

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Leviticus 23: 15-22

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. We'll continue to read Leviticus chapter 23, and today we'll read from verse 15 to verse 22.

Yesterday, we studied the first set of three feasts: Passover Feast, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Firstfruits. The spiritual significance of this group in the New Testament is the completion of salvation. Jesus Christ is the Passover Lamb, who died on the cross for the sins of humanity. On the day of the Feast of Firstfruits, He rose from the dead, granting new life to those who believe, enabling them to live a sinless life —a lifelong "Feast of Unleavened Bread."

Today, we will study the second feast: the Feast of Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Weeks or the Feast of Harvest. Pentecost is deeply connected to the New Testament believers. The offerings required during this feast can be difficult to understand without the insights of the New Testament. For thousands of years, unbelieving Jews have observed these sacrificial laws under the Old Testament without fully grasping the divine purpose behind them. We are truly blessed because, through the light of the New Testament, we can revisit the regulations concerning Pentecost and gain a clearer understanding of God's intent.

Verse 15-16: "And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord."

The day after the Sabbath, which is the day the sheaf of the wave offering is presented, is the Feast of Firstfruits. Starting from the Feast of Firstfruits, seven Sabbaths must be completed. Since the Feast of Firstfruits falls on the day after the

Sabbath, the period from this feast to the next Sabbath is exactly one week. Therefore, seven full Sabbaths, or seven weeks, make a total of 49 days. On the day after the seventh Sabbath, an additional day is added, making it a total of 50 days. In Chinese, a "旬" refers to a ten-day period, hence the term "Pentecost" in Chinese, meaning "the Feast of Fifty Days."

In English, "Pentecost" is derived from the Greek word "**Pentēkostē**", which literally means "the fiftieth day." On this day of Pentecost, a new grain offering is to be presented to the LORD. The regulations for grain offerings are clearly defined in Leviticus chapter 2. However, the grain offering required on Pentecost is not the usual grain offering that the Israelites regularly presented; it is entirely new, with unique requirements. This grain offering can only be presented on Pentecost, not on ordinary days, and its regulations differ from those of regular grain offerings.

First, the foundation of Pentecost is the Feast of Firstfruits because the counting begins from the Feast of Firstfruits. As we mentioned earlier, according to history, in the year Jesus was crucified, Passover happened to fall on a Friday, and the Feast of Firstfruits occurred on the third day after Passover, which is the day Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Therefore, the foundation of Pentecost is the resurrection of Christ, and that day happens to be the day after the Sabbath. The Sabbath is the last day of the week, which is the seventh day, so the resurrection is on the eighth day. A week of seven days is a complete cycle, thus seven is the number of completeness. After seven cycles, or seven weeks, there are seven Sabbaths. The day after the seventh Sabbath is Pentecost, which is the eighth "eighth day." The number eight is the number of resurrection, so Pentecost represents resurrection within resurrection.

From the New Testament perspective, this is filled with spiritual significance. On the first eighth day, the resurrection Sunday, the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Jesus was very busy on the day of His resurrection, appearing to many disciples. Most importantly, in the evening, when the disciples were hiding in a house because they feared the Jews and had locked the doors, Jesus suddenly appeared among them. He showed the disciples the nail prints in His hands and the wound in His side, helping them believe that He had indeed risen from the dead.

After the disciples believed in His resurrection, Jesus performed a groundbreaking act recorded in John 20:22: "And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" This is exactly like when God created man, forming him from the dust of the ground and breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. From that moment, all believers in Jesus Christ's resurrection receive the indwelling Holy Spirit, bringing eternal life.

After His resurrection, Jesus was with the disciples for forty days. He didn't remain with them continuously but appeared whenever needed. The number 40 symbolizes a period of trial. During this time, Jesus trained His disciples to transition from relying on His physical presence in earthly ministry to being led by the invisible guidance of the Holy Spirit. After these forty days, Jesus ascended into heaven in the sight of the disciples, instructing them not to leave Jerusalem because something significant was about to happen.

As a result, 120 disciples gathered in the upper room, praying and watching for ten days. On the 50th day after Jesus' resurrection, the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out. This fulfilled Jesus' promise before His ascension, recorded in Acts 1:8: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

On the first "eighth day" (the day of resurrection), the disciples had already received the indwelling Holy Spirit, the Spirit of life, bringing eternal life. However, on the "eighth eighth day"—the resurrection within resurrection—the Holy Spirit was poured out, and they received power. The purpose of this empowerment was for the disciples to bear witness to Jesus Christ, beginning in Jerusalem, then spreading to all Judea, Samaria, and finally to the ends of the earth. Their mission was to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, with the church being built across the earth as a testimony to His resurrection.

The disciples, after receiving the Holy Spirit for the first time, underwent 40 days of testing and learning. They were prepared to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with ten days of praying in one accord, the Holy Spirit was finally poured out

on the Day of Pentecost. The disciples, now able to follow the Holy Spirit's leading, preached the gospel, bore witness to Jesus, and building up the churches.

First, the Jewish church was established in Jerusalem, and later, many Gentile churches were founded in gentile lands. The new grain offering to be presented at Pentecost symbolized the church. The regular grain offering represented Christ. Christ is tender, pure, perfect, and complete; therefore, the regular grain offering was not to include leaven or honey. Leaven represents sin, and honey symbolizes the pleasures of the world. As the grain offering, Jesus Christ was entirely without sin and devoid of worldly elements.

The church, however, is composed of people who, though still sinners with an inner sin nature and external sins they struggle to overcome, have received God's life through faith in Jesus and are accepted by Him. Therefore, God instituted this new grain offering to represent the church.

Verse 17: "You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the Lord."

