



Resources for Lammastide

Background

The word 'Lammas' first appears in the writings of King Alfred and is thought to be derived from Middle English Lammasse, from Old English hlāfmæsse : hlāf, loaf + mæsse, Mass/Communion. Lammastide is a feast which was celebrated in England before harvest festival, during which bread from the season's first wheat was consecrated at Mass in thanksgiving. It is similar to the Hebrew Feast of Weeks in the Old Testament when a sheaf of the first of the barley harvest was offered (Leviticus 23: 9ff., Numbers 28: 26 - 31, Deuteronomy 16: 10,16) and Lammas Day itself is August 1st. Lammastide today is still an opportunity to offer our first and our best to God.

Praise

V. O Lord, our governor, how excellent is your name in this world.

R. You have set your glory above the heavens.

V. We shall eat the labours of our hands.

R. O well are we and happy shall we be.

A field of wheat, ripening, ruffled by the summer wind, gilded by the sun is something beautiful to the eye, promising a valuable harvest and bread to eat.

V. Praise the Lord, O my soul, all that is within me praise his holy name.

R. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

A bed of strawberries, the first and largest fruit ripening, is a lovely sight, promising a feast and a profit.

V. Praise the Lord, O my soul, all that is within me praise his holy name.

R. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

A lamb, plump about the tail, well grown, ready for the market, is a delight to behold, promising wool and good food for the farmer

V. Praise the Lord, O my soul, all that is within me praise his holy name.

R. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

A payslip representing a sum well earned is a pleasing thing, promising bills paid

V. Praise the Lord, O my soul, all that is within me praise his holy name.

R. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

Confession

We are tempted to forget the maker and take all the best for ourselves and our own.

V. Create in me a clean heart O God.

R. And put a new and right spirit within me.

We are tempted to say it was me and my hand that was responsible for this wonderful thing.

V. Create in me a clean heart O God.

R. And put a new and right spirit within me.

We are tempted to eat and not be satisfied as though one could never have enough of such good things.

V. Create in me a clean heart O God.

R. And put a new and right spirit within me.

Turning

It is an excellent thing to give the first and best to another and through him to God. The first loaf, the first Lamb, the first strawberry, the first fruit, the first of our wages.

V. Mercy and truth are met together.

R. Righteousness and peace have kissed one another.

It is an excellent thing to recognise the needs of others: the poor, the stranger, the birds of the air.

V. Mercy and truth are met together.

R. Righteousness and peace have kissed one another.

It is an excellent thing to observe temperance in all things and to recognise that man does not live by bread alone.

V. Mercy and truth are met together.

R. Righteousness and peace have kissed one another.

V. Yes, the Lord shall show loving kindness.

R. And our land shall give her increase.

V. Righteousness shall go before him.

R. And we shall direct our footsteps in his way.

Suggested Readings

Leviticus 23.9-21– offering of first fruits
Matthew 15.32-39 – feeding of the 4000

Suggested Hymns

O worship the King
Give thanks
God whose farm is all creation
Fill your hearts with joy and gladness
To thee o Lord our hearts we raise

Celtic prayer

There is no plant in the ground But tells of your beauty o Christ.
There is no creature on the earth, There is no life in the sea
But proclaims your goodness.
There is no bird on the wing There is no star in the sky
There is nothing beneath the sun
But is full of your blessing.
Lighten my understanding Of your presence all around, O Christ
Kindle my will to be caring for creation.

NOTES FOR A SERMON OR BIBLE STUDY ON THE FIRST FRUITS Lev 23:9-14

Farmers in Israel would begin their spring harvests with the barley crop at Passover. (A sheaf of barley was waved before the Lord in worship on the day after the Sabbath at Passover) The harvest continued for seven weeks as the other crops and fruits began to ripen. As each fruit ripened, the first of each type would not be eaten but instead the farmer would tie a ribbon around the branch. This ribbon signified that these fruits were Bikkurim, or the first fruits. **The festival of Shavuot was the time that the first fruits of all the Seven Types of Produce with which the Land of Israel is Blessed (wheat, barley, wine, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates) were brought to the Temple.**

They would gather the Bikkurim into baskets and bring them to the city of Jerusalem where they would be eaten in the holy city. The farmers living close to Jerusalem would bring fresh fruits, while those who had to travel a long distance carried dried raisins and figs. This joyful occasion was celebrated with the music of fifes, timbres, and drums. As the pilgrims approached the city walls they were greeted by the inhabitants of the city. Sometimes the King himself

would join the procession to the Temple Mount. In particular 2 loaves of the first barley harvest were offered.

