

What Do You Mean, “Sabbaths”?

A New Look at Pentecost!

Karaite Jews and some Christian churches observe Pentecost by counting seven Sundays from the “day after the Sabbath” during the Days of Unleavened Bread. They claim the commandment refers to counting from Sunday, and that we are to count seven “Sabbaths.” Is this what God REALLY commands? On what day should we observe Pentecost?

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It baffles me. I have seen grown men, who are supposed to be erudite scholars and leading Christian ministers, use the most superficial and shallow reasoning to try to debunk the traditional Jewish method of observing and counting to Pentecost (or Shavuot, the “Feast of Weeks”), by simply quoting from Leviticus 23, and then laughing and saying, “See, it says ‘Sabbath.’ We are to count ‘Sabbaths.’ Why it is so easy to see a ten-year-old could understand it!”

But why don’t they get honest with the subject, stop the ingratiating ridicule, and burrow a little deeper? Does not the apostle Paul command us to “PROVE all things”? (I Thess.5:21).

The Crucial Verses

We read beginning in Leviticus 23:15, the crucial verse, in the Rotherham Emphasized Bible, “Then shall ye keep count to yourselves, from the morrow of the sabbath, from the day ye brought in the wave sheaf, – seven sabbaths complete shall there be: until on the morrow of the seventh Sabbath ye count fifty days, – then shall ye bring near a new meal-offering unto Yahweh” (Lev.23:15-16).

It seems the whole controversy swirls around the true definition and meaning of the word “sabbath” in these verses! Is it referring to the weekly Sabbath? Could it be referring to the annual Sabbath – that is, the First Day of Unleavened Bread? Could the word also mean “weeks”?

Of course, at issue is the question of *from what day do we count fifty days to arrive at the correct date for observing PENTECOST!*

“Sabbaths”

In verse 15, where we read “seven sabbaths” – the Rotherham translation has a footnote (b) which says: “Seven sabbaths = seven weeks. Compare N.T. (New Testament) Ap. ‘Sabbath.’”

Turning to the Appendix to the Rotherham New Testament, we find a section on “Sabbath.” Rotherham says, “A few critical remarks on the word *sabbath* as it appears in the New Testament may be useful. *First*, this word seems to be sometimes an appellative [of or relating to a common noun] and sometimes a proper name (‘day of rest,’ ‘Sabbath’). *Second*, the term *sabbath* is, in several texts, used in the plural in the Greek, where, nevertheless, it is evident that only one particular day is intended. Under this head, the following texts are worthy of note: Mat.12:1, 11; Mark 1:21; 2:23; 3:2; Luke 4:16; 13:10; Acts 13:14.; 16:13. In all these passages the word in the original is in the plural, and yet it is plain that a particular, individual day is intended. Nor is there anything surprising in this; for ‘the Hebrew at times uses plural forms where other languages employ the singular.’”

Rotherham then adds, “*Third*, the word *sabbath* is extended to signify ‘week.’ Even in this there is nothing very far fetched; since the transition from the idea of ‘rest’ to that of a ‘rest-bounded period of seven days’ is a comparatively natural one. Still the question must be considered mainly as one of fact; although, even so, more demonstrative evidence should not be demanded than the nature of the case admits of; and it often suffices to attach a new meaning to a word, that the ordinary application of it is repeatedly seen to be unnatural, illogical, bewildering, or absurd. Hence the current opinion is probably correct that finds notwithstanding that the word for ‘week’ is here *sabbaton* in the singular; since it would appear a very paltry boast to say, ‘I fast twice on the sabbath’ when anyone (with more pleasantry than pharisaism) might reply, ‘I fast three times.’”

Ridiculous, isn’t it? No one would boast about fasting twice in a single day! That would be preposterous! Obviously, the word – as in this case -- sometimes means “week,” just as translators all have it!

Rotherham goes on: “To this example of *sabbaton* in the singular, used in the sense of ‘week,’ may now be added I Corinthians 16:2, where not only Westcott and Hort, but the entire board of Revisers find the word in the singular number; and it would seem enough simply to ask the question, Is it credible that the apostle Paul meant to enjoin on the assemblies of Galatia and on that of Corinth to lay by on ‘the first [hour] of sabbath’ without so much as specifying that it was the first HOUR of the day that he intended? If not, and if ‘first day of the day’ is impossible, what is left but to assume that he meant ‘first [day] of the week’? ‘Week’ also approves itself in Mat.28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7. . . There is nothing unnatural in supposing the meaning to be ‘week’ ; for, as we have seen: (a) the word in the plural form may convey a singular idea; (b) the word in the singular is twice used in the sense of ‘week.’ Now let us test the two words ‘sabbaths’ and ‘week’: ‘Late in the sabbaths, as it was on the point of dawning into the first of the sabbaths.’ Will that stand? Now try ‘week’: ‘Late in the week, as it was on the point of dawning into the first of the week.’ Here everything is harmonious. With the Hebrews the sabbath closed the week. Late on the sabbath would be late in the week, and the

transition is natural from the end of one week to the beginning of the next. Hence the correct rendering here is ‘week’” (Rotherham Emphasized Bible, Appendix, p.271).

