

The Christian Pentecost

In the first centuries of our common era, the 50-day Christian festival of Pentecost, like its Jewish counterpart, was inseparably connected with Phasekh. Epiphanius sums up the orthodox Christian position by referring to Acts, 20:16, which speaks of how the apostle Saul (Paul) hastened to keep the Festival of Pentecost at Jerusalem. He then comments, “But what Pentecost was Paul keeping if he had not kept the Phasekh?”¹

Christians observed not only the first and last days of this period with special reverence but actually considered the entire 50 days to be significant. The day of the *omer* wave offering, being the first of the 50 days, was considered the day of the messiah’s resurrection, also known as the Sovereign’s day. The observation of the Sovereign’s day and its connection with the Pentecost season provided the foundation for the development of the western Christian Phasekh systems.

The Early Assembly

The 50 days of Pentecost were very important to the early Christian assemblies. As J. Van Goudoever so poignantly observes:

The primitive Christian Church kept not only Pass-over, but also the period of seven weeks or fifty days called ‘Pentecost’.²

The entire 50 days were celebrated with special emphasis being placed upon the first and last days. The early assemblies, therefore, celebrated three aspects of Pentecost:

- (1) The 50th day, being the Festival of Weeks (Pentecost), upon which day the sacred *ruach* came down upon the gathered assembly in the year of the messiah’s resurrection.
- (2) The day of the *omer* wave offering, being the first day of the 50 days. Upon this day the messiah rose from the dead and breathed the sacred *ruach* upon his disciples.
- (3) The entire 50-day period, which was seen as a joyful time, reflecting the dwelling of mankind with the messiah in the kingdom of Yahweh.

¹ Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 75:6:1.

² BCal, p. 164.

The 50th Day

The observance of the 50th day, which day is properly called Pentecost and the Festival of Weeks, gained its authority from the fact that, in the year of the messiah's death, his disciples kept this celebration with one accord during their stay at Jerusalem.³ It was while they were gathered at this event, as told in the book of Acts, that the sacred *ruach* suddenly came down out of heaven as a rushing, violent wind, filling the whole house where the disciples were sitting.⁴ This *ruach*, appearing in the form of divided tongues of flame, then proceeded to set upon each of those in the gathered assembly.⁵ The sacred *ruach* allowed those upon whom it rested to prophesy in foreign languages, so as to be understood by visitors from various nations.⁶ It was a sign that the word of the messiah was being sent out to all the nations of the world.

With the descent of the sacred *ruach* also came a new revelation to the apostles. Inspired by the *ruach*, Keph (Peter) delivered his famous Pentecost speech: it is by the messiah's death and resurrection that there shall come a resurrection of the dead. It is also by his death and resurrection that salvation shall come to all mankind, all who call upon the name Yahweh.⁷ Upon hearing these words, about 3000 people were baptized and added to the ranks of the assembly. Many more joined in the following days.⁸

For these reasons, many early Christians considered Pentecost day as the first day of the Christian community. It was the beginning of a new era, the era of the Christian Assembly.⁹ Authority for the continued observance of Pentecost was reinforced by Saul (Paul), the apostle to the nations,¹⁰ when he was recorded in the New Testament as having recognized Pentecost during his ministry.¹¹ Pentecost, accordingly, became the festival of the New Covenant.¹²

Subsequently, due to its strong scriptural authority, all of the early assemblies, regardless of their respective Phasekh system, kept the festival of Pentecost. The early second century C.E. Quartodeciman *Epistula Apostolorum*, for example, speaks of both Pentecost and Phasekh as festivals that would continue far into the future.¹³ The early western assemblies likewise kept

³ Acts, 2:1.

⁴ Acts, 2:2.

⁵ Acts, 2:3.

⁶ Acts, 2:4–12. The Greek word γλώσσαις (*glossais*) means, “*tongue*, as the organ of speech . . . *language* or *dialect*” (GEL, 1968, p. 353); “the *tongue*; by impl. a *language*” (SEC, Gk. #1100). That the passage refers to foreign languages and not some meaningless babbling is confirmed by the response of those coming from other nations who were hearing the disciples speak. They questioned, “and how do we hear them each in his own dialect?” (Acts, 2:8) For this reason the NJB translates Acts, 2:4, as “to speak different languages”; and the AB renders it, “to speak in other (different, foreign) languages”; and NTB gives, “to speak in foreign tongues.”

⁷ Acts, 2:13–40. In v. 21, Keph quotes Joel, 2:32, “All who shall call upon the name of Yahweh shall be saved” (cf. SRB, loc. cit., p. 1151, n. g; AB, loc. cit., p. 174; REB, loc. cit., p. 121, n. a, and at Rom., 10:13, p. 159, n. f).

