

## CHAPTER 4

# PENTECOST: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

*“I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.” ~ King David*

**I**t appears that the masses had come from afar to be in Jerusalem at or near God’s Temple for Pentecost (Acts 2). Therefore, for many it all comes down to who controlled Temple worship in the days of Jesus and the apostles, as it is believed theirs would be the method of counting Pentecost that was employed in Acts 2. Whereas the Passover Lambs were often slain by each head of household (Ex.12:21), Pentecost required the services of the priesthood at the Temple (Lev.23:20) – so there is some logic and truth to this position. Let’s examine it.

The two main parties affecting temple service in the days of Jesus were the Sadducees and Pharisees. The Sadducees believed Pentecost was to be counted from the “morrow” of (the day after) the *weekly* Sabbath that fell during the days of Unleavened Bread – hence it would always fall on a Sunday. The Pharisees believed that the context and syntax of the Scriptures clarify that God was saying that Pentecost was to be counted from the “morrow” of (the day after) the Holy High Day Sabbath. This Sabbath was the first Day of Unleavened Bread – therefore the counting was to begin from the second Day of Unleavened Bread (Lev.23:11). For generations many have debated if the Sadducees or the Pharisees had control over the Temple ritual. It is a question that will likely continue to be debated by some. However, there is some **STRONG NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE** that will be presented in the pages to come which proves that the historical Jewish sources of the Mishna, the Talmud, Josephus, Philo and others are indeed accurate.

Many modern “scholars” and students have believed that the **PRIMARY** dispute between the Sadducees and the Pharisees was over the counting of Pentecost. But the reality is that the Pentecost dispute was ancillary to an even larger dispute concerning if the traditional *Hebrew lunar-solar calendar* would continue to be used, **OR** if the *strictly solar calendar* that the Sadducees wanted would become the new calendar for Israel and the

Temple! Notice what the *Encyclopedia Judaica* says, Volume 5, page 50, under the heading “Calendar”:

A calendric deviation from the approved norm by Jeroboam, ruler of the Kingdom of Israel, is implied in 1 Kings 12:32-33, according to many modern scholars.” It continues, “The Samaritans seem to have followed the northern calendar as distinct from that of the other Jews. In Hasmonean and Herodian times **the Sadducees and Boethusians each had their own calendar** as did – subsequently in talmudic and post-talmudic periods – the Karaites and other less well known sects.

Continuing under the next heading:

**The 364 DAY SOLAR CALENDAR** These calendars differed in a number of respects from the normative Jewish calendar...

Indeed, it was the Sadducees who wished to make a change. Whereas, from the days of Moses, the Hebrews had been using lunar-solar calendar that based its *months* on the cycle of new moons, and its *years* on the cycle of the sun; the Sadducees wished to use a strictly solar calendar. God commanded Moses to tell the children of Israel to “observe the month of Abib” (Deut.16:1). New moon observance is a Statute of God for His people. The word translated “month” here is from the Hebrew word “*hodes*” which literally means NEW MOON. God’s Word is filled with references to the new moon beginning each new month, and to God’s people “observing” or keeping these new moons (Ex.12:2; Num.29:6; Deut.16:1; 1 Sam.20:5,18; Ps.81:3 Isa.66:23; Ezek.46:1,6; Amos 8:5; Col.2:16).

Paul was even teaching the Gentile church of Colosse to keep the new moons along with God’s Holy Days and Sabbaths – and he encouraged the church there NOT TO LET ANYONE JUDGE THEM ABOUT IT!

**Col.2:16** “*So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths...*”

To switch to a purely solar calendar was something the influential Pharisees in the Sanhedrin simply would not allow. Pentecost was PART of the reason the Sadducees wished to make this change. Notice what Lawrence H. Schiffman, Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University and a contributing writer for the *Biblical Archaeology Review*

magazine, wrote on page 75 in his book *RECLAIMING THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS*:

As recorded in rabbinic literature, the primary dispute separating the Sadducees from the Pharisees pertained to the calendar. The Sadducees held that the first offering of the Omer (barley sheaf; Leviticus 23:9-14) had to take place not on the second day of Passover, as the Pharisees claimed, but rather on the first Sunday after Passover, in accord with Leviticus 23:11, ‘on the morrow of the Sabbath.’ To ensure that this Festival was observed on the proper day of the week, the Sadducees adopted a calendar that, like the one known from the Dead Sea sect and the Book of Jubilees, was based on both solar months and solar years. **Following that calendar, the holiday of Shavout would always fall on a Sunday.**

## INCREDIBLE!

Through calendar manipulation, the Sadducees attempted to adopt their interpretation that the Sabbath which Pentecost was counted from was the *weekly* Sabbath, which would always result in a pre-fixed Sunday Pentecost. This was in opposition to the traditional teachings of the Pharisees who held to the traditional Hebrew calendar and to the traditional

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~ Lawrence H. Shiffman

teaching that the first annual Sabbath of Unleavened Bread was the Sabbath Pentecost was to be counted from. The Sadducees sought to FIX the date of Pentecost by changing the Hebrew lunar-solar calendar that had been in use for thousands of years – to a purely solar one with ALL dates fixed – including Pentecost! The Sadducees sought **to fix both the day of the month AND the day of the week that Pentecost would fall upon.**

Many people *THINK* they are counting Pentecost according to the Sadducean computation (because they have been taught they are doing so), but they are not – as they aren’t using the purely solar Sadducean calendar! The fact is that the Sadducees sought to adopt a 360 day purely solar calendar. **The Sadducean solar calendar and reckoning of Pentecost had Pentecost falling on the fixed date of Sunday, Sivan 15, each year. This is nearly two weeks later than the Pentecost kept by the WCG and of most other “Christian” churches. Contrary to many COG beliefs and teachings, their modern Pentecost is not patterned after the Pentecost**

**date of the Sadducees. It is apparently patterned after the “Pentecost” date established by the Roman Church.**

Considerable new evidence about the Sadducean solar calendar has recently been made public from the archaeological finds of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other historical information. Copies of these calendars were found in the Dead Sea caves at Qumran. In order to practice this new calendar, the Sadducees would have had to separate from Temple service and join a private sect, or begin their own. Many scholars have found evidence that many of the founders of the Dead Sea sect, initially thought to be Essenes, were indeed pious Sadducees!

When the victorious Hasmonaean rulers (Judah the Maccabee’s family) adopted the rulings of the Pharisees (forerunners of the talmudic rabbis) regarding the conduct of the Temple in about 152 B.C.E., the loyal opposition – **a band of pious Sadducees – retreated to the desert, taking up residence at Qumran.**” (*Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Introduction xxii, by Lawrence H. Schiffmann)

Notice further conclusions from Dr. Schiffman, after a lifetime spent analyzing the Dead Sea Scrolls:

**We must conclude that the sect’s founders did not accuse the Pharisees of changing the calendar because the Pharisees were in fact following the ancient calendar inherited from biblical times.** For reasons we cannot know, various groups of priests and others in this period apparently wanted calendar reform, replacement of the lunar calendar with a solar one. (*Reclaiming The Dead Sea Scrolls*, page 305 by Lawrence H. Shiffman) (Emphasis mine throughout this book)

In the next chapter we will clarify another major **misconception** – that the priests, who performed priestly duties and ritual – also *SET* Temple ritual, and controlled all scriptural interpretation plus the calendar!