

CHRIST THE FIRSTFRUITS

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:20-23

INTRO: There were those in the church in Corinth who did not believe in a bodily resurrection. Perhaps this may have been partly due to some having been Sadducees before they became Christians, but more likely, there were some Greeks who continued to be influenced by the common notion that the body was evil within itself & that a bodily resurrection was thus undesirable.

At any rate, the bodily resurrection was an extremely important aspect of N.T. Christianity & Paul used the O.T. teaching re firstfruits to illustrate how Christ's resurrection from the dead was a pledge of our own resurrection in the last day.

I. THE LAW OF THE FIRSTFRUITS IS FOUND IN LEV 23:9-14.

II. THE FIRSTFRUITS WERE OF SUPERIOR QUALITY.

The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God. (EX 23:19).

A. They were the first ripe, healthier specimen, an example of what the harvest at its best should be.

B. Christ, in His exemplary life is the example Christians everywhere should strive to imitate, Heb 4:14.

READ I PET 2:21-22.

C. After setting the perfect example & dying a sacrificial death, Christ came back from the grave to be the firstfruits or firstborn from the dead & to be given preeminence.

And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. (Col 1:18).

III. THE FIRSTFRUITS BELONGED TO GOD--& SANCTIFIED THE WHOLE CROP.

A. The Israelites were not permitted to partake of the harvest

till the firstfruits had been offered.

You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. (Lev 23:14).

- B. Christ's death served to sanctify others: For both He who sanctifies & those who are being sanctified are all of one [Father], for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren. (Heb 2:11).

VI. THE FIRSTFRUITS WERE A PLEDGE OR PROMISE OF THE REMAINDER OF THE HARVEST.

- A. The term firstborn implies others to be born later; firstfruits implies other fruit to follow.
- B. Christ became the firstborn from the dead to die no more, Col. 1:18.

Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. (Rom 6:9).

- C. Christ's resurrection is a pledge & promise of our own. This is Paul's primary point throughout 1 Cor.

15.

V. THE FIRSTFRUITS WERE A SAMPLE OF THE HARVEST.

- A. They were of the same kind as the later fruits.
- B. Christ became like us to suffer, die & be raised on our behalf. John 1:14 READ HEBREWS 2:9-18.
- C. In the resurrection, we will be like Him. PHIL 3:20-21. Beloved, now we are children of God & it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him. (1 JN 3:2).
- D. Christ's resurrection was bodily & ours will be. READ I CORINTHIANS 15:42-44.

E. Our resurrected bodies will not be just like the body we have now.

1. Flesh & blood cannot inherit eternity, 1 Cor. 15:50.
2. Those who are still alive when Christ returns cannot go to heaven without a change in the make-up of their physical bodies.
READ I COR 15:51-54

F. The resurrected Christ was recognized by those who had known Him. READ I COR. 15:3-8.

NOTE: The exceptions were due to the way His disciples saw rather than to the way Jesus was resurrected. "Their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him" (LK 24:16).

G. Many other passages of Scripture give hope of recognition beyond the grave:

Luke 16:19-31, Abraham, Lazarus, the rich man
MT 17:1-10, Moses, Elijah
Luke 13:28, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob & all the prophets

H. In fact, I don't recall ever hearing any passage used to suggest otherwise.

CONCLUSION: The Jewish day began at evening. On the evening of Nisan 14, 30 AD, Jesus met with His apostles to observe the Passover feast. Later that same day as the Jews reckoned their time, He became our Passover lamb, fulfilling all the O.T. sacrifices by His sacrificial death. The morning after the Passover Sabbath was the feast of firstfruits. On that day, Jesus came forth from the tomb to become the firstfruits of our own resurrection.

La Porte, TX, January 9, 1983

Exton, PA, August 2, 1987

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, April 11, 1993

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, December 3, 2000