

The Inscrutable Question: Passover Seder: 4th Quarter; Feast of First Fruits: Introduction; Harvest & Presentation; Typology

Fourth Quarter:

- 1- The fourth cup is not documented in Scripture but there was one. Following this cup it was customary to sing three more *Hallel* hymns from Psalms 113-118, in this case the final three: Psalms 116-118.

Matthew 26:30 - And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

- 2- John's Gospel gives a little more detailed information about the Lord and His apostles' destination:

John 18:1 - When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, into which He Himself entered, and His disciples.

- 3- This garden is Gethsemane. It is located at the base of the Mount of Olives but on the eastern side of the Brook Kidron which runs between the mount and the eastern wall of Jerusalem.
- 4- This was one of our Lord's favorite locations, a place where he could find privacy with His apostles and solitude if He so desired. It was the place to which He and His disciples departed following the last Passover and the first Eucharist.
- 5- And it was the place where Judas betrayed Him and the site of His arrest by the Roman cohort and the officers of the chief priests and Pharisees. (John 18:2-3)
- 6- The Mount of Olives was also the exit route taken by David during the Absalom-Ahithophel Rebellion, the entry route used for the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the location of His Ascension, and the future site of His Second Coming.

C. First Fruits:

Leviticus 23:9 - Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying,

v. 10 - "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest.

v. 11 - And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord for you to be accepted; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.

v. 12 - 'Now on the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb one year old without defect for a burnt offering to the Lord.

v. 14b - It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places.

A. Introduction:

- 1- God decreed that the first fruits of all agricultural produce belonged to Him. This included all seven major crops of the land of Israel: barley, wheat, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates. Also included was the firstborn male of all animals. It even included the firstborn male of the people Israel.

Exodus 13:2 - "Sanctify to Me [set apart for special service to God] every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel ... it belongs to Me."

Numbers 18:15 - [the Lord addressing Aaron, the high priest] "Every first issue of the womb of all flesh, whether man or animal, which they offer to the Lord, shall be yours [the priesthood]; nevertheless the first-born of man you shall surely redeem ..."

v. 16 - "And as to their redemption price, from a month old you shall redeem them, by your valuation, five shekels in silver ..."

- 2- At the age of one month, each firstborn male was to be presented to the priest. This child was to be dedicated to the service of the Lord for his entire lifetime. However, the child could be bought out of service with the redemptive offering of five pieces of silver.
- 3- The lesson behind this is simple and is expressed in:

Numbers 3:13 - "For all the firstborn are Mine; on the day that I struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself all the firstborn in Israel. They shall be Mine; I am the Lord."

- 4- Jesus Christ's parents, Joseph and Mary, kept this mandate of the Law when the Lord was one month old according to:

Luke 2:22 - And when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Jesus up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord

v. 23 - (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord").

- 5- This was a form of "first fruits" that was incorporated into the Mosaic Law. But there was a Feast of First Fruits that was to be observed during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, usually on Nisan 16, the day following the Passover meal.
- 6- The concept of the "first issue" of any particular blessing from the Lord was considered sanctified and was to be brought to Him as an offering.
- 7- The "first issue" emphasized in the Feast of First Fruits is the first ripened grain that indicated the beginning of the barley harvest in Israel.
- 8- Jesus Christ described Himself as the "Bread of life," a reference to the fact that He was the source of all true spiritual nourishment.
- 9- In fact, the five loaves of bread that were the objects of His miracle of feeding the five thousand and the four thousand were barley loaves. The miracle was designed to teach the principle that the Lord is an inexhaustible source of provision to those who put their faith and trust in Him.
- 10- The typology of the Feast of First Fruits identifies the first sheaves of barley with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose impeccable human body is transformed into a resurrection body.

- 11- His resurrection is the first in a harvest that will by the beginning of his millennial kingdom total an unknown myriad of souls that have believed in Him for eternal life.

B. The Harvest & Presentation:

- 1- In the days of Solomon's, Zerubbabel's, and Herod's temples, preparation for the observance of First Fruits in Jerusalem began several days before Passover. Representatives of the Sanhedrin would mark and bundle specially marked sheaves in the Temple's barley field located across the Kidron in Ashes Valley at the base of the Mount of Olives.
- 2- This barley field was cultivated according to rabbinic traditions, their constant oversight guaranteeing that the crop was grown naturally. There was no artificial watering or fertilization.
- 3- As sundown approached on Nisan 15, three representatives from the Sanhedrin would leave the Temple, each taking with him a sickle and a basket. They would cross the Kidron over to the previously marked sheaves in the barley field.
- 4- Precisely at sundown they would reap the sheaves until they had accumulated two-thirds of a bushel, equal in Hebrew standards to one *ephah*, and then take the sheaves back to the Temple. This was the national First-Fruits offering.
- 5- Citizens of Israel brought their own baskets containing an *omer*, or about five pints of barley to the priests at the Temple. The priest would place his hand under the basket and slowly wave it before the Lord while the one bringing the offering would recite:

Deuteronomy 26:9 - "The Lord has brought us to this place, and he has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

v. 10 - "And now behold, I have brought the first of the produce of the ground which You, O Lord have given me."

C. The Typology of First Fruits:

- 1- The offering of First Fruits served as a guarantee that the remainder of the harvest would be realized in the days that followed.
- 2- As a type it pointed toward the resurrection of Messiah Who will be the first Person in the human race to be resurrected.
- 3- Since the wave offering at First Fruits was a guarantee of the future harvest of the barley crops, so also it was a type for the guarantee of the harvest of believers into resurrection bodies.
- 4- There is a certain order to the resurrections in human history. Paul referred to Jesus Christ as the first fruits of our resurrection in:

1 Corinthians 15:20 - Christ has been raised from the dead [resurrection], the first fruits [guarantee of a resurrection harvest] of those who are asleep [believers who are physically dead].

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