

The Resurrection of the Firstfruits

Mark Sappington
Given on June 1, 2024

Our Heavenly Father has given us a knowledge of His Holy Days and of His Feasts. We understand that His Feast days are a roadmap of His plan of salvation for mankind and how He has dealt with and will deal with mankind concerning giving spiritual life and salvation to those who will turn to Him and obey Him and follow Him and love Him with all their heart.

The Churches of God have all associated the Feast of Pentecost with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon many disciples in Acts 2 and with the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai to the Israelites in Exodus 20.

However, one event that is truly pictured by the Feast of Pentecost is not accepted by the majority of the Churches of God. It is an event that is celebrated by them with another Holy Day and that event is the subject of today's sermon.

My sermon this afternoon entitled:

The Resurrection of the Firstfruits

I would like to explore the special nature of the resurrection of the Firstfruits and its uniqueness in our Heavenly Father's plan of salvation.

The first point concerning the Resurrection of the Firstfruits is:

1) **The three Holy Day harvests represent the three spiritual harvests**

We read about the Feast Days of our Heavenly Father in Leviticus 23.

Leviticus 23:1 *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
2) Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts. (KJV)*

The Hebrew word for "feasts" in verse 2 is moedim – Strong's #4150 – appointed times. All of the Feast Days listed in Leviticus 23 are "moedim", but there are special "moedim" or appointed times listed in the chapter.

Leviticus 23:6 *And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. (KJV)*

Leviticus 23:34 *Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. (KJV)*

The Hebrew word for “feast” in verses 6 and 34 is not “moedim”; rather the Hebrew word is khag – Strong’s #2282 – a pilgrimage feast. In Exodus 23 we read about these two pilgrimage feasts as well as a third one. The plural of “khag” is “khagim”. Each of these khagim is associated with a harvest.

There are three main harvests in Israel: the barley harvest in the early spring associated with the “khag” of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the wheat harvest in the late spring associated with the “khag” of the Feast of Pentecost, and the general harvest of the early fall associated with the “khag” of the Feast of Tabernacles. This general harvest in the fall was not a grain harvest, but a bountiful harvest of fruits and vegetables.

Exodus 23:14 *Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year.*
15) *Thou shalt keep the feast [khag] 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 from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:)*
16) *And the feast [khag] of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast [khag] of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. (KJV)*

It is important to note that the Feast of Pentecost celebrated the firstfruits of the harvest and not the entire harvest, whereas the Feast of Ingathering celebrated the entire harvest. It is also important to note that verse 16 is actually a series of construct chains in Hebrew which is how possession or the words “of the” are made. So, in Hebrew, verse 16 reads: “*And the feast of the harvest of the firstfruits of your labors that you have sown in the field.*”

This is also confirmed in many English translations, among which is the New American Standard Bible which states:

Also, you shall observe the Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field; (NASB)

So, Pentecost celebrates the harvesting of the firstfruits of the harvest, not the entire harvest itself.

In summary, the resurrection (or harvesting) of Jesus the Anointed One back to eternal spiritual life is commemorated during the Feast of Unleavened Bread by the special ceremony of the Wave Sheaf Offering. The resurrection (or harvesting) of the Firstfruits of our Heavenly Father to eternal spiritual life is commemorated in the Feast of Pentecost. The transformation (or harvesting) of the physically resurrected remainder of mankind who choose to obey our Heavenly Father is commemorated by the Feast of Ingathering.

The second point concerning the Resurrection of the Firstfruits is:

2) The Wave Sheaf Offering pictures the presentation and acceptance of Jesus by God Our Father

The majority of Christian churches of today have little understanding of the Wave Sheaf Offering. This important event does not easily fold into the Good Friday – Easter Sunday celebration of the current Christian world. But for us, the Wave Sheaf Offering represents and commemorates a crucial and essential part of the plan of salvation of our Heavenly Father. To begin with, in Israel, there were two main grain harvests: the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. The barley harvest occurred immediately after the Days of Unleavened Bread. In Leviticus 23, we read of a special ceremony that took place on the Sunday during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Leviticus 23:4 *These are the feasts of the Lord, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons.*

5) *In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover.*

6) *And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.*

7) *In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.*

8) *But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.*

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 [Hebrew – reshith] of your harvest unto the priest:*

11) *And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD [Yehovah – God Our Father], to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. (KJV)*

The Hebrew word for *firstfruits* in verse 10 is *reshith* – Strong's #7225 – which means “the choicest, the first, the beginning, the chief”. Therefore, what was waved before YEHOVAH was first, the choicest, the finest and best quality of the first part of the barley harvest.

