject. Philo even went so far as to link the giving of the law with the Feast of Trumpets. The rabbis were the ones who advocated the giving of the law on Sivan 6, and Jewish tradition is unanimous in this opinion. The church fathers followed this tradition, and Whitsunday became the first annual festival in the Christian church. Not until the second century AD are there any rabbinical writings that link the giving of the law to Pentecost (Ency. Judaica, s.v. "Shavuot"). There is no Old Testament indication that any importance was attached to Pentecost and the law. Philo, Josephus, and earlier Talmudic writings do not even consider this connection, which in fact, originated much later. The idea actually caught on with Maimonides in the tenth century AD and was copied by Christian writers (ISBE, s.v. "Pentecost").

Some insist that the Sivan 6 tradition should be followed because ". . . The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Matt. 23:2-3). Also, since Paul was a Pharisee he obviously observed Pentecost on Sivan 6. The reckoning of the Sadducees should be discarded because they were liberal and Hellenistic. We are told Jesus did not criticize the scribes and Pharisees for their observance of weekly or annual Sabbaths. They were condemned for their hypocrisy only. The oracles of God were given

Bethel Church of God

The Facts About Pentecost

to the Jews and they were the ones who sat in Moses' seat. An examination of Matthew 23:2-3 shows that Jesus addressed the scribes and Pharisees. The scribes were a special class of skilled professional from both sects-Pharisees and Sadducees. The chief Scribe was the one who occupied the seat of Moses and was an authority on the law of Moses and traditions of the elders. Jesus Himself did not do all the things commanded by the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 12:1-8; 15:1-9). So, what is the meaning of Jesus' statement in Matthew 23:2-3? What should be clear is that the people were to obey the scribes and Pharisees only as long as they taught the oracles of God. They were not to be obeyed when they taught the traditions. In Matthew 23 we find the most scathing criticism found in the Gospels directed against the scribes and Pharisees. Certainly from this we can assume they were in error on many things. Their teachings contradicted much of the Word of God. From this we can have little confidence that they knew the proper date for Pentecost. Furthermore, their example was anything but pleasing in the sight of God.

Sivan 6 advocates say the wavesheaf offering must follow the first high day or it would be impossible to eat bread during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Leviticus 23:10 shows this command refers to the new harvest, not to stored grains from the previous year. So, the argument is not valid.

In the Gospels, John the Baptist was the first servant of God to roundly condemn the Pharisees. He called them "a generation of vipers." As far as doctrine was concerned, Jesus put the Pharisees and Sadducees in the same mold (Matt. 16:6, 12). The scribes and Pharisees were the main object of Jesus' stinging attack. It was because the Pharisees placed the traditions of the elders ahead of the Word of God. They replaced God's Word with a plethora of man-made laws, which due to many regulations replaced the Truth of God.

The idea that the Apostle Paul as a former Pharisee continued to keep a Sivan 6 Pentecost is an assumption. What did Paul say about his Pharisaic background? "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (Ph'p. 3:4-7). Paul adds, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Ph'p. 3:8). Does this sound like Paul was enamored with the Pharisees? Hardly. Furthermore, the Temple was controlled by the Sadducees and the Pharisees had little to say about the date for Pentecost during the time of Christ.

The problem with the Sivan 6 argument is that those who keep the date must place their confidence on the interpretation of the historical information that is presently available. Many scholars realize there is much that is not known about Jewish customs and practices during Christ's time. The truth is: At the present all the facts are not available.

To sustain a Sivan 6 Pentecost "Sabbaths" in Leviticus 23:15-16 is interpreted to mean "week." Sabbath never means "week" in the Bible. Gesenius is in error when he says "Sabbath" can mean "perhaps a week." The only reason this explanation is given is to support the modern Jewish observation of Pentecost on Sivan 6. Even the Septuagint gives the same interpretation in order to justify a Sivan 6 Pentecost. The Hebrew word for "week/s" is shabuot. It is a plural noun usually translated "weeks." The singular shabuah means week. Deuteronomy 16:9-10 uses shabuot but is illustrating another way to count Pentecost. It decidedly does not use shabbat. To say shabbat can be translated "week" is an attempt to force a meaning that is not there. Shabbat is never translated "week" in the Old Testament of the Authorized Version, and any other translation that does so violates the literal meaning of shabbat.

For many years the new moon of each month was determined by observation. Pentecost was never

assigned a fixed date as long as this was the method that was used. Much later, to prevent any doubt, the date was fixed. Following the Pharisaic method of reckoning, it was set to fall on the fiftieth day from the second day of Passover, that is, from the morrow after the first high Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread (Ency. Judaica, s.v. "Festivals"). The calendar which was adopted in the fourth century AD was based on calculation and each month was assigned a number of days irrespective of the new moon. Thus, Pentecost was fixed on a set date of the third month each year.

