

Countdown To Pentecost 2001

by John W. Ritenbaugh

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Sometimes the Bible makes an ambiguous statement—sometimes even on vitally important matters. As evidence accumulates from other parts of the Bible, however, the ambiguity dissolves and the statement becomes a clear rule. This is the case with the count to Pentecost in years when Passover falls on a weekly Sabbath.

In 2001, Passover once again falls upon a weekly Sabbath. This is of special interest because it presents us with the infrequent situation of the Days of Unleavened Bread beginning on a Sunday and ending on the weekly Sabbath. Although this may occur twice within three or four years, its normal average throughout this past century is about once every nine to ten years. For a twenty-year period that ended in 1974, it occurred only in 1974 itself. Within the church of God, there are differences of belief about whether it should begin counting to Pentecost from within or without the Days of Unleavened Bread when this situation arises.

When this occurred in 1994, we sought the counsel of anyone within the church who felt moved to contribute suggestions. We received many sincere and helpful papers, whose authors diligently researched the matter to confirm it to themselves, then shared what they had learned for all to benefit. We feel moved, however, to reopen the subject because more information has surfaced in the intervening years. This new material clarifies and strengthens our position, confirming that God led us to make the correct decision.

When the Sunday-or-Monday observance of Pentecost became an issue in the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) in 1973-74, a committee was formed to research into all aspects of the issue. When the ministry received the committee's conclusions, the Sunday-or-Monday issue was firmly resolved, and we wholeheartedly agree with the Sunday conclusion.

However, the particular issue this article addresses was left unresolved in the study material given to the ministry. The introductory letter to the *Pentecost Study Material* authored by Charles V. Dorothy is dated April 22, 1974, and the ministry received this material shortly thereafter. At that time, Pentecost 1974, according to the *God's Sacred Calendar* booklet, was scheduled for June 3.

The following quote is from the *Pentecost Study Material*, p. 74, under the heading, "Another Critical Problem":

The chief problem which the Worldwide Church of God faces this year at Pentecost has nothing to do with the above [the Sunday-Monday issue]. This separate problem involves whether we count Pentecost for 1974 from within or without the Days of Unleavened Bread. The last time we faced this particular calendar configuration was 1954 when our knowledge of the calendar was not so complete as it is now.

This year (as again in 1977 and 1981) the Passover falls on the weekly Sabbath. The next day, the first annual Holy Day, is Sunday and would normally be used to count "away from." But we have thought it best to wait till the following Saturday (which is the final High Sabbath as well), so that the next day, Sunday, could be a work day, and

thus start the work of harvesting. Depending on which Sunday we count from this year, Pentecost VARIES BY A WHOLE WEEK.

Some brethren are concerned over this alleged "arbitrary" decision, especially since Joshua 5:10-11 seems to show the Israelites counted that Pentecost from Sunday, the High Day within Unleavened Bread. More study is needed and more is being done. [Emphasis theirs.]

However, this suggestion was ignored, and a decision was made to count to Pentecost from the Sunday *within* the Days of Unleavened Bread. A letter dated March 30, 1974, under the signature of Garner Ted Armstrong, informed the ministry that the date of Pentecost was being changed to May 26. A curious fact arises when one compares the dates on the two letters: Garner Ted Armstrong's letter clearly shows that a decision had been made concerning when to count Pentecost in these odd years *before* Charles Dorothy's letter—stating that more study needed to be made—was sent out! Perhaps this difference was only due to a failure to communicate or coordinate properly, but it does cast a curious light upon the credulity of the decision.

Another quote from the *Pentecost Study Material*, p. 52, helps to show how critical this issue is, since it also touches on our observance of Pentecost in 2005 and 2008:

Here, then, is the crucial question: how should we count the days to Pentecost? From the Sunday during the days of Unleavened Bread? Or, should Pentecost be counted from the Sunday immediately following the weekly sabbath which must occur during the Days of Unleavened Bread? In other words, is it imperative that the weekly "SABBATH" fall during the days of Unleavened Bread? Or, is it essential that the SUNDAY following that particular weekly "sabbath" must fall within Unleavened Bread?

These are more crucial questions than might appear at first; for in those years where the last day of Unleavened Bread also happens to fall on a weekly sabbath (producing a "double Sabbath"), the offering of the wave sheaf is made to fall after, outside the days of Unleavened Bread. This is, indeed, what is happening this year. [Emphasis theirs.]

The WCG's decision sometime prior to March 30, 1974, was made on the basis of symbolism and a misunderstanding of Joshua 5:10-12. This article will show that the doctrinal committee overlooked a great deal in the Scriptures relating to Joshua 5:10-12 especially. This overlooked material renders Joshua 5:10-12 unusable as evidence for counting from within the Days of Unleavened Bread when Passover falls on a weekly Sabbath.

An Essential Understanding

It is essential to one's understanding of when to begin the count to Pentecost to know that Wavesheaf Day is only secondarily tied to Unleavened Bread but directly bound to the spring harvest.

Deuteronomy 16:9 states, "You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain." But what if poor growing weather prevented a crop from being ready to harvest at the time the new year was scheduled on the calendar to begin? In other words, before one can even consider when to begin the count, there must first be a harvest. Without a harvest, which day one begins the count is moot.

The Sanctification of the New Moons by Moses Maimonides relates how the ancient Israelites solved this problem. If poor growing weather prevented a crop from maturing, or violent weather made roads and bridges impassible so that people could not travel to the festival, the High Priest had the authority to declare an intercalary year, thus delaying the beginning of the new year by one month. This extra month enabled the grain to mature enough so a harvest would be ready. When the next normally scheduled intercalary year came around, they would ignore it, bringing the intercalary cycle alignment into its normal seven-times-in-nineteen-years rotation.

Thus, it can be seen that the entire spring festival schedule hinged first on whether a mature crop was available to establish the beginning of the year. Then and only then did the Days of Unleavened Bread become a matter to consider in determining Wavesheaf Day. A Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread provides a consistent starting point for the count.

Wavesheaf Cutting or Harvest?

Consider Deuteronomy 16:9 again: "Begin to count the seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain." Does "put the sickle to the grain" refer to the cutting made for the wavesheaf offering or to the harvest itself? On the day the *harvest* begins the count to Pentecost also begins.

This phrase cannot refer to the cutting made for the wavesheaf offering because each Israelite having a harvest was required to make an offering. Each Israelite was no more excused by God from making an offering from his harvest any more than we are excused from making an offering from our wages when we appear before God on His holy days.

Deuteronomy 16:16 and Exodus 23:15 command us not to appear before God empty. The Israelites had to do the same. For the wavesheaf offering, they had to cut it several days before they took it to the priests to the Tabernacle in Shiloh or in later times to the Temple in Jerusalem because they had to allow for travel time. We do the same when we separate our holy day offerings from the rest of our monies and then travel to the feast where we offer it to God.

