

## The Firstfruits of Those Who Have Fallen Asleep (1 Corinthians 15v20-24)

### Background

God rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and he promised to give them “a land flowing with milk and honey.” He also told the Israelites to bring him the first of all the produce from that land. The firstfruits were a tangible sign that God’s people would receive all the good things that he had promised (Deut 26v1-11).

### Questions

The apostles proclaimed the good news that Jesus Christ had been raised from the dead. However, some people in Corinth said that there was no resurrection of the dead.

First, Paul considers the position of the sceptics

- If there were no resurrection of the dead, what implications would there be for Christ’s resurrection? What would it mean for the preaching of the apostles and the faith of believers? What would it mean for those who had already died?

Then, Paul explains the implications of the gospel

- Since Christ *has* risen from the dead, what does this mean for those who have fallen asleep in Christ? How does the expression *firstfruits* help us understand this? What other comparison does Paul use to underline our close connection to Jesus Christ?

The resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of believers occur at different times but they are not two separate events. There is *one* spiritual harvest that includes both Christ and all who believe in him. This harvest has already begun; it began with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This harvest will certainly be completed; it will be completed at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Application

We should rejoice that the resurrection harvest has begun. This should encourage us to continue in the work of the Lord (1 Cor 15v58).

## 1 Corinthians 15:12-24

<sup>12</sup>Now if **Christ** is preached that **He** has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

<sup>13</sup>But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then **Christ** is not risen.

<sup>14</sup>And if **Christ** is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.

<sup>15</sup>Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that **He** raised up **Christ**, whom **He** did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise.

<sup>16</sup>For if the dead do not rise, then **Christ** is not risen.

<sup>17</sup>And if **Christ** is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!

<sup>18</sup>Then also those who have fallen asleep in **Christ** have perished.

<sup>19</sup>If in this life only we have hope in **Christ**, we are of all men the most pitiable.

<sup>20</sup>But now **Christ** is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

<sup>21</sup>For since by man came death, by **Man** also came the resurrection of the dead.

<sup>22</sup>For as in Adam all die, even so in **Christ** all shall be made alive.

<sup>23</sup>But each one in his own order: **Christ** the firstfruits, afterward those who are **Christ**’s at His coming.

<sup>24</sup>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.