

CHRIST THE FIRSTFRUITS

Leviticus 23:9-14; 1 Corinthians 15:20-24

INTRODUCTION

- As the philosopher Socrates died, he was asked, “Is there life after death?” His answer was, “I hope so.”
- Many people in the world today would give the same answer
- But the Christian does not merely “hope” he has life after death, he *knows* he has life after death (cf. Job 19:25-27)
- We have an assurance based on the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead
- In Scripture, a *type*, is a pattern, figure, or shadow which represents another
- The fulfilment of the type is called the *antitype*
- There are many types of the sacrificial death of Christ
- But what about the resurrection?
- The prophet Jonah is a type of Christ’s resurrection (Matthew 12:39-40)
- We can also find a type of Christ’s resurrection in one of Israel’s feasts
- Each of the seven feasts of the LORD are typical of different aspects of Christ’s ministry:
 - ✓ Passover – Death

- ✓ Unleavened Bread – Burial
- ✓ Firstfruits – Resurrection
- ✓ Pentecost – Holy Spirit sent
- ✓ Trumpets – Rapture
- ✓ Atonement – Second Advent
- ✓ Tabernacles – Kingdom

- The Feast of Firstfruits represents the resurrection of Christ
- The term “first fruits” is self-explanatory – it is the first of the fruit
- While all things belong to God (Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalm 24:1), he requires of man the “first things”
 - ✓ Because he is worthy of such
 - ✓ Because it is an expression of love and devotion to the Lord
 - ✓ Because where the first goes, the rest generally follows
- Giving God first place in all things is a principle we can apply to every part of our lives (Matthew 6:33; 2 Corinthians 8:5)
- But too often our carnal attitude says, “me first”
- The children of Israel were commanded to devote the firstfruits to the Lord, whether of man, animal, or crop (Exodus 34:19; Numbers 3:13)
- God’s promises of blessing are conditional upon the rendering of the firstfruits (Proverbs 3:9-10)
- Every year, during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Lord required the priest to bring a sheaf of barley and offer it on behalf of the nation – this is known as the Feast of Firstfruits

- The apostle Paul clearly linked this feast with the resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:20,23)
- Just as Christ in his death fulfilled the pattern of the Passover in every detail, so too in his resurrection he fulfilled the pattern of Firstfruits in every detail

I. **CHRIST AS FIRSTFRUITS PREVAILED OVER THE CURSED GRAVE**

A. 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)

B. It represents *abundance* of life

1. It was a mature and full ear of the sheaf that was presented and waved for an offering to the Lord

2. Christ's resurrection not only brought life to his own body, but brings eternal life to multitudes – it brings many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10)
3. The life that he gives to sinners is “more abundant” (John 10:10)

C. The timing of this feast indicates life, newness and resurrection

1. Passover was held on 14th day of Nisan
2. The Feast of Firstfruits took place on “the morrow after the sabbath” (Leviticus 23:11) following Passover
3. That sabbath is the *weekly sabbath*, rather than the festival sabbath on the first day of Unleavened Bread (15th of Nisan)
4. Therefore the Feast of Unleavened Bread always took place on the first day of the week, as did Pentecost, which was seven weeks later (Leviticus 23:15-16)
5. The wave sheaf was reaped after sunset on the evening before the offering
6. 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
7. Christ's resurrection took place sometime after sunset on the first day of the week (our Saturday night) (Mark 16:9)

8. This first day is also referred to as the “eighth day” by the patristic writers, this number representing resurrection and newness
9. 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

II. CHRIST AS FIRSTFRUITS PURIFIED THE COMPLETE GROUP

A. Christ’s work in justification of sinners

1. The harvest was prohibited until the firstfruits were offered (Leviticus 23:14)
2. The crop was bound under a type of ceremonial uncleanness
3. The firstfruits offering removed that uncleanness and released the harvest to be lawfully gathered
4. All mankind is “under sin” (Galatians 2:20) as violators of God’s law, and in bondage to sin’s wages – death
5. Only through Christ’s death and resurrection is man now released from his bondage and made a partaker of eternal life (Romans 4:25; 8:2)

B. One offering on behalf of all

1. The one sheaf of barley, once offered, was all sufficient to sanctify the whole of the harvest

2. Christ's one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Hebrews 10:10,14)
3. "If the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy" (Romans 11:16)

C. Christ's humanity

1. The firstfruits were taken from the same crop as the rest of the harvest
2. For man to be redeemed, only an offering of a perfect man would suffice
3. Christ, the eternal Son of God, took upon him human flesh, and became a Man, in order to save mankind (John 1:14; Philippians 2:7-8; Hebrews 2:14-17)
4. In his incarnation he was, and remains, fully God and fully Man (1 Timothy 3:16)

III. CHRIST AS FIRSTFRUITS IS PLEDGE OF THE COMING GATHERING

A. Christ's resurrection is a *precedent* of the believer's resurrection

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 (1 Corinthians 15:20-23)
 - 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; Ephesians 2:6)

B. 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)

C. 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

CONCLUSION

1. With reference to the individual believer, the Feast of Firstfruits teaches the duty of every believer to devote himself and all he has as a “firstfruits” to the Lord – giving him first place in all things
2. Is God truly first in your life?
3. With reference to Christ, the Feast of Firstfruits pictures the resurrection of Christ which is a pledge of the coming resurrection of all believers
4. Not all will be raised on that day – only those who are Christ’s
5. There are many “tares” who have the appearance of God’s children, but have never been born again
6. On the day of harvest, those hypocrites will be separated and cast into everlasting fire (Matthew 13:24-30,37-43)
7. The only hope for the sinner is to flee to Christ in humble repentance, and to trust in his redeeming blood as the only means of deliverance from sin, death and hell