Therefore, the count begins when the harvest begins, not when the farmer cuts his wavesheaf offering. God commands the count to begin when the harvest work begins. This is why wavesheaf day must always fall on a workday. The wavesheaf offering by the priest, the harvest and the beginning of the count all take place on the same day. This explains why God says in Leviticus 23:11 that the sheaf must be waved on the day *after* the Sabbath. It must not be waved on a Sabbath, in which no work may be done. It absolutely must *not* be done on the first day of Unleavened Bread, a high holy day Sabbath.

Why Count?

Using common logic, we can tell that God could easily have given a set calendar date for Pentecost, just as He did for all the other festivals. He could have instructed us to keep it on Sivan 6, but He does not. Therefore, the Pharisees, some modern-day Jews and even some who call themselves Christians are wrong to keep it on Sivan 6 year after year unless God's method of counting happens to end then.

He instructs us to count, but any count that begins on a fixed date will end on a fixed date. It is apparent that this is something He does not want because He does not give us a fixed date. No valid

reason for counting exists except the one given in the Bible. Setting Pentecost by beginning the count on a fixed date—and thus ending on a fixed date—makes void God's instructions for counting. *We count because God commands us to count!*

This makes determining the starting date for the count crucial. Leviticus 23:11 and 15 both tell us to begin counting "the day after the Sabbath." If this were a holy day Sabbath, it would be telling us to count from the day after a fixed date, on either Nisan 16 or 22. This means that Pentecost would fall on either Sivan 6 or 12. Why does God not simply set one of those dates in the first place?

The weekly Sabbath falls on different calendar dates and therefore so does the day after the weekly Sabbath. Understand why this is so: According to the Hebrew calendar rules, Passover, Nisan 14, can fall on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday or weekly Sabbath. Thus, the first day of Unleavened Bread can fall on either a Tuesday, Thursday, weekly Sabbath or Sunday. The last day of Unleavened Bread, just like the Passover, can fall on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday or weekly Sabbath.

If the Passover, Nisan 14, falls on a Monday, the date of the weekly Sabbath will be the 19th, and wavesheaf Sunday will be the 20th. If it falls on a Wednesday, the weekly Sabbath date will be on the 17th, and wavesheaf Sunday will be the 18th. If it falls on Friday, the weekly Sabbath date will be the 15th and also the First day of Unleavened Bread, and wavesheaf Sunday will be the 16th. If it falls on the weekly Sabbath, the next weekly Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread will be the 21st.

We can see that the date of the day after the weekly Sabbath that falls during the Days of Unleavened Bread will also move about because of the weekly Sabbath's relationship to the day on which Passover falls. This ensures that Pentecost will be on one of four dates in Sivan, forcing us to count every year.

Weekly or Holy Day Sabbath?

This begins to illustrate why the Sabbath mentioned in Leviticus 23:11, 15 must be a weekly Sabbath as the Sadducees of the first century and Herbert W. Armstrong practiced, not the first day of Unleavened Bread as the Pharisees believed, nor the last day of Unleavened Bread as the Essenes and Falashas (Ethiopian Jews) kept.

The question is, then, which Sabbath do we need to isolate to arrive at the correct date for Pentecost? The Sabbath we choose to begin the count is significant, or else we could arbitrarily decide to count from any Sabbath. Confusion would be the result. Even though the Old Testament instruction seems ambiguous on this point, it is reasonable to conclude that, since the counting instructions given in Leviticus 23:11, 15 and Deuteronomy 16:9 are given in relation to the Days of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost, the Sabbaths of Unleavened Bread are significant. Because Unleavened Bread is seven days long, one and only one weekly Sabbath, with its varying date, will always fall within it. If we were to deny this link between Unleavened Bread and when the count to Pentecost begins, God's counting instructions become unusable. Everyone could do what is "right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25), and confusion and division would result.

Although the wavesheaf is normally offered during the Days of Unleavened Bread, the connecting link between the wavesheaf and Unleavened Bread is the Sabbath. The Sabbath day is the sign between God and His people (Exodus 31:12-17), not just in identifying who they are, but in this case, it also serves as the focal point in counting to Pentecost. Because we must first identify the Sabbath

to begin the count, it is the Sabbath that must fall within the Days of Unleavened Bread, not necessarily wavesheaf Sunday. In the odd years when Passover falls on a weekly Sabbath, the only weekly Sabbath day within Unleavened Bread is also the holy day at its end. Nevertheless, this Sabbath, a double Sabbath, is of greater importance for beginning the count, not the wavesheaf offered the next day. The weekly Sabbath provides a consistent and correct pattern for beginning the count to Pentecost.

Another reason that we should count from the weekly Sabbath is the appearance of the definite Hebrew article *ha* that normally precedes "Sabbath." In the entire Old Testament, this designation, *hashabbath*, indicates the weekly Sabbath about 95% of the time. In Leviticus 23, a form of "Sabbath" appears in Hebrew twelve times and "Sabbaths" twice. The article *ha* appears before "Sabbath" three times, and each time it refers to the weekly Sabbath. Two of these occurrences concern the Sabbath in question (verses 11, 15). Once it appears before "Sabbaths" (verse 15), also referring to weekly Sabbaths.

It is not surprising to find no reference to Jesus or the early church involved in the wavesheaf ritual. However, they were very much aware of it, and it clearly shows in the accounts of Jesus' resurrection. In almost all translations, John 20:1 is rendered, "On the first day of the week. . . ." In Greek, this phrase is *te mia ton sabbaton*. *Sabbaton* can be used in a singular or plural sense to designate "Sabbath" or "Sabbaths" or "week" or "weeks."

Notice what Bullinger in the *Companion Bible* says about this Greek phrase:

The first day of the week = "On the first (day) of the Sabbaths" (pl.). Gk—*Te mia ton sabbaton*. The word "day" is rightly supplied, as *mia* is feminine, and so must agree with a feminine noun understood, while *sabbaton* is neuter. Luke 24:1 has the same. Matthew reads, "towards dawn on the first (day) of the Sabbaths," and Mark (16:2), "very early on the first (day) of the Sabbaths."

