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COUNTING FOR PENTECOST WHEN THE LAST DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD IS A SATURDAY

The various church of God organizations almost all start the count for Pentecost, CORRECTLY SO, from the Sunday during the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread. An exception to this is the Church of the Great God with John Ritenbaugh. When the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread is a Saturday, as it will be ACCORDING TO THE JEWISH CALENDAR next year, then John starts the counting for Pentecost from the Sunday morning AFTER the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread. In so doing he is starting his count for Pentecost ONE WEEK TOO LATE, and he is at variance with most of the other organizations that also still accept the present Jewish calendar in an unqualified way.

Next year, the year 2001, is such a year when this will happen. So next year the Church of the Great God will keep Pentecost ONE WEEK LATER than all the other churches that still accept the present Jewish calendar. When about two years ago I became aware of John's reasoning for his way of counting in this type of circumstance, I sent him a private message stating many reasons why I believe his way of counting is in conflict with biblical instructions. John has now made a lengthy tape devoted to defending his way of counting for Pentecost, which tape is being circulated at this point in time. So I will in this article expound the same points that I presented to John about two years ago, and then you can judge for yourself how Pentecost should be counted under such circumstances.

[Comment: I have referred to counting "according to the Jewish calendar" for the year 2001 for a specific reason. The Jewish calendar totally ignores real new moons, relying instead on an averaged-out formula that is at times as much as 15 hours out of step with reality. For next year the formula used by the Jewish calendar places the seven Days of Unleavened Bread from SUNDAY, April 8 to SATURDAY, April 14. This makes "THE SUNDAY" during Unleavened Bread the FIRST DAY of Unleavened Bread. But John starts his counting for Pentecost from Sunday, April 15. IF the Jewish calendar was correct next year, THEN the counting for Pentecost should really start from SUNDAY, APRIL 8, which is the way almost all the other churches (apart from CGG) do it.

However, when we consider the REAL new moons next year, then the Days of Unleavened Bread will go from MONDAY, April 9 to SUNDAY, April 15. In this case "THE SUNDAY" during Unleavened Bread will be THE SEVENTH DAY of Unleavened Bread. And FOR THIS REASON we, who reject the present Jewish calendar, will arrive at the exact same day for Pentecost as CGG. So we will keep the Passover and all Seven Days of Unleavened Bread one day later than CGG, but we will arrive at the same date for Pentecost. This is pure coincidence, as the Jewish calendar just so happens to place Nisan 1 one day too early for a year in which THEY place the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread on a Saturday. This will not normally be the case.

I mention this because, while in practice for next year I will keep Pentecost on the same day as John Ritenbaugh, IN RELATIONSHIP TO WHEN HE KEEPS THE PASSOVER AND THE SEVEN DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD HIS DAY FOR PENTECOST WILL BE WRONG! In relationship to when HE will keep the Passover, his date for Pentecost will be ONE WEEK TOO LATE! That same day for Pentecost will be CORRECT in relationship to the day when WE will keep the Passover. THE RELATIONSHIP between when we keep the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, and when we keep Pentecost is extremely important.

So the fact that we will keep Pentecost on the same day as CGG next year (i.e. June 3 instead of the May 27 date determined by the Jewish calendar), does not in any way remove the error in CGG's arrival

at this date. THE RELATIONSHIP between the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread on the one hand, and Pentecost on the other hand is of GREATER importance than the actual date itself. The "right date" for Pentecost with an incorrect relationship to Passover and Unleavened Bread is not really "the right date" at all!

[In this article I will explain how we should CORRECTLY count for Pentecost when the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread happens to be a Saturday, without regard for whether the Jewish calendar has placed the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread correctly or not.]

So let's examine this question.

THE ISSUE

In this situation, when the First Day of Unleavened Bread is a Sunday and the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread is a Saturday, how are we to count "from the morrow after the (weekly) Sabbath"?

There are ONLY TWO POSSIBLE OPTIONS ... and only one of them will be the right one. Those options are:

EITHER:

We take the PASSOVER as being in this case referenced as "the weekly Sabbath" and thus the "morrow after" will be the First Day of Unleavened Bread, a Sunday.

OR:

We take the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread as being in this case referenced as "the weekly Sabbath" and thus the "morrow after" will be the first day AFTER the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread have concluded, a Sunday.

IF the second situation is the correct one, THEN Pentecost will in such a year be exactly one week later than if the first situation is the correct one.

What is the answer here? Let's see what the Church has historically done to deal with this situation.

THE HISTORICAL VIEW OF THIS ISSUE:

Until 1973 inclusive the Worldwide Church of God observed (wrongly so!) the Day of Pentecost on a Monday. At the same time the Church ALSO felt that the key point about "the (weekly)

Sabbath" in this matter of counting for Pentecost was that THE SABBATH must be within the Days of Unleavened Bread. The fact that "the morrow after" would then sometimes be OUTSIDE OF the Days of Unleavened Bread was not perceived as a problem by the Church.

In 1974, after a lengthy process, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong finally acknowledged that his method of counting (i.e. exclusive counting) was incompatible with the biblical instructions. Even then Mr. Armstrong took great pains to point out that FROM HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (!) the expression "to count FROM" implied "counting exclusive of the starting point", i.e. "counting AWAY FROM", not including the first Sunday in the counting process. [He had also been partly influenced by the bias that God wouldn't want His Holy Days falling on the day of the pagan sun-god, which seemed to make sense to us "anti-sun-god" people.]

IN THIS HE HAD BEEN CLEARLY WRONG! THE HEBREW TRANSLATED AS "COUNT FROM" SHOULD IN THIS VERSE BE MORE ACCURATELY TRANSLATED AS "COUNT BEGINNING WITH"!

So shortly before Pentecost in 1974 the Church changed its teaching about Pentecost from a Monday to a Sunday.

AT THE SAME TIME WE ALSO CAME TO UNDERSTAND SOMETHING ELSE ABOUT THE COUNTING PROCESS!

And this "something" was how to count in those years where the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread is a weekly Sabbath day.

This we came to understand FROM TWO DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES, both of which helped us to reach THE SAME CONCLUSION. Those two different perspectives are:

- 1) From the instructions in Leviticus 23 when viewed with Joshua chapter 5.
- 2) From the significance of "THE MORROW AFTER THE SABBATH".

Understand that of these two reasons THE BIBLICAL INSTRUCTIONS must OBVIOUSLY come first. It is only after the biblical instructions have been clearly understood that THEN "the significance of the morrow after the Sabbath" becomes an added consideration. However, for the record, even in the "Pentecost Study Paper" that was sent to the ministry of the Worldwide Church of God in 1974 it was stated that Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong had mentioned in a conference with various leading ministers that he, Mr. Armstrong himself, believed that "it was imperative that the wave sheaf be offered DURING the Days of Unleavened Bread since Jesus Christ (the ante-type) was offered up to the Father on a Sunday DURING those days" (my emphasis, see page 52 of the Study Paper). So THE SIGNIFICANCE of why the counting must start during the Days of Unleavened Bread has been understood by the ministry since 1974!

The Pentecost Study Paper shows quite clearly that MR. ARMSTRONG HIMSELF MADE THIS DECISION, BECAUSE HE HAD COME TO A CLEARER UNDERSTANDING! HE HAD NOT BEEN "PRESSURED" INTO THIS DECISION AT ALL! Mr. Armstrong had come to understand that the symbolism REQUIRED the Sunday on which the counting is to start to be WITHIN the Days of Unleavened Bread.

