

The Feasts of Israel

Lesson Six - The Feast of Firstfruits - The Resurrection

One division of systematic theology of major Bible doctrines is known as Eschatology, or, the study of last things. This study delves into future prophetic events such as the Rapture of the Church, the Day of the Lord, the return of the Messiah, the restoration of Israel, and the messianic Kingdom. Although not a major doctrine, nor often examined, the subject of first things is one about which the Bible has much to say. Somewhat obscure and essentially unobserved for almost two thousand years, Israel's Feast of Firstfruits was an ancient holy day solely devoted to first things. Its a powerful message that not only embraces the gospel but empowers it. Without the resurrection of Christ, all other things concerning the gospel have no effect.

The Meaning and Time of Firstfruits

Firstfruits marked the beginning of the cereal grain harvests in Israel. Barley was the first grain to ripen of those sown in the winter months. For Firstfruits, a sheaf of barley was harvested and brought to the Temple as a thanksgiving offering to the Lord for the harvest. It was a representative of the barley harvest as a whole and served as a pledge or guarantee that the remainder of the harvest would be realized in the days that followed.

Firstfruits was an early spring feast, the third in the Jewish festive cycle. On the Hebrew calendar, it occurred on the 16th day of Nisan, the first biblical month (March or April), only two days after the beginning of the Passover season. Scripture did not specify the actual calendar date of Firstfruits, but merely prescribed its time of observance to be "on the day after the Sabbath." Thus, the chronology of the Passover season consisted of:

- **Passover - Nisan 14**
- **The Feast of Unleavened Bread - Nisan 15-21**
- **The First of Firstfruits - Nisan16**

The second day of Unleavened Bread was also Firstfruits, a day simultaneously shared by both holidays.

The Record of Firstfruits

The regulations for Firstfruits were outlined by the Lord in Leviticus 23:9-14

Leviticus 23:9-14 - And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, [10] Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the Firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: [11] And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the

morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. [12] And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the Lord. [13] And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the Lord for a sweet savour: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin. [14] And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

In summary, there were eight commands of Jehovah to the nation regarding this feast:

- Tell Israel to bring a sheaf of the firstfruits to the priest, when you shall come into the land and reap a harvest.
- The priest shall wave the sheaf before Jehovah to be accepted for you (Leviticus 23:11).
- He shall wave it after the sabbath (the sixteenth of the first month).
- On that day you shall offer a lamb of the first year without blemish, for a burnt offering to Jehovah (Leviticus 23:12).
- With the lamb offer two tenth deals (1 gallon) of fine flour mingled with oil as an offering made by fire to Jehovah, for a sweet savor (Leviticus 23:13).
- The drink offering with this shall be a fourth of a hin (1.5 qts.) of wine.
- You shall not eat of your crops of parched corn or green ears (of wheat) until the offering of the firstfruits has been made to Jehovah (Leviticus 23:14).
- This shall be a statute forever in all your generations.

A sheaf (Heb. omer, meaning "measure") was to be brought to the priest at the Temple who would wave it before the Lord for acceptance. There were also to be accompanying sacrifices: an unblemished male lamb of the first year, a drink offering of wine, and a meal offering of the barley flour mixed with olive oil.

The people were forbidden to use any part of the harvest in any way until after the FIRSTFRUITS were offered to the Lord. To neglect these firstfruits offerings (or any others) was considered robbery of God according to Scripture.

Leviticus 23:14 - And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

Malachi 3:8 - Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

The ritual for the Firstfruits ceremony was detailed in Deuteronomy 26:1-10. The order of the worship ceremony, even in the actual wording of the thanksgiving prayer to God, was carefully recorded in the text.

Deut. 26:1-10 - And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possesses it, and dwells therein; [2] That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there. [3] And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord swore unto our fathers for to give us. [4] And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the Lord thy God. [5] And thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: [6] And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: [7] And when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labor, and our oppression: [8] And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: [9] And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. [10] And now, behold, I have brought the Firstfruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God:

The Importance of Firstfruits

Firstfruits was preeminently seen as a time marker. It marked the beginning of the grain harvest in Israel, but even more importantly, it marked the countdown to the Feast of Weeks, the FOURTH of Israel's annual feasts. Beginning with Firstfruits, forty-nine days (or seven sevens) were counted, and on the fiftieth day, the Feast of Weeks was celebrated. The Lord commanded this is Lev. 23:15-16

Leviticus 23:15-16 - And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: [16] Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord.

As a result, this period of time was, and still is, known as the Sefirat Ha-Omer (Heb. "the Counting of the Omer") because of the ritual of counting the days from the omer (Heb. "sheaf, measure") to the Feast of Weeks.

The Service of Firstfruits

The Preparation for Firstfruits

In Temple days, Nisan 14 brought the painstaking preparations for the Passover season to completion: lambs had been chosen for Passover sacrifices, houses had been purged of all leaven in preparation for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and barley sheaves had been marked in the fields for the Feast of Firstfruits.

The barley field was a special field, cultivated solely for the national Firstfruits offering and kept strictly in accordance with all rabbinic traditions. One of the major barley fields in Israel, Ashes Valley, usually contain ripe grain, swaying gently in the soft breeze, and creating a mesmerizing pattern of warm gold. It had been plowed in the autumn and sown with barley some seventy days earlier during the winter months. Constant oversight assured that the crop had grown naturally, with no artificial watering or fertilization. In the days leading up to Passover, several sheaves were selectively marked and bundled by representatives from the Sanhedrin, Israel's ruling religious body. With that, the preparation for Firstfruits was complete.

The Procession of Firstfruits

Several days later at sundown on Nisan 15 (the beginning of the new Jewish day, Nisan 16), a three-man delegation from the Sanhedrin emerged from the Temple area, accompanied by a multitude of excited believers and observers. The procession made its way down to the barley field to perform the Firstfruits reaping ceremony. With sickles in hand and baskets under arm, the three chosen reapers positioned themselves in readiness before the predetermined bundles of barley. As they did so, a hush fell over the crowd in recognition of the solemnity of the moment. Only the soft whisper of the swaying grain could be heard. Suddenly, the unison voices of the reapers broke the stillness of the evening with a series of questions to the onlookers: "Has the sun set?" "With this sickle?" "Into this basket?" "On this Sabbath?" "Shall I reap

now?" Having received affirmative responses, the priests repeated this final verification process twice again as a safeguard. The marked sheaves were then reaped until one ephah of barley (about 2/3 bushel) was obtained.

