

Sheaf of the Firstfruits

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During the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:6-8) the Levitical priesthood was commanded to wave a sheaf of the first grain that was cut down in the early Spring harvest. This ceremony was to be conducted the morning after the weekly Sabbath that fell within this seven-day festival (see footnote on the timing of the sheaf of the firstfruits).

*When you (nation of Israel) come into the land which I (Almighty God) give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, **to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the** (weekly) **Sabbath the priest shall wave it.** And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the Lord (Lev. 23:10a – 12; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

This sheaf represented a very small portion of the Spring harvest. However, this small amount was very important because no one could eat anything from this first harvest until the sheaf of the firstfruits had been waved before the Lord.

You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your (nation of Israel's) generations in all your dwellings (Lev. 23:14; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Once this sheaf had been accepted by the Lord, the nation would be sustained by the new grain. This pictured, in advance, God the Father

accepting Jesus Christ, who was the first and only one to be "cut down" (harvested) in order to provide the means through which all sinners can be forgiven and, upon repentance, receive the gift of everlasting life, (cf. Jn. 5:39-40).

Jesus said to her (Mary Magdalene), 'Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God' (Jn. 20:17; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Figuratively speaking, the action of cutting the first sheaf of grain is to remind every sinner that Jesus Christ was "cut down" to cover their sins.

For he (Jesus Christ) was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions (sins; cf. 1Jn. 4:3) of My (Almighty God's) people he (Christ) was stricken (Isa. 53:8b; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

And after the sixty-two (prophetic) weeks Messiah (Jesus Christ) shall be cut off, but not for himself (not because of his sins) (Dan. 9:26a; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

The apostle Paul explained the importance of Jesus Christ's resurrection and pointed out that if God the Father had not raised Christ from the dead, and accepted his sacrifice (pictured by waving the sheaf of the firstfruits), no one would have any hope of everlasting life.

Now if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead (a teaching of the Sadducees; cf. Ac. 23:8)? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our (Christ's disciples) preaching is vain and

your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God (serious offense; cf. Deut. 19:16-19), because we have testified of God (our Father) that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up – if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins (because they cannot be forgiven; cf. Heb. 9:22)! Then also those who have died in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable (1Cor. 15:12-19; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Those, who understand the symbolism associated with waving the sheaf of the firstfruits, can trust there is a future resurrection of the dead. And the following scripture confirms that everyone will eventually be resurrected following Christ's return, but not at the same time.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³But each one in his (or her) own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at his coming. ²⁴Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father (at the conclusion of the 2nd resurrection, cf. Rev. 20:4-6), when he puts an end to all rule and all authority and power (1Cor. 15:22-24; Ed. notes in parentheses).

It appears that some Jewish religious leaders understood the connection between waving the sheaf of the firstfruits and the resurrection of Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 11:49-52), but it was not politically expedient for them to make this knowledge available to the public. Instead, they strived to cover it up.

On the next day that followed (Christ's death; which occurred late on a Wednesday; with

Thursday being the first High Day during the Days of Unleavened Bread), *the Day of Preparation* (Thursday night to Friday night, before the weekly Sabbath), *the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, 'Sir, we remember, while he (Christ) was still alive, how that deceiver said, "After three days I will rise." Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day (late Saturday), lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say to the people, 'he has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first.'* (Mt. 27:62-64; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Not only did waving the sheaf of the firstfruits picture Christ's resurrection and acceptance by Almighty God, but it also confirmed that no other part of the first harvest was to be waved. In other words, only Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead at this point in time (cf. Ac. 1:9-11). Those who will be part of the next resurrection are pictured by two loaves of bread that are waved on the Day of Pentecost. This appointed festival in late spring foreshadows a future resurrection involving many people who repented of sin during their lifetime, and are now waiting (figuratively) for Christ's return (cf. Rev. 6:9-11). These people are also referred to as firstfruits, but they are from a different harvest. Consequently, Christ will always be "the first of the firstfruits harvest at the beginning of the year".

*You shall bring from your habitations two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. **They are the firstfruits to the Lord** (Lev. 23:17; emphasis added).*

*The priest shall wave them (animals that are offered) **with the bread of the firstfruits** as a wave offering before the Lord, with the*

two lambs... (Lev. 23:20; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Consequently, when God's people pause and observe the waving of the firstfruit sheaf on the morning following the weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, they are remembering that Christ was cut down to cover the sins of every repentant sinner, he was resurrected from the dead three days later, and his sacrifice provides the way for everyone to begin a new life of obedience to his Father's law and commandments.

Finally those, who continue living this new way until the end of their lives, will inherit everlasting life at a future resurrection as these final scriptures confirm.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life (everlasting). No one comes to the Father (in reconciliation) except through me (as a result of Christ's sacrifice) (Jn. 14:6; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

*Then Peter said to them, "**Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Christ for the remission (forgiveness) of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**" (Ac. 2:38; Ed. note in parenthesis).*

*And we (Christ's disciples) are His witnesses to these things, and so also is **the Holy Spirit which God (the Father) has given to those who obey Him** (Ac. 2:38; Ed. notes in parenthesis; emphasis added).*

***He who says, "I know Him (God)," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him** (1Jn. 2:4; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).*

*Many will say to me (Christ) in that day (future resurrection), 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name.' ²³And then I will declare to them, '**I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!**' (Mt. 7:22-23; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added)*

*But **if the Spirit of Him** (Almighty God, the Father) **who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you**, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life (everlasting) to your mortal bodies through His Spirit which dwells in you (Rom. 8:11; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).*

*But **he who endures** (perseveres in living a new life; cf. Rom. 6:4) **to the end shall be saved** (Mt. 24:13; cf. 10:22; Mk. 13:13).*

Footnote: In Leviticus 23:10a – 12, the sheaf of the firstfruits was to be waved before the Lord on the day following the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. It was from this day after the Sabbath that the count to Pentecost began (Lev. 23:15-21).

From Acts 2:15, it is clear that the sheaf of the firstfruits was waved at the time of the morning sacrifice, which is 9:00am, because Christ's disciples were assembled at 9:00am to observe the day of Pentecost exactly fifty days after the sheaf of the firstfruits had been waved.

The two loaves of bread that were waved on the Day of Pentecost picture all those, who have repented of sin, being accepted by Almighty God and they will be resurrected at the return of Jesus Christ. These will comprise everyone who is part of the "first resurrection" (Lev. 23:17, 20; Rev. 20:4-6).

Symbolically, those in the first resurrection were “unleavened” during their physical lifetime through repentance of sin, which is an ongoing process (1Jn. 1:8-10; 2:1-2). Following their repentance of sin, and subsequent baptism, they were “leavened” by the receipt and action of God’s Holy Spirit (Mt. 13:33). Hence the two leavened loaves of bread being waved before God represent those who repent of sin during the first and second covenant periods.

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