THE PRECISE BIBLICAL INSTRUCTIONS

In Leviticus 23:10 we have the following instruction for the people of Israel:

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, WHEN YE BE COME INTO THE LAND WHICH I GIVE UNTO YOU, AND SHALL REAP THE HARVEST THEREOF, THEN YE SHALL BRING A SHEAF OF THE FIRSTFRUITS OF YOUR HARVEST UNTO THE PRIEST" (Leviticus 23:10)

Here we find an instruction that would only be implemented for the first time AFTER the people of Israel had crossed into the Promised Land. It was not an instruction they were to put into practice at the time God gave it to them through Moses.

This is important to understand!

Here God was spelling out all of the annual Feasts and Holy Days to Israel, BUT He gave them ONE instruction that they were NOT to put into practice UNTIL after they had crossed the Jordan. The expression "WHEN YOU BECOME INTO THE LAND" is a clear reference to "WHEN YOU HAVE CROSSED THE JORDAN RIVER ..."!

This instruction was to be followed AFTER they had crossed the Jordan, and then it was to be carried out every year thereafter.

Next, let's take a closer look at this verse.

The Hebrew word for "harvest" is "qatsiy" and it is used TWICE in this verse. It is a common practice in Hebrew to add the applicable pronouns to the end of a noun in the form of suffixes. This is also the case here in this verse. We'll see both the suffixes used here in a moment. So now notice the following points:

1) God said that this would apply to the land WHICH HE WOULD GIVE TO ISRAEL! God's emphasis in this statement is clearly that HE HIMSELF would be giving this land to them. God owned the land and it was HIS to give to whomsoever He chose.

2) Then God said: "... AND YOU SHALL REAP THE HARVEST THEREOF". The Hebrew here is "qatsiy-ah", which is the possessive singular pronoun that is appended to the noun. It literally means "the harvest OF IT". This is acknowledged in Green's Literal Translation, which renders this verse as follows:

Speak to the sons of Israel, and you shall say to them, When you come in to the land which I [am] giving to you, and have reaped ITS HARVEST, and have brought in the sheaf, or the beginning of your harvest, to the priest, (Leviticus 23:10 LIT)

Now notice:

The emphasis is on "ITS HARVEST"! The emphasis is NOT on "YOUR harvest"! What is emphasised is that it is "the harvest OF THE LAND". There is no reference one way or the other as to who might have "planted" that harvest. The focus is purely on what THE LAND, which GOD would give to them, HAS PRODUCED.

3) Then we come to the next part of this verse, which reads: "THEN you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of YOUR harvest unto the priest". The Hebrew here is "qatsiy-chem", which is the possessive plural pronoun that is appended to the noun. It literally means "of YOUR (plural) harvest".

When we put these three parts of this verse together, here is what God is telling us:

- 1) God Himself would give them a land to take over.
- 2) They would reap the harvest OF THAT LAND.
- 3) "Reaping" is the ONLY agricultural activity that God refers to in this context.
- 4) Once THEY had done the reaping, THEN it had obviously become "THEIR" harvest.
- 5) The expression "YOUR harvest" is a reference to OWNERSHIP, not to the production process. Once they TOOK the harvest to themselves, it had ipso facto become "THEIR" harvest.

6) When God said He would GIVE them the land, that OBVIOUSLY included EVERYTHING that was ON the land (e.g. crops and trees and houses) and UNDER the land (e.g. minerals), except for anything that God would SPECIFICALLY lay claim to (e.g. all the wealth of the city of Jericho).

7) God clearly referred to a sequence of events in this verse: first they had to come into the land that God would give them. THEN they would have to reap the harvest OF THE LAND. And ONLY THEN had it become THEIR harvest, from which they could bring the wave sheaf.

Now let's continue with verse 11:

And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: ON THE MORROW AFTER THE SABBATH the priest shall wave it. (Leviticus 23:11 AV)

Notice that "a day AFTER A SABBATH" is here referred to, BUT THAT SABBATH IS HERE NOT REALLY IDENTIFIED! Can we see this? Immediately before this God had spoken about THE PASSOVER (verse 5) AND THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD (verses 6-8). The Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread are obviously adjacent without any gaps between them. But no "Sabbath" has been referred to in any way leading up to verse 11. What this means is that we need to let God tell us ELSEWHERE precisely how this "Sabbath" is to be defined. We cannot simply read a specific definition for this "Sabbath" into this section of Scripture, when God did not define this "Sabbath" in this passage.

Next, let's also ask ourselves this question:

WHICH DAY IS IMPORTANT TO GOD? WHICH DAY IS GOD FOCUSING ATTENTION ON ... "THE SABBATH" OR "THE DAY AFTER THE SABBATH"?

It should be clear that the day which is here IMPORTANT TO GOD is "the day AFTER the Sabbath", because THAT is the day on which something is to happen! "The Sabbath" is here mentioned ONLY as "a reference point" for determining the day God wishes to single out for attention, but apart from that "the Sabbath" in this context remains anonymous and in the background. This "Sabbath" here is not singled out for any attention of any kind; it is nothing more than "a reference point" without any specific importance being attached to it here in this context.

Realize also that ONLY ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TWO OPTIONS IS POSSIBLE:

Either:

THE SABBATH will ALWAYS be within the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread and as a result "the day AFTER the Sabbath" will sometimes be "the day AFTER the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread", which is not a day that is in ANY way connected with the Passover or the Days of Unleavened Bread, and which has no significance of any kind.

Or:

"THE DAY AFTER THE SABBATH" will ALWAYS be within the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread, and as a result "THE SABBATH" will sometimes be "the day BEFORE the First Day of Unleavened Bread, which is THE PASSOVER DAY, which is very intimately connected with the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread, and which has enormous significance in its own right!

So IF the Sabbath is ALWAYS within the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread, then SOMETIMES the

wave offering is relegated to a totally insignificant day, the day AFTER the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread have been concluded. But IF "the day AFTER the Sabbath" is always within the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread, then SOMETIMES that Sabbath will fall on the highly significant day of the Passover.

So once again: which day is important to God in Leviticus 23:10-11 ... "the Sabbath" or "the day AFTER the Sabbath"?

Verses 12 and 13 then present specific instructions which the priests were to carry out on "this day AFTER the Sabbath".

Then notice verse 14:

AND YE SHALL EAT NEITHER BREAD, NOR PARCHED CORN, NOR GREEN EARS, UNTIL THE SELFSAME DAY THAT YE HAVE BROUGHT AN OFFERING UNTO YOUR GOD; it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings." (Leviticus 23:14)

So here we have A VERY SPECIFIC INSTRUCTION FOR THE ISRAELITES, which is referenced to nothing other than "THIS DAY AFTER THE SABBATH"! It is an instruction that pertains to NOT EATING SOMETHING VERY SPECIFIC until something had been fulfilled.

So to recap:

1) Here we have an instruction that they were not to eat any of the old produce of the land or any of the first-ripe ears of the new crop UNTIL this "wave offering" had been brought. So their "eating" is referenced to "the wave offering".

2) The "wave offering" in turn is identified only by a certain "SABBATH DAY" because it is to be brought on the day AFTER this specific Sabbath day. But thus far this specific "Sabbath day" hasn't even been PRECISELY identified for us; it has only been referred to AFTER God first discussed the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread.

3) However, what emerges from both these points is that WHAT IS IMPORTANT, and the day on which God is focussing VERY SPECIFICALLY, is "the day AFTER the Sabbath".

