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Messiah: The Firstfruits of Those Who Have Fallen Asleep 15: 20-28

Messiah: The Firstfruits of Those Who Have Fallen Asleep DIG: In this passage, Paul draws a comparison between Adam's death and Messiah's death. What did the death of Messiah give us that Adam's death did not? Sin entered the world when humans sinned against God. How will Messiah's death eventually destroy sin? What is the central proof Paul continually points to as evidence for the hope of our resurrection?

REFLECT: What proof do you see that there is life after death? Paul's belief in life after death helped him face danger and endure hardship. How does that same belief help you face life today? How does it help you face death? Why is Yeshua's resurrection from the dead so important in the life of a believer? How should knowing that Yeshua was raised from the dead affect the way you live your life? What hope does Messiah's resurrection offer you (Romans 6:5; Philippians 3:10; and Peter 1:3)?

**Just as the Feast of Passover was fulfilled by the death of Messiah, the Lamb of God;
and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was fulfilled by the sinlessness of His sacrifice;
the Feast of First Fruits was therefore fulfilled by the resurrection of Messiah.**

By means of **his** deductions, **Paul** has doggedly pursued the **Corinthian** error to its last, desperate conclusion. All of the deductions which **Paul** has knit so tightly together (**to see link click [Ds - The Importance of Messiah's Resurrection](#)**) **he** now unravels in one motion. They collapse like a house of cards when the breath of the truth is blown upon them. Logic, the genuine logic of reality, however, requires one more thing: the undeniable fact that **Yeshua Messiah did rise from the dead**. Even **the Corinthian doubters** admitted this fact. But something had blinded **their** eyes so that **they** failed to see that this one fact destroyed all **their**

previous pitiful arguments. With a sudden dramatic turn, which is as effective as all the reasoning by deduction which **Paul** had employed up to this point, **he** hurled **the Feast of First Fruits** at the **Corinthian** error (see the commentary on **Leviticus Ef - Rasheet**). This was the coup de gras. The knock-out punch. Only with **its** glorious connection with **God's** final triumph could **the resurrection's** full significance be appreciated.⁴⁹⁰

The Redeemer (15:20-22): But the fact is that the Messiah *has* been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (15:18), meaning something akin to, "**He** is the first of a great harvest of **all** who have **died**" (15:20). **The day** is coming when **all God's people who have died** will be **raised** to eternal **life**. This wasn't the first time **the Corinthian doubters** had heard this. Five years earlier **Paul** had written from **Corinth** to the believers in Thessalonica, "**Now brothers, we want you to know the truth about those who have died; otherwise, you might become sad the way other people do who have nothing to hope for. For since we believe that Yeshua died and rose again, we also believe that in the same way God, through Yeshua, will take with Him those who have died. When we say this, we base it on the Lord's own word: We who remain alive when the Lord comes will certainly not take precedence over those who have died. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a rousing cry, with a call from one of the ruling angles, and with God's shofar; those who have died united with Messiah will be the first to rise, then we who are still alive will be caught up** (see [Dw - The Rapture: Victory Over Death](#)) **with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we will always be with the Lord. So, encourage each other with these words**" (First Thessalonians 4:13-18).

The significance of **the firstfruits** was not only that **it** preceded the harvest, but that **they** were a **first** installment of the harvest. The fact that **Messiah** was **the firstfruit** indicates that something else, namely, the harvest of the rest of the crop, is to follow. In other words, **Messiah's resurrection** could not have been in isolation from ours. **His resurrection** *requires* our **resurrection**, because **His resurrection** was part of a larger **resurrection** of the redeemed since the beginning of time.



The fulfillment of **the Feast of Firstfruits** can be seen in **the resurrection of Messiah**. It is a harvest festival and the barley loaves are waved before **ADONAI**. Think of it! The grain that had come from the earth was then being lifted up high for all Isra'el to see! **Yeshua Himself** alluded to **His resurrection** in similar terms when **He** said: **The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds . . . and as for Me, when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to Myself (John 12:23-24, 32).** The resurrection of **Jesus** from **the dead** is perfectly symbolized in the wave offering of **First Fruits**. **Yeshua** rose on the third day. So, we can see the sovereign hand of **God** in regard to the timing of **Resheet**. It was imperative for **Messiah** to **die** exactly on the Passover in order to fulfill the prophecies, and for **Him** to be **risen** from **the dead** on **First Fruits**.

