



the Firstfruits

Understanding the Wave Sheaf Offering

by Tim Kelley

Nearly 3500 years ago, God revealed His plan for the redemption of all mankind and the subsequent Kingdom of God to a number of former slaves who had just been thrust out of the nation of Egypt. But for most of those who claim an allegiance to the book we call the “Bible”, that revelation has been hidden until the past 80 or so years, primarily because the Jewish people missed the coming of the The Messiah – the major player in that plan, and those who call themselves “Christian” have, for the most part, forsaken the blueprint of God’s plan – the Festivals of Leviticus 23.

But things are beginning to change. The Jews are beginning to grab hold of The Messiah and Christians are beginning to forsake the idolatrous ‘holidays’ of their fathers and are now taking a second look at the Biblical festivals.

God’s festivals reveal what He is going to do in a couple of ways. One way is by their close resemblance to ancient Hebrew wedding customs. Each of the festivals represents a stage in that custom including the courtship, betrothal, wedding supper, and even the newly married couple setting up their new home.

The festivals also show God’s intent by the fact that they are all tied to a particular harvest season. God often speaks to His people in agricultural terms, and thus it’s appropriate that they would understand His doings in regards to the yearly cycle of the three harvest seasons of Israel – the early spring ‘barley’ harvest, the latter spring ‘wheat’ harvest, and the fall harvest of fruits and vegetables.

Because we have just entered the spring festival season of Passover – the time of the barley harvest in Israel, I want to talk about that harvest – focusing in on a specific point in that harvest and show how it might tie into God’s overall plan for the salvation of His people. Today we’re going to talk about what’s commonly referred to as the ‘wave sheaf offering’ – a very special event that’s embedded into this Passover season.

In our study, we’ll:

1. Take a brief look at the harvest cycle and its associated festivals
2. Identify who God calls the ‘firstfruits’
3. Learn the mechanics of the wave sheaf offering
4. Determine the purpose of the wave sheaf offering
5. See the purpose of the firstfruits in God’s plan

The Biblical Festivals –

God’s festivals are spelled out in Leviticus 23 as well as various other places in scripture.

^{NKJ} **Leviticus 23:1** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, these *are* My feasts. ³ ' Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day *is* a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work *on it*; *it is* the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings. ⁴ ' These *are* the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times.

From this passage we can deduce a number of important concepts. First, we can see that the festivals are not ‘Jewish festivals’ but are rather ‘God’s festivals’. They are festivals that God has

provided to His people for their own good. Second, we see that (from this and subsequent verses) that the first festival mentioned is the weekly Sabbath. This would indicate that if you don't understand and observe the first festival – the Sabbath – you'll probably not understand the rest of the festivals. Thirdly, we see that the festivals are literally “appointments with God”. In verse 2, the Hebrew word for “feasts” is “moed” (מוֹעֵד – Strong's 4150). A moed is an appointed time, a specific time when God is going to do something that He wants us to be a part of. “Moed” is rooted in the Hebrew word “ya'ad” (יָעַד – Strong's 3259) which means to “fix, appoint, or assemble”. The first time we see “ya'ad” in scripture it is translated “betroth”¹. Thus we have the connection of God's festivals to a wedding. Fourth, we see that the festivals are called “holy convocations”. The Hebrew term is “miqra qodesh” (מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ Strong's 4744 & 6944). “Qodesh” means “holy” and a “miqra” is a reading or calling together for a reading. Strong's also describes it as a “rehearsal”. Thus we might say that the festivals are where we rehearse our part in the wedding of all time – the wedding of YHVH to His people. Because it's important to God that we join Him at the festivals, He made it to where the festivals are considered ‘sabbaths’ themselves, and thus gave us “days off” from work so that we can join Him.

Reading on into Leviticus 23, we see that the festivals are associated with the three harvest seasons², thus each festival represents a particular harvest. There are specific instructions for each harvest, especially in regards to what we're to do with the fruit of the harvest. In the first and second harvest, we are instructed to bring the “firstfruits” of that harvest³, but in the third harvest we're not. Instead, in that third harvest it appears we are to rejoice with as much of the harvest as we wish.

