

# First Fruits and The Seven Feasts of Israel

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## Introduction

In Leviticus 23, the God of Israel gave a marvelous and profound prophetic system by choosing, seemingly arbitrarily, seven holy feasts to be held each year by the Chosen People. God imparted this important information to Moses on Mt. Sinai, and he dutifully delivered it to Israel in the wilderness. From that moment on, the Tabernacle was constructed and the feasts observed exactly according to the instructions of the Lord, by the true believers.

It is the third feast, First Fruits, with which we are concerned in this newsletter. The church continues to celebrate First Fruits in its New Testament essence, as Resurrection Sunday, or Easter, but we do not realize its full impact nor its glorious promise for the future, unless we understand its original form directly from God's instruction.

The church appreciates Passover in that the Lord Jesus cited this feast Himself as a holy convocation. We take the bread and the wine of Passover as communion, according to what happened on that Passover of crucifixion in the New Testament record. We correctly "do this in remembrance of Me" remembering our deliverance from bondage by the blood of the Lamb (as Israel was delivered from Egypt in the Exodus). The second feast, Unleavened Bread, demonstrates a holy walk — "And on the fifteenth day of the same month as the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread" (Lev. 23:6). Leaven, in the Bible, is sin, and the God of Israel asked for a week of eating "sinless" bread. As we walk in Christ, "the Bread of Life," we demonstrate a continuous keeping of this feast, which is exactly our instruction from the Apostle Paul: "Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Cor. 5:8).

But with First Fruits, we seem to have confused an ancient pagan fertility rite with the original directions. Today, we have an amalgam of a Babylonian festival with a Biblical holy convocation.

## Resurrection Sunday

We should look carefully at the original instructions for the third feast and understand fully their implications:

*“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.*

*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”* (Lev. 23:10–11).

To paraphrase, God is saying to Moses, “I am taking My people into an exceptionally fertile land and I would like them to acknowledge that fact. Each spring, when the first harvest of the year is available, the people should bring some of their initial crops to the Temple so that the high priest can acknowledge them before Me. This must be done on the Sunday (“the morrow after the sabbath”) during the week of Unleavened Bread.”

Thus it happens, so early in the Bible, that God honors Resurrection Sunday, the Sunday after Passover, as representing particularly the things that come up out of the ground spontaneously and miraculously after the long, dead winter. We see this miracle every spring and we take it for granted, but which of us has to go out and do anything special to our trees or our shrubbery to make them come forth with their first fruits in March and April?

The original name of the feast of First Fruits contains a great truth. If there are first fruits, then there must be a second, a third and so on, and that is the true meaning of this Sunday. We do not merely celebrate the resurrection of the Lord on First Fruits, but more so, the resurrection of the entire church. That the Lord rose from the dead is cause for great wonder and blessing, but are we really surprised? He could raise the dead Himself; He could walk on water; He could feed the thousands. The greater miracle is that we ordinary, mortal, earthly sinners will all rise! As Paul presented so clearly:

*“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”* (I Cor. 15:22–23).

Those “in Adam” die, since all descendants of our sinning original father have inherited his terrible tendency. But in Christ we are made alive again. And this will happen in some given order, as the Scripture tells us. Christ is the firstfruits; His “number” was one. Apparently, we all have a number and we will be raised from our graves in order. Obviously, “The dead in Christ shall rise first” (I Thess. 4:16–17), since they have lower numbers.

Jesus celebrated First Fruits in the appropriate manner by rising from the dead on that day. He also gave the Father His proper First Fruits offering; graves were opened and dead people rose and were seen after His resurrection in Jerusalem (Matt. 27:53). Our Lord, not unlike any farmer of the soil, gratefully brought before the Father a few early “crops” of what would be a magnificent harvest later on. We sometimes fail to note that Jesus was not the only deceased person to rise on that miraculous day of First Fruits. Those He brought forth from their graves represent a type of the church. We, too, shall

be brought forth from our graves for the big fall harvest — the Rapture — at the Feast of Trumpets. It was not only, then, the Lord's resurrection that demonstrates our promise, but also the resurrection of those chosen saints of the time, which assures us of our own triumph.

## The Rest of The Story

Thus, clearly, in His Passion Week, the Lord celebrated the first three feasts, each in the appropriate manner. He was crucified on Passover, answering to the Blood of the Lamb, which had gotten the chosen people out of slavery to begin with; He was buried on Unleavened Bread ("This bread is my body") — a case of a dead man arranging his own burial at the appropriate time. And He was raised on First Fruits, as a demonstration of the future resurrection of the church. That wasn't the end of the Lord's ministry on earth, even though we assume He was inactive after that. As a matter of fact, He continued, regarding His promise to the disciples in John 14, to send the Holy Spirit. The fourth feast, Pentecost, occurs 50 days after First Fruits (Lev. 23:15–16), and on that very day, the Holy Spirit attended the Pentecost festivities at the Temple site "like a rushing, mighty wind." Pentecost represents the summer harvest, a larger harvest than First Fruits, but not so large as the fall crops, and the Holy Spirit harvested 3,000 people (Acts 2:41). On the occasion when the Law came, Israel had made a golden calf, and by God's direction, 3,000 were killed (Ex. 32:28). And now, on Pentecost, the same number were returned to the Chosen People, "The letter kills, the Spirit gives life."

That was the last of the Lord's activities that we have seen on earth, other than the various personal miracles we all experience in our holy walk with Him. We are due, therefore, for upcoming performances, each on their appropriate day, if the Lord is to continue the system He has undertaken. If we are correct about the ongoing fulfillment of the feasts in their proper order, we should expect the Rapture of the church, appropriately enough, on the Feast of Trumpets (1 Thess. 4:16–17; 1 Cor. 15:51–52). We cannot be dogmatic on this point, since the Lord is to come by surprise, and the church is becoming more and more aware of the feasts — even expecting Him on Trumpets. Yet, He intends to surprise us 'Like a thief in the night,' and so there is some debate about whether He will continue to fulfill the feasts or whether He will pick some other day, surprising us all. The writer rather prefers the idea of the Day of Trumpets, itself, and is aware that some of the church is expecting the Lord on that very day in some future year. We are not those who are asleep after all; we are supposed to be waiting and watching expectantly (1 Thess. 5:1–10).

If our theory is correct, then the Lord should continue to fulfill the last two feasts — even after the Rapture of the church. And indeed it appears that He will. The Day of Atonement will be fulfilled at the Second Coming, when "they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced and mourn for Him as for an only son...and all Israel will be saved" (Zech. 12:10; Romans 11:26).

Finally, the Lord will celebrate the seventh feast, the Feast of Tabernacles, when He places His own tabernacle here on earth among us and the world will come up from year to year to worship Him (Zech. 14:16–19).

## The Future

Clearly, then, Christians have a very bright future. First Fruits, in essence, means that our Savior will return for us. Buddha and Mohammed have not promised their followers they will return. With these worldly religions, what you see is what you get. But our King is coming! First Fruits represents, in a way, the whole point of Christianity — what we see is not all we get. This life is only the beginning. Even if we are dead, we shall rise — just as those dead branches of winter bear fruits every spring. Let us pray with John, “Amen, come quickly Lord Jesus.”