It is also interesting to note that the word for *firstfruits* in verse 10, *reshith*, is also the first word in the Bible in Genesis 1:1 – *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

This wave sheaf offering was a representation of Jesus the Anointed One being presented before God Our Father's throne and being accepted by God Our Father after Jesus' resurrection. In John 20, we read about the fulfillment of the meaning of the wave sheaf offering.

John 20:1 *The first day of the week [this is the Sunday during the Feast of Unleavened Bread] cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulcher. (KJV)*

Continuing in verse 10...

10) *Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.*

11) *But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher, (KJV)*

Continuing in verse 14) ...

14) *And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.*

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.*

18) *Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.*

19) *Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*

20) *And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.*

21) *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. (KJV)*

The parallel account in Luke 24 adds a piece of critical information.

Luke 24:36 *And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*

37) *But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.*

38) *And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?*

39) *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me (the Greek word means to touch), and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.*

40) *And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. (KJV)*

So, later on that Sunday, the disciples were able to touch Jesus, whereas earlier that day, Mary Magdalene could not, because Jesus had not yet ascended to His Father. So, we gather from this that Jesus was presented to our Heavenly Father, and Jesus and His sacrifice with His own blood were accepted by our Heavenly Father, and Jesus

was glorified again by our Heavenly Father sometime between the morning and late afternoon on the Sunday during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

This ceremony has so much deep meaning in the plan of salvation, but it also holds deep importance because this ceremony is utilized to determine the occurrence of another Holy Day, which leads us to the second point.

The third point concerning the Resurrection of the Firstfruits is:

3) The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost does not have a fixed date

The Feast of Pentecost has been known by many different names in the Bible. In Exodus 23 Pentecost is referred to as the Feast of Harvest.

Exodus 23:15 *Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (KJV)*

Continuing in verse 16)

16) and the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labors, which thou hast sown in the field: (KJV)

In Numbers 28 Pentecost is referred to as the Day of the Firstfruits.

Numbers 28:26 *Also in the day of the firstfruits, when ye bring a new meat offering unto the Lord, after your weeks be out, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: (KJV)*

In Exodus 34:22 Pentecost is referred to as the Feast of Weeks.

Exodus 34:22 *And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end. (KJV)*

It is interesting that the common Hebrew calendar year is comprised of 50 weeks, hence the connection of 50 and weeks in the Feast of Weeks. In the New Testament, the Greek name for Pentecost is Pentecostē which means “fiftieth”, from which we directly get the English name. The date of Pentecost is not a fixed date in the Hebrew calendar. It is calculated or counted by counting 50 days from and including the Sunday of the wave sheaf offering during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which arrives another Sunday. The instructions from our Heavenly Father on determining the date each year for Pentecost are in Leviticus 23.

Leviticus 23:15 *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. (KJV)

Continuing in verse 21)

21) And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. (KJV)

So, the setting of the day of Pentecost is totally dependent on the day of the Wave Sheaf Offering. Pentecost is celebrated on the fiftieth day from and including the day of the Wave Sheaf Offering. This is why Pentecost is always observed and celebrated on a Sunday. However, the Jewish community has fixed the date of Pentecost as Sivan 6 in the third month of the Hebrew calendar. The Jews do so by counting 50 days from and including the First Day of Unleavened Bread. This belief comes from their view that the “Sabbath” in verse 15 means the Holy Day of the First Day of Unleavened Bread.

However, there are differences between the weekly Sabbath and the appointed times or moedim – appointed times – or Feast Days. For all the moedim or Feast Days listed in Leviticus 23 (except for the Day of Atonement), there is a prohibition against any servile or customary work on those days. However, for the weekly Sabbath, as instructed in Exodus 20:10, no work whatsoever was to be done. Therefore, the Feast Days or “moedim” are not exactly interchangeable with the term Shabbat or weekly Sabbath.

