

## The Feast of First Fruits

Leviticus 23:9-14

The final part of the Feast of Passover is spoken of as the Feast Day of the Sheaf of First Fruits. The only specific scripture which deals with this Feast Day is found in Leviticus 23:9-14. The New Testament clearly interprets this simple but beautiful Feast Day in I Corinthians 15:20-23. Paul in a summary statement interprets this by referring to Christ as the First Fruits. The day of the Sheaf of First Fruits is a remarkable prophetic type of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, His ascension to heaven and the coming resurrection.

### I. THE PRACTICE OF THE FEAST

When Israel eventually entered into the Promised Land, they were commanded to keep this Feast day then. It involved the harvest period under Passover and Pentecost. It could not be kept in the Wilderness as that was a place of wandering, feeding on the manna from heaven. It was not a place of harvest or feeding on the fruit of the land (Joshua 5:10-12).

The custom was carried out in this manner: The standing ripe harvest, barley and wheat, would soon be reaped. A person would go to the standing harvest, take one sheaf and bring it unto the priest. The lone sheaf was called "the sheaf of the firstfruits." The priest was then to take this one sheaf and wave it before the Lord in his house. This was to be done on "the morrow after the Sabbath." Certain prescribed offerings were also to be presented along with the sheaf. None could eat of the bread or roasted grain of the corn harvest until that sheaf had been presented to the Lord and accepted for Israel. It may be asked: *How many of the Israelites really understood the symbolic truth and significance of this simple but beautiful ceremony?* The New Testament historical fulfillment is that which interprets the ceremony for us and helps us to understand the Feast Day of First Fruits.

### II. THE PICTURES IN THE FEAST

#### A. A sheaf in scripture is generally used to typify persons or a person – Leviticus 23:10

1. Joseph dreamed a dream in which he saw eleven sheaves bow down to his sheaf. The interpretation was clear. It was a prophetic dream which showed that his eleven brothers would bow down to him in the appointed time (Genesis 37:5-11). This shows that the sheaf was symbolic of a person.
2. The Song of Degrees found in Psalm 126 is also a prophetic psalm. It speaks of the sower going forth to sow in tears. Then he comes back later in the harvest time bringing his sheaves with him. This prophetic psalm could be applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Lord of the Harvest. In His first coming He went forth weeping bearing precious seed. In His second coming He will come rejoicing in the harvest time, bringing His sheaves with Him. The sheaves in this harvest time are the redeemed souls which come to fruition by the Gospel.
3. The single sheaf, presented to the Lord here on this Feast day speaks of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the sheaf of firstfruits (I Corinthians 15:20-23).

#### B. This is the Sheaf of the First Fruits – It is preeminent – Leviticus 23:10

This one sheaf is distinctly called "the sheaf of the firstfruits." The nation of Israel was familiar with the concept of the firstfruits, or the firstborn. Both taught the same truth.

1. The firstborn of both man and beast were **sanctified** and presented to the Lord. They were distinctly and uniquely His (Exodus 13:2, 11-13; 22; 29).
2. The firstfruits of all the earth were to be **presented** to the Lord, at His altar in praise and thanksgiving. Sometimes they were presented to the priests and Levites (Deuteronomy 26:1-11; 18:3-5; Leviticus 19:23-25). Thus, the firstfruits belonged exclusively to Jehovah.
3. The New Testament shows beautifully how the Lord Jesus is the fulfillment of all that truth symbolized in the firstfruits and especially here as the Sheaf of First Fruits.
  - a. He is the firstborn of Mary (Matthew 1:23-25)
  - b. He is the first begotten of the Father (Hebrews 1:6)
  - c. He is the firstborn from the dead (Colossians 1:18)
  - d. He is the first begotten of the dead (Revelation 1:5)
  - e. In all things He is the preeminent One (Colossians 1:18)
  - f. He is the beginning of the creation of God (Revelation 3:14)
  - g. He is the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29)
  - h. He is the firstfruits of the resurrected ones (I Corinthians 15:20, 23)
 Jesus is the **sheaf of the First Fruits**

#### **C. The First of the First Fruits – the pattern of all things to come – Exodus 23:19, 34:26**

The **sheaf** of the firstfruits needs to be distinguished from the **harvest** of the firstfruits (Exodus 23:16, 34;22), or that which took place under the Pentecost harvest. This sheaf was a forerunner sheaf, a sample sheaf of the coming harvest. The harvests of Passover (barley) and Pentecost (wheat) were a kind of firstfruits harvest because the final harvest was to come in the end of the year under Tabernacles (fruit). Hence this sheaf was but **the first** of the firstfruits, and the harvest would follow. Jesus Christ therefore is the representative sheaf and the saints of all ages will be the harvest of the end of the age (Matthew 13:36-43).