1. The promise of a future harvest

One of the principles that a first fruit offering taught was that a future harvest was promised - the first fruit were just a taste of what lay in store at the end of the full ingathering of the harvest. Therefore, when a first fruit offering was brought before the Lord, it represented a prayer to Him to watch over the future harvest. The first fruit offering anticipated the coming harvest.

This principle carried itself over into themes that run throughout Scripture.

Israel: Jer 2:3 'Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruit of His harvest...' Because God chose Israel as the first fruit of all the nations of the earth, He was anticipating His plan for the final harvest in which other nations would be gathered in to the Kingdom of God. Israel, the first fruit offering of men and women to God for His use and purpose as outlined in the OT, is a proof and guarantee to all believers that God had purposed a wider harvest to be reaped from every Gentile nation under the sun.

(Rom 11:16,26 'If the dough offered as first fruit is holy, so is the whole lump...and so all Israel will be saved...')

Us: James 1:18 '...that we should be a kind of first fruit of His creatures' Followers of Jesus are a type of first fruit of the entire Creation - they are the promise that the earth will be set free from its bondage to decay and will enter the liberty that the children of God, the first fruits, have received.

2. The offering that makes holy

Another principle of the first fruit offering is that it represents a part of the whole. When that part is offered to the Lord, the remaining part becomes 'holy' to Him - it sanctifies the thing from which the first fruit offering comes.

ILLUSTRATION USING MARBLES If you were to have a bag that contained a hundred marbles you may consider offering part of them as a first fruit offering to the Lord - Let's say you offered 5 marbles as a first fruit offering to God (and that the officiating priest was pleased to accept them from you) leaving 95 marbles in your bag. Because you'd given those 5 marbles to the Lord, they're a representative proportion of the entire bag and, if the 5 are acceptable to Him, then so are the 95.

Indeed, if the 5 are accepted, the 95 have been accepted as well. As the 5 become set apart for use by the Lord so, too, do the 95. In fact, you shouldn't consider that the 95 are your own possession anymore for you to do with as you wish, but you should expect the Lord to use them for His will and purpose seeing as they have been set apart for Him by your first fruit offering.

Far from the first fruit offering being a ceremony where a believer give to God a small proportion of what they have and then use the remainder for their own selfish gain and purpose, it is, in reality, a ceremony that reminded the Israelite that all things should be set apart for the Lord's purpose

Dough/ Israel In the days of the Temple, when the sacrificial system took place, the first fruit offerings were given to the Levites and they became their property (Num 18:12). After its destruction when no sacrificial system existed, the women of the house would throw a handful of the dough into the fire as the first fruit offering to the Lord so that the rest of the dough became holy to Him. In every kitchen, therefore, the hearth became an altar to YHWH. Commenting on this passage, the apostle Paul writes (Rom 11:16) 'If the dough offered as first fruit is holy, so is the whole lump' The context of what he's saying is that, if the patriarchs at the beginning of Israel's history were set apart for the Lord and His service, then the entire nation must be considered to be set apart for the use of the Lord.

Families: I Cor 7:14 '...the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife...your children...are holy' The believing partner in a marriage relationship represents the first fruit offering to God that makes the unbelieving partner consecrated/set apart. Children, by being part of the family unit, are holy too.

Society: Believers too, therefore, are called to be 'sanctifiers' of their society. They can bring cleanness back into their society by the Church being the part that's offered to God.

3. CHRIST: THE FIRST FRUITS

Christ. I Cor 15:20,23 '...Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep...Christ the first fruits, then at His coming those who belong to Christ'

Jesus life makes holy the lives of all who follow him – the body of Christ. His resurrection from the dead is the promise that believers, too, will receive bodies in the final harvest of the barley harvest that will never again die

The Israelites were also not allowed to eat of the new harvest until the offering of the first fruit was brought and presented to God (Lev 23:14), impressing upon them the importance of giving to God first before they thought of themselves. Being the beginning, the sheaf offered as the first fruit was the promise or guarantee of the harvest that was about to be gathered in. In the NT, we find the fulfilment of this festival in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The wave offering of the sheaf took place on the first day of the week after Passover – the Sunday when Jesus rose from the grave

The Holy Spirit: '...we...who have the first fruit of the Spirit...[who is] the guarantee of our inheritance...' Rom 8:23 and Eph 1:13-14

But believers can know with a great deal of certainty that they'll receive the final promised inheritance into their lives because they're experiencing the first fruit of that inheritance - they aren't just believing that they must have the first fruit because they've been told they should have it even if they can't see the evidence for it, but they are living in the reality of the provision that's poured out upon them now.

