

The True Meaning of First Fruits - Part II

From Shadows to Realities

As we continue in Part Two of this teaching, I will be giving some concrete, scriptural answers to the main questions asked by so many today about the subject of first fruits.

You will be able see how the offering of first fruits under the law was completely fulfilled in Christ. When we truly understand this fact then we will not be trying to go back under the shadows of the law to try and perform what has already been fulfilled. Instead we will receive the greater realities that have been given to us through Christ and the New Covenant.

Remember, the Law was only a shadow of the good things that were coming under the New Covenant, not the realities themselves. (*Hebrews 10:1*) We will receive divine revelation and learn of the true meaning of first fruits then when we look at Christ and the ordinances of the New Covenant. (*II Corinthians 3:12-16*) In the following paragraphs I will be giving you the shadow of first fruits under the Law and the reality that they have now become in Christ.

What are first fruits?

Shadow: We find the term first fruits mentioned for the first time under the Law of Moses in Exodus 23:16. God commanded the Israelites to keep these three annual festivals- Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Pentecost and the Feasts of Tabernacles.

“Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year... “And the feast of harvest (also called the Feast of First fruits and the Feast of Pentecost, Numbers 28:26, Acts 2:1), the first fruits of your labours, which thou hast sown in the field...

God commanded the Israelites to bring an offering of the first fruit of their crops from the field. In verse 19 God also commands them to bring the first of the first fruits of their land into the house of the Lord, which at that time was the Tabernacle in the Wilderness.

“The first of the first fruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God.”

God commanded them to bring two different types of **first fruit offerings**. One was the first of the first fruit or the very best of their crop and this was to be done during the Feast of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread and also the **first fruits** of their crops which were to be brought on the Feast of Pentecost. (*Exodus 23:15, 18, Exodus 23:16*)

In order to understand the meaning of the spiritual reality of first fruits under the New Covenant, it is helpful to understand the distinction between **the first of the first fruits** (*Exodus 23:19 KJV*) and first fruits under the Old Covenant and what these mean. (*Exodus 23:16 KJV*) The symbolism of both of these is very significant and the answers are revealed in Christ and the New Testament scriptures.

Reality: The first of the first fruits under the law pointed to Jesus Christ. He has become the *first* of the first fruits (of the Spirit) to be offered up as a living sacrifice and to be raised from the dead. (*I Corinthians 15:20, 23, Hebrews 10:5-10*) The first fruits were symbolic of and now represent all of those who have come to believe in Christ because of his perfect sacrifice. Jesus is the **first born** among many brethren. (*Romans 8:29*)

New converts in the early Church were referred to as “first fruits” because they were often the first followers of Christ in their communities (*Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:15*). However, Paul and James also taught that Christ was a type of first fruit for those of us in the faith (*1 Corinthians 15:20; James 1:18*). There is **no mention of cash or money** in regards to the biblical principle of first fruit for the Church in the New Testament. (See every reference to “first fruit” or “first fruits” in Nave’s Topical Bible). Under the Law, sacrifices (animal, grain, burnt offerings, etc.) were required by God for the forgiveness of sin and for “covering” or “blessing”. (*Genesis 3:21; Genesis 4:4-5; Genesis 8:20-21; Genesis 22:10-13; Leviticus 4:35; Leviticus 5:10*).

Unlike the Israelites under the law, believers under grace do not have to give carnal offerings in order to be forgiven, covered or blessed by God. Why? It is because Jesus became a once and for all sacrifice and offering for us on the cross. He fulfilled all the requirements of the law on our behalf. Now we have all of these things because of the better sacrifice of Christ and his blood. Our inheritance blessings do not depend on our doing works of the law, i.e., giving a first fruit offering of substance, but by our trusting in Christ and everything that he has obtained for us through the cross by faith. (*Romans 4:13-14, Galatians 3: 6-18*)

We should not believe those who teach that we must give a first fruit offering of money in order to receive divine protection and blessings from God or that the first “governs the rest” of our finances for the entire year. We do not receive our inheritance by performing works of the law but we receive them automatically by grace and faith in Christ and because we are now co-heirs with him. *The blessings that God promised Abraham are now ours through inheritance not works.* (*Romans 8:14-17, Romans 4:13-14, Galatians 3:16-18*)

Believers in the New Covenant do not have to give a first fruit portion of their income in order to have the rest of their finances “blessed” or “covered” as the Israelites did. Under the law, offerings like the first fruit offering were temporarily imposed on them until Christ could come with a more perfect sacrifice and bring a new and better covenant with better sacrifices and offerings. (*Hebrews 9:10, 8:1-7, 10:8*) Teaching believers the carnal ordinances of the law teaches them to perform works based on their own merits (works-based religion) instead of a grace-based faith in Christ. First fruits under the New Covenant have nothing to do with money but it has everything to do Christ and all of those now in him.

