

Christ the Firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:20)

Wavesheaf Firstfruits- the “Forgotten Festival”

Light on the Rock

by Philip Shields April 2007

Why do so many celebrate the pagan Easter holiday instead of God's festival of the Wavesheaf, which celebrates Christ the Firstfruits and His resurrection the Biblical way? Without Wavesheaf Sunday, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, none of the other prophecies about God's kingdom would happen. Hear and read about this fascinating “forgotten festival”.

This Sunday, April 8, to most nominal Christians, will be Easter Sunday. God's children will *not* be observing Easter, but rather the festival the Bible tells us to keep. On the other hand, I feel some of God's children don't properly celebrate the resurrection of Christ for fear of somehow being involved in “Easter”. And yet Christ's resurrection depicts Christ as the Firstfruits of the harvest of those God is calling now, the wavesheaf of barley.

But again, I don't keep Easter because Easter bunnies and Easter eggs, pagan symbols of sexual fertility, have nothing to do with the glorious resurrection of the Son of God, the creator of Heaven and earth. Did you know that the very name “Easter” comes from the ancient goddess of sex and fertility, Ishtar, which I've heard was pronounced the very same way we pronounce “Easter”.

The Christian world has unfortunately absorbed a lot of paganism into its culture. True, Christ is risen. True, that is the top news since the universe came into being! But don't mix the truth of the Bible with pagan Easter sunrise fertility worship! No way!

The very symbols of Easter have more to do with sex, babies and fertility than with the resurrection. Everything out there can be *fertile*: plants, bugs, fish, chickens, livestock – but nothing and no one else in the whole universe can give you everlasting *life* except God Almighty, through the resurrected Jesus Christ, the firstfruits.

Today I'm going to talk about new life, resurrection, the empty tomb, Christ risen – but NOT in context of Easter, but in context of what the Bible teaches: Christ the Firstfruits; the Wavesheaf of the firstfruits of the Barley harvest in the Promised Land which began the seven sabbaths to the Feast of Pentecost.

Leviticus 23 lists the festivals of God. The Bible calls them “the feasts of the LORD” (Lev. 23:1-2), not of the Jews. These are *annual* sabbaths, also called “high days”. You must remember that. God says the holydays and festivals are “holy convocations” and are “commanded assemblies”. God in essence is setting an *appointment* for us to appear before Him on these days and to worship Him. If you had received a personal invitation to have dinner with the queen of England, what would you do? Surely you would respond, and surely you would appear.

Don't miss your appointment with God throughout the year on each of His commanded assemblies on His holydays. These holydays also give us the keys which unlock the code of God's plan of salvation.

Let's start with a run-up to the Wavesheaf firstfruits day by rehearsing briefly the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread – which are directly tied to the firstfruits. Without Passover, there is no firstfruits. Without the death of crucifixion, there is no resurrection.

The PASSOVER and Days of Unleavened Bread

The start of the first month of God's calendar depends on the barley being ready to harvest.

There had to be firstfruits of barley to present shortly after Passover, so if the barley was late one year, they would insert, or "*intercalate*", a 13th month at the end of the Hebrew year, to keep the Passover just before the spring barley season. The barley has to be in a certain stage of development, called '*Abib*', so at the end of the 12th month they could know whether or not there would be harvestable barley in about another 2 weeks. If not, then add the 13th month. There is not a single historical instance when the harvest was started *after* the days of Unleavened Bread. The Passover and Wavesheaf Sunday could not be held unless there was harvestable barley. They were tied together.

Passover shows us we have all earned the death penalty for our sins. But God is willing to *pass over* our sins (Rom. 3:25) if we have repented of: *what we are, what we've done, and what we should have done*. Then we accept Christ crucified, to pay for our sins, to redeem us from captivity and death, and we proclaim Him as our Lord and Master. In fact we agree to be symbolically crucified with Him. The world and its ways become crucified to us.

Many ministers understand that God's plan of salvation starts with Passover (Christ on the cross) – but they also tend to think of God's plan as ending with that. Thus they miss the fact that even though Passover and Jesus crucified, is a huge part of God's plan – ***God's plan doesn't end there! Passover is but the first Feast of God***, and it's not even a holyday. God's plan of salvation just begins with Passover and the cross of our Lord.

Paul says over and over that the message of the cross – and the resurrection of Jesus – was a central part of the true gospel. Hear my sermon on "the True Gospel" or just read the first 7-8 verses of 1 Cor. 15. Paul gloried in the cross, his boast was in the cross, he said he wanted to know nothing but the cross.