Since the firstfruits are the focus of the spring harvest, let's focus in on them so as to determine their identity.

Who are the Firstfruits?

Human beings are oftentimes identified in agricultural terms. One of the first places we see that is where Rachael blames her barrenness on Jacob.

^{KJ} **Genesis 30:1** Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die!"² And Jacob's anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

Here Jacob likens children to fruit. In this passage, the Hebrew word for “fruit” is “periy” (פְּרִי – Strong's 6529) which according to Dr. Frank Seekins means “to the mouth goes the person's hand”⁴. This is an interesting concept since the scripture shows that at one time in Israel's history, salvation was in a way dependant on those who put their hand to their mouth⁵.

Another case of people or persons being identified in agricultural terms is that of Joseph who in his dream identifies himself as a sheaf of grain.⁶ The Psalms also speak of the godly person as a tree that brings forth fruit in its season –

¹ Ex. 21:8

² vs. 10 (barley), vs. 17 (wheat), vs. 39 (fruit, produce)

³ vs. 3 & 17

⁴ Hebrew Word Pictures, Seekins, Living Word Pictures, Inc, Phoenix, AZ, 1994, pg. 141

⁵ Judges 7:5-7

⁶ Gen. 37:7

^{NKJ} **Psalm 1:1** Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly . . . ² But his delight is in the law of the LORD . . . ³ He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season,

Good fruit is what God expects His people to be. In his charge against Israel and Judah, YHVH reminded them that they were at one time a “good fruit” –

^{NKJ} **Jeremiah 11:16** The LORD called your name, Green Olive Tree, Lovely and of Good Fruit.

But Israel turned from God and was broken off of the olive tree of Israel. Yeshua was later sent to begin gathering up those broken of sticks, but the actual work of the gathering was to be performed by His disciples, as well as those who became disciples after them.

^{NKJ} **John 15:5** "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing . . . ⁸ "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

So we can see that God’s people are often defined in the scriptures as “fruit”. But God also calls His people by a more specific term. Not only are they fruit, they are his “firstfruits”.

^{NKJ} **Jeremiah 2:3** Israel was holiness to the LORD, The firstfruits of His increase.

In this passage, the Hebrew word for “firstfruits” is “reshiyt” (רֵאשִׁיטָה – Strong’s 7225). “Reshiyt” means “first, beginning, best”. It comes from the Hebrew word “rosh” which means “head”. So the firstfruits are the first, the beginning, the ‘head’ of the harvest. Being that the firstfruits are the first of the harvest, by implication there is more to be harvested after the firstfruits. In other words, the firstfruits are not the entire harvest.

The term “firstfruits” is applied to Israel in another passage as well, but this time translated from a different word –

^{NKJ} **Hosea 9:10** " I found Israel Like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers As the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season. *But* they went to Baal Peor, And separated themselves *to that* shame; They became an abomination like the thing they loved.

In this case, the word ‘firstfruits’ is translated from the Hebrew word “bikkowrah” (בִּכְוֹרָה – Strong’s 1061). Bikkowrah comes from the root word “bakar” (בָּכַר – Strong’s 1069) which means “firstborn”. Thus Israel is God’s firstborn, which YHVH clearly states in the Passover story –

^{NKJ} **Exodus 4:22** "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel is My son, My firstborn.

So Israel is God’s firstborn as well as God’s firstfruits. There are no other peoples who are referred to by that term. With that said, let’s take a look at some of the details of the Wave Sheaf Offering.

The Wave Sheaf Offering -

This special offering is described in Leviticus 23, beginning in verse 10. In the text, this passage follows the seven days of unleavened bread, but most believe it took place during the Days of Unleavened Bread. According to the text . . .

^{NKJ} **Leviticus 23:10-14** . . . 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. ¹¹ 'He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. ¹² 'And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the

sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD. ¹³ Its grain offering *shall be* two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the LORD, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering *shall be* of wine, one-fourth of a hin. ¹⁴ You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God

This seems pretty straightforward, but there are a few points that need to be clarified. First, the offering is not really the “wave-sheaf” offering; it’s more correctly the “wave – omer” offering. A sheaf is a bundle of grain stalks laid parallel together and tied into a bundle, and though sheaves are very much a part of the offering, what is actually waved is a bowl of flour. The word translated “sheaf” in verse 10 is the Hebrew word “omer” (עֹמֶר – Strong’s 6016) which means “a dry measure of grain of about 2 litres.” So an “omer” of flour was brought to the priests and that is what was waved.

