

How to Prepare for Pentacost / B. Strong 2023

A – The meaning of Shavuot

Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks, and Pentacost are all synonymous.

Shavuot is short for Hag Shavuot, which means Festival of the Weeks. It marks the beginning of the wheat harvest, as well as the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai.

The name Feast of Weeks applies because the scripture says to count seven weeks (49 days) to the day after the seventh sabbath (making it 50 days) after Passover. And that's where we get the word Pentacost, since Pente in Greek means five, and pentekoste means fifty.

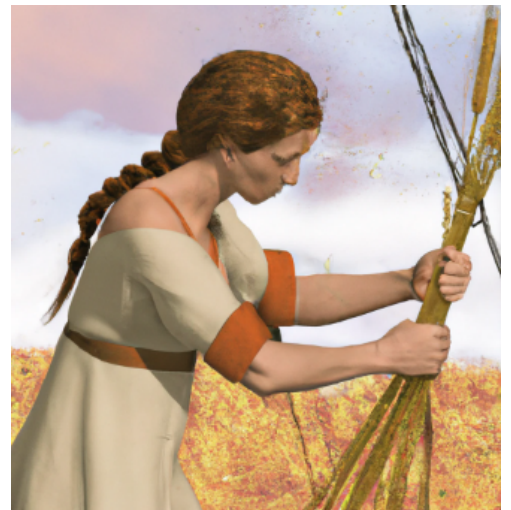
B - Orthodox Jewish Traditions on Shavout

B1 - Counting the Omer

'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. ¹⁶ Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. (Leviticus 23:15,16)

The counting from the day after the Sabbath (after Passover) to Shavuot is called the Counting of the Omer. An 'Omer' is a sheaf of grain. At top right you can see a woman binding up sheaves of wheat.

We can count the Omer in different ways, but it is a count down from First Fruits to Shavuot.



B2 – Reflecting on the Giving of the Law at Sinai

The Torah portion recited by Orthodox Jews for this holiday is Exodus 19:1-20:23 (which includes the ten commandments), and Numbers 28:26-31. The Haftora portion is Ezekiel 1:1-28, which is the passage about the four-faced angelic beings.

The counting of the Omer from a Jewish perspective is counting down from First Fruits to Shavuot, when the Law was given at Mount Sinai.

Sinai is also the event where God made communicated to Israel that they would be His chosen people. There were 70 nations at the Tower of Babel, when He divided their tongues. Now He had consecrated a new nation as His own.



B3 - Reading the Book of Ruth

The book of Ruth on this holiday because Ruth is set in the time of a harvest, and she was a pagan woman who said to Naomi, when Naomi told her to go back to her people.

“Entreat me not to leave you, *Or to turn back from following after you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, And your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, And there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, If *anything but* death parts you and me.”*

So Naomi put her trust in God, even as the Jews put their trust in God, and we put our trust in God.