The word Sabbath is used three times in the determination of Pentecost (Lev. 23:11, 15-16). But which Sabbath is meant one of the two high Sabbath days, or the weekly Sabbath? Can we really prove that the weekly Sabbath is meant rather than one of the high Sabbath days? Yes, indeed! The word Sabbath in Leviticus 23:11, 15-16 is the Hebrew word haShabbat. In the Hebrew ha is the definite article corresponding to our "the." The word for Sabbath in Leviticus 23:11, 15-16 should be translated "the Sabbath" as it correctly is in these texts. What is significant is that in the Old Testament a number of texts show that haShabbat refers to the weekly Sabbath only. It never refers to a high Sabbath day. While the root word for Sabbath along with the definite article can have other meanings, such as "rest," when vowel pointed as haShabbat, it always refers to the weekly Sabbath. The following texts contain the word haShabbat. The reader is asked to examine them carefully. Exodus 16:29; 20:8, 11; 31:14, 15; 35:3, Numbers 15:32, Deuteronomy 5:12, 15, Nehemiah 10:31, 33; 13:15, 17, 18, 19, 22, Jeremiah 17:21, 22, 24, 27, Ezekiel 46:1, 4, 12, and Amos 8:5. All these texts use haShabbat and clearly refer to the weekly Sabbath. The following texts also use haShabbat but are indefinite in their meaning. These texts include Leviticus 23:11, 15-16 which is what has led to the problem in understanding which Sabbath day is meant there. However, the meaning of haShabbat is so clear in the above list, all doubt is removed as to which Sabbath is meant in Leviticus 23:11, 15-16. This second list of unclear texts includes Leviticus 23:11, 15-16; 24:8, Numbers 28:9, II Kings 11:5, 7, 9; 16:18, II Chronicles 23:4, 8, and Psalm 92:1 (superscript). None of these texts pinpoint the weekly Sabbath, but neither do they pinpoint any high Sabbath day. What this means is that every clear-cut text which uses haShabbat refers to the weekly Sabbath, never to a high Sabbath day. Leviticus 23:11, 15-16 refers to the weekly Sabbath only, and this is the proper day to reckon the count toward Pentecost. What this means is that Pentecost cannot fall on Sivan 6! One of the arguments listed by McClintock and Strong in support of a Sivan 6 Pentecost is that the word "Passover" used in Joshua 5:11 is the equivalent of haShabbat. Therefore, haShabbat refers to one of the high Sabbaths. However, Passover is not a high Sabbath day but can fall on a weekly Sabbath. So, this argument is not valid.

A Monday Pentecost?

Those who keep a Monday Pentecost are accused of counting fifty-one days, not fifty as the Bible instructs. One who keeps Pentecost on Monday keeps it on the fifty-first day we are told. The problem with this accusation is that the count ends with the completion of the fifty days. There is no fifty-first day in the count, and the day of Pentecost is not included in the count. Those who keep a Sunday Pentecost actually count forty-nine days and keep Pentecost on the fiftieth day. They do not allow the fifty-day count to be complete. Hebrew numeration always includes the beginning and the end, that is, the terminus a quo (beginning) and the terminus ad quem (ending). See the Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th edition, s.v. "Pentecost." The Bible instruction says to count fifty days. For a long time the Jews have realized the inconsistency in their count toward a Sivan 6 Pentecost. If fifty days are counted inclusively beginning on Nisan 16, the correct date would be Sivan 7. Since the time of Maimonides (twelfth century AD), Jewish scholars have interpreted Leviticus 23:15 to mean the reckoning count should be forty-nine days from the time of the cutting of the wavesheaf (Jewish Ency., s.v. "The 613 Commandments"). Surprisingly, Sunday advocates tell us that when the preposition min is used in reference to time, the count is inclusive. But when it comes to counting, they completely overlook the last Sunday of the fifty days as a part of the count. They fail to realize this last day contains the min-"unto the morrow"-and end up counting only forty-nine days. The truth is that all the groups that admit to an inclusive count with Pentecost occurring on

Bethel Church of God

The Facts About Pentecost

Sunday omit the “unto the morrow” (mimaharat) at the end of the count, thereby observing Pentecost after a forty-nine day count.

Those who hold to a Sunday Pentecost tell us it is only reasonable to rely on the ancient understanding of the Jewish people. After all, they preserved the oracles of God. They have always understood that the wavesheaf offering should fall within the Days of Unleavened Bread. To use the last high day as the marker would place the wavesheaf Sunday outside the Days of Unleavened Bread. Accordingly, the wavesheaf offering must take place during the Days of Unleavened Bread. However, the usage of the word haShabbat proves that it is the weekly Sabbath that must fall within the Days of Unleavened Bread, not the second high day. So, the marker is the weekly Sabbath.

