

Peninsula City Church

Our Great High Priest

The Counting is Over

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5th Jun 2022 the AM Service

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Today we remember the Feast of First Fruits, *Shavuot*, or Pentecost

An Introduction

Q. Why do we need to remember this feast, and what is it all about for our lives?

Today we remember and celebrate the feast called Pentecost or Weeks. For many a Jew the Feast was a time for Israel to be thankful and celebrate the goodness of God and faithfulness for the barley harvest (i.e. the early harvest) and the wheat harvest (i.e. the later harvest). It is also the end of seven weeks, known as the Counting of the Omer (a Jewish measure of the weight of about 2.3 kg). It is also called *Shavuot* (meaning weeks), or as we would know it, the Feast of Pentecost.

But what has all this have to do with those who are not Jewish and live today? Why do we need to remember the feast, and what is it all about anyway? We do not grow our own barley or wheat; we get the products made from these grains from the supermarket. So, what's the deal with all of this? From the perspective of a Christ-follower, it was an important time in light of what Jesus Christ had come to do. He said that He would send the Spirit of God who would equip and empower His own to be a witness to Him and His work. It would also be a remarkable shift in that the Holy Spirit of God would not just come on a person to serve the Lord (as mentioned in the Hebrew Bible), but He would come live within the Body of Christ, His church as His temple.

So, here, we will briefly review the idea of the feast in an attempt to find out what it all meant. Firstly, we will briefly review where this feast began and its significance? Then secondly, we will look at what has to do with Christ-followers today?

1. The context of the feast

Q. Where did this feast begin, and what was its significance?

There are three great pilgrimage feasts: Weeks or Pentecost and Tabernacles.¹ Here at these three principal feasts (see the calendar over the page).²

“Jewish males were required to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem.”³

As Moses recorded the Lord saying,

“Three times in a year, all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread and at the Feast of Weeks and at the Feast of Booths, and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed” (Deut 16:16 NASB).

So, in light of this, Feast was an agricultural feast observing the Spring, i.e. the later wheat harvest; however, it did become a religious feast over time.⁴ The feast was first known by various names like the ‘Feast of Weeks’ (Ex 34:22; Num 28:26; Deut 16:9-10; 2 Chron 8:13),⁵ ‘Feast of Reaping or Harvest’ (Ex 23:16; this is the first time that it is mentioned in the Bible).⁶ It has been said regarding the naming of this feast that,

¹ Driver, S.R. *The Book of Exodus*. (Cambridge, UK: The University Press, 1911), 243.

² “The Incredible Story of The Jewish People.” http://www.jewishwikipedia.info/jewish_calendar.html (3rd June 2022).

³ “A Christian Perspective on the Feast of Pentecost.” <https://www.learnreligions.com/feast-of-pentecost-700186> (3rd June 2002).

⁴ Armerding, C.E. “Festivals and Feasts.” In *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. T. Desmond Alexander & David W. Baker (eds). (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 310. See also “Shavuot Themes and Theology.” <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/shavuot-themes-theology/> (3rd June 2022).

⁵ Berlin, Adele & Brettler, Marc Zvi. *The Jewish Study Bible*. (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 1999), 190.

⁶ Feinberg, C.L. “Pentecost.” In *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia: Vol Four – M-P*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 692. See also Driver, *The Book of Exodus*, 243. See also Bosman, Hendrik L. “ḥag Šābu ‘ôt” (Feast of Weeks).” In *New*

“This name is not descriptive of the character and substance of the holiday. Rather, it is a chronological tag, which addresses itself to the time lapse between Passover and *Shavuot*, thus emphasising the relationship and independence of the two holidays.”⁷

In Lev 23:15-22, Israel was instructed on this feast on what they were to do. It was celebrated on the day after the Sabbath, which would make it a Sunday.⁸ It is from this passage in verse 16 that we get the Greek name Pentecost,

“You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath. Then you shall present a grain offering of new grain to the LORD” (Lev 23:16 ESV).