The Presentation of Firstfruits

In the Temple court, the grain was threshed with rods rather than oxen-drawn sledges so that the barley corns would not be injured. It was then parched over an open flame and winnowed in the wind to remove the chaff. Finally, the barley was milled and put through an intensive sifting process until sifted very fine. According to the Talmud, this sifting ceremony continued until one of the Temple inspectors could plunge his hands into the flour and remove them without any flour adhering to his hands (Menahot 8:2)

On the morning of Nisan 16, the firstfruits were presented to the Lord. One omer (about five pints) of the barley flour was mixed with 3/4 pint of olive oil, and a small amount of frankincense was sprinkled upon it. This became the Firstfruits offering. The priest waved it before the Lord in accordance with Lev. 23:11-13 and burned a small amount upon the altar. The remainder was given to the Levites.

Leviticus 23:11-13 - And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. [12] And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the Lord. [13] And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the Lord for a sweet savour: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin.

A National Celebration But For the Family

Firstfruits was a NATIONAL observance, but each family brought its respective firstfruits offering to the Temple as well. Early each spring, Israelite farmers performed the ritual of setting their firstfruits apart. Throughout the terraced hill country of Ephraim and Judah, and rolling hills of the lowlands, the ritual was frequently repeated. Farmers, followed by skipping children, ventured into the fields to mark the best of their fruits so as not to damage them. These were set apart to the Lord as each farmer declared, "Behold, these are the firstfruits." Excitement mounted daily as the firstfruits ripened and were finally harvested for the Passover pilgrimage to Jerusalem. On the morning of Nisan 16, the winding streets of Jerusalem were alive with the smell of baking matzah, the sound of laughing children, the excited shouts of a woman, a baby's cry, the distant barking of a dog, the nervous bleating of sheep, and the soft cooing of turtledoves. Jerusalem was waking to the Feast of Firstfruits. Its early spring so it's usually cool. Outside the gates of the temple, a haunting melody of flutes quickens the hearts of those who arrive. Many reply, "Praise God in His

sanctuary." (Psalms 150:1). Inside the Temple gates, Levitical choirs led the worship music with Psalm 30: "I will extol You, O Lord, for You have lifted me up. And have not let my foes rejoice over me..." That scene would continue throughout the day as the Jewish nation flocked to the sanctuary of the Lord.

Glancing into the Court of Priests, one could see orange flames on the brazen altar leaping toward heaven as a column of steam and blue smoke drifted slowly toward the east. A host of priests were present there: some tending fires, some slaughtering sacrifices, some pouring the drink offerings, and some waving the Firstfruits offerings before the Lord.

In the Court of the Israelites, a steady stream of men could be seen on the 15 steps of the Nicanor Gate, solemnly presenting their offerings to the priests under its impressive archway. Many led small white lambs on ropes. The poor brought turtledoves, the acceptable offering for those unable to afford a lamb. As the priest held the lambs and turtledoves, the men offered a prayer to God confessing their sin.

Each sacrifice is prepared in accordance with the Law of Moses (Lev. 1:14-17)

Leviticus 1:14-17 - And if the burnt sacrifice for his offering to the Lord be of fowls, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves, or of young pigeons. [15] And the priest shall bring it unto the altar, and wring off his head, and burn it on the altar; and the blood thereof shall be wrung out at the side of the altar: [16] And he shall pluck away his crop with his feathers, and cast it beside the altar on the east part, by the place of the ashes: [17] And he shall cleave it with the wings thereof, but shall not divide it asunder: and the priest shall burn it upon the altar, upon the wood that is upon the fire: it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord.

The priest followed the ritual to the tee. They carefully drained the blood of the sacrifice at the side of the altar. The plucked feathers of the turtledoves drift to the ground and rest on the pile of ashes beside the altar, waiting the removal to a place outside the city. Finally, with one smooth motion, he observed the priest cleave each bird down the breastbone and lay it upon the sacrificial fire. Many watch the fire and wonder back to the days of their father Abraham who offered Isaac on this very spot. Standing face-to-face with the Priest, the observer repeats the familiar Firstfruits prayer:

"I declare today to the Lord your God that I have come to the country which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us. Deut. 26:3)"

Then the observer removes the basket from his shoulder and hands it to the priest. The simple basket of peeled willow shoots contains the omer of barley for

his Firstfruits offering. The priest places his hands under the basket and slowly waves it before the Lord as the observer continues the ceremonial prayer:

"My father was a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a great nation, great, mighty, and populous. He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a 'land flowing with milk and honey;' and now, behold, I have brought the Firstfruits of the land which you, O Lord, have given me." (Deut. 26:5,9-10)

Deut. 26:3-10 And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord swore unto our fathers for to give us. [4] And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the Lord thy God. [5] And thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: [6] And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: [7] And when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labor, and our oppression: [8] And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: [9] And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. [10] And now, behold, I have brought the Firstfruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God:

With the Thanksgiving prayer complete, the priest sets the basket in front of the altar and casts a handful of the grain upon the fire. The Jewish male participant falls on his face to worship the Lord, then returns to the outer courts to rejoin his family. Seeing their father, his children run and clutch his knees. The commandments for the holy days are fulfilled. The participant rejoices in the new harvest from the Lord. This is experienced for thousands on the ancient day of Firstfruits.

The Modern Observance

Firstfruits sacrifices and offerings are not offered today since there is NO TEMPLE. The only Firstfruits ritual which has survived to modern times has been the counting of the omer, the days of Firstfruits to Shavuot (the Feast of Weeks).

