

CHAPTER 9

HISTORICAL RECORDS OF TEMPLE PENTECOST CONCURRENT WITH ACTS 2 TIMEFRAME

“But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.” ~ Jesus Christ

Alfred Edersheim devoted much of his life to the study of the Temple services and ministry in the period from the Maccabees to the destruction of the Temple. Notice what he says about how Pentecost was historically counted during and prior to the New Testament dispensation:

The expression, ‘the morrow after the Sabbath’ (Lev.23:11), has sometimes been misunderstood as implying that the presentation of the so-called ‘first sheaf’ was to be always made on the day following the weekly Sabbath of the Passover-week. This view, adopted by the ‘Boethusians’ and the Sadducees in the time of Christ, and by the Karaite Jews and certain modern interpreters, rests on a misinterpretation of the word ‘Sabbath’ (Lev.23:24, 32, 39). As in analogous allusions to other feasts in the same chapter, it means not the weekly Sabbath, but the day of the festival. The testimony of Josephus (Antiq. 3:248-249), of Philo (Op.ii. 294), and of Jewish tradition, leaves no room to doubt that in this instance we are to understand by the ‘Sabbath’ the 15th of Nisan, on what ever day of the week it might fall. (*The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*, by Alfred Edersheim, pages 203-204) (emphasis added)

Notice that Mr. Edersheim understood the word ‘Sabbath’ of Lev.23:11, to be the same word ‘Sabbath’ referred to in Lev.23:24, 32 and 39 where it is clearly referring to the Holy Sabbaths of Trumpets, Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. He wasn’t confused by the fact that his contemporary, James Strong, was about to attach a reference number to each word in the Bible, and in so doing would sometimes apply *more than one number* to the same root word – thereby confusing some. The scholars and historians, like Alfred Edersheim, who understood the Hebrew language and its syntax, also understood what the noted historian Edersheim explained when

he said, *“as in analogous allusions to other feasts in the same chapter, it means not the weekly Sabbath, but the day of the festival.”* He wasn’t confused by a numbering system; he just looked at the Hebrew and its structural context. Edersheim then concludes that there is *“no room to doubt that in this instance we are to understand by the ‘Sabbath’ the 15th of Nisan”* was historically the date Pentecost was numbered from!

For those who have eyes to see, let them see. Others may decide to spend a considerable amount of time trying to explain away, ignore and forget the abundance of historical, archaeological and Scriptural evidence against a Sunday Pentecost, so they can continue in their “tradition” with a “clear” conscience.

So much history – so many facts! It is hoped that this does not become boring for those who do not appreciate quite as in-depth of a study of Scripture and history as is presented herein. It is felt that because the minds of so many have been set in error for so long a time, making it much more difficult to “think outside their box,” that an abundance of evidence is better than leaving several potential loose ends untied.

Besides, it was God who told us to “BE CAREFUL” to give our offerings to Him on the correct days – including Pentecost offerings!

Num 28:2 "Command the children of Israel, and say to them, 'My offering, My food for My offerings made by fire as a sweet aroma to Me, you shall be careful to offer to Me at their appointed time.'

God then details these appointed times, and in verse 26 speaks of the offering on what He calls the “Feast of Weeks” – not the feast of Sabbaths.

Num 28:26 'Also on the day of the firstfruits, when you bring a new grain offering to the LORD at your Feast of Weeks, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work.

JOSEPHUS – HOW PENTECOST WAS COUNTED BEFORE AND DURING HIS LIFETIME?

But on the second day of unleavened bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them.” (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 3, Chap. 10, section 5)

In the very next section Josephus continues:

When a week of weeks has passed over after this sacrifice, (which weeks contain forty and nine days), on the fiftieth day, which is Pentecost,... (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 3, Chap. 10, section 6)

My friends, these *are NOT* quotes of a commentator who opined after a couple of thousand years had elapsed! This is what historians of that day and local region recorded as a matter of FACT – and as a matter of HISTORY!