During the Passover service, we now use the New Covenant emblems that Jesus introduced. Since He is the Lamb, we no longer roast lamb or offer sacrifices. Ever. But we do what Jesus did. We now wash each other's feet, eat broken unleavened bread and take a sip of red wine. I suggest you listen to my sermon on my website, Feb 2006, titled "Passover Emblems" to understand more about the Passover. I'm glad to report that 120 of my dear brethren in Kenya, whom I help teach, kept Passover this year and washed feet. They are like living streams of Light in Africa.

On this evening, Jesus washed all 12 disciples' feet, including Judas. As we wash feet now, we remember the Master has washed our brother's feet, meaning we see them also as forgiven and washed by the Master. As I washed my wife's feet this year, I looked up to her and said, "This tells

me to serve you, forgive you, love you, and lay down my life for you. And I am to remember that Jesus has already washed you, as I now do.”

Then we take the **unleavened bread, bless it and then break it into pieces**. Sometimes the Jews actually strike the bread, as He was broken for us. The traditional blessing over the bread by the Jews, interestingly enough included the words like, “God, ruler of heaven and earth, who provides us bread from the earth.” I see it as a prophecy for Jesus’ resurrection from the depths of the tomb, in the earth. Jesus is the bread of life, the manna from heaven (John 6), the Son of God born in Bethlehem, whose name means “House of Bread”.

After that we discuss the meaning of the wine, bless it, and then take a sip of wine from the Cup. The full explanation is in the sermon in Feb 2006 titled “Emblems of Passover”. I wish you would hear it again or read the transcript.

So the festivals and holydays of God begin with the Passover. The plan of salvation *begins* with Calvary. Many of you feel it ends at Calvary also. But not so. That’s just the beginning. First the Passover – pictured by the sacrificed lamb, whose blood was splashed on the door posts and lintels in the original Passover. Next, the 7 Days of Unleavened Bread, picturing taking in Jesus Christ as our righteousness, and putting sin out of our lives as we bury ourselves in Christ.

Jesus, the “Lamb of God”, was sacrificed and died at the precise instant when the Passover lambs were being slain. Precisely. God would not have had His Lamb killed at any time other than the precise time He intended. The arguments about exactly when the lambs of Exodus 12 were sacrificed seem silly to me. People strive over what KJV translates as “at even”, or “twilight”. In Hebrew it is “between the evenings”(Ex. 12:6). This all becomes moot when you accept that God would not sacrifice His Lamb at the wrong time. The Pharisees in Jesus’ day had this point right. They felt the lambs should be slain at about 3 pm. The first evening to them was noon to 3 pm, and the “2nd evening” was 3 pm to sundown, so “between the evenings” would be at 3 pm, or the Biblical “ninth hour”. When was Jesus killed? When did he die? Precisely at 3 pm (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34), referred to as “the ninth hour” in the Bible.

The Night to be Observed (or Night of Solemn Observance)

After Passover, which is a feast of God but not a holyday, we come to the evening ending Passover and starting the 15th of Nisan – what we’ve come to call, from the KJV, **“the Night to Be Much Observed”** – and I’ve explained before that this night was the evening they were free, and left Egypt’s stranglehold and captivity. I’ve also explained that the real meaning is a **“night to be observant”**, commemorating when God watched over them, watched their back. We meet on this evening once a year to celebrate the victory over sin that God gave us through His Son Jesus Christ.

The Jews keep Passover and what we call “the night to be observed” (Ex. 12:41-42), or as the NKJV has it, “a night of solemn observance” as one and the same night. Jesus obviously kept *his* Passover service – or at least the new covenant emblems of the bread and wine and footwashing-- one night earlier than the rest of the Jews of His day, so this is what I do too.

This Night to be Observed also starts **7 Days of Unleavened Bread**, picturing how we must take in Jesus, the bread of Life, completely and totally in our new lives while putting out the leaven of all

sin – which is commandment breaking (1 John 3:4) and sin includes pride and vanity, hypocrisy, drunkenness, adultery, sabbath breaking, idolatry and so forth.

As we observe the 7 day spring feast, we must not forget its point: Christ is our bread of life, He is our righteousness which we receive by faith in Him, while we show our appreciation by living a new way to God's glory. We now make a concerted effort to keep out the leaven of all sin out of our lives after we have accepted God's forgiveness for past sins. These holydays also show us that people who continue to live a way of life of sin do not know God (1 John 2:3-6) and will not be in God's kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9-11). We are called to be overcomers through Christ.