Our understanding of the importance of the wavesheaf in relation to both Christ's acceptance and the count to Pentecost should lead us to see that the gospel writers were establishing the exact day of Christ's acceptance. This day was the first day in the count to Pentecost since He was not only the wavesheaf offering but He was also the beginning of the spiritual harvest. John 20:16-19 absolutely proves which Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread God intends us to use to determine wavesheaf Sunday. These verses show that Jesus ascended to the Father to be accepted on the day following the *weekly* Sabbath. In the year Jesus was crucified, Passover was on a Wednesday. He was still in the grave when the first day of Unleavened Bread, a Thursday Sabbath, passed by. He rose from the dead late on the weekly Sabbath and was "waved" before God for acceptance on the Sunday morning following the weekly Sabbath. The Pharisees and rabbinic Jewry were wrong in using the day after the first day of Unleavened Bread Sabbath. The Sadducees were correct in using the weekly Sabbath. Taken together, these factors point conclusively to the wavesheaf day as being on a Sunday, the day following the weekly Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Symbolic Relationships

Symbolism is an effective teaching tool, and the Bible uses it extensively. It can be used to hide clear understanding for a time, or clarify it when the time comes, according to the Creator's purpose. Taken by itself, the symbolism within the wavesheaf offering is clear, but its relationship to other instruction is not always understood.

To which festival is the symbolism of the wavesheaf offering most closely related: Passover, Unleavened Bread or Pentecost? On the calendar it is most closely associated with Unleavened Bread because it is observed either within it or adjacent to it. Because each in its place plays a part in His purpose, all of God's festivals and rituals have a relationship with each other. Some festivals and rituals, though, have a closer relationship with some symbolism than they do with others. For instance, the lamb slain on Nisan 14 has a direct and powerful relationship to Passover—in fact, Passover revolves around it. Its relationship with the other festivals, however, seen in the focus of their teaching, begins to become more distant, though still having some bearing.

So it is with the wavesheaf offering. Although observed in or near the Days of Unleavened Bread, its purpose and symbolism are directly tied to Pentecost fifty days away. Symbolically, it has a much less direct bearing on Unleavened Bread than on Pentecost. The only reason to tie the wavesheaf offering to Unleavened Bread is to provide consistency for beginning the count.

Passover and Unleavened Bread, though next to one another on the calendar, do not teach us the same things. The same is true of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. Proximity on the calendar does not indicate the closeness of the symbolic relationship.

Passover pictures Christ crucified for the forgiveness of our sins, as well as the means and cost of redemption from Satan, sin and this world. Unleavened Bread depicts our liberation and what God does to make it possible. It also shows our continuing responsibility to keep ourselves free by striving not to sin and overcoming by the power of God. The symbolism and instruction of these two are clearly related but much different.

The wavesheaf offering pictures the firstfruit of the first *harvest* of the year offered before God for His acceptance. Spiritually, it pictures Christ—the firstfruit of God's first spiritual harvest of souls—ascending after His resurrection to be accepted before God as the offering for our forgiveness and as our High Priest, enabling Him to administer the Holy Spirit and mediate for us before God.

Pentecost depicts the giving of God's Spirit to regenerate us, thus putting us into the church, giving us power to overcome sin, and enabling us to be resurrected as firstfruits into the Kingdom of God as part of the same spiritual *harvest* that began with Christ. Both the wavesheaf and Pentecost depict a harvest. One event begins it, and the other ends it. Wavesheaf Day is day one of the count and Pentecost is day fifty. If Christ had not been resurrected (harvested), or His sacrifice not accepted, there would have been no Holy Spirit sent to mankind, no church and no reason for Pentecost to be observed by Christians because there would be no harvest of firstfruits.

Conclusion? The wavesheaf offering has a direct connection to Pentecost and nearly a direct one to Passover, but only an indirect one to Unleavened Bread. The harvest symbolism and the fact that Wavesheaf Day begins the count that ends at Pentecost nearly detach the wavesheaf from Unleavened Bread but firmly attach it to Pentecost. In other words, it is really a Pentecost ritual, not an Unleavened Bread ritual regardless of when it falls. What symbolic reason is there in this to conclude that the wavesheaf must always be offered during the Days of Unleavened Bread?

Passover, a Day of Unleavened Bread?

In 2001, with Passover occurring on a weekly Sabbath, the first day of Unleavened Bread falls the next day—Sunday—and the last day on the following weekly Sabbath. As we have seen, this raises the question of which Sabbath begins the count. Is it legitimate to consider Passover, Nisan 14, a weekly Sabbath, as the day preceding wavesheaf Sunday?

This entails considering Passover as a day of Unleavened Bread, as well as the priests making the wavesheaf offering on a holy day, the first day of Unleavened Bread rather than a common harvest workday. If we do this, the command to offer the wavesheaf on the day after the weekly Sabbath that falls *within* the Days of Unleavened Bread is broken. The alternative is to wait until the following Sunday, the day after the weekly Sabbath that is definitely within the Days of Unleavened Bread (also the last day of Unleavened Bread). We must ascertain if we can legitimately consider Passover as a day of Unleavened Bread or within it. If it can, this makes a difference of one full week as to when we observe Pentecost.

To do so, however, confuses the teaching about the two. God made it very clear in Leviticus 23:5-6 that Passover is the 14th, and Unleavened Bread begins on the 15th. Though related, they are two distinct and separate festivals:

On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight [*ben-ha erivim*, "between the two evenings"] is the Lord's Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; seven days you must eat unleavened bread.

On the 14th the firstborn were killed, on the 15th Israel left Egypt (Numbers 33:3). They are two distinct and separate—though related—operations. In Exodus 12:15, 19 God says that the Days of Unleavened Bread are seven days long, not eight as they would be if we add Passover. In addition, Leviticus 23:6 commands that we eat unleavened bread seven days.

Some have been caused to stumble at Exodus 12:18-19 because, without a bit of research, it only *seems* to say that Passover is a day of Unleavened Bread:

In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening [*ba'ereb*, "even," "evening," "twilight," "dusk," at the end of the day, not the beginning], you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses. . . .

To confirm that *ba'ereb* occurs at the end of the day, notice Leviticus 23:32 where it is used in relation to Atonement.

If Exodus 12:18-19 is saying one should begin eating only unleavened bread at the beginning of the 14th and cease eating it at the beginning of the 21st, then Passover becomes the first day of Unleavened Bread, a holy day, and Nisan 20 becomes the last day of Unleavened Bread! Although unleavened bread is required for the Passover meal—no Passover sacrifice was ever to contain leaven (Exodus 23:18)—the Bible never refers to the whole day as unleavened or as legally being part of the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Hidden in the Greek of Matthew 26:17, Mark 14:1, 12 and Luke 22:7 is a reference to Passover as "the first of the unleaveneds." This is because unleavened bread is indeed used on the 14th as part of the Passover service. A comparison with the Old Testament, however, discloses this to be only the

popular usage of some during New Testament times. In the Old Testament, something akin to this is found in Deuteronomy 16, where the first day of Unleavened Bread is called "Passover," while the context clearly describes the first day of Unleavened Bread. People popularly used Passover and Unleavened Bread interchangeably, and the Bible notes this practice, though "Passover" was the term most generally used for the whole period.