⁸ Acts, 2:41–47.

⁹ BCal, pp. 228, 233.

¹⁰ Rom., 11:13; 1 Tim., 2:7; 2 Tim., 1:11.

¹¹ Acts, 20:16 (Saul at Jerusalem); 1 Cor., 16:8 (Saul at Ephesus).

¹² BCal, p. 233.

¹³ Epist. Apost., 17.

Pentecost. It is mentioned, for instance, in the Acts of Paul (c.180 C.E.),¹⁴ and shortly thereafter by Irenaeus,¹⁵ Tertullian,¹⁶ and Origen. Origen even notes that Christians of his day were often criticized for keeping Pentecost.¹⁷ Eusebius writes:

For when we have well and duly passed the Passage (Phasekh), another, greater festival awaits us there. The children of the Hebrews call it by the name of Pentecost, and it bears the likeness of the kingdom of heaven.¹⁸

Didymus of Alexandria (c.387 C.E.) similarly reports:

After this solemnity (Phasekh) we shall also celebrate the Feast of Weeks, called Pentecost, on which we shall reap as perfect sheaves and fullest ears that which flowered in the spring.¹⁹

Ambrose of Milan (c.389 C.E.) states:

In spring we have the Phasekh, when I am saved; in summer we have the Pentecost, when we celebrate the glory of the resurrection after the manner of the age to come.²⁰

Athanasius, after telling his Christian readers, “Let us keep the sacred festival (of Phasekh),” advises:

. . . adding day by day the sacred Pentecost, which we regard as festival upon festival, we shall keep the festival of the *ruach* who is already near (us) through the messiah Yahushua.²¹

Support for the observance of Pentecost was so strong that any Christian who failed to keep Pentecost was condemned as a heretic at the Council of Elvira (c.303–306 C.E.):

It has been decided to correct a bad custom according to the authority of the Scriptures, so that we all celebrate the day of Pentecost; and that anyone who does not should be marked as having brought in a new heresy.²²

¹⁴ Acta Pauli, 1:30–32.

¹⁵ Irenaeus, frag. 7; Ps.-Justin, 115.

¹⁶ Tertullian, *de Cor.*, 3, *de Bapt.*, 19.

¹⁷ Origen, *Celsus*, 8:22.

¹⁸ Eusebius, *Pas.*, 4.

¹⁹ Didymus, 5:88.

²⁰ Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.*, 10:34.

²¹ Athanasius, *Fest. Let.*, 14:6.

²² Syn. Elvira, *Can.*, 43. This edict was written against those who abandoned the 50th day of Pentecost and kept only the 40th day, the day of Ascension (cf., Acts, 1:1–12). In the Codex Toletanus I, this clause reads, “so that after the Phasekh we should all celebrate not the 40th but

Early Christian lectionaries demonstrate the various features of Pentecost, which included its role as a festival of covenant, as a festival of revelation, as a festival of Law-giving, and as the gathering around Mount Sinai.²³ The Christians often compared the events that occurred at Mount Sinai immediately after the Exodus, the great assembly gathered there and the giving of the Torah of Moses, with the experience of the disciples on Pentecost day during the year of the messiah's death and resurrection. Augustine, for example, writes:

In former times Moses received the Torah on Mount Sinai and he proclaimed the commandments of the sovereign before the people. There the deity came down to the mountain, here the sacred *ruach* came to be visible in tongues of fire.²⁴

Chrysostom similarly states that, "the *ruach* which had Moses render the Torah to the Hebrews now came down for the salvation of all people."²⁵ In another place he writes:

On that day the Torah was given according to the Old Covenant, on the same day the sacred *ruach* came according to the new grace; on that day Moses received the Tablets of the Torah, on the same day the choir of the apostles received the *ruach* coming down, instead of the Tablets which were given to Moses.²⁶

The Christian Pentecost of the second century C.E. was imbued with the theme of representing the future day on which the messiah would offer his followers to father Yahweh. It was connected with the establishment of Yahweh's kingdom on earth and the time when the saved would dwell in the kingdom of Yahweh. By the fourth century C.E. the Christian meaning for Pentecost began to shift in emphasis. In the writings of Athanasius of Alexandria (342 C.E.), to demonstrate, he refers to Pentecost as "the festival of the *ruach*, which is already near through messiah Yahushua."²⁷ As Raniero Cantalamessa points out, "Pentecost becomes more and more clearly the feast of the Spirit," and is thought of "as the 'spiritual' presence of Christ among his disciples."²⁸

Day of the Omer Wave Offering

The first day of the 50 days of Pentecost, being the day of the *omer* wave offering, was observed by the early Christian assemblies as the anniversary of the messiah's resurrection. The well-known Christian theologian and writer

the 50th as the day of Pentecost" (EEC, p. 195, n. a). An ancient epitome of these canons summarizes Canon 43 thusly: "After the Phasekh let the 50th, not the 40th (day), be kept."