On the 23rd day of this period, a minor holiday called Lag B'Omer is celebrated. The first word of this holiday is a combination of the Hebrew letters lammed and gimmel (which numerically represent 33) since the holiday occurs on the 33rd day. The origins of this joyous holiday are very obscure. The Talmud

suggests that it was on this day that a plague ended among the students of the second-century rabbi, Akiba. To remember that happy day, Lag B'Omer is a favorite day on which to perform weddings. It is also customary in Israel to build campfires at night and stay up singing songs and roasting potatoes over the campfire. Israeli building contractors cringe at the approach of this holiday, for usually every scrap of unguarded wood on their job sites is scavenged by neighborhood children for firewood.

Jewish mystics also commemorate this day as the anniversary of the death of Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai, the author of their book on mysticism. Many thousands traditionally visit the rabbi's grave site in Meron (in northern Israel) on Lag B'Omer. Apart from the counting of days, there is no modern celebration of Firstfruits.

The Biblical Application of Firstfruits

First things are an important and oft-repeated theme of Scripture. God declared that, in general, the firstfruits of all agricultural produce belonged to Him, from grain, to wine, to oil, to fleece.

Exodus 22:29 - Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.

Exodus 23:19 - The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk.

Exodus 34:16 - And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.

Deut. 18:4 - The firstfruit also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him.

Deut. 26:2 - That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there.

This included all of the seven major crops of the land of Israel:

- **Barley**
- **Wheat**
- **Grapes**
- **Figs**
- **Pomegranates**

- Olives
- Dates

The Firstfruits of the **bread dough** also belonged to Him as a "heave offering" (Numbers 15:20-21)

Numbers 15:20-21 - Ye shall offer up a cake of the first of your dough for an heave offering: as ye do the heave offering of the threshing floor, so shall ye heave it. [21] Of the first of your dough ye shall give unto the Lord an heave offering in your generations.

Further still, the firstborn males of all animals (Ex. 22:30; Lev. 27:26) and, indeed, even the firstborn of the Israelites themselves belonged to Him.

Exodus 13:2 - Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.

Exodus 13:12-15 - That thou shalt set apart unto the Lord all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the Lord's. [13] And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem. [14] And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: [15] And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that opens the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem.

Exodus 34:19-20 - All that opens the matrix is mine; and every firstling among thy cattle, whether ox or sheep, that is male. [20] But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb: and if thou redeem him not, then shalt thou break his neck. All the firstborn of thy sons thou shalt redeem. And none shall appear before me empty.

Numbers 3:13 - Because all the firstborn 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.

Numbers 18:15-16 - Every thing that opens the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the Lord, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem. [16] And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine

estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.

According to Mosaic Law, each firstborn male was to be presented to the priest at ONE MONTH of age. In His mercy, the Lord made provision so that the firstborn could be redeemed and thus freed from lifetime service to God. At this dedication ceremony, called a **Pidyon Haben** (Heb. "redemption of the Son."), it was possible to redeem the son out of full-time service through the payment of five shekels (pieces of silver) to the priest (Numbers 8:16) The Pidyon Haben held true for all except priests and Levites. They were obligated to serve in the Temple and, therefore, could not be exempted.

At one month of age, Jesus was taken to the Temple for His **Pidyon Haben**. Mary and Joseph presented Him to the Lord: "As it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every male who opens the womb shall be holy to the Lord.'" (Luke 2:23).

Significantly, it was on the occasion that Jesus was first publicly declared to be the Messiah. The godly Simeon took the Child in his arms and blessed God: "For my eyes have seen Your salvation" (Luke 2:30). As a second witness, Anna, the prophetess, declared His messiahship "to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem." (Luke 2:38) The meaning of the Pidyon Haben ceremony was given by the Lord: "Because all the firstborn are Mine. On the day that I struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to Myself ALL the firstborn in Israel." (Numbers 3:13) When God redeemed Israel out of Egyptian bondage, He did so through the blood of the Passover lamb. All firstborn were under the curse of death and judgment. Escape were possible only by exhibiting faith in God through the blood of the innocent Passover lamb.

So, too, in the spiritual sense, all men are FIRSTBORN. All are sinners just as Adam, and therefore, are under the curse of death and in need of redemption. Escape is possibly ONLY by exhibiting faith in God through the redemptive blood of the Messiah, the true Passover Lamb, sacrificed as our substitute.

Romans 5:17 - For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

1 Cor. 15:22 - For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

1 Cor. 5:7 - Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:

Firstfruits In the New Testament

Although not emphasized in the Hebrew Scriptures as the other Levitical feasts, the feasts of Firstfruits forms an important backdrop to the New Testament teaching. It is directly mentioned on no less than seven occasions in the New Testament.

- Paul spoke of Epaenetus as the Firstfruits of Achaia (Romans 16:5). That is, Epaenetus was the first of many to trust in Jesus in western Asia Minor. Paul later spoke of the household of Stephanas as the "firstfruits of Achaia" (1 Cor. 16:15). They were also some of the first believers in that large and bountiful harvest in Asia Minor.
- Paul used the concept of the firstfruits pinched from the dough to teach: "For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy" (Romans 11:16). By this he meant, if God chose and accepted the patriarchs, then the whole lump of dough (Israel) belonged to Him. Therefore, "God has not cast away His people." (Romans 11:2)
- James taught that we as believers who are set apart to the Lord are the Lord's firstfruits. "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." (Jas. 1:18)
- Paul used this imagery when he spoke of salvation as the "firstfruits of the Spirit." (Romans 8:23). By this he meant that the indwelling of the Spirit of God is the guarantee, or pledge, that there will be a final redemption. Our bodies will be glorified and the creation redeemed from the curse. The present reality of the indwelling of believers by the Holy Spirit assures, or guarantees (is the firstfruits of), the future promise of Heaven.
- In Revelation, John describes a group of 144,000 Jewish men who will be sealed just prior to the opening of the seventh seal (Rev. 7:1-8). There will be 12,000 from each of the various tribes of Israel, sealed and protected from God's wrath at the commencement of the Day of the Lord. Later, John describes these 144,000 as "the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb." (Rev. 14:4) These 144,000 will be God's FIRST working with National Israel. They will be the proof, guarantee, or pledge (the firstfruits) of a future harvest within the nation of Israel. They will be the guarantee during the time of God's awesome wrath that He has not cast off His people. God will burn away the chaff and impurities in the fiery blast furnace of His wrath to bring the remnant of Israel to repentance at the end of Daniel's 70th week. Paul clearly says, "All of Israel will be saved." (Romans 11:26)
- Paul spoke of himself as "one born out of due time." This identifies himself with Israel's final harvest. The imagery was that of a fig tree which would occasionally yield prematurely ripened figs out of season. These early figs were few and rare. Paul viewed himself as one of these whom God had graciously saved before the final harvest.

