

Counting the Omer

THE FESTIVAL OF ANTICIPATION AND GRACE

Counting the Omer is not an event as it is a discipline of anticipation. To understand Counting the Omer, we must first recognize that Passover coincides with the harvest of barley in Israel

Three days after Passover, the Lord prescribed an offering of FirstFruits of the barley harvest.

Lev 23:9-12; 15-17;20-21.

The LORD said to Moses,

"Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest.

He is to wave the sheaf before the LORD so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath.

Three days after Passover, the Lord prescribed an offering of FirstFruits of the barley harvest. The priest was to offer as a wave offering a sheaf of new grain along with the other daily offerings. There are many other Firstfruit offerings required of the Lord including the Tithe, which is to be the First of the increase of our Land. God also set apart as His own the firstborn of all the flocks and herds as well as the firstborn children of their families. All children were to be redeemed (Ex 13:13). Remember, it was the firstborn of all the Egyptians both children and animals that were taken by death in the last plague of judgment on the night just before the Passover.

"FirstFruits" of the Bible represents more than just the first in line or the first to happen to appear. The "FirstFruits" are the primary, the premier, the best, and the perfect example of all that is to follow. The Firstfruits offerings are reminders for the people of God that ALL their provision and supply is given by the Lord.

The sheaf of grain waved before the Lord is a "type" or representation of the resurrection of Jesus. Three days after his death on the cross, the Lamb of God emerged from the tomb victorious and alive.

1Cor 15:20-21 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the FirstFruits of those who have fallen asleep. NIV

Christ is the Primary, the Premier, the Best, the Perfect example of all that is to follow. He is the sheaf of the first grain – the firstborn from the dead (Rev. 1:5).

{mospagebreak title=More than Passover}

BUT WAIT – THERE IS MORE....

This is where Counting the Omer Starts...

Exodus 23:15 – 17; 20-21.

"From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD. From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, baked with yeast, as a wave offering of firstfruits to the LORD....

The priest is to wave the two lambs before the LORD as a wave offering, together with the bread of the firstfruits. They are a sacred offering to the LORD for the priest.

On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. New International Version

Counting the Omer connects Passover with the summer Feast of First fruits. We are told to count off fifty days - five being the number of GRACE - and then there is ANOTHER offering of FirstFruits. The first harvest at Passover is the Barley Harvest, the Harvest after fifty days is the Wheat Harvest. So there is a FirstFruit offering of one type at Passover, and there is another type of crop being harvested after fifty days. Furthermore there is a specific connection in time between the two harvests.

Barley is considered a lower grade of grain than wheat, so there is also the idea of increase going on here not just one crop and then another. Passover remembers the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Fifty days later God met with His delivered nation (Israel) at Mt. Sinai where He offered to enter into Covenant with them (Exodus 19). They all agreed to His offer (Exodus 24), and He gave them the Torah, which was their guide and schoolmaster to teach and guide them on how covenant living operated. Later, after the death and resurrection of Messiah, God sent the Holy Spirit to the believers in Jerusalem with tongues of fire and speaking in unknown languages on the very same day of the year. Jesus promised that "He will teach you in all truth" (Jn 16: 13). In the New Testament, the death of the Messiah occurs on the exact date of Passover. The experience of Pentecost in Acts 2 occurs exactly fifty days after the cross.

Leaven or no Leaven?

Leaven or no leaven, What does God want?

At Passover, there was no leaven allowed whatsoever, anyone found with leaven was cut off from nation of Israel (Exodus 12: 15), no leaven was allowed with any sacrifice (Exodus 34:25), nor was any leaven to be burned on the altar of burnt sacrifice (Leviticus 2: 11). But here 50 days later, there is the waving (not burning) of an offering of refined flour processed into bread made WITH leaven. What's the deal? This second assembly is called "Pentecost" (fifty days), or "Shavout", or the "Feast of Weeks" (for the 7-week time period).

The focus of the Passover and the first fruit of that season is the sinless, spotless Lamb of God that was slain for our deliverance from the consequence and power of sin (Egypt) NO LEAVEN.

The focus of Pentecost is the impartation of Grace given by God to empower and equip His covenant people to get from where we are to where God wants us to go.

The two loaves that are waved before the Lord with leaven are US! We stand before the Lord WITH MIXTURE still in us. We have access and good standing because the Lord himself made a way and a provision for our sin. That is already done. But we are not yet completed, and we don't have the ability to complete ourselves alone.