THE FORGOTTEN and IGNORED FESTIVAL

During these days of Unleavened Bread is when we keep another FESTIVAL – what I call the forgotten festival: the Wavesheaf of the Firstfruits. Who keeps it properly any more? Easter is the pagan counterfeit of what we're supposed to do, but fellow Christians – do you observe Wavesheaf Sunday at all? Do you at least have a brief solemn thank you prayer with your family on this day? Or is it, as I say – “the forgotten festival”? If so, beware! God says not to forget it!

Leviticus 23:9-11 BARLEY WAVESHEAF during the days of Unleavened Bread

“And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘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. ...”

Then verses 12-13 speak of an offering, then verse 14 basically says the harvest cannot start or continue until the firstfruits of the harvest of barley had been offered.

The Bible says a lot about “firsts”. **Of all the grains planted in the winter, the first to ripen – or mature-- and to be harvested, was the barley.** The barley firstfruits represents the First to be presented to the Father to consecrate the rest of the harvest. The firstfruits of barley picture Christ. The REST of the early maturing harvest could picture Christians in the new covenant who have come to spiritual maturity sooner than the others to be harvested. God said to present the barley firstfruits “on the day after the Sabbath”. The Pharisees considered that “sabbath” to be an annual sabbath, the first holyday of unleavened bread, the 15th of Nisan. So to them, the “day after” that particular sabbath would always have been Nisan/Abib 16.

Nisan is the Babylonian name for Abib. Both are used in scripture. Both refer to the first month of God's calendar.

But the Sadducees and Karaite Jews considered “the sabbath” mentioned in Lev. 23:11 to be the weekly sabbath, which I also subscribe to. So the “day after the [weekly] sabbath” would always be on a Sunday. If it was on the 16th of Abib/Nisan, there would have been no need to count 50 days to determine when Pentecost would be. For that matter, Pentecost is never given a precise date either, even though God dates precisely all the other holydays. Why? Because you had to count to get to the right day. Otherwise God would have surely said in scripture that Pentecost is always the 6th of Sivan, as traditional Jews observe it. But He doesn't!

The exact wording and actions for firstfruits is laid down in Deuteronomy 26:1-10.

The sheaf (Hebrew is *omer*) means “measure”, not a sheaf as we who speak English think of “sheaf”. It’s a MEASURE of grain or flour, about 5 pints. You’d never think of “5 pints” as sheaves, but a measure of grain or flour. But when we say “sheaf” we think of a flowing bundle of grain stalks.

The 50-day period of time from the Wavesheaf to Pentecost was called “Counting the Omer”. As time went on, the Jews set aside a specific field just outside Jerusalem where barley was grown naturally and then the first ripening sheaves were carefully marked and bundled by members of the Sanhedrin – but still uncut. These were to be the firstfruit barley presented for the nation. But individual families of Israel also brought their *own* firstfruits of their own crops as well.

What the Jews would do – and did the same year Jesus died:

At sundown on the sabbath after Passover, 3 selected men wielding sickles would proceed to the specially selected barley firstfruits that had been carefully marked, still standing barley. After asking several prescribed questions, they would cut down the firstfruits to release them from the earth, right at sundown.

Now think about this carefully! I got this material from several books on the subject as well as from various articles on the internet.

Next the barley sheaves would be brought to the temple court and threshed with rods and then parched over an open flame and then winnowed to remove any chaff. Then they milled the grains and put them through an intensive sifting process until sifted very fine. This was done until it was so fine that your hand could be placed in the flour without any flour sticking to your hand. Then one omer, about 5 pints, was mixed with some olive oil and some frankincense and waved (raised up high) before the Lord by the priest as the first fruits to God.

Some believe the sheaves (“omer” = “measure” remember, not necessarily “sheaf” as we westerners think of it) were standing sheaves of grain that were cut and then raised up to heaven as sheaves, but I don’t think so and evidence of history says “no” as well.

So think of what this tells us:

- the barley firstfruits were pre-selected, as Christ was before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8)
- they were released from the earth when the sickle was put to them, at sundown at the end of the sabbath - - exactly 3 days and 3 nights after Jesus was entombed.
- early the next morning, on Sunday the first day of the week, these first fruits of barley was raised up high by the priest to God to be accepted on OUR behalf, and of course to consecrate the rest of the harvest as well (Lev. 23:11).

Now keep all this in mind as we see what scripture says about Jesus.