*Dear Great and Almighty **Father**, Praise **Your** mighty power which is greater than even **death!** What a comfort to know that though life is full of problems and trials will be over soon and all who love **You** will have an eternal life of joy and peace. **For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:18).** Thank **You** for **Your** great love that was willing to suffer intense pain and shame (**Hebrews 12:2**) by dying of the cross as **the Lamb of God (John 1:29)** so that **You** could give **Your** righteousness to those who love **You (Second Corinthians 5:21).***

*Though my heart rejoices at eternity with **You**, I am deeply grieved and very concerned about family and friends who know About **You** but who only take the part of the gospel that they like. They forget how important **Your** holiness is, and they want **Your** gift of heaven without it changing their hearts. **Your Word** teaches*

the opposite. **You** see each person's heart, whether their love is only words, or if they truly love **You** in first place above all else in their lives. **Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" And then will I declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness" (Matthew 7:21-23).**

Please open the eyes of my family and friends to see that you offer them the greatest happiness that they will ever have with their sins forgiven, but they must turn from sins to loving **You** the most. Yes, they may get laughed at or poked fun at, but the joys of heaven will be forever. Please bring into their lives friends and events to guide them to focus on living for what will give them eternal joy. Let them ponder **Your** deep love and may they seek to love **You** back- no matter the earthly cost. Please give them a moment of spiritual clarity. **Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving (Colossians 2:6-7).** In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen

The **resurrection** that **Paul** speaks about here is permanent **resurrection**. The TaNaKh tells us of people who were miraculously brought back **to life**. **The widow from Zarephath had her dead infant son raised from the dead by the prayers of Elijah (First Kings 17:22); The Shunammite's Son was raised from the dead by the prayers of Elisha (Second Kings 4:8-37).** In the B'rit Chadashah, **Paul raised Eutychus from the dead at Troas (Acts 20:1-12). The widow from Nain had her son brought back to life by Yeshua (see the commentary on [The Life of Christ Eb - Jesus Raises a Widow's Son](#)), and Jairus' daughter was also raise from the dead by the Master Healer (see the [The Life of Christ Fh - Jesus Raises a Dead Girl and Heals a Sick Woman](#)), as was **Lazarus (see the [The Life of Christ Ia - The Resurrection of Lazarus: The First Sign of Jonah](#)).****

So, if all these **people** were **raised from the dead**, how is **Yeshua the firstfruits**? All of them passed through **death** a second time. **Messiah**, however, was the first **to be raised** never to **die** again! **He is the firstfruits of more to come**, and as believers, we are the *more to come*. We will **die**, only **to rise to**

eternal life. As **John** said: **I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life** (see my commentary on [The Life of Christ Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer](#)).

Through Messiah, as a man, came the resurrection of the dead, just as through **Adam**, the first man, came death (15:21). **Paul's** point here is that **Yeshua's** humanness was completely involved both in **His resurrection** and in ours. It was because **Messiah died**, was buried, and was **raised** as a man, that **He** could become **the first fruits** of all others who would be **raised** to glory. **The first fruits** and the harvest were from the same crop.

Paul continues to explain how the great truth of the one **resurrection** of **Messiah** affects believers. The convincing analogy comes from the first man: **For just as in connection with Adam all die, so in connection with Messiah all will be made alive (15:22)**. Just as **Adam** was the forerunner of everyone who **dies**, so **Messiah** is the forerunner of everyone who will be **raised to life**. In each case, one man doing one act caused the consequences of that act to be applied to every other person identified with **him**. Those who are identified with **Adam**, every person who has ever been born, is subject to **death** because of **Adam's sinful** act. Likewise, those who are identified with **Messiah**, every person who has been born again in **Him**, is subject to **resurrection** to eternal life because of **Messiah's** righteous acts. **In Adam all** have inherited a **sin nature** and will therefore **die** (see the commentary on [Romans Bm - The Consequences of Adam](#)). **In Messiah all** who believe in **Him** have inherited **eternal life** and **will be made alive**, in body as well as in spirit (see the commentary on [Romans Bn - The Contrast to Adam](#)).

