

# Discovering the WAVE SHEAF Offering

**Despite Biblical Mention of the Wave Sheaf Offering Being Extremely RARE, this Important Harvest Ceremony Factors into Christian Theology in ways Not Obvious to the Average Worshipper!**

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Having left Egypt, and while yet in the Wilderness, God gave Moses specific instructions regarding a very unique annual wave offering that His people were to present from the yields of their annual grain harvests. It was a first offering of their field yield, of seed which they had planted,<sup>1</sup> that expressed certain implications as to the acceptability of His peoples' spiritual activities, but, more importantly, conveyed profound veiled implications regarding God's future Spiritual Harvest.

But, in fact, this particular offering is mentioned for the last time, in Leviticus 23. After that, it isn't mentioned again directly by name anywhere in Scripture! If something were so important, why would it be mentioned so little? Does a dearth of direct mention justify its disregard?

Some feel they see a possible oblique reference to it in Joshua Chapter 5. That consideration is addressed in the article: "*Celebrating the Promised Land*". Some see another indirect reference in Luke Chapter 6:1. This incident is considered in the article: "*The Enigmatic Second-First Sabbath of Luke 6:1*". Another less oblique reference to this observance is found in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:2, but inadequate translation and mis-explanation by those desperate to find examples supporting Sunday worship services in the early Church obscure the **real** point of Paul's instruction. Paul was referring to the 'first *day* of weeks', not the first day of the week as most translations have it.<sup>2</sup> (Neither '*day*' nor '*the*' are in the original Greek, and '*weeks*' is

expressly plural!) The first day of the count toward the 'Feast of Weeks' is that day in which the Wave Sheaf Offering is offered!

Many today might regard this Levitical institution as having little to do with New Testament practice or expression. **NOT an insignificant mistake!** In fact, this ceremony, though veiled of specific re-mention, factors into True Christian practice in many important ways. Representatively, its relevance is even greater!

Just for starters, the Day of Pentecost,<sup>3</sup> also an annual Holy Day, the day upon which God founded His True New Testament Church, and first gave the visible outpouring of His Holy Spirit, was ON the fiftieth day from the annual Wave Sheaf Offering! Without it, this date couldn't have been determined! So long as we disregard the relevance of this rarely mentioned offering, we wouldn't be inclined to even ask the important questions. What does this ceremony represent? Particularly, what relevance does it have to the Redemptive Process?

In the Biblical Holyday calendar, there are two observances which are not determined by a fixed calendar date alone. They are: the Wave Sheaf Offering, which is dependent upon that year's grain, (the barley) the first of which being sufficiently ripened for harvest, and the Feast of Pentecost, which is dependent upon the Wave Sheaf Offering. These two observances are related to a day of the week, not to a fixed calendar date as are all others.

At the onset of the first month of the religious new year (beginning in spring), if it appeared that the grain was **not** going to be sufficiently ripened by Wave Sheaf Day, roughly just after mid-month, a

<sup>1</sup> Exodus 23:16 "...which you have sown in the field..."

<sup>2</sup> Though the first day of weeks WAS a Sunday, that wasn't the reference. This was the morrow after the Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread, thus a Sunday. It was the first day of the count toward the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), the fiftieth day thereafter. (Also a Sunday, the morrow after the seventh Sabbath) Lev. 23:15-16

<sup>3</sup> Acts 2: 'Pentecost' being named from this 50 day count. Pentecost is also known as the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Firstfruits.

**thirteenth** month would be added to the calendar. Typically, Wave Sheaf Day fell on the morrow after the Sabbath that fell within the seven days following Passover. Pentecost fell on the fiftieth day after that, the day after seven whole weeks had passed.<sup>4</sup> If it was apparent to that echelon of priests, who dealt with calendar determination, that the grain wasn't going to be sufficiently ripened by mid-month, the start of that new year would be delayed by inserting in a thirteenth month. With a lunar calendar, having months of 29 or 30 days each, (a lunar month is 29.53+ days) the addition of a thirteenth month was necessary on average 7 out of every 19 years to keep the lunar calendar in sync with the harvest seasons. The readiness of a Wave Sheaf accurately facilitated this determination in those early years before observational calendar methods came to be employed more exclusively.