How plain that the Greek word *sabbaton* not only means “Sabbath,” but it also clearly means “WEEK”!

What about the Hebrew language? What about the Old Testament Scriptures?

Old Testament Evidence

Further evidence that ‘sabbath’ can refer to “week” and ‘sabbaths’ can refer to ‘weeks,’ is also found in the Old Testament!

In Leviticus 23:15, we read in the Rotherham, “seven sabbaths complete.” The footnote says “Seven sabbaths = seven weeks.” Because this is understood by scholars, this verse is translated often with the word “weeks” instead of “sabbaths.” For example:

The Moffatt translation: “you shall count seven full WEEKS.”

The Good News Bible: “Count seven full WEEKS.”

The New Revised Standard Version: “You shall count off seven WEEKS; they shall be complete.”

New International Version: “Count off seven full WEEKS.”

Revised Standard Version: “seven full WEEKS shall they be.”

The Amplified Parallel Bible: “And you shall count from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the wave sheaf offering, seven Sabbaths; [SEVEN FULL WEEKS] shall they be.” The bracketed words are in the Amplified Parallel Bible, to explain the usage of the word “Sabbaths,” that in this case the word refers to “WEEKS.”

The Hebrew Tanakh: “And from the day on which you bring the sheaf of elevation offering – the day after the Sabbath – you shall count off SEVEN WEEKS. They must be complete: you must count until the day after the SEVENTH WEEK.”

Certainly, the Jews above all peoples ought to know the nuances of their own language! The term “Sabbath,” then, can also refer to “week,” in the Hebrew language, just as it also does in the GREEK language of the New Testament!

Proof from Deuteronomy

One of the key lessons in Bible Study is that, “The Bible interprets the Bible.” That is, one passage of Scripture interprets another passage of Scripture. God’s Word explains the meaning of God’s Word.

It is DANGEROUS for people to ignore the plain interpretation of the Scriptures by the Scriptures themselves, and to insert *their own private OPINION instead!!!*

As the apostle Peter wrote, “First of all you must understand this, that NO PROPHECY OF SCRIPTURE [that is, no teaching of Scripture, or the Word of God] is a matter of *one’s own interpretation*, because no prophesy [“inspired teaching”] ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from GOD” (II Pet.1:20-21, NRSV).

Or, as the Amplified Parallel Bible has this passage: “[Yet] first [you must] understand this, that no prophesy of Scripture is [a matter] of any personal or private or special interpretation (loosening, solving). For no prophesy ever originated because some man willed it [to do so – it never came by human impulse], but men spoke from God who were borne along (moved and impelled) by the Holy Spirit.”

So how, then, does the BIBLE – the Scriptures themselves – interpret the passage of counting the omer – the days and weeks till Pentecost? Do we literally count seven “Sabbath” days? Or do we count “seven WEEKS”?

Further proof that the correct answer to that questions is “WEEKS” is found in Deuteronomy, where the Feast of Weeks (“Pentecost”) is also discussed. Moses was told, “You shall count off SEVEN WEEKS; start to count the SEVEN WEEKS when the sickle is first put to the standing grain” (Deut.16:9, Tanakh).

In this case, the Hebrew word admits of no ambiguity. The word translated “weeks” here is *shavuah*, not *shabbat* or *shabbatot* (plural of *shabbat*). Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance translates this word *shavua* as “sevens, i.e. a *week* (specifically of years): -- seven, week.” It is the past participle of the word *shava* which means, “to be complete,” from the word *sheva*, “seven, seven times, by implication a *week*.”

Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon defines the word *shavua* as meaning: “a hebdomad” – that is, “a group of seven.” It continues: “(1) of days, a *week* . . . *the feast of (seven) weeks, Pentecost*, so called from the seven weeks which were counted from the Passover to this festival, Deut.16:9.”

A New Look at “Shabbat”

Clearly, the passage in Deuteronomy 16:9 proves that *shavua* and *shabbat* can both mean “WEEK” and their plurals can mean “WEEKS.”

The word *shabbat* itself *literally* means, contrary to the opinions of some who seem to gloss right over this basic fact, “to REST, to keep as a day of rest.” Says Gesenius, “The primary idea appears to be that of *to sit down, to sit still*.” In Arabic, it means “to take rest.” It has a secondary meaning of, “to cease, desist, leave off.” Its third definition means “to celebrate the sabbath,” and refers to the weekly sabbath itself, or to an annual holy day, also called “Sabbaths.”

That the annual holy days are also “sabbaths,” is proved in Leviticus 23:24 where the Feast of Trumpets is called a “sabbath,” and verse 32 where the Day of Atonement is referred to as a “sabbath of rest.” In Leviticus 23, verse 39, the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles is called a “sabbath,” and the “eighth day” is also referred to as a “sabbath.” Thus it follows that the First and Last days of Unleavened Bread, also annual holy days (Lev.23:7-8), must also be annual “sabbaths.”

Consequently, when God tells His people, “And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath” (Lev.23:15), He could just as easily be referring to the *annual* holy day of the First Day of Unleavened Bread as to the *weekly* Sabbath day!

