



**BETHEL AG CHURCH**  
INTERNATIONAL WORSHIP CENTRE

# ***THE FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS***

***"But Christ has indeed raised from the dead, the firstfruits  
of those who have fallen asleep." 1 Corinthians 15:20***

# Feast of the Firstfruits

God introduced the Seven Feasts of Israel when the children of Israel were encamped at Mount Sinai. Although these seven holidays are referred to in several places in the Bible, it is only in Leviticus 23 that all seven holidays are listed in their chronological order. They are called "the feasts of the Lord", which simply means that they were instituted by the Lord Himself, a fact that shows its importance. They were "holy convocations" that took place at "appointed times".

All the Seven Feasts of Israel sums up God's plan of Salvation for His people in symbolic and prophetic significances - from the death of Jesus to the establishment of His Messianic Kingdom - the Kingdom of God. The first four feasts were fulfilled by our Lord Jesus' First coming, while the last three festivals of Leviticus 23 will be fulfilled in the Second coming of the Lord. Because these feasts symbolize a sequence of events in a set chronological order, the events that they symbolize will also take place in that exact order.

- The first three feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits occur in rapid succession in the first month (Nisan - March or April) of the Hebrew calendar over a period of eight days. They were collectively referred to as "Passover".

- The fourth feast, Pentecost or Harvest, occurs fifty days later (in the third month of Sivan - May or June) at the beginning of the summer. In New Testament times, this feast became known by its Greek name - Pentecost, a word that means 'fifty'.

- The last three feasts: Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles extend over a period of twenty-one days in the seventh month (Tishri - September or October) of the Hebrew calendar. They were collectively known as "Tabernacles."

In the Hebrew calendar, this feast of Firstfruits occurred on the 16th day of Nisan, which is the first biblical month (March or April), and only two days after the beginning of the Passover season. Scripture did not specify the actual calendar date of Firstfruits, but merely prescribed its time of observance to be "on the day after the Sabbath" - i.e, Sunday. Thus, the chronology of the Passover season consisted of:

**The Feast of Passover - Nisan 14**

**The Feast of Unleavened Bread - Nisan 15-21**

**The Feast of Firstfruits - Nisan 16**

(The second day of Unleavened Bread was also Firstfruits. Therefore, this day of the feast of Unleavened Bread was simultaneously shared with the holiday of Firstfruits.)

*Leviticus 23:9-14 - And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 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. And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf, a he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the Lord. And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the Lord for a sweet savour: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin (measure of 2 litres). And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.*

## **What is the feast of the Firstfruits?**

Firstfruits marked the beginning of the cereal grain harvests in Israel. Barley was the first grain to ripen. For Firstfruits, a sheaf of barley was harvested and brought to the Temple as a thanksgiving offering to the Lord for the harvest. It was a representative of the barley harvest as a whole, and served as a pledge or guarantee that the remainder of the harvest would be realized in the days that followed.

During the Feast of Firstfruits, Israel had to bring a single sheaf of the firstfruits of the harvest of the land to the priest. The priest would wave the sheaf before the Lord, and it would be accepted on behalf of Israel. Along with the sheaf, a male lamb without blemish was offered to the Lord as a burnt offering.

## **Is there any significant meaning to the word Firstfruits?**

The people of Israel were familiar with the concepts of “firstfruits” and the “firstborn”. The firstfruits and firstborns were always dedicated to the Lord. The firstfruits were always the choicest, the foremost, the first, the best, the pre-eminent of all that was to follow. They were holy to the Lord. The concept of the first fruits or firstborn is a major theme in the Bible. This concept can be seen in the following Scriptures: **Exodus 23:16, 19; 34:26; Leviticus 2:12, 14; 23:20; Numbers 18:12-15, 26; Deuteronomy 18:1-5; 26:2-4, 10; 2 Chronicles 31:5; Nehemiah 10:35-39; Proverbs 3:9; Jeremiah 2:3; Ezekiel 44:30; 48:14; Hebrews 6:20.**

The firstborn of both man and beast were sanctified and presented to the Lord (**Exodus 13:2; 22:29**).

The first fruits of all the earth were presented to the Lord as firstfruits at His altar in praise and thanksgiving. The most comprehensive passage about the first fruits offering is found in **Deuteronomy 26**. It explains that the purpose of the first fruits was to acknowledge how God took the Israelites down to Egypt, multiplied their number, released them, and gave them the land of Canaan for an inheritance.

God told the Israelites that the first fruits offering was to be given in thanks for *"cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant..."* (**Deuteronomy 6:10-11**). The offering was brought to the temple where it was displayed before God, and then given to the priests for their sustenance (**Numbers 18:11-12**).