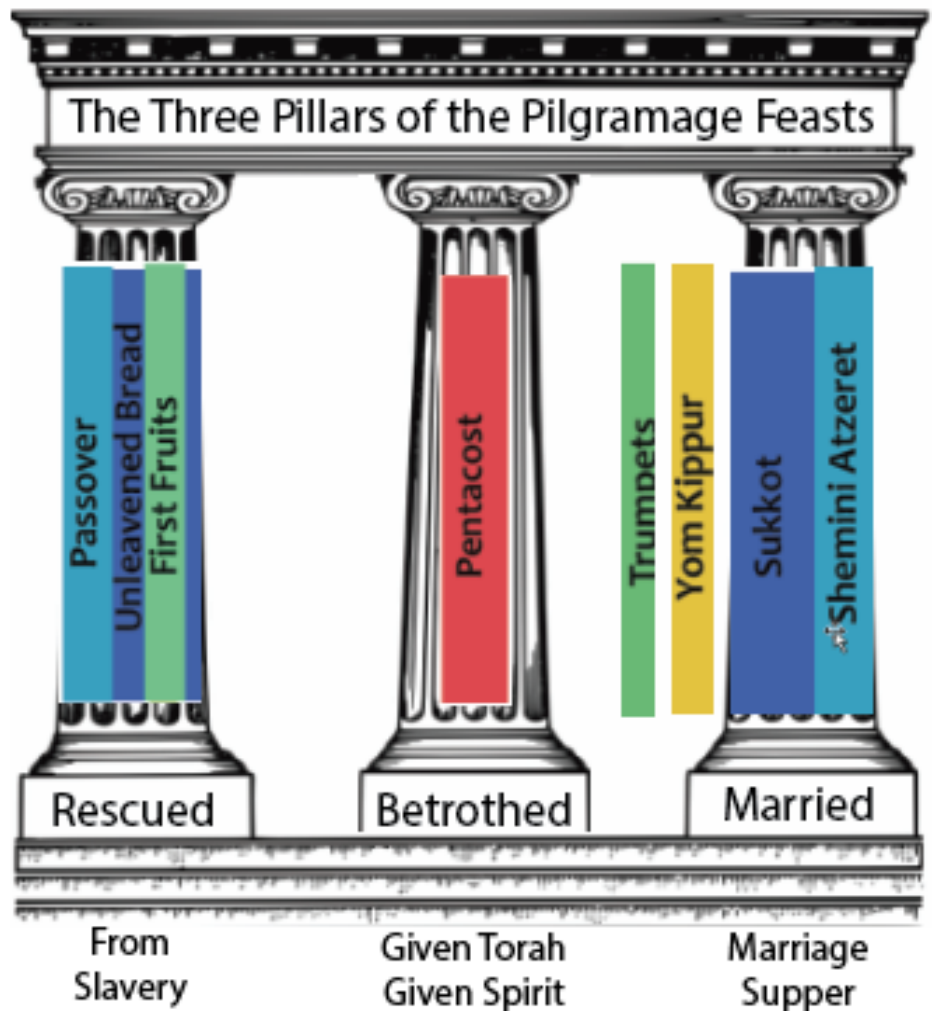
C - The Three Pilgrimage Feasts

Deuteronomy 16:16 - “Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed.”

As you can see from the illustration at right, Pentacost, or Shavout, or the Feast of Weeks, is the middle pillar of the three pillars.

The first and the last pillars are of course very important; we look back to when we were slaves in Egypt and to sin, and in truth we still struggle with sin. We look forward to being glorified and fully adopted as sons and daughters of the living God, and sitting at the Marriage supper of the Lamb.

But the second pillar is the one in which Israel was given the Torah, God’s teachings and instructions – in which Israel was chosen as God’s special nation, and betrothed as a



people which we are grafted into, and in which we were given the Holy Spirit as a seal and evidence that we are indeed adopted.

D - We Are Like an Egyptian Slave Girl



We, and Israel, are like a sinful slave girl who had no hope. But we were rescued from our bondage by the most amazing hero in the universe, who somehow loves us, promises to marry us, and gives us a book which explains how to live righteously, and a Holy Spirit guide to comfort us until it's time for the marriage. One day, we will exchange these tired old imperfect bodies for a glorified body, feast with Him at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and dwell with our perfect Savior in Eternity. Our Hero will even come on a white horse.

It's this second pillar of Shavuot that gives us the Torah and the Holy Spirit. These are the wonderful gifts needed to complete our journey. But in that journey, it's important for us to remember our humble beginnings as an Egyptian slave girl.



E - The Commandments in the Old Testament

The ten commandments are a summary of 613 commandments in the first five books of Moses. Some of these 613 commandments are easy to understand and keep, others are more difficult.

All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16,17)

Leviticus 19:14, for example, shows me how God cares for the disabled:

You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind, but shall fear your God: I *am* the LORD.

You can imagine how people might see a deaf person and have a little sport by yelling curses at them, knowing that they cannot hear.

Or putting a stumbling block in front of a blind person to watch them fall. How God must hate that kind of cruel sport. And many more of God's teachings give us specific examples how we should treat others.



F - The Teachings of the New Testament and the Holy Spirit

There are some 1200 teachings or commands in the New Testament. For example, avoiding the works of the flesh, and bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5).