How do we know which day to count from?

“Sabbaths” of YEARS

Turn to Leviticus 25. We read here of the “Sabbath year” of rest for the land (verses 1-4). Notice what God says: “But in the seventh year shall be a SABBATH unto the land, a Sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vine” (Lev.25:4, KJV).

Now notice verse 8: “And thou shalt NUMBER *SEVEN SABBATHS OF YEARS* unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven SABBATHS OF YEARS shall be unto thee forty and nine years.”

Here, plainly, “sabbaths of years” makes no sense at all, unless the word “Sabbaths” means “*WEEKS OF YEARS*”! There is no other way to understand it! A “Sabbath” of years would simply be “seven years” – that is, a complete “week of years”! So in this case, the Bible itself interprets “sabbaths” as meaning “*WEEKS*”!

In this verse, the word *shabbat* obviously CANNOT refer to the Sabbath day! It plainly refers to the number *SEVEN*, or *WEEK*. “Seven SABBATHS of years” means seven weeks of years, or seven sevens of years -- the identical meaning that seven SHAVUA of years would have!!!

Thus in Hebrew, just as in Syriac and in Greek, the word *shabbat* can also refer to “week” or “weeks” – there is simply no skirting, avoiding, or getting around this fact!

Now this is something *even a little CHILD can understand!* But what about some grown up adults?

Which Day Do We Count From?

Let’s put this question to the test. The Jews say we should count from the annual holy day on which Passover falls – Abib 15 – beginning the count the following day, Abib 16. The Sadducees in ancient times said we should count from the weekly Sabbath that falls inside the seven days of Unleavened Bread. So who is right?

We have proved that the usage of the word “sabbath” can easily refer to “week,” so we have to be careful here. The usage of the word *shabbat* in Leviticus 23:15 could be either “sabbath” or “week.” So we have to look elsewhere for a definitive answer to this question!

The Pharisees in ancient times counted from the first holy day of Passover. The Sadducees, and later the Karaites, counted from the first day of the week, following the weekly Sabbath day during the Feast.

Who’s right?

Another Authority Speaks Out

The Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, by M'Clintock and Strong, volume VIII, published in 1877, says about Pentecost:

“Pentecost, the second of the three great annual festivals on which all the males were required to appear before the Lord in the national sanctuary, the other two being the feasts of Passover and Tabernacles. It fell in due course on the sixth day of Sivan, and its rites, according to the law, were restricted to a single day . . . The time fixed for the celebration of Pentecost is the fiftieth day reckoning from ‘the morrow after the Sabbath’ of the Passover (Lev. 23:11,15,16). The precise meaning, however, of the word [shabbat] in this connection, which determines the date for celebrating this festival, has been a matter of dispute from time immemorial. The Boethusians and the Sadducees in the time of the second temple (Mishna, Menachoth, x, 3), and the Karaites since the 8th century of the Christian era, took [shabbat] in its literal and ordinary sense as denoting ‘the seventh day of the week,’ or ‘the Sabbath of creation,’ and maintained that the omer was offered on the day following that weekly Sabbath which might happen to fall within the seven days of the Passover, so that Pentecost would always be on the first day of the week. But against this it is urged

“(a) That Joshua 5:11, where [the morrow after the Passover] is used for [the morrow after the Shabbat] shows that [*shabbat*] in Lev. 23:11 DENOTES THE FIRST DAY OF PASSOVER, which was to be a day of rest.

“(b) The DEFINITE ARTICLE in [*ha-shabbat*, or ‘the Sabbath’] in Lev. 23:11 REFERS TO ONE OF THE PRECEDING FESTIVAL DAYS.

“(c) The expression [*shabbat*] is also used for the Day of Atonement (Lev.23:32), and the abstract [*shabbat*] is applied to the first and eighth days of Tabernacles (ver.39) and the Feast of Trumpets (23:24), as well as to ‘WEEK’ (23:15; 25:8); hence this use of *sabbaton* in the N.T. (Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 18:12).

“(d) According to Lev. 23:15 the seventh week, at the end of which Pentecost is to be celebrated, is to be reckoned from the Sabbath. Now if this Sabbath were not fixed, but could happen on any one of the seven Passover days, possibly the fifth or sixth day of the festival, the Passover would in the course of time be DISPLACED FROM THE FUNDAMENTAL

POSITION which it occupies in the order of the annual festivals.

“(e) The sabbatic idea which underlies all the festivals, and which is SCRUPULOUSLY observed in all of them, shows that the reckoning could not have been left to the fifth or sixth day of the festival, but must have FIXEDLY BEGUN ON THE 16TH OF NISAN. Thus, each Sabbath comes after SIX EVEN PERIODS:

“1. The Sabbath of days, after six days

“2. The Sabbath of months, after six months

“3. The Sabbath of years, after six years

“4. The Sabbath of sabbatic years, after six sabbatic years

“5. The Sabbath of festivals = the Day of Atonement, after six festivals; hence the SABBATH OF WEEKS, i.e., PENTECOST, must also be at the end of six common weeks after Passover, which could be obtained ONLY by reckoning from the 16th OF NISAN, as this ALONE yields six common weeks; for the first week during which the counting goes on belongs to the Feast of Passover, and is NOT common.