The term first fruits under the New Covenant always refer to people, not money. In Romans 8:23 the word first fruits here means **“those who have the first fruits of the blessings of the Spirit.”** We are able to taste of the blessings given to us through the Spirit because of all that Christ has obtained for us by way of the cross! Salvation, healing, deliverance, divine provision, protection, peace and unmerited favor are all ours in the name of Jesus and because of everything that he has obtained for us! We have received divine revelation from God and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit and are able to taste of the word of God and the powers of the world to come! (*Hebrews 6:4-5*)

In Romans 11:16 the term first fruit means **“a person consecrated to God, leading the rest in time.”** (*Joseph Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*) Maybe you have become the first fruit of Christ in your family, community or workplace. You are but the first fruit of a much greater end-time harvest of souls that will come pouring into the Kingdom in these last days!

Old Testament First Fruit Offering is Insufficient

Did you know that the New Testament scriptures declare that *all offerings* and sin offerings that were given under the law could never make the conscience of the worshiper perfect? Since this is the case, why is it that so many believe that giving a first fruit offering according to the law is beneficial in any way? In fact, strict rules and regulations may have the feigned appearance of wisdom and humility but they have no real value in helping us overcome our sinful flesh or receive the blessings of God, only the blood of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit can help us do that. (*Galatians 3: 6-18, Colossians 2:13-23*)

The Old Testament sacrifice and offerings were insufficient to forgive us completely of sin and help us to obtain the blessings of God. (*Hebrews 9:9-10, Romans 8:4-14, Galatians 5:16-25*) Giving an offering of the first fruit of your substance according to the fleshly ordinances of the law is not the first fruit offering that God has commanded or desires anymore. It’s not the “real deal.” God has a much better sacrifice in mind under the terms of the New Covenant. There will be more about this later.

Are We Commanded To Bring A First Fruit Offering Today?

If we truly want to know whether a teaching is truly from God and whether to receive and practice it or not, we must know where it *originated* from. Since believers today are not under law but grace, we can rule out the fact that we are not to give a first fruit offering according to the demands of the law. We find that the first fruit offering originated from the Law of Moses but this type offering was only temporary until the reality of what it symbolized could manifest through Christ and the Church in the New Covenant.

Since we are taught in the New Testament that the ordinances or sacrifices of the Law could not make those who performed them perfect and they were not the real offerings that God truly desired, then we would not want to give this type of carnal or fleshly offering. Carnal or fleshly rules like this were only to be followed until the time of reformation (or until Christ could bring the New Covenant). (*Hebrews 9:10, 10:8*) The Lord removed the law out of the way in order to establish a New and better Covenant. (*Hebrews 10:7-10*)

Shadow: In Leviticus chapter two, God commanded specific instructions about different offerings that were brought by the Israelites to the priests in the temple in the wilderness. One of the offerings that were acceptable to God (*under the law*) then was a first fruit offering of their grain. (Verses 12-16) In chapter 23 starting in verse 10 we read of God giving Moses specific instructions concerning the first fruit or grain of the harvest. The symbolism that was foreshadowed in this act also points to a much greater reality in Christ. For greater understanding, I will quote the entire passage.

