

LEVITICUS 23 : 15 – 17**THE FEAST OF SEVENS / THE FEAST FIRSTFRUITS**

And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath.

Then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD.

A common question from a child is “How long is it until my birthday?” If close enough, a daily countdown may begin until the big day. Here is a similar daily countdown leading to the Feast of Weeks or Firstfruits.

The Lord had stipulated three main Jewish festivals.

- 1) Passover / the Feast of Unleavened Bread
- 2) The Feast of Weeks / the Feast of Firstfruits
- 3) The Feast of Booths or Tabernacles / the Feast of Ingathering or Harvest End.

The first of the three, Passover, lasted a week. Regardless of which the day of the week it was, which Passover and its Passover week began, there was always a Sabbath or Rest Day (Saturday) included in that week. The very first Passover was the night the Lord freed His people from slavery in Egypt, leading them to the Promised Land of Canaan. For them, celebrating Passover was a reminder of that great deliverance of the past, and also the Lord's picture of the far greater deliverance to come from sin, devil, death, and hell to eternal Rest and Promised Land of heave, all through Jesus, the Lamb or God whose blood takes away the sin of the world.

Each year, on the day after the-Sabbath-of-Passover-week, a first sheaf, the first sheaf of the new harvest (barley), was presented to the Lord. With the presenting of the first sheaf, a countdown began lasting “a week of weeks” ($7 \times 7 = 49$ days) to the 50th day.

7 was used in Bible times to show blessings from God. 7 days in a week, 7 days between each release of dove at the end of the Flood, every 7th years the land was allowed to lie fallow. At the end of the 7th seven-year, the next year, the 50th year, was the Year of Jubilee—debts canceled, prisoners released!

The countdown meant “attention to the future” (how many days until my birthday?). Anticipation and time to prepare—much like our Lenten season leading up to Good Friday and Easter. God always teaches us to look ahead to the Better Day, to the ultimate, release from life in this sin-filled world, not just to “rest” with our fathers in the grave, but to Rest with our Father in heaven at the Great Resurrection. In Jesus you have forgiveness for the sins of last year and yesterday. Peace with God.

The (second) festival began at the 50th day and was called the Feast of Weeks ($7 \times 7 = 49$).

It was more than just a number for a number's sake (Ok, today is the 50th day after the 4th of July; let's celebrate). It was 50 days after 1st sheaf of the barley harvest had been "waved" before the presence of the Lord. Now harvest was now in full swing. The wheat harvest was underway. (The Jewish calendar was also very much agricultural based.) It was time to present the "new grain" offering to the Lord. It was time to hold the Feast of the Firstfruits. First is always special—first ripe tomato, first bite of new sweetcorn, first paycheck, first car you bought. At this Feast of Firstfruits, or Feast of Weeks, an offering of the firstfruits was given to God.

Give the Lord the first and of the best! Abel in Genesis 4 did. However, this is counter-intuitive to human logic warped by sin. "These are my first apples off my tree; I'm not giving these away!" Yet the Lord teaches us that the Firstfruits are dedicated to Him, from a heart of Thanks and Love for all that He has done for you. Everything you receive in life is God's gift to you. If you surprisingly received \$5000 for your birthday, would it not be in order to give a firstfruits offering to the Lord? I think so.

Jesus is God's gift of firstfruits to you!—Jesus, His only and His best!
*(I Corinthians 15:20-23): But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the **firstfruits** of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the **firstfruits**, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.*

Here, Christ is actually being compared to more than the firstfruits offerings of the Feast of Weeks, but to the first sheaf waved before the Lord already fifty days earlier on the day-after-the-Sabbath of Passover week, which began the countdown to the full harvest. Jesus is the one in whom the full harvest of souls begins. His Resurrection! (Easter) was on the day of the Sabbath Day of Holy Week. His Resurrection leads the way to the full Harvest and Resurrection of souls at the Last Day.

Now, live as firstfruits-offerings to Him! Live in in this world, dedicated to Him, not to yourself nor to the world. *They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being **firstfruits** to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God (Revelation 14:3-5).*

The child of God in Christ does not run with the world, but is dedicated as a special gift, a firstfruits gift to God. Each day celebrate the Feast of Weeks and The Feast of Firstfruits! As you eagerly await the great day of Rest to come, eagerly live as His firstfruits.

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---