

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG37 Fifty Days to Perfection

On the day of Pentecost, the disciples, all 120 of them, were in one place in one accord. How did they arrive at that spirit of oneness and unity? To answer that question, we've got to examine the fifty-day time period between Passover and Pentecost, or as they're called in Hebrew, Pesach and Shavuot. The fifty days begins during the Unleavened Bread with the waving of the sheaf of the first-fruits of the barley harvest, and continues to the first day of Pentecost, or Shavuot. The events that are experienced by the disciples just preceding and during these fifty days includes the arrest, the trial, the torture, crucifixion, and resurrection of Yeshua. It also includes His post-resurrection teaching and impartation, His Ascension, and their waiting and praying together in the upper room in Jerusalem.

All of these events and experiences create an atmosphere of testing, shaking, and devastation for the disciples. It brings them to the end of their false beliefs, their false expectations, and false hopes. It initiates a godly sorrow that brings repentance. It creates a broken spirit and contrite heart, which is produced in a way that we had not seen existing before among the disciples.

Yeshua had warned them that the shepherd would be smitten and the sheep would be scattered. Peter expressed his refusal of that statement by saying, "I'm ready to both go to prison and to death for You." And they all said the same, all the disciples said the same. Yet at the foot of the cross, we only see from the Scriptures that John the beloved and the women were present. Imagine the devastation of abandoning the Lord in His hour of suffering. Yeshua said the disciples were to be His witnesses, and they were. They were in fact witnesses of the resurrection of Christ, and really that only after the fact; but they were not witnesses of the cross. They had been scattered during the time of the cross. They weren't with Him during the cross, and as far as we know, they had no observation whatsoever of the actual cross and death of the Lord.

Now, when we think of what that would mean to them, having followed Him and especially having made the statements that they'd made, it was a tremendous devastation. So we want to look into these fifty days, we want to see what is going on. I personally feel like always this time period between the feasts is so significant. God is doing something in our spirits. It is a time of devastation. It is a time of repentance. It is a time of preparation for what God has for us in the next step of our ministry, of our lives, of our relationship with Him.

So first let's kind of back up and talk about the scriptural definition of this time period we are speaking of. We'll start in Leviticus the 23rd chapter, verses 10-11. It says, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord for you to be accepted; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.'"

So again, it's not clear just in what I've read, but he is talking about the day after the Sabbath of the Feast of Passover and the Unleavened Bread, and he is dealing with the sheaf of the barley grain. Now, when you look at a sheaf of barley grain, we know it's quite a few stalks with the barley heads. We know it is the first fruits and we know Christ Himself is the first fruits of the resurrection, He is the first fruits of

all creation. And so why isn't there just one piece of grain? He said, "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it abides alone," when He was referring to Himself. But when we come to this time of the waving of the sheaf of first fruits, it's a sheaf that is waved; which means there's probably hundreds, who knows how many grains, individual grains, are included on that sheaf. So why was a sheaf used instead of a single grain, if it's supposed to be significant of Christ having been the first fruits of resurrection and having been the first fruits of all creation?

Well, we have to go back to Matthew and remember that when Christ was resurrected, the tombs were opened and many walked out of the tombs; so it really was a sheaf of first fruits. It wasn't just a single grain, Christ, who was resurrected, it was a sheaf of grain. There were who knows how many, maybe thousands, who came out of the graves and walked the streets of Jerusalem, according to the Gospel of Matthew. So this was certainly in keeping with the type of what actually happened. And we see in Leviticus 23, they were commanded to wave the sheaf of first fruits after the Sabbath.

Let's look again at Leviticus 23, starting at 15-17, "You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete sabbaths. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the Lord. You shall bring in from your dwelling places two loaves of bread for a wave offering, made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of fine flour, baked with leaven as first fruits to the Lord."

The reason I want to emphasize how this timeframe is arrived at is because there is tremendous significance just in the timeframe itself. It does tell us what is taking place. We begin at Passover and immediately following the Passover, we go into the Feast of Unleavened Bread. So on the morrow after the Sabbath, we have the waving of the sheaf of the first fruits, and then we begin counting. In Judaism this is called the Counting of the Omer. Omer basically means sheaf. So it's the counting that takes place from the time of the sheaf and you count these seven Sabbaths, you count fifty days completely. And then that takes you to the Day of Pentecost.

Now, in the Pentecost, you have another offering. What do you have? You have two loaves that are brought to the priest and waved before the Lord. So we go from the head of the grain to single grains being a first fruits. We go from the raw grain, and then we have to see that that grain for the sacrifice brought in the Pentecost is ground into fine flour. It's processed, it's baked, it's re-leavened, and that makes up the two loaves. Now we know that two is significant generally in the Scriptures as Christ in His Body. And so, we have on the Day of Pentecost, again, a first fruits, don't we? The first fruits of the Body of Christ is expressed on that first day of Pentecost with the waving of the two loaves before the Lord.

