

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

The general attitude of many Christians to any subject that had a relationship with an Old Testament teaching is that of **“the Old Testament teachings are no longer relevant to us, we are a New Testament people”**. At best, those who make some efforts to **“look into”** and attempt to bring out some inspirations from the Old only seek for some promises or lay hold on some familiar story and that is all. They are careful not to exercise themselves **“in great matters or in things too high for”** themselves, (Ps. 131 vs. 1b). Similar attitude is carried into the Book of Revelations. To a good many, the Book of Revelations is a book of mysteries or at best a Book whose major part concerns the destiny of the Nation of Israel. Anything outside of that may be classed under **“heresy”**. But Jesus said, **“every Scribe which is instructed unto the Kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old”** (Matt. 13 vs. 52). These two areas, which appear to be so grey to many, nonetheless contain vital treasures for the people of God for all time.

The Books contained in the old are shadows of the events in the new while the Book of Revelations is a Book of signs and symbols. In the Old Testament are types; in the New are the anti-types. **“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them”** (Is. 8 vs. 20). The Old and the New must witness to every vital truth of Scriptures. For **“in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established”** (II Cor. 13 vs. 1). The Lord Jesus Christ made several allusions to the Old Testament subjects. Paul and a number of the apostles drew similar references from the Old on many occasions. In these closing days of time, the people of God have a great need to be well instructed; the Church has shied from vital truths of Scriptures for too long. Information gives freedom. **“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge”** (Hos. 4 vs. 6). When God’s people do not know the things written concerning them, they are bound to be held in bondage. **“In the volume of the book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God”**, (Heb. 10 vs. 7; Ps. 40 vs. 8).

The subject of **firstfruits** originates from the Old; but references are made to the same in the New. It concerns men and women who desire to obey God in everything. Men and women who desire to live the kind of life that glorifies God. It concerns the High calling of God in Christ Jesus. **“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures”** (James 1 vs. 18). The 144000 Lambs of Rev. 14 are referred to as saints who were redeemed from among men, being the **firstfruits** unto God and to the Lamb” (Rev. 14 vs. 4).

The subject of **firstfruits** originated from the story of the firstborn in Israel. The firstborn either of human or animal, which is male, was to belong to God. When the firstborn was that of man he was to be redeemed unto God; **“and all the firstborn of man among thy Children shalt thou redeem”** (Ex. 13 vs. 13). **“All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty”** (Ex. 34 vs. 20b). When Pharaoh would not allow Israel to leave Egypt the divine intervening power that followed was to slay all the firstborn in the land of

Egypt while all the males in Israel that opened the matrix were redeemed unto the LORD, (Ex. 13 vs. 15). The firstborn had certain reserved rights. The right of the firstborn is the birthright. He is the head of his family by right and his, is a double portion of his Father's property. Usually the firstborn males carry the title of "princes" in the Old Testament. They are the rulers and judges of the families. They take vital decisions, which affect the life of Israel. In the course of Israel's exodus from Egypt and while wandering in the wilderness, most of the rebellions of the nation which got at God were initiated by the firstborn males for which principal reason God substituted the Levites for the natural firstborn. **"And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the Children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine; because all the first born are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the LORD"** (Num. 3 vs. 12-13). **"And the LORD said unto Moses, number all the firstborn of the males of the Children of Israel from a month old and upward and take the number of their names. And thou shalt take the Levites for me (I am the LORD) instead of all the firstborn among the Children of Israel; and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstlings among the cattle of the Children of Israel"** (Num 3 vs. 40-41).

In the process of this substitution of the Levites for the firstborn, the census was taken of both the firstborn males and the Levites. It was apparent that the firstborn males out-numbered the Levites. This difference was to be accounted for by paying their redemption price (Num. 3 vs. 42-51). With a note of finality, God said to Moses in Num 8 vs. 13-19, **"and thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the LORD. Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the Children of Israel; and the Levites shall be mine. And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the Tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shall cleanse them, and offer them for an offering. For they are wholly given unto me from among the Children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the Children of Israel, have I taken them unto me... and I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the Children of Israel... and I have given the Levites as a gift.... to do the service of the Children of Israel, in the tabernacle of the Congregation, and to make an atonement for the Children of Israel..."**. The implication of the above Scriptures is that the firstborn had a vital spiritual role to play in Israel.