Next, what is important to understand about this instruction is that there would be ONLY ONE SINGLE APPLICATION FOR THIS INSTRUCTION in verse 14! It was only going to be applied ONE SINGLE TIME! Can we understand this? There would be ONLY ONE SINGLE TIME in their history after crossing the Jordan when they would be in the position of NOT eating OLD PRODUCE before a certain event had taken place. EVERY SUBSEQUENT YEAR they would of necessity be ALL ALONG eating "the old produce from the previous harvest". And very obviously they would also VERY SOON AFTER ENTERING THE LAND be eating some of the NEW crop (i.e. "the green ears").

That "ONE TIME" in their history would be when they crossed over the Jordan into the Promised

Land. Thereafter they would ALWAYS (!) and REGULARLY (!) eat of the old corn from previous harvests! After the initial crossing into the Promised Land the Israelites would always keep over some dried grains as food for the following year. That is the very purpose of reaping a crop of grain!

Yes, it was to be a statute "for ever" for the people of Israel. What was to be observed "for ever" was that they were to bring a sheaf of the firstfruits to the priest for him to "wave" (Leviticus 23:10-13). But the instruction in verse 14 had ONLY ONE SINGLE APPLICATION, something which was to be observed

right in the first year of Joshua's leadership over the people of Israel ... immediately after they had first come into the land which God gave to them.

Now let's ask ourselves: WHY did God include this instruction to not eat of the old crop UNTIL a certain event had taken place, when the part about not eating of the old crop in this instruction would NEVER AGAIN have any application, after it had been carried out that one single time? Leviticus 23:14 (the old crop part of this instruction) had no application of any kind to anyone AFTER the first year of the Israelites having crossed over the Jordan.

[Comment: The text was only divided into verses much later than when it was first written. It was an unfortunate division of text that the statement ... "it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings" was included as A PART OF VERSE 14. This statement really should have become the next verse, because it applies to the whole section of verses 10-14. And what was to be "a statute for ever" was "the bringing of the wave sheaf" and "not eating of the NEW crop" until after the wave sheaf. The "eating restriction" for the "old corn" only had a one-time application. The "eating restriction" for the "new corn" would apply every subsequent year.]

Then moving on, in Leviticus 23:15-16 God instructs us exactly how we are to "count" for the Day of Pentecost. Verses 17-21 then continue with instructions for this Day of Pentecost.

So notice:

This statement in verse 14 regarding NOT EATING OF THE OLD CROPS OF THE LAND UNTIL after the wave sheaf had been brought is embedded right within all of the instructions that pertain to the counting and the observance of this Feast of Pentecost.

Clearly God INTENDED this "eating restriction" to help us to identify IN A HISTORICAL WAY which day "the wave offering" should be brought, which in turn is the day that identifies the count-down towards Pentecost. THAT is why God embedded this "eating restriction" right within the discussion of Pentecost. There is no other purpose for this "eating restriction" having been recorded and preserved.

God was using this event to convey some very specific information to us.

In plain English:

GOD INCLUDED VERSE 14 TO GIVE US A CLUE AS TO HOW WE SHOULD "COUNT" AT CERTAIN TIMES THAT MIGHT OTHERWISE BE AMBIGUOUS!

Leviticus 23:10 leads us directly to Joshua chapter 5, where they came into the land. In Joshua chapters 3-4 we see the people of Israel crossing the Jordan, and in chapter 5 we find them in the

Promised Land.

WE SHOULD EXPECT JOSHUA CHAPTER 5 TO INFORM US ABOUT THE FULFILMENT OF GOD'S INSTRUCTION IN LEVITICUS 23:14!

What we find in Joshua chapter 5 is that God instructs Joshua to circumcise all those males who had been born during the 40 years of wandering and who had not thus far been circumcised (Joshua 5:2-7). AFTER they had been circumcised, the people of Israel then kept the Passover.

Keep in mind that there was A LARGE NUMBER OF MEN, AGED BETWEEN 40 YEARS AND 59

YEARS, WHO WERE ALREADY CIRCUMCISED! It was only the men who had been older than 20 years (see Numbers 14:29) who had died in the wilderness (except for Joshua and Caleb). All the males who had been less than 20 years old at the time of Numbers chapter 14 were possibly still alive. Thus there was A LARGE NUMBER OF PRIESTS AND LEVITES, between ages 40 years and just under 60 years, who did not need to be circumcised. This means there were PLENTY of Levites available for carrying the Ark of God, and for performing ANY sacrifices or other ritual requirements that might have existed, without being in any kind of "pain" from just having been circumcised.

As we are told in Joshua 5:5:

NOW ALL THE PEOPLE THAT CAME OUT WERE CIRCUMCISED: but all the people [that were] born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, [them] they had not circumcised. (Joshua 5:5 AV)

To give you some idea of the numbers involved, consider the following:

1) When they left Egypt, there were 603550 males 20 YEARS OLD AND UP in the 11 tribes of Israel (i.e. excluding the tribe of Levi). See Numbers 1:3 and Numbers 1:46.

2) But there were in these same 11 tribes only 22273 "firstborn males", going right down to age ONE MONTH AND UP. See Numbers 3:43. This number of 22273 would therefore have included firstborn males between the ages of one month and 20 years.

3) So it is CONSERVATIVE to say that amongst 603550 males only 22273 (in actual fact some less than this!) were firstborn. Now obviously, some "firstborn" children were females. If we allow for a similar number of "female firstborn" in the nation, then we would have AN APPROXIMATE RATIO of 44546 (i.e. 22273×2) to 559000 ($603550 - 44546$) for the ratio of total firstborn to non-firstborn males. So VERY CONSERVATIVELY speaking, the likelihood of a male child being "a firstborn" was about one in 12.

A far more extreme picture emerges when we look at the likely total population of the nation, but excluding the tribe of Levi, (i.e. 600000 men above age 20 years plus 600000 women above age 20 years plus 600000 males below age 20 years plus 600000 females below age 20 years) as having been about 2,4 million people. Of this number only about 45000 were firstborn ones (22500 males and another 22500 females). So of a total population of about 2 445000 only 45000 were firstborn ones, a ratio of ONE FIRSTBORN PERSON FOR EVERY 54 PEOPLE IN THE NATION! That is an absolutely staggering figure and extremely unlikely to be correct.

HOWEVER ...

This ratio is not really important and it may well be in error. But the fact that cannot be denied is that THEY HAD A LOT OF CHILDREN! The AVERAGE, since every married couple could only have ONE "firstborn", was very likely ABOVE A DOZEN CHILDREN PER MARRIED COUPLE! This was at the time they left Egypt. And when people have such a lot of children, then it means that there was A VAST NUMBER OF PEOPLE UNDER THE AGE OF 20 YEARS AT THE TIME OF THE EXODUS. It could very possibly have been far more than the 600000 males and the 600000 females which I assumed above. The figures I have used above represent a common, conservative and not unreasonable speculation, one the Church has used in the past.

4) Shortly before they crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land, they were numbered again. But this time we have no indication of how many were firstborn; we only have total numbers. The numbers were then as follows: 601730 males from 20 years old and up for the 11 tribes (see Numbers 26:1-2, 51).

There were also 23000 Levite males from one month old and up (Numbers 26:62).

5) Now all those males over the age of 20 years died in the wilderness. But more children were also born during those 40 years. Yet at the end of the 40 years the number of males above age 20 years is approximately the same as it had been 40 years earlier (i.e. 603550 compared to 601730).