Secondly, the omer of flour is “waved” before YHVH to be accepted on behalf of the people. The phrase “to be accepted on your behalf” is translated from the Hebrew word “li-r’zonchem” which is the combination of the Hebrew preposition “li” which means “to” and the 2nd person masculine plural form of the noun “ratson” (רַצוֹן – Strong’s 7522) which means “pleasure, delight, and acceptance”. The thought is that God is looking down from Heaven at what the priest was waving back and forth and God is pleased with what He sees.

The third point is that the wave offering is not offered alone. It is accompanied by a burnt offering of a one year old male lamb without blemish as well as an associated grain and drink offering. What that means is that the waving of the omer of flour is dependent upon having the one year old lamb . . . without the lamb, you cannot make the offering.

And one other point – this offering had to be made before any of that year’s harvest could be eaten. This is generally understood to mean that the rest of the fields could not be harvested until the offering had been made.

In his book “the Temple and its Ministry and Services, Alfred Edersheim describes the wave-omer offerings of the second Temple period⁷.

“ . . . Already, on the 14th of Nisan, the spot whence the first sheaf was to be reaped had been marked out by delegates from the Sanhedrim, by tying together in bundles, while still standing, the barley that was to be cut down. Though, for obvious reasons, it was customary to choose for this purpose the sheltered Ashes-valley across Kedron, there was no restriction on that point, provided the barley had grown in an ordinary field—of course in Palestine itself—and not in garden or orchard land, and that the soil had not been manured nor yet artificially watered (Mishnah, Menach. viii. 1, 2).

When the time for cutting the sheaf had arrived, that is, on the evening of the 15th of Nisan (even though it were a Sabbath, just as the sun went down, three men, each with a sickle and basket, formally set to work.

But in order clearly to bring out all that was distinctive in the ceremony, they first asked of the bystanders three times each of these questions: ‘Has the sun gone down?’ ‘With this sickle?’ ‘Into this basket?’ ‘On this Sabbath (or first Passover-day)?’—and, lastly, ‘Shall I reap?’ Having each time been answered in the affirmative, they cut down barley to the

⁷ The Temple, Its Ministry and Services; Alfred Edersheim; Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA; copyright 1994; 4th printing (1998); pg.204

amount of one ephah, or ten omers, or three seahs, which is equal to about three pecks⁸ and three pints of our English measure. The ears were brought into the Court of the Temple, and thrashed out with canes or stalks, so as not to injure the corn; then ‘parched’ on a pan perforated with holes, so that each grain might be touched by the fire, and finally exposed to the wind. The corn thus prepared was ground in a barley-mill, which left the hulls whole. According to some, the flour was always successfully passed through thirteen sieves, each closer than the other. The statement of a rival authority, however, seems more rational—that it was only done till the flour was sufficiently fine (Men. vi. 6, 7), which was ascertained by one of the ‘Gizbarim’ (treasurers) plunging his hands into it, the sifting process being continued so long as any of the flour adhered to the hands (Men. viii. 2). Though one ephah, or ten omers, of barley was cut down, only one omer of flour, or about 5 1 pints of our measure, was offered in the Temple on the second Paschal, or 16th day of Nisan. The rest of the flour might be redeemed, and used for any purpose. The omer of flour was mixed with a ‘log,’ or very nearly three-fourths of a pint of oil, and a handful of frankincense put upon it, then waved before the Lord, and a handful taken out and burned on the altar.

The remainder belonged to the priest. This was what is popularly, though not very correctly, called ‘the presentation of the first or wave-sheaf’ on the second day of the Passover-feast, of the 16th of Nisan.”