They however busted God's plans and purposes for them and this affected their position under God in a perpetual manner. The firstborn males committed vital errors of an eternal scale due to reasons that are not far fetched. First, the firstborn males lacked vision. They appeared to be a people without goals. But **"Where there is no vision, the people perish...."** (Prov. 29 vs. 18). For this reason they misled Israel through all the wilderness journey. They always mobilised the people in a mob action against the spiritual leadership. They led in murmurings and in complaints. Instead for them to lead the people forward, they were always willing to lead the people backward. Many times they fought directly against God's own counsels and purposes for the people. It was clear they either lacked vision or somewhere along the line, their vision must have gotten blurred. Besides, the conference of the firstborn males constituted themselves into the opposition. They just always decided to choose the direction in opposition to that of the spiritual leadership. They cared less if their chosen direction was in direct opposition with God's. They were becoming very popular. They were the princes of the people and they were in

the majority. The true spiritual leadership was in the minority. The firstborn males also turned themselves into a disobedient people. They just disobeyed whatever instruction emanated from the spiritual leadership. The firstborn males developed into a rebellious block. What was designed by God to be the secondary spiritual leadership became the primary leadership on the side of rebellion and they had the majority support. Moses along with Aaron and his sons were to constitute the primary spiritual leadership of the people while the conference of the firstborn males otherwise called the princes was to be the secondary spiritual leadership. But due to rebellion they opposed the primary leadership in every major decision and turned themselves into primary leadership of the opposition. They also lusted after things that had little or no spiritual value. They were a carnal people for which reasons God wasted a whole generation in the wilderness because God concluded them in unbelief.

The Book of Psalm 78 and I Cor. 10 vs. 1-11 are a good summary of the wilderness account of the Nation of Israel in which the secondary spiritual leadership played a major role in Israel. These things were written for our examples so that our ways can be well instructed in the knowledge of God. We can learn from Israel's mistakes so that we can make a better success of our spiritual journey.

In the face of persistent disobedience, God arranged for a substitutionary plan. He chose a tribe, the tribe of Levi to play the role of the firstborn males by substitution through the principle of redemption. The thoughts of God concerning Israel was clear in Ex. 19 vs. 6, **“ye shall be unto me a kingdom of Priests and an holy Nation...”**. This set plan of God was to be under the primary and the secondary leadership as examples for the people to follow. The ministry of the firstborn was to foreshadow that of the Lord Jesus Christ who is God's own first begotten Son. That God left the natural firstborn males and adopted another tribe to serve this purpose shows that Israel had missed a vital lesson but this would not stop God's intended purpose. **Lack of vision and presumptuousness** are two of a kind that can ruin the destiny of a spiritual people. It is enough disease to be spiritually un-informed and un-enlightened; to be in this state and to be presumptuous in spiritual decisions at the same time can be vitally destructive. The lessons to be learnt in the choice of the firstborn can be readily inferred from the LORD's instruction in Num. 8 vs. 13-19 quoted earlier: they were lessons in separation, consecration and in spiritual service. God intended for the firstborn, the princes of Israel, the rulers and the leadership of God's people to be separated, set apart and be consecrated to God's purposes. Israel's leaders missed these lessons in obedience and God chose the Levites to function in that capacity. In Numbers 8 verses 13-19, after the Levites had been substituted for the firstborn males in Israel, God commanded that the Levites be **“purified”**, have their **“clothes washed”** and be **“offered as an offering before the LORD”**. After this the Levites were to proceed to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation.

The Levites are descendants from Levi, one of the twelve sons of Jacob. When God went out first for the firstborn, the qualities He was looking for included **cool-headedness, malleable character, teachable spirit, sober-mindedness, humble and obedient heart, calmness of spirit, willing submissiveness and simple faith expressed in every one of God's instructive words**. These make for responsible spiritual leadership qualities. The firstborn males were the natural leaders, leaders by circumstance of birth. The Levites were adopted leaders; leaders by divine choice. What makes the difference is availability of desired qualities in spiritual terms. The natural leaders could not produce the qualities that God was looking for; this made

them to always be on the side of rebellion for which reason God set them aside and went for a whole tribe to teach the lesson He had wanted to inculcate through the choice of the firstborn males. God wanted a people who have the right characters, qualities, attributes, and heart disposition to be the leaders of His people so that they could teach by example; they could be set up as the examples for the people to follow. They could be made as beacons of light. It was not as though the Levites had all that God was looking for but they were willing to go all the way with God. They did not strive with God.

Moses was just to announce the next spiritual direction – recruit a whole tribe of Levi and conscript them for God. And a whole family in “**silliness**” submitted themselves willingly without questioning. God had gotten a people who He can at least groom for His purposes. In verse 21 of Numbers 8, Moses caused the Levites to be purified; their clothes were washed and they became an offering unto God. Ours is to make ourselves available. Ours is to be willing to love the Lord. Ours is to live a life of submission, a life of obedience, a life of sober-mindedness. God’s is commitment to an inner work of sanctification; the Levites were “**purified.**” This is the work of the Holy Spirit. He purifies us from the inside. His workings of purification on the inside translate to the “**washed clothes**” on the outside. The clothes, which are washed, are the behaviours, the characters and the external personality that can be seen on the outside, which ought to bear the mark of a crucified life. But first we must, in a silly way, submit to God’s instructive words to be conscripted. This instruction for conscription comes to us in different ways. Whichever way God chooses to speak to us, His voice cannot be mistaken; ours is willingness and obedience. To strive with Him is to display a rebellious heart. May we not miss God’s intended purpose for us.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE MEANING OF FIRSTFRUIT