Doing things like this is not uncommon. Today, we commonly refer to the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day as either the "Feast" or "Tabernacles," even though we clearly understand that the Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day are separate festivals. So it was with Passover in the time of Christ and the apostles. Neither our use of "Tabernacles" nor the Jews use of "Passover" alters the authority of God's intent in the Scriptures.

Passover and Unleavened Bread are separate festivals, each with a different focus but related to the other. To blend them to the point of making them one festival stretches the Scriptures and introduces confusion into the instruction. The Pharisees did this and proved that the mixture produces weakness, not strength. Thus Passover, even when it occurs on a weekly Sabbath, is never legally part of the Days of Unleavened Bread and cannot be used for determining wavesheaf day. If one uses it as the starting point, it places the wavesheaf offering on a Sabbath in violation of the instruction in Leviticus 23:11 and Deuteronomy 16:9, which show it must be after the Sabbath and on a common workday.

We must conclude, then, that, if we do not accept the fact that the Sabbath mentioned in Leviticus 23:11, 15 is the weekly Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread, we are left without a consistent defining point from which to begin the count. Only these two verses in the Old Testament show when to wave the sheaf. Why not any other Sabbath, either holy day or weekly? John 20:1, 17 absolutely confirm that Jesus was "waved" on the Sunday following the weekly Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread. When Passover falls on the weekly Sabbath, the only Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread is also the last day of Unleavened Bread. When Passover falls on the weekly Sabbath, should we throw out the rule used to calculate Pentecost for all other years? Pentecost is always calculated from the weekly Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread. Nowhere does God say to alter that rule during a year like this one.

A Sabbath Wavesheaf?

When Passover falls on a weekly Sabbath, and if the wavesheaf occurs the next day, it:

1. follows a Sabbath not within the Days of Unleavened Bread;
2. causes the wavesheaf (and the beginning of the harvest) to be performed on an annual Sabbath, a rest day; rather than a workday and
3. presents us with the peculiar symbolic picture of Christ being resurrected immediately after He is symbolically put in the grave!

Scripture shows He was put into the grave on Passover near sunset and rose 72 hours later on a Sabbath near sunset. When Passover is on a weekly Sabbath, can the same calendar day represent the crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of Christ? Does this not totally destroy the sign Jesus gave as evidence of His messiahship, being three days and three nights in the grave? Only when Passover falls on Wednesday can the symbolism work precisely as it did when Christ died. Whenever Passover

falls on a Monday, Friday or weekly Sabbath, the exact symbolism cannot be maintained. The WCG's symbolism argument becomes more smoke and mirrors than fact. Where is the scriptural authority for its use?

Can the following Sunday, Nisan 22, be wavesheaf Sunday? Yes, just as well as when Passover falls on a Monday or Friday. If Passover had been on the weekly Sabbath, Jesus would have been in the grave three days and three nights and then resurrected. Though the wait would have been longer following His resurrection, He would have been fully ready to ascend to the Father and be accepted on wavesheaf Sunday, Nisan 22.

A calendar for 1994 (also a Sabbath Passover year), published by the Messianic Jews (Lederer Messianic Publications, 6204 Park Heights, Baltimore, MD 21215), lists two days for the wavesheaf offering, Monday, March 28 (Nisan 16) for the Pharisaic tradition and Sunday, April 3 (Nisan 22) for the Sadducean tradition. These modern Jews clearly recognize that the ancient Sadducees understood that wavesheaf day could fall after the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Does waving the sheaf on a holy day present any problems? Yes, indeed! First, the Bible says to wave it on the day *after* the Sabbath. Can it legitimately be waved on a Sabbath, a holy day, a day of rest? Is it not bending the Scripture to count any Sabbath as a common workday? The Jewish sects uniformly held wavesheaf day to be a workday. Though they did it on different days, the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes and Falashas *all waved the sheaf on a normal workday*. No record has ever been found of any of them offering the wavesheaf on a holy day Sabbath. Apparently, this is not because of the priestly work involved in making the offering, but because once the offering was made, the people were free to begin the harvest in earnest because the count to Pentecost begins when the sickle was put to the grain (Deuteronomy 16:9). History shows the people usually began working around noon on wavesheaf day because the offering was normally scheduled to be made by a priest between 9:00 a.m. and noon.

In "What You Need to know About the New Testament Pentecost" in the June 1974 *Good News* magazine, Garner Ted Armstrong and Raymond McNair write:

During that time of the early New Testament Church, the Sadducees and the priests took the *weekly Sabbath* of the Passover season as the benchmark from which to reckon the fifty days to Pentecost. It was not until a very few years before the fall of Jerusalem that the *Pharisees* finally got control of the Temple and changed over to reckoning Pentecost from the morrow after the first *annual Sabbath* during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

. . . We are commanded to begin counting the "seven weeks" or "seven sabbaths" *from* (figuring inclusively), or beginning with, the wave-sheaf Sunday which must always fall during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

. . . The Sadducees and most Christian scholars throughout history have concluded, erroneously, that the wave-sheaf Sunday could sometimes fall *outside* the Days of Unleavened Bread. But this is incorrect. (p. 5. Emphasis theirs.)

Where is their authority for saying Sadducean and Christian scholars throughout history have concluded, erroneously, that wave-sheaf Sunday could sometimes fall *outside* the Days of

Unleavened Bread? No such refutation of that practice appears in the entirety of the Bible, and not a single religious body, using the Bible and drawing upon their own history, ever placed the wavesheaf offering on a Sabbath in order to keep it within the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Does having the wavesheaf after the Days of Unleavened Bread leave Christ symbolically hanging on the stake or buried during the entire period (Days of Unleavened Bread) that represents His work as High Priest, cleansing us of sin and delivering us from its power? Of course not.

The prophecy of Daniel 9:26-27 says the Messiah is cut off "in the middle of the week." Its fulfillment is a sign of the Messiah. This means He had to be crucified in a year in which Passover fell on a Wednesday, making it impossible for Him to be killed in a year in which Passover fell on a Monday, Friday or weekly Sabbath. Thus, one crucifixion could not cover every possible day on which a Passover could fall. God opted for a calendar arrangement that would cover the highest number of scenarios; that is, eight of nine years the wavesheaf will fall within the Days of Unleavened Bread. By itself, however, this is no reason to change the rule for counting to Pentecost in the odd year. Nothing in the Scriptures or history supports it. Changing the instruction established in Leviticus 23:11, 15; Deuteronomy 16:9 and confirmed by John 20:1, 17 introduces confusion.