“(f) The Septuagint, Josephus, Philo, Onkelos, and the synagogue have understood it in this way and acted upon it, and most Christian commentators espouse and defend the traditional interpretation . . . It is therefore EVIDENT THAT THE JEWS, WHO DURING THE SECOND TEMPLE KEPT PENTECOST FIFTY DAYS AFTER THE 16TH OF NISAN, RIGHTLY INTERPRETED THE INJUNCTION CONTAINED IN LEV.23:15-22” (*Cyclopeifia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, by M'Clintock and Strong, vol. VII, p.924-925).

The Evidence from Joshua

The reference cited above mentions the evidence from the book of Joshua that the “morrow after the Sabbath” of Leviticus 23:11 must refer to the first annual Sabbath of Passover. Let us look at this verse in Joshua more closely.

Joshua declares, “On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the PASSOVER. The DAY AFTER THE PASSOVER, THAT VERY DAY, THEY ATE SOME OF THE PRODUCE OF THE LAND: unleavened bread and roasted grain” (Joshua 5:10-11).

Remember, the Israelites were not permitted to eat of the grain of the harvest UNTIL the “wave sheaf offering” had been presented on “the morrow after the Sabbath” (Lev.23:11). God commanded, “You must not eat any bread, or roasted or new grain, UNTIL THE VERY DAY you bring this offering to your God” (Lev. 23:14).

Since the Israelites ate that grain on the morrow AFTER THE PASSOVER – and remember, the Passover was slain on the 14th of Abib or Nisan, but EATEN on the 15th of Abib or Nisan – therefore, this “morrow” would have to be the 16th of Abib or Nisan!

Therefore, “the day after the Sabbath” of Leviticus 23:11 must be the same day as the “DAY AFTER THE PASSOVER” of Joshua 5:11 – which was Abib/Nisan 16!!!

An Old Testament Key

The argument over this question began between the Pharisees and Sadducees. Both groups arose during and following the time of the Maccabees (about 164 B.C.). The Pharisees were the “separated ones” who refused to follow the Hellenism and pagan ways of Antiochus Epiphanes, and led a revolt against the Greek-Syrian intrusion in Israel.

The Sadducees trace their origin back to the priests of that time, many of whom sold out to the Greek influences of the age, and capitulated to the wave of Hellenism.

When the Maccabees defeated the foreign invaders, the Pharisees sought to teach the Torah and the religion of Moses – the truth of God. They sought, at that time, to eradicate the pollution which had come upon the land, and to return to Torah.

The Sadducees rose up mainly amongst the priests, and denied many of the teachings of the Pharisees. They were highly political and politically motivated. The Jewish historian Josephus points out that very few of the people followed the teachings of the Sadducees; most of them followed the precepts of the Pharisees. (Which explains why most of Jesus’ debates in the Gospels were with the Pharisees, not the Sadducees.)

However, since these two groups disagreed on how to count to Pentecost, it would help us to resolve this issue if we can go back to obtain evidence from BEFORE THE TIME of the Sadducees and Pharisees.

Can we do that? Yes, we can!

The evidence is found in the Greek translation of the Old Testament Scriptures known as the Septuagint – translated about 250 years before Christ – about one hundred years before the sects of the Sadducees and Pharisees arose, following the Maccabean rebellion!

The story of the first, authorized translation of the Scriptures into Greek, by learned Jewish scholars and priests approved by the High Priest in Israel, for the library of Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt, is an amazing story in itself.

However, suffice it to say at this point, that the key to our question is found in the authoritative translation of Leviticus 23:15, in the Septuagint. This was translated roughly 100 years or more before the existence of the Sadducees and Pharisees, as competing rivals. How useful would an unbiased ancient authority such as this – with no axe to grind – be to our discussion?

The Septuagint Translation

Unger’s Bible Dictionary has to say about the LXX:

“The Greek Septuagint. The Hebrew Old Testament enjoys the unique distinction of being

the first book or rather library of books, for such it is, known to be translated into another language. This translation is called the Septuagint and was made in the third and second centuries B.C. During this period the entire Hebrew Bible was put into the Greek language. It was in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (235-246 B.C.) that the Pentateuch was put into the Greek tongue. Originally the term Septuagint, abbreviated LXX, was applied to the Greek Pentateuch.”

Concerning the origin of the LXX, Unger states: “THE SEPTUAGINT WAS THE BIBLE OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY before the New Testament was written. After the New Testament Scriptures came on the scene, they were added to the Septuagint to form the completed Scriptures of Christianity.

“Besides this momentous ministry, the Septuagint met the religious and liturgical requirements of Jews living in Alexandria, Egypt. This was the center of culture and learning of ancient Judaism.”