²³ BCal, pp. 188–190.

²⁴ Augustine, *Serm.*, 186.

²⁵ PG, 64, p. 420.

²⁶ PG, 63, p. 933.

²⁷ Athanasius, *Fest. Let.*, 14:6.

²⁸ EEC, p. 168, #61, n. b.

Clement of Alexandria (end of the second century C.E.), as one example, emphasized the connection between the *omer* wave offering and the resurrection. He writes that Yahushua arose from the dead on “the first day of the weeks of harvest, on which the priest offered the first δράγμα (*dragma* = *omer*) according to the Torah.”²⁹ Epiphanius, after quoting Deuteronomy, 16:9, and in reference to the messiah’s death, states that the *omer* wave offering came on the third day after the slaughter of the Phasekh lamb because it foreshadowed “that blessed *omer* who has been raised from the dead and is offered from the earth on the third day.”³⁰

It was on this same day that the messiah appeared to his disciples, who had hidden themselves in a locked house for fear of the Jews. After showing the nail holes in his hands and the wound on his side, Yahushua said to them, “Peace to you; as the father has sent me forth, I send you.” Having said these things, “he breathed on (them), and said to them, Receive the sacred *ruach*.”³¹ This day, therefore, was the beginning of their apostolic mission to go out among the nations, taking the sacred *ruach* with them.

The ramifications of observing the day of the *omer* wave offering as the anniversary of the messiah’s resurrection and its effects on the western Christian Phasekh systems will be examined in some detail in our next chapter. For now it is only necessary to point out that the first day of the 50-day count to Pentecost was designated as the “Sovereign’s day,” an important appellation for the day of the Phasekh Eucharist celebration for the western systems.

The 50-Day Period

Finally, because the *ruach* was given by the resurrected messiah to the apostles on the day of the *omer* wave offering, and then the sacred *ruach* came down upon the gathered assembly on the 50th day (the Festival of Weeks), the entire 50-day period of Pentecost was celebrated with rejoicing.³² According to Tertullian, who followed the western Phasekh system, we rejoice “from Phasekh (the day of the resurrection) to Pentecost day.”³³ He further notes that, for the Christians of his day, the period from resurrection day to Pentecost was one long festal day,³⁴ 50 days of pure exultation.³⁵

Hippolytus, after writing that the messiah is prefigured in the Phasekh and was sacrificed as our Phasekh, then connects this 50-day period with the heavenly kingdom. He writes that the messiah was prefigured in both the Phasekh and the Pentecost, so that he might fulfill the mysteries prophesied about him:

In the Pentecost, that he might make an advance sign of the kingdom of heaven, (by) going up into heaven first himself and offering humanity as a gift to the deity.³⁶

²⁹ Chron. Paschale, 1, p. 15.

³⁰ Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 51:31.

³¹ John, 20:22f.

³² BCal, p. 229; EEC, p. 168, #61, n. a.

³³ Tertullian, *de Cor.*, 3. Tertullian followed the western system for Phasekh, which observed the first day of the week after the 14th of Abib as the Phasekh of the resurrection.

³⁴ Tertullian, *de Bapt.*, 19.

³⁵ Tertullian, *de Jejun.*, 14.

³⁶ Hippolytus, *Elk. and Han.* (frag. 5); quoted by Theodoret, *Dial.*, 2:11. The messiah went to heaven both on the first and several days after (Mark, 16:9–19; John, 20:15f, cf., John, 20:19–29).

Origen refers to this period as the time of leaving the affairs of this life and hastening toward the city of Yahweh. It is a prophetic period, a type of our being risen from death with the messiah and made to sit with him in the heavenly places, at which time, "one is always living in the days of the Pentecost."³⁷ Therefore, it is a period of supplication and prayer, "so as to become worthy of the mighty rushing wind from heaven, which compels the evil in mortals and its consequences to disappear, and so that one becomes worthy also of some share in the fiery tongue given by the deity."³⁸ Eusebius, meanwhile, makes the following point:

. . . after the Phasekh, we celebrate the Pentecost for seven complete weeks, having soldiered through the previous 40-day period of asceticism (Lent) in the six weeks before the Phasekh. . . . The labors of that observance are fittingly succeeded by the second festival, seven weeks long, with an increase of repose for us, symbolized by the number seven. But the number of the Pentecost is not constituted by these seven weeks: going one day beyond, it seals them on the first day (of the week) with the solemnity of Christ's assumption. In these days of the sacred Pentecost, therefore, we are right to represent our future refreshment by rejoicing our lives and resting the body as though we were already united to the Bridegroom and incapable of fasting . . .³⁹