So of the approximately 600000 males that were below the age of 20 years at the time of the exodus, PERHAPS (?) as many as 400000 had also died (or perhaps even departed from the main body of Israelites?), to make allowance for all the males who had been born during the FIRST 20 YEARS in the wilderness (and who thus were from 20 years old to almost 40 years old at the end of the 40 years)? This would mean that during the first 20 years EVERY YEAR 20000 males had been born (thus 400000 after 20 years) who were still alive at the second numbering in Numbers chapter 26. Considering that female children were also being born, it would have meant that 40000 children were born every year during the first 20 years in the wilderness, a rather high ratio when you only start out with approximately 600000 women over the age of 20 years ... that's one in 15 women having a baby every year, or one in five women having a baby every three years, to start with at any rate.

[Comment: IF only 300000 or even less of the original 600000 under the age of 20 years died in the wilderness, which I personally think is more likely, then this only makes my point more strongly. I think of Numbers 14:30-31:

Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, [concerning] which I sware to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun. BUT YOUR LITTLE ONES, which ye said should be a prey, THEM WILL I BRING IN, and they shall know the land which ye have despised. (Numbers 14:30-31 AV)

SOME of those under the age of 20 years at the time of the exodus must obviously have died or otherwise "departed" from the main body of Israelites, otherwise there would be no room in the 601730 for any males who had been born during the first 20 years in the wilderness. But, if anything, this Scripture implies that A LARGE NUMBER of those who were under the age of 20 years actually went into the Promised Land. This, however, leaves far less space for "newcomers" to be included in the group of 601730 males over the age of 20 years that did end up entering the land. But that only makes my point more emphatically.]

6) The figures are really not important. They are conservative for the point I wish to make. And that is this:

THERE WERE VERY LIKELY AT LEAST AS MANY AS 200000 MALES, WHO WERE OLDER THAN 40 YEARS BY THE TIME OF JOSHUA CHAPTER 5, AND WHO DID NOT NEED TO BE CIRCUMCISED! VERY POSSIBLY THERE WERE EVEN MORE THAN 200000!

That would have meant (conservatively) a total adult male population at the time of Joshua 5 of about 400000 males between ages 20 - 40 years and another 200000 males between ages 40 - 60 years, plus only two men over the age of 60 years (Joshua and Caleb).

[Comment: The number of people UNDER the age of 20 years at the time of Joshua chapter 5 does not really concern us. These would have been the people who were born in the SECOND 20 years of their wandering. The males amongst them would obviously also have been circumcised by Joshua.]

7) Thus we should recognize the following:

A) Besides Joshua and Caleb, there were ALL THE WOMEN IN THE NATION PLUS ABOUT 200000 MALES (if not more!) who were immediately "eligible to take the Passover" without having to first be circumcised. This constituted far more than one half of the adults in the nation.

B) These approximately "200000 males" were all available for going "around the city of Jericho" once a day for six days. They were also available for any "harvesting" that might have been needed. There were also available plenty of Levites for carrying the Ark and far more than seven priests for blowing the trumpets on these journeys around Jericho, without having to call on any men who had just been circumcised.

C) The circumcising of the perhaps 400000 males over the age of 20 years plus the additional perhaps 600000 to 900000 (?) males under the age of 20 years (which would imply a total population of up to about three million?) had taken place on the 10th Day of the 1st Month. On the 21st Day of the 1st Month (the 7th Day of UB) they marched around Jericho seven times. That was more than ten days after the circumcising, and by then the after-effects of the circumcisions should not have presented major problems to any of the men over the age of 20 years.

D) The account where Simeon and Levi killed all the Shechemites tells us that they killed them ON THE THIRD DAY from when they had been circumcised because that was "when they were sore" (Genesis 34:25). The "THIRD DAY" for the Israelites in Joshua chapter 5 would have been "the 12th day of the 1st Month". Passover would have been at the very start of the "FIFTH DAY" from the day of their circumcision. And the "wave sheaf" was not cut until Sunday morning, the "SIXTH DAY" from when they had been circumcised. By then the recovery process was well under way. Even IF perhaps "only" 200000 men marched around Jericho on the first of the seven days of marching, that number would have grown every single day, so that by the seventh day ALL the men would have joined the march.

THERE WAS NO NEED OF ANY KIND TO "POSTPONE" THE PASSOVER TO THE SECOND MONTH! AND THERE IS NO HINT ANYWHERE IN JOSHUA 5 THAT SUCH A "POSTPONEMENT" TOOK PLACE!

The 200000 or more males between the ages of 40 and 60 years would have taken care of killing all the Passover lambs, and the women (who were not in any pain either) would have taken care of preparing the meals. And all that was required of the around 400000 males over the age of 20 years who had been circumcised four days earlier, was that they would EAT a portion of the Passover meal, that's all. That wouldn't have been very difficult for them, even if they did still experience some pain.

So let's note the sequence of events there and the timing that the Bible reveals.

And the people came up out of Jordan ON THE TENTH [DAY] OF THE FIRST MONTH, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho. (Joshua 4:19 AV)

Here God has identified THE DAY when this occurred. It was the 10th Day of the FIRST Month. So the people of Israel entered the Promised Land exactly four days before the Passover date.

Then, seven verses later, God instructs Joshua to CIRCUMCISE all the males that had been born in the wilderness.

At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and CIRCUMCISE again the children of Israel the second time. (Joshua 5:2 AV)

So Joshua circumcised the males (obviously with a lot of men who were ALREADY circumcised helping him with this task).

And their children, [whom] he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way. And it came to pass, when they had done circumcising all the people, that THEY ABODE IN THEIR PLACES IN THE CAMP, TILL THEY WERE WHOLE. (Joshua 5:7-8 AV)

Notice also the statement "when THEY had done circumcising ..." because this tells us that A LARGE NUMBER OF MEN, who had been circumcised before they left Egypt, helped Joshua with this task of circumcising those who had been born after they had left Egypt. There was a large number of men available, who did NOT need to be circumcised.

So perhaps about 400000 men "abode in their places in the camp", while the other perhaps 200000 men were available for any duties that might have been needed to be carried out.

It is significant that GOD arranged for them to be circumcised on the 10th Day of the 1st Month, the precise time when normally THE PASSOVER LAMB was to be selected. As soon as the circumcising was completed, God said to Joshua:

And the LORD said unto Joshua, THIS DAY HAVE I ROLLED AWAY THE REPROACH of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day. (Joshua 5:9 AV)

So exactly WHEN did God "roll away" the reproach from Israel? God did this on the 10th Day of the 1st Month, the precise time when the Passover lamb was selected and set apart. The next verse starts with the word "AND", joining it very clearly to the thought of the previous verse.

It is not just that "Israel kept the Passover"; it is really "AND the children of Israel KEPT THE PASSOVER ON THE 14TH DAY OF THE MONTH AT EVEN ..."

AND the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, AND KEPT THE PASSOVER on THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF THE MONTH at even in the plains of Jericho. (Joshua 5:10 AV)

The Hebrew in this verse is "la-chodesh", meaning "IN THE month". [Comment: "le" is the Hebrew for "in" and "ha" is the definite article. When these are used together, then "le-ha" is contracted into "la". Thus "la-chodesh" is "IN THE month".]

The point is that the use of the definite article "THE" really requires this to refer back to an antecedent. And the ONLY possible antecedent for "THE month" in Joshua 5:10 is found 15 verses earlier in Joshua 4:19, which referred to the "10th Day of the FIRST month".