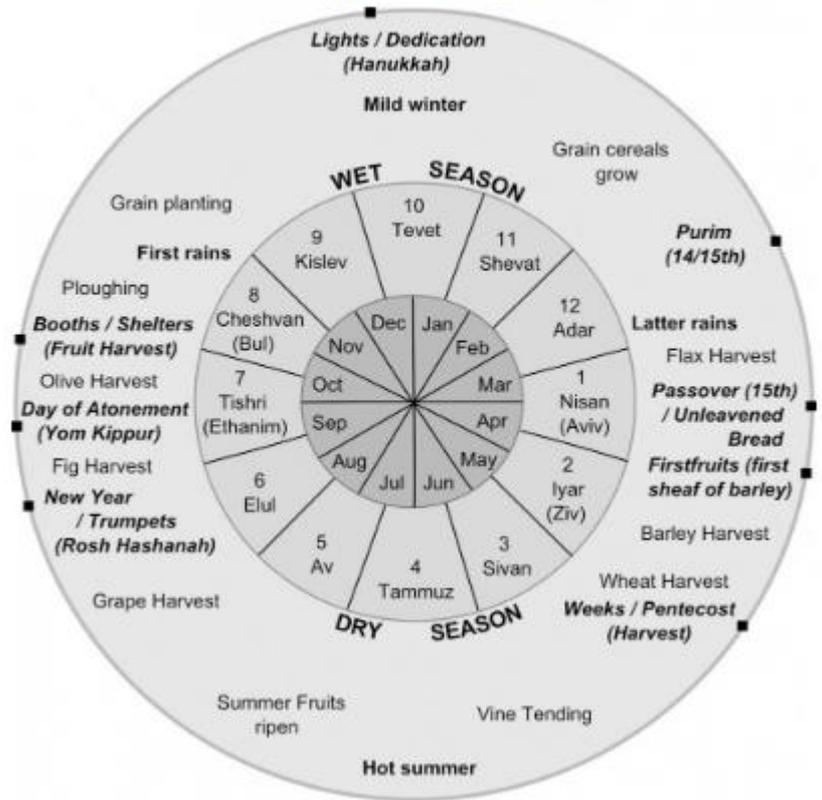
The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (the Septuagint, i.e. LXX for the so-called 70 scholars that interpreted it in the third century BC) uses the word *Pentēkostē*, which means fiftieth.⁹ So, it was celebrated fifty days after the Sunday after Passover. So, initially, it was called *Shavuot* because Lev 23:15 says,

“You shall count seven full weeks (49 days) from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering” (Lev 23:15 ESV).

Israel was to count seven weeks from Passover (a Sabbath day) and include the day after Passover, the first or early harvest of barley. The period was also known as the Counting of the Omar. There are some reasons given, but the main one was that the Lord had said to do so (Lev 23:15-16) to be spiritually ready to receive the Torah.

Then on the following day after the seven weeks (after the Sabbath), they were to celebrate *Shavuot*. During the Feast of Weeks, Israel had been waiting for this historical-agricultural feast called *Shavuot* to celebrate the later harvest.¹⁰ Josephus called it “a week of weeks,” i.e. seven weeks of seven days.¹¹ It is also called *Yom Ha-Bikkurim*, which means “the day of the first fruits.”¹² The feast defined the end of the counting of the seven weeks. It has been said on this matter that,

Fig. 3 The Jewish Calendar



International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis. Vol. 4. Willem A. VanGemeren. (ed.). (Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 1997), 24-26.

⁷ Isaacs, Ronald H. *Every Person's Guide to Shavuot*. (North Bergen, NJ: Book-mart Press, 1998), 3.

⁸ Cohen, Gary G. “Sheba, Shib’â.” In *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. Vol. 2. R. Laird Harris et al. (ed.). (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1981), 899. Josephus, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*. William Whiston (trans.). (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 352. Antiq. 13.8.4.

⁹ “Pentēkostē.” <https://biblehub.com/greek/4005.htm> (3rd June 2022).

¹⁰ Neusner, Jacob. *An Introduction to Judaism: A Textbook and Reader*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1991), 58-59.

¹¹ Josephus, *The Works of Josephus*, 96. Antiq. 3.10.6.

¹² Clark, Eli. “Shavuot.” In *Celebration: The Book of Jewish Festivals*. Naomi Black (ed.). (London: Collins, 1987), 132. See also Berlin, & Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible*, 264. Also see *The Complete Jewish Study Bible*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2016), 161.