The lesson in the **firstfruits** is simple. A fruit is the evidence of the life of a plant and its capacity to perpetuate itself. A fruit will manifest what kind of life the parent plant is made of. If a plant is poisonous, its fruit is not likely to be otherwise. A fruit is produced by a natural process and not necessarily by artificial intervention. The firstborn males in Israel were expected to manifest certain characters; these characters were expected by God to be acceptable to Him or at least meet certain basic or fundamental spiritual requirements or be in line with certain of His principles. These characters were not available because those natural firstborn males did not carry the “**right seed**” in them. A tree will not produce any fruit other than the kind of its own life. God now raised the Levites as a divine intervention programme. He sets them up to show forth the example of what He expected from the principle of the firstborn males and then He began to teach on the principle of the firstfruits by instituting the law of the firstfruits.

**Firstfruit** simply put is the first ripened fruit. For a fruit to be said to have ripened first, it is understood that the fruit had gone through the process of planting or sowing followed by growth process before coming to fruition. The lesson we are to learn is in faith. What God could not obtain in the natural firstborn males, He could realise through the process of sowing His “**land**” with the right “**seed**” and subjecting it to an entirely right environment to promote good growth

and then come into fruition. God needed a community of men and women to stand before him as a prophetic typical or anti typical community of firstborn males. The Lord Jesus Christ is the first begotten of the Father. When God sees this community, what he sees in them is the glory of his first begotten Son. Firstfruits come by sowing the land with seeds that have life. And by natural process firstfruits are produced. Firstfruits are **“firstborn”**. For God to obtain firstfruits of men or Spiritual firstborn, he only needs to sow men with the seed of Christ and subject these to the right environment of **“sunlight”**, **“water”** and **“air”** and **“fruits”** are produced. The first of these fruits (men in the image of Christ) to be ripened are called the firstfruits. These firstfruits have a destiny in God. There is a divine intention, a divine purpose set for them. It is this purpose of God, which the lessons of firstfruits as taught by Scriptures, intend to convey. We will now look at a few Scriptures to bring out some of the deep lessons kept and preserved for our purpose.

### The Firstfruits As Offering To God

In Ex. 22 vs. 29. God instructed, **“thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits – the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me”**. The firstfruits and the firstborn are to convey the same intended purpose of God. God’s own first-born is to be offered for man; man in appreciation of this truth and in response to divine love is to offer his firstfruits unto God. This offering is a willing offering. This offering being firstfruit, presupposes it is the best a man has to offer to God. There is no such best other than his own very life abandoned to God in deep response to God’s love for his soul. God’s desire for us is that we present ourselves unto him as an offering, a living sacrifice. **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”**. (Rom 12 vs. 1). To be a living sacrifice and a worthy offering is to have our hearts sanctified and our bodies made holy and then set ourselves apart for God’s purpose. We are to live for God. Our lives are to be lived for him in holiness and in righteousness. Paul writing to Timothy said, **“Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work”**, (II Tim. 2 vs. 19-21). In verse 22 he said further, **“flee.....youthful lusts, but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart”**, (II Tim. 2 vs. 22). If we can consecrate our bodies to God by living lives, which are devoid of sin and we can allow our lives glorify God in all ways then, Paul says this is our reasonable service. We are not born to serve sin. We are not born to serve the world. We are not born to just toil and expire our lives over things, which have temporary span of life. We are born to discover the purpose of God for us in life. God’s purpose for us is to be an offering. God’s purpose for us is to be a living sacrifice; we are to live lives, which are consecrated, (set apart) for God’s purpose. If we find expression in this way, we are on the way to being God’s firstfruits. To be a firstfruit is to be found among men and women who are daily yielding to God and are making positive response to becoming like Christ. Our firstfruit is our life, which is offered unto God.

When God said in Ex. 22 vs. 29 that we should **“not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits”**, it is to suggest that we should aim at being among men and women who will be first to bring to God their fruit of righteousness. We are expected by God to find expression in two ways. One, we are to be among the first specie of humans to make the mark of High calling of God in Christ Jesus. Secondly, we are to give God our attention first before we give our attention to other things. This bothers on preference. This is God’s emphasis in Ex. 20 vs. 3 when He said; **“thou shalt have no other gods before me”**. The matter is not to prefer anything however good above God. Jesus Christ also said in Mat. 6 vs. 33 **“seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his (God’s) righteousness”** The matter is who or what is first in a man’s life. Where a man’s heart finds rest and joy is an indication of what is first in his life. David said, **“How shall we sing the LORD’s song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my joy”**, (Ps. 137 vs. 4-6). We are to be God’s first ripe fruits.