Thus both, the use of the conjunction "AND" as well as the use of the definite article "THE", require this PASSOVER to have been IN THE FIRST MONTH! Grammatically there is no room for reading a "SECOND MONTH PASSOVER" into this verse. Grammatically it has to be a Passover in the FIRST month, in agreement with its antecedent, and joined by the conjunction "AND" to the event of the circumcising. There is simply no room for a 30-day gap between verses 9 and 10 in Joshua chapter 5.

Now notice again verse 10:

And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept THE PASSOVER ON THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF THE MONTH AT EVEN in the plains of Jericho. (Joshua 5:10)

This VERY SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIES "THE 14TH DAY OF THE MONTH"! This therefore cannot possibly refer to anything other than A REAL PASSOVER! In Joshua 5:10 the Israelites kept this at the precise time and on the precise day on which God had instructed the Passover to be observed.

It most assuredly could NOT have been some kind of "Night-to-be-much-Remembered" observation, because THAT is to only take place ON THE 15TH DAY OF THE MONTH (see Exodus 12:42). The very fact that Joshua 5:10 clearly identifies THE 14TH DAY is irrefutable proof that what the Israelites did is observe A REAL PASSOVER!

Understand also that this is the whole point about showing that they FIRST were circumcised (Joshua 5:2-7) ... because God had spelled out so clearly in the original instructions that "NO UNCIRCUMCISED MALE" (Exodus 12:48) was to partake of the Passover. There was no problem with uncircumcised people taking part in any "Night-to-be-much-Remembered".

Furthermore, taking part in the Passover meal would not have involved any more effort for those who had just been circumcised than taking part in a "Night-to-be-Remembered" meal. There isn't really any difference between those two meals, except for the symbolism, for what these meals represent. But the "post-operative pain" of the circumcisions doesn't make one meal more difficult to participate in than the other meal.

It was GOD who instructed Joshua that the males should be circumcised (Joshua 5:2). The fact that GOD gave this instruction shows that GOD was preparing the people for observing A REAL PASSOVER, by ensuring that they would meet the requirements that GOD Himself had originally imposed for Passover observance.

If this was anything other than A REAL PASSOVER, then there would not have been any need for the Israelites to FIRST be circumcised before they proceeded to destroy Jericho. It is THE REAL PASSOVER which is the only occasion in the year that requires circumcision. Nothing other than THE PASSOVER is limited to CIRCUMCISED people (I'm not speaking about the women here).

Furthermore, it wouldn't be right for us to somehow "INFER" that when GOD tells us that the Israelites kept THE PASSOVER at even ON THE 14TH DAY, that this couldn't possibly mean what it says, that it must surely mean something other than "THE Passover". It wouldn't be right for us to "REASON AWAY" the clear and plain intent of this statement in Joshua 5:10, simply because the clear and plain intent does not fit in with OUR IDEAS!

Now notice verses 11-12:

And they did eat of the old corn of the land ON THE MORROW AFTER THE PASSOVER, unleavened cakes and parched corn IN THE SELFSAME DAY. And the manna ceased ON THE MORROW AFTER THEY HAD EATEN OF THE OLD CORN OF THE LAND ... (Joshua 5:11-12)

THE PURPOSE OF THESE TWO VERSES IS TO MAKE CLEAR TO US THAT GOD'S INSTRUCTIONS IN LEVITICUS 23:14 HAD NOW BEEN FULFILLED.

Can we understand this?

Leviticus 23:14 and Joshua 5:11 BOTH refer to eating the old produce and BOTH refer to "THE

SELSAME DAY". Understand that there is NO OTHER VERSE ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WHOLE BIBLE THAT COULD EVEN REMOTELY BE A REFERENCE TO LEVITICUS 23:14 HAVING BEEN FULFILLED!

It is an inescapable conclusion that Joshua 5:11 is intended BY GOD to show us that the requirement of Leviticus 23:14 had now been fulfilled. Leviticus 23:14 makes quite clear that they were simply NOT ALLOWED by God to eat the things they are pictured eating in Joshua 5:11 UNTIL THE WAVE OFFERING HAD BEEN BROUGHT! Therefore Joshua 5:11 has to mean that they ALSO had brought the sheaf of the wave offering on that day after the Passover (which was OBVIOUSLY the 15th, the First Day of Unleavened Bread). And therefore in THAT specific year the counting for Pentecost MUST HAVE STARTED ON THE FIRST DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD, THE 15TH OF THE FIRST MONTH. And therefore in THAT specific year the First Day of Unleavened Bread must have been a Sunday, the only day of the week on which the wave offering was to be brought.

And THEREFORE "the Sabbath" that is not directly identified in Leviticus 23:11 in THAT particular year must have been the day of the Passover, the 14th of the month. They would have observed the Passover Friday evening, then rested during the day on Saturday, then gone out and cut a sheaf of the early grain on the Sunday morning, the 15th of the month, and have the priest wave it before God, AND THEN they began to eat the old produce of the land. And after that they would have marched around Jericho one time. And on the Monday, the 2nd Day of Unleavened Bread the manna ceased. So, ON THAT SUNDAY, the 1st Day of Unleavened Bread, the Israelites may have had the manna when they woke up in the morning (since this was a double Sabbath, i.e. a weekly Sabbath followed by a Sunday First Day of Unleavened Bread, would the FRIDAY perhaps have been the last day on which they had collected a triple portion of manna?? Or would they only have collected a double portion of manna on the Friday, and then DEPENDED on the produce of the land from Sunday onwards??), and later in the same day they ate of the old produce of the land. And that (either the Friday morning before they kept the Passover that evening or else the Sunday morning, First Day of Unleavened Bread?) was the last time that they had any manna.

To start with they were not allowed to eat any of the old produce of the land. IF they didn't have any wave offering in the year that they first crossed the Jordan, THEN they also could not have eaten any of the old produce or of the new produce FOR THE WHOLE FIRST YEAR! But that is clearly not what happened. Leviticus 23:14 is not some incidental meaningless instruction; it was given by God for a very specific purpose, to help us identify the starting date for the counting towards the Feast of Pentecost. Never again are we told that Israel came into a certain area and "ate of the old corn". And nowhere outside of Leviticus 23:14 do we have this kind of restriction imposed ... that they were not to eat of the old corn until a specific event had taken place.

[COMMENT: The expression "the MORROW after" in Leviticus 23:11 does not mean "the morning after", but rather "the DAY after". Thus when they observed the Passover on Friday evening (the start of the Sabbath), then "the morrow after" was NOT Saturday morning, but rather Sunday morning ... or at the very earliest Saturday EVENING AFTER SUNSET. In practice it would have been Sunday morning.]

And so, based on this biblical precedent, we see that when the Passover falls on a Saturday, then we are to start counting towards Pentecost from the Sunday which is the First Day of Unleavened Bread. In this case the Passover is "the Sabbath" which is referred to in Leviticus 23:11.

The key in this whole equation is NOT the weekly Sabbath that is referenced, but the fact that THE STARTING POINT FOR THE COUNTING PROCESS must be within the Days of Unleavened Bread. Understand that the Sabbath itself doesn't really feature in the whole equation ... IT IS SIMPLY A REFERENCE POINT! It is THE MORROW AFTER THE SABBATH that really features; it is the morrow after the Sabbath that is IMPORTANT in this equation. And God intended for us to understand that "the

morrow AFTER the Sabbath" should always lie within the Days of Unleavened Bread, because there is a significance attached to "the morrow after the Sabbath", but there is no significance at all attached to this particular Sabbath itself in this context.