The Wave Sheaf Ceremony marked the official beginning of the physical 'early' harvest season, while Pentecost celebrates its completion. In that fact, we can detect a spiritual parallel to aspects of Bible Prophecy. After all, Colossians 2:17<sup>5</sup> alerts us to the fact that the Holydays contain a prophetic component: a 'shadow of things to come'. With this parallel in mind, we can better discern the purpose of the Wave Sheaf Offering. There are apparent informational correlations to the First Resurrection, God's first harvest, which helps us better understand the necessity of a Second!

### Our Wave Sheaf Offering

But, there is an even greater revelation contained within this observance. Once we realize it was that day in which the resurrected Christ ascended to the Father, a whole new area of understanding opens. In that presentation He had to be sanctified<sup>6</sup> and alive.<sup>7</sup> That Sunday was the 'morrow after the Sabbath' that fell within the Days of Unleavened Bread, thus would have been Wave Sheaf day. In this, we can come to realize that this ancient offering

<sup>4</sup> Lev. 23:15 "...seven Sabbaths shall be complete."

<sup>5</sup> Col.2:16-17 "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or drink, or in respect of an holyday...Which are a shadow of things to come...but the body of Christ" (The IS is spurious!)

<sup>6</sup> John 20:17 "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father:..."

<sup>7</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:17 "And if Christ be not **raised**, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."

remained important, in fact an essential, to our redemption. **He was our Wave Sheaf Offering!** Being the first of the 'firstfruits', the first of a Kind, His acceptance before the Ancient of Days was essential on two accounts: First, to receive Power to officiate before God's Throne on our behalf, and second, to establish the acceptability of that Kind (a kind of His creatures.<sup>8</sup>)

(Unnoticed in this situation is the fact that upon becoming 'accepted' on His own behalf and ours', He then became one of the two "Ancients of Days"! My article on "Who IS the Ancient of Days?" addresses this phenomenon. Seeing the dilemma between verses 9, 13 and 22 of Daniel chapter 7, we can draw no other logical conclusion!)

### "Sit Thou at My Right Hand"

As a side subject, we should note two relevant passages. The oldest being Psalm 110, the other Daniel 7. In Psalm 110:1 we see YHWH instructing the 'Lord' to "...sit at [His] right hand until [He] makes [His] enemies [His] footstool." In Daniel 7 we see "...one like the **Son of man** came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the **Ancient of days**, and **they brought him near before him**. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." '**They**' had to present Him before the Ancient of Days! Reminiscent of the priests on earth **waving the sheaf** of the firstfruits of the first harvest to be accepted before the LORD.

If there is a day on which the event described in these two places actually took place, it most logically would have been this Wave Sheaf Day, the morning after Christ's resurrection. Early on that morning He said, "Touch me not for I have not yet ascended to my Father...", but later He said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth." Something happened that morning. It is here posed that Daniel 7 relates the scene of the presentation of our Wave Sheaf Offering and that Psalm 110 relates what was said at that ceremony in heaven! Another point worthy of note: After becoming seated at God's right hand, the 'Lord' (Adonai in v.1) is also

<sup>8</sup> James 1:18 "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

referred to as LORD (YHWH in v.5) and the Son of man, after presentation before the Ancient of Days is Himself referred to as ‘the Ancient of Days’ when mentioned in the context of the ‘second coming’! (vs. 9 & 13) These Beings, after Christ is ‘**restored** to the glory which He had with the Father before the world was’, (John 17:5) apparently were known by the same personal titles. There are other instances!