“The Lord said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest . He is to wave the sheaf before the Lord so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath. On the day you wave the sheaf, you must sacrifice as a burnt offering to the Lord a lamb a year old without defect, together with the grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil- an offering made to the Lord by fire, a pleasing aroma-and it’s drink offering of a quarter of a hin of wine. You must not eat any bread, or roasted or new grain, until the very day you bring this offering to your God.” (*Leviticus 23:9-14 KJV*)

Reality: Wow! This passage is loaded with rich symbolism that points directly to the sacrifice of Christ, His going into the real Holy of Holies in heaven on our behalf so that we might have access to God and the bread and the wine of the New Covenant! Especially note that the priest was to wave the sheaf offering the day *after* the Sabbath. This too has special meaning. (John 1:29, Matthew 26:26-29, Hebrews 6:19-20)

After the Lord’s death and burial we know that he was seen at the tomb on Sunday morning, *the day after the Sabbath*. (*Matthew 28:1-7*) This is also called Resurrection Sunday. Jesus could not go into the Holiest of all until after his resurrection. The first of the first fruit offering that the Israelites were commanded to bring to God was symbolic of Jesus. He became the first of all first fruits that would be harvested thereafter. (*Read I Corinthians 15:20-23*) As the REAL first of the first fruits, he went in to the REAL Holy of Holies as our High Priest to wave the REAL wave sheaf offering on our behalf. Jesus is in reality the true wave sheaf offering! God the Father accepted the perfect sacrifice of his Son in our stead. Now we are totally accepted by God!

As the first begotten Son of God or the first of the first fruits, Jesus became our forerunner and entered into the Holiest Place before us on our behalf. (*Hebrews 4:14-16, 6:19-20*) Now, because of what Jesus has done for us, we have been regenerated and now have the first fruits of the Spirit and have also become first fruits unto God. We will also be raised from the dead as well because of his sacrificial Atonement. (*I Corinthians 15:20-23*) These are the spiritual meanings and the true realities that are clearly revealed within Christ and the New Covenant. Continuing on to verse 15 we read:

Shadow: **“From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath and then present an offering of new grain to the Lord.” (*Leviticus 23:15-16*)**

Reality: This scripture was brought into fulfillment starting at the time of Jesus’ resurrection and up until the Day of Pentecost in the Book of Acts. From the time of the resurrection it was exactly 50 days until the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. After the Lord’s resurrection, he spent exactly 40 days with His disciples teaching them of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. (*Acts 1:3*) The Lord then told

his disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they received “power from on high” or the outpouring or baptism of the Spirit and fire.

The disciples spent the next ten days in prayer in the upper room and waiting, just as Jesus commanded them to. Exactly on the 50th day, God poured out the Spirit just as He had promised. In the literal Greek translation it says, “**And in the fulfilling of the day of Pentecost, they were all with one mind in the same place.**” (**Acts 2:1**) The promise of the Holy Spirit could not be given on the 49th day or the 51st day; it had to be fulfilled just as God promised on the 50th day. All of God’s promises are yes and amen! Halleluiah!

Shadow: Before the Feast of Pentecost or First Fruits, God commanded the Israelites to keep the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This too, is rich in symbolism and I want to quote this particular passage of scripture to show how these have also been fulfilled in Christ and their relation to first fruits.

“Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib: for in it thou camest out of from Egypt (Passover): and none shall appear before me empty)

Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with *leavened bread*; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning. (Exodus 23:15, 18 KJV)

Reality: The Lord Jesus fulfilled the **Passover** and the **Feast of Unleavened Bread** by becoming the real Lamb of God and by dying on the cross. He was the *unleavened* sacrifice (unleavened bread) that God required. Unleavened bread is symbolic of the absence of sin. The sinless life of Jesus is symbolic of *unleavened* bread. He lived a sinless life and offered himself up to God as an unleavened sacrifice. He sacrificed his life to take away our sins and so that we can receive eternal life with God. (*1 Corinthians 5: 7-8*)

Shadow: On the Day of Pentecost God commanded the people of Israel: “**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 first fruits unto the Lord.**” (**Leviticus 23:17 KJV**)

Reality: These first fruits that were baked with leaven pointed to all the real first fruits that have been harvested since the inception of the Church. On the Day of Pentecost in the Book of Acts we read that 3000 souls alone were harvested in one day and brought before God as a first fruits offering. This was just the beginning of a great harvest of souls in the earth. Again, in the Bible leaven can be symbolic of different things but in this particular case it is a symbol of sin. This leaven represents us as sinners that have been redeemed by Christ. You and I have been forgiven and delivered of our sins through the sacrifice of Christ. Although we started out as leavened bread (sinful) however, we have now become a new lump (new creatures in Christ) because Christ (our unleavened) Passover has been sacrificed for us. The scriptures declare:

“For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy...” (Romans 11:16)

Now we have become *unleavened* because we have been made first fruits unto God in Christ! (*1 Corinthians 5: 1-8*) We have been cleansed of all our sins because of the sacrifice of Christ. We are now made the righteousness of Christ. Because Jesus took our sins, we have now become unleavened like him. Wow, what an awesome revelation! It is amazing how God is so detailed. Now we can understand the meaning of why God commanded the Israelites to make a first of the first fruit offering with unleavened bread during the Days of Unleavened Bread *and* a first fruits offering of bread with leaven during the Feast of Pentecost. It was all but a foreshadow of this greater reality that we now have received under the New Covenant!