In plain language:

IF the counting towards Pentecost only starts on the Sunday AFTER the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread have concluded, THEN Pentecost simply does NOT have ANY RELATIONSHIP TO THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD! But Pentecost MUST be linked in some way to the Days of Unleavened Bread, it MUST have a direct relationship to these Seven Days of Unleavened Bread! Specifically, Pentecost must be EXACTLY SEVEN WEEKS AFTER ONE OF THOSE SEVEN DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD.

To start counting towards Pentecost only AFTER the Days of Unleavened Bread have come to an end DESTROYS the connection between Pentecost on the one hand and the Days of Unleavened Bread on the other hand. Realize that God is not really concerned about "the Sabbath" that is referenced in Leviticus 23:11; what God IS concerned about in Leviticus 23 is "the day AFTER the Sabbath". THAT is the important day in the whole discussion leading up to counting for Pentecost. And Pentecost MUST always be within seven weeks of the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Consider also one other point:

In case people had a genuine emergency God DID make allowance for them to take the Passover exactly one month later. But God did NOT make allowance for the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread to ALSO be postponed by one month! And nor did God make allowance for Pentecost, the counting for which starts from the wave offering during the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread, to be postponed by one month.

When people were permitted to observe the Passover one month later, then this postponement did NOT affect either the Days of Unleavened Bread or the timing of Pentecost. Unleavened Bread and Pentecost were to be observed by all based on the timing for A FIRST MONTH PASSOVER! This included the people who would observe the Passover only one month later, because of some emergency they had been involved in at the time of the (first month) Passover.

This means that there was NO WAY that the wave sheaf could have been brought based on "a second month Passover", because THAT would also have postponed Pentecost by a full month!

Realize that THE PASSOVER is never at any time "postponed" to the second month! It is ALWAYS placed IN THE FIRST MONTH. God has ONLY attached a symbolism to a FIRST MONTH Passover. There is no symbolism attached to the Passover being observed in the SECOND month! Thus: for people who DO observe a second month Passover, they do NOT have that second month Passover followed by Seven Days of Unleavened Bread, nor do they then have Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles shift to the EIGHTH month, in order to preserve the exactly six months period between the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread and the Seven Days of Tabernacles. When people do observe a second month Passover NOTHING ELSE SHIFTS!

And God has most assuredly not "SHIFTED" the Passover to the second month for such people. The only thing that GOD has done in permitting a second month Passover is this:

For people who, because of genuine emergencies over which they had no control, were not able to participate in the Passover WHEN GOD WANTS IT TO BE OBSERVED, for such people God

made ALLOWANCE to observe the Passover exactly one month later. HOWEVER, their OBSERVANCE of the Passover in the second month did NOT really make the 14th day of the second month THE PASSOVER DAY! This is because at no time in Israel's history had the death angel EVER "passed over" their homes on the 14th day OF THE SECOND MONTH!! The ONLY day that is "the Passover Day" is the 14th Day of the FIRST month, even though God ALLOWS people, who were prevented by emergencies, to observe this ordinance one month later.

So the 14th day of the second month is NOT "the Passover Day", even though God allows SOME people to observe the Passover on THAT day. Their observance simply points to something that happened one month EARLIER and really should have been observed one month earlier.

Now Leviticus 23:14 is EXTREMELY CLEAR in stating that the Israelites were simply not permitted by God to eat any "old corn or green ears" in the Promised Land UNTIL after the wave sheaf had been offered to God! But that wave sheaf COULD NOT BE BROUGHT IN THE SECOND MONTH! It had to be brought in the first month, because God did NOT permit the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread to ALSO be postponed to the second month.

SO THEREFORE:

When Joshua 5:10-11 tells us that they ate "old corn and parched corn" on the day AFTER they had kept the Passover, this simply HAS TO BE IN THE FIRST MONTH! A second month Passover had no way of influencing the timing of the wave sheaf offering, which was the key for when they were permitted to eat these things.

And these things have all been clearly understood by the Church since 1974, when we changed not only from a Monday to a Sunday observance of Pentecost, but when we ALSO corrected the wrong way we had previously counted when the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread had been a weekly Sabbath day.

IT HAD BEFORE THEN BEEN AN UNPROVED ASSUMPTION that "the Sabbath" is what is so important to God in this equation, and that therefore "the Sabbath" must at all costs be one of the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread. From 1974 onwards we came to understand that it is "the day AFTER the Sabbath" that is the really important day to God, and it was the historical record of Joshua 5:10-12 that helped us to understand this.

In going back to "pre-1974" in his way of counting (though rejecting a Monday-Pentecost, which is part of the pre-1974 teaching) John Ritenbaugh is forced to re-interpret Joshua chapter 5 in some other way than what is so clearly stated in this chapter. He has to look for some hidden meaning, something that isn't stated but must be inferred. In the process he has to reject what it clearly DOES state.

Now let's examine the second point, which is something Mr. Armstrong himself also understood when he said: "it was imperative that the wave sheaf be offered DURING the Days of Unleavened Bread since Jesus Christ (the ante-type) was offered up to the Father on a Sunday DURING those days"

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "THE DAY AFTER THE SABBATH"

As Mr. Armstrong pointed out, we in God's Church understand that "the wave offering" symbolically represented Jesus Christ. We also understand that the Passover represents the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

In the gospel accounts we see that Jesus Christ was resurrected sometime after the sun had set on Saturday evening. When the women came to the tomb early on Sunday morning, when it was still dark (see John 20:1), Jesus Christ had already been resurrected. Mary Magdalene then saw Jesus Christ,

who told her that He had NOT YET ascended to God the Father (John 20:17); yet later that same day they DID touch the feet of the resurrected Jesus Christ (see Matthew 28:9).

THIS ALL HAPPENED ON A SUNDAY, THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK! AND IT ALL HAPPENED DURING THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD!

It should be quite clear that "THE WAVING" OF THE SHEAF REPRESENTED JESUS CHRIST after His resurrection being presented to God the Father before quickly (i.e. the same day) returning to this earth.

Now understand this: "the waving" cannot be separated from Christ's death! Without the Passover (picturing Christ's sacrifice) there simply would be nothing to wave! The Passover is a major consideration in this waving ritual! And it is not right to separate THE PASSOVER from "THE WAVE OFFERING" by MORE THAN ONE WEEK! The "wave offering" simply has to be within seven days of the Passover, because God the Father HAS TO accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ ("slain from the foundation of human society") within the first 7000 years from when that sacrifice became a necessity. It would be TOO LATE for God the Father to accept Christ's sacrifice on our (humanity's) behalf only after more than 7000 years have already elapsed ... and that is the symbolism if one places "the wave offering" on the day AFTER the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread ... that God the Father is accepting Christ's sacrifice "too late"!

Similarly, without the foundation of the Passover there cannot be any Days of Unleavened Bread ... unless our guilty past is forgiven and blotted out by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ we can't really put sins out, because they still remain with us. It is THE PASSOVER that makes the Days of Unleavened Bread possible!

So while the Passover is indeed a separate occasion from the Days of Unleavened Bread, it is nevertheless very intimately tied to the Days of Unleavened Bread. It is a part of the Days of Unleavened Bread in the same way that the Last Great Day is a part of the Feast of Tabernacles. Technically the Last Great Day may be a separate occasion, but IN PRACTICAL TERMS it is a part of the Feast of Tabernacles, and we always keep ALL 8 DAYS at the feast site. Similarly, technically the Passover may be a separate occasion, but IN PRACTICAL TERMS it is a part of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and we always keep the Passover on the day immediately before the First Day of Unleavened Bread commences. And even as in many ways the Last Great Day is looked upon as a part of Tabernacles, so also is the Passover in many ways looked upon as a part of Unleavened Bread.