Says Unger, “Representing a *PREMASORETIC HEBREW TEXT*, THE SEPTUAGINT IS ACCORDINGLY OF *BASIC TEXTUAL AND EXEGETICAL VALUE*” (Unger, “Versions of the Scriptures,” p. 1147). He adds:

“Importance of the Septuagint. *The importance of the Septuagint from every angle CAN SCARCELY BE OVERESTIMATED.* This can be asserted despite its deficiencies and limitations. Religiously and spiritually the Septuagint gave the great revealed truths concerning creation, redemption, sin and salvation to the world. It released these from the narrow isolation of the Hebrew language and people and gave them to the Greco-Roman world through the divinely prepared instrument of the Greek language, the lingua franca of the Greco-Roman age (300 B.C. to A.D. 300). The Septuagint was a definite factor in the preparation for the coming of Christianity and the New Testament revelation. In making the Old Testament available in the same universal language in which the New Testament was destined to appear, it presaged the giving of the Holy Scriptures in one international and universal language of the period” (p. 1149).

Unger goes on:

“As the first translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into a foreign language, the Septuagint gained great fame. The very fact that it was put into the language of culture and education of the day made its use wide. Philo of Alexandria used the Septuagint widely. Josephus depended upon it. *JESUS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS QUOTED FROM IT* as well as from the Hebrew With the dawn of Christianity the Septuagint became *THE SCRIPTURES OF CHRISTIANS*. It was venerated and quoted and used in controversy. The Old Latin, Egyptian, Ethiopic, Gothic, Slavonic and other versions were made from it and it was used in early missionary activity” (*ibid.*).

As a translation, says the *New Bible Dictionary*, “The Pentateuch again ranks high. It is generally competent and faithful” (“Text and Versions,” p.1259). This authority continues: “It acts also as a linguistic and theological bridgehead between the Hebrew of the Old Testament

and the Greek of the New; for it served as ‘Bible’ to generations of Greek-speaking Jews in many countries, AND IT IS OFTEN QUOTED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT” (*ibid.*).

Unbiased and open minded scholars, as a whole, have concluded that the Septuagint was of PRIMARY IMPORTANCE as the first major translation of the Scriptures into the UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE of the cultural, educated world of that time. It was used by Jesus, the apostles, and the early Church! Therefore, it has great importance for us in determining exegetical questions regarding the original Hebrew text, where there are questions of meaning – such as the controversy concerning the “morrow after the Sabbath” in Leviticus 23:11, 15.

Therefore, let’s look at the Septuagint, in Leviticus 23. Notice carefully the pivotal Scripture concerning the counting of Pentecost, found in Leviticus 23, quoted exactly from the LXX:

“These are the festivals for the Lord – holy, set days, which you shall proclaim in their set times. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, between the two evenings, is the Passover for the Lord. And on the fifteenth day of this month beginneth the festival of unleavened bread for the Lord. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. Now the FIRST DAY shall be a holy, set day for you. You shall do no sacrificial service, but offer whole burnt offerings to the Lord seven days, and the SEVENTH DAY shall be a holy set day for you. You shall do no sacrificial service.

“Moreover the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, and thou shalt say unto them, When you are come into the land which I give you, and are about to reap the harvest thereof, you shall *bring a sheaf, as the first fruits* of your harvest, to the priest, and he shall offer up the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you ON THE MORROW AFTER THE FIRST DAY, the priest shall offer this up” (Lev. 23:4-11).

The Septuagint very plainly says, “on the morrow after the FIRST DAY,” which has to be the first day of the Feast – Passover! There is no way you can interpret the expression “first day” to refer to ANYTHING OTHER THAN THE FIRST DAY OF THE FEAST! It clearly does not refer to the weekly Sabbath – the weekly Sabbath is the “SEVENTH DAY,” *by its own definition!*

Now let’s look at the New Testament evidence. This should nail the lid on the coffin of the Sadducean “Sunday” theory once and for all!

New Testament Evidence

Jesus Christ told His disciples, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach” (Matt.23:2-3, NRSV). Notice! He did not say that the *Sadducees*, or

Karaites, who came later, sat in Moses' seat! He said the Pharisees did – and that we should do what they said, from the law of Moses. That is, when they taught the laws of God, the Torah, we should follow them – not the opinions of the Sadducees.

In fact, when confronted by the Sadducees, Yeshua said to them that they were ignorant of the Scriptures. He rebuked them saying, “you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God” (Matt.22:29)!!!

But He said the Pharisees sat on Moses' seat. They claimed their authority to teach came down from Moses, through each generation of elders and priests, to the very time of Christ. Jesus did not rebuke them for saying this; nor did He correct them. In fact, He said so long as they taught the things Moses taught, we should FOLLOW them!

In other words, we should not throw the baby out with the bath water, or become self-righteous, and negate or repudiate everything the Pharisees taught. They taught much that was GOOD!

Did they teach correctly the laws of God as pertaining to the correct counting of the feast of Pentecost? Were they doing it correctly?

BOOMING Silence!

Before answering that question, notice one vital thing: Nowhere in the entire New Testament did either Jesus Christ, the gospel writers, the apostles, or the apostle Paul himself, EVER reprove or rebuke the Pharisees for observing the WRONG DAY FOR PENTECOST!

NEVER!!!

