

The Two Pentecosts

Read the following article about the Jewish Feast of Pentecost. Then fill in the chart drawing parallels between the two feasts.

Shavuot

The Jews celebrated three major Jewish feasts: Passover, Pentecost, and Sukkot (Tabernacles). Males over the age of eighteen who lived within twenty-five miles of Jerusalem were obliged to journey to the Temple to celebrate these feasts.

Pentecost means “the fiftieth day.” The Jewish Feast of Pentecost falls on the fiftieth day after Passover. Fifty days is seven weeks, so the feast is also called Shavuot, the Festival of Weeks. Originally Pentecost was a harvest feast. On the day after Passover, the firstfruits of the barley harvest were offered at the Temple. Fifty days later on Pentecost, the firstfruits of the wheat harvest were offered there. These two offerings and a “sacred assembly” on those two days were prescribed in chapter 23 of Leviticus.

When the Temple was destroyed and offerings could no longer be made there, Pentecost became a celebration of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. By binding themselves to live by the Commandments, the Israelites became God’s own people. Because days to Pentecost are counted from Passover, which commemorates the Exodus, Pentecost is linked to God’s saving his people by the blood of the Lamb.

Jews observe Shavuot by not working, staying up the entire first night studying the Torah, eating a dairy meal at least once during the Shavuot, and reading the Book of Ruth.

Shavuot	Christian Pentecost