The Scriptures also demand that He lay in the grave three days and three nights to be the authentic Messiah (Matthew 12:38-40). In a year like this, following the WCG's scenario, He is symbolically crucified on the Passover (a weekly Sabbath), buried near sunset, immediately raised the same day and accepted the next morning, having spent—at most—only a few minutes in the grave. It virtually denies the necessity of Christ having to be in the tomb three days and three nights to fulfill the sign. It is a fact that every aspect of symbolism cannot possibly meet every possible calendar and prophetic scenario available to this Pentecost counting issue. It is useless to attempt to force them.

WCG's Symbolism Argument

The symbolism involved in the WCG's decision brings out another problem in logic. The 1974 *Pentecost Study Material*, pp. 56-58, leads one to believe that the fulfillment of God's plan *must* occur in a specific order: 1) Christ's Passover sacrifice; 2) the Father's acceptance of His sacrifice; and 3) the Christian's ridding his life of sin following his acceptance of the sacrifice. They argue that a Nisan 22 wavesheaf Sunday wrongly pictures the believer putting out sin before the Father accepts the sacrifice of Christ.

However, does not the eating of unleavened bread—signifying the believer putting sin out of his life—begin when Nisan 15 begins? Does not Nisan 15 begin at sunset? When WCG placed wavesheaf Sunday on the first day of Unleavened Bread, Nisan 15 began an entire half-day before the wavesheaf was offered! Even in a normal year their sequence is already broken! The symbolic teaching, though, remains consistent, illustrating that a Christian's work of ridding his life of sin begins *before* acceptance by the Father!

Another difficulty that enters the mix is that, symbolically, God does not give the Holy Spirit until Pentecost, symbolically long after the Christian begins putting sin out of his life—yet it is a Christian's receipt of God's Spirit that enables him to get rid of sin!

Consider that Passover more frequently falls on Monday, Wednesday or Friday. When it falls on Monday, Tuesday is the first day of Unleavened Bread, and the following Monday is the last day of Unleavened Bread. In such a year, five full days elapse before the wavesheaf is cut. What is the

difference whether the wavesheaf offering must wait one, three, five or seven full days during Unleavened Bread? What law is broken? Each of these four ways depicts Christ spending time in the grave, symbolically illustrating that He was truly dead and buried and fulfilled the sign of His messiahship.

The WCG's sequence blurs this teaching severely, besides arbitrarily altering the rule established in Leviticus 23:11, 15. In addition, it puts wavesheaf day on a holy day, a rest day, whose teaching and symbolism is entirely different. All the variables produced from the four different days Passover can fall on shows that God does not demand the symbolism to apply in any strict chronological order. Instead, the symbolism overlaps; its order is general rather than specific. It has no bearing on whether we can use symbolism to override a law.

Joshua 5

Whoever made the decision to change the manner of counting evidently decided to change primarily from a consideration of symbolism and Joshua 5:10-12. It concludes: "Putting these points all together, it appears that the wave sheaf must always have been offered during the days of Unleavened Bread—and not after that period" [p. 58, emphasis theirs]. If this is so, where is any record—let alone a biblical record—of anyone doing this?

However, WCG never considered a great deal of information that impacts upon a true understanding of Joshua 5:10-12. The result is an error-filled interpretation on their part.

So the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho. And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. Now the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year." (Joshua 5:10-12)

From these verses, the *Pentecost Study Material* concludes:

Since the children of Israel did eat of the produce (grain) of the land on the day after the Passover (the 15th of Nisan), and since they could not have eaten of the grain until after they had offered up the omer—they must have, therefore, offered the wave sheaf on the morning of the 15th which would have been on a Sunday.

This, in turn, would mean that the Passover day (the 14th of Nisan) was a weekly sabbath; and this would show that in those years when the last day of Unleavened Bread coincided with the weekly sabbath, God directed the priests to count Pentecost from the Sunday following the weekly sabbath which immediately preceded the days of Unleavened Bread. Thereby the wave sheaf would always fall within the days of Unleavened Bread.

Have you ever noticed human nature's flexible and ingenious proclivity for creating exceptions for itself? It quickly slips into gear whenever one is confronted with a rule one finds onerous or a circumstance it finds itself uncomfortable with. Then one says to himself, "This doesn't apply to me."

It happens frequently with speed limits. Quicker than a wink, our minds can find a justification for going faster than the law allows. It says, "I'm late," or "I'm in a hurry," or "This law only applies when traffic is heavier," or "The police will allow us five miles per hour over the speed limit." In principle, this is what happened with WCG's interpretation of Joshua 5. The interpretation became the justification for changing the consistent manner Wavesheaf Day is determined in all other years, as the Sunday following the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Consistency unifies; inconsistency creates diversity, uncertainty and ultimately confusion. To the best of my knowledge, nobody, until the WCG in 1974, ever began counting from anywhere except from the day following a Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread. Why? Because every other group clearly perceived the Sabbath to be located there and found no permission to place it anywhere else. This does not mean that individuals within those groups did not express their opinion in writing that the Sabbath could fall outside Unleavened Bread. However, the sect or group to which they belonged did not practice those opinions.

The following is a list of the requirements God lays down for making the wavesheaf offering:

1. Exodus 23:14-19: The offerings had to be from their *own* labors and from fields that *they* had sown. When we factor this into the circumstances of Joshua 5, it becomes clear these offerings had to be firstfruits, not spoils. There is no room for an exception.
2. Leviticus 23:10: It had to be from their own land. This clarifies that, when they were in the wilderness, they were not making this offering.
3. Leviticus 23:14 and Deuteronomy 16:9: The sheaf was to be waved before both harvesting and eating the crop.
4. Leviticus 23:12-13: This particular burnt offering was to accompany the wavesheaf offering. It was an incomplete offering without it. There are no exceptions to this.
5. Leviticus 22:17-25: An offering cannot derive from a stranger's possessions, a principle that applies to all the national offerings, no exceptions. God always receives the best, no matter which offering is concerned. Please read Malachi 1:6-14.
6. Deuteronomy 12:4-14: The Israelites could not make the national offerings until the Tabernacle and brazen altar were in place. The Bible gives no exception for the events of Joshua 5. The Tabernacle was not in place in Shiloh until seven years later.

Was Passover Even Kept?

The WCG and many of its offshoots assume the events of Joshua 5:10-12 can only mean—by the eating of unleavened cakes and parched corn—"that Passover occurred on a weekly Sabbath and wavesheaf day was the first day of Unleavened Bread." However, nothing in the context directly states those assumptions, nor does it indicate anywhere that a wavesheaf offering or its accompanying burnt offering occurred either.

However, let us discern what Joshua 5:10-12 really records. Few people are aware that these events occurred on the anniversary of two earlier and significant events in Israel's history. They are also related to the events of Christ's crucifixion and our being enabled to be children of God.