“In Palestine, the grain harvest lasted seven weeks and was a season of gladness (Jer 5:24; Deut 16:9; Is 9:2). It began with the harvesting of the barley during the Passover and ended with the harvesting of the wheat at Pentecost, the wheat being the last cereal to ripen.”¹³

At this feast, there was to be the offering of the sheaf from the wheat harvest. It usually falls somewhere in May or June. It has been said that the feast took place “after the corn harvest and before the vintage.”¹⁴ It was to be a time to,

“Commemorate the time when the children of Israel received the Law on Mount Sinai. Its agricultural significance is that it marked the beginning of the summer harvest in ancient Palestine.”¹⁵

The Jewish people remember this time as receiving the covenant of the Torah. It was supposed to have happened on *Shavuot* at the foot of Mount Sinai, Ex 19.¹⁶ It was said to be recalling the “hope of a universal covenant.”¹⁷ The book of Jubilee states that,

“For this reason, it is ordained and written on the heavenly tablets that they should celebrate the feast of weeks in this month once a year, to renew the covenant every year.”¹⁸

In light of what has been said here, the timing of *Shavuot* is as follows,

“Thursday morning, the fifteenth of Nisan (the month in which Passover falls, i.e. the season of Spring in the northern hemisphere), the Jewish people left Egypt. That year *Nisan* and *Iyar* (the month after Nisan, i.e. the second month of the Hebrew calendar) were both full months of thirty days. The Torah was given on a Shabbat, and halachic authorities have accepted the view that it was the sixth of *Sivan* (the month that *Shavuot* falls May-June in our western calendar). By adding the sixteen days of *Nisan* (from the Jews’ departure till the end of the month) and the thirty days of *Iyar* and six days of Sivan, we learn that the Jews received the Torah fifty-two days after leaving Egypt.”¹⁹

- ii. **Passover (*Pesach*) - Celebration of freedom (*Major Holiday*)**
 - a. The Passover Seder [Nisan 15 (evening of the 14th)]
 - b. Unleavened Bread (*Chag HaMatzah*) - Sanctification [Nisan 15-22]
 - c. Sefirat HaOmer - Counting the Omer [Nisan 16- Sivan 5]; the countdown to Shavu’ot.
 - d. Firstfruits (*Reishit Katzir*) - Messiah’s Resurrection; [Nisan 17]
 - Yom HaShoah - Holocaust Memorial Day [Nisan 27]
 - Yom Hazikaron - Israel Memorial Day [Iyyar 4th]
 - Yom Ha’atzmaut - Israel Independence Day [Iyyar 5th]
 - e. Lag B’Omer - 31st day of the Omer count [Iyyar 18]
 - Yom Yerushalayim - Jerusalem Reunification Day [Iyyar 28th]
- iii. **Pentecost (*Shavu’ot*) - The giving of the Torah at Sinai and the giving of the Ruach HaKodesh to the Church [Sivan 6-7] (*Major Holiday*)**

¹³ “PENTECOST (‘fiftieth’).” <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12012-pentecost> (3rd June 2022).

¹⁴ Freeman, James M. *Manners, and Customs of the Bible*. (Plainfield, NJ: Logos, 1972), 71

¹⁵ Pearl, Chaim & Brookes, Reuben. *The Guide to Jewish Knowledge*. (Bridgeport, CT: Hartmore House, 1985), 25.

¹⁶ Greenberg, Irving. *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*. (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1993), 68. See also *Pentateuch and Haftorahs: Hebrew Text English Translation & Commentary*. J.H. Hertz. (ed.). (London: Soncino Press, 1989), 521.

¹⁷ Greenberg, *The Jewish Way*, 85.

¹⁸ “Jubilee. 6:17.” <http://www.pseudepigrapha.com/jubilees/6.htm> (3rd June 2022). See also Beale, G.K. & Carson, D.A. (eds). *Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 531.

¹⁹ Bogomilsky, Moshe. “Dvar Torah Questions and Answers on Shavuot.” Shulchan Aruch Harav 494:1: https://www.sie.org/templates/sie/article_cdo/aid/2865690/jewish/Dvar-Torah-Questions-and-Answers-on-Shavuot.htm (3rd June 2022). Cf. also “Shavuot – the feast of weeks.”

https://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Spring_Holidays/Shavuot/shavuot.html (3rd June 2022).

