

THE FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS

Leviticus 23:9-14

INTRODUCTION

- Charles E. Hummel in *The Tyranny of the Urgent* wrote, “We live in constant tension between the urgent and the important. There is an insidious tendency to neglect important tasks that do not have to be done today—or even this week.”
- Too often the most important thing in the Christian’s life – our devotion to God – can become neglected and replaced by the pressing duties of life
- The question as to what comes first in our lives is something that all of us must answer every day
- The phrase, “In the beginning God,” should describe our priorities
- The Feast of Firstfruits was held in close connection with the first two feasts; it was to be observed within the seven-day feast of Unleavened Bread
- While Passover and Unleavened Bread were held on the same dates every year (14th and 15th day of the first month), the Firstfruits was held on the “morrow after the sabbath” (the weekly sabbath) that would occur during the seven days of Unleavened Bread
- Therefore Firstfruits was always observed on the first day of the week, which is now called the Lord’s Day

- This was a harvest feast, which occurred at the beginning of the barley harvest
- Once the sheaf had been waved before the Lord and accepted the whole harvest was now accepted by the Lord
- Unlike the first two feasts, Firstfruits was not to be observed until the children of Israel entered into the promised land, and they began to harvest their crops
- Hence in giving this ordinance, God gives them a promise that they would certainly enter into the land he had promised them
- These feasts are “shadows of things to come” and typically represent God’s work of redemption through Christ from beginning to end

I. THE CONSECRATED RENDERING

A. The Lord’s part must come first

1. As the firstborn of the flocks and the firstborn of their children belonged to the Lord, so the first of their crop was his
2. The harvest could not commence until the first sheaf was offered unto God
3. They were not to please or satisfy themselves, then take God the leftovers

B. This is an acknowledgement of God’s Lordship and provision

1. As Creator, all things belong to him (Psalm 24:1)
2. All we are and have is God's
3. This is especially true for those who have been "bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20)
4. To render unto God that which he demands of us is to confess our reliance on him for all our needs (Psalm 116:12-14)

C. There is a great battle in our lives for the first place

1. The first part of our lives (Ecclesiastes 12:1)
2. The first part of the day (Mark 1:35)
3. The first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2)
4. The first of our income
 - a. We honour the LORD with our substance and with the firstfruits of all our increase (Proverbs 3:9-10)
 - b. Those who refuse to tithe are robbing God and under a curse (Malachi 3:8-10)
 - c. Those who seek God first will not lack God's supply (Matthew 6:33; Philippians 4:19)
5. The first of our children
 - a. Often the course that the eldest child takes in life is followed by the younger siblings

6. Those who would give God first place must “first give their own selves to the Lord” (2 Corinthians 8:1-5)

II. CHRIST’S RESURRECTION

A. The resurrection of Christ perfectly fulfilled the type of Firstfruits

1. The wave sheaf was reaped after sunset on the evening before the offering
2. The next day the priest would wave the sheaf before the Lord, towards the four points of the compass, then throw part of it into the fire, while reserving the remainder for himself
3. Christ’s resurrection took place sometime after sunset on the first day of the week (our Saturday night) (Mark 16:9)
4. On the day of Christ’s resurrection, as the priest in the temple in Jerusalem waved the sheaf of barley before the rent veil, the Lord Jesus, in the heavenly temple, presented himself as the firstfruits before God the Father

B. The sheaf of grain represents life from the dead

1. The apparently lifeless seed of grain is planted under the earth
2. From the ground emerges a living plant producing many more seeds

3. The enemies of Christ thought they had won when they killed him and buried him.
4. They did everything in their power to ensure that he remained buried – yet he arose from the dead!
5. Though that body was dead, there remained, as it were, the germ of the seed, the life-giving power of God, which raised that body to life immortal, and in so doing, provided immortality to all who believe (John 12:23-25)

C. Christ's resurrection is a *precedent* of the believer's resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20-23)

1. The reaping of the firstfruits was a promise of the harvest that would soon follow
2. The resurrection of Christ is the sure guarantee of the resurrection of believers
 - a. Though others had been temporarily resurrected from death, Christ is the first to be resurrected to eternal life
 - b. The harvest, of which Christ is the firstfruits, will soon take place when "the dead in Christ shall rise" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)
 - c. So certain is the resurrection of the believer that the apostle Paul speaks of it as having already happened – "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:6)

D. Christ's resurrection is a *sample* of the believer's resurrection

1. The firstfruits were a *specimen* of the harvest
2. The firstfruits and the harvest bear a similarity and resemblance
3. Though the Christian has no equality with the Lord, yet there is a likeness between the Christian's resurrection body and Christ's (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2; Colossians 3:4)

D. The firstfruits shows the blessedness of the resurrection

1. There were other offerings connected with the Feast of Firstfruits
 - a. A lamb without blemish for a burnt offering (Leviticus 23:12)
 - b. A meat and a drink offering (Leviticus 23:13)
2. There was no sin offering, only offerings of a sweet savour to God
3. Christ satisfied the payment for sin in his death
4. In his resurrection he needed not atone for sin; rather, he shows forth his triumph over death, and the blessedness of the life he has and bestows on his people
5. There will be no Feast of Firstfruits in the Millennium as it has been fulfilled in Christ

III. THE COVENANT'S REALISATION

- A. For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. (Romans 11:16)
1. In this verse, Paul by the Spirit likens Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as the firstfruit
 2. God made covenant promises concerning them and their seed
 3. While Israel is presently in blindness and unbelief, there will come a day when they will mourn and repent, and receive Jesus as their Messiah (Zechariah 12:10; Romans 11:25-26)
 4. The 144,000 from the twelve tribes are also described as "the firstfruits" of Israel's salvation (Revelation 14:4)

IV. THE COMFORTER'S RESIDING

- A. The Holy Spirit, given to believers, is the firstfruits, promising future glorification (Romans 8:22-23)
1. The Holy Spirit is called the "earnest" of our inheritance (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14)
 2. The earnest is a pledge or downpayment, giving assurance that the full amount will be given in due time

V. THE CHRISTIAN'S REPRODUCTION

- A. Paul described the first Christians at Achaia as the "firstfruits" (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:15)
1. Those believers were just the first of many others who would also come to Christ
 2. God's intention for every believer is that their faith does not end with them, but is passed on to others, producing a great harvest
 3. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18)
 4. The woman of Samaria, having come to faith in Christ, sought to be a firstfruits to her city, bringing the people also to the Saviour (John 4:28-30; 39-42)

CONCLUSION

1. There can be no blessing on those who put themselves and their own interests before God (Haggai 1:9-11)
2. Is God getting your first and your best, or your leftovers?
3. There is coming a day of harvest when man will be reaped like wheat, or burned like tares (Matthew 13:37-43)
4. Are you among the wheat or the tares?
5. Are you one of the Lord's firstfruits, yielded as an instrument to bring others into the great harvest to God's glory?