### **A Little Cake First**

The story of Elijah’s meeting with the widow of Zarephath is very instructive. The story is in I kings 17 verses 10-16. Elijah had earlier been directed by God to come to Zarephath. On getting to Zarephath he met a widow. There was famine in the land. The famine did not spare the widow. Elijah requested two things at the hands of the widow: a little water in a vessel and a morsel of bread in **“thine”** hand. The widow did not have all of Elijah’s specifications but she had a handful of meal in a barrel and a little oil in a cruse. She was **“gathering two sticks that she might go in and dress it”** for herself and her son that they might eat it and die. Elijah allayed the woman’s fear: **“you will not die if you do what I told you to do.”** In verse 13 of I kings 17 he said, **“go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son”**. This is a deep lesson.

We are told this woman was a widow. To be a widow is to typify God’s people who are stripped of all forms of allegiance in their hearts. Their hearts are free from idols, **“Little children, keep yourselves from idols”**, (I John 5 vs. 21). Nothing in their hearts takes a first place apart from God. They are dutiful in their secular vocation, they are responsible people wherever they find themselves but God is first in their heart before anything else. Every other thing takes a bearing from God being first. Every other thing takes reference from that which is first. **“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”** (Prov. 4 vs. 23). This is what this widow typifies. She represents Christians who have no covering apart from that which God provides. They are **“widow”**. They have lost their **“husbands”**. They only look up to God for everything. Here there is no place for making men your covering or having men take the place of God in your life; they rule over you, use you exploit you, stand between you and God and at the end, only to leave you as spiritual babe that has a need to feed on spiritual feeding bottle all the rest of his life. Paul said, **“the unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in Spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband”**, (I Cor. 7 vs. 34). The widow of Zarephath represents Christians who care for the things of the Lord. Her son typifies those Christians who are a product of the ministry of ashes that this widow represents. Widowhood stands for the ministry in soberness, humbleness of Spirit, meekness of heart and a life of total abandonment to God. This does not allow room for self-glory, self-motive, self-gain, greed, avarice or taking the

place of God in the lives of the people. It only calls for pure motive and a life that is lived daily in the fear of God. Hear the woman tell Elijah, **“I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die”**, (I Kings 17 vs. 12). The ministry that this woman identifies with will produce nothing except as it works out the cross of Christ and the purpose of God in her. When we come to terms with the cross of Christ, we **“eat....and die”**. Not die physically but die to sin and die to our self-life. That is the implication. This is what being firstfruit implies. When this happens, what results is ceaseless flow of the life of Christ, **“for thus saith the LORD God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth”**, (I Kings 17 vs. 14). No one knows the place of “death” that does not know the place of ceaseless flow of divine life.

### The Firstfruits Of Wheat Harvest

In Ex. 34 vs. 22, the firstfruit of wheat harvest was mentioned along with one of the principal feasts, which the Lord instructed for Israel. Three times, Israel was to gather in a year: she was to gather during the feast of Passover, the feast of Pentecost and the feast of Ingathering (tabernacles). The feast of firstfruits in this verse was mentioned along with the feast of Passover.

The first Passover took place the last night that Israel spent in Egypt before the exodus. That night, each house was to kill a lamb that had no blemish, a male and not older than a year. The blood of this lamb was to be used to strike on the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of the houses wherever each family was to eat the lamb. The flesh of the lamb was to be roasted and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The full account of the institution of the first Passover is found in Ex. 12. Subsequently, the LORD instructed for the Nation of Israel to keep Passover as one of her main feasts and along with the Passover feast, the feast of firstfruits was instituted. While the Passover had immediate application to the Nation of Israel on the eve of her exodus, it was largely referring to the offering of Jesus Christ as our Passover. It also refers to its implications for us who have benefited from the death of Jesus Christ through the experience of the new birth.

Three vital things are to be noted in the way the Passover was to be celebrated. The first thing is the fact that the flesh of the Passover lamb was to be roasted. When we consider this instruction of roasting the flesh before eating against the backdrop of the Egyptians who ate their flesh raw in honour of a deity called Osiris, then the message becomes clearer that in Passover all idolatry is forbidden. Celebration of Passover therefore implies that the people who are part of this celebration already have their lives broken clean from all idolatry. That the flesh of the lamb was roasted by fire is further instructive: fire is an instrument of preservation. Whatever is properly roasted by fire will hardly decay.

Fire relates to the Holy Spirit in His cleansing power. When on the day of Pentecost, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, **“cloven tongues like as of fire sat upon each of them”**. These cloven tongues like as of fire had its own implication for the disciples and even for us today. The fire is to be used **“to roast our flesh”** or our carnal nature. The fire may come by way of trials or tribulations. **“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”**, (John 16 vs. 33). In Acts 14 vs. 22, Paul and Barnabas while

exhorting the Churches in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch said, **“we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God”**. Many times, the word of God comes to us as fire; **“is not my word like as a fire?”** (Jer. 23 vs. 29) and **“I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them”**, (Jer. 5 vs. 14). The whole purpose of the fire is to **“burn out”** of us, all the carnal nature, which is anti-God and anti-righteousness.

