

Firstfruits / Wave Sheaf



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 an 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. 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. Leviticus 23:9-14.

God wanted His people to always remember that He was their Provider, that whatever good they received ultimately came from Him. This ritual of presenting to the Lord the Wave Sheaf, a bundle of barley, the earliest grain, was a reminder of this fact. It was performed on the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread when all the people were gathered at Jerusalem. No one was to begin harvesting prior to this. From that time 50 days were counted to the day of Pentecost. Barley was the first crop which was then followed by the wheat harvest. At Pentecost the first product of the wheat harvest was presented to the Lord as two loaves of bread with leaven.

How did Firstfruits point forward to Jesus?

1 Corinthians 15:20, 23

Jesus is the Firstfruits of the dead. He was not the first to be raised, for others had been raised from death, in both the Old and New Testament times, but they died again. He is the first to be raised to eternal life. He died on the day of Passover, the fourteenth day of the first month. He rested in the grave on the first Sabbath of Unleavened Bread, the fifteenth. He was resurrected on the day of Firstfruits, the sixteenth day of the month.

Christ arose from the dead as the first fruits of those that slept. He was the antitype of the wave sheaf, and His resurrection took place on the very day when the wave sheaf was to be presented before the Lord. For more than a thousand years this symbolic ceremony had been performed. From the harvest fields the first heads of ripened grain were gathered, and when the people went up to Jerusalem to the Passover, the sheaf of first fruits was waved as a thank offering before the Lord. Not until this was presented could the sickle be put to the grain, and it be gathered into sheaves. The sheaf dedicated to God represented the harvest. So Christ the first

fruits represented the great spiritual harvest to be gathered for the kingdom of God. His resurrection is the type and pledge of the resurrection of all the righteous dead. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." 1 Thessalonians 4:14.

As Christ arose, He brought from the grave a multitude of captives. The earthquake at His death had rent open their graves, and when He arose, they came forth with Him. They were those who had been co-laborers with God, and who at the cost of their lives had borne testimony to the truth. Now they were to be witnesses for Him who had raised them from the dead. (Matthew 27:51-53)

During His ministry, Jesus had raised the dead to life. He had raised the son of the widow of Nain, and the ruler's daughter and Lazarus. But these were not clothed with immortality. After they were raised, they were still subject to death. But those who came forth from the grave at Christ's resurrection were raised to everlasting life. They ascended with Him as trophies of His victory over death and the grave. These, said Christ, are no longer the captives of Satan; I have redeemed them. I have brought them from the grave as the first fruits of My power, to be with Me where I am, nevermore to see death or experience sorrow.

These went into the city, and appeared unto many, declaring, Christ has risen from the dead, and we be risen with Him. Thus was immortalized the sacred truth of the resurrection. The risen saints bore witness to the truth of the words, "Thy dead men shall live, together with My dead body shall they arise." Their resurrection was an illustration of the fulfillment of the prophecy, "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." Isaiah 26:19.⁴⁴

The verse above (Isaiah 26:19) speaks of dead men living, rising, awakening, being cast out of the earth. What happens when someone dies? Where are they? Let us examine what the Bible tells us.

What does David say about death?

Psalms 13:3

How does Jesus refer to death?

John 11:11-14

David and Jesus both describe death as sleep.

When does Jesus say He will give reward to the faithful?

Revelation 22:12

The Second Coming of Jesus is reward time for the righteous. If the righteous dead are already in heaven, why would it say that He brings the reward when He comes? This leads us to the question as to whether the righteous dead are in heaven.

When do the righteous dead go to heaven?

1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17

If anyone went to heaven when He died, it should have been Jesus. Did Jesus go to Heaven when He died? John 20:17

When Jesus met Mary soon after His resurrection, He said He had not yet been up to His Father in Heaven.

The Bible calls death a sleep over and over. The Resurrection is to be at the end of the world when Jesus comes again, and those who love Him who are alive and the righteous who are asleep in the grave, go up together. They are not already in heaven.

How much memory or thankfulness do the righteous dead exhibit?
Psalms 6:5

Do the dead praise the Lord?
Psalms 115:17

What happens to the thinking ability in death?
Psalms 146:3, 4

How much do the dead know?
Ecclesiastics 9:5, 6

Jesus was the Firstfruits of the grave. He slept in the grave until His Resurrection on the day of the Wave Sheaf. So the righteous dead sleep in their graves until the Resurrection at which time they will ascend to the Father.

There are other Firstfruits as well who are specially recognized by being sealed with a unique seal. How many are there in this group? What are some of their qualifications?
Revelation 7:3, 4; 14:1-5

These Firstfruits were a representative sample of the rest of the harvest. How many are in the other part of the harvest? Who are they?
Revelation 7:9, 13, 14

We want to be either among God's Firstfruits or the greater harvest. Pray that God will help you to be faithful to Him so that you can be a part of His harvest for heaven.