The Fulfillment of Firstfruits IN CHRIST

Like all of Israel's Feasts, including these in the SPRING of the year, the Feast of Firstfruits found its prophetic fulfillment in the work of Messiah's first coming. Paul declared this in the seventh and MOST SIGNIFICANT reference to firstfruits in the New Testament with this proclamation:

"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the FIRSTFRUITS of those who have fallen asleep." (1 Cor. 15:20; Rev. 1:5)

But how was the Messiah our firstfruits? Jesus rose again on the THIRD day (literally, the third day of Passover season, Nisan 16), on the day of Firstfruits. But His resurrection had far greater implications. Paul said this:

1 Cor. 15:22 - For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

The resurrection of Jesus is the guarantee and the beginning (firstfruits) of the FINAL HARVEST, or resurrection of all mankind. The Messiah fulfilled the prophetic meaning of this holy day by rising from the dead to become the firstfruits of the resurrection, and He did it on the very day of firstfruits.

The Bible tells us there is life after death. The grave is not the final stop on this journey into eternity. The human spirit does not cease to exist, nor does it float aimlessly as part of some "cosmic consciousness." Nor is it ever reincarnated. ALL will be resurrected. The only question is the quality of that eternal existence. The Hebrew prophet Daniel prophesied:

Daniel 12:2 - And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

The Messiah further explained:

John 5:28-29 - Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, [29] 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.

Just as there are two parts to the harvest in Israel - the wheat and the chaff, there will be parts of the final harvest.

Matthew 3:12 - Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Matthew 13:37-43 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; [38] The field is the world; the good seed are

the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; [39] The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. [40] As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. [41] The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; [42] And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. [43] Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Some will inherit eternal life and dwell in the House of the Lord forever. Others will inherit eternal separation from God, confined forever to the Lake of Fire. They that belong to the Messiah, who have by faith trusted in Him, will be resurrected unto life at His coming. Jesus provided the ironclad guarantee when He rose from the dead. It will happen, of that we are sure, because, "now is Christ risen from the dead, and has become the FIRSTFRUITS of those who have fallen asleep." Christ's resurrection is the down payment of all who will follow in the same manner at the rapture of the church. Glory to God! Passover speaks of our identification with Him in death. Unleavened Bread speaks of our identification with Him now in burial. The old man is dead and buried. Firstfruits speaks of the resurrection life we now have living in us as a result of our faith and intimacy with Him and the hope that one day when He appears in the clouds for us, we will be LIKE HIM and be glorified! Praise the Lord.

1 Thes. 4:13-18 - But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. [14] For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. [15] For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. [16] For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: [17] Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. [18] Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Titus 2:13-15
Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; [14] Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. [15] These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

1Cor. 15:12-25, 50-58 - . [12] Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the

dead? [13] But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: [14] And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. [15] Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. [16] For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: [17] And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. [18] Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. [19] If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. [20] But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. [21] For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. [23] But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. [24] Then cometh the end, when 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. [25] For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. [26] The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. [50] Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. [51] Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, [52] In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. [53] For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. [54] So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. [55] O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? [56] The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. [57] But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. [58] Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

The Five Raptures in Scripture

- Christ and the many saints that were resurrected after His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20,23; Matthew 27:52-53; Ephes. 4:8-10).
- "Afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor. 15:23,51-54; John 14:1-3; Luke 21:34-36; 2 Cor. 5:1-8; Ephes. 5:27; Phil. 3:11,20-21; 1 Thes. 2:19; 1 Thes. 3:13; 1 Thes. 4:13-17; 1 Thes. 5:9,23; ? 2 Thes. 2:1,7, note; Col. 3:4; James 5:7-8; 1 John 2:28; 1 John 3:2; 1 Peter 5:4). Everyone in Christ, dead or alive, will be

- translated at this time. Not one person will be left on earth who is in Christ (1 Thes. 4:16-17).
- The 144,000 Jews saved in the first 3 1/2 years of Daniel's 70th week (Rev. 7:1-8). They will be caught up as the manchild in the middle of this week or 3 1/2 years before the second coming (? Rev. 12:5; ? Rev. 14:1-5; ? Isaiah 66:7-8; ? Daniel 12:1). See notes on these scriptures.
 - The great multitude of tribulation saints who are saved after the rapture 2, above and during the whole of Daniel's 70th week (Rev. 6:1-19:21). The first martyrs of this period are told to rest until the rest of them are killed (Rev. 6:9-11) when vengeance will be taken and all raptured in time for the marriage supper (Rev. 7:9-17; Rev. 15:2-4; Rev. 20:4-6). Even those killed by the beast in the last 3 1/2 years of this week have part in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6). This proves their rapture in time for the marriage supper (Rev. 19:1-10) and in time to come back with Christ (Rev. 19:11-21; Jude 1:14; Zech. 14:5).
 - The rapture of the two witnesses, ending the first resurrection which began with the resurrection of Christ (Rev. 11:7-11).

Qualifications For The First Resurrection

There are qualifications the Bible clearly outlines for those wishing to be a part of the first resurrection unto life or as most Bible scholars term it, the rapture of the church:

- **To be in Christ** (1 Thes. 4:14,16; 2 Cor. 5:17-18).
- **To be Christ's** (1 Cor. 15:23; Galatians 5:24).
- **To be blessed and holy** (Rev. 20:4-6; Hebrews 12:14).
- **To be good** (John 5:28-29).
- **To be worthy** (Luke 21:36).
- **To be in the Church** (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:20-23; 4:4-6; 5:27; Col.1:18,24).
- **To be pure** (1 John 3:2-3).
- **To be without spot or wrinkle** (Eph. 5:27)
- **To live and walk in the Spirit** (Galatians 5:19-21).
- **To walk in the light** (1 John 1:7; Col. 2:6).

The method of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:35-50).