The Passover was to be eaten with **unleavened bread**. In Scriptures, leaven typifies sin. To eat the Passover with unleavened bread will suggest that sin was not permitted along with this feast. This is to imply that all sin must terminate at the point where we partake of Passover if not before and once we have partaken of Passover, sin is no longer supposed to be part of our regular experience. The fact that this feast is celebrated with eating of bread suggests that a communion is involved. A followership or partakership is involved. A covenant, in a living relationship with others of common goal is involved. The implication of the bread being **“unleavened”** is that sin is not a common language of the community of men and women who have a part in Passover and whoever is still in sin or desires to continue to live in sin is not and cannot be one in this community. May the Lord open our understanding in the true knowledge of His dear Son.

## CHAPTER THREE

### GOD’S MIND REVEALED

In Ex.2vs.8 the Passover was to be eaten with **bitter herbs**. The implication of this is far reaching, more so that the instruction to eat the meat with bitter herbs did not stop with the first Passover but had to continue to be part of the yearly celebrations later. The bitter herbs eaten with the roasted lamb the very night on the eve of exodus would be to temper the excitement that would naturally have attended the reality of the imminent freedom from four centuries of bondage. You can consider a nation few hours away from obtaining her independence after 400 years of “Colonial” rule. The joy, the excitement and all the attendant side attractions will be similar to the experience of a nation in slavery for a similar period of time. But God said, **“temper your outward feelings of joy and excitement with bitter herbs”**. This is to say that the people should remain sober. They should allow the spiritual lesson overwhelm all the carnal considerations. They should allow an inner reflection gain the upper hand over all the religious and ceremonial euphoria. And this lesson was to attend every Passover that followed year after year. The bitter herbs are the innate qualities of the spirit that confer soberness on a Christian and these are the marks, usually of a crucified life. When a man or woman has met Christ and has become born again, he or she has come to experience his or her first Passover and from that first moment of encounter with Christ, the evidence of **“bitter herbs”** must show on his or her life. It does or should affect every aspect of a Christian’s life. It becomes the moderating influence of the Holy Spirit that balances out a Christian and that is what convinces you that there is something different about this man. If the evidence of **bitter herbs** is missing in the life



of a Christian, his encounter with Christ may either not have been thorough or his experience with God along with divine dealings in his life may have been very limited otherwise he has not been sufficiently cooperating with God.

We have just mentioned a few things about Passover but our focus is the feast of firstfruits which is mentioned under Passover feast and which God instructed to be celebrated along with Passover. Firstfruit by implication is associated with Passover and all the rules and conditions that guide the feast of Passover will by inference apply to the feast of firstfruits. Three things have been mentioned as being worthy of note in the celebration of Passover feast. They are: **fire, unleavened bread and bitter herbs** (Ex.12vs.8). All these are to be understood as also applying to the feast of firstfruits as they apply to the Passover since firstfruits are also part of Passover feast. Note that when God was speaking about firstfruits, He had man in mind. Paul said in I Cor. 9 vs. 9-10, **“for it is written in the Law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen”?** We understand that **“all Scripture is given by inspiration of God”**. It is clear that Prophetic Scriptures are almost always symbolic in nature. And more oftentimes than not, man is the subject in the mind of Scriptural prophecies. The matter of firstfruits is a prophetic message. It brings out the mind of God – his desired intention and ultimate purpose for the corporate man in his redemptive status.

When a man gets born again, he begins a journey in God. This journey is likened by Paul to a race, **“know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? ... Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us...”** (I Cor. 9 vs. 24; Heb. 12 vs. 1). In another place Paul likened the Christian journey to a warfare, **“no man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully”**, (II Tim 2 vs. 4-5). In vs. 5 he likened the journey to a farmer: **“the husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits”**, (II Tim 2 vs. 6). All these thoughts convey one thing. They all point to the fact that a race is involved in a Christian journey. A race or a competition involves more than one person but only one takes a first place. And that person is a firstfruit of some kind. The first place belongs to the first fruit. It does not only suggest a first position, it also suggest who first arrives at that first position.

When God instructed concerning the feast of firstfruits, prophetically He was unveiling the divine mind. One, God will have his firstfruits from among men, the Lord Jesus Christ being the very first of the firstfruits himself. These **firstfruits** Company would occupy a first place with regards to attainment of divine goals and purpose and will also be in the first batch to arrive at this place of attainment. Two, that a feast is associated with firstfruits suggest that a celebration or a rejoicing is involved because the entire concept associates itself with victory and for every remarkable victory there is a rejoicing; there is a celebration. Besides, the idea of a feast further suggests that quantity is involved. This quantity relates to both the subject in view as well as the vehicle of becoming, that is, the medium of expression. By this we understand that God expects that there shall be many who will respond in faith to ascend in redemptive empowerment to the place of attainment in character, in nature and likeness and to the glory and the image of the pattern Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Further, we understand that the Holy Spirit will make grace

available in abundance to cause understanding and enlightenment in the knowledge of Christ through the revelation of His word, in such dimensions that the environment is sufficiently **“oiled”** and helped and made suitable for the making of the firstfruit so it can be said, **“It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy”....** And, **“it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”**, (Rom 9 vs. 16; Phil. 2 vs. 13).