Aristocratic Christian Pentecost

Vitally important for our discussion is the fact that the early Christians determined Pentecost by the Aristocratic method, i.e., its 50 days were counted from the first day of the week, which is the day after the weekly Sabbath, that followed the 14th of Abib.⁴⁰ This detail is certainly not surprising, since the original Christian assemblies were all Quartodeciman and all subsequent assemblies acquired their first views from that Aristocratic-based group. Though this date was ascribed in the Torah to the time when the high priest was to provide the *omer* wave offering, the New Testament makes it the date of the messiah's resurrection.

For the Christians, the 50th day of Pentecost always fell on the first day of the week (Sunday).⁴¹ As shown above, Eusebius makes the 50th day fall on the first day of the week, being a seal on the seven weeks.⁴² Egeria (c.383 C.E.), as

with Luke, 24:36–40) and on the 40th day (Acts, 1:1–9) of these 50 days. On the offering of redeemed humanity to father Yahweh, seen as the meaning behind the offering of the firstfruits (Lev., 23:10–14, 16–20), also see Hippolytus, *Noetus*, 4; Irenaeus, *Ag. Her.*, 3:17:2.

³⁷ Origen, *Celsus*, 8:22.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Eusebius, *Pas.*, 5.

⁴⁰ See above Chap. XVI, pp. 247–250.

⁴¹ ACC, 2, pp. 1157–1161.

⁴² Eusebius, *Pas.*, 6.

another example, reports that in her day, for the Christians living in Jerusalem, “The 50th day is a Sunday.”⁴³ The Syriac *Teaching of the Apostles* similarly connects “the first day of the week and the end of Pentecost.”⁴⁴ This same work goes on to comment that, “by the same gift of the *ruach* which was given to them on that day, they appointed ordinances and laws.”⁴⁵

It is manifest that if the 50th day always fell on the first day of the week then the first day of that same 50-day period—the day of the *omer* wave offering—did likewise. As already demonstrated, eminent early Christian writers, such as Clement of Alexandria and Epiphanius,⁴⁶ identified the day of Yahushua’s resurrection with the day of the *omer* wave offering. In accordance with this view, the New Testament records that the messiah both rose from the dead and breathed the *ruach* on his disciples during the first day of the week that followed the day of the Phasekh sacrifice (Abib 14).⁴⁷

Conforming to this understanding, Justin Martyr writes that Yahushua “rose from the dead” on the day after Saturn’s day (i.e., the Sabbath day),⁴⁸ on the first day of the week which is also called “the day of the ἡλίου (*heliou*; sun),”⁴⁹ i.e., Sunday. On this point, there was near unanimity among all of the early Christian assemblies, whether Quartodeciman, Roman, quasi-Quartodeciman, or gnostic.⁵⁰ As a result, it was from the first day of the week (Phasekh Sunday) following the 14th of Abib that the early Christians began to count Pentecost. Athanasius, for instance, states:

From this day (the first day of the week, the day of the resurrection) we count one by one seven more weeks and celebrate the sacred day of Pentecost. This was formerly foreshadowed among the Jews under the name of the Feast of Weeks; it was the time for freeing (those in bondage) and forgiving debts, in sum, it was a day of all kinds of freedom. Since that time is for us a symbol of the world to come, we shall celebrate the great Sunday (Pentecost Sunday), enjoying here the first installment of that eternal life. But when we shall depart hence, then we shall celebrate the full festival with the messiah.⁵¹

With particular reference to the Pentecost day reported in Acts, 2:1–3, the *Constitutiones Apostolicae* calculates:

⁴³ Egeria, 43:1.

⁴⁴ ANCL, 20, pp. 36f; BCal, p. 187.

⁴⁵ ANCL, 20, p. 38.

⁴⁶ Chron. Paschale, 1, p. 15; Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 51:31.

⁴⁷ Matt., 26:17–21, 27:62, 28:1–7; Mark, 14:12–18, 15:42–44, 16:1–6; Luke, 22:7–16, 23:44, 50–56, 24:1–6; John, 18:28, 19:13f, 38–42, 20:1f, 19–23.

⁴⁸ That Saturn’s day (= Satur-day) is the Sabbath day see, for example, Tacitus, *Hist.*, 5:4; Dio, 37:15–19, 49:22:3f. Also see HBC, pp. 15f; ACC, 2, pp. 1137–1141.

⁴⁹ Justin Mart., *1 Apol.*, 67.

⁵⁰ On a small number of variant views of the three days and nights of the messiah’s stay in the grave see FSDY, 2.