But remember, these loaves are now a processed grain. It now has the leaven back into it. It has been baked. It has gone through everything needed to be gone through for it to become a loaf, rather than just a singular grain or individual heads, or grain unprocessed. So here we have this picture, and this is what we see happening during this time. The disciples are going to go from this time of expression of the waving of the sheaf of grain, which is Christ at His resurrection, and the cross and the resurrection, the suffering, it all throws them into something. That something is a process, but we know that it is the dealings of God on them that send them into and finalize their preparation.

So during these fifty days, the disciples experience their final preparation for ministry. And it's just as Yeshua underwent the temptation in the wilderness, likewise the disciples were tested, shaken, and tempted. Yes, Christ had been prepared. All of His life since His birth He had been going through a

process with the Father of being trained and raised and matured; but we know just prior to His ministry, He goes through that final temptation that prepares Him finally and surely for the ministry that He has.

And in Luke 4:13 it says, "When the devil," speaking of these days of temptation of Christ in the wilderness, "When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time." We know what that appointed time is – it's the time of Judas's betrayal, it's the time of His trial, it's the time of His crucifixion. The devil leaves until he can come back and has the inroad into creating the crucifixion of Christ.

But up until that time from the temptation in the wilderness, Christ passes the testing and Satan leaves. The devil leaves. It says in verse 14, "And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district." So we see that Christ had a final time of preparation, and we understand the disciples likewise have a time of final preparation. It takes place during these fifty days from the Passover, or Feast of Unleavened Bread, to the Pentecost. They were perfected into one. And we see that expressed again in those loaves. They're now not singular grains; they're perfected into one perfect loaf that is waved as an offering before God.

And this is what Yeshua said to watch for in John 17:22-23. He says, "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me." So this to me is very prophetic from Christ. He is talking about the oneness between Himself and the Father; but He is also saying, "I've given them the glory that I had because they will now be perfected into unity," or into oneness.

And what is the purpose of that unity? That unity is so that the world may know that Christ was sent by the Father as the Messiah to bring salvation to all of the earth. So they must be perfected. And for it to work, according to Christ, they must be perfected into a unit, into a unity, into a oneness. They're not individually perfected. Christ was individually perfected; but He was the sheep, the wave offering of the grain, the sheaf of the grain. He was singularly perfected. He was that grain of wheat that fell to the ground and died and abided alone. But now that's no longer what is working. We see something else must transition. This perfection must be about oneness and unity in order that the world may believe.

So we go on to Luke 22 and see how this begins to unfold. Luke 22 verse 31, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat." Now, this is being spoken right after Christ takes the wine and the bread and blesses it and creates this covenant with them. They're at the last supper, the Seder meal; they're all together here at this moment before, again, Christ is betrayed, and He speaks this to Simon: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat."

And we all relate to this, and I've always heard it taught, that He is speaking directly to Simon here. But, if you read it in the Greek, that's not the expression. The expression is in the plural; and if we were to read it correctly, to express that language, you would say, "'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you guys, all of you disciples, like wheat. But I have prayed for you,' again, back to singular speaking to Simon, 'that your faith', again, singular speaking to Simon, 'that your faith may not fail,' speaking again to Simon Peter; 'and you, when once you' – Simon – 'have turned again, strengthen your brothers.' But he said to Him, 'Lord....'"

So this is very dynamic, because the Lord is again saying to them right here at the last supper, "You guys are about to go into a trial; Satan has demanded permission, and he is going to try to sift you like wheat; he is going to put you through a temptation as he put Me through a temptation just prior to My coming

into the ministry that the Father had for Me.” And then He goes on in verse 32 and says, "But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." So Simon becomes a key player here, because he, we know, is going to have a part in helping everybody through this process.

Verses 33-34 say, "But he said to Him, 'Lord, with you I am ready to go both to prison and to death!' And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me." So this is what was spoken at that last supper in preparation.

He goes on in Matthew 26 to talk about the scattering of the disciples that will take place just hours from where they are. Matthew 26 verses 30-35 says, "After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them, 'You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, "I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered." But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.' But Peter said to Him" – again, notice they're never listening because they're always rebuffing what He is saying and telling Him what they are going to do. They should have listened; it would have helped them through the trial – "But Peter said to Him, 'Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.' Jesus said to him, 'Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' Peter said to Him, 'Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.' All the disciples said the same thing too." So again, we see He is addressing Peter, but this is about all of the disciples. They're all chiming in. They're all saying, "We will not deny You. We will not be scattered."