Hence, this is the reason why we do not follow the Jewish custom of celebrating the Feast of Pentecost on a fixed day of Sivan 6, but instead we count fifty days from and including the Sunday after the weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The fourth point concerning the Resurrection of the Firstfruits is:

4) The Firstfruits are waved on Pentecost

The second harvest in Israel is the wheat harvest and occurs approximately a month and a half after the barley harvest. Barley was the early spring crop, and wheat was a later spring crop, because wheat takes longer to mature for harvesting.

Whereas the barley harvest is associated with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the wheat harvest is associated with Pentecost.

There is a special ceremony that occurs in no other Festival or Holy Day in our Heavenly Father’s calendar. This ceremony is unique to the Festival of Pentecost and has significant and special meaning to the called-out ones of our Heavenly Father.

Leviticus 23:17 *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.*

18) And ye shall offer with the bread seven lambs without blemish of the first year, and one young bullock, and two rams: they shall be for a burnt offering unto the LORD, with their meat offering, and their drink offerings, even an offering made by fire, of sweet savor unto the LORD.

19) Then ye shall sacrifice one kid of the goats for a sin offering, and two lambs of the first year for a sacrifice of peace offerings.

20) And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits for a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs: they shall be holy to the LORD for the priest. (KJV)

Verse 17 states that the two leavened wave loaves are the firstfruits unto Yehovah. The Hebrew word for firstfruits in this verse is *bikkurim* – Strong's #1061 – meaning the first fruits or the first part of the harvest. This Hebrew word is different than the Hebrew word for *firstfruits* or *reshith* in verse 10 referring to Christ. Christ never sinned. We are stained by sin, hence the two wave loaves contained leaven.

James describes us as the Firstfruits of our Heavenly Father.

James 1:17 *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.*

18) He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created. (NIV)

So, whereas the wave sheaf offering pictured the presentation of and acceptance of Jesus Christ by God Our Father before the Father's throne, the wave offering of the two loaves on Pentecost pictures the presentation of and acceptance of the Firstfruits by God Our Father before His throne. We will be among those firstfruits if we endure faithfully unto the end.

The fifth point concerning the Resurrection of the Firstfruits is:

5) The Resurrection of the Firstfruits is the better resurrection

The general belief of the Churches of God is that the First Resurrection found in Revelation 20:5 is the Resurrection of the Firstfruits and this is a correct belief. The First Resurrection or the Resurrection of the Firstfruits is the better resurrection which is mentioned in Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:35 *Women received their dead raised to life again and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:*

36) And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

37) They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

38) (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

39) And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

40) God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. (KJV)

Hebrews 11 tells us that there is a better resurrection awaiting our Heavenly Father's elect, and that God Our Father will make us all perfect in the future, and that future is the Resurrection of the Firstfruits.

It is also important to note that the Old Testament people who were called out by our Heavenly Father are part of the Firstfruits who knew about the Resurrection of the Firstfruits. The people discussed in Hebrews 11 were people from the Old Testament. They endured their suffering and afflictions so that they might enter our Heavenly Father's Kingdom by way of the Resurrection of the Firstfruits, the better resurrection. Job, who lived thousands of years ago, in the Old Testament, knew about the Resurrection of the Firstfruits and he waited in anticipation of that change and transformation occurring at that resurrection.

Job 14:10 *But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?*

11) *As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up:*

12) *So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.*

13) *O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!*

14) *If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. (KJV)*

The Hebrew noun for *change* in verse 14 is *khalifah* – Strong's #2487– meaning a physical change as in a change of clothes or meaning a more abstract change as in a revival from death. So, in verse 14, Job was referring to his resurrection to spiritual life, the better resurrection, the resurrection of the Firstfruits. Most English translations translate this word as “change” or “transformation”. For example, the Jubilee Bible 2000 translates this last part of verse 14 as “*I will wait until my transformation comes.*” So, the faithful servants of Yehovah in the Old Testament knew about the resurrection of the Firstfruits, the better resurrection, and they endured hardship and suffering in their lives so that they might be part of that better resurrection.

In John 3, there is a well-known but misunderstood dialogue between Jesus the Anointed One and Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin and a leader in the Jewish community.

John 3:1 *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:*

2) *The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

3) *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (KJV)*

The Greek phrase for *born again* in verse 3 is *gennao another* – Strong's #1080 and #509 – meaning “to be born from above”. Let's continue in verse 4 of John 3.