Notice Paul's statement in Galatians 3:17, 29:

And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. . . . And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The key words for us at this point are "covenant," "confirmed," "promise" and "four hundred thirty years." These play a significant role in showing God's faithfulness to His promises and that God's faithfulness is the reason we can become Abraham's spiritual seed.

We must add Exodus 12:39-42 to our understanding:

And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt; for it was not leavened, because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provisions for themselves. Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on that very same day [*selfsame day*, KJV]—it came to pass that all the armies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night of solemn observance to the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the Lord, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.

Notice three points here: unleavened bread, Israel leaving Egypt, and this happening exactly four hundred thirty years—to the selfsame day during its nighttime portion—of an earlier event. That earlier event appears in Genesis 14-15, God's covenant of promise with Abraham. The Israelites left Egypt in the night after their first Passover experience, the beginning of the day we call the first day of Unleavened Bread, the 15th of Nisan. Thus, the dates of Joshua 5:10-12 parallel Genesis 14-15, Exodus 12-13, and Christ's crucifixion.

Exodus 12:43-50 records that circumcision is a commanded prerequisite for taking the Passover. Verse 51 does not mean the Israelites were circumcised that day, but refers to "the selfsame day" noted in verse 41. At this point in the Exodus story, they had already taken Passover and were therefore already circumcised. This section is a reminder that, for any future Passover, whether Israelite or stranger, one must be circumcised.

In Genesis 14-15, it is important to note the progression of time from event to event, as well as how it compares to the sequence of Christ's final day and the events of the Exodus from Egypt. We should not expect every aspect of symbolism to fit "perfectly" because that is impossible. God's disclosure of Himself, His purpose, will, plan and our salvation is revealed piece by piece, thus He adds new things from time to time that disturb what we might expect from a parallel sequence.

In Genesis 14:17-20, Melchizedek (Christ) offers bread and wine to Abram. Working back from the events of Genesis 15, the understanding of "the selfsame day" of Exodus 12:41 and Christ's institution of the bread and wine during His final Passover, this likely occurred at the beginning of

the 14th, perhaps even at twilight. Following this, Abraham asks for clarification regarding an heir (Genesis 15:2-3) because earlier, God had said that Abraham's family would be great (Genesis 12:2-3). In response, God promises him innumerable descendants, using an illustration requiring Abraham to count the stars of heaven (Genesis 15:4-5).

Twilight is clearly past and now—with stars visible—it must be the dark part of Nisan 14. Both John 13:30 and I Corinthians 11:23 confirm the same general time in the events of Christ's final Passover. The daylight portion of the 14th is approaching.

In Genesis 15:8-17, Abraham asks for evidence that God will follow through. He receives a command to prepare a sacrifice and an additional prophecy concerning his family's future. Genesis 15:12 shows that he made the sacrifice during the daylight part of the 14th. By this sacrifice, God ratifies His promise to Abraham.

Many have wondered why Christ was sacrificed during the daylight portion of the 14th, in the afternoon, rather than at its beginning and more in alignment with the Passover service in the twilight portion of the 14th. This reveals why. Even as He ratified His covenant of promise with Abraham by this sacrifice, Christ's sacrifice provides the ratification of the New Covenant. Christ's sacrifice, by God's decree, had to align with the ratification of His covenant of promise with Abraham. In Christ's sacrifice, death and burial, God's draws together in one event the main elements of both the covenant of promise with Abraham and the Passover.

Notice especially how close this chronological alignment is. Verse 12 specifically states, "When the sun was going down." Thus, this sacrifice, like Christ's, took place in the afternoon. In the late afternoon, a great darkness and horror fell upon Abraham, allowing him to experience a small taste of the horror Christ faced in His crucifixion when God forsook Him. In addition, Moses inserts a detail that is not so readily apparent at Christ's crucifixion: that Abraham had to beat off some vultures. Vile birds are a Bible symbol of demons. This detail suggests that a great spiritual battle occurred, during which the demons taunted and persecuted Christ to induce Him to give up. He had to fight them off alone because the Father had forsaken Him.

For the events of Genesis 15:17-21, the sun has gone down and it is dark. In the crucifixion sequence, by dark the Son was in His grave. This is now the 15th of Nisan, the day that became the first day of Unleavened Bread, the part known as the Night To Be Much Observed, "the selfsame day" of Exodus 12:41. Numbers 33:3 confirms Israel left Egypt on the 15th of Nisan, but Exodus 12:42 specifically states Israel began its departure at night, and God names that night the "Night To Be Much Observed." Its significance is that, because the firstborn of the Egyptians have been slain, the descendents of Abraham are released from their bondage and free to leave Egypt. The firstborn of Egypt thus become a type of the True Firstborn, Jesus Christ, the sacrifice for our sins that enslave us to spiritual Egypt.

Genesis 15:10 and 17 show us a small portion of the ancient practice of making serious covenants. Those making the covenant prepared a sacrifice by dividing animals or fowl in two, then both parties passed between the divided carcasses. This symbolized the seriousness of their intentions in that the divided carcasses represented what would happen to them if they did not keep their oath! They placed their lives at risk. The carcasses were then burned, symbolizing their acceptance.

The smoking oven and burning torch symbolize God. In many instances in the Bible, God represents Himself through the image of fire (*i.e.*, the burning bush and the pillar of fire). The sacrifice in

Genesis 15 is interesting in that only God passes between the divided carcasses because, in reality, this is an oath of only one party, God, to keep His promise. In this specific case, Abraham has agreed to nothing, but God has bound Himself with utmost seriousness to meet the requirements of His promise in full. This promise will be fulfilled only because of God's character and grace.

The 14th thus signifies the ratification of the promise by sacrifice, and the 15th, what it accomplishes by providing visible evidence of God's faithfulness (e.g., the Israelites go free).

This Scenario and Joshua 5:10-12

When Israel approached the Promised Land, they walked from the south heading north. When they reached Moab, they made a sharp right turn and circumvented Moab. As they did this, they encountered groups of Midianites and defeated them all. By the time they reached the eastern bank of the Jordan River, they were inside the Promised Land. At this point, the tribes of Reuben, Gad and one-half of Manasseh approached Moses to claim the land on the eastern side as theirs. God granted their request with the proviso that their armies go with the rest of the Israelite tribes until the western side of the land was subdued.

Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people saying, "Pass through the camp and command the people saying, 'Prepare provisions [*victuals*, KJV] for yourselves for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess'" (Joshua 1:10-11).

Where did this food come from? It could not have been manna because manna could not be stored. It could have included some meat they slaughtered from the herds and flocks traveling with them. It could also be evidence that the Israelites were already gathering and perhaps eating the produce of the lands they were conquering. The narrative does not say what lands, but it could include the Promised Land because people were already beginning to take up residence east of the Jordan.