Paul illustrates the method of the resurrection by the death and resurrection of a grain of wheat or some other grain.

Daniel 12:2 - And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

This verse clearly states the doctrine of the first and second resurrections, but without the time element of 1,000 years between the two resurrections. There are two main kinds of resurrection: spiritual and material. Spiritual resurrection is that of the spirit being quickened from death in trespasses and sins. Such a resurrection causes one to be renewed in the glorious likeness of God (1 Cor. 11:7; Ephes. 4:21-24; Col. 3:10; 1 John 3:9). It is taught in Ephes. 2:1-6; Ephes. 5:14; Romans 6:11 and takes place only in this life. When physical death comes all possibility of such spiritual resurrection has passed (Eccles. 11:1; Hebrews 9:27; Rev. 22:11). Material resurrection is that of the body to which we shall confine the rest of our study.

Kinds of Material Resurrection:

There are two kinds of material or physical resurrection: the righteous to life before the Millennium; and the wicked to damnation after the Millennium (Daniel 12:3; John 5:28- 29; Rev. 10:4-6,11-15). There will be 1,000 years between the two resurrections (Rev. 20:4-6).

- **The fact of a resurrection.** The following Bible characters taught it: Job (Job 19:25- 27), Isaiah (Isaiah 26:14-19), Daniel (Daniel 12:2), David (Psalm 16:10; Psalm 17:15; Acts 2:31), O.T. saints (Hebrews 11:35), N.T. saints (Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20-21; Acts 2; Acts 4; etc.), Jesus (Matthew 16:21; Matthew 22:23- 31; Luke 14:14; Luke 20:27-36; Luke 24:13-45), Matthew (Matthew 28:1-20), Mark (Mark 16:1-18), Luke (Luke 24:1-49), John (John 19-21; Rev. 20:4-6), Mary (John 11:24), Herod (Matthew 14:2), Peter (1 Peter 1:3; 1 Peter 3:21), and Paul (Acts 17:18,32; Acts 23:6; Acts 24:15,21; Romans 1:4; Romans 6:5; Romans 8:34; 1 Cor. 15; Phil. 3:10-11; Hebrews 6:2; Hebrews 11:35).
- **The resurrections foretold** (Isaiah 26:14-19; Daniel 12:2; Psalm 16:10; Matthew 12:41-42; Matthew 20:19; Matthew 27:63; 1 Thes. 4:14-17; 1 Cor. 15; Rev. 20:4-6; John 5:28-29) Permanent—raised to immortality to live forever in their bodies. Christ "the firstfruits" was the first of all permanent

resurrections (1 Cor. 15:1-23). Then there were many O.T. saints resurrected after His resurrection (Matthew 27:53).

- **The order of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-34) <The word [order] comes from the Greek: ?????? (GSN-5001), rank or company. It is used only here, but it is used in the Septuagint of a company of soldiers (Numbers 2:2;Samuel 23:13)**

1 Cor 15:20-34 - But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. [21] For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. [22] For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. [23] But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. [24] Then cometh the end, when 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. [25] For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. [26] The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. [27] For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. [28] And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. [29] Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? [30] And why stand we in jeopardy every hour?

The First Resurrection

Rev. 20:4-6 - And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. [5] But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. [6] Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Daniel 12:2 - And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

John 5:28-29 - Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all

that are in the graves shall hear his voice, [29] 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.

This is the resurrection of all the just, blessed and holy, from Adam to the Millennium. It covers the period of time from Christ's resurrection to the resurrection of the tribulation saints and the two witnesses and includes the various companies of redeemed. There are Five Raptures in the First Resurrection. All who have part in this resurrection will have a part in ruling with Christ. He will not rule with just a select few, as taught by some (Rev. 20:4-6). This resurrection may be called the "out" resurrection; that is, a resurrection out of or from among the dead (Luke 14:14; Luke 20:35-36; Phil. 3:11-14; 1 Thes. 4:14-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-58; Hebrews 11:35; Rev. 20:4-6). Just as Christ came out from among the dead as the firstfruits of the dead, so at the rapture the dead in Christ will come forth from among the wicked dead according to the above passages. Even the tribulation saints will come out from the wicked dead (Rev. 20:4-6). The wicked dead will not live again until the thousand years are finished (Rev. 20:4-6). The Greek expression *ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν* (GSN-1537) *ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν* (GSN-3498), out of the dead, is used 48 times and teaches a select resurrection from the dead—the righteous selected from among the wicked—but it does not teach a select resurrection of some righteous from among the remaining righteous (Matthew 17:9; Mark 9:10; Luke 24:46; Acts 3:15; Acts 4:10; Acts 10:41; Acts 13:30; Acts 17:31; Romans 1:4; Romans 4:24; Romans 6:4-9; Romans 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:12,20-23; etc.). The theory that a few of the righteous will be selected from among the righteous is a mere human invention based upon a few historical stories of the O.T. which were never intended as types. There is a lack of even one plain scripture on the subject. All the dead and living in Christ will be in the first resurrection—not just a few of those in Christ. All who are out of Christ will be raised together after the Millennium to be judged and cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:4-6,11-15).

The Resurrection of the Righteous:

- **The first resurrection** (Rev. 20:4-6)
- **The resurrection of the just** (Luke 14:14)
- **A resurrection of life** (John 5:29)
- **A better resurrection** (Hebrews 11:35)
- **The resurrection of (from among) the dead** (Phil. 3:10-15)

The Second Resurrection

This is the resurrection of all the wicked from Adam to the end of the Millennium. It will take place after the Millennium and will also include those wicked who die during the Millennium (Rev. 20:4-6,11-15). They will be raised with immortal bodies to be tormented in hell forever (Matthew 10:28; John 5:28-29; John 12:24; Daniel 12:2; Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 15:21,34-50; Rev. 14:9-12; Rev.

19:20; Rev. 20:4-6,11-15). The theory that only the righteous will be raised to immortality is false, not being founded on one scripture. The method of the resurrection of the just and unjust is plainly taught and illustrated by a grain of wheat or any other grain. So what makes the difference between the two resurrections? Does not a bad or poisonous seed reproduce in the same way that a good seed does? Do not both go through the same process? The resurrection of men follows this same process, the only difference being in the glory of one over another. Both the saved and unsaved will be immortal as is plainly taught in all Scripture. The wicked bodies will exist in conscious torment forever (notes, [?] Luke 12:5). Only the body sleeps in the dust of the earth, for only the body was made out of dust (Genesis 2:7; Genesis 3:19; Eccles. 3:19-21).