Each year, the harvest time relies on when the harvest is ready and the lunar cycle. However, the section of time from Passover to *Shavuot* usually looks something like the following see on the previous page.²⁰

However, it was mainly a precious time for remembering God's goodness and faithfulness. God fulfilled His promises, and Israel could take this time to remember the past harvests and joyfully celebrate by faith God's provision of the current harvest, Lev 23:21. Israel is a delightful time to show "an offering of gratitude."²¹ This was a reminder for Israel to remember God's endless love. It began with the barley harvest during the Passover and ended with the wheat harvest on *Shavuot*, this is its consistent and primary Old Testament usage.²²

Leviticus 23: Two parts to the Feast

a. The Feast of Weeks: Part One - A celebration

The Feast of Weeks was a celebration time. It was celebrated after seven weeks, known as the 'Counting of the Omer.' It falls between First Fruits and *Shavuot*. On the Sabbath, after the seven weeks, there was an offering made to the Lord for His goodness and faithfulness shown to Israel. It was the end of the Feast of Weeks as outlined in Lev 23:15-22 below,

¹⁵ "You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths. ¹⁶ You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the Lord. ¹⁷ You shall bring in from your dwelling places two loaves of bread for a wave offering, made of two-tenths of an ephah (22.2 kg is one ephah, so this would be 4.22 kg for the two loaves); they shall be of a fine flour, baked with leaven as first fruits to the Lord. ¹⁸ Along with the bread you shall present seven one-year-old male lambs without defect, and a bull of the herd and two rams; they are to be a burnt offering to the Lord, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the Lord. ¹⁹ You shall also offer one male goat for a sin offering and two male lambs one-year-old for a sacrifice of peace offerings. ²⁰ The priest shall then wave them with the bread of the first fruits for a wave offering with two lambs before the Lord; they are to be holy to the Lord for the priest. ²¹ On this same day, you shall make a proclamation as well; you are to have a holy convocation (meeting). You shall do no laborious work. It is to be a perpetual (permanent) decree in all your dwelling places throughout your generations. ²² When you reap the harvest of your land, moreover, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field nor gather the gleaning of your harvest; you are to leave them for the needy and the alien. I am the Lord your God" (NASB; cf. Deut 16:9-12).

So, as it says in this passage, on *Shavuot* (the day after the end of the counting of two Omer's a Jewish weight) of, flour was brought to the Temple courtyard, and then two loaves of bread containing yeast were made from the flour.²³ It was known as the offering of the Omer of the wheat flour and was brought before the Lord and waved as an offering of thankfulness for this later fruit, Lev 23:20. This was a symbolic act of offering the first of the latter harvest to the Lord.²⁴ Let us take some time to understand these loaves.

²⁰ "The Jewish Calendar: Mindfulness of the Divine Rhythm."

<https://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Calendar/CalendarIntro.pdf> (3rd June 2022).

²¹ Philo, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*. C.D. Yonge (trans.). (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 532. *The Decalogue*. XXX. 160.

²² Feinberg, "Pentecost," 692.

²³ Chilton, B.D. "Festivals and Holy Days: Jewish." In *Dictionary of the New Testament Background*. Craig A. Evans & Stanley E. Porter (eds). (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 373.

²⁴ Armerding, "Festivals and Feasts," 311. See also, "The Talmud18 explains that by waving the loaves in the four directions and up and down, we acknowledge the One who created the four directions, heaven, and earth. Alternatively, waving in the four directions blessed the winds that originate from them, so that they should only be good, beneficial winds, and lifting the loaves

- The loaves had yeast in them and were made from two-tenths of a weight called an ephah, which is about 22.4 kgs in weight and is approx. - 92 cups of flour.
- So then, two-tenths (i.e. two omers), which is about 4.22 kgs - 18 cups.
- An Omer was one-tenth of an ephah, i.e. 2.22 kgs (about 9 cups) in weight, a large loaf of bread. So, each loaf that was waved before the Lord weighed about 2.22 kgs.



These two loaves (see image)²⁵ were to be offered together with

parts of the lamb and waved by the priest before God as a symbol of thanks for the later whole grain offering of the land of Israel,

“And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the first fruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest” (Lev 23:20 ESV).

Some of the two loaves and the lambs were to be burnt on the altar before the Lord, and then the rest would be eaten by the priests. Only after this ceremony was completed could the people of Israel eat the wheat that they saw being harvested. This festival was a holy and joyful time of celebration because of the faithful provision of the Lord,

“And you shall make a proclamation on the same day. You shall hold a holy convocation (meeting). You shall not do any ordinary (daily) work. It is a statute forever in all your dwelling places throughout your generations” (Lev 23:21 ESV).

“And 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 towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there” (Deut 16:11 ESV).