The Scriptures also affirm, **“the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day..... we have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”**, (Prov. 4 vs. 18; II Pet. 1 vs. 19-21).

In Ex. 34 vs. 22. God said, **“and thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year’s end”**. In this verse the seven main symbolic Jewish feasts were summarized into three and of the three, the feast of firstfruits was mentioned in the place of the feast of Passover. This is to show that the waving of the sheaf of firstfruits the **“morrow after the Sabbath”** at Passover is taken as a feast that comes under the Passover feast and also that the same conditions that guide the celebration of the feast of Passover do in the same manner guide the feast of firstfruits that comes with Passover. An insight had been indirectly given to the manner of celebrating the feast of firstfruits in verse 18, **“the feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread”**. Between the Passover feast and the feast of firstfruits, three vital principles are brought out. The feasts go along with meat roasted by fire; they are to be eaten with unleavened bread and also with bitter herbs. The associated conditions suggest the seriousness with which these feasts are viewed in Divine Mind. They also reveal the manner and the calibre and the stuff of men and women these firstfruits are expected to typify in God’s economy.

By the mention of fire, we understand that it will take God’s personal dealings to produce such men and women for flesh and blood can never rise of its own to overcome the debilitating influences due to the effect of the fall in the garden of Eden. But God is committed to bringing many sons to glory albeit through trials and tribulations.

The unleavened bread reveals the character and the manner of life and testimony of the men and women that God has in view by the time they will have qualified as firstfruits. The bitter herbs will be the mark through which the firstfruits stand distinct from others. They are known by the

level of their humbleness of mind, soberness of life and brokenness of spirit. They are to be a crucified people – a people who are motivated because of the world within and not because of the world without. All firstfruits must relate to these primary factors because Jesus Christ related to them. He is the first of the firstfruits, (I Cor. 15 vs. 20, 23).

When we critically examine the scriptures in Ex. 34 vs. 22-23, **“and thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year’s end. Thrice in the year shall all your menchildren appear before the LORD God, The God of Israel...”** along with those of Ex. 23 vs. 14-16, **“three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread... and the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours... and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year...”** the three main feasts are related in two different patterns. In the first pattern, we have the feasts of weeks, firstfruits, and ingathering mentioned indicating that the feast of firstfruits was mentioned instead of the feast of Passover; this implies that the first gathering can actually be referred to as either the feast of Passover, the feast of unleavened bread or the feast of firstfruits. In the second pattern, the feasts of harvest, the firstfruits and ingathering were mentioned; this implies that the feast of Pentecost can also be called the feast of weeks or the feast of firstfruits.

This means the feast of firstfruits features twice of the three gatherings that take place in a year. In actual sense, what takes place along with Passover is not a whole ceremony allotted to the firstfruits but the waving of the sheaf of firstfruits **“on the morrow after Sabbath”** that follow the Passover but the fact that Ex. 34 vs. 22 refers to it as a feast is for a double emphasis on the message of firstfruits.

One other striking observation is the fact that **“firstfruits of wheat harvest”** is mentioned in Ex. 34 vs. 22 as being one of the three major feasts and since neither Passover nor unleavened bread was mentioned in the same passage, it is understood that the firstfruits here relates to and is used to qualify the feast of Passover. But firstfruits of wheat harvest are more suited to Pentecost since wheat is majorly harvested around the time that the feast of Pentecost is celebrated. Firstfruits of barley ripen around the time Passover is celebrated while the firstfruit of wheat ripens around the time for the feast of Pentecost. However, the Scripture was silent in the use of firstfruits of barley harvest along with Passover feast, rather the firstfruits of wheat harvest was used to qualify the feast of Passover. This is to convey a vital message to us. Firstfruits relate to the best in value and this is why God instructed that the firstfruit should be offered unto Him.

If barley harvest has been emphasised along with the celebration of the feast of firstfruits, it will have played down on the Spiritual significance for us. God wants the best for himself. That is why He offered His first begotten Son. Jesus Christ can only be God’s best. No wonder he became God’s corn of wheat that must fall to the ground and die. **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall unto the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit,”** (John 12 vs. 24). We are the Fathers ground into which the corn of wheat must fall. Jesus Christ is the corn of wheat.

