

# FESTIVAL INFO

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## PENTECOST

The Christian High Holy Day of **Pentecost** is celebrated on the 50th day (the seventh Sunday) from [Easter Sunday](#).<sup>[2]</sup> It commemorates the descent of the [Holy Spirit](#) upon the [Apostles](#) and other followers of [Jesus Christ](#) while they were in Jerusalem celebrating the [Feast of Weeks](#), as described in the [Acts of the Apostles](#) ([Acts 2:1–31](#)).

The holiday is also called "White Sunday" or "[Whitsunday](#)" or "Whitsun", especially in the [United Kingdom](#), where traditionally the next day, [Whit Monday](#), was also a public holiday (since 1971 fixed by statute on

the last Monday in May). The Monday after Pentecost is a legal holiday in many European countries.

In [Eastern Christianity](#), Pentecost can also refer to the entire fifty days of [Easter](#) through Pentecost inclusive; hence the book containing the liturgical texts is called the "[Pentecostarion](#)". Since its date depends on the [date of Easter](#), Pentecost is a "[moveable feast](#)".

Pentecost is one of the [Great I](#) [feasts in the Eastern Orthodox Church](#), a [Solemnity](#) in the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church, a [Festival](#) in the Lutheran Churches, and a [Principal](#)

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[Feast](#) in the Anglican Communion. Many Christian denominations provide a special liturgy for this holy celebration.

## BACKGROUND

In [Judaism](#) the Festival of Weeks ([Hebrew](#): שבועות *Shavuot*) is a [harvest festival](#) that is celebrated seven weeks and one day after the first day of Passover (the Feast of Unleavened Bread) in [Deuteronomy 16:9](#) or seven weeks and one day after the [Sabbath](#) referred to in [Leviticus 23:16](#).<sup>[11]</sup> The Festival of Weeks is also called the *feast of Harvest* in [Exodus 23:16](#) and the *day of first fruits* in [Numbers 28:26](#).<sup>[12]</sup> In [Exodus 34:22](#) it is called the "firstfruits of the wheat

harvest."<sup>[13]</sup> The date for the "Feast of Weeks" originally came the day after seven full weeks following the first harvest of grain.<sup>[14][15]</sup> In Jewish tradition the fiftieth day was known as the *Festival of Weeks*.<sup>[12][13]</sup> The actual mention of fifty days comes from [Leviticus 23:16](#).<sup>[3][16]</sup>

During the Hellenistic period, the ancient harvest festival also became a day of renewing the [Noahic covenant](#), described in [Genesis 9:8–17](#), which is established between God and "all flesh that is upon the earth".<sup>[9]</sup> By this time, some Jews were already living in [Diaspora](#). According to [Acts 2:5–11](#) there

were Jews from "every nation under heaven" in Jerusalem, possibly visiting the city as [pilgrims](#) during Pentecost. In particular the *hoi epidemountes* (οἱ ἐπιδημούντες) are identified as "visitors" to Jerusalem from Rome. This group of visitors includes both Jews and "proselytes" ([προσῆλυτος](#), *prosēlytos*); sometimes translated as "converts to Judaism", *proselyte* referred to non-Jews who adhered fully to the [Mosaic laws](#), including [circumcision](#).<sup>[17]</sup> The list of nations represented in the biblical text

includes [Parthians](#), [Medes](#), [Elamites](#), [Mesopotamia](#), [Judaea](#),<sup>[iii]</sup> [Capadocia](#), [Pontus](#), Asia, [Phrygia](#), [Pamphylia](#), [Egypt](#), [Cyrene](#), and those who were visiting from [Rome](#).<sup>[18]</sup> Scholars have speculated about a possible earlier literary source for the list of nations including an astrological list by [Paul of Alexandria](#) and various

references to the Jewish diaspora by writers of the [Second Temple](#) era (particularly [Philo of Alexandria](#)).<sup>[19]</sup>

After the [destruction of the Temple](#) in 70 AD offerings could no longer be brought to the Temple and the focus of the festival shifted from [agriculture](#) to the Israelites receiving

the [Torah](#) (the Five Books of Moses or the Law at Sinai. It became customary to gather at [synagogue](#), stay up all night learning Torah, and reading from the Torah the [Ten Commandments](#) and the Israelites acceptance of and promise to live by the Torah