An Additional Thought Here: The Year of Jubilee

In Chapter 25 of the book of Leviticus, we have something called the Year of Jubilee. It was a time of freedom and restitution throughout the land of Israel. It occurred every 50 years after seven lots of seven years. Then in the 50th year, a horn was blown throughout the land of Israel, declaring it is the year of (Heb. *qeren ha-yobhel*, i.e.) the year of the horn of the ram or Jubilee. Then on, this year, it is said that,

⁸ “You are also to count off seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years, so that you have the time of the seven sabbaths of years, namely, forty-nine years. ⁹ You shall then sound a ram’s horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement

blessed the dew, that it too should be beneficial.” “The Shte Halechem (Two Breads).”

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2599670/jewish/The-Shte-Halechem-Two-Breads.htm#footnoteRef9a2599670 (3rd June 2022).

²⁵ “The Art of Baking Biblical Bread: Preparing for the Third Temple.” <https://www.israel365news.com/69749/priests-re-learn-bring-ancient-harvest-bread-offering-temple/> (3rd June 2022).

(Heb. *Tishri*, i.e. September–October), you shall sound a horn all through your land. ¹⁰ You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release (or *liberty*) through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family. ¹¹ You shall have the fiftieth year as a jubilee; you shall not sow, nor reap its aftergrowth, nor gather in from its untrimmed vines. ¹² For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat its crops out of the field. ¹³ On this year of Jubilee, each of you shall return to his own property. ¹⁴ If you make a sale, moreover, to your friend or buy from your friend's hand, you shall not wrong one another. ¹⁵ Corresponding to the number of years after the Jubilee, you shall buy from your friend; he is to sell to you according to the number of years of crops. ¹⁶ In proportion to the extent of the years, you shall increase its price, and in proportion to the fewness of the years, you shall diminish its price, for it is a number of crops he is selling to you. ¹⁷ So you shall not wrong one another, but you shall reverence your God; for I am the Lord your God... ³⁹ If a countryman (Lit. *brother*) of yours becomes so poor with regard to you that he sells himself to you, you shall not subject him to a slave's service. ⁴⁰ He shall be with you as a hired man as if he were a sojourner; he shall serve with you until the year of jubilee" (Lev 25:8-17, 39-40 NASB).

I have mentioned this here because it was a year of freedom and justice. As all within the nation of Israel, especially the poor, were to be set free and restored to their previous place in society. It had nothing to do with them deserving it but simply that the Lord had granted it to be so. It was a great celebration time in the nation of Israel. Where the debts own were cancelled, and life could get back to some sought of normality. I will come back to this topic later in our study.

b. The Feast of Weeks: Part Two – Justice for those in need

A part of the feast is overlooked by many a Christ-follower on *Shavuot*, or Pentecost as we know it today. That is the aspect of 'Justice,' as seen in the action of generosity. Why did Israel also need to remember to be kind and be just in their dealings with others, especially the marginalised and poor? There is a fantastic welfare feature to the feast, which God had incorporated.

"When you reap the harvest of your land, moreover, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field nor gather the gleaning of your harvest; you are to leave them for the needy and the alien. I am the Lord your God" (Lev 23:22 NASB).

¹¹ "And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst, in the place where the Lord your God chooses to establish His name. ¹² You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes" (Deut 16:11-12 NASB)

Those who needed food throughout the year could go to any barley or wheat field and get some food. It was especially brought to the forefront during this time of the feast. So, there was an aspect of justice to the Feast of Weeks as well, which the Lord included.

An example of this is seen in the book of Ruth. Both she and Naomi needed food, and Boaz enacted what the Lord had put in place in the book of Leviticus. The idea was that the Lord was always looking out for the poor and traveller temporarily living in a place, and those who owned the field were to help them. That is, as it says,

"And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God" (Lev 23:22 ESV).

So, there was always a caring aspect of the feast, which the Lord had included.²⁶ People knew that they could go to any field and get some grain to process to have a meal because Leviticus had said that it would be so. Consequently, we have seen the historical context, some of the traditions, and the spiritual meaning of *Shavuot*. However, what does it now mean as we now move forward to *Shavuot* in the New Testament?

2. *Shavuot* (Pentecost) a Christ-followers context?