No Soul-Sleeping Taught in Scripture

All scriptures used to teach soul-sleep clearly refer to the body which does sleep in the dust of the earth until the resurrection of the body (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29). The body is the only part of man that dies at physical death (James 2:26). The reason it dies is because the inner man, the life of the body, leaves the body. It then goes back to dust and is spoken of as being asleep (Genesis 3:19; Eccles. 3:19-21; Matthew 9:24; John 11:11; 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 Cor. 15:6,18,20,51; 1 Thes. 4:13-17).

Soul-Sleeping Scriptures Examined:

Every scripture used by those who teach soul-sleep refers to the body and not to the soul and spirit, as can be seen by an examination of the so called proof texts themselves.

- Sleep in the dust (Job 7:21; Psalm 22:15; Psalm 146:4; Eccles. 3:19-20; Daniel 12:2). Only the body was made of dust and that is what will return to dust again (Genesis 2:7; Genesis 3:19; Eccles. 3:20). The soul and spirit are not made of material substances as the body so they will not return to dust. See pt. (14), The Doctrine of Man, for the difference between the material and spiritual natures of man.
- Death—a falling asleep (Acts 7:60; Acts 13:36; 1 Cor. 15:6,18,20,51; 1 Thes. 4:13-17; 1 Thes. 5:10; 2 Peter 3:4). This is true as far as the body is concerned, for the body is the only part men can see as falling asleep. No man could see the soul and spirit, or the invisible part of man, whether it fell asleep or not. In Acts

13:36 that which fell asleep was laid in a tomb and saw corruption. That seeing corruption definitely refers to the flesh is clear from Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:23-32. In these passages it was the flesh that saw no corruption while the soul went to hell. In David's case his flesh saw corruption (Acts 13:36). In all the other passages above the thing that fell asleep was the flesh or body (1 Cor. 15:35). Naturally, the body falls asleep when the spirit leaves it (James 2:26).

- Death is spoken of as sleep (Deut. 31:16; 2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Kings 2:10; 1 Kings 11:21,43). This refers to the body falling asleep, as in points 1 and 2, above.
- No difference between man and beast in death (Eccles. 3:19-20). This is used as conclusive proof by false cults that both man and beast become extinct at death, but an honest acknowledgement of facts here will show that it refers to the body, not the soul. It says, All go to one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. There can be no argument against this, for both men and beasts were made of dust as far as the body is concerned (Genesis 2:7,19). All bodies do return to dust again, but nothing is said here or in any other place that the souls and spirits (or the invisible and intangible parts) of men and beasts were made of dust. On the contrary, this same passage proves there is a distinction between man and beast as far as their spirits are concerned, for the spirit of man goeth upward, and the spirit of beast goeth downward to the earth.
- No consciousness in death (Psalm 6:5). This verse must be understood with other facts. In physical death there is no remembrance, because the body dies and has no soul or spirit in it that could cause the body to continue having memory and consciousness. The body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26). It is not the chemical makeup of the body that has consciousness or it would continue after the spirit leaves the body. The soul and spirit make the body conscious so long as they are in the body, but when they leave the body it is dead and therefore cannot be conscious.
- The statement in this verse about the grave (Hebrew: ??????? (HSN-7585), the unseen world of departed spirits) not containing anyone who praises God is no doubt literally true, for hell is a place of torment in fire and who would praise God in such circumstances? That there is consciousness in Sheol is clear from many scriptures (see Hell). It does not say here or elsewhere that people in Sheol are extinct and unconscious, and could not praise God. It is clear that in "hell" (Sheol/Hades) men do cry and desire to get out of hell, as in Luke 16:19-31; Isaiah 14:9-11; etc.

- The dead don't praise the Lord (Psalm 115:17). This is true as far as the body is concerned, for it is lifeless, unconscious, and goes into dust again when the soul and spirit leave it (James 2:26). The souls of the righteous continue to praise God in full consciousness after leaving their bodies (Hebrews 12:22-23; Rev. 6:9-11), but the wicked who go to hell will have no praise for God. Their sole interest will be to escape such a literal burning hell and that will be impossible (Luke 16:19-31).
- In the day of death "his thoughts perish" (Psalm 146:4). This also is true as far as the body is concerned. The body cannot possibly have thoughts when the inner man leaves it (James 2:26). After leaving the body souls and spirits continue to have thoughts in heaven (Hebrews 12:22-23; Rev. 6:9-11) and in hell (Isaiah 14:9-11; Luke 16:19-31; see Hell).
- "The dead know not anything" (Eccles. 9:5-6; Job 14:21). Again, we repeat these facts are true regarding the body, but not the soul and spirit. How could a dead body of dust be conscious, have memory, love, hatred, and envy with the soul and spirit gone from it? Dust cannot have these experiences whether it is shaped into physical form or otherwise. The soul and spirit continue to know and they have emotions and desires after leaving the body, as proved in many scriptures on Hell.
- The dead come out of the graves (Matthew 27:52; John 5:28-29). As to the bodies which die at physical death, they are put into graves; but the souls and spirits never go to graves, as proved in many scriptures on Hell. If one knew that a body was still alive because the spirit was still in it, he would not put that body in the grave. It could not see corruption with life in it. Furthermore, it would be breaking the law to bury a live body; this would be murder and incur the death penalty.
- David is not yet ascended into heaven (Acts 2:34). This is true as to his body, but not true as to his soul and spirit, for all souls who died before Christ's resurrection were taken to heaven as captives (Psalm 68:18; Ephes. 4:8-10). Every just man's spirit is in heaven (Hebrews 12:22-23). Every righteous person who dies goes to heaven as an inner man (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21-24; Rev. 6:9-11) and the body is buried in the grave to await its resurrection (John 5:28-29; Daniel 12:2). One does not die spiritually at physical death, for he is either dead or alive spiritually in his lifetime. If he is spiritually dead in sins (Ephes. 2:1-9; 1 Tim. 5:6), at physical death his soul will go to hell and his body in the grave to await their reunion in the second resurrection (Rev. 20:6,11-15). If he is alive spiritually at physical death, his soul will go immediately to heaven and his body to the grave until their reunion in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6; 1 Thes. 4:13-17). To prove that David's body is what is referred to as the part which has not yet ascended, see Acts 13:36 where it plainly reveals what it was that saw corruption. Thus, it is clear that soul-sleeping is a fallacy, but body-sleeping is a reality.