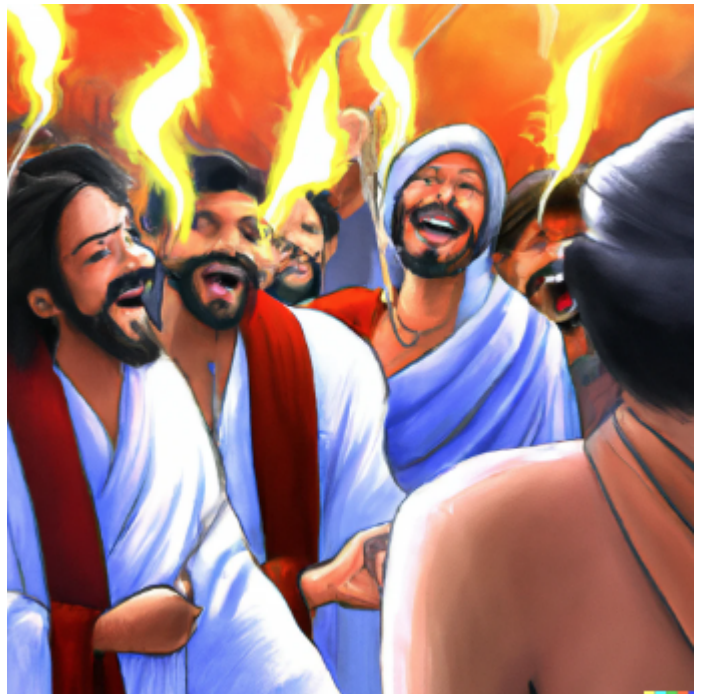
F1 - Counting the Omer from the Crucifixion to Pentacost

From a Christian perspective, another way to Count the Omer is to count from the day Yeshua was resurrected to the day that the Holy Spirit was given at Pentacost in Acts 2.

So there are really two major events that the counting of the Omer can signify. The first is waving of the grain offering on First Fruits as the children of Israel were fleeing Egypt and then fifty days later received the Law on Mount Sinai.

The second is from resurrection day, First Fruits, when Yeshua came out of the tomb until He sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in the apostles and those gathered and waiting in Jerusalem (Acts 2).

So, to me, Shavuot or Pentacost is really all about the Word of God and the Spirit of God – and we need them both in order to change.



F2 - The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit was prophesied in the days of Ezekiel.

²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*. (Ezekiel 36:27)

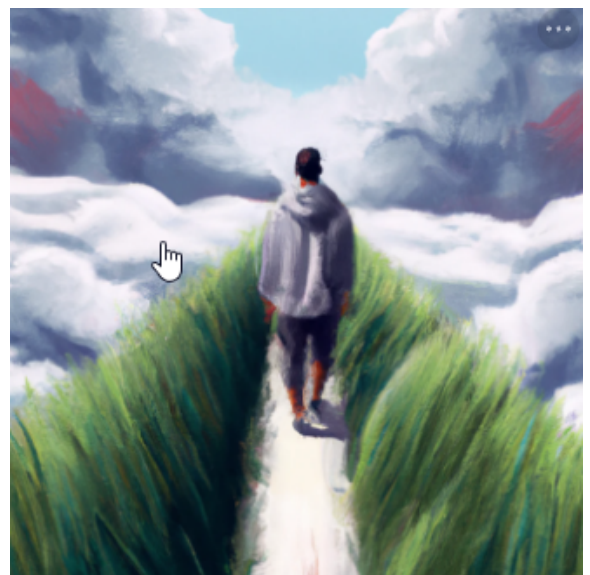
F3 - Walking in the Spirit

The book of Galatians invites us to walk in the Spirit, who guides us and convicts us in our behavior.

¹⁶ I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. (Galatians 5:16-18)

The book of Galatians invites us to avoid the works of the flesh and do bear the fruit of the Spirit.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22,23)



F4 - The Holy Spirit is a Seal

¹³ In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:13,14)



G - Our Situation Before Salvation

So what was our situation before we were saved? Our body is like a carriage, drawn by our emotions represented by horses, who are under the guidance of our intellect, represented by the driver, who uses his will to get the emotions to fall into line, represented by the reins and the whip. And it's all in bondage to sin, represented by the demonic black birds.

But who is inside the carriage? For the unsaved, a dead spirit man. But when we accept Yeshua as our savior, the master awakens, and the demonic bondage to sin is broken, through the work of Yeshua on the cross and His resurrection! Though, we sometimes, because of our flesh and habits, behave as if the bonds were still there.

Our challenge as the spirit-man master is to calm the horses of emotion, instruct the driver of intellect what to do and how to care for the carriage body. Our spirit man needs to take control over the carriage, and not leave it to the emotional horses or the intellect of the driver. The proper order is that the spirit-man master should call the shots, and the master is guided by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.



H - Contentment

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. (1 Timothy 6:5-8)

What does it say about a Christian who is not content with his or her station in life and life circumstances? We who have been adopted by the King of the Universe, and promised Eternal life in Paradise, which will take place in a very short time, seeing that this earthly existence is but a vapor? But if we trust in God and hold fast to Him, let the earth spin around in a great haste; but let us be still and know He will make all things right in His good time. Let us accept the things that we cannot change.