From Edersheim’s account we learn more about the offering. We see that there was nothing special about the grain that was used in the offering. It did not come from a special field, but could be selected from anywhere within the boundaries of Israel. It was selected before the Passover, but was not cut until after the Passover lambs were slain and eaten. The individual “corns” (grains) were separated from the head, then parched in a pan specially designed so that each corn would be touched by fire. Then the corns were subjected to the wind, presumably to remove the husks that were now detached from the grain. The grain was then ground and sifted until it was deemed pure enough for the offering, and though three sheaves of barley were cut, only one omer of fine flour was actually used for the offering.

Let’s now summarize what we’ve seen so far:

- God has given us his festivals to learn about how He intends to build his kingdom.
 - The festivals parallel the Hebrew wedding
 - The festivals parallel the three annual harvests
- God calls Israel His firstfruits as well as His firstborn
- The sheaves of barley grain that ultimately become the wave-omer offering come from anywhere in the land. There is nothing special about them
- The refining of the grain did not begin until after the Passover meal was eaten
- The grain goes through a refining process that includes being blown by the wind
- More grain was chosen than was actually used.
- The offering must be accompanied by a one-year-old male lamb without blemish

Before moving on, let’s add a little more information about the wave-omer offering, information that’s not necessarily specific to this offering, but to other grain offerings as well. We find this information at the beginning of the book of Leviticus where all the offerings are described.

^{NKJ} **Leviticus 2:14 & 16** If you offer a grain offering of your firstfruits to the LORD, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits green heads of grain roasted on the fire, grain beaten from full heads . . . ¹⁶ then the priest shall burn the memorial portion: *part* of its

⁸ a peck is about 2 gallons

beaten grain and *part* of its oil, with all the frankincense, as an offering made by fire to the LORD.

Here we see that from the omer of highly refined barley flour, a small portion call the “memorial portion” - “azkarah” in Hebrew - is separated from the whole and burned on the altar. As for what happens to the rest of the omer of flour after it is waved, the scripture is silent. It’s assumed that it was eaten by the priests just as the other grain offerings ⁹.

With the information we have so far, can we determine the purpose of the wave-omer offering? Can we know what it represents? I believe we can, especially with the help of Paul’s expert understanding of the Torah and the prophets.

What Does the Offering Represent?

Paul’s letter to the Romans was written to mend a rift that was developing between the Jewish and non-Jewish believers in Yeshua. As one of his arguments Paul showed that being a descendant of Abraham did not buy you a ticket to the kingdom. Instead, the kingdom was only available by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which was made possible by the sacrifice of the Messiah.

^{NKJ} **Romans 8:9-11** But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. ¹⁰ And if Christ *is* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin, but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. ¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Paul was saying that those of us within whom God’s spirit dwells have in effect “died” because of sin, but the spirit of God now gives us life. Paul then went on to say that our sufferings (experiences) in this life – our trials – are nothing compared to the glory that those sufferings will bring.

^{NKJ} **Romans 8:18** For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

And what is that glory? Paul tells us in the very next verse.

^{NKJ} **Romans 8:19** For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

God’s sons are His firstborn, the children of Israel. Their revealing, gathering, and restoration as a people is what brings glory to God.

^{NKJ} **Isaiah 44:23** Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done *it!* Shout, you lower parts of the earth; Break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, And glorified Himself in Israel.

Paul’s trials were all a part of his ministry of restoration - the revealing and the restoration of the son’s of God – Israel - God’s firstborn, His firstfruits. Paul speaks of it in practically all his epistles. He went on to make this even more clear –

^{ESV} **Romans 8:22** For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

As shown earlier, God’s people Israel are the firstfruits. But not everyone who is born an Israelite is part of the firstfruits as Paul clearly states in his letter to the Romans –

⁹ Lev. 2:10

^{NKJ} **Romans 9:6** For they are not all Israel who are of Israel . . .

The true Israelites are those who have His spirit dwelling in them, and (as the epistle seems to indicate) are taking part in bringing about the revealing of the sons of God.