Would this not have been a gross oversight, if they had been leading the whole nation astray on what day to keep God's annual festival? In Matthew 23, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees on many issues dealing with their rules and traditions, regulations and decrees, and extrapolations they made from the Scriptures. But *He never rebuked them for such a serious crime and offense as keeping God's holy day on the INCORRECT DAY!*

NEVER!!!

That fact alone speaks volumes on which day should we keep! He SAID they sat in Moses' seat, and to DO what they SAID, in terms of that which they taught and received from Moses – from the Torah itself! That was an endorsement of their authority to teach from the Law of Moses, and to teach the Holy Days of God. It was not an endorsement for them to *change* anything in God's Law. *If they HAD CHANGED the proper day to observe Pentecost, that would have been VERY SERIOUS – and it would have been something that Christ and the apostles would have pointed out and REBUKED THEM FOR!*

But they didn't. Obviously, there was no “smoking gun” or “red herring” there. The Pharisees were keeping Pentecost, as they did the Passover itself, on the correct day! They

counted to Pentecost correctly, beginning with the wave sheaf offering on the second day of Passover, or Abib 16! If they had not been doing so, then no doubt that Jesus Christ and the apostles would have rebuked them severely for this serious error!

The Apostle Paul

The apostle Paul is an intriguing example. He was a very faithful, zealous servant of God. After his conversion, he became a staunch and stalwart messenger of God, zealous above most of God's servants. He was a man who had previously been taught at the very feet of the leading rabbi of that time, Rabbi Gamaliel.

Paul told the Jews, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, *educated strictly according to your ancestral law*, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today" (Acts 22:3, NRSV).

Later, when he was being examined by the Sanhedrin, seeing that some were Sadducees and some were Pharisees, he told them, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead." Luke continues the account, "When he said this, a dissension began between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all three.)" (Acts 23:6-8).

Obviously, Paul identified much more with the Pharisees in his training and education, and the laws of God, than with the Sadducees!

On another occasion, in his epistle to the Philippians, Paul wrote explaining his religious background, and said: "If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; *AS TO THE LAW, A PHARISEE*; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; *as to RIGHTEOUSNESS UNDER THE LAW, BLAMELESS*" (Phil.3:4-6, NRSV).

When it came to the law, and as to the righteousness of obedience to the law, including COUNTING PENTECOST, Paul said he was "BLAMELESS!" He was without blame or error. In other words, he observed the day of Pentecost CORRECTLY, as the Pharisees observed it, counting from the day after the first holy day of Passover!

The Proof of Deuteroproton

Amazing historical proof is also found hidden in plain sight in the New Testament as well. We read in the gospel of Luke, "Now it happened on the *second Sabbath after the first* that He went through the grain fields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands. And some of the Pharisees said to them, 'Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?'" (Luke 6:1-2, NKJV).

What was this all about? Believe it or not, hidden in this passage is a veritable KEY that unlocks the truth about from what day to count to Pentecost! Notice! What is this mysterious expression, “*the second Sabbath after the first*”? It has perplexed scholars for generations.

Notice that this event occurred at the time of the harvest of grain. This would place the time as early to late spring. In Israel, the two major grain harvests are at the beginning of spring, or Passover, and the festival of “first fruits” – that is, Pentecost. Passover occurs March-April, and Pentecost falls in May or June. Passover begins the barley harvest, and Pentecost begins the wheat harvest.

Which harvest is this? Matthew records this same event in chapter 12. In Matthew’s account, we simply read, “At that time Jesus went through the grain fields *on the Sabbath*. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat” (Matt.12:1). In this passage, we discover that this event occurred on the weekly Sabbath. That same day, He entered their local synagogue (Matt.12:9), and healed a man on the Sabbath (verses 10-11). Yeshua thus showed it is all right to heal and do good on the Sabbath, thereby revealing that some of the Jewish Sabbath traditions and added regulations concerning the Sabbath were in grievous error. The whole emphasis here was that it was the *weekly Sabbath day* that was involved!

Yet Luke adds that this particular weekly Sabbath day was also “the second Sabbath after the first.” What did he mean by such an expression?

The Greek-English Interlinear has it this way: “And it happened on the second chief Sabbath.” Literally, “And it was on a Sabbath, the second chief.” The Greek expression here is *sabbaton dueteroproton* and means, literally, “Sabbath, the second chief,” or “sabbath the second first,” that is, “the second first (or chief) Sabbath.”

Now notice! First, this occurred during the grain harvest. Second, this was a weekly Sabbath, and yet it was unique – a “second” “chief” Sabbath. This could not be during the fall Feast of Tabernacles – that festival occurs AFTER the harvest has been completed! There is only one “chief Sabbath” at Pentecost, since it is a one-day festival. The only other time when there would be two “chief Sabbaths” in a row *would be during the spring Passover/Days of Unleavened Bread*.

During the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, we actually have THREE CHIEF SABBATHS. That is, the first day of Unleavened Bread, the weekly Sabbath which occurs DURING the Festival of Unleavened Bread, and the FINAL day of Unleavened Bread. Both the first and last days of Unleavened Bread are “annual festivals” or “Sabbaths.”

