

What Christian Israelites Believe ...

7. About Celebrating Pentecost (Whitsuntide)

God commanded the Israelites (through Moses) to hold three great feasts annually: the Feast of the Unleavened Bread (Passover), the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles (or of the Ingathering) (see Deuteronomy 16:16 and Exodus 23:14).

The Feast of Weeks was brought about to celebrate the harvest:

‘And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year’s end.’ Exodus 34:22.

Another name for it was the Feast of the First Fruits, as it was also about offering the first of the new season’s ripe fruits and liquors to God as an act of allegiance to God, the giver of all:

‘Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.’ Exodus 22:29.

The feast was to commence seven weeks (fifty days) after the harvest began and originally lasted one day:

‘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. And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the Lord thy God, according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee.’ Deuteronomy 16:9-10.

(The Feast of Tabernacles marked the completion of the harvest and was celebrated for seven days. See Exodus 23:16.)

The Feast of Weeks was later also called Pentecost (deriving from the Greek word Pentekostos, meaning ‘fifty’), given the feast occurs fifty days after Passover. Jesus died and rose again during Passover (which Christians now know as Easter). The following Pentecost, the Holy Spirit became available to all:

‘And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, [the apostles] were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like

as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.’ Acts 2:1-4.

The apostles were like the ‘first fruits’ of the Christian Church. They received a portion of God’s spirit, enabling them to go forth and preach Jesus Christ to the world and continue his work:

‘Many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.’
Acts 2:43.

Just as the appearance of God on Mount Horeb marked the birth of the Israelite nation, so did this Pentecost mark the birth of the Christian Church (see Acts 2:37-47).

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is mostly known within the Christian Israelite Church as Whitsunday (and the weekend as Whitsuntide). The name Whitsunday comes from the words ‘White Sunday’ and stems from the wearing of white clothing during Pentecostal celebrations in early England, where our church was founded. Christian Israelites celebrate Whitsuntide annually by coming together for a feast. As part of this, we ask that Christ and the Holy Ghost be given to us to strengthen us in our fight to overcome evil. Each year, we hope to gain a further portion of the spirits, thus strengthening us continually until we have reached perfection, in hope that one day our bodies will be changed from mortal to immortal, as Jesus Christ was after he ascended to his father:

‘Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.’ John 20:17.

We also hope that this will thereby make us God’s ‘first fruits’:

‘These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.’ Revelation 14:4.

We celebrate Whitsuntide not only to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit, but also as a wedding feast. This is in anticipation of becoming one of the 144,000 referenced in Revelation, who will be gathered together as the bride of the Lamb (Jesus Christ) when he returns from heaven to dwell here on earth:

‘Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the

righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.' Revelation 19:7-9 (see also Revelation 14:1-3).

As such, Whitsuntide (or Pentecost) is the most important event in the Christian Israelite calendar and celebrated annually, fifty days after Easter.