John 3:4 *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

5) *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

6) *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

7) *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

8) *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. (KJV)*

In verse 4, Nicodemus took Jesus literally and responded to Jesus concerning a new physical birth. Jesus continues in verse 6 to say that what is born of the Spirit is spirit, and that those who are born of the Spirit are spirit and are invisible like the wind. Jesus also says in verse 5 that we cannot enter the Kingdom of our Heavenly Father without being born of the Spirit. The Apostle Paul further explains that flesh and blood cannot enter the Kingdom of Our Heavenly Father, but rather only spirit can enter it.

1 Corinthians 15:50 *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. (KJV)*

This better resurrection, the Resurrection of the Firstfruits, is for the faithful called-out ones who have shown loyalty, obedience, and righteousness in their lives in their continual submission to our Heavenly Father and to Jesus. In doing so, this better resurrection is also referred to by Jesus as “the resurrection of the just.”

Luke 14:12 *Then said he also to him that bade him, when thou make a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee.*

13) *But when thou make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind:*

14) *And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just. (KJV)*

Jesus was resurrected by our Heavenly Father as a spiritual Elohim Being again and was accepted back at the Right Hand of God Our Father.

Romans 6:3 *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?*

4) *Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

5) *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: (KJV)*

Just as Jesus was raised to eternal life again as an Elohim spiritual Being, we will be resurrected to eternal life as Elohim spiritual beings. Our resurrection will be in the

likeness of Jesus' resurrection. The Apostle Paul wrote many well-known scriptures concerning the First Resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15 he also tells us when the Resurrection of the Firstfruits occurs.

1 Corinthians 15:50 *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*

51) *Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,*

52) *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

53) *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (KJV)*

Paul tells us that the Resurrection of the Firstfruits occurs at the last trump, the Seventh Trumpet, which we will read about later in the book of Revelation. Our Heavenly Father has given us so much to look forward to, and one amazing event that we all look forward to and have hope in is the Resurrection of the Firstfruits, an event pictured by the upcoming Holy Day of Pentecost. With our understanding of who God Our Father is in the Bible, 1 Thessalonians 4 reads differently than how we have read it for decades in the past.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

14) *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God [God Our Father] bring with him.*

15) *For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord [Κύριος without the definite article "the" – God Our Father], that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord [with the definite article "the" – Jesus Christ] shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

16) *For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:*

17) *Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (KJV)*

1 Thessalonians 4:13 (with substitutions) *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

14) *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God Our Father bring with him.*

15) *For this we say unto you by the word of God Our Father, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of Jesus Christ shall not prevent them which are asleep.*

16) For Jesus Christ himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God Our Father: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17) Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet Jesus Christ in the air: and so shall we ever be with God Our Father. (KJV)

Can we imagine just how wonderful the resurrection of the Firstfruits will be? We will be changed instantaneously into spiritual eternal beings, full of endless energy, vitality, and power. No more physical limitations. No more sore and aching muscles, no more painful joints, no more feeling exhausted and fatigued, and no more physical pain. Do we realize that on the day of the resurrection of the Firstfruits, we will see Jesus for the first time? We will see Jesus and all the angels in Their glorious spiritual appearance when we are resurrected as spiritual beings. Then something else unbelievable occurs soon after our resurrection.

Just like the two leavened loaves were waved before our Heavenly Father in Leviticus 23 on the day of Pentecost, we as newly resurrected spiritual beings will be presented by Jesus to our Heavenly Father. Do we realize that on that day, we will see our Heavenly Father for the first time on His throne on the sea of glass? How glorious and exciting will that be? John writes about this exciting event in 1 John 3.

1 John 3:1 *Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*

2) Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (KJV)

So, we will be like our Heavenly Father as a spiritual being, and we will see our Heavenly Father as He is in all His grandeur and majesty. Brethren, the Resurrection of the Firstfruits is the better resurrection.

The sixth and last point concerning the Resurrection of the Firstfruits is:

6) The Firstfruits receive their reward at the Resurrection of the Firstfruits

In Matthew 6 Jesus told His disciples that our Heavenly Father will reward us openly.

Matthew 6:1 *Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.*

2) Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

3) But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:

4) *That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.*

5) *And when thou pray, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.*

6) *But thou, when thou pray, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. (KJV)*

Continuing in verse 16)

16) *Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.*

17) *But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;*

18) *That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. (KJV)*

In Matthew 16 Jesus told His disciples that He will come and reward us according to our works.

