

Christ, the Firstfruits

If Jesus were not alive, any expectation about the future would be only delusion (1 Cor. 15:12-19). "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead" (1 Cor. 15:20, ESV). His resurrection is a historical event. Consequently, we can be sure that all who have died in Christ will be resurrected at His coming (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-23. What does it mean to say that Jesus is the "firstfruits"?

1 Cor. 15:20-25:

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For

since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: 1) Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end, when 2) He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet."

The end of the present evil age will be marked by the bodily resurrection of those who died in Christ (1 Cor. 15:24; Rev. 20:5, 6). As the last Adam, Christ will deliver the kingdom back to the Father by bringing the rulership of this world back to Him (1 Cor. 15:25-28).

"For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be

destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

I Corinthians 15:25-28 NKJV

Christ's subjecting Himself to God (1 Cor. 15:28) can be understood in terms of how Adam and Christ are depicted in relationship to each other. As the ultimate Adam in the plan of redemption (1 Cor. 15:45), Jesus submits Himself entirely to the will of the Father, something that the first Adam failed to do.

"CHRIST THE FIRSTFRUITS"-

THE BIBLE SUGGESTS THAT "FIRSTFRUITS" WERE NOT JUST THE "FIRST" BUT ALSO THE "BEST" OF THE HARVEST "IN RANK" AND THEREFORE "HOLY" TO GOD AS

AN EARNEST OF THE REST OF THE HARVEST (NUMBERS 18:12; STRONG'S #7225; EZEKIEL 48:14)

THIS IS AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION BECAUSE IN THE END THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT "ALL SHALL BE MADE ALIVE" (VERSE 22)— JUST AND UNJUST— PROVING THAT ALL ARE IN CHRIST AS FAR AS THE PROVISION THAT GOD HAS GIVEN TO ALL MEN FOR ETERNAL LIFE.

In consequence of Adam's sin, death passed upon the whole human race. All alike go down into the grave. And through the provisions of the plan of salvation, all are to be brought forth from their graves. "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust;" "for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:22.

But a distinction is made between the two classes that are brought forth. "All that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the

resurrection of life; and they that have done
evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” John
5:28, 29. (GC 544)

HOW SAD THEN WILL IT BE FOR THE LOST TO REALIZE
AT THE SECOND RESURRECTION THAT GOD PROVIDED
RESURRECTION FROM DEATH FOR THEM IN CHRIST JESUS
TO BE ETERNAL YET THEY CHOSE TO MAKE IT
TEMPORARY. THEY ARE RESURRECTED IN CHRIST ONLY
TO FACE THE FINAL JUDGMENT THAT WILL BE EXECUTED
AGAINST SIN. THIS IS WHY PAUL SAYS LATER IN 2
COR. “KNOWING THE TERROR OF THE LORD WE PERSUADE
MEN” 2 COR. 5:11. AND AGAIN, “THE LOVE OF GOD
CONSTRAINS US” (VERSE 14). THE LOVE OF GOD WILL
BE A “TERROR” TO THOSE WHO REALIZED WHAT THEY
HAVE LOST, TO UNDERSTAND THAT CHRIST DIED FOR
ALL MEN AND NOT JUST THOSE WHO ACCEPTED HIS
SACRIFICE AND ARE SAVED. TO RECOGNIZE THEN, AS
WE OUGHT TO NOW, THAT ALL ARE SAVED BY GRACE
THROUGH FAITH AND THAT NO ONE IS SAVED BASED ON
THEIR MERITS. THEREFORE THE FIELD OF SALVATION

IS LEVEL LEAVING NO REASON WHATSOEVER THAT ONE
PERSON SHOULD BE SAVED OVER ANOTHER EXCEPT FOR
PERSONAL CHOICE AND GOD'S RESPECT OF THE SAME.

In 1 Corinthians 15:29-34, Paul resumes his
thought about the foolishness of denying
Christ's resurrection. He uses the illustration
of baptism because it is itself a symbol of a
believer's union with Christ in His death and
resurrection (Rom. 6:3, 4; Col. 2:12); it makes
no sense to deny the reality of the
resurrection. What is difficult to grasp,
however, is what Paul meant by the expression
"baptized for the dead" (1 Cor. 15:29).

"Different suggestions have been offered,
but it is better to interpret the expression as
referring to the decision of some to be baptized
so that they would be able to be reunited with
dead loved ones at the resurrection. It could
also be that the decision to be baptized was a
response to the exemplary life of those who had

died in Christ. This case would refer to people not being baptized in place of the dead but because of the dead.”—Carl P. Cosaert, “1 Corinthians,” *Andrews Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2022), p. 1652.

A THIRD OPTION FOR INTERPRETING THIS VERSE IS BASED ON EPHESIANS 2 WHICH DESCRIBES THOSE WHO ARE MADE ALIVE IN CHRIST (AND BAPTIZED) AS HAVING BEEN “DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS” (EPHESIANS 2:1). THIS UNDERSTANDING OF THE TEXT HARMONIZES WITH THE REALITY OF BEING BAPTIZED AS A SIGN OF BEING MADE ALIVE FROM OUR OLD DEAD SINFUL LIFE OF THE FLESH.

THIS IDEA ALSO FINDS MORE SUPPORT IN 2COR 5:14 WHERE PAUL STATES:

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto

themselves, but unto him which died for them,
and rose again." (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

THIS UNDERSTANDING IS THEN CONFIRMED BY PAULS
ILLUSTRATION IN ROMANS 6:1-11:

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in
sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How
shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer
therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were
baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into
his death? Therefore we are buried with him by
baptism into death: that like as Christ was
raised up from the dead by the glory of the
Father, even so we also should walk in newness
of life. 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. For he that is dead is
freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ,

we believe that we shall also live with him:
knowing that Christ being raised from the dead
dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over
him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once:
but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.
Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead
indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through
Jesus Christ our Lord."

(Romans 6:1-11)

IN SUMMARY

BORN AGAIN BELIEVERS ARE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST'S
DEATH, SIGNIFYING THAT THEY ACCEPT THEIR DEATH
TO SIN IN CHRIST. IN CHRIST THEY ARE ALSO FIRST-
FRUITS TO GOD - JAMES 1:17 - REV 14:4

"HE CHOSE TO GIVE US BIRTH THROUGH THE WORD OF
TRUTH, THAT WE MIGHT BE A KIND OF FIRSTFRUITS OF
ALL HE CREATED." (JAMES 1:18 NIV)

"THESE ARE THOSE WHO DID NOT DEFILE THEMSELVES
WITH WOMEN, FOR THEY REMAINED VIRGINS. THEY

FOLLOW THE LAMB WHEREVER HE GOES. THEY WERE PURCHASED FROM AMONG MANKIND AND OFFERED AS FIRSTFRUITS TO GOD AND THE LAMB." (REVELATION 14:4 NIV)

HOW CAN CHRIST BE THE FIRST FRUITS AND THE REDEEMED ALSO BE THE FIRST FRUITS? BASED ON THE REALITY OF THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL THE REDEEMED ARE IN CHRIST. WHATEVER CHRIST HAS ACCOMPLISHED AS THE NEW ADAM IN BEHALF OF HUMANITY IS OURS AS WE ACCEPT OUR POSITION IN HIM.

Second, risking death would be pointless if there were no resurrection (*1 Cor. 15:30-32*). It would be better, instead, to delight in the pleasures of this world (*1 Cor. 15:32*).

Reflect on Paul's words in 2 Timothy 1:12. How could he be so sure about the future? How can we?