The purpose of the Father is to sow his land with the corn of wheat and not of barley though barley is a good fruit, so there can be **“much fruit”** of wheat. God expects each of us to number among the **“much fruit”** of wheat. **“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me,”** (John 12 vs. 32). A fruit by the law of nature is bound to resemble the kind of fruit of its own seed. This principle was involved in the death of Jesus Christ for humanity – you and me. If we are sown with the seed of Christ, we should bear fruit after Christ. If Christ was the corn of wheat, then we should become the “fruit” of wheat. Wheat grain is more highly rated than for barley grain. This can be inferred from Rev. 6 vs. 6. Jesus Christ illustrating this truth likened his death to a corn of wheat and not a corn of barley falling to the ground. As wheat ranks highest among grains so is God’s expectation of us that we should respond to the work of the Holy Spirit as we allow our life reflect the life of Christ in righteousness, in character, in nature and in quality of life. We are supposed to allow the corn of wheat that fell to the ground find a true expression in our life. It ought to reproduce itself in us. There is expected a new creation man after Christ. **“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin,”** (Rom. 6 vs. 5-6). Paul expressed it in this way, **“it is a faithful saying... if we be dead with him, we shall also reign with him...,”** (2 Tim. 2 vs. 11-12).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CALL TO TOTAL SEPARATION

It is significant that firstfruit is mentioned along with Pentecost. Incidentally, God allowed leaven to be included in the bread, which is baked for celebrating the feast of Pentecost. While **“unleavened bread”** is eaten along with Passover, **“leavened bread”** is baked in Pentecost. Ordinarily, it can be said that leaven was left out of the bread that was baked and eaten during Passover to signify the haste involved in the exodus: there was no time to allow the bread to go through the process of leavening as compared with Pentecost which was celebrated while Israel was already in the promised land. A critical look at this will suggest however that God knowing Israel was going to leave Egypt could have instructed them to bake their bread a few days before the eve of leaving Egypt if leaven must be added. However, the non-inclusion of leaven has a whole spiritual lesson for us. It is interesting to note that of the three major feasts, leaven was allowed only in one – the feast of Pentecost, but not in either of the feast of Passover or the feast of tabernacles.

Leaven as it were relates to fermentation in the natural. In fermentation is contamination possible. It is that leaven carries a spiritual lesson that Paul spoke of the leaven of malice and wickedness and the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (I Cor. 5 vs. 7-8). The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees as touching their religious doctrines and dogmas (Mt 16 vs. 6, 11-12). If we narrow these thoughts to our experiences in Christ today, it will be evident that the level of sincerity and truth that attended the message of **“Passover”** that is, **“the born again or the believe in Jesus Christ and be saved”** message of a

few decades ago can not be said to attend the present day message that surrounds the Pentecostal Church. We can easily derive that what looked like a ceremonial instruction under the Law of Moses was actually a prophecy for our day. God was, through the instruction to include leaven in the bread that is baked for the celebration of the feast along the feast of Pentecost, granting us a prophetic insight into the manner of the Pentecostal Church we would have centuries after.

But the encouragement is that whatever the level of leaven that attends the celebration of the spiritual Pentecost in our contemporary time a firstfruit shall be preserved unto God.

This means that we are not to be carried away by the excesses of the age of Pentecost, rather the men and women whose eyes are indeed set on God's purposes should carry on the principles of separation and consecration unto God. God already had in view that a time like this would be when sincerity and truth, soberness and the fear of God will be cast to the ground while noise, insincerity, self gain, greed, avarice, covetousness personal ego, idolatry and all that is called leaven will be associated with the worship of Jehovah. But in the midst of this, He already had made a provision for those who would set their **"affection on things above" and "not on things on the earth"** (Col. 3 vs. 2). We were warned, **"he that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."** (Rev. 22 vs. 11-12).

The message of firstfruit presupposes that there are other fruits besides the firstfruits that is, by inference there are fruits that are not "first"; they are not first with reference to placement, they are not first with reference to timing; they are not first with reference to standard or quality, neither are they first with reference to faithfulness to God and to their primary calling. The admonition is that we should become God's firstfruits in every sense of the word. Every aspiration has its price tag. To become God's firstfruits involves a **"roasting with fire"**, a celebration with **"unleavened bread"** and the eating of meat with **"bitter herbs"** as encouraged in Exodus 12 vs. 8.

**"And the rest of the people,..... and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God,...every one having knowledge, and having understanding; they clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and unto an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes; AND TO BRING THE FIRSTFRUITS OF OUR GROUND, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD....."** (Neh. 10 vs. 28-29,35). The book of Nehemiah in chapter 10 re-enacts and enlivens the message of the firstfruits. The fundamentals of firstfruits are recapitulated for our spiritual understanding and enlightenment.