The new grain offering of Pentecost required two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, mixed with leaven, and baked into two loaves to be presented as a wave offering. Unlike the regular grain offering, which could not contain leaven, the Pentecost grain offering had to include leaven because it symbolized the church. The church was established on Pentecost, and the believers within the church still have sin, hence the addition of leaven. The fine flour, usually unshaped, is formed into loaves, representing many believers gathered together as one corporate expression of God. These two loaves represent the Jewish church and the Gentile church. The number two symbolizes testimony. Together, Jews and Gentiles bear witness to Jesus Christ. These two testimonial loaves are to be presented as a wave offering, offered as the firstfruits to God.

A wave offering involves lifting the loaves in the hands and waving them before God, symbolizing resurrection. It indicates that the Jewish and Gentile testimonies are accepted by God in resurrection. These wave offering loaves cannot be burned on the altar because no grain offering with leaven could be offered on the altar. Therefore, the loaves are waved to signify that the church's building continues today through the resurrection life of Jesus Christ.

On one hand, the church grows numerically, allowing all the sons of peace chosen by God to receive grace and salvation, joining the church. On the other hand, there is qualitative growth as believers walk the path of sanctification, living holier lives and making the church's testimony shine brighter. These two wave loaves are offered to God as firstfruits. James 1:18 says, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." Through His resurrection, Jesus Christ became the firstfruits. We, through His resurrection, have received eternal life. As this resurrection life grows in us, one day we will be like Jesus Christ, the firstfruits among all creation.

Verse 18: "And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the Lord, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord."

The burnt offering to be presented to God on Pentecost is very rich, including seven one-year-old lambs, one young bull, and two rams, along with the accompanying grain offering and drink offering. All these sacrifices and offerings are to be placed on the burnt offering altar, completely burned, becoming a sweet aroma, a food offering to God, so that He may be satisfied.

Verse 19: "Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a peace offering."

A male goat is also to be offered as a sin offering. The two loaves offered as wave offerings are to be leavened, signifying that people still have sin, and that sin has not been completely removed. Therefore, a sin offering is required to deal with the sins that people may unknowingly commit. Additionally, two one-year-old male lambs are to be offered as a peace offering. When people's sins are covered by the sacrifice, peace is made between God and men, allowing people to offer a peace offering to God. This peace offering is shared between God and people.

Deuteronomy 16:10 further explains, "Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with a tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you." This indicates that the peace offering is a freewill offering, and among the seven feasts, only Pentecost requires a peace offering, and it is one that the people willingly bring. As New Testament believers, we were once without any part in God's family, but through the grace of Jesus Christ, we are now His children, included in God's eternal purpose. We become the wave loaves, offered to God as firstfruits. What a great blessing this is.

Verse 20: "The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the Lord for the priest."

The priests are to take the two male lambs of the peace offering, along with the two loaves of new grain offering, and offer them as a wave offering before the Lord. This is God's holy offering, and it is to be given to the priests. From the New Testament application, every priest who faithfully serves in the church can enjoy the peace offerings and the wave loaves. The priests are God's messengers, bringing peace to those in need, and those who receive the gospel are made into a wave offering presented to God. Their service becomes their nourishment, a special portion given to the priests by God, enabling them to rejoice and be glad together in God's house.

Verse 21: “And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.”

This day shall be a holy convocation, where all the people gather together to worship the Lord. On this day, no work shall be done. It is to be observed as a Sabbath, and all the people are to rest before the Lord. This shall be a statute forever for the children of Israel, throughout their generations.

Verse 22: “When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleanings from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the Lord your God.”

This verse added here, it might seem a bit abrupt at first glance. However, if we understand the spiritual significance of Pentecost, it is to bring the Gentiles into the family of God's people. If you understand this, you will praise God's wisdom and mercy. It says here that the harvesters should not reap to the edges of their fields, nor gather the gleanings. This refers to God's care for the poor and the stranger, as God has arranged a portion for them. God specifically adds the phrase, "I am the Lord your God," to remind the Israelites that they must observe this and not deprive the poor and the sojourner of their rightful portion.

In the Old Testament, the most famous gleaner was Ruth, a Moabite woman. She came to Bethlehem as a foreigner, following her mother-in-law, Naomi. Naomi had lost her husband and two sons in Moab and returned to Bethlehem with her daughter-in-law. They had nothing and were poor. Naomi understood God's law, that in God's land, there was provision for the poor and the sojourners. Naomi helped Ruth to glean in the fields of Boaz, which eventually led to the marriage of Boaz and Ruth. Through this marriage, Ruth, a Gentile woman, was brought into the people of God. She not only bore a godly descendant but also became the ancestor of David and is listed in the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

In the New Testament, there is also the famous Canaanite woman recorded in Matthew 15:21-28. At that time, Jesus went to the region of Tyre and Sidon, a Gentile territory. A Canaanite woman came to Him, pleading for help for her demon-possessed daughter. Jesus told her, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But the woman did not give up. Jesus then said to her, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." But this Canaanite woman was not offended. She understood that Jesus came to a Gentile land and said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." On one hand, she acknowledged that Jesus was Lord; on the other hand, she recognized Jesus as the crumbs. From the Old Testament perspective, Jesus was the crop left unharvest, the portion God provided for the poor and the stranger. And because of her faith, Jesus healed her daughter. Pentecost speaks of the building of the church, which is especially good news for us as Gentiles, a story of how the Gentiles are blessed. May God help us.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord, we are so grateful. More than 3,500 years ago, through the law of Pentecost established by Moses, You had already foreseen that we Gentiles would be received as Your children through faith, and that we would become the new grain offering, offered as a wave offering to You. Today, the building of the church continues. Help us all to rise up and fulfill the role of priests, enjoying the peace offering and the wave offering in Your house, and make the building of the church our common mission. Bless the church I belong to. We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!