Only *after* the firstfruits were presented to God, could the REST of the harvest be presented.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23

“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 the firstfruits, afterward** those who are Christ's at His coming.”

Remember I said the harvest starts after the firstfruit wavesheaf of barley was offered. The *spiritual* harvest of people being called and converted and brought into God's family, also starts with Jesus being offered up first of all, FOR us – and “afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.”

On the Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread, the first sheaves of barley are presented – or waived – to God, to be presented in behalf of the rest of the harvest, and actually as Lev. 23:11 says, “to be presented on YOUR behalf...”, which began the barley harvest. This harvest lasted for 7 weeks plus a day, 50 days total, to end on a Sunday Pentecost.

This Barley wavesheaf day could be called a “feast of firstfruits” due to what we just read in Leviticus 23.

“Feast of Firstfruits” can apply to Wavesheaf Sunday as well as Pentecost

The TERM “feast of firstfruits” is ALSO applied to the Feast of Pentecost, which is the firstfruits of the WHEAT harvest, which starts a few weeks after the barley harvest starts. This feast, 50 days after Wavesheaf Sunday, is called by different names: Pentecost, Feast of Weeks, Feast of Harvest (Ex. 23:16); Feast of Firstfruits. “*Pentecost*” is Greek for “fiftieth”. The Hebrew word used is *Shavuot*, or “weeks”.

Numbers 28:26 PENTECOST

'Also on **the day of the firstfruits**, when you bring a new grain offering to the LORD at your Feast of Weeks [Pentecost], you shall have a holy convocation....”

Exodus 23:16 also refers to Pentecost, called “the feast of Harvest” as firstfruits.

Leviticus 23:15-17

'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. 16 Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. 17 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***”

(then vs. 18-21 other offerings, and v.21- it is a holy commanded assembly).

So the name “Feast of Firstfruits” can refer to both! To Wavesheaf Sunday as well as the feast of Pentecost. I think there's a reason for this: BOTH festivals are closely linked to each other. The entire 7 week period between them is a festival period, hence it is called “feast of weeks”. Only the 50th day is an actual annual sabbath and holyday, but it's a feast of “weeks”. Harvesting was going on, and it was a festive time. For 7 weeks. It was a feast of weeks – not just a feast of a day. There's

also reason to think it could also be translated “feast of *sabbaths*”, since between sabbaths was a week and also the original Hebrew gives credence to that idea.

I will remind you that traditional Jews count it from the first holyday of Unleavened bread, which can fall on any day of the week, and their Pentecost can fall on any day of the week as well. I’m not going to discuss that argument today.

THE RISEN CHRIST IS WHO THE FIRSTFRUITS PICTURED

Now let’s see who and what these all pictured. You’re about to see what people refer to as “resurrection Sunday” in the correct biblical light.

Jesus IS called the “firstfruits”. Let read it again. So because this is fulfilled in Christ, we do not any longer offer physical firstfruits of the harvest of barley, for Christ IS the firstfruits.

1 Corinthians 15:20-24

“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 the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.”

Jesus was also pre-selected long before the wavesheaf was actually offered. He was as good as “slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

Remember Jesus Himself said he would be resurrected exactly 3 days and 3 nights after He was put into the tomb, and it was the *only* sign He gave that He was the Messiah (**Matt. 12:40**). Christ was clearly put into the tomb just before sundown at the end of Passover day in the middle of the week – a Wednesday, (**Daniel 9:27**) – not on Friday -- , and so He was resurrected just before or at sundown 3 days later exactly, to the very second. Jesus was crucified on a Wednesday morning at 9 a.m. and breathed his last, at 3 pm on that Wednesday – just as the Jews were beginning to sacrifice their Passover lambs.

The disciples wanted Him buried before the Sabbath started, but *that* sabbath was *not* the *weekly* sabbath, but an annual holyday – a “high day” – **John 19:31**. Jesus was crucified on Passover, the 14th of Nisan in the afternoon, then just before sunset they entombed Him, just before the 15th of Nisan began – which began the 1st day of Unleavened Bread, a holyday, an annual sabbath or “high day”.

So the disciples entombed Jesus just before sunset of Passover day (**Mark 15:42; Luke 23:53-54**) *moments* before the holyday began, an annual sabbath. By the time Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early Sunday morning just *before* daylight (“while it was yet dark” – **John 20:1**), He had *already* been resurrected – *before* sunrise, while it was still dark.