What Does Joshua 5:10-11 Prove?

This text has been quoted by Sivan 6 advocates to prove the count for Pentecost should begin with the first high Sabbath day during the Days of Unleavened Bread. What is very important here are the events that lead up to Joshua 5:10-11. Notice the context. “And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho” (Josh. 4:19). What took place immediately after? “At that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time. And Joshua made him sharp knives, and circumcised the children of Israel at the hill of the foreskins. . . . And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that they abode in their places in the camp, till they were whole” (Josh. 5:2-3, 8). Now notice Joshua 5:10-12. “And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho. And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year” (Josh. 5:10-12). Some argue that the command in Leviticus 23:14-“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”-proves that the Passover in Joshua 5:10-11 occurred on a Sabbath and the next day-Sunday-was the wavesheaf day. Thus, the count for Pentecost began with the morrow after the first high Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. What has been overlooked in all this is Joshua 5:2-3 and 8. Circumcision is a debilitating operation. Is it possible the Passover could have been prepared and observed a few days after this surgery? Not according to the Bible! Joshua 4:19 places the date on the tenth day of the first month. Now notice Genesis 34:25. After the men of Shechem were circumcised we read, “And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males.” The Shechemites were helpless at this time, unable to defend themselves. Following circumcision Israel remained in their abodes until they were whole. This would have taken several days, so it is not likely the Passover of the first month was observed at this time. But there is a provision to take the Passover on the second month (Num. 9:10-11). The logical conclusion is that the Passover in Joshua 5:10-11 is the Passover of the second month, and the count for Pentecost had begun the previous month.

For those who insist that Joshua 5:10-11 refers to a Saturday Passover and hence a Wave Sheaf Sunday on the following day, there is another consideration. The Israelites did not eat of their own harvest. They ate the “old corn,” that is, grain from the previous year. They had just entered the promised land and were busying themselves for conquest. They had no time to plant and harvest. The wave sheaf offering had to be from the newly harvested grain (Lev. 23:10). Could a wave sheaf offering from Canaanite grain have been acceptable to God? Not at all! Notice Leviticus 22:24-25. “Ye shall not offer unto the LORD that which is bruised, or crushed, or broken, or cut; neither shall ye make [any offering thereof] in your land. Neither from a stranger’s hand shall ye offer the bread of your God of any of these; because their corruption [is] in them, [and] blemishes [be] in them: they shall not be accepted for you.” Joshua 5:10-11

Bethel Church of God

The Facts About Pentecost

does not support a wave sheaf offering on the day immediately following the Passover. This text cannot be used as a marker for the Pentecost count.

What Does Deuteronomy 16:9-10 Say?

This text, like Joshua 5:10-11, has been used to support a Sivan 6 Pentecost. Deuteronomy 16:9-10 utilizes another method of counting Pentecost. The consideration here is weeks, not days. If we were to use days in this application we would give it a forty-nine day count-seven seven-day periods-the starting point being the Monday following wavesheaf Sunday. Deuteronomy 16:9 states, "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" (Deut. 16:9). Wavesheaf Sunday was taken up with the (omer) offering. The harvest could not begin until this was complete. Since we have no min associated with this count, it is not inclusive. Day one of this count, then, would be Monday. The end of the count would coincide with the last day of the fifty-day count of Leviticus 23:15-16. But the count must be complete. Thus, Pentecost would fall on a Monday. Deuteronomy 16:9-10 emphasizes weeks and there is a very simple way to count. One week from today would be the same day of the week seven days later. One week from wavesheaf Sunday is a Sunday. Seven weeks from wavesheaf Sunday is a Sunday seven weeks later. When the seven weeks are complete the count is complete. It is not until then that Pentecost is observed, starting at sundown at the end of the seven weeks. This same method of counting is observed in Leviticus 15:18-19, 28-29 and Judges 14:12, 18. Whichever count is used-the inclusive count of Leviticus 23:15-16-or the seven week count of Deuteronomy, Pentecost falls on Monday.

Sivan 6 advocates insist the word for "weeks" (shabua) refers to a seven-week count that begins on the morrow after the first high Sabbath day during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Thus, Pentecost is on Sivan 6. This view contradicts Leviticus 23:15-16 which uses the word haShabbat. It has already been proven that haShabbat refers to the weekly Sabbath only. So, the Pentecost count cannot begin on the day following the first high Sabbath day during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The marker is the weekly Sabbath, thus making the weeks run from Sunday to Sunday.

