

## Firstfruits

### James 1:18 (KJV)

18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Presents (gifts) made to God of part of the fruits of the harvest, to express the submission, dependence, and thankfulness of the offerers. The portion given was instead of the whole, in acknowledgement that all was due to God. *American Tract Society Bible Dictionary*

As God had claimed the first-born of man and beast, so also he claimed the first of the first-fruits, that they might be presented as an acknowledgment that God was the giver of them, and thanks be rendered for His gifts. All the males were to present themselves three times in the year before God, and these occasions were arranged at the times of ingathering of the barley (at the Feast of Unleavened Bread); of wheat (at the Feast of Weeks); and of the vintage (at the Feast of Tabernacles). *New and Concise Bible Dictionary*

- I. Firstfruits was something that God required of His people.
  - A. Leviticus 23:10 “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.
  - B. It spoke of God’s provision for His people and their acknowledgment of that.
    - 1. 1 Chronicles 29:14 (NKJV)
      - a. 14 But who am I, and who are my people, That we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, And of Your own we have given You.
- II. Firstfruits speaks of us being consecrated to God.
  - A. Man’s tendency is to make him the center of his life.
  - B. For the Christian, God is the center of his life.
    - 1. When the crop was just about ready they would go out and pick a few stocks of grain.
    - 2. They would bring them to the priest who would weave the before the Lord and then offer a portion of that grain as an offering to the Lord.
    - 3. This was the offering of the firstfruits.
  - C. Consecration means self-surrender; and the fortress of self is in the will, and the way of self-surrender is the flowery path of love. To take the metaphor of

Scripture, the consecration which we owe to God, and which is His design in all His dealings with us in the gospel, will be like that of a priestly offering of sacrifice, and the sacrifice is ourselves. *Biblical Illustrator – James, (Rio, WI: AGES, 2005), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Chapter 1"*

III. Firstfruits also speaks of God separating us to Himself.

A. When God first chose the children of Israel it was partly that they would be to Him a special people, The People of God.

1. Deuteronomy 26:18 “Also today the LORD has proclaimed you to be His special people, just as He promised you, that [you] should keep all His commandments
  - a. Have ever considered yourself as special to God.
  - b. But not for anything that we are or have done but just because God has set His love upon us.
2. Jeremiah 2:3 Israel [was] holiness to the LORD, The firstfruits of His increase.
3. Titus 2:14 who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself [His] own special people, zealous for good works.
  - a. Look at all that He has done for us.
  - b. Gave Himself for us.
  - c. Redeemed us from every lawless deed.
  - d. Purified us in the blood of Jesus.
4. 1 Peter 2:9 But you [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;
  - a. Exodus 19:6 ‘And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These [are] the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

IV. Firstfruits speaks of a guarantee of a future and full harvest.

A. The whole creation is waiting for our final redemption.

1. James explains why God regenerates those who place their trust in Jesus Christ. Although salvation is the greatest possible blessing a human being can receive, its primary purpose is not to benefit man but to fulfill God's sovereign purpose of believers becoming, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. *John MacArthur, MacArthur New Testament Commentary –*

*James, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 63.*

B. Romans 8:18-25 (NKJV)

1. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. 24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

Just as soon as Israel arrived in the land flowing with milk and honey and gathered the first harvest, God was to have His portion first (Lev. 23:14; Deut. 26:1, 2). The land did not belong to them. It was God's possession and they were holding it in trust for Him. The believer is to recognize the principle of divine ownership in everything he possesses.

Now when a believing sinner is regenerated he is not his own. Having been bought with a price he becomes the purchased possession of the One who redeemed him (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). When God saves a man, giving him a new life, that life is God's possession, and the Christian is merely holding it in trust for its Owner. *Lehman Strauss, Lehman Strauss Commentaries – James, Your Brother: Studies in the Epistle of James, (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1967), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 49.*

It is written of the redeemed: "These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" (Rev. 14:4). Of Old Testament saints we read: "Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the firstfruits of His increase" (Jer. 2:3). May it ever be so of us!

*Lehman Strauss, Lehman Strauss Commentaries – James, Your Brother: Studies in the Epistle of James, (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1967), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 50.*