Fourteen Proofs of the Future Immortality of the Body:

The Bible promises immortality for the body in the resurrection. See Romans 2:7; 1 Cor. 15:42-54; Phil. 3:21; 1 Tim. 6:16; 2 Tim. 1:10. The body is the subject of these passages and therefore will be resurrected immortal to house the immortal soul and spirit.

The Scriptures throughout teach even present immortality of the soul and spirit (note, [?]1 Peter 3:4). Bible writers made many references to a future resurrection judgment, and life beyond the grave for both the righteous and the wicked in body, soul and spirit (Job 19:25-27; Psalm 16:9-11; Isaiah 26:14-19; Daniel 12:2,3,13; Matthew 6:20; Matthew 10:28; Matthew 12:32; Matthew 13:50; Matthew 18:8-9; Matthew 19:27-30; Matthew 22:23-33; Matthew 23:15; Matthew 25:31-46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:19-31; Luke 23:43; John 11:24-26; John 12:24,48; Acts 1:3; Acts 2:25-36; Acts 3:26; Acts 4:2,10,33; Acts 5:31; Acts 7:59; Acts 10:40-42; Acts 13:34-37; Acts 17:31,32; Acts 23:8; Acts 24:15,21; Acts 26:8; 1 Cor. 15; 1 Thes. 4:13-17; Phil. 3:20-21; Col. 3:4; Hebrews 11:8- 19,35-40; Hebrews 12:23; Rev. 20:4-15; Rev. 21:8; Rev. 22:15). These are just a few of many scriptures teaching a life after death—the wicked in eternal hell (notes, [?]Psalm 9:17; Luke 12:5), and the righteous with eternal life (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41,46; John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:21-54; Rev. 20:11-15). Jesus and Paul illustrated the resurrection by seed (John 12:24; 1 Cor. 15:35-54). Just as every seed can live again when it dies, so every man will live again in the resurrection, and physically like the seeds. The greatest proof of the immortality of the body is Jesus Christ (Luke 24:39; John 2:19; John 10:17-18). His resurrection is the guarantee of that of all men (1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor.

- The difference between the material and spiritual natures of man proves the immortality of the soul and spirit and the future immortality of the body.
- The doctrine of the future immortality of the body has never been disproved. We have more proof for this doctrine in Scripture than we do for what life is. We have no scripture explaining what odor is, what electricity is, and what atoms are, yet we believe in them. † is a law of logic that a faith not discredited has a right to exist. Faith in God and immortality is native to the soul. It has a right to exist just as much as nature has a right to exist. Both were created to exist and both do exist as proved by actual demonstrations, illustrations and continued reproductions in nature.
- Natural laws demand immortality of the body. Hundreds of thousands of creations prophesy and proclaim the resurrection of the body to a future existence either in heaven or hell. The invisible things are clearly seen by the visible (Romans 1:20). Innumerable seeds and plant life rise again to live and reproduce their own kind eternally. Each seed and each plant verifies the doctrine of immortality and a future life. Paul used seeds to illustrate the future and eternal life of the body (1 Cor. 15:35- 54). Bad and poisonous seeds also reproduce the same as

good ones do. So also is the resurrection of the dead (John 5:28-29; Daniel 12:2). Man was created to live forever in body, soul, and spirit, and he would have done so from Adam's time on, if he had not sinned. Resurrection is necessary to bring the body back from dust to be punished for sin or rewarded for righteousness (John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:4-6,11-15; Daniel 12:2).

- Spiritual laws prove immortality of the body. The soul and spirit are the immaterial parts of man which know, reason, and make one conscious of things about him. By these faculties man knows there is immortality. He is fearful of the reality of immortality of the body if he sins, and is happy about it if he lives right, proving that the laws of consciousness and of being know and recognize a future life of rewards and punishment.

5:1-8; Phil. 1:21-24; Phil. 3:20-21).

The wicked have described in horror the damnation of the damned in hell and proclaimed in the dying hour their eternal destiny to be one of torment and remorse. Newport, Voltaire, Paine, Hume, Altamont, Allen, Hobbes, Mason, and others have all testified at death about their wrathful destiny in the hands of an insulted God. Numerous are the dying testimonies of saved men regarding the glory and wonders of the beautiful world they were going into eternally. Not only men named in Scripture but men in all generations have died in the peace and glory of heaven. Man is the only earth creature that has faculties to make him capable of self-consciousness and God-consciousness. This is the line of demarcation between man and beast.

- Death is a blunder and an abortion if there is no resurrection of the body to immortality. Death is real (Hebrews 9:27). It is an enemy (1 Cor. 15:24-28). The vindication of God as a perfect Worker and a just Judge requires life after death. The present is too brief to receive justice and meet opportunities that come. Men merely begin a work and leave it undone. Thousands die in infancy. What incompleteness and waste of life if death ends all. Life becomes a hopeless mockery and an infinite series of abortions under these circumstances. But with immortality, all who desire life and continuation of their greatest plans, find life takes on a new meaning (1 Cor. 15:19).
- Justice demands that all men live again eternally that they might receive of the things done in the body whether they be good or bad (Matthew 10:41-42; Matthew 16:27; Matthew 19:28-30; Romans 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:9-10; Hebrews 9:27; Rev. 20:11-15). Mere extinction of being would be unjust and improper as a penalty. It would be a

guarantee of freedom from punishment and would encourage sin and rebellion. Such would never permit the degrees of punishment corresponding to degrees of guilt (Matthew 10:15; Matthew 11:22; Matthew 12:41; Matthew 16:27; Matthew 23:14; Mark 6:11; Mark 12:40; Luke 10:14; Luke 11:31- 32; Luke 20:47; Rev. 20:11-15). Extinction of being for each rebel would make lies of all these scriptures. Degrees of guilt demand immortality of the body as well as the soul of the wicked, just as obedience to God demands life for the saints to enjoy the fruit of their works. If death ends all, the conscience and the Bible tell many lies and they are a cheat and a farce. Here some sinners prosper through sin and cheating and many saints live in poverty partly because they do not seek unjust gain as sinners do.

