

# The Festival of First Fruits

In the process of revealing His plan of salvation for mankind, God established His annual Holy Days around the harvest seasons in the Middle East (Leviticus 23:9-16, Exodus 23:14-16). Just as His people harvested their crops around these three Festival seasons, God's Holy Days show us how He is harvesting people for eternal life in His Kingdom.

The Holy Days have meanings that build upon each other. Together they progressively reveal how God works with humanity.

The fifteenth of Nisan begins the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is a High Sabbath. It is a seven day feast to the Lord. The day following the Sabbath during Passover is called the Feast of First Fruits (Leviticus 23:10-14).

The Feast of First Fruits can be found in Leviticus 23:

*Leviticus 23:9-14* <sup>9</sup> And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, <sup>10</sup> 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: <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the Lord. <sup>13</sup> And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, and offering made by fire unto the Lord for a sweet savour: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin. <sup>14</sup> 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.

## Understanding the Festival Ceremony

The observance was carried out in this manner, when the standing ripe harvest of barley was ready to be reaped. The celebrant would take one sheaf from the standing harvest and bring it to the priest. The lone sheaf was called "the sheaf

of the first fruits." The priest was then to take this one sheaf and wave it before the Lord in His house. This was to be done "the day after the sabbath." Prescribed offerings were also to be presented along with the sheaf.

## The Sheaf of First Fruits in the Bible

God commanded the people to bring a sheaf of the harvest (Leviticus 23:10). Remember, three times a year God commanded the people to come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. All three of these festivals are agricultural harvest Festivals. Passover is the barley harvest. Pentecost is the wheat harvest. Both of these Festivals are first fruits harvests before the final harvest that was to come at the end of the year during the Festival of Tabernacles, which is the fruit harvest.

The harvest represents all who would put their faith, trust, and confidence in the Messiah (Matthew 13:39). So, the sheaf is the first of the first fruits. Since a sheaf in the Bible is used to typify a person or persons (Genesis 37:5-11), a sheaf spiritually represents people who accept the Messiah into their hearts.

The nation of Israel was familiar with the concept of first fruits or the firstborn. The first fruits were always the choicest, the foremost, the first, the best, the preeminent of all that was to follow. They were holy to the Lord. The concept of first fruits or firstborn is a major theme in the Bible. This can be seen by the following Scriptures: Exodus 34:26, Leviticus 23:20, Numbers 18:12-15, Deuteronomy 18:1-5, 26:2-4, and Proverbs 3:9.

## **Everything on the Earth, Both Man And Beast, Was To Be Presented Before the Lord as First Fruits to Him**

The firstborn of both man and beast were sanctified (made holy) and presented to the Lord (Exodus 13:2,22:29).

The first fruits of all the earth were presented to the Lord at His altar in praise and thanksgiving (Deuteronomy 26:1-11).

---

## The Theme of the Festival of First Fruits is Resurrection and Salvation

There are several important events that happened on this day in the Bible.

1. Noah's ark rests on Mount Ararat (Genesis 8:4).
2. Israel crosses the Red Sea (Exodus chapter 14).
3. Israel eats the first fruits of the Promised Land (Joshua 5:10-12). The manna that God gave from Heaven during the days in the wilderness ceased the sixteenth day of Nisan after the people ate of the old corn of the land. The day following was the seventeenth of Nisan, the day when the children of Israel ate the first fruits of the Promised Land.
4. Haman is defeated (Esther 3:1-6). In the Book of Esther, Haman plotted to kill all the Jews in Persia and Media. Haman had ten sons. By this, we can see that Haman is a type of the false Messiah (antichrist). A decree was sent out on the thirteenth of Nisan that all the Jews would be killed. Upon hearing this news, Esther proclaims a three-day fast, which would be Nisan 14-16. On the sixteenth of Nisan, Esther risked her life when she came to King Ahasuerus. The king asked her, in effect, "Tell me, what do you want?" Esther replied, "If it seems good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him." This was the sixteenth day of Nisan. At the banquet, the king again asked Esther what she wanted, and she asked the king to come to another banquet to be held the next day, the seventeenth of Nisan. On this day, Haman (a type of the false Messiah or antichrist, as well as of satan) is hanged.
5. The resurrection of Jesus (John 12:24, 1 Corinthians 15:16-20). The Lord Jesus celebrated the Festival of First Fruits by offering Himself as the first fruits to all future generations (Matthew 27:52-53).

