

God's Firstfruits in the Better Resurrection

Did you know that only a relatively few Christians will take part in the first resurrection?

1Corinthians 15:51-52, *'Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all [all faithful Christians] be changed, 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.'*

Revelation 14:1,4, *'And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an **hundred forty and four thousand**, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. 4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. [not corrupted by the teaching of false churches] These are they which **follow the Lamb** whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being **the firstfruits** unto God and to the Lamb.'*

One thousand years later comes the resurrection of most people who have ever lived, including most Christians who believe they will be in the first resurrection! Revelation 20:11-12, *'And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, of which is the book life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.'*

Obviously, most then will miss out on the one thousand years of the millennium, which will see this earth prepared for the resurrection of so very many people – probably the most exciting and creative 1000 year period in all of human history, when this earth will be changed into a worldwide Eden, (read our article 'Return to Eden').

Those who participate in the first resurrection are God's **firstfruit** harvest of the Saints, and I don't mean those saints nominated by the Roman Catholic church, but rather the few Christians who have actually proved themselves faithful down the ages, Revelation 17:14, *'These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: **and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.***'

Faithful here is PISTOS (Greek) to be trusted, reliable, to be steady, steadfast. Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words adds, 'Note: in 3 John 5 the R.V. version has "Thou doest a faithful work," For A.V. "Thou doest faithfully ... " to do a faithful work is to do what is worthy of a faithful man ... Wescott suggests "thou makest sure (piston) whatsoever thou workest." (i.e., it will not lose its reward)'. The suggestion then, is that the word 'faithful' implies an *active* faith.

One chapter in the New Testament helps us to understand more clearly the meaning of the word faithful. Hebrews chapter 11 lists examples of faithful men and women who will be in the first resurrection. All listed here had an ACTIVE faith, actively serving God while believing and trusting in Him and His word.

So, it is not enough just to *believe*, if you hope to serve God during the millennium. Millions of Christians do that. The Greek word for *believe* is Peitho- Vines: 'see, agree, assure, obey, persuade, trust, yield,' and includes the note : 'For apisto, the negative of No 1, and apeitho, the negative of No 2, see Disbelieve, Disobedient.' The implication then, is that obedience to God's instructions is included in Belief, and striding out in faith to follow His word is a requirement for the first resurrection. Obviously, if one shows no interest in what God requires of one, then that is impossible, so nominal Christians who fail to study God's word will not qualify, nor will those who mistakenly think that God's laws do not apply to Christians, Matthew 5:17-18, *'Think not that I am come to*

destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.'

Sadly, these qualifications explain why there will be so few in the first resurrection, but this is part of the Plan of God. God explains this through His Holy Days, which have their roots in the agricultural cycle in Israel. The Holy Days listed in Leviticus chapter 23, and apart from the weekly 7th day, begin with the Passover which commemorates the exodus of Israel from Egypt and the way that God's people must come out of the world's ways.

Nearly all Old Testament references to months except the first one, Abib, are by number. The first month of the year is special in this regard and, actually, wherever it occurs it is preceded by the definite article, "the", i.e. "the abib", because the word describes the condition of the grain in the firstfruit barley crop, if it is ready to be harvested.

At the end of the 12th month, the Priests went out into the fields to make sure that the barley would be ready to harvest 2 weeks later, to provide the Wavesheaf offering (Leviticus 23: 9-14) during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. If it would not be ready, an extra month, the second Adar was added, making a 13 month year.

The first month of God's years then, is the month of **the Abib**, or Aviv (e.g. Tel Aviv – the hill of the barley), a special month because it pictures the start of God's Firstfruit harvest of His saints. Jesus Christ was the first of the Firstfruits to be resurrected, Romans 8:29, *'For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the **firstborn among many brothers and sisters.**'* NLT. He will return for His Bride to be, at the same time of the year. Revelation 14:15, *'And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; **for the harvest of the earth is ripe.**'*

Most Christians who believe they keep the Holy Days have not grasped this important fact, despite knowing that each day should picture the progression of the harvests which take place in Israel, first the smaller barley harvest, then the wheat, culminating in the fruit harvest at the end of the agricultural year. Exodus 23:16b, *'You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labour.'* ESV.

That final harvest, pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles, is the great harvest of all who have ever lived, at the second resurrection, and the gathering of those living to that harvest during the Great Tribulation described in Revelation 14: 18-19, *'And **another** angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.'*

Christians should have as their goal the tremendous privilege of being in the **firstfruit harvest** of the 1st resurrection, and serving with Christ in the millennium.

Hebrews 11:35, *'Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain **a better resurrection.**'*

So, why is it that the first resurrection will be so small in number? Actually many, if not most of those resurrected then are long dead, and those now living, in that resurrection will therefore be few indeed.

The answer is that God is the Master of family planning. Jesus Christ will gather together His Bride at the first resurrection, Revelation 19:7, *'Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready.'*

They will then serve with Him as Kings and Priests during the 1000 years, when the Earth's population at first is quite small, Revelation 5:10, *'And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.'*

They will teach, lead and rule those who survive the Great Tribulation, until they too recognise their need for repentance and baptism. Revelation 20:4, *'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.'*

The children of those they teach, will provide a growing number educated in the way of God as the 1000 years progress, who may well assist Christ's Bride in the second resurrection, along with those mentioned in Revelation 7:14-15, who 'washed their robes' only during the Great Tribulation, and so missed out on being part of the Firstfruit harvest. *'And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which **came out of great tribulation**, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.'*

During the 100 years (Isaiah 65:20) of the 2nd resurrection, the Great White Throne judgment described in Revelation 20:11-13, all who have ever lived will have their chance to become members of the growing family of God, but none of them will ever attain to the close and special relationship with Jesus Christ, which is for those in the Firstfruit harvest, who become the Bride of Christ!

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