

Parson to Person
1 Corinthians 15
(The Resurrection) – Part 3
Christmas Eve

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 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” (1 Corinthians 15:20–28 NKJV).

The Laws of Nature and Nature’s God

Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain” (John 12:24).

Much can be said about this seemingly simple verse, but for our present purposes, please allow me to focus on the beauty we see in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Notably, the above verse describes death, burial, and resurrection. It documents multiplication and fruitfulness. Moreover, as should be obvious to all who know Him, God’s creative work declares His sovereign ownership over all of creation—and the bounty He deserves. From the beginning, God put this functionality

and pattern into nature in order to declare His glory (see Psalm 19:1 and Romans 1:20).

Firstfruits

Within the Law of Moses, we learn that God required the “*firstfruits*” of harvest. In addition, He established the meaning of the “*firstfruits*.”

The “*firstfruits*” is a symbolic portion of that which is ingathered—representing the whole. Therefore, as the “*firstfruits*” are offered to God, the offering signifies that all represented belongs to God—the whole of the harvest.

With this in mind, Paul declared that “*Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*” Therefore, when coupling the symbolic nature found in the law of “*firstfruits*” with Jesus’ words concerning the seed, sowing, death, and life, we learn that Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as the “*firstfruits*” has and will produce a harvest of souls—and that each and every soul represented in Him belongs to God.

Death Came by Man and The Rule of Federal Headship

Sin entered the world through the rebellious acts of Adam and Eve. Moreover, inasmuch as Eve was tempted, deceived, and fell into Lucifer’s seductive trap, Adam, as her husband and spiritual head, also ate of the forbidden fruit and was held responsible for the two by headship. This set in motion what Theologians refer to as “Federal Headship.” The accountability was just and right. Adam as head represented the two—and now represents all mankind—in him.

In a sense, Adam as “federal head” became a sort of “firstfruits” of the nations. God declared that “*in Adam all die*” (vs. 22a).

However, as God has established “The Rule of Federal Headship,” He also set into motion from before the foundations of

the world (see Ephesians 1:4, 1 Peter 1:20, and Revelation 13:8b) redemption in Christ—thus moving sinful men and women who trust Him for salvation from identification in Adam to identification in Christ. *“For in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming”* (vs. 22–23).

Therefore, by “The Rule of Federal Headship,” Christ becomes the *“firstfruits”* of those who trust in Him. Believers are no longer identified with Adam in sin. We are identified with Christ in righteousness. We no longer suffer eternal separation from God: death. We are now guaranteed eternal life with Him, in Him (our *“firstfruits,”*) for His glory.

Death, Burial, and Resurrection

Jesus’ righteousness is attributed to us. We, having experienced death, were buried with Christ and will celebrate a future physical resurrection—just as He did. As Paul put it, *“In Him you were...buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead”* (Colossians 2:11–12 abridged). *“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross”* (Colossians 2:13–14). Praise the Lord!

The Second Coming, The Coming Kingdom, and the Second Death

The physical resurrection of the saved is an event we anticipate in the future. The resurrected will be raised in sequence based upon the dispensational period in which they died. The Church Age saints will be resurrected at the Rapture. The saints from the Pre-Church

Age dispensations and those from the Tribulation will be raised up at the Second Coming.

All believers are spiritually alive now! However, the day will come when those who *“sleep in Jesus”* will be physically raised up to live and reign with Jesus—first in the *“Millennial Kingdom”* —*“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus”* (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Moreover, *“He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death”* (vss. 25–26). Following the Millennial Reign, we will enjoy the blessings of God for all eternity in the New Heaven and New Earth (Revelation 20:4–6, Daniel 12:2).

The unsaved will be raised up to judgment at the Great White Throne where they will be cast into the lake of fire—this is the *“second death”* (see Revelation 20:6b, 11–15).

Note: *“Sleep”* is the Biblical nomenclature given to the dead. It speaks to the eternal nature of man in either spiritual/eternal life or spiritual/eternal death.

Why All of This for Christmas?

If Jesus had not been born of a virgin, He would have been born of Adam under *“The Rule of Federal Headship”* as a sinner. However, because He is born of God, as the Son of God, He is able, by a sinless life, through His death, burial, and resurrection, suffer in our place for our sins and serve as the *“firstfruits”* of those made righteous—in Him. All who trust Jesus for salvation fall under *“The Rule of Federal Headship”*—in Jesus.

“Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” (James 1:18).

Merry Christmas!

I love you all,
Pastor Paul