Joshua 4:19 specifies the dates when it says Israel came into the land on the 10th day of the first month, but it gives no clue as to which day of the week this was. It is the same date of Jesus' triumphal march into Jerusalem on the back of an ass before His crucifixion and the date to select the sacrificial lambs for Passover. The dates are beginning to align with Genesis 14-15 and Exodus 12.

Joshua 5:2-9 records the circumcisions performed in Gilgal. It gives no date, but this probably took place on Nisan 11, since Joshua would want to obey God as soon as possible, as well as to begin subduing the land right away. *Gilgal* means "rolled away," indicating that God officially "rolled away" or forgave the shame of Israel's captivity in Egypt and their behavior in the wilderness.

The circumcision was necessary for at least two reasons: first, to make the uncircumcised Israelites eligible to take the Passover on the 14th, and second, to have a fully covenanted people prepared to fight the wars and take over the land. Notice that the assault on Jericho followed immediately after these events. In the spiritual application of circumcision, God makes the New Covenant only with those circumcised in the heart and only a covenanted people will be in His Kingdom, of which the Promised Land is a type. Through circumcision and the "rolling away," God prepares the people for the following steps needed to live in the land and take it over.

Those circumcised remained in the camp in Gilgal until they were healed. Because Israel observed Passover in the home, the circumcision did not affect the men keeping it. The Bible contains

absolutely no evidence of miraculous healings or especially rapid recovery from the surgeries due to extremely good health.

Then as the 14th began at twilight, the Israelites killed the lambs as instructed in Exodus 12:1-6. Some, including Joshua, Caleb, and others above the age of forty, undoubtedly remembered the experience from Egypt. Whether anyone kept Passover in the wilderness is debatable, since the Bible records nothing of it, but Exodus 12:25 commands them to keep it when they came into the land. After the Passover meal, the Israelites burned any remaining lamb parts and stayed in their homes until morning.

This brings us to the daylight portion of the 14th. What did they do then? They did what we do then: It is the preparation day for the first day of Unleavened Bread, so they made final preparations for observing it. Manna appeared on that day because Passover is not a Sabbath but is a preparation day for the high holy day Sabbath. Therefore, they gathered a double portion in anticipation of the holy day, an annual Sabbath (Exodus 16:25-30). God is concerned about witnessing to His people in all His holy convocations, so there would be no excuse for them not knowing to collect double.

Exodus 13:3-10 commands Israel to keep the Days of Unleavened Bread and specifically draws attention to the day they left Egypt. When does the 15th of Nisan begin? At sunset. Sunset between the 14th and 15th of Nisan begins the Night To Be Much Observed, the very first one in the Promised Land. Chronologically, this brings us into alignment with Genesis 15:17, Exodus 12:40-42, and Christ being in His grave. The first two are separated by 430 years to the day, and now in Joshua 5: 11, exactly forty years to the day later, Abraham's descendents are in the land keeping the Night To Be Much Observed. Notice in Joshua 5:11 the phrase, "the selfsame day" appears. This occurred at night, and of course, the daylight portion following memorializes God's faithfulness to His promise to Abraham and his seed, both the Israelites as his physical seed and us now as his spiritual seed. These events falling on these specific dates as Israel entered the Promised Land cannot be mere coincidence.

Did Israel Offer the Wavesheaf?

Armed with this information, we may know the *dates* on which these events occurred, but they in no way reveal on which *days* of the week they fell. If Israel made a wavesheaf offering, when did they do it? It seems especially critical at this point, since it would have been the first time in the land. But Joshua says absolutely nothing about it.

We know that Passover observance begins at twilight when the lamb is slain, but the bulk of it is observed at night. We also know that twenty-four hours after Passover begins the Night to be Much Observed begins. The first day of Unleavened Bread begins with this observance at night. On the 15th, beginning with the keeping of the Night to be Much Observed, the people would be eating unleavened bread just as we do today because it is such a significant event in the history of God's people.

Where did the grain for making the unleavened bread and parched corn come from? It came from the grain of the land, exactly as the Scripture implies (Joshua 1:11). They could have used the old corn confiscated from the Canaanites' storage places or even harvested a sufficient amount from fields of grain left behind by Canaanites as they fled the Israelites. They had sufficient time to make such preparations. Joshua 5:11 says the Israelites ate unleavened bread and parched grain on the day after Passover. *Day* does not necessarily have to mean "daylight," but simply any portion of the next 24-

hour day. The observance of the Night to be Much Observed is a very significant part of the day after Passover.

The Israelites rested on the holy day. They could eat manna as well as unleavened preparations. On the 16th, the next day, when they would normally have expected manna to appear, it did not. From this point, they were completely dependent upon the crops harvested from the land.

Why did Israel not make a wavesheaf offering? Because they could not lawfully do so for many reasons:

1. Because the 15th is a Sabbath, and Leviticus 23:11 clearly commands the wavesheaf offering to be made on the day following the Sabbath, not on the Sabbath.
2. Because, if the particular Sabbath that preceded the 15th was also Passover (as per the WCG scenario), it would not qualify to determine wavesheaf day since it is not part of the Days of Unleavened Bread.
3. Because they had absolutely no grain that qualified as an acceptable offering. The wavesheaf offering law states specifically that it had to be from seed that they had sown. Israel reaped what Canaanites had sown. Conquest did not change this fact. They could eat it but not offer it.
4. Because Deuteronomy 12 specifically forbids making the required animal sacrifice that accompanied the wavesheaf offering until the Tabernacle was established where God had placed His name. This did not occur until seven years had passed (compare Joshua 14:6-13 and 18:1).
5. Because Leviticus 22 strictly forbids an offering from the stranger's hand. It had to come from someone who had covenanted with God. A stranger is someone "unknown" to God, an outsider, or someone not in the family.

Israel never made a wavesheaf offering in Joshua 5.

Do Little Things Not Matter?

We are to live by every word of God. However, I have learned through this Pentecost counting test that has come upon the church that people consider certain areas as "little" and thus of no account. They dismiss them as not worthy of serious consideration. One might be tempted to think that all the points discussed so far are minor ones that God could easily overlook because Israel had such a sincere attitude at that point in their relationship with Him. Perhaps it is good to be reminded of God's reactions in other instances when people have set aside seemingly "minor points" in favor of some other way of doing things.

In Leviticus 10, an event occurred that was well within the memory of Joshua, Caleb and many of those over 40 when Joshua 5 took place. Nadab and Abihu, two sons of Aaron, were shockingly, instantaneously struck dead—apparently by lightning bolts that possibly burned them into cinders—when they carelessly overlooked one simple direction and placed coals from a "strange" fire on the incense altar. Interestingly, this involved making an offering.