I'm going to read this story again out of Mark 14, because I want again to really emphasize this fact that we're not just dealing with Peter here; this is everybody who is going to experience this timeframe. Mark 14:26-31 says, "After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, 'You will all fall away, because it is written, "I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.' But Peter said to Him, 'Even though all may fall away, yet I will not.' And Jesus said to him, 'Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times.' But Peter kept saying insistently, 'Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!' And they all were saying the same thing also."

So it's not just one place, it's through the whole telling of this story in the Gospels, that they were all together, they were all taking what was being said, not just Peter. And they were all standing up, saying, "We will go to death with You." If they only knew that in a matter of hours, they would have the opportunity to go to death with Him; and they all found out that they were absolutely incapable of doing that. They were being tested to the very core of their beings by what they had said, about what they had said, about what they believed.

You see, He talked to them in the parable, sitting looking back at Jerusalem, because it says that they all believed the Kingdom was ready to come. So He sat down and told them a parable, trying to explain to them, "No, the Kingdom is not going to come right now; there's going to be a timeframe." There were many things that the disciples did not understand. There were many things that they had incorrect beliefs about. There were many wrong stories that they had in their mind of how things would go and what would truly happen through Christ. They believed that He would take down the Romans. It goes on and on what was in their mind of what would really take place and how it would take place.

But they were so convinced; and again, when we read these, we see when He spoke to them they weren't really listening, they were so preparing their defense and preparing their counter answer to the

Lord that it went over their heads completely what He was talking about. So we see that they were all going through this same process, and all saying that they would not deny Him.

So anyway, let's look at Peter and what actually transpires in Matthew 26:71-73. "When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.' And again he denied it with an oath," – I mean, he's swearing now that "I never knew this man" – "'I do not know the man.' A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.'" In other words, he wasn't just standing around grieving over the trial; he was in conversation with these people, and they heard his voice and they heard his accent being Galilean, and so they come back and they reapproach him and they say, "Hey, you must have been with him because you're a Galilean." And again, he goes on denying it. In verses 74-75, "Then he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know the man!' And immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the words which Jesus had said, 'Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly."

See, he was scattered. He left the area, he wept bitterly. He went into this process of repentance before God. And I like the way Luke 22 expresses it, starting at verses 61-62. It says, "The Lord turned and looked at Peter." Here He is in the process of being tried and being whipped, and He looks at Peter; "And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, 'Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly."

So imagine the Lord looking you in the eye after you had just failed, after you had fallen, the feeling of shame, the feeling of... it's beyond words. We know this is what Judas couldn't do. Judas recognized what he had done, but he would not go into repentance. He simply went out and hung himself. The rest of the disciples had a different response. Whatever the pain, whatever the torment they were going through, they had to put themselves before the Lord; they had to humble themselves, they had to reach for a godly sorrow that worketh repentance in their spirits. They had to be absolutely devastated.

As the story goes about the grain of wheat on that Day of Pentecost, it was finely ground. They were pulverized. They were ground to powder in the dealings of the Lord that they had to go through in this process; but they did go through it. They did give themselves to what they needed to from that point.

And then we just see again in John the 19th Chapter, that, "When Jesus then saw His mother," starting at verses 26-27, "and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' From that hour the disciple took her into his own household." So as far as we see in the Scriptures, the only disciple at the foot of the cross is John the beloved. They had all been scattered. They were all... who knows where they went? They were off in some corner. Maybe they went back to the upper room. Maybe they went back to Gethsemane themselves and put themselves through their own Gethsemane experience. Wherever they went, they went into this time of deep, deep repentance and deep seeking of God for what they had failed to be and what they had failed to be able to walk in in their own selves; and they began to see they were incapable of doing anything in themselves. Christ had that same realization, didn't He? He knew that in Himself He could do nothing, it was only by the Father.

The disciples are now going through this testing that brings them through the same way. They realize no longer can they do anything of themselves. If you remember, going back to the last supper, when the Lord begins this discourse with them about what's going to happen, they literally get in an argument with each other about who is the greatest. Right there, after the institution of Communion, after saying what He's saying about the testing that's going to come, they end up in an argument over who's the

greatest. I mean, let's face it. These people are truly a wonderful illustration of the humanity and flesh that we all carry in our nature, our Adamic nature. And they're also an expression of the fact that God knows how to grind that to powder, how to test it, how to deal with it until He brings us to a place of absolute and complete repentance until those things are gone from our spirit, and we're now prepared for the ministry that He has called us into.