James, in his letter to the “twelve tribes scattered abroad” supported what Paul taught to the Romans. James began his letter by discussing the trials and temptations that befall all of us. These could be trials that came upon Israel as a people¹⁰ or those we experience individually. In either case, he went on to say (quoting from the New Jerusalem Bible) –

^{NJB} **James 1:17-18** . . . all that is good, all that is perfect, is given us from above; it comes down from the Father of all light; with him there is no such thing as alteration, no shadow caused by change. ¹⁸ By his own choice he gave birth to us by the message of the truth so that we should be a sort of first-fruits of all his creation.

Like Paul, James seems to have indicated that those facing trials in association with their walk – and that’s probably all of us – are counted as the firstfruits.

Who then does the wave-omer offering represent? Let’s put the puzzle together by first comparing the wave-offering with those we’ve identified as the firstfruits.

The Wave-Omer Offering

- The stalks of grain can be harvest from anywhere in the land.
- Three sheaves of barley are cut, but only a small amount makes it through the process
- The grain goes through an extensive process before it is refined enough to be a part of the offering
- The wind helps separate the parched grain from the husk.
- The wave-omer offering requires the sacrifice of a male lamb without blemish.

Israel – the Firstfruits

- Israel is gathered from the four corners of the earth
- Many are called, but few are chosen
- God’s people go through many trials in order to fulfill their calling
- The “ruach”, God’s Holy Spirit helps us be separated from the world.
- Israel’s redemption required a male lamb without blemish.

The parallels are clear. We are the firstfruits from which the wave-omer is derived. We offer our lives as a living sacrifice, doing our part to further the restoration of all things, which is acceptable and pleasing to God.¹¹

^{NKJ} **Romans 12:1** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service.*

The wave-omer offering represents those who dedicate their lives to walking in the ways of God. It represents those who share in the work of the kingdom and long for its restoration. It represents those who imitate the walk and cling to every word of our King – Messiah Yeshua. It represents those who truly understand that their salvation was and is dependent on what He has done, and continues to do for us. And because we do these things, we – like the wave-omer offering - are unleavened.

¹⁰ 1 Cor. 10:11

¹¹ Note that the context of Romans 9, 10, and 11 is that of the restoration of all Israel.

^{NKJ} **1 Corinthians 5:7** Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

In other words, God looks at us as part of the “unleavened” wave-omer offering because of Yeshua’s sacrifice.¹²

What Part Does the Offering Play in God’s Plan?

What are we to do with this understanding? Is it important that God considers us His firstfruits? Yes – very much so. God has a plan, and as we continually grow in our understanding of that plan, our desire to be a part of the plan will grow.

While in captivity, the prophet Daniel spoke of a coming kingdom that would not pass away.

^{NKJ} **Daniel 7:13** " I was watching in the night visions, And behold, *One* like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. ¹⁴ Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom *the one* Which shall not be destroyed.

We understand this kingdom to be the coming Kingdom of God with Messiah Yeshua at the helm. This was the main message of the angel Gabriel who was sent by God to the pregnant virgin – the betrothed wife of Joseph.

^{NKJ} **Luke 1:26-33** ²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God . . . ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name *was* Mary. ²⁸ And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!" . . . ³¹ "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. ³² "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³ "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

Yeshua was to be the king of Israel in a kingdom that would never end. That was Gabriel’s focus, and it was Yeshua’s focus as well.

^{NKJ} **Matthew 6:33** "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

But the kingdom was to come in stages. As the parable of the mustard seed indicates, it would start very small and continue to grow and spread. Yeshua also likened the kingdom to leaven, a small lump that eventually permeates the entire loaf.¹³

But before the Kingdom could begin, Yeshua knew that He must first die.

^{NKJ} **John 12:24** ²⁴ "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

Yeshua understood that at least one reason for His death was so that others could be drawn to Him . . . to His kingdom.

^{NKJ} **John 12:32** ³² "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself."

¹² Take out the period “.” that was added by the translators between the words “unleavened” and “for” and the passage fits into the context of what Paul had been saying.

