

THE FEAST THAT POINTED TO THE RESURRECTION

Gardens are special places. God designed them to sleep every year while the weather is cold, and snow or morning frost covers the ground. Then when the weather warms, the snow melts, the morning frost turns to dew, and the trees begin to flower. Birds chirp, frogs sing, and plants burst out of the earth.

Today, most of us purchase our food from the grocery store. Even if it is frozen where you live, somewhere in the world apples and wheat are growing, ready to be shipped to hungry mouths around the globe. In the days of God's prophet Moses, that was not the case. The people of Israel were overjoyed when their gardens began to show signs of fruit and vegetables appearing.

During the Exodus, God instituted a number of feasts for his people to celebrate when they reached the Promised Land. The feasts helped the Israelites remember God's great blessings on them as he led them out of slavery in the land of Egypt. The feasts

also pointed forward to the coming of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who would one day die on the Cross to take the punishment for the sins of all who believed in him.

The Feast of the Firstfruits took place at the beginning of the harvest. The people would bring the first sheaf of wheat to the priest at the tabernacle or, later, the temple. A sheaf is a bunch of wheat stalks tied together in a bundle. On the day after the Sabbath, our Sunday, the priest would wave the sheaf up and down to show that the person bringing the wheat was offering the very first part of their harvest that year to God.

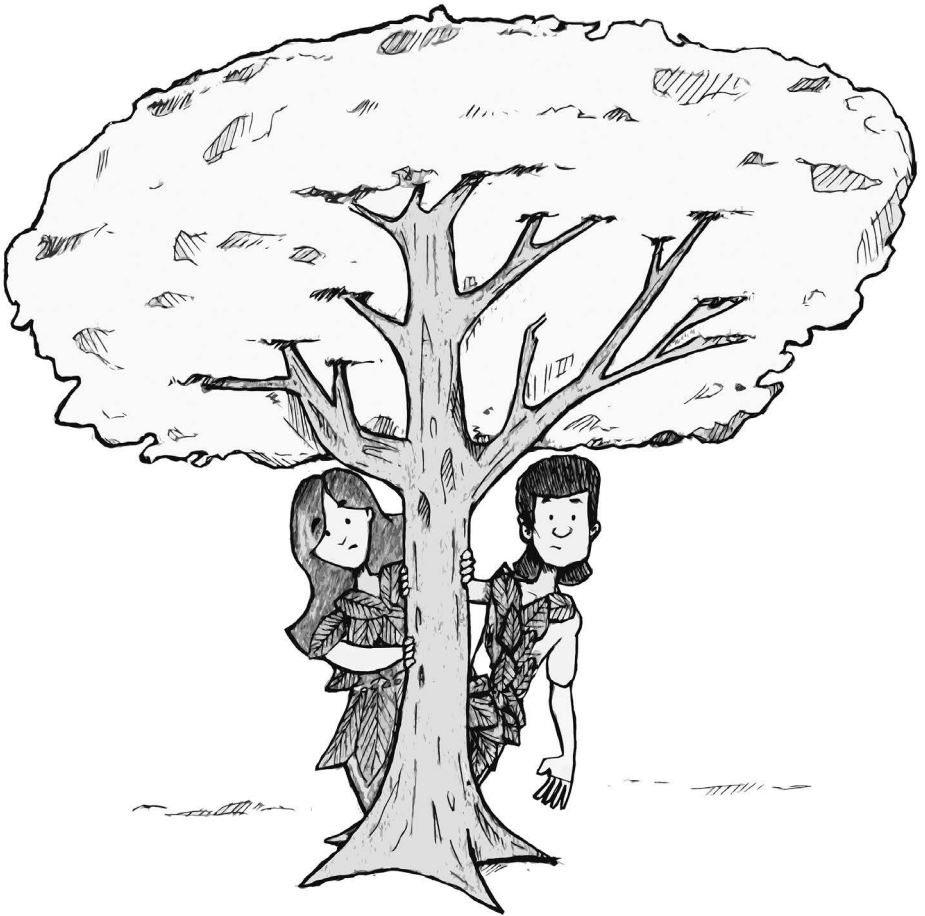


The person bringing the offering would also give a gift of grain and wine, then sacrifice a perfect-year-old male lamb to show their gratitude to God. Until the Feast of the Firstfruits took place, the people of Israel did not eat anything from their harvest. So, they remembered that every good thing in their lives, including the harvest, came from God. By giving the first part of their harvest back to God, the Israelites glorified—honored and worshiped—him in their hearts.

Everything in the Bible is part of a grand story that God tells us about who he is, about who we are and why we need a Savior, about his plan for salvation,



and about Jesus' commands to his followers. You see, God is good and holy and just. There is nothing sinful in God. But, Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden when they rebelled against God by disobeying him and eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That's when sin and death entered God's perfect world.



Humans have been sinning ever since. Romans 3:23 says, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Our sin is a very sad thing. For, sin separates us from God and the punishment for sin is death. Yet, God had a plan for his people from the very beginning. He sent Jesus, who is the Son of God, to die on the Cross. That’s where Jesus took the punishment for the sins of all who:

- Believe in him.
- Confess their belief with their mouths.
- Repent of—that means turn away from—their sin.

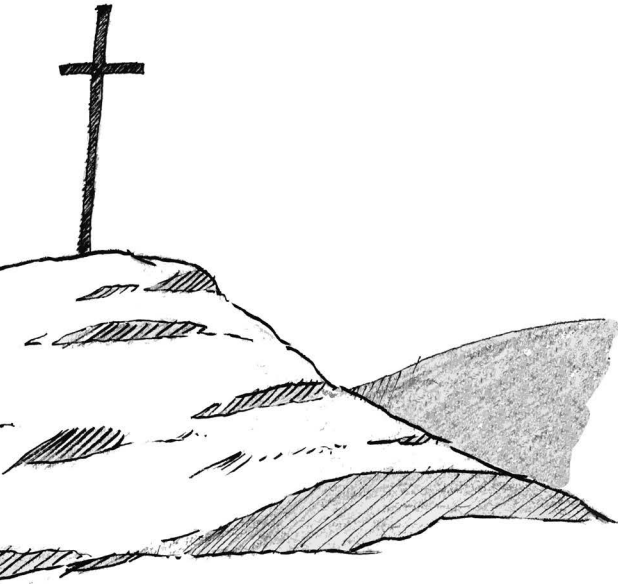
Now, the day Jesus died on the Cross was a sad day in history. Jesus, who is fully God and fully human, came to free us from sin. He did that by dying, which is terribly sad. Then, three days later, on Sunday morning, Jesus rose from the dead, which was exceedingly miraculous.

The Old Testament always points forward to God’s great plan for our salvation through Jesus, God the Son. In 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, the apostle Paul showed how the Feast of the Firstfruits pointed to Jesus’ resurrection. He wrote: “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a

man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”



You see, God gave his people the Feast of the Firstfruits to celebrate God's blessing of the harvest. Jesus is the beginning of the harvest for the kingdom of God. Though Adam brought death into the world, Jesus has made it possible for us to live eternally with him. When Jesus rose from the dead, he proved that he had conquered sin and death on the Cross. His resurrection showed that he paid the punishment for our sins.



There were many witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus. In fact, there were over five hundred witnesses. Everyone who believes in and follows Jesus will one day be resurrected just as Jesus was. Then, believers will live for all of eternity with Jesus. We will see and live with him, follow him in victory and live with him on the new earth where there will be no sin, no death, and no tears. Today, we are his witnesses as we share about his crucifixion and resurrection with our friends, family members, and the people we meet.