

# UTAH SUPPLEMENT

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## Pentecost

Pentecost, also called Whitsunday, (Pentecost from Greek pentecostē, “50th day”), major festival in the Christian church, celebrated on the Sunday that falls on the 50th day of Easter. It commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and other disciples following the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ (Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2), and it marks the beginning of the Christian church’s mission to the world.

The Jews had an early harvest festival seven weeks after the firstfruit offerings of Passover, called the Feast of Weeks.

The Jewish feast of Pentecost (Shavuot) was primarily a thanksgiving for the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, but it was later associated with a remembrance of the Law given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. The church’s transformation of the Jewish feast to a Christian festival was thus related to the belief that the gift of the Holy Spirit to the followers of Jesus was the firstfruits of a new dispensation that fulfilled and succeeded the old dispensation of the Law.

When the festival was first celebrated in the Christian church is not known, but it was mentioned in a work from the Eastern church, the Epistola Apostolorum, in the 2nd century. In the 3rd century it was mentioned by Origen, theologian and head of the catechetical school in Alexandria, and by Tertullian, Christian priest and writer of Carthage.

In the early church, Christians often referred to the entire 50-day period beginning with Easter as Pentecost. Baptism was administered both at the beginning (Easter) and end (the day of Pentecost) of the Paschal season. Eventually, Pentecost became a more popular time for baptism than

Easter in northern Europe. In England the feast was commonly called White Sunday (Whitsunday) for the special white garments worn by the newly baptized. In The First Prayer Book of Edward VI (1549), the feast was officially called Whitsunday, and this name has continued in Anglican churches. In Catholic and other Western churches, priests often wear red vestments during Pentecost to symbolize the “tongues of fire” that descended on the disciples from the Holy Spirit; members of the congregation also wear red in some traditions, and the altar is commonly dressed in a red frontal cloth.

The account in Act 2 reports that, after Jesus ascended in to heaven, Jesus’ followers were gathered together for the Feast of Harvest (aka Pentecost), and the Holy Spirit “filled the whole house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:2). “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:4). This strange occurrence drew a large crowd, and Peter stood up to speak to them about repentance and the gospel of Christ (Acts 2:14). By the end of the day that the Holy Spirit came, the Church grew by 3,000 people (Acts 2:41). This is why Christians still celebrate Pentecost.

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit in John 14:26, who would be the Helper for his people. “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

This New Testament event is also significant because it fulfills an Old Testament prophecy in Joel 2:28-29. “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.”

Excerpts from Encyclopaedia Britannica and Christianity.com