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PENTECOST

The Christian holiday of **Pentecost**, which is celebrated on the 50th day after the weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:15), commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and other followers of Jesus Christ while they were in Jerusalem celebrating the Feast of Weeks, as described in the Acts of the Apostles. Some Christians believe this event represents the birth of the Catholic Church.

In Eastern Christianity, Pentecost can also refer to the entire fifty days of Passover through Pentecost inclusive; hence the book containing the liturgical texts for Paschaltide is called the "*Pentecostarion*". Since its date depends on the date of the weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost is a moveable feast.

The holy day is also called "White Sunday" or "Whitsunday", especially in the United Kingdom, where traditionally the next day, Whit Monday, was also a public holiday (now fixed by statute on the last Monday in May). In Germany Pentecost is called "Pfingsten", and often coincides with scholastic holidays and the beginning of many outdoor and springtime activities, such as festivals and organized outdoor activities by youth organizations. The Monday after Pentecost is a legal holiday in many European nations.

The term Pentecost comes from the Greek Πεντηκοστή (*Pentēkostē*) meaning "fiftieth" (50th). It refers to the festival celebrated on the fiftieth day after Passover, also known as the "Feast of Weeks" and the "Feast of 50 days" in rabbinic tradition.

The Septuagint uses the term *Pentēkostē* to refer to the "Feast of Pentecost" only twice, in the deuterocanonical Book of Tobit and 2 Maccabees. The Septuagint writers also used the word in two other senses: to signify the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:10), an event which occurs every 50th year, and in several passages of chronology as an ordinal number. The term has also been used in the literature of Hellenistic Judaism by Philo of Alexandria and Josephus.

In early Judaism the Festival of Weeks (Hebrew: שבועות *Shavuot*) was a harvest festival that was celebrated seven weeks and one day after the first Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread in Deuteronomy 16:9 or seven weeks and one day after the Sabbath in Leviticus 23:16. The Festival of Weeks was also called the *feast of Harvest* in Exodus 23:16 and the *day of first fruits* in Numbers 28:26. In Exodus 34:22 it is called the "first fruits of the wheat harvest." The date for the "Feast of Weeks" originally came the day after seven full weeks following the first harvest of grain.^{[1][12]} In Jewish tradition the fiftieth day was known as the *Festival of Weeks*.

After the destruction of the temple in 70 AD offerings could no longer be brought to the temple and the festival started to have a different focus the giving of the law on Sinai. This feast eventually received the name Pentecost from the Koine Greek word Pentekoste meaning fiftieth day The actual mention of fifty days comes from Leviticus 23:16.



In Christian tradition, Pentecost is an important event that marks the shifting of God's redemptive purpose from the "descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" to all peoples. Scholars believe that even if the Pentecost narrative is not literally true, it does signify an important event in the history of the early Church that enabled the rapid spread of Christianity. Within a few decades important congregations had been established in all major cities of the Roman Empire.

The biblical narrative of Pentecost is given in the second chapter of the Book of Acts. Peter's sermon in Acts 2:14-36 stresses the resurrection and exaltation. In his sermon Peter quotes Joel 2:28-32 and Psalm 16 to indicate that first Pentecost marks the start of the Messianic Age. About one hundred and twenty followers of Christ (Acts 1:15) were present, including the Twelve Apostles (Matthias was Judas' replacement) (Acts 1:13, 26), Jesus' mother Mary, other female disciples and his brothers (Acts 1:14).

Critical scholars believe some features of the narrative are theological constructions. According to scripture, while those on whom the Spirit had descended were speaking in many languages, the Apostle Peter stood up with the eleven and proclaimed to the crowd that this event was the fulfilment of the prophecy. In Acts 2:17, it reads: "'And in the last days,' God says, 'I will pour out my spirit upon every sort of flesh, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy and your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams.'" He also mentions (2:15) that it was the third hour of the day (about 9:00 am). Acts 2:41 then reports: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

Peter stated that this event was the beginning of a continual outpouring that would be available to all believers from that point on, Jews and Gentiles alike.