So when was Jesus actually resurrected? I feel it had to be exactly 3 days and 3 nights after he was placed in the tomb. He was placed in the tomb just before sundown on a Wednesday late afternoon. So he was brought back to life also at the end of Saturday 3 days and 3 nights later. My point is: His

resurrection was surely actually right at sundown. In any case, by early the next morning, the tomb was already empty. So some time before that, He had been resurrected by His Father in Heaven.

Guess when the barley firstfruit sheaves were being cut loose from the ground? Remember? Right at sundown on the sabbath. So I think Jesus also was resurrected at sundown on the weekly Sabbath, though Mary Magdalene did not see him until later Sunday morning.

By Sunday morning, while it was still dark, just before sunrise, they found the tomb already empty. So his resurrection had to be sometime before that! No one watched Him be resurrected. They just found the empty tomb!

Brethren, this was the day that marked the end of Satan's hold on all of us – when Jesus was resurrected, and rose to heaven to be presented to Father in Heaven, the rest of the spiritual harvest of souls could proceed. But not before!

Jesus was pre-selected, just as the very first firstfruits were also pre-selected (Rev. 13:8) Jesus was cut loose from the ground – i.e., resurrected – at Sundown on the sabbath.

Jesus was raised up to Heaven to be presented “in our behalf” before Father – on the FIRST DAY that began the counting of seven weeks or sabbaths to Pentecost.

In the Greek, there is MUCH that is said in John 20:1 and other parallel scriptures.

We're going now to read what all 4 gospels say. Be prepared for something some of you may not have been aware of before!

“ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK” OR “THE FIRST OF THE WEEKS” (plural)

I am going to now look at the verses from all 4 gospels that tell us about finding the tomb empty – and what this has to say about the Ignored Festival, the Wavesheaf Firstfruits. ALL FOUR GOSPELS say it was very early, just about dawn while it was still dark, on “the first day of the week”. I want you to focus on the phrase “first day of the week”. Let's read them first.

Matthew 28:1

“Now after the Sabbath, as **the first day of the week** began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb”.

Mark 16:1-2

“Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. 2 Very early in the morning, **on the first day of the week**, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.”

Luke 24:1

“Now on **the first day of the week**, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.”

John 20:1

“Now **the first day of the week** Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.”

Now here's the bombshell from the Greek. The Greek has no word “day” in the phrase translated “first day of the week”. You'll see in an interlinear that it is assigned the number 9999, which means it is an added word in the English.

The Greek actually says “the first [no day 9999] of the sabbaton Mary came....”

The word from Greek “*sabbaton*” is translated “week” in English. Strong's dictionary says it is “the *plural* in all the above applications” – and *should be translated either “sabbaths” (plural), or “weeks”*.

Jesus was what the wavesheaf barley firstfruits pictured. He had been cut loose from the earth like barley -- resurrected, ready to be waived or raised to heaven, presented to God on our behalf before the rest of the spiritual harvest of souls could happen.

This word “sabbaton” in the GREEK is used 68x in the New Testament. Virtually every case the Bible translates it “sabbath” except in the accounts about Jesus' resurrection, and then they decide it should be translated as “week”, singular instead of plural, because the translators didn't know what on earth “first of the sabbaths” or “first of the WEEKS” (plural) would mean.

That's because they don't understand about PENTECOST – called the “Feast of Weeks” or “feast of Sabbaths”. This was the first day that started the counting of the seven sabbaths leading up to Pentecost.

That was the intent and focus of all four gospel writers: that this was “**the first of the weeks**”, or “**first of the sabbaths**” leading to Pentecost. **Jesus was the firstfruits, about to be presented, and this would start the counting of 50 days to Pentecost.** Hence, “on the first of the weeks” they discovered the empty tomb.

On Pentecost, 50 days later, 3,000 firstfruits of humanity were harvested. **But the bigger news was what happened 50 days earlier – at an empty garden tomb!** Jesus was alive again. 500 watched Him rise to heaven at one time. Many others saw him here and there. It was so compelling, so real, that thousands ended up giving their lives for this truth, this fact they had personally witnessed: when GOD died for mankind, was resurrected and rose to heaven to be accepted as firstfruits on our behalf.

It should not have been translated “on the first day of the week”, or as some paraphrases have “on SUNDAY”. That's not at all what the Greek says or what the gospel writers intended to focus on.

Here's what VINE'S Expository Dictionary says about the Greek word “sabbaton”, under the article “WEEK”. They know the meaning of the Greek better than you and I do. And note what they specifically say about the gospel accounts:

“sabbaton NT:4521 is used (a) in the plural in the phrase “the first day of the week,” Matt 28:1; Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1,19; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2.”

