

## **FANTASTIC FEASTS... & WHERE WE FIND THEM**

We've looked at the Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread. Passover took place on the 14th day of the Jewish month Nisan, then the Feast of Unleavened Bread was the next day.

They were followed by First Fruits:

Lev 23:9 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Lev 23:10 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them:

'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.

Lev 23:11 He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.

Lev 23:12 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.

On the "day after the Sabbath" he shall wave it. What Sabbath?

It's important to realize that Sabbaths did not only occur on Saturday, the seventh day; Nisan 15, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, **was also considered a Sabbath when Israel was to do no work** (Leviticus 23:7). Israel was to do no work, and to hold a "Holy Convocation" to the Lord.

There are four Sabbaths in close proximity to the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

- The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:7).
- The last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:8).

- The weekly Sabbath which falls during the seven days of Unleavened Bread.
- The weekly Sabbath which follows the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Passover is Nisan 14; Unleavened Bread starts on the 15th. It was on the 16th, which was the "morrow after the Sabbath," that the Feast of First Fruits was to be celebrated.

The Jewish historian, Josephus, who lived in the first century wrote: "But on the second day of Unleavened Bread, which is the sixteenth day of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth, for before that day they do not touch them" (Antiquities of the Jews 3.10.15)

Thus First Fruits was the Sunday following Passover.

Barley was the first of the grain crops to ripen. On this day a sheaf (*omer*) of barley was waved before the LORD in a prescribed ceremony to mark the forty nine day countdown to the Feast of Weeks we call Pentecost.

(This however could not be done until after the Children of Israel had entered the Promised Land, therefore the Feast of First Fruits was not observed during the Wilderness Wanderings).

On First Fruits every Jewish male would come to the Temple with a second lamb after the Passover lamb, and with the "first fruits" of his field:

- The priest would slay the lamb as the Israelite watched the preparation of his sacrifice. If he was poor he could offer two turtledoves. (Leviticus 5:7; 12:8, 14:22).

- When the Temple stood in Jerusalem, a sheaf of new-cut barley was presented before the altar on the second day of Unleavened Bread.

Josephus writes:

On the second day of unleavened bread, that is to say the sixteenth, our people partake of the crops which they have reaped and which have not been touched till then, and esteeming it right first to do homage to God, to whom they owe the abundance of these gifts, they offer to him the first-fruits of the barley in the following way. After parching and crushing the little sheaf of ears and purifying the barley for grinding, they bring to the altar an *assaron* for God, and, having flung a handful thereof on the altar, they leave the rest for the use of the priests. Thereafter all are permitted, publicly or individually, to begin harvest.

We maintain that Jesus fulfilled each of the spring feasts in His first coming. He rose from the dead on the first day of the week, on Sunday, in conjunction with Firstfruits.

The chronology of Jesus' last week on earth is highly controversial. You've probably visited the Christian website, [gotquestions.com](http://gotquestions.com). In their answer to the question, "On what day of the week was Jesus crucified?" they say,

The Bible does not explicitly state on which day of the week Jesus was crucified. The two most widely held views are Friday and Wednesday. Some, however, using a synthesis of both the Friday and Wednesday arguments, argue for Thursday as the day.

Why is it so hard to figure out? For one thing, as we noted earlier, holy days were considered Sabbaths - even though they did not fall on a Saturday.

Another reason there is disagreement is that some chronologies think it important that Jesus be in the tomb for three full days and nights. Others argue convincingly that He only needed to be in the tomb for a portion of a day in order for it to count as a full day.

There were also competing calendars. We said when we looked at Passover that it was likely in Jesus' time that two different days were available to celebrate the feast - based on two different calendars in use. However, not everyone believes this, either.

It hurts my brain to think through each of the possibilities. Each has pluses and minuses.

Is it important? Sure; but I don't think it's crucial to have the exact chronology. It's one of those things that we need to accept as unshakable. If godly, scholarly men are still in disagreement after all these centuries, we are not likely to solve it.

What I do think is crucial is that Jesus died on the Cross as the Lamb of God just when the Passover lambs were being sacrificed; that He lay in the tomb fulfilling Unleavened Bread; and that He rose from the dead as the firstfruits of the future resurrection in fulfillment of First Fruits.