In our present day, the concept of firstfruits offering may vary as to give a portion of the first paycheck of a new job as an offering to God, or the portion of first paycheck of the year, or it could be a profit that you earned through the sale of something, or a hike in your salary, etc. But as a Jesus follower, tithes (to give 10% of your income), and other generous offerings like first fruits, are considered as a part of worship to God. We are no longer under the Law nor under any obligation to give! We give tithes and offerings because we love and delight in the Lord. In the New Testament, we are called to give generously (more generously than Old Testament giving) and cheerfully and sacrificially (**2 Corinthians 9:6-7**) (Refer the notes on Tithes and offerings on [www.bethelag.in](http://www.bethelag.in))

## **How was the Feast of Firstfruits celebrated?**

The purpose of this special service was to consecrate the harvest to God. The firstfruits represented the whole harvest. This act reminded the Israelites that God had given them the land and that all of the harvest rightfully belonged to Him. The people were just stewards of the land. Offering the firstfruits actually consecrated the entire harvest to God. If God accepted the firstfruits of the harvest, it meant the entire harvest would be acceptable by God.

The firstfruits were brought to the Temple on the day after the Sabbath, on the second day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread.

A sheaf (or Hebrew: "omer", which means "measure" of approximately 2 kg) was brought to the priest at the Temple, who would wave it before the Lord for acceptance. There were sacrifices that accompanied the sheaf: an unblemished male lamb in its the first year, a drink offering of wine, and a meal offering of barley flour mixed with olive oil. People were forbidden to use any part of the harvest, in any way, until after the firstfruits were offered to the Lord. To neglect these firstfruits offerings (or any others), was considered robbery of God according to Scripture (**Malachi 3:8**)

**The Feast of the Passover points towards Redemption, the Feast of the Unleavened Bread teaches us about sanctification or separation, and the Feast of Firstfruits teaches us about consecration.** As true Believers in Christ, the act of consecration involves our lives being a living sacrifice to Him; ; we are totally separated from the defilement of the world. Each day, we are to live out our lives as a "holy" and "royal" priesthood to the glory of God, for we are now God's people (**1 Peter 2:9-10**).

## How does Feast of the Firstfruits point towards Christ, the Messiah?

Like all of Israel's Feasts, the Feast of Firstfruits found its prophetic fulfillment in the work of the Messiah when He was resurrected as the Firstfruits from the dead. His resurrection marked the beginning of the harvest of souls, who have been set apart for God through Jesus. As Passover pictures Jesus the Messiah as the Lamb who was slain; Firstfruits pictures the Messiah who was 'raised up' as firstfruits, in whom those who are asleep will be 'made alive.'

Paul spoke of Jesus as the fulfillment of this feast with these words

*"But now (Christ) Messiah has been raised from the dead, the Firstfruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Messiah all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Messiah the firstfruits, after that those who are Messiah's at His coming." (1 Corinthians 15:20-23)*

The resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee and the beginning of the final harvest of souls, or resurrection of all mankind. This even points to a life after death. The grave is not the final stop on this journey into eternity. The human spirit does not cease to exist, nor does it float aimlessly as part of some "cosmic consciousness". Nor is it ever reincarnated. ALL will be resurrected.

## What are the different types of resurrection mentioned in the Bible?

The resurrection of the human body from the grave is clearly taught in God's Word. Job, the oldest of the patriarchs, said: *"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God"* (Job 19:25-26). It is evident that Job was firm in his belief in the resurrection of his body and a future life beyond the grave.

There are broadly two types of physical resurrection mentioned in the Bible: the righteous to life before the Millennium; and the wicked to damnation after the Millennium (Daniel 12:3; John 5:28- 29; Rev. 10:4-6,11-15). (Millennium is 1,000 years of Christ kingly reign over the earth as He fully establishes the Kingdom of God - Revelation 20:4-6)

**John 5:28-29**, (Jesus said) *"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."*

**Daniel 12:2**, *"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."*

### **The first resurrection is the raising of all Believers.**

This is the resurrection of all the just, blessed, and holy, from Adam to the Millennium age (**Luke 14:14; Luke 20:35-36; Philippians 3:11-14; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; Hebrews 11:35**). The first resurrection takes place in various stages - Jesus Christ Himself (the "*first fruits*," **1 Corinthians 15:20**), paved the way for the resurrection of all who believe in Him. Still to come, is the resurrection of "*the dead in Christ*" at the Lord's return (**1 Thessalonians 4:16**) and the resurrection of the martyrs at the end of the Tribulation (**Revelation 20:4**). The first resurrection consists of several sequential resurrection events which are treated as a single category—the raising of all those who are redeemed.

