



Leviticus 23:9-14 **1 Corinthians 15:20**

The Feast of the First Fruits

God claims the first fruits of everything. He has first claim on our lives.

The feast of the first fruits is closely associated with the Passover and the unleavened bread. They were held consecutively on the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth days of the first month of the Jewish calendar.

Although the Passover was established the night Israel left Egypt, it was not celebrated until forty years later in the Promised Land. The feast of first fruits was not observed until the nation entered the Promised Land. The feast of first fruits was a celebration of God's provision in the Land. For forty years they had eaten manna, the food of the wilderness journey. Now it was time to celebrate the promise of God's abundant harvest in the land of provision.

"Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, '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'" (Leviticus 23:9-10). Barley would be the first grain to ripen in Israel. After the barley came the fruit, olives, grapes and finally wheat.

The Jewish people at the time of the sowing of seed would mark off certain barley in the field. When the time the harvest season arrived, men would carry a sickle and basket and on command reap the specially designated grain. The men would march to the Tabernacle bringing a sheaf of the first fruits of the harvest to the priest. The priest would wave the sheaf accompanied by burnt and meal offerings. "He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord for you to be accepted; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. Now on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb one year old without defect for a burnt offering to the Lord" (vv. 11-12).

This first fruits offering represented the whole harvest yet in the field. Men gave thanks for the harvest while it still stood in the field. God still claims first fruits of everything. It belongs to Him, even before it is harvested.

Jesus Christ is the Passover lamb who shed His blood to redeem us. The apostle Paul saw the resurrection of Christ as the first fruits of a greater resurrection day in 1 Corinthians 15:20-25.

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the

are asleep. For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

Jesus described Himself as the grain of wheat that fell into ground and died, that it might spring to life and bring much fruit. Jesus said to His disciples, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:23-24). The hour of His glorification was His crucifixion and resurrection.

The feast of first fruits was the third day after Passover. Christ rose from the dead as the first fruits of the resurrection on the third day from His death.

Christ is the first representative of the whole resurrection harvest that will take place when He returns. On the day in which He rose from the dead Jesus said to Mary, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God. Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord,' and *that* He had said these things to her" (John 20:17-18). Our Great High Priest was waving the first fruits of the resurrection harvest!

Our Lord Jesus Christ is in the presence of the Father in heaven as the representative of the whole church that is still in the field waiting the harvest. The first fruits is a living testimony to God's sovereignty and says to a watching world, "Because I live, you shall live also."

The tomb is empty! Jesus rose from the dead! He is alive. He is the first to rise from the dead in expectation of a greater harvest.

Jesus is the first fruits designated by God the Father until the day when He shall come again to gather in His redeemed. One great resurrection day He will gather the harvest from the grave of those who have been laid to rest in the grave, and gather all who are alive and remain in one grand harvest of all the redeemed of all ages.

The apostle Paul declared the next great event with these words in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

another with these words.

And if that great expectation weren't enough Paul tells us another great "first fruits" that we have already experienced. He wrote to the Roman Christians, "And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23). We have received the down payment, the first fruits of the Holy Spirit. There is more to follow! Can you imagine what it is going to be like in heaven in the presence of the LORD God for all eternity? We have only tasted what it is going to be like when He comes for us. The presence of the Holy Spirit guarantees the promise.

The apostle John was permitted to see what is taking place in heaven, about the throne of God. He heard the new song they are singing about the throne. He saw the Lamb, and those who follow Him wherever He goes. "These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb" (Revelation 14:4). He goes forth with a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.

But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other" (Matthew 24:29-31).

Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Even today.

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