The feasts of the Lord tell the story of His redeeming the human race by coming as a man, adding humanity to His deity, to die as the final Lamb having lived an unleavened life. Then He arose from the dead as the firstfruits promise of the greater, future harvest of souls.

First Fruits is mentioned a few times in the New Testament.

Romans 8:23 ... but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

The Holy Spirit is “the firstfruits” of God’s work of salvation and re-creation in believers. Elsewhere the Holy Spirit is called “a deposit (down payment or earnest) guaranteeing our inheritance (Ephesians 1:14). Warren Wiersbe says that the Holy Spirit is described as our engagement ring - a token of the finished work to come.

God the Holy Spirit, indwelling believers, is a foretaste that they will enjoy many more blessings, including living in God’s presence forever.

1Co 15:20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

1Co 15:21 For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead.

1Co 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

1Co 15:23 But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming.

1Co 15:24 Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.

“Adam” represented every future human being when he and Eve decided to rebel against God in the Garden of Eden. God told them the consequences of their bad choosing would be “death,” and death is what followed.

“In Adam all die” are four words that summarize the human condition. Why is there disease, disaster, death?

“In Adam all die.” It’s because of what Adam did and he represented the race of people who would descend from him.

Not fair, you say? Wait and listen to this! **Jesus also represented the entire human race in His decision to obey God.** When you identify with Him, you go from death to life.

In verse twenty three of First Corinthians fifteen, the word “order” is important, letting you know that the resurrection of the human race will occur in stages - not all at once. It’s actually a military word used to describe the separation of soldiers into various detachments.

This is important. A lot of people get confused, especially about Bible prophecy, from a failure to realize that there is not one massive general resurrection at the end of the age.

Jesus was “the firstfruits.” He rose and His resurrection guaranteed that believers in Him would also rise.

People had been raised from the dead before Jesus - but not in their eternal, resurrection bodies. He was the first to be raised glorified.

The next stage are “those who are Christ’s at His coming.” What coming? Paul meant the coming of Jesus to resurrect and rapture the church - to remove living believers off the planet prior to the Great Tribulation.

In that stage of the resurrection is that the Lord will, “...descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (First Thessalonians 4:16-17).

The rapture is always presented as imminent. When it happens, the spirits of believers who have died between the resurrection of Jesus and the rapture will be reunited with their bodies - only, as we see at the end of chapter fifteen, their bodies will be raised incorruptible and glorious. The living believers will be raptured - changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

Who’s next? Dr. J. Vernon McGee said,

The Old Testament saints are not raised, according to Daniel 12:1, until after the Great Tribulation Period when they are raised to enter the kingdom here on this earth. Then you have the resurrection of the tribulation saints, and that ends the first resurrection. You have, therefore, three definite groups [in stages]: The Church, the Old Testament saints, and the tribulation saints.

In First Corinthians 15:24, the “end” Paul was talking about leaps forward past the seven-year Great Tribulation and to the end of the one thousand year reign of Jesus on earth that follows the Tribulation. Although Satan will lead a great rebellion against the Lord, there will also be human believers who need to receive resurrection bodies.

After all that history, every believer from every age will have been raised and be in their glorified bodies fit for eternity.

You can read about this moment in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, in chapter twenty. There you find that another resurrection will take place.

All nonbelievers from throughout time will be raised and be judged. Rejectors of God's grace, they will be cast alive into the Lake of Fire for eternity.

The resurrection of believers happens in stages, beginning with Jesus, the firstfruits. It can be confusing since it is also called "the first resurrection." It is first, before that of nonbelievers; but it occurs in stages.

The resurrection of nonbelievers, to eternal punishment, **does** happen all at once, at the Great White Throne. It is the second resurrection.

I'll close with this long passage from the Revelation:

Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Rev 20:7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison

Rev 20:8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea.

Rev 20:9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

Rev 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Judgment Before the Great White Throne

Rev 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.



Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

Rev 20:13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

Rev 20:14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Rev 20:15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.