The Redeemed (15:23): But each in its own order: the Messiah is the firstfruits; then those who belong to the Messiah, at the time of His Second Coming are the full harvest (see [Dx - A Timeline of the Resurrection](#)). Unlike the grain harvest, however, this full harvest is far removed in time from **the resurrection of Messiah (15:23)**. We do know, in fact, we are told that we cannot know when **the Lord** will come to **raise** and **rapture His people** and set up **His Kingdom (Matthew 24:36, 42, 44, 50)**. We do not know the time, the specific generation or moment, but we do know **the order**. The next event on **Ha'Shem's** prophetic calendar is the Rapture of the Church (see the commentary on [Revelation Bg - The Sequence of Pretribulational Events](#)).

The Restoration (15:24-28): The final event in **God's** timetable is **the culmination**, when **Messiah** establishes **His Eternal Kingdom** (see the

commentary on **Revelation Fq - The Eternal State**) and **hands it over to God the Father, after having put an end to every rulership, yes, to every authority and power (First Corinthians 15:24; also see Second Corinthians 10:3-4; Ephesians 6:12)**. At that time all things will be restored as they were originally designed and created by **YHVH** to be. In the end, it will be as it was in the beginning (see the commentary on **Genesis Ad - The Anticipation of Eternity**). **Sin** will be no more, and **ADONAI** will reign supremely, without enemy and without challenge. Here is the culmination: **Messiah** turns over the restored world to **God His Father**, who sent **Him** to recover it.

For He has to rule until He puts all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy, of both God and mankind, to be done away with will be death, for “He put everything in subjection under his feet” (Psalm 8:6). Lest any of his readers misunderstand, **Paul** goes on to explain the obvious: **But when it says that “everything” has been subjected, obviously the word does not include God, who is Himself the one subjecting everything to the Messiah**. From the time of **His** incarnation until the time He presents **the Kingdom to His Father, Messiah** assumes the role of a **Servant**, fulfilling the divine task as assigned by **His Father**. But when the final work is accomplished, **He** will assume **His** former, full, glorious place in the perfect harmony of **the Trinity**. **Now when everything has been subjected to the Son, then He will subject Himself to God, who subjected everything to Him; so that God may be everything in everyone (1 Cor 15:25-28; also see Zechariah 14:9; Dani’el 7:14)**.

The Reality: Explorers know that every expedition eventually comes to an end. Vacationers know that no trip will last forever. And our journey in this **life** certainly won’t. This heart will feel a final pulse. These lungs will empty a final breath. The hand that directs this pen across the page will fall limp and still. Barring the return of **Messiah**, I will **die**. So will you . . . As the psalmist asked: **Who can live and not see death? Who can save himself from the power of the grave (Psalm 89:48)?** Young and old, good and bad, rich and poor. Neither gender is spared; no class or race is exempt. **No one has power over the time of their death (Ecclesiastes 8:8)**.

The finest surgeon might enhance your **life** but can’t eliminate your **death**. The writer to the Hebrews was blunt: **People are destined to die once (Hebrews 9:27)**. Exercise all you want. Eat nothing but healthy food, and pop fistfuls of vitamins. Stay out of the sun, away from alcohol, and off drugs.

Do your best to stay **alive**, and, still . . . you **die**.

Death seems like such a **dead** end, until we read of **Yeshua's resurrection** account . . . **Then the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Yeshua, who was crucified. He is not here, He has risen, just as He said" (Mt 28:5-6). He has risen.** Three words in English. Just one in Greek: *egerthe*.

So much rests on the validity of this one word. If it is false, then the whole of our faith collapses like a poorly told joke. Yet, if it is true, then **God's** story has turned your final chapter into a preface. If the angel was correct, then you can believe this: **Yeshua** descended into the oldest cell of **death's** prison and allowed the warden to lock the door and melt the keys in a furnace. And just when the demons began to dance and prance around, **Yeshua** pressed his pierced wrists and hands against the inner walls of the cavern.

From deep within, **He** shook the cemetery.

The bodily **resurrection** means everything. If **Yeshua** lives on only in spirit and deeds, **He** is but one of a thousand **dead** heroes. But if **He** lives on in the flesh and bone, **He** is **the King** who pressed **His heel** against **the head** of **death (Genesis 3:15)**. What **He** did with **His** own grave, **He** promises to do with yours . . . empty it.