The ungodly steal, cheat, get gain by every conceivable means and live off the labor and ignorance of the poor. The brewer lives off the society which he damns by his product. Thousands of the poor are robbed and forced to support him. The arrogant mistress lives in pleasure and sin while the virtuous girl toils in the sweatshop denying herself pleasure of sin because she has a hope of the future. Life is so inequitable and changeable. The wicked take advantage of the righteous and thousands cry for help, refusing to break God's laws to get revenge. Where is justice going to be meted out if not in a life to come?

- The purpose of existence teaches immortality. If the universe exists only for itself, it is abnormal and a deviation from the common rule of all creation as demonstrated in nature. If it exists for anything less than itself, it is waste. If it exists for something greater than itself, what is that something? The answer is that it exists for God, to glorify Him and carry out the purpose for which He created it (Rev. 4:11). Man was given dominion on earth to rule it forever (Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 8). He was created an eternal creature in order to rule it forever. Man's fall and continued sin do not do away with God's eternal plan. They only postpone it until the final restitution of all things (Acts 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Ephes. 1:10). Then man will become eternal in body as he is in soul and spirit now. This will be necessary for him to rule forever (Daniel 7:18,27; Rev. 5:10; Rev. 22:4-5), for that requires immortality of body, soul, and spirit.
- The brevity of life demands immortality of the body. Man never ceases to live in soul and spirit (note, [?] 1 Peter 3:4), so brevity of life could only refer to the body that is soon cut down and goes to dust again. The works of man outlive him, so if he should never live again, then his works are better and greater than he is, and this is unreasonable to believe. Everything in nature and creation operates contrary to this belief. Does the life of flowers cease to exist in the future because they have died in the winter? Does the falling of the leaves in autumn prove the tree is forever dead and lifeless? Shall the seeds be powerless to produce if the tree falls in death?

No, indeed. Over 80,000 seeds testify constantly of an eternal existence. They are lower forms of life than man and yet when they die they live again, for this is the creative purpose and natural law for each one of them. Are they greater than man, the highest of creation? Shall the works of man's hands be more eternal than he is? Shall his plans end because he is temporarily cut off due to Adam's sin? This would be a creative blunder, for the brevity of life demands life again for all men to correspond with their own creative makeup.

- Man's greatness demands immortality of the body. Elephants can live much longer than man; trees thousands of years; and other parts of creation lower than man exists eternally. Shall we accuse God of creating and running a world out of balance? Shall we accuse Him of making the lower creations to outlive the higher? Shall moral and spiritual creations live less than the brute and material creations? Such would condemn the Creator and insult creation as represented by man, the lord over creation on earth. There must be another life for all men for these inequalities to be adjusted. Man could have lived forever had he not sinned. He will live again and forever in the final restitution of all things—some to everlasting shame and contempt (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29).
- The universal human desire demands immortality of the body. This desire is in every man, even the lowest rebels against God. God has made hungers in the human breast, each of which has a corresponding satisfaction: water for thirst; food for hunger; friends for the social nature; home for homesickness; God for spiritual hunger; and immortality for the desire of a future life. We accept justice and believe in it because of universal conscience. Why not accept belief in immortality because of the universal hunger for it? If you should find a dog yearning for eternal life, thinking about it, and reasoning how to get it, you would say that the animal had a high nature and spiritual faculty you never thought possible. Take away that power in man and he will die like one. No man of sound mind will agree that he has a nature lower than a dog, incapable of higher and spiritual things. This proves he knows he has natural and higher faculties than an animal. Such power not only teaches immortality to him and demands it for him, but guarantees it to him.
- Moral nature in man demands immortality of the body. No man can explain the origin of moral nature and moral obligation apart from the truth of immortality. Moral nature demands a set of laws based upon rewards and punishments for obedience and sin. Nations who have conformed to moral law have advanced to the highest culture and those who have denied it have sunk into depravity (Romans 1:18- 32). Nations that endure must not only have mentality but morality. Our moral nature affirms in many ways that there is a future life and that we must prepare to get the good out of it or we will suffer the consequences of sin forever (Psalm 9:17; Rev. 14:9-14; Rev. 20:11-15).
- Universal instinct to worship God and meet certain standards that will better the future and eternal existence proves immortality of the body.

Nature causes the birds to go north and south and to know when to mate. The ants, bees, and all other creatures know by instinct how to carry on their own particular life for the future. Everything in creation obeys its natural instincts except unregenerate man. He is capable of choosing to better himself or to degenerate to unnatural living, now and forever. He has outstanding instincts to worship and prepare for eternal life. Is man the only creature fooled by nature? Why do not animals have the same natural craving for immortality? This proves man capable of worship and preparing for eternity to better himself (1 John 3:1-3; 2 Cor. 7:1; Hebrews 12:14-15; Galatians 5:24; 2 Cor. 5:17-21).

- Man's constitution demands immortality of the body. He was created to live forever physically, as well as in soul and spirit. Sin cut him off from this and hindered the original plan. Jesus came to restore all to man. Being constituted to live forever proves the possibility of immortality. Man being created in God's own image and likeness demands it; the eternal purpose of God demands it; and the eternal plan of God provides for it; but sinners forfeit their part in the glorious plan by sin (Proverbs 1:22ff; Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 6:16-23; Romans 8:12-13). Even they will exist physically forever as an eternal monument of God's justice to all coming generations throughout all eternity (Isaiah 66:22-24; Rev. 14:9-11; Rev. 20:10-15; Rev. 21:8; Rev. 22:15).

CHRIST IS THE FIRSTFRUITS FROM THE DEAD AND
BECAUSE HE LIVES WE SHALL LIVE ALSO! ARE YOU READY
FOR ETERNITY??