⁵¹ Athanasius, *Fest. Let.*, 1:10. That “Great Sunday” is Pentecost see ECC, p. 167, #58, n. e.

And again, from the first Sunday (Phasekh Sunday) count 40 days, and on Thursday celebrate the Festival of Assumption of the sovereign (Acts, 1:1–9). . . . When the 50th day from the first Sunday arrives, you are to have a great festival; for on it, at the third hour, the sovereign Yahushua sent us the gift of the sacred *ruach* (Acts, 2:1–3).⁵²

Theophilus of Alexandria (401 C.E.) likewise counts to Pentecost using this method. He reports:

. . . on the next day (after the Sabbath day fast, i.e., on Sunday), which is the symbol of the sovereign's resurrection, let us celebrate the true Phasekh. Then let us add to these seven more weeks, which compose the festivity of Pentecost, and present ourselves worthy of the communion of the body and blood of the messiah.⁵³

A poem of Paulinus of Nola similarly counts to Pentecost from resurrection Sunday (Phasekh Sunday). He writes:

Yet the whole world with equal devotion everywhere venerates this lofty mystery of great love toward humankind in a particular month each year, when it celebrates the eternal king risen with a restored body. After this solemn festival (Phasekh Sunday)—we calculate seven weeks before this sacred day comes around for mortals—comes the day on which the sacred *ruach* was of old sent down from the heights of heaven in parted tongues of fiery light.⁵⁴

Origen makes the number “50” sacred and directly points to Pentecost as his prime example. He becomes even more specific and reports that each of the seven weeks of Pentecost ends with a Sabbath day:

The number “50” moreover contains seven Sabbaths, a Sabbath of Sabbaths and also above these full Sabbaths a new beginning in the eighth of a really new rest that remains above the Sabbath.⁵⁵

It is therefore manifest that the early Christians calculated the day of the *omer* wave offering and Pentecost by the Aristocratic method. Neither has this fact escaped the eyes of present day scholars. J. Van Goudoever, for example,

⁵² Apost. Constit., 5:20:2, 4.

⁵³ Theophilus Alex., 20:4.

⁵⁴ Paulinus, *Poem*, 27.

⁵⁵ Origen, *150 Ps.*, frag. on Ps. 3; GCS, 1, pp. 138f; BCal, p. 185.

several times concludes that the Christian system is based upon the old Israelite priestly calendar.⁵⁶ He writes:

When we read that the stone was rolled from the sepulcher and that Jesus arose from the dead on the Sunday after Passover, we must realize that the earliest Christians followed the old priestly calendar in which the 50 days were counted from the Sunday after Passover. So the Christians among the listeners in the synagogue could immediately infer that the Gospels teach that Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the 50 days; just as Jesus was crucified on a special day, Passover, because he was the true Passover according to John, so he arose from the dead on a special liturgical day, the first day of harvest.⁵⁷

It is also recognized that, just because the Christians used the Aristocratic system for determining Pentecost, it does not mean that they followed the Sadducees. Rather, as Goudoever states, they were merely following the more ancient system used by the original Zadok (Tsadoq) priests of Israel. He concludes:

The early Christians perhaps did not favour the Sadducees, but rather the old Zadokite tradition to which the Sadducees were one of the heirs.⁵⁸

The Sovereign's Resurrection Day

For the early Christians, whether their Phasekh system was Quartodeciman or one of the later western views, the day of the *omer* wave offering was the anniversary of the messiah's resurrection.⁵⁹ In turn, because the title κύριος (*kurios*; sovereign)⁶⁰ was applied to Yahushua the messiah, we find that from

⁵⁶ BCal, pp. 174f, "Since the Jews of the second century of our era did not count the fifty days from Sunday to Sunday, the early Christians in that century did not recognise their way of counting as an originally Israelite counting"; p. 175, "Since, however, we know that the Israelites, before our era, counted their fifty days from Sunday to Sunday, at least in one important (priestly) tradition, we are able to recognize that the Christian liturgical calendar is also in this point allied with the Israelite calendar; we recognize in the celebration of Easter in continuation of the first day (viz. Sunday) of the fifty days of harvest"; p. 221, "The first of the 50 days, being a Sunday in the priestly Israelite calendar, was the day on which the first sheaf was brought to the Temple; for the Christians it was the day on which Jesus arose from the dead. The 50th day was, like the 50th year, a time appropriate for Revelation to both the Israelite and the Christians, although in Judaism this day is not developed until the second century A.D."; p. 226, "If in all four Gospels the Sunday after Passover is the first day of harvest, then it is clear that the Synoptic Gospels use the old priestly calendar in which the 50 days are counted from Sunday to Sunday. . . . The use by the earliest Christians of the old priestly calendar does not seem remarkable when we remember that between 24 B.C. to 65 A.D. the high priests in the Temple of Jerusalem were members of the family of Boethus. These Boethusians are explicitly mentioned by the Mishnah as those who counted the 50 days from Sunday to Sunday" (cf., Men., 10:3).