In other words, Vine's admits it should be translated "first of the weeks" or "first of the sabbaths". Remember we count seven sabbaths or seven weeks to PENTECOST (Lev. 23:15).

What are John, Mark, Matthew and Luke all saying?

They're saying, on this day when Jesus is revealed as resurrected, it was Wavesheaf Sunday, Firstfruits Sunday, when the 7 sabbaths and 50 days could start to be counted. Notice this was also a SUNDAY, the day after the *weekly* sabbath, not the day after the annual sabbath.

Jesus IS RISEN, Jesus LIVES

Luke 24:4-5

"And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. 5 Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?"

Matthew 28:1-8

Now after the Sabbath, as the first of the weeks [as it should be] began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4 And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men.

5 But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you."

8 So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word"

Revelation 1:17-18

"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. 18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."

Jesus LIVES! Jesus was God long before, was God as a man (he WAS worshiped, remember) and was God and is God after the resurrection (Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and My God"). The resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee of our own resurrection. "as in Adam all die so in Christ all shall be made alive" – 1 Cor. 15:22. Jesus fulfilled the prophetic meaning of firstfruits by ascending to heaven to be presented on the very day of the Feast of Firstfruits.

John 20:1-23

"Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. 2 Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him."

3 Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. 4 So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. 5 And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, 7 and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. 8 Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. 9 For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. 10 Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.
11 Mary Magdalene Sees the Risen Lord

But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. 12 And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. 13 Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him."

14 Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?"

She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away."

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary!"

She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher).

17 Jesus said to her, "***Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'***"

[Why? To be presented to God our Father on our behalf.]

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.

[Then later that day, Jesus had been in front of the heavenly father and came back down again to be with the disciples – just as the wavesheaf was raised up to God and brought back down again by the priest]

19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first [no day] of the weeks [as it should be], 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." 20 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to 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. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

This year, 2007, Wavesheaf Sunday happens to fall on the exact same day as Easter. That's unfortunate, but in our haste to distance ourselves from pagan inroads into Christianity, let's not forget to take time on Wavesheaf Sunday to thank Jesus for His sacrifice, and to praise our heavenly

Father for His great master plan – starting with Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread and the Wavesheaf of barley, picturing the glory of the risen Christ in our behalf.

Wavesheaf Sunday is not a holyday. It's not a sabbath. It's not a rest day. Rather it pictures the beginning of the rest of the harvest. It is a work day of harvesting those God is calling into His kingdom. But DO take time to understand it and praise God in this glorious day.

This message about the death and resurrection of the Son of God became a PART of the GOSPEL of God.

Romans 1:1-5

“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, **separated to the gospel of God** 2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, 3 **concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord**, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4 and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

“Moreover, brethren, **I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you**, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 **by which also you are saved**, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you -- unless you believed in vain.

3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: **that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,...**” -- all in context of verse 1: defining the very gospel Paul preached.”

The gospel of the Kingdom goes nowhere without the risen King! The gospel of the Kingdom won't ever come to reality without the life, death and resurrection of our Savior.

Let's praise God for this resurrection.

You know what else? We are REDEEMED by His blood sacrifice – but it is His LIFE that saves us. His life being lived again in us, giving us HIS righteousness, is what actually saves us.

Romans 5:10-11

“For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, **we shall be saved by His life**. 11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.”

And so that is why I am focusing so much on Gal. 2:20 – that the life we NOW live is actually Jesus living in us. Jesus and Father have come to reside in us. Through God's spirit, we become the body temple of God. Brethren, all of this is now possible, because of Wavesheaf Sunday and the Resurrection of our Lord.

Let His mind now reside in you. Let His peace now abide in you. Let your life actually be HIS life shining through you. Become – like my 120+ brothers and sisters in Kenya – Potamos Lampas – living streams of light, showing GOD is in you.

Christ is now our life.... All because of wavesheaf Sunday!

2 Cor 4:9-11

“persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed -- 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, **that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.** 11 For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.”

Colossians 3:3-4

“For you died, and **your life is hidden with Christ** in God. 4 When **Christ who is our life** appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”

John 14:19-20

"A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. **Because I live, you will live also.**"

Brethren, that's all for now. God bless you and remember this festival. Without it, all the others would never happen.

Til next time, this is your brother Philip, saying walk with God and praise Him for firstfruits of Jesus. Soon we'll talk about how you are also first fruits! God bless.... Till next time....