It is instructive to note that the message of firstfruits is so vital in the mind of God that Nehemiah used the words **"curse"** and **"oath"** in verse 29 of the above quoted scripture to emphasis the seriousness, which attends the message of firstfruits. The major implications relate to a life of consecration, separation and dedication through determination and disciplined yieldedness to the Holy Spirit. This is not talking about asceticism. This is talking about allowing the Holy Spirit effect all of God's dealings in our lives as we willingly submit to Him daily and through the daily challenges and daily experiences. In our hearts we can be separated from everything which

can obscure our heavenly desires. God's expectation for us is to set our **"affections on things above"** and **"not on things on the earth"**. **"Seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members, which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the Children of disobedience"**. (Col. 3 vs. 2-6)

Firstfruits relates to holiness. It also relates to increase. Firstfruit relates to sample specie. Firstfruit tells what the entire harvest looks like. Firstfruit is a token, the evidence of an imminent harvest. Jeremiah relating firstfruits to holiness said, "Israel was holiness unto the LORD..... the firstfruits of his increase." (Jer. 2vs.3). Firstfruits indeed evidences increase. True spiritual increase must show through the attendant firstfruits of that increase. True spiritual increase is not necessarily quantitative but purposely qualitative. Spiritual increase relates to life and essence than it does to numerical strength. Increase that is spiritually meaningful must relate to a tangible essence. True increase may not shout itself out in seemingly noisy ecstasy of empty religion, rather it affirms itself in the reality of the evidence and testimony of an inward experience. True Christianity exudes genuine holiness; such an holiness which is Holy Spirit born is an evidence of true increase; such an increase addresses itself to the firstfruits.

The firstfruits are first to manifest what the whole lump looks like. The firstfruits announce by life and testimony what their innate quality of an inward life.

**"If the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches,"** (Rom 11 vs. 16). God counts and relies on the firstfruits because they actually set the standard. They are the pacesetters. They are the way marks of God. **"Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities"** (Jer. 31 vs. 21). Firstfruits are God's milestones. They serve as God's beacons of light. **"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven"** (Mt 5 vs. 14-16).

The second Edition of Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English defines **"firstfruits"** as the earliest produce of the season. By this, it is implied that firstfruits announce the season of harvest. If there is a firstfruit then there is bound to be an harvest. That is what the pattern of the feasts displays. At Passover we have the sheave of firstfruits, at Pentecost we have the feast of firstfruits but in tabernacles, what we have is the ingathering, ingathering of the major harvest. If the bringing forth of the firstfruits is delayed, then the harvest is delayed.

To hasten the harvest then the firstfruits of men and women who desire to unite themselves with God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus only need to renew their consecration vows of separation under God and the signs of harvest will begin to show all around!

**“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain”** (James 5 vs. 7). The harvest is tied to the coming of the Lord; by implication the matter of firstfruits is also tied to the coming of the Lord. The question of both the firstfruits and the harvest is equally tied to the early and the latter rain. The patience of the husbandman is also paramount.

By implication, the appearing of the firstfruits and the harvest in the earth evidences the soon coming of the Lord. If we cannot see either of the signs of firstfruits or of harvest in the earth, then are we not hopeful of the soon coming of the Lord. The evidence either of firstfruits or of harvest is the evidence of the soon appearing of the Lord. To hasten the coming of the Lord is to hasten our pace in becoming like him. It is as we become like him that we can be called his fruit - either a firstfruit or a harvest fruit. The husbandman is willing to give both the early and the latter rain in order to help quicken our pace. In Joel 2 vs. 23-24 was a promise, **“be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God; for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil.”**

The promise of **the “former rain”** in the Book of Joel which was re-echoed as the **“early rain”** in James 5 vs. 7 indicates that by the time the church is due for the later rain, the lessons and the spiritual benefits of the former rain will appear to have substantially been forgotten hence the need for the former rain to be given along with the latter rain. The former rain came on the day of Pentecost and all of the revivals of the Holy Spirit to-date have continued to be part of the former rain. The lessons or the benefits of the former rain included the empowerment to become **“born again”** and be filled with the Holy Spirit and the resultant Christian disciplines that follow. These disciplines have been used of God in all the church age to disciple men and conform them to Christ but the greater part of these discipleship elements have been lost. That is why most of the “born-again” experience today has lost the steam and the fruits are non-abiding. The low level and standard of consecration as we have it in our contemporary Christian experience is also clear evidence. Clearly, an average “born-again” tongue talking Christian today has no inward experience to back up his claim. The result is religious edifices packed full with psychedelic, pleasure loving and title-crazy “Christian” men and women who either have ever had true baptism with fire and lost it or never had one before. The promise of the former rain to be given along that of the latter is not to be seen as a credit for the church. If the church were to be in her rightful place, she will only have needed to await the latter rain alone. The promise of the former rain is rather an indictment of the church’s apostate’s condition. That is why we need the “former rain” anointing to teach us again the things, which we have unlearned through modernism. As we arise and peruse of the rains of mercies, which are beginning to fall in the antitypical Pentecostal anointing, we are expected to shine forth in the glory of the firstfruits and of the harvestfruits unto God.

### The Qualities Of The Firstfruits Company

The qualities of the firstfruits or the firstfruit company are enumerated for us in the book of \*Revelations, Chapter 14. **“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand having the Father’s name written in their**

**foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they, which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God”(Rev. 14 vs. 1-5).**

The firstfruits are not defiled with women; they are virgins; they follow the Lamb withersoever he goeth; there was no guile found in their mouth; they are without fault before the throne of God! May we be empowered to be God’s firstfruits.