¹³ Luke 13:18-21

This drawing of His people began when Yeshua breathed on His disciples, imparting on them the power of the Holy Spirit –

^{NKJ} **John 20:19-22** 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, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace *be* with you . . . , as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is what they needed in order to do the job they had been trained for – raising up disciples to Messiah Yeshua.¹⁴ Once they received the spirit, they were able to be sent out to the various parts of the known world and begin the process of restoration, and the Spirit – the Power to do the job that was assigned to them, could not come until Yeshua had been sacrificed. God has an order to things.

Just as the Messiah had to die in order for the restoration to begin, a relatively small group of believers would have to be sent out to spread the message of Messiah around world; and not until that message had been spread could the masses of humankind recognize and turn to Him. As we've seen, this relatively small group of believers is represented by the wave-omer offering.

In like manner, Yeshua was the first to be resurrected to eternal life. Without that resurrection, there could be no other resurrection. The next resurrection will be that of those who have performed the work of the kingdom. It is the resurrection of the firstfruits. Paul mentions this in his letter to the Corinthians.

^{NKJ} **1 Corinthians 15:19-24** ⁹ If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. ²⁰ But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. ²³ But each one in his own order: Christ,¹⁵ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming. ²⁴ Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.

In this passage we see that the first to be resurrected from the dead to eternal life is Yeshua himself. His resurrection is followed by the resurrection of the firstfruits, which will be followed by yet another resurrection, the one that includes all those who have turned to God and His Messiah as a result of the work of the firstfruits, and just as the gospel message was sent out according to God's order, these resurrections all take place in God's order.

How does this fit into the three annual harvest festivals? There are three harvest festivals and according to Paul, there are three resurrections. It appears that the first harvest was that of Messiah during the Passover festival. It's likely that He was resurrected on the day of the wave-omer offering, and being a part of Israel, He would be included as one of the firstfruits, probably as the "memorial portion" that was burned on the altar. He did not have to be waved before God because He was already accepted as evidenced by the opening of the graves, the sun going dark, the earthquakes, and the veil of the Temple being rent in two.

The next harvest festival is Shavuot, and Shavuot is directly connected to the wave-omer offering. Shavuot has a firstfruits wave offering as well which is composed of two leavened loaves of wheat. How the resurrection of the unleavened firstfruits of the wave-omer offering and the resurrection of the leavened firstfruits of Shavuot takes place is not clear (at least not to this author).

¹⁴ Matt. 28:19-20

¹⁵ The comma after "Christ" is added by this author. The Greek contains no punctuation, thus the placement of punctuation marks is by the understanding of the translators.

The third harvest festival is the fall festival of Sukkot. If the analogy stands, this would be the resurrection of “those who are Christ’s at His coming”.

When these resurrections take place is (for me) yet to be understood. We understand that Yeshua’s resurrection actually did take place during the spring festival season, but will the others take place at their respective times of the year, or during the age pictured by that festival? These are still questions looking for an answer. As God continues to draw his people, and as more and more of us begin to observe the festivals, God will continue to reveal His plan to us, after all –

^{NKJ} **Proverbs 25:2** *It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.*

What’s more important than knowing the timing of the end times events is the reality that YHVH and the Messiah have given us a job to do. As we proceed through the spring festival of Passover, we should reflect on the events that happened immediately following that fateful night. The Passover story points out that when Israel was thrust out of Egypt, they did not head directly for the Promised Land. Instead, Moses lead them south – away from the promised land - to the city of Sukkot in order to fulfill the oath their fathers had taken roughly 270 years earlier.

^{NKJ} **Genesis 50:25** Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here."

Israel’s first order of business was to gather the bones of Joseph - the sheaf to whom all his brothers had bowed. The gathering of his bones might very likely have happened on the day of the wave-omer offering. They collected the bones, and then carried those bones for nearly 80 years before finally burying them in Shechem following the death of Joshua, the one who did eventually lead them into the Land.

God has called us carry the bones of Joseph as well - the bones of Messiah Yeshua - the son of Joseph. He has charged us with the responsibility of carrying His message of the restoration of the Kingdom to our communities, nation, and ultimately the world¹⁶. When we pick up those bones and begin to fulfill our calling, God looks down at us as thousands of finely sifted grains of barley and says -

^{NKJ} **Matthew 25:23** " . . . Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."

Shalom Alechem

¹⁶ Matthew 24:14