God also rejected Cain's offering, again apparently based on only one flaw or at most two (Hebrews 11:4 indicates only that it was not made by faith). David transported the ark in the wrong manner, and when Uzzah, probably involuntarily, touched it with his sinful hand to keep it from hitting the ground, God struck him dead. Ananias and Sapphira fudged a bit by not telling the whole truth to God's apostle, and God struck them dead too.

Perhaps we have also been guilty of what God says in Exodus 12:19: "For seven days, no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land." People frequently joke about having eaten something leavened during the Days of Unleavened Bread. I have done it. However, notice how serious this is to God. At the very least, "cut off" means to be excommunicated from camp, and at its most extreme it implies being put to death! Could it be that we do not take sin and holiness as seriously as God does? A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Would Joshua, whom God strictly instructs to do everything exactly as Moses taught him (Joshua 1:7), overlook three major reasons not to make a wavesheaf offering?

Conclusion: Joshua 5 cannot be used to establish a first day of Unleavened Bread waving of the sheaf because no wavesheaf offering was made and none needed to be made.

Two Final Points

Some claim the wavesheaf offering must be made during the Days of Unleavened Bread to conform to God's seven-thousand-year plan that they say the Days of Unleavened Bread picture. This reasoning, though, contains a flaw. The Bible nowhere states that God's plan is limited to seven thousand years. Consider this: According to this scenario, Jesus will return at the end of six thousand years, a resurrection will occur and the Millennium will begin. Revelation 20:5-8 says that the rest of the dead do not live again until the thousand years are finished, then Satan will be released for a season to deceive the nations again.

How long will he take to deceive the nations? By this time, seven thousand years have already expired. Then what happens? Revelation 20:11-15 shows another resurrection to judgment. How long will this judgment take? From Isaiah 65:20, some think 100 years. Thus, it is after the seven thousand years are past when the majority of those who have ever lived will get their first opportunity for salvation. So much for God's plan being neatly contained within one calendar week symbolically representing seven thousand years! On the contrary, when wavesheaf day falls occasionally outside the Days of Unleavened Bread, God can more accurately show that His plan to harvest mankind exceeds seven thousand years and offers hope for salvation to all.

Others have suggested that we must follow exactly what occurred to Christ in His crucifixion week in order to conform. There is a flaw in this too. John 7:14 says that Christ did not begin preaching to the people until midway through the Feast of Tabernacles. Does this mean we should do likewise and not preach until the Feast is half over each year? Attempting to reconcile symbolism and conform to each example to force a wavesheaf offering into the Days of Unleavened Bread is a fool's errand. It cannot be done. Symbolism is not law. Symbolism is an interpretation, and it is highly variable, whereas law is constant. That is why it is law.

Wavesheaf Summary

The following points summarize the reasons for our conclusion on when the count should begin:

1. The wavesheaf offering is primarily a harvest ritual directly tied to Pentecost. The count to Pentecost begins the day the harvest begins, not the day the wavesheaf offering is cut. The offering of the wavesheaf, the harvest and count begin the same day. This forces wavesheaf day to be a common workday (Deuteronomy 16:9).
2. The Bible states a definite rule regarding when to wave the sheaf. Leviticus 23:11 and 15 plainly declare that the count begins on the day after the Sabbath.
3. This Sabbath must be a *weekly* Sabbath, as established by its movable date, from which counting to Pentecost is required. Additionally, but less importantly, the definite article appearing before "Sabbath" suggests a weekly Sabbath. John 20:1, 17 shows conclusively that Christ was "waved" before the Father on a Sunday following a *weekly* Sabbath. The contexts of Leviticus 23:11, 15; Deuteronomy 16:8-9; John 20:17 and biblical history corroborate that this Sabbath will *always* be within the Days of Unleavened Bread. Without this Sabbath link, the beginning of the count to Pentecost loses its anchor point and inconsistency results.
4. The Bible *nowhere* says that wavesheaf day must be within the Days of Unleavened Bread. To force it within them in a year in which Passover falls on a weekly Sabbath, one must needlessly alter the instruction of Leviticus 23:11, 15. Doing this forces one to begin counting toward Pentecost from a morrow after a Sabbath not within the Days of Unleavened Bread.
5. Although Leviticus 23:11, 15 puts some emphasis on "the day after," we cannot locate that day unless we first locate the Sabbath in question. Every historical record of those using these verses to count to Pentecost—except for the WCG after 1974—has acknowledged wavesheaf day as a workday. To place wavesheaf day on a holy day Sabbath following a weekly Sabbath Passover just to keep it within the Days of Unleavened Bread violates the record of history. In addition, Leviticus 23:10, 14 suggests that as soon as the wavesheaf offering was made, the Israelites were free to harvest, thresh, grind, and bake bread made of the grain of that harvest the same day. Therefore, wavesheaf day must be a workday, not a holy day Sabbath.
6. Only symbolism ties the wavesheaf to Passover and Unleavened Bread. Its *harvest* symbolism ties wavesheaf day directly to Pentecost, but less directly to Passover and far less directly to Unleavened Bread (which does not depict a harvest at all). We believe that the command to count from the morrow after the weekly Sabbath should take precedence over symbolism. Otherwise, why have a rule? Symbolism is an instructive teaching device, but it is essentially analogous—and analogies ultimately prove nothing. Attempting to coordinate the symbolism of the wavesheaf with all three festivals in an orderly chronological sequence, considering the four days when Passover can fall, produces highly inconsistent results and is practically useless. In no case should symbolism override a law in determining when to keep the feasts in their appointed times (see Deuteronomy 17:8-13, particularly verse 11).
7. The Bible and the record of history show no disagreement between Jesus and the early church with the Sadducees who controlled the Temple and thus religious life during the

time of Christ and the early church. Historical records show the Sadducees observed it as we advocate in this article. In addition, even modern calendars occasionally acknowledge that some Jews today still count to Pentecost as did the Sadducees of old.

8. Joshua 5, far from confirming a wavesheaf within the Days of Unleavened Bread, actually does *not* support it at all. In fact, there is no evidence that the Israelites even kept the Passover that year. Scriptures in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua show that meeting commanded requirements for a lawful offering was *impossible* at the time of Joshua 5. Israel could not meet those requirements until at least seven years later. Joshua 5 gives absolutely *no* authority to establish a Sunday, first day of Unleavened Bread wavesheaf day to begin the count to Pentecost.

In summary, we feel we should faithfully follow the command recorded in Leviticus 23:11, 15 and used by Herbert Armstrong before 1974—whether the wavesheaf day falls with or without the Days of Unleavened Bread—because insufficient scriptural evidence exists to justify an exception. The cumulative evidence of the Bible and history substantiates that the weekly Sabbath falling within the Days of Unleavened Bread is of greater importance than the wavesheaf offering occasionally occurring outside them.