While many are set on an A.D. 30 or 31 date for Jesus’ crucifixion, virtually everyone agrees that Jesus Christ was crucified sometime between A.D. 29 and possibly as late as the mid-30s A.D. Obviously, the beginning of the church in Acts 2 (on Pentecost), was in the same year as Christ’s crucifixion. Do we have any DIRECT historical evidence of how Pentecost was counted in A.D. 31? YES! How about A.D. 29? YES! How about A.D. 28, 27 or 26? YES! How about A.D. 32, 33, 34 or 35? YES, YES, YES, YES!

As a matter of fact, we have historical evidence of how Pentecost was counted in the Temple dating BEFORE CHRIST, up to the 50s A.D!

THE WORKS OF PHILO JUDAEUS

Philo lived from about 20 B.C. to about the mid-50s A.D. As a contemporary of both Jesus and the apostle Paul, he is recognized as being one of the most important Jewish historians and authors of 2nd Temple Judaism. His life’s work focused on HOW Temple service was carried out during that era including during his lifetime. Notice what Philo recorded about how Temple Pentecost was counted while he was an adult historian – **DURING the Acts 2 Temple administration:**

(160) And also the day on which is offered the sheaf of corn, as an offering of gratitude for the fertility and productiveness of the plain, as exhibited in the fullness of the ears of corn. And that day of Pentecost, which is numbered from this day by seven portions of seven days... (PHILO, *The Decalogue*, Chap.30, section 160)

Note also that Philo says the count was by “seven portions of seven days” – not by counting seven Sabbaths. In addition, let’s see what else he says about how Pentecost was numbered in his lifetime:

(162) “There is also **a festival on the day of the paschal feast, which succeeds the first day, and this is named the sheaf**, from what takes place on it; for the sheaf is brought to the altar as a first fruit both of the country which the nation has received for its own, and also of the whole land; so as to be an offering both for the nation separately, and also a common one for the whole race of mankind; and so that the people by it worship the living God, both for themselves and for all the rest of mankind,...” (PHILO, *The Special Laws*, Chap.29, section 162)

Notice here that Philo states very clearly in his writing concerning Temple services during the days of Jesus and the apostles that the special offering of the sheaf was on the day “which succeeds the first day” of the “paschal feast” (Unleavened Bread). Again, this is not commentary 2000 years after the fact, but an actual historical recording of Second Temple practices which was recorded during the time of Christ! Philo would have been nearly 50 years old – well into his historical writing – by the time of Jesus’ death and resurrection, as well as that first great New Testament Pentecost of Acts 2! The sheaf or omer offering was waved up in Temple on the 2nd Day of Unleavened Bread during Jesus’ life on earth – the day **after** the first High Day, thus beginning the count toward Pentecost for a Sivan 5, 6 or 7 date. It was NOT counted in the Temple from the weekly Sabbath. That is a simple fact. Can you accept it? Do you prefer Truth over tradition? Do you prefer God’s Truth over the misguided teachings of men whom you may have allowed to place themselves “over” you?

The historical evidence is simply OVERWHELMING – not to mention the new archaeological evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls! But that is not ALL the evidence, nor is it even the most compelling thus far presented in this book. There is more Scriptural evidence. Evidence from what became a popular and very widely used translation of the Old Testament Scriptures, used often by the Jews, as well as also being used – quoted and referred to – by Christ and His disciples in the New Testament – the SEPTUAGINT

Bible! In the next chapter, we will explore together this irrefutable Scriptural evidence from the Septuagint, and examine other clear Scriptural evidences from both the Old and New Testaments – ones that make it plain that Pentecost was counted from Nissan 16, the morrow after the first annual Holy Sabbath of Unleavened Bread – not from the weekly Sabbath. In addition, it will be made clearer yet that Pentecost was NEVER Scripturally fixed (to always fall) on a Sunday!