



The Living God Ministries, Inc.

Montgomery & Spanish Fort, Alabama

May 22, 2020

Who Me, a "Firstfruit"?

Warm hellos to you dear brethren, co-workers, and spiritual family on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico and scattered children of God, from our offices here in Spanish Fort.

I mentioned last Friday night how quickly time seems to move by. This past week my wife and I were helping brethren on a farmette catch up with several projects they were a bit behind on. It was hard couple days of work, but I know I slept better after each hard day of physical work! The time we were there also quickly passed.

On the morning we were getting ready to depart, the owner went to his garden to see if there were any "firstfruits" yet. It got me to thinking, and most of the trip back to our home, I thought about "Firstfruits" while driving.

When was the last time you thought of yourself as a "firstfruit"? You are you know.

It is a blessing and honor to be among a select group known as firstfruits, called out of this world and invited to be prepared to rule with Christ in His Kingdom. We understand that we are only part of a small flock that has been freed from deception that has been placed on the many. *"Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart."* (Matthew 13:13, 16, 19)

The apostle and half-brother of Jesus, James, uses the term "firstfruits" to refer to himself and to the other disciples. *"Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures."* (James 1:18)

The apostle Paul recognized both the symbolism and typology of the annual festivals such as Passover and Unleavened Bread. (1 Corinthians 5:7-8) It's clear that Paul recognized the fulfillment of the wave sheaf ceremony in his comments in 1 Corinthians 15:20: *"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."*

The wavesheaf offering was the first portion of the first grain harvest of the year. Some Jewish sources state that the grain was cut the evening before and was then offered or waived the next morning, on the first day of the week.

Paul continues, *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."* (1 Corinthians 15:22-23)

An analysis of the events that took place at the time of the Christ's crucifixion and death result in the conclusion that Jesus died during the later afternoon of Passover, which fell on a Wednesday that year. He was placed in the tomb shortly before sunset. The women who followed Jesus observed the placing of Jesus' body in the tomb. The next day was the high day Sabbath of the First Day of Unleavened Bread, which fell on a Thursday. The women rested on that day. Then they returned on a Friday and prepared (and probably also bought spices) to further prepare the body of Jesus for burial. Then, the women rested according to the Sabbath commandment. (Luke 23:54-56)

Mary Magdalene went to the tomb on the first day of the week (Sunday) while it was still dark. She found the stone that had been blocking the tomb entrance already rolled away. She ran back to the disciples and immediately told Peter and John what she had seen! Peter and John hurried to the tomb and found that only the linen cloths that Jesus was wrapped in were there. The body of Jesus was already gone. Mary had followed them and she stood outside the tomb. As she stood there, Jesus appeared to her, and at first she did not recognize Him. This took place shortly after dawn of the first day of the week.

Then as He spoke to her, she knew it was He, the resurrected Jesus. "Jesus said to her, *"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.'"* (John 20:17)

The clear implication is that Jesus was very soon that day going to ascend to the Father and be received and accepted as the firstfruits of all humans who have died and have been resurrected to eternal life in the kingdom of God.

The wavesheaf ceremony does not specifically celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, but focuses on the acceptance of Christ by His Father following His resurrection. Jesus entered the heavenly holy of holies also to have His shed blood accepted as the atoning sacrifice for all mankind. (Hebrews 9:11-12) For Jesus, His request was answered. *"And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."* (John 17:5)

It is indeed inspiring to try to imagine how awesome and joyous this event in the third heaven was!

Paul referred to the order of resurrections. *"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming."* (1 Corinthians 15:22-23) Here you and I are referred to. We will be resurrected to eternal life as Christ was. *"And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man."* (v.49) *"For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."* (v.53)

Revelation 14 refers to the group of 144,000 that is with the Lamb on Mount Zion. I see this as the heavenly Mount Zion. This group is further described. *"These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God."* (v.4-5)

The number (144,000) may be symbolic. But, the point I am focusing on is that these individuals now with the Lamb are described as "firstfruits".

Referring back to Leviticus 23, the fiftieth day celebration is determined by assigning the day of the wavesheaf as day #1 in the count. *"And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD."* (Leviticus 23:15)

Therefore, the fiftieth day (or Pentecost) always falls on the day after the weekly Sabbath or on what we refer to today as Sunday. Anciently, the ceremonies involved two loaves of bread. *"You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD."* (v.17)

You'll notice that these two loaves are baked with leaven. We understand this to mean that they represent human beings who are still imperfect and do sin from time to time. These two loaves symbolize humans being called and prepared as firstfruits and who will eventually be given eternal life at Christ's return.

Pentecost also reminds us of the special calling of human beings in this age before the return of Christ. I should add, that calling and assembling of the firstfruits is still taking place. How blessed we are to be selected to be part of this special group! How meaningful are the appointed times of the Lord, and how important they are in understanding the great plan of God for all mankind!

On this soon upcoming Day of Pentecost, we'll again reflect upon what we are taught, as we

congregate and fellowship, and on the importance of yielding to that Spirit and growing in grace and knowledge as the firstfruits of the Lord.

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

-Scott Hoefker

(Pastor, *The Living God Ministries Gulf Coast*)

The schedule for this **Sabbath** is:

May 22nd / Friday: Evening Praise Sacrifice to welcome God's Sabbath - 6:30 pm (via Teleconference live connect with Stephen Glover and Friends.)

May 23rd / Saturday: Spirit and Truth Worship Services - 10:15 am, with services held in **Montgomery and Spanish Fort** at our normal **10:15 a.m.** (with *phone conference connection* available from Montgomery and *Live Webcast* from Spanish Fort). A noon "potluck" meal will be enjoyed and shared with a small group in **Spanish Fort** shortly after worship services.

May 23rd / Saturday: Malachi 3:16 Sabbath Fellowship (Interactive Bible Discussion) - **3:30 pm** from Montgomery. (Connecting live with all via telephone conference).

Telephone Ministry (English): Call **1-712-770-4700**; then, when asked, enter Code **112165 #** to join.

(Note: All callers are muted and must press *6 to comment and *6 to resume mute.)
All times are listed in Central Standard Time zone.

Our Daily Bread Recordings

Sunday through Saturday / Our Daily Bread [listen anytime 24/7 to a recorded 15 minute message] Call 1-712-770-4709 (note this call in number is different and ends in "9"), then when asked, enter code 112165# [reference code numbers are on "Spiritual Fellowship Opportunities" on this website <http://www.tlministriesgc.org> or at "Resources/Archives" on <http://www.haggai114.net>]

Daily Fellowship Opportunities

Sunday – Friday / **Morning Sacrifice** (Prayers & Scripture Reading) at 6:00 a.m.
Sundays / **The Minor Prophets** (Interactive) at 6:30 p.m. [Whit, Logan & Friends]
Mondays / Africa Discipleship at 7:00 a.m. [Stephen & Moses]
Almond Branch Fellowship at 6:30 p.m. (Interactive) (Stephen & Friends)
Tuesdays / **Haggai Fellowship** (Interactive) at 6:30 p.m. (Interactive) [Stephen & Friends]
Wednesdays / Africa Discipleship at 7:00 a.m. [Stephen & Moses]
1st & 3rd Wednesday / **Sons of God Fellowship** (Young men training) at 6:30 p.m. [Stephen & Friends]
2nd & 4th Wednesday / **Lydian's Fellowship** (Ladies) at 6:30 p.m. [Esther/Gayle/Laura & Friends]
Thursdays / **Mt. Carmel Fellowship** (Interactive) at 6:30 p.m. [Scott & Friends]

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