Matthew 16:24 *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

25) *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*

26) *For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

27) *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. (KJV)*

As we have read in 1 Thessalonians 4, Jesus, along with His angels come to the earth to resurrect the Firstfruits. Our reward is at His coming. The Resurrection of the Firstfruits will apparently not be done in secret and in silence.

Matthew 24:29 *Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:*

30) *And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*

31) *And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (KJV)*

Verse 31 is referring to the Resurrection of the Firstfruits when Jesus and the angels gather all of the Firstfruits, the elect, from all parts of the earth. The Churches of God

believe that Jesus continues to descend to the earth and establishes His Kingdom immediately after this Resurrection of the Firstfruits. Instead, though, we understand that Jesus and the angels return with us to heaven to be presented to and accepted by our Heavenly Father, again the fulfillment of the meaning of the waving of the two loaves on Pentecost. The actual return of both God Our Father and Jesus the Anointed One to the earth to conquer evil and to set up Jesus' Kingdom on the earth occurs at a later time in the year, celebrated by the Feast of Trumpets in the fall. Revelation 20, includes a description of what our role will be in Christ's Kingdom after the First Resurrection and during the Millennium.

Revelation 20:4 *And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

5) But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6) Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. (KJV)

So, the saints in the Resurrection of the Firstfruits are blessed and holy and will be priests of our Heavenly Father and will reign with Jesus during the Millennium. The Apostle Paul states that our reward is the inheritance from our Heavenly Father.

Colossians 3:23 *And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;*

24) Knowing that of the Lord [kurios – without the word “the” is Yehovah – God Our Father] ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. (KJV)

In verse 24, Paul states that we shall receive the reward of the inheritance of our Heavenly Father, because we serve our Lord and Master, Jesus. So, what is the inheritance of our Heavenly Father? In Revelation 21, we read words from our Heavenly Father concerning that inheritance - if we overcome in this life.

Revelation 21:6 *And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.*

7) He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. (KJV)

Our reward is to inherit all things from our Heavenly Father. This means everything. Our Heavenly Father and Jesus will share all Their creation with us and will share Their spiritual Kingdom with us forever. So, the First Resurrection is the Resurrection of the Firstfruits. It is the better resurrection. It is the resurrection to eternal life in which the

second death has no power. It is a spiritual resurrection in which we will inherit all things from our Heavenly Father. We receive this reward and inheritance at the Resurrection of the Firstfruits.

Today, we have explored the Resurrection of the Firstfruits, and we've explored it in six points.

- 1) The three Holy Day harvests represent the three spiritual harvests. The Feast of Pentecost is a "khag" or pilgrimage feast, a special "moed" or appointed time, which represents the Resurrection of the Firstfruits.
- 2) The Wave Sheaf Offering pictures the presentation and acceptance of Jesus by our Heavenly Father. Some time after talking with Mary Magdalene at the tomb, Jesus ascended to Heaven and presented Himself to our Heavenly Father as the sacrifice for our sins, our Heavenly Father accepted Him and His sacrifice.
- 3) The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost does not have a fixed date. Pentecost is the only Holy Day that is dependent on another Feast for determining its date. Pentecost is the fiftieth day from and including the Sunday after the Sabbath Day during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
- 4) The Firstfruits are waved on Pentecost. Just as Jesus presented Himself to our Heavenly Father, we will be presented by Jesus to Him also, and our Heavenly Father will accept us as His spiritual sons.
- 5) The Resurrection of the Firstfruits is the better resurrection. Of the resurrections of humanity in our Heavenly Father's plan of salvation, the Resurrection of the Firstfruits is the better resurrection and is an event that we all look forward to with much anticipation and excitement.
- 6) The Firstfruits receive their reward at the Resurrection of the Firstfruits. When Jesus and the angels come to resurrect us to spiritual life, we receive our reward at that time, because Jesus brings our reward with Him.

Many of us are dealing with and are enduring severe trials, trials of health issues, trials of finances, trials of problems in our families, trials of problems in our work or with our friends or our associates, trials of loneliness and being all by ourselves, or trials of discouragement, sadness, and despair.

Brethren, no matter what trial that our Heavenly Father is allowing us to undergo at this present time, we can and should always remember and keep in the foremost of our minds our wonderful, incredible, and indescribable future that we all will share together in our Heavenly Father's Kingdom forever. That awesome future begins at the Resurrection of the Firstfruits.