⁵⁷ BCal, p. 225.

⁵⁸ BCal, p. 226.

⁵⁹ E.g., Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 51:31; Chron. Paschale, 1, p. 15.

⁶⁰ SEC, Gk. #2962, "*supreme* in authority, i.e. (as noun) *controller*; by impl. *Mr.* (as a respectful title)"; GEL, 1968, p. 1013, "of persons, *having power* or *authority over.*"

the time of the Quartodeciman writer John the divine (c.96 C.E.)⁶¹ this annual celebration was identified as τη κυριακῆ ἡμέρα (*te kuriake hemera*; the Sovereign's day), τῆς κυριακῆς (*tes kuriakes*; the Sovereign's [day])," and τῆς κυριακῆς ἡμέρα (*tes kuriakes hemera*; the Sovereign's day),⁶² commonly known in the English vernacular as "the Lord's day." By the final decade of the second century C.E., the western assemblies gave a far greater latitude to this expression so as to extend it to every Sunday.⁶³

⁶¹ John the divine is said to have had his vision on the island of Patmos in the 15th year of Domitian (i.e., 96 C.E.) (Eusebius, *H.E.*, 3:18:1–3:23:4; cf., Irenaeus, *Ag. Her.*, 5:30:3, "toward the end of Domitian's reign"). For the confusion between the apostle John, one of the twelve disciples, and John the divine, the student of the apostle John, see the appropriate Appendix in *FSDY*, 2. John, one of the twelve, authored the book of John and the epistles 1 through 3 of John. John the divine authored the book of Revelation.

⁶² Rev., 1:10, John the divine states, "I became in the *ruach* on τῆ κυριακῆ ἡμέρα (*te kuriake hemera*; the Sovereign's day)." There is absolutely no indication whatsoever in this book or from this period that the Sovereign's day is a weekly Sunday. That construct does not appear for another full century. As C. W. Dugmore correctly argues, why should we doubt that this expression, like others of its class, refers to anything else than resurrection Sunday? (*SNT*, 6, p. 277). Frank H. Yost, on the other side, argues that this expression should better refer to the weekly Sabbath day (*ECS*, pp. 27f). Yet his reasoning seems unlikely, since in this form this expression is found nowhere else in Scriptures, let alone in reference to the Sabbath day. Further, if the Sabbath day had been the date intended, John would more likely have said "on the Sabbath day." Similarly, if John had meant the Phasekh he would have said, "on the day of the Phasekh."

On the other hand, the expression "ἡ ἡμέρα κύριος (*he hemera kurios*; the day of the sovereign)" mentioned in 2 Pet., 3:10, as demonstrated by its context (2 Pet., 3:3–13, cf., Rev., 20:1–15), and in 1 Thess., 5:2, is a clear reference to the "day of Yahweh," i.e., the Judgment Day, as found in Isa., 2:1–22, 13:6–15; Jer., 30:7ff, 46:10ff; Joel, 2:1–13, 3:12–17; Obad., 1:15f; Zeph., 1:7–18; Zech., 14:1–21; Mal., 3:1–4:5; (cf., LXX of these verses). At the same time, as we shall demonstrate in our second volume, there is a connection made later in the western Christian assemblies between the day of Yahweh (the Judgment Day), being the eighth 1,000-year period (= the eighth day) in human history, and the development of their construct of the Sovereign's day to reflect a weekly Sunday observance.

The next Quartodeciman reference to the resurrection day as the Sovereign's day comes in the *Didache*, 14:1 (early second century C.E.). Later, the Quartodeciman Melito of Sardis wrote a book on the subject (Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:26:2). Among the western assemblies, Dionysius of Corinth, about the year 170 C.E., reports that they read Clement of Rome's letter to them on the sacred Sovereign's day (Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:23:11). They obviously did not read it every week but annually on the resurrection day. The spurious GN Peter (c.180 C.E.) similarly refers to the day that Mary Magdalene came to the tomb of the messiah and found him gone as "the Sovereign's day" (12). Even Irenaeus (c.185 C.E.) refers to the Sovereign's day as the annual celebration of the resurrection (Ps.-Justin, 115). In none of these or any other comparable record from the time before the last decade of the second century C.E. is there any indication that a weekly Sovereign's day was observed, only an annual celebration.

