

Fact Sheet for **“What Does This Day Mean to You?”**
1 Corinthians 15:20-24

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The apostle Paul begins 1 Corinthians 15 with a thought that he will carry through the whole chapter. (Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, 13-14)

ESV ²⁰ **But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.**

The term "firstfruits" is an agricultural term that refers to the initial part of the harvest.

²¹ **For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.**

"by a man came death" - Adam (see next verse)

²² **For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.**

"in Adam all die" - everyone! (Romans 5:12)

"in Christ shall all be made alive" - only Christians (see next verse)
In Paul's mind it is "we all", not "everyone".

²³ **But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.** ²⁴ **Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.**

"those who belong to Christ" - These are the ones who shall be made alive.

There is a very specific reason that Paul used the term "firstfruits" in referring to Christ's resurrection. God designed a powerful illustration of this in the Old Testament.

ESV **Leviticus 23:9-14**

Notice something. This is the only one of the 7 feasts described in Leviticus 23 whose date is left to be determined. It wasn't until the time of Joshua and the battle of Jericho that the date of Firstfruits was set in stone (Joshua 5:10-12).

Passover had always been on the 14th day of the 1st month. Unleavened Bread had always started at Passover and continued for 7 days. Firstfruits was always to be on Sunday. But now it was always to be on the Sunday following Passover, during the week of Unleavened Bread... Resurrection Sunday!

When the disciples were first coming to the empty tomb on resurrection morning the priests were preparing to present the offering for Firstfruits in the temple. God pointed to the day of Jesus' resurrection in the book of Joshua.

Now, the agricultural term "firstfruits" was used in the NT to illustrate several other things.

The indwelling Holy Spirit (Romans 8:23)

Christians (2 Thessalonians 2:13; James 1:8; Revelation 14:4)

Even Abraham and the patriarchs (Romans 11:16)

However, 1 Corinthians 15:20 and 24 are different.

ESV 20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

This is much more than a mere illustration. It rises to the level of "fulfillment" of OT scripture. And unlike the other illustrative uses of "firstfruits" there is a OT feast associated with this day. Today is the day! As "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep" Jesus in His resurrection is the fulfillment of Leviticus 23:9-14 and Joshua 5:10-12. This day is one facet of God's perfect and intricate design for our salvation!

If you choose not to believe in Jesus Christ, not to accept His sacrifice for your sins, not to be born again... the Bible is crystal clear. There is no "better place" you will go to. Your final destination is the lake of fire. Jesus told of two men, one poor but saved (Lazarus) and one not saved (a rich man). Read Luke 16:22-24. This message drove home to me when I was 10 years old.

If you have accepted Christ as your Savior this day will always remind you that if you die before Christ returns you will be resurrected to a wonderful eternity with God. And it is God who will always keep us!

But there is a travesty that is all too prevalent among Christians. Many who truly have faith in Jesus Christ, who will one day inherit an immortal body, but who choose not to live for Him. It's inconvenient. It costs too much. It will change my schedule. It will change my involvement in different things. It will force me to change my attitude.

The Christian life does take effort to live well. Look at the last verse of 1 Corinthians 15...

ESV 1 Corinthians 15:58 ¶ Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Which category do you fit in?

Which category do you want to fit in?