Now Jesus Christ simply HAD TO be presented to God the Father DURING the Days of Unleavened Bread! It could not be that He would somehow be presented to the Father only after the Seventh Day of Unleavened Bread had concluded! That would have been an utter impossibility! The Days of Unleavened Bread are conditional on God the Father accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. BEFORE those Seven Days of Unleavened Bread are concluded (while we are still going through the process of putting sins out of our lives) the Father must have accepted the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ ... that is a part of understanding the symbolism of the annual Holy Days. Mr. Armstrong was PERFECTLY CORRECT in his understanding in this regard.

When you understand that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ simply HAD TO be presented to the Father DURING the Days of Unleavened Bread, THEN you should also understand that the wave offering, picturing this acceptance by the Father, also HAD TO be presented DURING the Days of Unleavened Bread. How could the sacrifice of Jesus Christ POSSIBLY be presented to God the Father only AFTER the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread have been completed and are over? That doesn't make sense.

So getting back to "the morrow after the Sabbath" in Leviticus 23:11:

Nowhere in that chapter (i.e. Lev. 23) is that Sabbath actually defined! It is simply that God has discussed the Passover (verse 5) and the Days of Unleavened Bread (verses 6-8). THEN verse 9 starts a new section ... explaining how we are to correctly count for the Day of Pentecost. "A SABBATH" is referred to in verse 11, but we are NOT given a clear definition of how we are to arrive at that "Sabbath". That same "Sabbath" is again referred to in verses 15-16, and these verses make quite clear that it must be a WEEKLY Sabbath day.

IT HAD BEEN OUR ASSUMPTION that the "Sabbath" being talked about has to be one of the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread. However, when we take our understanding of the symbolism of the wave offering into account, THEN we should realize that that "Sabbath" must be one of EIGHT days, and not one of seven days. The "eight" days within which that Sabbath has to fall are: 1 day (Passover) plus 7 days (Unleavened Bread) = 8 days. It is those 8 days that God has discussed in Leviticus 23 in the lead-up to this reference about "the Sabbath".

And in those situations where these EIGHT days include TWO weekly Sabbath days, Joshua chapter 5 makes quite clear that it is always the first of the two Sabbath days that must be taken as the reference point. That also insures that the wave offering is ALWAYS presented before God during the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread. And that is what the Church came to understand back in 1974, even if every individual minister back then didn't understand this very clearly (I recall explaining this to fellow ministers back in the 80's and also in the lead-up to the 1994 Feast of Pentecost, two full decades after the Church had already come to this understanding).

Consider also the following facts:

There is no debate and no argument over how to count when THE SUNDAY DURING UNLEAVENED BREAD is the 2nd or 3rd or 4th or 5th or 6th or 7th Day of Unleavened Bread. In every one of those cases all, including John Ritenbaugh, are agreed that the counting for Pentecost must start with THAT Sunday. And with all six of those possibilities (to be technically correct: for those who go by the Jewish calendar, the Jewish postponement rules actually prevent the weekly Sunday from falling on some of those days) the counting process ALWAYS starts WITHIN the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread. This is accepted without argument.

So consider:

WHY would God for six out of seven possible situations (i.e. the Sunday during Unleavened Bread being the 2nd to the 7th Day of Unleavened Bread) have arranged it so that the counting ALWAYS starts within the Days of Unleavened Bread, THEREBY OBVIOUSLY LINKING THIS COUNTING PROCESS TO THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD ... and then for ONE POSSIBLE OPTION (i.e. when the Sunday is the FIRST Day of Unleavened Bread) God would have arranged it so that the counting process IS POSTPONED BY ONE WEEK TO THE DAY AFTER THE SEVENTH DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD??

In other words, when the First Day of Unleavened Bread is A SUNDAY, then John Ritenbaugh actually POSTPONES the start of the counting process by one week to the following Sunday, deciding that the Sunday DURING Unleavened Bread is for some reason NOT SUITABLE to represent the day when God the Father accepts the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf.

WHY would God possibly find the SECOND to the SEVENTH Days of Unleavened Bread quite acceptable for use as days for "the wave offering", but REJECT the FIRST Day of Unleavened Bread for this purpose? Is there something WRONG with the FIRST Day of Unleavened Bread that makes it UNSUITABLE for an event for which ALL the other six Days of Unleavened Bread are eminently suitable? Why would God in such a situation possibly want to use the day AFTER THE SEVEN DAYS

OF UNLEAVENED BREAD for the ceremony that HE wants performed on the other six days of Unleavened Bread?

Consider also the actual fulfillment of these events by Jesus Christ:

A) Jesus Christ died late on a Wednesday afternoon.

B) He was buried in the tomb close to sunset that evening.

C) He was in the tomb for 72 hours, 3 full days.

D) So the Passover, the 14th day, was a Wednesday.

E) Thursday was the 1st Day of Unleavened Bread, Friday the 2nd Day of Unleavened Bread, Saturday the 3rd Day of Unleavened Bread, and Sunday the 4th Day of Unleavened Bread in the week of the actual crucifixion.

F) So in actual fact God the Father accepted Christ's sacrifice on a Sunday that was THE FOURTH DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD!

So notice the following point:

Jesus Christ Himself was killed IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WEEK, on a Wednesday, the fourth day of the week. And God the Father ACCEPTED Jesus Christ's sacrifice IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SEVEN DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD, on a Sunday, the fourth Day of Unleavened Bread. Both of these events occurred PRECISELY IN THE MIDDLE of two different seven-day periods. That is no coincidence. Furthermore, the day on which God accepted Christ's sacrifice was also THE FIRST DAY OF A WEEK. This is also significant.

So God accepted Christ's sacrifice on the FIRST day of a 7-day week. This pictures the sacrifice being accepted AT THE START OF THE 7000-year period. But it was also accepted EXACTLY IN THE MIDDLE of a 7-day period of Unleavened Bread. This pictures the sacrifice being accepted for ALL during those 7000 years ... both, for those who went before, and also for those who would follow. Christ was killed IN THE MIDDLE OF A LITERAL WEEK, and God the Father accepted His sacrifice for us IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WEEK OF UNLEAVENED BREAD. Those two "middle points" were clearly planned by God.

Now it is clear and accepted that it is perfectly correct to have the Sunday of the "wave offering" be the 2nd and the 3rd Days of Unleavened Bread, even though BOTH of those days actually lie BEFORE the day on which this "wave offering" was fulfilled by the resurrected Jesus Christ.

So IF God planned for the "wave offering" to be acceptable on the 2nd and the 3rd Days of Unleavened Bread, even though those two days actually PRECEDE the time of the literal fulfillment of this event (as well as accepting that "wave offering" on the 5th and 6th and 7th Days of Unleavened Bread, which followed the literal fulfillment) WHY would God somehow NOT have wanted that "wave offering" on the FIRST Day of Unleavened Bread? What could there possibly be about the FIRST Day of Unleavened Bread that would make it unsuitable in the eyes of God for the "wave offering"? Why would God go to the extreme of taking a day that lies AFTER all seven of the Days of Unleavened Bread, RATHER THAN taking the FIRST Day of Unleavened Bread?

That just doesn't make sense.

Let's look at another point.

THE REASON WHY GOD PLACED PENTECOST ON A MOVING DATE

When we look at all of the annual Feasts and Holy Days, we find that ONLY the Day of Pentecost (Pentecost is both, a Feast and a Holy Day) moves to a different day of the month every year. ALL other annual days to be observed are on FIXED days of the first or the seventh month. But Pentecost is NOT fixed in that way.