⁶³ Some try to superimpose the concept of a weekly Sovereign's day (Sunday) observance back to the sixth decade of the first century C.E. (e.g., *ECY*, pp. 13, 22). As we shall prove in our third volume of this series, there is no New Testament evidence of this whatsoever. The method used by those who improperly claim this connection is to superimpose a later definition back upon earlier documents or statements. Early Church fathers, likewise, give no such definition. Ignatius, *Mag.*, 9, for example, contrary to the assertion of some, says nothing of the kind (*ECS*, pp. 30f; *SNT*, 6, pp. 279f) and Justin Martyr (mid-second century C.E.) never once defined the weekly Sunday observance practiced at Rome as the weekly Sovereign's day (Justin Mart., *I Apol.*, 67). The first actual references to the Sovereign's day as every Sunday occurs after the establishment of the System E Phasekh in 196 C.E. Tertullian, *de Jej.*, 14–15, written about 208 C.E., for example, places the weekly Sabbaths together with the Sovereign's days as those days on which one was not to fast. Origen, *Celsus*, 8:22, writing about 248 C.E., also speaks of keeping the plural Sovereign's days (cf., *ECC*, p. 155, #43, n. a). It was at this time that the weekly Sunday worship (the eighth day), as developed in the Roman assembly, was merged with the identity of the Sovereign's day. This transformation also occasioned the expansion of the Eucharist into a weekly (if not daily) occurrence. For more information see our discussion in *FSDY*, 3.

Rupert of Deutz (12th century C.E.), as an example, notes that many Christians believed “that on the first day of the week the sovereign rose” and that “this is why it is called the day of the sovereign’s resurrection.”⁶⁴ Gaudentius of Brescia (died 406 C.E.) likewise states that the messiah rose “on the Sovereign’s day, which the Scriptures call the first day of the week.”⁶⁵ Archaeus (late second century C.E.), meanwhile, in a discussion about the Sovereign’s day, comments:

For on that day (the Sovereign’s day), the mystery of the resurrection, of unchangeable hope, and of inheriting the kingdom was established. At this time, the sovereign (Yahushua) triumphed over humanity’s enemy—death—his body having been revived, which will never die any more but with the *ruach* continues on unchangeable. This is the body, enveloped with glory, which he offered to the father, when the gates of heaven opened to him.⁶⁶

We also have an indirect report of a statement made in the original works of Irenaeus. This report mentions an early Christian tradition of not kneeling in prayer on the Sovereign’s day,⁶⁷ which began during so-called apostolic times (i.e., before 133 C.E.).⁶⁸ This custom was based upon the connection between the Sovereign’s day and the messiah’s resurrection. We read:

Not kneeling on the Sovereign’s day is a symbol of the resurrection through which by the messiah’s grace we have been freed from our sins and from the death they made us die. The aforesaid custom had its beginning from apostolic times, says the blessed Irenaeus, the martyr and bishop of Lyons, in his book *On Phasekh*. In it he also mentions the Pentecost, during which we do not kneel, since it is the equivalent of the Sovereign’s day, for the aforementioned reason.⁶⁹

Just how early the Sovereign’s day was recognized by Christians is demonstrated by the Quartodecimans, who as we have already demonstrated represent the earliest Christian practices. From their records one discovers that the conservative Quartodeciman assemblies not only observed the Phasekh on the 14th of Abib but acknowledged the Sovereign’s day as the day

⁶⁴ Rupert, 6:26.

⁶⁵ Gaudentius, *Tract.*, 1, on 3:10:13.

⁶⁶ Archaeus, frag. (PG, 5, p. 1490). In the Arabic version, the fragment is attributed to Archaeus but in the Syriac version it was composed by Irenaeus (see EEC, p. 147, #31).

⁶⁷ This custom is mentioned in the *Acta Pauli*, 1 (c.180 C.E.), by Tertullian, *de Orat.*, 23:1f; Origen, *150 Ps.* (GCS, 1, p. 138; EEC, p. 147); Conc. Nicaea, *Can.*, 20; Eusebius, *Pas.*, 5; and Epiphanius, *Expos. Faith*, 22:5ff.

⁶⁸ The early Christian expression “apostolic times” refers to the age of the circumcised bishops of Jerusalem, i.e., until 133 C.E., see FSDY, 2.

