

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. ¹¹He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. ¹²And 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 throughout unless noted; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

This sheaf represented a very small portion of the spring harvest. However, this small amount was very important because no one was to 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. notes in parenthesis).

Once this sheaf had been accepted by the Lord, the nation could be sustained by the new grain. This pictured, in advance, God the Father accepting Jesus Christ (the bread of life; Jn. 6:35, 48), who was the first one to be harvested in order to provide the means through which all

sinners could be forgiven and, upon repentance, receive the gift of everlasting life (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. notes in parenthesis).

Also, the first sheaf of grain to be cut down in ancient Israel pictured Jesus Christ being cut down to cover the sins of Almighty God's people.

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

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; cf. Isa. 9:58; Ed. notes in parentheses).

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 the 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)? ¹³ But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁴ And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching (of Christ's disciples) is vain and your faith is also empty. ¹⁵ Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God (serious offence; cf. Deut. 19:1619), 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. ¹⁶ For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. ¹⁷ 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)! ¹⁸ Then also those who have died in (knowing) Christ have perished. ¹⁹ 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, know there is a resurrection of the dead because this is another lesson associated with this ceremony.

It appears that some of the Jewish religious leadership made this 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 wanted to cover it up.



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Hebrews 11:35; Revelation 20:46

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,⁶³ saying, "Sir, we remember, while he (Christ) was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.'" ⁶⁴ 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, 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. Everyone else will have to wait until a future date.

But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have died. ²¹ For since by man came death (Adam's translation from spirit to flesh and blood following his sin; see the study: Which Rib Was Eve Made from), by Man (Christ) also came the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die (because everyone who is born came from Adam), even so in Christ all shall be made alive (cf. 2Pet. 3:9). ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at his coming (1Cor. 15:20-23; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

This scripture plainly states that no one who has died will be resurrected until Christ returns. Therefore, the sheaf of the firstfruits is totally unique and it represents Jesus Christ being cut down and sacrificed; then it is waved before the Lord picturing Christ's resurrection and acceptance by Almighty God.

Everyone else, both the living and the dead, will now wait until the return of Jesus Christ and after his return there will be two resurrections (Heb. 11:35; Rev. 20:46).

Consequently, when God's people observe this appointed time on the morning following the weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened bread, they are remembering that Christ was cut down for our sins, resurrected from the dead and accepted as the one who covers all the sins that have ever been committed, upon repentance (Ac. 2:38).

*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 is 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 approximately 9:00am, because Christ's disciples were assembled at this same time 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 at the return of Jesus Christ. These will comprise those 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, and they were "leavened" by the action of God's Holy Spirit (Mt. 13:33). Hence the two leavened loaves of bread being waved before God represented those who repented of sin during the first and second covenant periods.

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