## Jesus Is the First Fruits of the Barley Harvest

1. Jesus is the firstborn of Mary (Matthew 1:23-25)
2. Jesus is the first-begotten of God the Father (Hebrews 1:6)
3. Jesus is the firstborn of every creature (Colossians 1:15)
4. Jesus is the first-begotten from the dead (Revelation 1:5)
5. Jesus is the firstborn of many brethren (Romans 8:29)

6. Jesus is the first fruits of the resurrected ones (1 Corinthians 15:20,23)
7. Jesus is the beginning of the creation of God (Revelation 3:14)
8. Jesus is the preeminent One (Colossians 1:18)

Jesus is indeed the Most Holy One of God and is sanctified by the Father. Jesus is the first, the choicest, the preeminent One. He is both the firstborn of God and the first fruits unto God. Jesus is the sheaf of the first fruits.

## First Fruits is Prophetic of the Resurrection of Christ

The Festival of the sheaf of the first fruits is prophetic of the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus prophesied that He would rise three days and nights after He was crucified upon the tree (Matthew 12:40, Luke 24:46). This was foreshadowed to happen in the Old Testament by type and shadow (Genesis 22:1-6, Exodus 3:18, 8:27).

Since Jesus was crucified on the day of Passover, the fourteenth of Nisan, and He arose from the grave three days and nights after He was crucified, Jesus arose from the grave on the seventeenth of Nisan, the day of the festival of First Fruits. This day would be the day after the weekly sabbath during the week of Passover (Mark 16:1-6). In fact, Jesus is called the first fruits of those who rise from the dead.

-But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. --1 Corinthians 15:20-23

## The Spiritual Understanding of First Fruits

A sheaf in the Bible is used to typify a person or persons (Genesis 37:5-11). Christ will return to earth (Zechariah 14:4) during His second coming as King over all the earth. He also will bring the sheaves (the believers in Jesus as the Messiah) with Him (Psalm 126, Mark 4:26-29, Jude 14).

The 144,000 Jewish witnesses who witness of Christ during the tribulation are first fruits to God during the tribulation (Revelation 14:1-4).

The following are Scriptures in the Bible concerning first fruits.

1. Israel was God's firstborn (Exodus 4:22). But, the first will be last and the last will be first (Mark 10:31). Therefore, the Gentiles became the first to receive the Messiah (Isaiah 60:1-3, 62:1-3, Acts 15:14-16). At the end of this present age, the Jews as a corporate people will accept Jesus as Messiah as well.
2. The Gospel was preached to the Jew first and then to the non-Jews (Romans 1:16).
3. We are called to seek first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33).
4. Jesus was alive the first day of the week (Mark 16:1-6).
5. Jesus was the first to rise from the dead (Acts 26:23).
6. The early believers were a kind of first fruits (James 1:17-18).
7. Those who arose from the dead with Christ during His resurrection became the first fruits of all those who would rise from the dead (Matthew 27:52-53, Ephesians 4:8, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
8. Jesus first loved us, and He is to be our first love (1 John 4:9, Revelation 2:4).
9. Jesus is the first (Alpha) and the last (Omega) (Revelation 1:8, 17, 22:13, Isaiah 41:4, 44:6, 48:12).

Few people understand that God follows a systematic plan, symbolized by His Holy Days, to save all humanity by offering all people eternal life in His Kingdom.

In this world we are simply at the beginning of the harvest from the Kingdom of God.