So, though little mentioned specifically by name, later than Leviticus 23, we continue to find it a silent and subtle component in many New Testament doctrinal subjects:

1. Wave Sheaf semi-indirectly determines the start of the calendar year and early harvest season,
2. It is key for the fifty day count toward the ‘first harvest’ celebration: Pentecost,
3. It illustrates the start of the era of our personal redemption through Christ’s living Priesthood,<sup>9</sup>
4. It illustrates God the Father’s acceptance of the first prototype of the ‘harvest of Firstfruits’,
5. Christ’s resurrection (by the way, just **as** the physical Wave Sheaf in the field was being cut) verifies the fact of the resurrection from the dead,<sup>10</sup>
6. The setting described in Psalm 110 and Daniel 7, showing Christ fulfilling our Wave Sheaf, indirectly illustrates the ‘duality’ of the Godhead, (note also, it was a blend of these same two passages that assured Christ of achieving a death sentence that Passover evening.<sup>11</sup>)
7. There being an ‘early harvest’ exposes the fact of there being more than one ‘day of salvation’.

All of these doctrinal issues are to some degree implicit in the practice of a Wave Sheaf Offering.

### **That There Be No Gatherings**

But now, to the matter of New Testament practice, the passage referred to earlier is insightful. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16 provides an extraordinary glimpse into early Church practice. You see, these were Gentiles! Corinth was a prominent Greek city. Its members were declared to be ‘Gentile’!<sup>12</sup> You would think

<sup>9</sup> Hebrews 5:5-11

<sup>10</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:12-23

<sup>11</sup> Matt. 26:64 “*Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*” (From Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13)

<sup>12</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:2

Jewish legal practices (and it was Paul writing!) would be irrelevant in this congregation.

Though most ‘evangelical’ types seize upon this passage as illustrating their regular practice of ‘going to church on Sunday’, the truth is quite otherwise! (See JF&B Commentary for instance! Paragraph after paragraph they wax eloquent about how this is an example of regular Sunday observance!) In fact, when what this passage is saying is correctly understood, it shows them observing a ‘work day’ on that particular Sunday! The ‘*first day of weeks*’ as it should read, is not the weekly Sunday, but is an annual Sunday! Being largely unfamiliar with Biblical Holydays, most churchgoers are oblivious to what is here so plainly stated, in fact, instructed, by the Apostle Paul. Here we see him **instructing** the Corinthians, as he already had the Galatians<sup>13</sup> (who also were Gentiles) to prepare for a famine-relief effort, but in doing so, not disregarding a valid Levitical ceremonial consideration!

To know when the ‘first day of weeks’ was, they **had** to have been observing the days of Unleavened Bread! That fact is consistent with Paul’s admonition that they **KEEP** that feast. (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 5:8 & 11:23-34) You see, the ‘first day of weeks’ (weeks is plural<sup>14</sup>) is the first day of the 50-day count to Pentecost: the Feast of Weeks! That Paul didn’t have to explain it to them indicates that they knew already **when** that date was, being an observance on the Jewish calendar, (not their calendar) and that they were themselves here shown keeping it.

### **What Paul ‘Ordered’!**

*1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 16:1* “*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.*” This collection was not putting coins in their regular ‘Sunday’ offering basket,

<sup>13</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16:1 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8:

<sup>14</sup> Englishman’s Greek Concordance, (Zondervan) 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, page 679 (the original Greek word is ‘*sabbaton*’), has this preface: “*Those which are the cases of σάββατον, a noun of the second declension, and in the singular, have the figure (2). Those which are of the third declension, and are neut. plural., are marked (3)*”. 1<sup>st</sup> Cor.16:2 indicates a (3), showing that it should be translated: ‘weeks’! The passage could just as correctly be translated: “**the first of the weeks...**” which would be consistent with the premise that this is referring to the first day of the count to the Day of Pentecost, the morrow after the weekly Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread, which is Wave Sheaf Offering day! NOT a regular Sunday at all!

