

RESURRECTION CELEBRATION

We traditionally celebrate the first day of the week, after the Passover, as Resurrection Sunday. Sometimes this coincides with the holiday of Easter. Other times they fall about a month apart. To celebrate the day of Resurrection Sunday is to celebrate the resurrection of the Lamb of God who was slain as our Passover.

Jesus was in the grave THREE DAYS over two Sabbaths. The first was a high Sabbath, which the first day of Passover always is. This does not always fall on the seventh day of the week, as the regular weekly Sabbath does. The second Sabbath that Jesus was in the grave, was the regular weekly sabbath. There is dispute as to how these three days in the grave are counted, but scripture tells us:

40 For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Matthew 12:40

It was three days and three nights. If our counting does not result in this, we have made a mistake in our reckoning. Jesus did not make His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on "Good Friday". You can't get three days and three nights out of that. As I said, there is dispute and some reckon Jesus was crucified and buried on Thursday. Others on Wednesday. I believe it was on the Wednesday, however the critical point for agreement is that Jesus was slain as our Passover lamb and resurrected from the dead. The issue is not to form "The Church of the Wednesday Believers", "The Church of the Thursday Believers" and "The Church of the Friday Believers".

We are generally familiar with the Passover celebration. It is the celebration of Yahweh's bringing Israel out of captivity in Egypt. Passover is one of a number of events that follow from the 14th of Aviv (Nisan in modern Hebrew):

4 And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, that they should keep the passover. 5 And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel.

Numbers 9:4-5

Passover is one day long, the 14th of

the first month. The very next day, the 15th, marks the beginning for the Feast of Unleavened Bread:

15 Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. Exodus 12:15

Another special day of significance didn't actually begin being celebrated during Moses' life, though the command for its celebration was given by Moses:

9 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 10 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: 11 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. 12 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. 13 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. 14 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. 15 And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: 16 Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD. 17 Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD. Leviticus 23:9-17

15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. 16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is

I covered a little more than the immediate feast of concern, because I need to examine just a little further in the calendar.

The special day to be noted in verse 10, is what has been called the "Feast of the Firstfruits" which causes confusion with the feast that follows seven weeks later, Shavuot, also known as Pentecost.

With the immediate feast in view, we find, "**a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest**".

The "sheaf" is an omer (not to be confused with the homer - another unit of measurement). This measurement is "a sheaf". That which is tightly bound or it also is a measure of dry things, containing the tenth part of an ephah. (Size of an ephah is disputed.)

The "firstfruits" is "reisheet" in Hebrew, which means "beginning, chief". It is referring to a grain. The first grain to harvest in the Promised Land was barley.

The final word to note is "harvest". The Hebrew is "katzir" coming from the word meaning "to cut off, especially grain, hence to reap; to harvest".

In the original, the day might best be called the "Feast of the Beginning of the Harvest".

FEAST OF THE BEGINNING OF THE HARVEST

This particular observance is probably unknown by most Christians, but it is the feast that points specifically to the Resurrection Day of Jesus.

In verse 11 on this feast, the priest would take that sheaf and present it before Yahweh in a wave-offering. Such an offering is not destroyed, like a burnt offering. Jesus had already gone through death and was resurrected, to be destroyed no more. Remember when Jesus first appeared to Mary:

15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. 16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is

to say, Master. 17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. *John 20:15-17*

Later, we saw Jesus actually inviting 'doubting Didymus' to touch Him. I believe the reason Mary wasn't allowed to touch Jesus yet, was because he had been resurrected but had not been "waved", as it were, before the Father in heaven. Jesus had to ascend into the heavenly 'holy of holies' to present Himself, for He was the offering priest. After having accomplished that, He returned and welcomed their touches.