⁶⁹ Quoted by Ps.-Justin, 115.

of the messiah's resurrection. To demonstrate, the Coptic text of the Quarto-deciman *Epistula Apostolorum* mentions the Sovereign's day as the first day of the week, the day on which the messiah came "into being" by means of the resurrection.⁷⁰ The prominent Quartodeciman writer Melito of Sardis of the mid-second century C.E. wrote a treatise entitled *On the Sovereign's (Day)*.⁷¹ The *Didache* (early second century C.E.) instructs those in the assembly, "On the Sovereign's (day) of the sovereign, assemble in common to break bread and offer thanks."⁷² In the corresponding passage of the *Constitutiones Apostolicae*, we find the words, "the day of the resurrection of the sovereign, that is, the Sovereign's day." This document also refers to the resurrection day as "the first Sovereign's day."⁷³

Until the end of the first century C.E., the Sovereign's day was still only a once-a-year event serving as the anniversary of the messiah's resurrection.⁷⁴ Yet as time progressed, and as various Christian assemblies pressed to differentiate themselves from the Jews, a tradition built up that every Sunday should be the Sovereign's day.⁷⁵ This transition took place under the guidance of the Roman and Alexandrian assemblies. It became part of their general effort to expand the Eucharist mystery from strictly a Phasekh practice to an every Sunday event.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Epist. Apost., 17f. The conclusion that the messiah was raised early on the first day of the week is based upon the statements made in Matt., 28:1-9; Mark, 16:1-6; Luke, 24:1-7, cf., v. 13-24; John, 20:1f.

⁷¹ Eusebius, *H.E.*, 4:26:2; Hall, *Melito*, frag. 16b. The book itself is now lost to us.

⁷² *Didache*, 14:1. The unique expression, "the Sovereign's (day) of the sovereign," used in this passage, clearly refers to the resurrection day connected with the Phasekh season and not, as some have glossed, to the weekly Sovereign's day. In the early centuries C.E. Christians still utilized the sacred name Yahweh, which name was expunged from later copies of these early documents because it was considered too sacred to utter. Returned to its original form, the statement would read, "the Sovereign's (day) of Yahweh."

⁷³ Apost. Constit., 5:20.

⁷⁴ The idea that the Sovereign's day for early Christians was originally every Sunday is a popular but common misnomer built out of theological wishful thinking. The expression τῆ κυριακῆ ἡμέρᾳ (*te kuriake hemera*; the Sovereign's day) is found in that form only once in all of Scriptures (Rev., 1:10). In this single passage it is clear that John the divine is speaking only of the day of the *omer* wave offering or resurrection day and not the first day of any particular week. The association with the first day of the week comes when the Scriptures claim that a day with Yahweh is as a thousand years and the Judgment Day is to be determined in this fashion (Ps., 84:10, 90:4; 1 Pet., 2:9, 3:7-13, esp. v. 8). In turn, the Judgment Day follows the great thousand-year long Sabbath reign of the messiah (Heb., 3:7-4:13, esp. 4:9; cf., Rev., 20:4-8). Since the great thousand-year Sabbath reign of the messiah was equated with the seventh day of the week (Heb., 3:7-4:13, esp. 4:4-7), the Judgment Day was the eighth day. The connection between the Sovereign's day and the eighth day, accordingly, was emphasized by early Christian writers (see FSDY, 3). The *Epistula Apostolorum*, for example, in reference to the resurrection day, quotes the messiah as saying, "I have come into being on the eighth (day) which is the Sovereign's day" (Epist. Apost., 18).

At the end of the second century C.E., the definition for the Sovereign's day was expanded to every Sunday under the guise that it represented the eighth day. This idea was built upon an earlier Roman Christian innovation of worshiping on Sunday. Justin Martyr, for instance, writes, "For the first day after the Sabbath, remaining the first of all days, is called however the eighth, according to the number of all the days of the cycle, and yet it remains the first" (Justin Mart., *Trypho*, 41:4). This interpretation was then utilized by the Roman and Alexandrian assemblies as a reason to drop the Sabbath day and replace it with the Sovereign's day for a weekly celebration. See FSDY, 3, for more details.

⁷⁵ See FSDY, 3.

⁷⁶ See FSDY, 2.

Conclusion

The evidence presented so far reveals conclusively that the early Christian assemblies not only continued the observance of Pentecost but calculated it based upon the Aristocratic method. This detail advances the knowledge that the first Christian assemblies observed the Aristocratic systems for both the Phasekh and Pentecost. This fact is our first indication that the earliest Christians believed that the ancient Zadokite or Aristocratic observances of the Khag of Phasekh and Unleavened Bread and the Khag of Pentecost were the original and intended observances of the Torah of Moses.

At the same time, another most revealing factor has been brought to light. The day of the *omer* wave offering, being the day of the messiah's resurrection and identified as the Sovereign's day, was one and the same with the day celebrated by the western Christian assemblies for their Phasekh Eucharist. This fact compels us to explore the influence of the Christian Pentecost and the day of the *omer* wave offering upon the development of the western Christian systems for the Phasekh of the resurrection (Phasekh Sunday).