{mospagebreak title=The exciting Part!}

And here is the exciting part!

The Lord says – COUNT the DAYS.

Counting the Omer teaches us that the Grace of God is dependable. There is Grace coming for you that you have never experienced before. It is a sure thing. IT is not "Well, maybe someday", or perhaps this or that... He has set this time, namely Pentecost, where He WILL POUR OUT, He will give new, all that is needed to get us to the next level of Holiness and Glory. COUNT THE DAYS! EXPECT! ANTICIPATE! Counting the Omer is not wishful thinking, we count because we are sure of what is ahead for us. His plans are sure, and your faith is sound. - You can COUNT on it!

Acts 1:4-5

On one occasion, while he (Jesus) was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.

For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

New International Version

John 16:12-16

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me."

New International Version

So we look ahead filled with hope. And we count the days...

The counting of the omer begins the day after Passover and ends on Pentecost (also called The Feast of Firstfruits)

And so we begin:

"This is the first day ‐ day one - counting the omer....."

and each day we will count ‐ this is the second day - counting the omer; this is the third day... until we reach fifty.

{mospagebreak title=Pentecost}

The Day of Pentecost ‐ also called Shavout ‐ the Festival of God's promised GRACE, a midsummer Sabbath where we gather in His Name and receive what we need to get to the next place He has prepared for us....

Acts 2:1-6

When the day of Pentecost came,

(this is The Feast of Firstfruits, also called Shavout)

they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. New International Version

(They were in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of First Fruits)

The Holy Spirit was poured over and into these people and there was a lot of noise and confusion, finally Peter began to

explain what was happening.

Acts 2:15-21

These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 "In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your young men will see visions,

your old men will dream dreams.

18 Even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will prophesy.

19 I will show wonders in the heaven above

and signs on the earth below,

blood and fire and billows of smoke.

20 The sun will be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood

before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

21 And everyone who calls

on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

New International Version

{mospagebreak title="Birth" of the Church}

This event is often referred to as the "Birth of the Church" as we know it today. Only fifty days from the Passover, counting the omer leads us into the latest moving and operation of God's eternal Kingdom.

In the Old Covenant the nation of Israel was delivered from Egypt on Passover day. Fifty days later they were at the base of Mt. Sinai where they accepted the God's covenant of protection and provision as His own special people. The Lord gave them instructions on how to live in this relationship. We call it "the Law", but it was a necessary provision for actually living in and maintaining this covenant relationship with God. The "Law" is a gift, and it always restores Israel no matter how many times they broke their agreement and covenant with God. The "law" was succesful as well. Jesus was the "end of the Law" (Romans 10:4),that is He was the end to which the law pointed, His appearance as a man was finally accomplished at His birth through Mary.

The crucifixion happened on the Day of Passover, the very day. The "Lamb of God" (John 1:29) was given and the "new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20) was ratified and put into operation. This covenant is not only for the nation of Israel, but it is for the whole world. Who-so-ever may enter into his Kingdom.

Jesus promised that he would not leave us comfortless, He promised to give us the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17, 16:13). The fullness of this gift came exactly 50 days after the crucifixion. Counting the Omer keeps our focus on the provision of God. As the "law" was our "schoolmaster" (Galatians 3:24,25), the Spirit teaches us in all truth (John 16:13). He convicts of sin and he reproves us of error. The Spirit of God given here is the fulfillment of the promise that God will write His laws on our hearts (Ezekiel 36). The presence of His very own Spirit within our hearts is the dynamic and authoritative power that performs this operation of salvation.

Counting the Omer reminds us that God has a plan, He is in charge and He knows the end from the beginning. So often we get discouraged by difficulties, tragedies, sin, complacency, and so on, but when we count, we are reminded that the Lord is with us. His promises are good, His mercies do not fail, and our hope in Him is well founded.

During this season, we can say "Today is day # ____ of counting the Omer. Jesus has been raised from the dead, and so shall we."

There is Grace coming for you that you have never experienced before. It is a sure thing. IT is not "Well, maybe someday", or maybe this or maybe that... He has set this time, namely Pentecost, where He WILL POUR OUT, He will give new, all that is needed to get us to the next level of Holiness and Glory. COUNT THE DAYS! EXPECT! ANTICIPATE! His plans are sure, and your faith is sound.

Counting the Omer is not hard, it is easy. It keeps us alert, and confident is the provision of God for our future success. You can COUNT ON IT !!