### **The second resurrection is the raising of all unbelievers;**

the second resurrection is connected to the second death. This includes the resurrection of all the wicked from Adam to the end of the Millennium. It will take place after the Millennium and will also include those wicked who die during the Millennium (**Revelation 20:4-6,11-15**). They will be raised with immortal bodies to be tormented in hell forever (**Matthew 10:28; John 5:28-29; 12:24; Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:21,34-50; Revelation 14:9-12; 19:20; 20:4-6,11-15**)

## **What can we learn from Jesus' resurrection?**

Christ's resurrection is a prototype of our resurrection and the kind of resurrected bodies that we will possess.

- Our resurrected bodies will resemble Christ's resurrected body. The resurrected Jesus spent remarkable normal times with his disciples, after His resurrection, as a man teaching them and eating with them (**John 21**). He walked and talked with two disciples on the way to Emmaus (**Luke 24:13-35**), spoke to Mary as she assumed he was the gardener (**John 20:15**). Christ's resurrection body seamlessly interacted with the disciples' mortal bodies (**John 20:19-23**). Nothing indicates that his clothes were strange or that there was a halo over his head. He drew close enough to breathe on them (**John 20:22**). The nail prints in Christ's hands and feet are the strongest possible affirmation that the same earthly body that was crucified is now the same heavenly body that was raised. "*It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have*" (**Luke 24:39**).
- In contrast, the resurrected body of Christ had divine nature. Though the doors were locked, Christ could suddenly appear in the room where the disciples were gathered (**John 20:19**). He could appear, disappear, and ascend as He wished (**Acts 1:9**).
- When Paul speaks of our resurrection bodies, he says, "*The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body*" (**1 Corinthians 15:42-44**).

The following summarizes the contrasts in the passage:

EARTHLY BODY	RESURRECTION BODY
Sown a perishable body	Raised an imperishable body
Sown in dishonor	Raised in glory
Sown in weakness	Raised in power
Sown a natural body	Raised a spiritual body

Our present bodies are fallen and destructible, but our future bodies—though still bodies in the fullest sense—will be untouched by sin and indestructible. They will be like Christ's resurrection body—both physical and indestructible.

### How exactly is Resurrection vital for our Salvation?

The Bible presents the Resurrection of Christ as the **'fundamental doctrine of Christianity'** - based on the preaching of the apostles, as given in the book of Acts, and based on the writings of Apostle Paul and others. For example, in

**1 Corinthians 15:12–19**, Paul says that, if the resurrection of Christ did not occur, preaching is in vain, faith is in vain, the apostles were false witnesses, the Corinthians were still in their sins, Believers who have died have perished, and Christians are of all people most to be pitied.

The resurrection of Christ is also presented in the New Testament as a 'supreme example of God's power'. Paul says that Jesus Christ, *"was declared to be the Son of God in power by His resurrection from the dead"* (**Romans 1:4**).

In **Ephesians 1:19–20**, he says that the resurrection of Christ was a demonstration of *"the immeasurable greatness of God's power"*. Paul prayed that Believers might know *"the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His great might that He worked in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places."* The same God who raised Christ from the grave has also raised us from spiritual death to spiritual life (**Colossians 3:1, 1 Peter 1:3**)

The 'key to the Kingdom of God', promised in the gospel message, is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If it weren't for Christ's resurrection, there would be no Kingdom of God to come. There would be no messianic King of that Kingdom—and no resurrected followers of His to serve as kings and priests along with Him.

The cross is central to our Salvation, but what God accomplished there is incomplete unless the tomb is empty on a Sunday morning. Therefore, the resurrection of Christ is vital for us and our Salvation.

**"Jesus Christ fulfilled the feast of firstfruits by being the firstfruits of the resurrection"**

## **Applications:**

1. The Feast of Firstfruits gives us our hope and promise of our own resurrection, as Christ demonstrated and fulfilled it for us. Christ became the First and we, who believe, will follow Christ in the order of resurrection (**Philippians 1:6** *"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."*)

2. Firstfruits indicates to give the first portion to God. It signifies that we must bring to church /our best in honour to God, in worship and thanksgiving! (**Romans 11:6**, *"If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches."*)

3. The Feast of Firstfruits points us to be excellent in our responsibilities in order to sow and reap in the due seasons of life, so God would give us a blessed life. (**Isaiah 61:7**, *"Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours."*)

4. Firstfruits in a field always signifies a greater harvest of crops. The principle of the Feast of firstfruits therefore signifies a great spiritual harvest of souls. The Church becomes the centres that reap to carry out God's mission to establish God's kingdom in this world.

**John 4:35**, *"Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest".*

**Matthew 9:37-38**, *"The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."*

5. God is sending a great harvest in this age. Let's gear up to labour with Him, to serve Him, and to be agents of the Gospel (good news) to the dying world. Tell them about a God who died for them! Tell them about a God who suffered so they could be healed. Tell about a God who can provide a life beyond the grave! He is alive forever! Hallelujah!

If you have any further questions, please email us at [info@bethelag.in](mailto:info@bethelag.in) or walk into the church office for any counselling regarding this issue.

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