Is the First Fruit Offering Money?

All believers that have come to Christ since are now called first fruits *or* those who have the first fruits of the Spirit. (*Romans 8:23, 16:5, 1 Corinthians 16:15, James 1:18 KJV*) As we learn from these scriptures, we find that first fruits are not **money** but **people** who are in Christ. The difference between the Old and the New Covenants can clearly be seen. In the Old Testament a physical harvest of earthly substance was offered up to God by the **fleshly** works of men, in the New Covenant however a **spiritual** harvest of precious souls are offered up to God by the Spirit. *The latter is the acceptable sacrifice to God now.*

Modern day teachers who claim that believers in Christ must bring a first fruit offering of money today according to the commandments of the Law of Moses have either departed from the truth of the Gospel or have never really understood it to begin with. Otherwise they would know this paramount truth of the New Covenant: **“You are not under law, but under grace” and would not be trying to bring believers back under the law. (Romans 6:14)** Those that teach a first fruit offering of money as a command for the Church today cannot substantiate their teaching with the authority of Christ and the New Covenant so they must bring you back under the law in order to impose it on you.

Those that teach this way obviously are deceived and lack understanding of the differences between the Old and New Covenants. According to God’s very own words, believers would not be obligated to bring a first fruit offering of substance because the law has been fulfilled, abolished and taken out of the way by Christ. Believers that do not understand the truth that **“You are not under law, but under grace”** are easy prey for the deception of these false teachers. The Law ended when Christ fulfilled it completely, nailed it to the cross and abolished its commandments and regulations. *(Romans 10:4, Colossians 2:14, Ephesians 2:14-15)*

We find that the Lord gave no such command for the New Testament Church to bring a first fruit offering of money or substance as was given to ancient Israel. We also do not find any proof that the New Testament Church practiced or taught this Old Testament ordinance either. In fact, we find quite the opposite. We find that the early Church (which was composed entirely of Jewish converts) immediately began a radical departure from giving according to the Law and began to give entirely by GRACE. I explain this in greater detail in Grace Giving Part III. *(Click Articles button on home page)* We also learn through the New Testament scriptures that Jewish converts were released from the law upon conversion to Christ and that Gentile converts were not required to take on the yoke of the law now that faith in Christ had come. *(Acts 15 and Galatians 3:19-29)*

Do we have to sow first fruits (money) into Churches and Ministries in order to receive blessings from God as some claim? The answer is an absolute no! We do not receive the blessings of Abraham by performing works of the law but by faith in Christ and what He has already accomplished for us through His life, death, burial and resurrection. *(Romans 4:13-14, Galatians 3:6-18)* Will God bless us for giving? Yes, absolutely but not because we are earning our blessings through works of the law but because we have been made sons of God through the Spirit and have been made joint-heirs with Christ! *(Romans 8:14-17)* We are no longer giving by outward commands (the law) but instead are giving from the heart, out of a spirit of love and by God’s empowering grace!

Ministers today that teach the Church that they must give a first fruit offering based upon the Mosaic Law and the Hebrew Festivals are neglecting to teach the spiritual reality of first fruits. They are in effect taking believers back to the shadow but this has no real substance. This is due to carnal thinking and teaches giving according to an Old Covenant Law that in reality has been abolished in Christ. Those who take Christians back under the rules and regulations of the law are leading believers away from God’s grace and obscuring the true identity of those in the body of Christ as the real first fruits unto God. This also hides the truth about the kind of first fruit offering that God really desires under the New Covenant. Are you curious about that last statement? Good! Now we can go on to learn about the kind of offering that is truly pleasing to God.

[True Meaning of First Fruits - Part III](#)