What Is the Sabbaton Theory?

Some say the sabbaton theory is proof that Pentecost falls on Sivan 6. Acts 16:11-13 is a case in point, which is said to refer to Pentecost. It states, "Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither" (Acts 16:11-13). The Greek word for Sabbath here is sabbaton. The idea behind this is that sabbaton refers to Pentecost because Paul stayed in Phillipi several days but did not meet with the believers until Pentecost. Pentecost could not have fallen on a Sunday or Monday here, but rather Sivan 6, because had they met on the weekly Sabbath it surely would have been mentioned. Other texts used to "prove" this theory are Luke 4:16, and Acts 13:14, but there is nothing in these texts or the context to indicate a Sivan 6 Pentecost. The Analytical Greek Lexicon tells us on page 361 that sabbaton is both singular and plural. The Word Study Concordance, page 679, shows that sabbaton is the word shabbat with a grammatical ending. Also, there are many things the Bible does not mention. So, to assume that because the weekly Sabbath is not mentioned in Acts 16:11-13 proves a Sivan 6 Pentecost is pure postulation. Some argue that sabbaton refers to the high Sabbath days only. Therefore, shabbat must refer to the weekly Sabbath. But the fact is, sabbaton refers to both the weekly Sabbath and the high Sabbath days. See, for example, Leviticus 23:32 which refers to the day of Atonement. Here the expression "sabbath of rest" is the same expression used in Exodus 31:15 for the weekly Sabbath and for the land Sabbath in Leviticus 25:4-5. Also, shabbat refers to both the weekly Sabbath and the holy days (Lev. 16:31; 23:32). The whole sabbaton theory is lacking in substance and should be discarded as having any weight for proof of a Sivan 6 Pentecost.

Can the Septuagint Be Relied Upon?

The Septuagint is the one translation from the Old Testament Hebrew to the Greek that is the most commonly known. It is used by Sivan 6 advocates for proof that Pentecost falls on Sivan 6. This is because it translates "Sabbath/s" as "week/s" in Leviticus 23:15-16. It is held by many that Christ and the apostles frequently quoted Old Testament passages from the Septuagint (LXX)-some say as much as ninety percent of the time. Other authorities disagree and say that two out of every three quotes do not agree verbally with the LXX. What must be realized about the LXX is that it cannot be used in a mechanical manner to revise or correct the Masoretic text (New Unger's Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Septuagint"). There are many variations in the translation so the quality of the LXX must be viewed with great caution. There is extreme literalism and freedom of interpretation in the same verse or in nearby verses. It frequently misses the sense of the original. It often fails in difficult passages due to the carelessness and ignorance of its translators (Bible Handbook, Joseph Angus, 30-31). There are mistakes as well as good renderings of difficult verses. Greek mythological terms and philosophical ideas are introduced (Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Alfred Edersheim, Vol. I, 27-28). Revisions were constantly made in the LXX, so it witnesses to a text earlier than the Masoretic text. Parts of later Greek translations were introduced into the LXX (Harper's Bible Dictionary, s.v. "Septuagint"). Whenever there is disagreement with the Masoretic text, the LXX is the work that suffers. The scholar Paul Kahle did considerable work on the LXX and concluded there was not one Greek original. The manuscripts of the LXX cannot be traced back to one prototype. Kahle believed there were earlier translations of the Pentateuch before the LXX became the standard Greek Torah.

There are a number of hints that the LXX was translated from the Hebrew, not in the first half of the third century BC as is commonly believed, but at about 100-80 BC. The main value of the LXX is that it reflects an older Hebrew text than what we presently possess. Since the Greek is not pure in the LXX it is impossible to construct this older Hebrew text. The Pentateuch is reasonably accurate, but this cannot be said about much of the rest of it. There are interpolations throughout the entire text and some of them are paragraph length. Some believe that before the second century BC was over the text of the LXX had been replaced by Theodotion's version which is a revision of an older alternative version. There is so much mixture in the sources that it is not even known how to reconstruct the text (ISBE, s.v. "Septuagint"). With these facts in mind there should not be much concern about the translation of Leviticus 23:15-16.

What should be clear to any objective reader is that Pentecost should be counted from the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. After a complete count based on the inclusive method of calculation, Pentecost should be observed on Monday. Those who adhere to a Sivan 6 Pentecost have followed the error of the Pharisees whose motivation in establishing the first high day as the marker was to control the people. Jewish scholars admit that they count only forty-nine days when they observe Pentecost on Sivan 6. The Sadducean method of counting from the weekly Sabbath is correct, but they also fail to count the full fifty days. Jesus said to beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Both parties are incorrect in the count. Only a Monday Pentecost meets the Bible requirements for the correct observance of this holy day.