We go to following the resurrection in Mark 16, starting at verses 9-11. "Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons. She went and reported to those who had been with Him, while they were mourning and weeping." See, they're still in this state of mourning and weeping after the resurrection. "When they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they refused to believe it." So I guess their mourning and weeping isn't done yet, because even when they get word of the resurrection, they refuse to believe it. They're still hardened in their hearts.

"After that," according to verses 12-14, it says, "He appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking along on their way to the country." We know this is the story of the road to Emmaus. Verses 13-14, "They went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either. Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen." They are in a process. I'm telling you, this has got to be the worst days of their life. It is exactly the type of reality that Christ Himself faced in the temptation in the wilderness.

And it brings an end to the humanity and the flesh and the pride and the arrogance of what we are in the flesh, and it prepares us to receive what God is going to do. In Acts 1:2-3, it says, "Until the day when He was taken up, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God." He was there. He came in and He began to deal with their hearts and spirits. He began to deal with their unbelief. He began to impart to them, to unfold the Scriptures to them, to show them all the things that they had thought they believed that were incorrect. He began to show them the truth, teach them the truth, and now they're in a position where they can listen.

In verses 4-5, it says, "Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, 'Which' He said, 'you heard from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'" Going on to Acts 1 verses 9-15, "And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.' Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers."

We can only assume, from what happens coming up on the Day of Pentecost, that there were 120 there, that that was the total of people that were in the upper room going through these last ten days. Christ

was with them for forty days, taking them through, walking them through this time of testing and transition. But we know that after He ascended, there were yet ten days left before the Feast of Pentecost would begin.

And they all, according in obedience – oh my gosh, they're finally moving in obedience! What a change. They go with one mind. See, we've never seen this before. Now we're seeing this unity, this oneness coming, and that is what must happen in the disciples for them to be the witness. There must be the oneness. They all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, and that is what they did for ten days. And who knows, that must have been an interesting time. I bet it was a time of great repentance, one to another. I bet they were apologizing for many things that had transpired, many failures that they had all had, for their arguments at the last supper over who was the greatest. It's just without words what was taking place between these who are going to be the witness of Messiah in the earth.

So we see that in Acts 2:1, we come finally fifty days later to the Day of Pentecost. "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place." And again, look at that language, they were all together. They were all together. Finally, they were together, and they were in one place. I think that is more significant than just the geographical physical place they were; they were finally all in one place together. They had come to a common faith, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. They had come through these days of trial; they had been ground into this fine flour that could now be mixed with the oil anointing of the Holy Spirit and be baked into the loaves to be presented to the Lord.

Verses 2-4, "And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance." It sounds like what Christ experienced. He came down from the mountain out of the wilderness of temptation, and He was filled with the Holy Spirit when He came, and He moved in the power of God. And now we see the disciples having made it through this great time of testing and devastation and shaking, coming out as one heart and one man before God, as one loaf to be waved before God, now anointed by the Holy Spirit in the power of God to be the witness to the world.

In Acts 2:14 we see that Peter stands up with the eleven in this oneness. They're all together standing, and Peter is the voice. By the power of the Holy Spirit, they were now able to witness to the world. In verses 31-32, it says, "He looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses." They were witnesses. They may not have been at the foot of the cross; they may have been scattered during those terrible moments that Christ was going through; but they were truly witnesses to the world of the resurrection of Christ, and that's what the apostles were to do.

I want us to remember a few key points from this message. Number one, the beginning of the Feast of Pentecost, or Shavuot, is determined by the counting of fifty days from the waving of the sheaf of the first fruits. In Judaism, this is called the Counting of the Omer. Number two, these days are significant, because they mark the end of Christ's ministry on the earth and mark the final preparation of the disciples. Like Yeshua's testing in the wilderness, they will either be destroyed through this testing and shaking, or they will emerge in the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill their commission as witnesses to the world.

And lastly, I would say, we, like the disciples, must experience the preparation and perfecting of our spirits in order to enter into the unity, into the power of the Holy Spirit, that will be the witness to the world in this day and age of the truth that God has sent His Son as the Savior of the world. But as Christ had said to the disciples, "You will be one; and when you are one, the world will believe."

Lord, help us to come through our testing. Help us to come through the trials that are necessary for us in this day and age. If You must seem to scatter us first in order to deal with us separately, then let it be, Lord. But whatever it is, let it be that process like the grinding of the grain into the fine flour that can be made into the perfect loaves to be waved before You on the great Day of Pentecost. Let our spirits be broken, let our hearts be humbled, let our repentance be complete and thorough, and let us come forth as those witnesses to the world of Your resurrection power. Amen.