WHY IS THIS SO? WHY DID GOD PLACE PENTECOST IN SUCH A WAY THAT IT MOVES TO A DIFFERENT DAY OF THE MONTH EVERY YEAR?

Let's see if we can understand GOD'S REASONS for dealing with Pentecost in this way. Understanding WHY God has done it this way should help us to further understand how to correctly count for Pentecost.

Pentecost will ALWAYS occur in the third month. It will be on the following days in that third month. When THE SUNDAY DURING UNLEAVENED BREAD IS:

- A) the 1st Day of U.B., Pentecost will be 5th day of the 3rd month;
- B) the 2nd Day of U.B., Pentecost will be 6th day of the 3rd month;
- C) the 3rd Day of U.B., Pentecost will be 7th day of the 3rd month;
- D) the 4th Day of U.B., Pentecost will be 8th day of the 3rd month;
- E) the 5th Day of U.B., Pentecost will be 9th day of the 3rd month;
- F) the 6th Day of U.B., Pentecost will be 10th day of the 3rd month;
- G) the 7th Day of U.B., Pentecost will be 11th day of the 3rd month.

So, while Pentecost is always on a Sunday, that Sunday can be anywhere from the 5th day of the 3rd month to the 11th day of the 3rd month (ignoring the Jewish postponement rules).

The first point in this regard to understand is that God did NOT do it this way BECAUSE HE WANTED PENTECOST TO MOVE AROUND THE MONTH!

Pentecost moving from the 5th to the 11th of the third month is NOT A DIRECT INTENTION BY GOD! It is really only A CONSEQUENCE of something else that God DID WANT TO FLUCTUATE!

God FIXED the dates for the Passover and for the 1st and the 7th Days of Unleavened Bread. But God INTENTIONALLY AND DELIBERATELY placed the date for the "WAVE SHEAF OFFERING", picturing God the Father accepting Jesus Christ's sacrifice for us human beings, on A MOVING DATE! It was always to be A SUNDAY DURING THE DAYS OF U.B.! But that Sunday would MOVE from the 1st Day of U.B. all through those seven days to the 7th Day of U.B..

And God INEXORABLY LINKED Pentecost to this MOVING DATE for the "wave sheaf offering". It is BECAUSE the "wave sheaf offering" moves that THEREFORE God determined that Pentecost would always MOVE IN TANDEM WITH IT, ALWAYS MAINTAINING A DISTANCE OF EXACTLY SEVEN WEEKS FROM THAT "WAVE OFFERING"!

This is important to understand. When we read Leviticus 23, we see that this "wave offering" moves through the Days of U.B., and Pentecost is FIXED to always be exactly seven weeks later than this day of the "wave offering". God did not describe Pentecost in terms of flexibility, of it moving to different days of the month. No, God described Pentecost IN VERY FIXED TERMS, occurring always exactly seven weeks after the day identified as "THE DAY AFTER THE SABBATH".

Don't be misled regarding the EXTREME IMPORTANCE of that "day AFTER the Sabbath" simply because it is not highlighted as a Holy Day. It is EXTREMELY IMPORTANT! Without it NO HUMAN BEING could have access to SALVATION! The Passover pictures Jesus Christ willingly giving His life for us, to pay for all of OUR sins. BUT, unless that sacrifice is actually ACCEPTED by God the Father on our behalf, no human being would ever be able to CLAIM that sacrifice before God, and therefore no human being could ever attain unto immortal life. That "day AFTER the Sabbath" is the MOST UNDERRATED AND UNDER-APPRECIATED DAY IN THE WHOLE YEAR!

And God, in His wisdom, placed THAT day on a moving scale, moving from the 15th day of the 1st month to the 21st day of the 1st month. Yes, God did not instruct us to observe this particular day in any way, other than in Old Testament times the wave sheaf having to be brought, but WITHOUT IT PENTECOST WOULD SIMPLY NOT BE POSSIBLE!

Let me repeat that: Without that "day AFTER the Sabbath" Pentecost would simply not be possible! And THAT is why God has linked Pentecost in a FIXED AND RIGID manner to this "day AFTER the Sabbath". That "Sabbath" is not important at all; it is only "the day AFTER that Sabbath" that is so very important.

So, do we really believe that GOD INTENDED this day for the "wave sheaf offering" to move from the second day of U.B. to the first day AFTER the Seven Days of U.B. have come to an end?

Do we honestly believe that that is how the mind of God works? That God would say: I want you to place My acceptance of Jesus Christ's sacrifice on YOUR behalf to fall anywhere from THE SECOND DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD TO THE DAY AFTER UNLEAVENED BREAD HAS COME TO AN END?! AND I DON'T EVER WANT TO SEE YOU TRYING TO BRING THAT "WAVE OFFERING" ON THE FIRST DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD, BECAUSE I AM JUST NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT IT ON THAT FIRST DAY ... THAT FIRST DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD IS ANATHEMA TO ME AS FAR AS "THE WAVE OFFERING" IS CONCERNED!

That line of reasoning doesn't really make sense, does it? Yet that is how some people seem to reason, when they want to start counting towards Pentecost from the day AFTER the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread have come to an end.

Now THE REASON WHY God planned to have that "day AFTER the Sabbath" move through all seven of the Days of U.B. is to symbolically show us that HIS ACCEPTANCE OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE APPLIES TO ALL 7000 YEARS OF HUMAN BEINGS BEING BORN! Here God uses every one of the seven days of U.B. to each represent a 1000-year period of human existence. And so God "ACCEPTS" the wave sheaf offering on the 1st and 2nd and 3rd and 4th and 5th and 6th and 7th Days of U.B. ... because GOD will apply that sacrifice to human beings who were born in the 1st and 2nd and 3rd and 4th and 5th and 6th and 7th millennia of human existence planned by God.

That is the real reason WHY God moved the day for His acceptance of Christ's sacrifice for us through all seven of the Days of U.B..

So how can anyone ever POSSIBLY leave out the FIRST Day of U.B. for this wave sheaf offering

... and replace it by some INSIGNIFICANT day AFTER the Seven Days of U.B. have come to an end?

One further point might merit consideration:

In dealing with ancient Israel God did certain things exactly 40 years apart. Thus on the FIRST DAY of Unleavened Bread Israel started to march out of Egypt. Exactly 40 years later, on the same FIRST DAY of Unleavened Bread Israel started to march around Jericho. On the SEVENTH DAY of Unleavened Bread Israel completed their departure from Egypt by crossing the Red Sea. Exactly 40 years later, on the same SEVENTH DAY of Unleavened Bread Israel completed their marching around Jericho and the walls fell down. From when the Red Sea had opened up for them TO THE EXACT DAY 40 years later the walls of Jericho fell down for them.

Inferring a second month Passover for Joshua chapter 5 would destroy this 40-year link between these events, by placing them "40 years PLUS one month" apart. But it is clear that God PLANNED for these events to be exactly 40 years apart.

And anyway, as we saw earlier, Joshua 5 makes quite clear that in that particular year the "wave offering" must of necessity have been offered ON THE FIRST DAY OF UNLEAVENED BREAD! The facts of comparing Leviticus 23 with Joshua 5 allow for no other conclusion. Those two chapters PROVE that it is wrong to ever start the count for Pentecost from the day AFTER the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread have been concluded. The symbolism explained above simply adds to that proof.

It should be clear to any objective observer that the way of counting for Pentecost as practised by the Church of the Great God under these circumstances is biblically incorrect.

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