When we look at this passage in Luke closely, therefore, we see that we have *three unique Sabbaths during the days of Unleavened Bread*, in all years except where the first or last day of the Feast falls on the weekly Sabbath.

It is clear that the Sabbath in Luke 6 must have been a Sabbath during the week of Passover. At no other festival are there two chief Sabbaths, or three. And at no other festival is the harvest of grain occurring, except Pentecost, which is a one day festival.

Therefore this passage must be discussing the weekly Sabbath which occurred during PASSOVER and the Feast of Unleavened Bread! The passage says this was the “second chief Sabbath,” not the third – therefore it was the second Sabbath of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread – that is, the *weekly* Sabbath, which is followed by Sunday, the first day of the week. The account in Matthew simply calls it a Sabbath, giving no indication it was an annual holy day. Therefore, this Sabbath must have been the WEEKLY SABBATH!

This is a vitally important point! Remember, the Sadducees and Karaites count to Pentecost beginning with the Sunday (first day of the week) *following the weekly Sabbath* that occurs during the Feast of Unleavened Bread! But this would pose a serious problem. Notice!

We read in Leviticus 23: “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall *wave the sheaf* before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; *on the day AFTER THE SABBATH the priest shall wave it*” (vs.10-11).

The children of Israel were commanded by God to wave the omer offering before the Lord on the “day after the Sabbath.” Was this the annual Sabbath of the first day of Unleavened Bread, or the weekly Sabbath?

Notice again! God goes on, commanding, “You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain *nor fresh grain UNTIL THE SAME DAY that you have brought an offering to your God.* It shall be a *statute forever throughout your generations* in all your dwellings. And you shall count for yourselves FROM the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering . . .” (Lev.23:14-15).

Do you see the problem? Here we find the apostles harvesting GRAIN from the new barley crop ON THE WEEKLY SABBATH *BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF SUNDAY!* It was on the second Sabbath, *deteroproton*, during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and therefore the day BEFORE Sunday, when the Sadducees and Karaites say the omer should be offered, and the count to Pentecost should begin!

But if that is the case, then *why were they harvesting the grain the day BEFORE it was allowed, according to the plain commandment of God?* No grain was to be eaten from the new crop UNTIL the wave sheaf offering. Yeshua taught obedience to ALL the laws of God (Matt.5:17-19). He observed all God’s Laws. Therefore, the plain fact is that the wave sheaf offering MUST have already been offered PRIOR to the disciples harvesting and eating the grain in the field!

Do you see? In other words, the omer must have been offered as the Orthodox Jews tell us, on the day after Passover, Abib 16, and the Sadducean method of waiting until the day after the weekly Sabbath must be incorrect, a false teaching and a false interpretation!

How plain! The evidence has been here, right in front of us, all along!

Commentary Analysis

What do Commentaries have to say about the account in Luke 6, and the expression used only there regarding the Sabbath day?

The *Matthew Henry Commentary* says regarding the account in Luke, chapter 6: “This story here has a date, which we had not in the other evangelists; it was *on the second Sabbath after the first* (v.1), that is, as Dr. Whitby thinks is pretty clear, the *first Sabbath after the second day of unleavened bread*, from which day they reckoned the *seven weeks* to the feast of Pentecost; the first of which they called *Sabbaton deuteroproton*, the second *deuterodeuteron*, and so on” (p.1418).

Dake’s Annotated Bible explains this passage as follows: “These six words (the second Sabbath after the first) are from only one Greek word *deuteroprotos*, the second-first Sabbath, the ordinary weekly Sabbath following the special Sabbath that began the feast regardless of what day of the week it fell on. That is the feast of unleavened bread of 7 days always started on the 15th day of Nisan or April, regardless of what day of the week it was (Lev.23:6-8). If it happened to be on Wednesday the regular weekly Sabbath or the second Sabbath of the feast would be 3 days later. The last day of the feast, being also a Sabbath, or the third Sabbath of the feast, would be on Tuesday or three days after the weekly Sabbath. The 1st and 7th days of the seven-day feast were special Sabbaths and the regular weekly Sabbath was between the two, being the second Sabbath of the feast. That this was a weekly Sabbath is clear from Matthew 12:1-8.”

The *Adam Clarke Commentary* declares as to this passage: “The Vulgate Latin renders *deuteroproton*, *secundo-primum*, which is literal and right. We [in English] translate it the *second Sabbath after the first*, which is directly wrong; for it should have been the *first Sabbath after the second* day of Passover. On the 14th of *Nisan*, the Passover was killed; the next day (the 15th) was the first day of the feast of unleavened bread; the day following (the 16th) the *wave sheaf* was offered, pursuant to the law, *on the morrow after the Sabbath: Lev.23:11*. The *Sabbath*, here, is not the seventh day of the week, but the *first day* of the *feast of unleavened bread*, let it fall on what day of the week it would. . . .

