

THE THEME OF THE FESTIVAL OF FIRST FRUITS IS RESURRECTION AND SALVATION

There are several important events that happened on this day in the Bible.

1. **Noah's ark rests on Mount Ararat** (Genesis 8:4).
2. **Israel crosses the Red Sea** (Exodus chapter 14).
3. **Israel eats the first fruits of the Promised Land** (Joshua 5:10-12). The manna that God gave from Heaven during the days in the wilderness ceased the sixteenth day of Nisan after the people ate of the old corn of the land. The day following was the seventeenth of Nisan, the day when the children of Israel ate the first fruits of the Promised Land.
4. **Haman is defeated** (Esther 3:1-6). In the Book of Esther, Haman plotted to kill all the Jews in Persia and Media. Haman had ten sons. By this, we can see that Haman is a type of the false Messiah (antichrist). A decree was sent out on the thirteenth of Nisan that all the Jews would be killed. Upon hearing this news, Esther proclaims a three-day fast, which would be Nisan 14-16. On the sixteenth of Nisan, Esther risked her life when she came to King Ahasuerus. The king asked her, in effect, "Tell me, what do you want?" Esther replied, "If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him." This was the sixteenth day of Nisan. At the banquet, the king again asked Esther what she wanted, and she asked the king to come to another banquet to be held the next day, the seventeenth of Nisan. On this day, Haman (a type of the false Messiah or antichrist, as well as of satan) is hanged.
5. **The resurrection of Jesus** (John 12:24, 1 Corinthians 15:16-20). The Lord Jesus celebrated the Festival of First Fruits by offering Himself as the first fruits to all future generations

The nation of Israel was familiar with the concept of first fruits or the firstborn. The first fruits were always the choicest, the foremost, the first, the best, the preeminent of all that was to follow. They were holy to the Lord. The concept of first fruits or firstborn is a major theme in the Bible. This can be seen by the following Scriptures: Exodus 34:26, Leviticus 23:20, Numbers 18:12-15, Deuteronomy 18:1-5, 26:2-4, and Proverbs 3:9.

EVERYTHING ON THE EARTH, BOTH MAN AND BEAST, WAS TO BE PRESENTED BEFORE THE LORD AS FIRST FRUITS TO HIM

- The firstborn of both man and beast were sanctified (made holy) and presented to the Lord (Exodus 13:2,22:29).
- The **first fruits** of all the earth were presented to the Lord at His altar in praise and thanksgiving (Deuteronomy 26:1-11).
- **Who alone is the rightful owner of this world and everything in it?**
"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein". Psalm 24:1
- **Who gives us the ability to obtain wealth?**
"But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swear unto thy fathers, as it is this day". Deuteronomy 8:18

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What Does It Mean To Give First Fruits?

“Honor the Lord with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.”
(Proverbs 3: 9-10)

Making an offering to God of the first and best portion of all we receive. We do this both as a sign of our love and in thanksgiving for all the many blessings we have received. We offer not only the *first fruits* of our financial resources, but a generous portion of our time and talent as well. We give in proportion to what we have received. This means we give from our substance and not from our surplus. Giving only from our surplus leads nowhere. It is an action which has no power to transform either our values or our lives. Giving from our substance requires a sacrifice and leads to conversion of mind and heart.

Placing God first in our lives. This means making God’s priorities our priorities. When we place our loving Creator at the center of our life, we become more prayerful, more focused on loving and caring for our families and our neighbor in need and less preoccupied with material things. In short, we find the true source of happiness and fulfillment that we all seek and that the Lord alone can provide. It’s been said that “People make the time and find the money for what they value most.” We must challenge each other, as disciples of

Jesus Christ, to value God above all else. This belief will lead us to put our faith in action by finding the time and money to promote God’s priorities because we have made them our priorities as well.



Planning our giving. This way the Lord of our life receives the first portion instead of what’s left over in our wallet or purse when the basket passes our way on Sunday morning. We generally plan the things in our lives that are most important to us. When we plan our giving, and set this money aside first, we demonstrate the great importance that God and the support of the Gospel have in our lives.

Acknowledging our Creator as the source of all we have and all we are. Everything we have ultimately has been given to us by our God. We are called to be good stewards, caretakers, or managers of these gifts by using them for God’s purposes and priorities.

Putting our trust, security and faith in God, instead of in money and possessions.

When we give our gift at the offertory, we are expressing our belief that God will “make good” on the solemn and repeated promise given to us that we would be taken care of. We trust in faith that the 90% that may be left after we give our gift will be enough for our material needs.

Giving the way God gives and loving the way God loves. From the beginning of time, our Creator has given humankind the gifts of life and unconditional love. One day our God saw fit to give the *first fruits* of love for us, the sacrificial gift of an only son, Jesus. Jesus gave his own life for us on the cross. He set an example for us of giving unconditionally and of sacrificing so that others might live. We walk in the footsteps of Christ when we give sacrificially a part of our substance so that others might live. The Scriptures tell us that those who follow the example of Jesus will be the *first fruits* of the redemption (James 1:18 and Revelation 14:4).

“As soon as the word spread, the people of Israel gave in abundance the first fruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything.”
(2 Chronicles 31:5)

“I will not offer to God that which costs me nothing”
2 Samuel 24:24