The scripture says that Paul had learned to be content. He *learned* it.

Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹² I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Phillipians 4:11-13)

H1 – The Cardboard Box of Our Life’s Circumstances

In *The Art of Divine Contentment*, the Puritan Thomas Watson asks us to consider if we’re focused on the cardboard box of our earthly existence – all our physical limitations, failures, weaknesses and troubles. Because when life becomes difficult, that’s what’s right in front of us.

And if we are focused on that cardboard box of this temporal life, things can look a little bleak.



H2 – Focus on the Incredible Jewel Inside of the Cardboard Box

Or we can choose to focus on the incredible Jewel we carry inside the box:

- Forgiveness of Sin
- The Seal of the Holy Spirit of God
- Adoption by the Father through the Son
- Marriage to the Lamb
- New Heavens and a New Earth where righteousness dwells
- New Jerusalem come down from Heaven
- Life in Paradise and Life Eternal in the presence of the King of the Universe

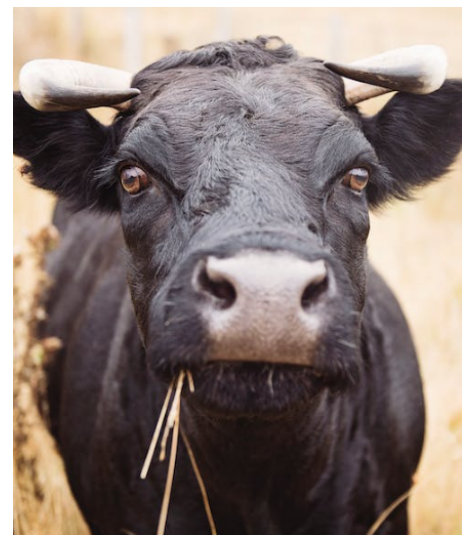


J - Meditating on the Word of God (There’s no ‘i’)

Meditating on the Word of God is like a cow chewing the cud. A cow eats grass, chews it, digests it, regurgitates it, re-chews it, reswallows it, in a process called ‘Rumination’. This allows them to eat grass more completely, improving digestion, and ultimately producing milk.

We can do this with the Word of God by taking a verse at a time, even a sentence or a phrase at a time, and repeating it over and over to ourselves, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to us what it means, how we might apply it in practice, how we can walk it out.

Scriptures encourage us to meditate on the Word. Joshua 1 says ‘This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success’. Psalm 1 says ‘But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night’.



In this way we digest the word. Eating it too fast, we do not properly digest the Word, and fail to get the full meaning, impact and application.

J1 - Make the meditation practical

The apostle James invites us to use the Word of God as a mirror to compare to our own behavior:

¹⁹ So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; ²⁰ for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

²¹ Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (This reminds me of Psalm 19, which says “The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul”).

²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ²⁵ But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:19-25)



So what this means to me is that when we read God’s incredible Word, we measure ourselves against it, and where we see that we are not measuring up to it, we resolve to change our behavior. We don’t just see the truth and accept that we’re not there yet and walk away; we see our specific lack and resolve to work towards lining up our lives with the Word.

J2 - Stars on the Calendar and Tips from the Puritans

Recently Asa and I were working on our character, so we decided to give ourselves a star on the calendar for each day we did not talk about other people. After about a week, we both had a few stars on some of the days; then the next day I picked her up at the bus station, and as she got into the car, she said “Oh, I’m just dying to tell you what happened at work today, but I don’t want to lose my star!” – can you see how making changes based on God’s word can actually work?

Meditation on the Word of God was a common practice amongst the Puritans, and they wrote of it often. Sadly, you rarely hear of this discipline today; perhaps it’s a sign of our fast-paced, instant gratification culture.

The Puritans in their many writings on the subject had a few recommendations:

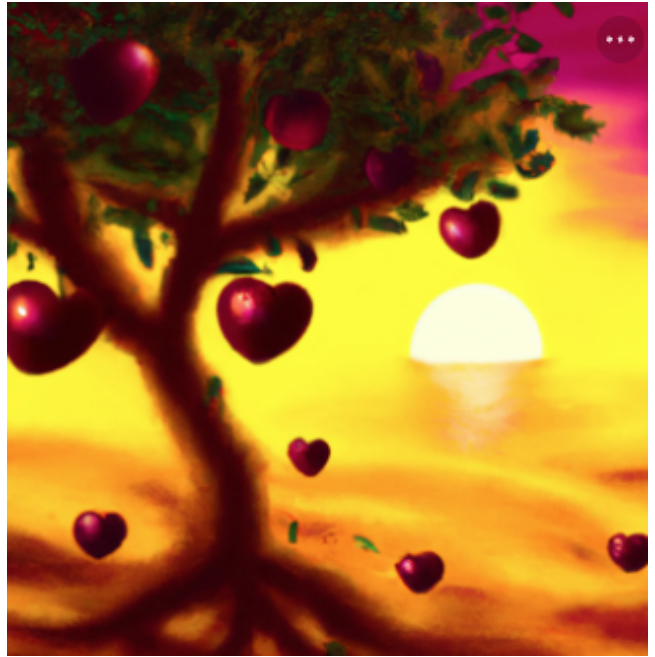
- Occasional meditation on the Word is good, but regular, deliberate meditation is better.
- Meditate on one thing at a time – keep it simple.
- Meditate on scriptures having to do with issues you are struggling with; for example, there are many verses that give us counsel in dealing with anger or lust.
- Meditate on God’s Glory, God’s Judgement, the Gospel, Yeshua’s sacrifice.
- Meditate on what a waste sin is and its eternal consequences.
- Choose topics that are profitable and practical rather than topics that are more speculative.

J2 - Meditation Example

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22,23)

As I read and memorize that verse, I ponder, how well am I bearing the fruit of the Spirit in my daily life? And the word longsuffering helps me understand the kind of patience I need to develop. I ponder the situations in the past where I have been impatient, and ponder what the result of that impatience was. It never produced fruit. I ponder how I can endure, suffer through those irritating situations with more grace for the sake of my witness to those around me.

I desire to line my life and behavior up with what scripture teaches, and I resolve to change, even a little bit. I read the verse again and ponder my past success at demonstrating love, joy and peace. Yes, I could do better in those areas as well. I meditate on how I can change. I pray to God for help understanding the verse, and conforming to it, day by day.



Addendum: Shavuot and Pentacost: God disinheriting the nations, then re-inheriting them

In The Unseen Realm, Michael Heiser makes the case for God disinheriting the nations at Babel, making a covenant with Israel at Sinai, and re-inheriting the nations through the work Yeshua did on the cross, through His resurrection, and through the work of the Holy Spirit at Pentacost in Acts 2. Here are some of the key verses involved, so follow this incredible story.

Genesis 11:7-9 – When God divided the peoples of the earth into languages and nations

Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." ...there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Deuteronomy 4:19,20 – God gave the nations over to the worship of lesser gods

¹⁹ And *take heed*, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and *when* you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage. ²⁰ But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be His people, an inheritance, as you are this day.

Deuteronomy 32:8,9 – Why there were 70 nations – the number of the angels of God

⁸ When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, When He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the [Ⓜ]children of Israel (DSS: angels of God).
⁹ For the LORD's portion *is* His people; Jacob *is* the place of His inheritance. (*70 nations noted in Genesis 10*)

Psalms 82 – The Divine Council, God will judge the gods, and inherit the nations

82 God stands in the congregation of [Ⓜ]the mighty; He judges among the [Ⓜ]gods...⁶ I said, "You *are* [Ⓜ]gods, And all of you *are* children of the Most High. ⁷ But you shall die like men, And fall like one of the princes." ⁸ Arise, O God, judge the earth; For You shall inherit all nations.

Exodus 19:4-6 – Keep My Covenant – and be a Kingdom of Priests

⁴ ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. ⁶ And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

Isaiah 42:6 – Israel will be a light to the nations

“I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand;
I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles

Acts 2 – Pentacost - Jews from every nation heard the speech each in their own language

Jews from every nation under heaven came together for Pentacost, and understood the Galilean’s, each in their own language (Parthians, Medes, Elamites, from Asia, Egypt, Libya, Cretans and Arabs.

Luke 20:34-36 – Those counted worthy to attain that age will be called sons of God

³⁵ But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; ³⁶ nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

Isaiah 66:18 – God will re-inherit the nations

... It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory.

Acts 1:8 – You shall receive power, and be witnesses to Me to the end of the earth

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.”

Romans 11:25 – Until the fullness of the Gentiles (Nations) has come in

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own [□]opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Note: The Bibliography has a few really good books – The last three are especially recommended; I listened to the last two as audio books from Audible.com – and it’s worth knowing that some audio books are “included” in an Audible membership and come at no cost. You can just ‘Search’ books, and for example, use “included” and “Puritans” and it will show you a list of what books are included.

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