(that wouldn't need a special order) but rather, going out into their fields, harvesting some of their new crops, preparing it for long-term preservation and then putting them into storage, until that as-yet-unannounced day when it would be collected-up by someone coming through the area.

2: "Upon the **first day of the week(s)** let every one of you **lay by him in store**, as God hath prospered him, that there be **no gatherings** when I come." If this 'gathering' was indicative of a church service, as some allege, then why would Paul **not** want there to be any gatherings when he arrived? You'd think Paul's long-awaited visit would be even MORE reason for a 'gathering'. No, he was referring to the designee collecting it having to wait for them to gather-in and prepare these foodstuff offerings for the journey to provide relief to the Saints in Judea! Not a of gathering of a church service. The language here demonstrates that it involved 'gathering-in' their produce and getting it readied for transit!

3: "And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send **to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.**" That was the purpose and intended destination of these **special** offerings.

4: "And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me." Perhaps Paul would accompany the persons transporting their foodstocks, perhaps not.

5: "Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.

6: And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go." Paul wasn't fully decided as to whether he'd go to Jerusalem or not at this point.

7: "For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.

8: But I will tarry at Ephesus until **Pentecost.**"

(So, Paul was a Pentecost observer all these many years after the cross!!<sup>15</sup> Well, Pentecost needed the 'first (day) of weeks' to determine which 'morrow after the Sabbath' it, the Feast of Weeks, fell on!) 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, chapters 8 & 9, describes further this famine relief situation for the Jerusalem Saints.

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<sup>15</sup> Many protestants aren't even aware that the Feast of Pentecost was a long-standing traditional Old Testament Holyday. They think it first occurred on this occasion where they read in Acts 2. This day of Pentecost is curious in that it is interdependent on all the other spring Holydays for its determination. See my article entitled, "Are Holydays Done Away?"

## A Day of WORK!

Now, when we consider that Paul was instructing them to begin this 'gathering' process on the **first day of weeks**, we are forced to realize that he was advocating that they go out and do some WORK on that day. Under the old Levitical proscription, the first day of weeks: Wave Sheaf Day, was always the start of the annual spring harvest, and was NOT on a Sabbath! (It was always on the morrow after the Sabbath!) The first day that it became 'ceremonially legal' to harvest was intended to be a **work** day. Paul's instruction here is consistent with that tradition! So, in effect, Paul is advocating WORK on this first day of weeks! That's not how my former protestant minister ever represented it!<sup>16</sup> But, **even if** we hold with 'the first day of the week' translation, it still doesn't help Sunday advocates, because Paul 'gave order' to **work** on that day!

## The Corinthians Knew!

So though little mentioned directly, the Wave Sheaf Offering remained in the practical consciousness of the early Church, as seen in this narrative in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 16. Paul's mention in v. 16:1 indicates the churches in Galatia, being instructed similarly, must also have known, and in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8, so did the Macedonians! Southern Greece, northern Greece, and central Asia Minor, areas all evangelized by the Apostle Paul! Even these Gentile congregations came to know about this purposeful observance. No explanation to them or to his readers was necessary as to what day he meant.

From this evidence, we can see that the ancient Wave Sheaf Offering factored-into what was commonly taught in the early New Testament Church! **Ω**

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<sup>16</sup> As a one-two punch, Sunday-keepers also cite Acts 20:7 as another example of regular Sunday churchgoing. The wording of that in the KJV being: "Now on the first day of the week..." is another example where the word 'day' was inserted. Again, the word 'week' is in the **plural**, and the original Greek is 'σαββάτων': Sabbaths. 'First' is the Greek word 'mia', which means either 'first' or 'one'. The phrase should be translated: "Now on the first of the Sabbaths..." or "...on one of the Sabbaths...", the first one of the Sabbaths after arriving, they met with the congregation. ('First day' in verse 18 is **not** 'mia' and the word 'day' this time IS there. Here showing that if there was intent to say "the first day of the week", in verse 7, Paul would have worded things differently, and 'Sabbaton' would not be found in its plural form!)