In verse 11, of Leviticus 23, we saw the wave offering was to happen on the morrow after the Sabbath. This brings up a heavily disputed point. What Sabbath was it referring to? This followed Passover and was during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Was it the high Sabbath, called a Shabbaton, or the regular weekly Sabbath? During the time of Christ, the two prominent religious groups, of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, took opposing views on this. The Sadducees said it was the weekly Sabbath, the Pharisees – the high Shabbaton. The Sadducees had controlling power in the second temple worship schedule, which meant when Jesus was presenting Himself as that "reisheet katzir" before His Father in heaven (after appearing to Mary), the priest in the earthly tabernacle was waving the sheaf. This was the first day of the week, what we call Sunday. (Beside this, the Leviticus passage refers to the Sabbath, not the Shabbaton.) You might wonder why this would be important. The remaining of the passage I quoted from Leviticus brings this reason to the forefront. It sets the dating for the time of Shavuot, Pentecost. (Note: Current Orthodox Judaism follows the Pharisees reckoning based on the Shabbaton. A contemporary Jewish calendar will not result in the same timing. For them, Shavuot always falls on Sivan 6, not always the first day of the week.)

Verse 14 tells us this first offering had to be offered before mankind could partake of the blessings of harvest for themselves. The first to God, after that the blessing was to be partaken of by

man. Such was our Lord's sacrifice and resurrection. First to God, then the rest of humanity could partake for their blessing. *Baruch Yah!*

Verse 15 begins the "Counting of the Omer". Day one is the first day after that Sabbath. Day one is Resurrection Sunday!

Verse 16 shows us the following: This day of the Feast of the Beginning of the Harvest, was very important to note, it was remembered every day as being counted off until the completion of seven weeks. After that period of 49 days, they celebrated Shavuot. Shavuot falls on the 50th day, hence the name "Pentecost". Pente comes from the Greek meaning 50. Pentecost Sunday is always Sunday.

Pentecost is essentially recognized as the birth of the Church. It is the day the Holy Spirit was poured out in Acts chapter 2. Now note the offering that was offered at Shavuot in verse 17:

17 Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD.

Now we see a different word translated as "firstfruits". This is the word "bikkur". This is very closely connected to the term for "firstborn". It does refer to harvesting and gives rise to the thought of Pentecost, Shavuot being the "Feast of the Firstfruits".

Look at what is offered at this occasion, "two wave loaves of two tenth deals". The single sheaf, that was cut down has now multiplied. The loaves were not only "two", they were of double the size. The word translated, "deals", is based on tenths or tithes. That which is initially dedicated to God. The blessing of Christ's offering has multiplied for the firstfruits of harvest.

The original, that was the type of Christ, was not leavened. Remember, it was during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These at Pentecost are leavened. Why leaven here? Such indicates that the birth of that which was to come from Christ was to come from leavened humanity. Leaven being a picture of sin in the Bible. The Church was born from the offerings of sinful humanity. Christ was sinless, all the fruit of His sacrifice are those who come to God from sinful

man. Those loaves represented redeemed humanity that were born-again into the Church that blessed Pentecost day.

These loaves are also of fine flour. The original at the beginning of harvest was specifically a sheaf. If even taken as a specific-sized container, it was not ground flour. It was the whole "berry". These loaves are of a ground flour. Such is the state of the church. It must be made from those who have been crushed in repentance before Him.

One last portion of scripture I would like to look at on the Resurrection of Christ today came from the Apostle Paul. He had been addressing the teaching of apostates that denied the resurrection from the dead. He was showing how ludicrous their teaching was. Jumping into the midst of their discussion:

15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. 16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: 17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. 20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

Paul was from a Jewish background. He spoke and thought like a Jew. When he is discussing the resurrection, it is only natural he should think to the "firstfruits". In doing so here, he shows us the connection of these special days of the "Beginning of the Harvest" and the "firstfruits of the loaves" offered at Pentecost. He also shows that if we do not stand on this entire basis of the resurrection of Christ, we have no ground at all to stand upon. The entire faith of Christianity lies with its foundations here. How appropriate that such is a day to celebrate!



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The English version used is from the King James Bible.

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