

41. Learning the Order of the Resurrections

We concluded our last topic by seeing that Christ is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. We saw that “firstfruits” means *a person who is superior in excellence to others of the same class*. Because Christ is holy and without sin, that meant that at the moment we became a Christian, we became holy in the sight of the Father because the Father looks at us through the righteousness of Christ. In our topic today, we are also going to see the fact that “Christ is the firstfruits” means that we can understand the order of some key events in the future.

1 Corinthians 15:20-22 says, “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.” These verses remind us of the consequences of the choice of Adam. Romans 5:12 says, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” We see that we all people experience death because of the sin of Adam. This actually talks about two kinds of death. It is important to help our physical and spiritual children understand both kinds of death so that they are equipped to answer the questions of new Christians.

Genesis 2:15-17 says, “Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” Here, we see that God put Adam in a perfect environment. He was given the freedom to do anything that he chose except one thing. He was also told what the consequences would be if he did that one thing. God told Adam that the very day that he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would die. This is a key place to explain to our children the difference between spiritual death and physical death.

Spiritual death is the separation of man from God. Physical death is the separation of the body from the soul and the human spirit. Genesis 3:7-8 says, “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” Adam and Eve knew that they had sinned. They immediately tried to hide their shame. When they could not hide their shame, they then chose to hide from God in the Garden. Here we see that they had already experienced spiritual death and were hiding from God. Genesis 5:5 says that Adam experienced physical death at 930 years. That verse says, “So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.” We need to help our children understand the difference between spiritual and physical death so that they are equipped to answer questions that new Christians might ask them.

Adam caused every person to experience spiritual death, which is separation from God. In contrast, Christ came to give us spiritual life so that we can have a relationship with God and enjoy fellowship with Him. John 1:12-13 says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor

of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” As Christians, we now have a relationship with God because we have become His children by His will. Then, 1 John 1:6-7 promises us, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” Here, we see that as we choose to walk in the light we enjoy fellowship both with Christ and with one another.

The fact that in Adam all die and in Christ we have been made alive is important for us to understand and explain to our children because it also helps us to understand the order of the resurrections. 1 Corinthians 15:23 says, “But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming.” Christ was the first to experience physical resurrection with a new body. Here, we see that Christians will be the second to experience resurrection and receive a new body. This will happen for us at the moment that Christ comes to take the church to heaven. 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 says, “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.” Our physical bodies will be raised and changed into glorified bodies that have not experienced the effects of sin.

After the resurrection of the righteous, 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 says, “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.” Christ will put an end to Satan’s power. Revelation 20:10 says, “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” Here, we see the final judgment of Satan. Hebrews 2:14 says, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Here, we see that Satan will be eternally judged.

Christ will bring an end to all human rule, authority and power. This is described in Revelation 20:11-15 where we see the judgment of all unbelievers. Then, Christ will reign, because all of His enemies have been placed under His feet. Philippians 2:9-11 says, “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” As a part of their judgment, all unbelievers will be forced to bow their knees before Christ and finally confess that Jesus is Lord. Revelation 20:15 says, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” Here, we see that they will confess but it will be too late and they also will experience eternal judgment.

The time of the end is described in Revelation 21:1-3 where we read, “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.'" After the final judgment at the end of Revelation 20, eternity will begin with the new heaven and the new earth. Here, we see that things will be restored to the perfection that existed before Adam and Eve sinned.

In 1 Corinthians 15:27-28, we read, "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." The first part of verse 27 is a quotation from Psalm 8:6. In that Psalm, we see that the Father placed all things under Christ. In Matthew 28:18, we read, "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'" Christ is the One who has been given all authority by the Father.

We see that Psalm 8 will be fully fulfilled at that time when all judgment is complete and Christ will rule for eternity. Revelation 11:15 says, "Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'" Here, we see that as the seventh angel sounded, he looked forward to the time when the Father and Christ would begin their eternal rule.

We also see that these verses explain the eternal relationship between the Father and Christ. We see that Christ will choose to be subject to the Father. Christ explained this relationship in John 5:26-27 where we read, "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man." Here, we are reminded again that although the Father and Son are equal, the Son has chosen to be submissive to the Father. True submission means that a person places their full potential at the disposal of another. Christ will rule throughout eternity. At the same time, He will subject Himself to the Father. This is also what Christ did when He came to this earth. John 6:38 says, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." Here, we see that the desire of Christ is that God may be all in all.

In these verses, we see that the fact that Christ is the "firstfruits" means far more than just the fact that He was the first to rise with a glorified body. Here, we see that the result of the fact that Christ is the "firstfruits" means that He will rule for all eternity in the restored creation because sin and death have been defeated. At the same time, Christ will continue to bring glory to the Father throughout eternity. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to answer questions that new Christians may ask about our eternal state.