Q. Why do we need to remember this feast?

Well, for Christ-followers, some of the things that happened on the *Shavuot* after Jesus' ascension stand out for all believers. As a New Testament feast, it is far more than merely a revamp of the feast of *Shavuot* (the Day of Pentecost) for Christ-followers. It was an actual fulfilment of the feast by Jesus Christ. Some of these will be mentioned below.

a. Jesus fulfilled the feast of *Shavuot* and sent the Spirit

Jewish people from all over the Roman and Parthian Empire had come to Jerusalem at the end of the Counting the Omer to celebrate *Shavuot* (Pentecost) as in previous years. The Torah required that all males go up to Jerusalem three times a year, as we have already seen, Deut 16:16. However, although those who attended did not know it, this *Shavuot* things would be different from any other in the past. It has been said that,

“Although the agricultural aspect of *Shavuot* concerns mainly the spring harvest, it also marks the beginning of the birth of new fruits of the land, and those the fruits were brought to the Temple at *Shavuot*, cf. Deut 8:7-10.”²⁷

On this *Shavuot*, after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit came as a fulfilment of the feast, Acts 2:1-4.²⁸ The Holy Spirit came down was similar to Jesus Christ, had the Holy Spirit come to Him at His baptism, Matt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Lk 3:21-22.²⁹ One major paradigm shift as to the person of the Holy Spirit before this Pentecost and previous ones is that the Holy Spirit would now live with His own. It is pointed out in the prophecy in the book of Ezekiel 36:27, which says,

“And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances” (Ez 36:27 NASB).

As a result, the Holy Spirit went from merely being with or on a person to being within the people on this day. This was an indication that there would be a later harvest of the new fruit this *Shavuot* since 3000 people would come to know the Messiah, Acts 2:4. They became a new creation and entered into His Kingdom on that day, 2 Cor 5:17. In light of what has been said above and as Jesus the fulfilment of the feasts,

“Yeshua (Jesus) resurrected the same day that the Jewish people were commanded to bring their Omer of barley to the Temple as a wave offering. This day was also known as Firstfruits! Firstfruits is a day to remember the Lord is our provider, so we give back to Him a portion of what He gives to us. It is also the day that Yeshua (Jesus) was resurrected, becoming the Firstfruits for all of us.”³⁰

²⁶ Armerding, “Festivals and Feasts,” 311.

²⁷ “Shavuot and Pentecost.” <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/shavuot-and-pentecost> (3rd June 2022).

²⁸ *The Complete Jewish Study Bible*, 1560.

²⁹ Levine, Amy-Jill, & Brettler, Marc Zvi. (eds). *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*. 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Oxford Press, 2017), 223.

³⁰ “Yeshua (Jesus) Appeared While His Disciples Were Counting the Omer.” <https://free.messianicbible.com/feature/yeshua-appears-while-counting-the-omer/> (3rd June 2022).

Consequently, Paul stated that in light of the feast of First Fruits ending with *Shavuot*,

²⁰ “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep ... ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor 15:20,23 NASB).

It has been said that,

“Because seven weeks have passed since the Feast of Firstfruits (when Yeshua resurrected) and the waving of the Omer offering took place. This day is called the Feast of Weeks and then *Shavuot* (Exodus 34:22). Before they eat any of their own harvested wheat, the Jewish people present a portion to the Lord this day. They also hold a sacred assembly.”³¹

b. Christ-followers on this *Shavuot* when the Holy Spirit came

We know this annual event for many a modern Christ-follower as Pentecost Sunday. It was the day when the Holy Spirit entered with those at Jerusalem. However, He continues to transform lives and live within His children. Luke knowing this fact, recorded at the end of his gospel Jesus saying that He would send the Holy Spirit,

⁴⁶ “Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ And you are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but wait in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high” (Lk 24:46–49 NKJV).

This was then fulfilled on an established day at the feast of *Shavuot* of that year,

¹ “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come (*fulfilled completed*); they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues (tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each), as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4 NKJV).

The Complete Jewish Bible says that,

“The festival of *Shavu’ot* arrived...” (Acts 1:1a CJB).

For many Pentecostals, there can be a narrow-minded reading of this part of the Bible, only seeing the matter of speaking in tongues. However, there is far more to what happened on this day. As has previously been pointed out, the feast already had a history. The main thing of the feast was it had to do with was harvest and thankfulness for the goodness and faithfulness of God. So, when Jesus said that,

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8 ESV; cf. Lk 24:48).

Jesus was speaking from His understanding of *Shavuot* and being the fulfilment of this feast as He sent the Holy Spirit. The disciples, as Jews, were also waiting for the feast to begin, as were the many Jews that had come to Jerusalem. We read about the later fruits of this harvest, with 3000 coming to know Jesus as their saviour and receiving the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:41. So, the 120 were able to witness the first of the later great harvest on this day.

