

CHAPTER 4

THE SHEAF OF FIRSTFRUITS

The waving of the Sheaf of Firstfruits before the Lord took place "on the morrow after the sabbath." Hence it would be on the sixteenth day of the first month. All the events, therefore in connection with the Feast of Unleavened Bread find their perfect fulfillment in the death and resurrection of Christ. The Passover event itself was on the fourteenth day of the first month, in the evening. That is the day of the crucifixion, which in the New Testament is called the Preparation, or the day before the sabbath. (See Mk. 15:42; Lk. 23:56). Then followed the days of Unleavened Bread, beginning on the fifteenth day, and continuing for seven days. Then on the sixteenth day, which was "the morrow after the sabbath" the Sheaf of Firstfruits was waved before the Lord.

It is clear from the New Testament that Christ rose "the third day." (Matt. 16:21; Lk. 23:54-56; 24:46), and according to the generally accepted terms of the day this was equivalent to saying he rose "after three days." (Matt. 27:63; Mk. 8:31). Therefore, to fulfill the type of the Old Testament, it is clear that Christ was crucified on the day of the Passover, the sabbath followed the next day, and the Sheaf of Firstfruits was waved before the Lord on the "morrow after the sabbath."

CHRIST, THE FIRSTFRUITS

Here we have a beautiful type, therefore, of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead on the "morrow after the sabbath." Mark tells us, "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week..." (Mk. 16:9). It was the beginning of the harvest season, when the fields were beginning to show the first signs of a ripening harvest. Before there was any general harvest, however, one sheaf was garnered and waved before the Lord on the first day of the week, during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And therefore in the waving of that one sheaf, Israel would be reminded of the fact that soon a great harvest was to be gathered in.

Perhaps there was not a single person in the camp of Israel who saw anything more in that ordinance than the promise of a great harvest - but in type it spoke beautifully of "Christ, the firstfruits." (1 Cor. 15:20,23). And just as assuredly as the one ripe sheaf testified to Israel that a great harvest was soon to be garnered, so surely did the resurrection of Christ testify to the fact that soon after that event there would be a great spiritual harvest of souls. And so there was! Thousands upon thousands came to know the Lord in the weeks that were to follow, when God sent forth the Holy Spirit and empowered His waiting disciples to preach the Gospel. Soon the revival spread to the Gentiles, and the apostle Paul was raised up to evangelize practically the whole Roman Empire.

THE CORN OF WHEAT MUST DIE

Jesus Himself testified, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (Jn. 12:24). Except He die, there could be no harvest. And the fact that He did die and rose again was positive proof that there would be a great and mighty harvest. "Christ the firstfruits..." And if He was "firstfruits," then certainly there must be a great harvest to follow His resurrection. This explains, in part, the strange reply that Jesus gave to Philip and Andrew when they told Him of certain Greeks who desired to see Him. Incidentally it was the Feast of the Passover, when these God-fearing Greeks had gathered to observe the Feast of the Jews. Jesus' only reply was: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." In other words, in His present position He had no ministry for them, for He had nothing in common with them. He must first go down into death before He could mean anything to them. If and when His death was accomplished, then He would be able to minister life to all men, irrespective of race or nationality, in the great harvest that would follow His resurrection. That great harvest constitutes the Feast of Pentecost.