“This *Sabbath*, then, on which the disciples plucked the ears of corn, was the *first Sabbath* after that *second day*. Dr. Lightfoot has demonstrably proved this to be the meaning of this *sabbaton deuteroproton*, and from him F. Lamy and Dr. Whitby have so explained it. *This Sabbath could not fall BEFORE the Passover because, till the second day of that feast, no Jew might eat either bread or parched corn, or green ears (Lev.23:14).*”

Adam Clarke then hits the nail right on the head! SMACK! POW! He explains:

“Had the disciples then gathered these ears of corn on any Sabbath before the Passover [or, before the wave sheaf offering!!!], *they would have broken TWO LAWS INSTEAD OF ONE:*

and for the breach of these TWO LAWS they would infallibly have been accused; whereas now they broke only one . . . which was that of the Sabbath” (volume 3, page 404).

How plain! The mystery is solved! The truth has been lying right in front of us, in plain sight, as it were, all these years.

As the great detective Sherlock Holmes might say, “Elementary, my dear Watson!” Yes, so elementary that a grade school student can understand it! So why can’t grown men and even ministers face the music, face the facts, and admit the stunning truth that they have been WRONG all these years? Better to repent *late* than never!

What Further Proof Do We Need?

Alfred Edershem in his book *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*, summarizes the truth on this matter of counting to Pentecost. He wrote:

“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 always be 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 Karaites 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), Philo (*Op.* ii, 294), and Jewish tradition *leaves no room to doubt* that in this instance we are to understand by the ‘Sabbath’ the 15th of Nisan, on whatever day of the week it may fall” (page 204).

There is, as he said, “No room to doubt”! Therefore, what further proof do we need? Why won’t many ministers examine this evidence? Why won’t most of God’s people open their eyes, and take a NEW GOOD LOOK at all the evidence, and DO WHAT GOD SAYS?

Let Us Follow Christ!

Why can’t many face these facts, and be reasonable, and search these things out for themselves, and stop being misled by erring, sinning, disobedient ministers? The apostle Paul wrote, “PATTERN YOURSELVES after me [follow my example], as I imitate and *follow Christ* (the Messiah)” (I Cor.11:1).

Are you personally willing to FOLLOW CHRIST? And Paul? And the rest of the apostles? Are you willing to observe Pentecost on the CORRECT DAY?

Paul told the Ephesians, “I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem” (Acts 18:21, NKJV). He was referring to the Feast of Pentecost. Luke records, “he was hurrying to be

at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost” (Acts 20:16). That would have been the *correct day* of Pentecost! Paul was a Pharisee, and boasted of such. Remember, he declared he was “circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the LAW a *Pharisee . . . concerning the righteousness which is in the LAW, BLAMELESS*” (Phil.3:5-6, NKJV).

How important is it to YOU to observe God’s law “blamelessly”? How important is it to you to keep Pentecost the way Paul did, the way Christ Himself did – the way and on the date God commanded?

Will you really “follow Christ”?

The apostle John wrote: “Whoever says, I know Him [I perceive, recognize, understand, and am acquainted with Him] but fails to keep and obey His commandments (teachings) is a LIAR, and the Truth [of the Gospel] is not in him. But he who keeps (treasures) His Word [who bears in mind His precepts, who observes His message in its entirety], truly in him has the love of *and* for God been perfected (completed, reached maturity). By this we may perceive (know, recognize, and be sure) that we are in Him: Whoever says he abides in Him ought [as a personal debt] to *walk and conduct himself in the SAME WAY in which He walked* and conducted Himself” (I John 2:4-6, Amplified Parallel Bible).

Will you walk in His footsteps, and conduct yourself as He did, and observe the very same days He observed?

This is serious business! We should take nothing for granted! Our eternal life and place in God’s Kingdom could be at stake!

It is incumbent upon all of us to *do the right thing*, no matter what other people, including churches or various ministers, do about this matter.

I know that it is HARD to admit that you have been WRONG – to admit *error* – in your practices and observances all these years. It is HARD to swallow the fact that you have been deceived, led astray, by no doubt sincere, well-meaning ministers who themselves just parroted the same old spiritual “junk food” they were taught years ago.

But that is no excuse to continue in error and refusing to confess the sin. At least hopefully it was a sin of ignorance and not deliberate!

What about you? Will you reconsider this question, and examine the evidence, and do the right thing?

If a minister of God teaches wrong, then he should REPENT immediately, and cast away the wrong teachings as filthy and unclean rags, and abhor himself, like Job did when he saw his sin! He should repent from the very depths of his being, shaking and trembling in horror, ashamed of his guilt, and cry out to God for forgiveness for leading God’s people ASTRAY! If you are such a minister, take heed!

What do you ministers have to say for yourselves? Will you keep on pandering to the people, and using shallow, superficial explanations, and ignore the truth? Will you continue to go on, ignoring the mountain of true evidence? Is the worship of the people, and your present position, salary, and income more important than the TRUTH of God?

What about you members? Which road will you take? What will you do about these things? Isn't it high time to take them seriously, to search out the truth, and to follow the Word of God? Yeshua says to us, "Seek FIRST the Kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt.6:33).

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Come on, my friends – you *know* what you ought to do. So gird up your loins, and *do* it! Take the bull by the horns -- and be forever blessed!