³¹ “Yeshua (Jesus) Appeared While His Disciples Were Counting the Omer.” <https://free.messianicbible.com/feature/yeshua-appears-while-counting-the-omer/> (3rd June 2022).

An aspect has often been overlooked; it was not a new festival but a Jewish feast that was already established and known as Shavuot. Yes, the Feast of *Shavuot* was fulfilled in Christ on this day with the beginning of the celebration of the wheat harvest. However, the ongoing matter of justice towards the poor and marginalised is part of the feast. The early Christ-followers, Jewish, knew this and reached out to those in need as part of the feast. That is,

⁴⁴ “And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need” (Acts 2:44-45 NASB).

It was part of the early church, especially from this day onwards. Here are two examples of this in action,

- The man who could not walk who was healed: Acts 3
- They sold their stuff and shared it with those who were in need: Acts 4:32-37

An Additional Thought Continued: The Year of Jubilee fulfilled

We saw earlier that in Chapter 25 of the book of Leviticus, there is something called the Year of Jubilee. It was a time of freedom and restitution throughout the land of Israel. If Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of all of the feasts, then it is also the case with Jubilee. He was the climax of Jubilee, the supreme One who gave freedom, not merely from physical slavery but from slavery to sin.

¹⁶ “And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written (Is 61:1-2), ¹⁸ ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ To proclaim the favourable year of the Lord (*Jubilee*)” (Lk 4:16-19 NASB).

However, there is the thought that the 50 days from Passover to Pentecost are also representative of Jubilee. On this day, the Spirit of God came, and there was greater freedom that was part of the work of Jesus Christ. He had promised that He would send the Holy Spirit and send Him.

So, the Feast of Weeks, Shavuot or Feast of Pentecost was an empowering time in the lives of those involved. The Holy Spirit began a new phase of God here with us as Jesus Christ said it would. He would no longer be on a person to empower them, but with His temple, the church worldwide. The Feast also refocused and empowered His own regarding the importance of the Kingdom of Heaven’s justice. The feast pointed out the value of both Spiritual gifts and justice, not just one or the other.

Some concluding thoughts

So, coming back to the opening question,

Q. Why do we need to remember this feast, and what is it all about for our lives?

We have seen why we need to remember *Shavuot*. *Shavuot* (*Feast of Weeks, Pentecost*) as we celebrate the goodness and faithfulness of God. It was an essential part of the life of Israel. But it was also an important day in the new church's life. Things changed when the Holy Spirit came that day. He moved into His new temple and has lived there ever since. All people who become Christ-followers through the power of the Holy Spirit are part of His temple. But they are also empowered at that time to be His witnesses with the gifts and fruit to do the work that needs to be done in partnership with Him. He also empowered His church to serve the community with Kingdom justice.

The justice of the Kingdom of God is part of the life message of the gospel, which needs to be shared as His Kingdom continues to expand across the earth. The rule of King Jesus continues; it is a Kingdom of celebration and thanksgiving for the goodness and faithfulness of God.

Therefore, every day of our lives here on earth, we have opportunities to live and serve others in the power of the Holy Spirit. We have seen throughout the Scripture that God's plan 'A' for the *Shavuot* was being worked out. We are part of this plan as part of the latter harvest that is still being servants and harvested. This harvest will continue until God says it is time for the harvesting to end.

Some points to ponder:

- Why do we also need to remember to be kind and show God's justice towards others, especially the marginalised, poor and those in a season of hardship?
- What can we learn from the two examples of Ruth and Boaz in the Book of Ruth?
- The Holy Spirit lives within His church; how does this encourage us to do His work, His way?
- From this Pentecost onwards, how will we show justice to someone today?

So, today we celebrate *Shavuot*, 'Stop and reflect.' We have seen what the Bible has said to each person in their day. But what has the Holy Spirit been saying to us today? That is, what is the one thing that stands out to us? We need to apply this; otherwise, it is merely all academic. Then we need to respond to what the Holy Spirit has been saying to us.

In response, we need to ask through this process:

- What personal application can be found in the passages?
- What is God teaching me today?
- That is, "What is God saying to me?"

How should I respond to what is being said, or so what?

- What are you going to do about it?
- What do you need to do to respond?
- Pray and respond