#### **D. Wave the Sheaf before Jehovah – the Person of Christ – Lev. 23:11; Exodus 23:19)**

This one sheaf was to be taken to the house of the Lord and waved in presentation before Jehovah. It speaks of Christ's ascension to the heavenly Father's house, the true tabernacle and temple. When He was about to ascend after His resurrection, He told Mary not to touch Him for he had not yet ascended to the Father (John 20:17).

While the Jews kept the letter of the law concerning this Feast day, and that before a rent veil, Christ fulfilled the reality and spirit of it as He ascended to the Father's house and presented Himself as the sheaf of the firstfruits in His resurrection and glorified body. The empty tomb testified to the fact that the sheaf of firstfruits had been reaped and waved before the Lord in His heavenly sanctuary.

#### **E. To be Accepted for You – The Principle of Justification – Leviticus 23:11**

The sheaf waved before Jehovah was accepted for Israel. Paul told the believers that they were "accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6). So we may say that as the sheaf was accepted before Jehovah for Israel and Israel was accepted of Jehovah in that sheaf, so Christ is accepted before God for us and we are accepted of God in Christ.

### **III. THE PATTERN OF THE FEAST**

This one sheaf was to be waved in the house of the Lord "on the morrow after the Sabbath." It is a most remarkable prophecy of the resurrection day. No set date is mentioned

in Leviticus for the waving of the sheaf of firstfruits, under the historical-typical command. However, when we come to the New Testament historical-antitypical fulfillment we find the dates to be implicit in the Old Testament command.

Thus this event remarkably fulfills Christ's own prophetic word that He would be dead for three days and three nights and then be raised after that (Matthew 12:38-40; 16:21; 27:63; 28:1; Luke 24:7, 46; Mark 8:31; 16; 9).

From the fourteenth day to the close of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth day, we have a time period of three days and three nights, counting the Hebrew reckoning of time from "even to even."

Failure to recognize that there were **two Sabbaths** in the Passover week has brought much confusion and misunderstanding as to the day of Christ's crucifixion, as well as the day of His resurrection. It has distorted the truth of Christ's statement concerning His being three days and three nights in the heart of this earth.

The Unleavened Bread was a High Day or extra Sabbath, and then there was the weekly Sabbath also, thus making two Sabbaths in the week of the crucifixion (John 19:30-31; Luke 23:50-56).

Each of the Gospels confirms the fact that the resurrection of Christ took place at the close of the weekly Sabbath and early the first day of the new week. This is to say that the resurrection took place on "the morrow after the Sabbath." Type and antitype met together in wonderful fulfillment.

Thus one of the foundation stones of the Christian faith – the resurrection of the Christ – was established on the **first** day of the new week, **not** the Sabbath.

The Christian rejoiced in a new day, the first day of the new week, the resurrection day. It was for this reason that the early believers gradually moved away from keeping of the Sabbath to the keeping of the first day of the week (John 20:1; Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 1:10).

The Jews kept a Christless Sabbath! The keeping of the first day of the week, the resurrection day, was foreshadowed by Israel while they were keeping weekly Sabbaths. One wonders how many of them ever understood why God instituted this simple ordinance of the sheaf waving to take place on "the morrow after the Sabbath." The New Testament believer rejoices in the knowledge of the truth.

Besides the daily evening and morning sacrifices there were other specified sacrifices to be offered with this sheaf. These offerings are:

1. A lamb without blemish of the first year to be offered as a Burnt Offering
2. The Meal Offering and its accompanying Drink Offering also to be offered as a sweet savor to the Lord. Here we see bread and wine involved
3. The Sheaf of the First Fruits offered