

# THE THREEFOLD ORDER OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS

## Interpretation of I Corinthians 15, Verses 20-28

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### INTRODUCTION

I remember very vividly when I first saw the basic truth that I am going to share with you in this Bible study. I was in Lima, Peru in 1982 endeavoring to help new brethren be in unity on several basic Bible doctrines. One of the doctrines was the Pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church. One morning, as I was making preparation for a meeting later in the evening, I saw the subtle, underlying parallel the Apostle Paul was using in I Corinthians 15 of the three Feasts of Israel being typical of the three “orders” of the resurrection of the righteous. It was strikingly beautiful when my eyes were opened to comprehend what Paul was alluding to.

Basically explained, there are three times in the year God required that all the men of Israel were to appear before Him at the three designated Feasts (Exo. 23:17; 34:23 & Deut. 16:16). Likewise, the Apostle Paul teaches that the resurrection of the righteous dead, to appear before God, will be in three stages or “order(s).” Paul said “*every man in his own order*” (15:23). These “orders” fit perfectly the parallel of the three designated Feasts. The signal, as it were, of what Paul was inspired to reveal was his use of the “*Firstfruit wave sheaf offering*” as a type of the resurrection of Christ which was the first “order” of the resurrection of the saints. As I noted this and then observed the sequence that followed, the whole simple parallel literally “jumped out” at me. Next Paul makes the statement, “afterward, those who are Christ’s.” Since Christ was the Firstfruit sample, it follows that “those who are Christ’s” must refer to the Harvest of Firstfruits that follows—which is the Church of Jesus Christ. “Then the end...when death is abolished” refers simply to the resurrection of the Old Testament saints, which is represented by the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year. There it was, plain and simple!

How many times in the past I and other brethren had sought for a clear explanation of this passage of Scripture and it seemed to elude us. I studied it more carefully. There it remained, clear and sensible. I immediately shared it with the brethren there in Peru in a very simplified form. Now I want to share it with you in a much more thorough and careful, step by step procedure because, of course, it must be clearly proven from the Scriptures and be able to stand any test of criticism. Furthermore, this is a very importance subject, the outcome of which gives answers to some basic problems. The proper interpretation of this passage of Scripture is crucial to our understanding the resurrection of the righteous dead. Likewise, it is necessary for our understanding of the uniqueness of the Rapture of the Church—separate and distinct from the resurrection of the Old Testament and Tribulation saints. Therefore, if there ever was a clear demonstration and positive proof of the distinctive Pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church, it would be found here in I Corinthians 15. Once we have traversed through this passage in a careful manner, I believe you will agree with me and rejoice in the truth as well. (Others have also seen this basic truth—see Appendix .)

In order to understand this in a positive way I will need to go through I Corinthians 15:20-28 in a very slow and careful manner, verse by verse, and step by step. I hope you will be prepared for such a study. I am sure in the end you will be rewarded for your patience and perseverance.

### *Two Kinds of Resurrection*

First of all, it is important to remember that the Scriptures reveal two entirely different kinds of resurrection of the dead. The Bible clearly reveals that everyone will be resurrected from the dead, both the saved and the unsaved. The resurrection of these two different categories of people will be for vastly different reasons and will take place at different times. We must understand this so that we do not mingle the resurrection of the unsaved with that of the saved—or with any of the “orders” of the resurrection of the saved. One passage that illustrates the two kinds of resurrection is John 5:28, 29 where Christ said, “*Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.*” The prophet Daniel spoke of this as “*some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt”* (Dan. 12:2). The Apostle Paul (Acts 24:15) designated them as “*a resurrection of the dead, both the just and the unjust.*” In the book of Revelation the resurrection of these two categories of people, the just and the unjust, is separated by the thousand year reign of the Messiah (Rev. 20:4-6 & 13-15). The resurrection of the unrighteous is called “*the second death*” in Revelation 20:6 & 14.

It is highly important that these two distinct categories of resurrection never be mingled together. The righteous will get “*glorified bodies*” whereas the unrighteous are not said to get such bodies. They will exist forever in resurrected mortal bodies. The righteous will be in a place and position of bliss and glory whereas the wicked will be in everlasting shame and torment. “*Death*” as the enemy of the righteous will have been “*destroyed*.” This is not true of the unrighteous. “*Death*” is not destroyed for them. As was stated above, their resurrection is called “*the second death*.” Death as a condition of continued existence in *separation* from God will be the fate of the lost. Paul does not speak of the resurrection of the lost in I Corinthians 15. The resurrection of the unjust takes place at the end of the thousand year reign of Christ and just before the creation of the New heavens and New Earth.

It would also be appropriate at this time to clarify what it means to be one of the “*righteous or just*” and also what it means to “*have done good*” as Christ spoke in John 5:29. The “*just*” are only righteous because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:22 & 4:5) as their sin-bearer and substitute, Who paid the penalty for their sins in His sacrificial death. Christ died for the sins of all mankind and all those who place their faith in Christ are said to be justified and made righteous. All our sins were “*imputed*” to Jesus Christ when he died the sinners’ death. On the cross “*He (God the Father) made Him (Christ) Who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*” (II Cor. 5:21). All of Christ’s perfect “*righteousness*” was imputed to the believer in the resurrection of Christ from the dead (Rom. 5:17 & 6:7-11), so that now, in the sight of God, the believer stands in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Likewise, as to “*doing good works*,” let it be known first of all that “*this is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He has sent*” (John 6:29). This is the only “*work*” that the helpless sinner can do in order to be saved (Acts 16:30,31). The one who has placed his faith in Jesus Christ is then “*created unto good works that God has before ordained we should*

walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). So to be qualified for the resurrection of “*the just,*” and to be one who has “*done good,*” is first of all to have placed your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as the gracious Savior and Lord of your life.

### ***Three “Orders” to the Resurrection of the Righteous***

Secondly, it is also very important to recognize that the resurrection of the righteous will not take place all at once, at the same time, or in the same event. As I stated before, in I Corinthians 15 the Apostle Paul revealed to us that the resurrection of the righteous dead will be in different stages or “*order[s]*” (I Cor. 15:23). The last “*order*” being at “*the end*” (I Cor. 15:24) and is also spoken of in Revelation 20:4. We shall find that this last “*order*” takes place at “*the end*” time event of the second coming of Jesus Christ to rule and reign on earth. This happens at the very beginning of the thousand year reign of Christ. Many interpreters confuse the resurrection of the “*unjust*” with the last “*order*” of the resurrection of the righteous.

Furthermore, the fact that there are different “*orders*” to the resurrection of the righteous should be very helpful in distinguishing in our minds the different groups designated for each “*order*” and the different times when God will resurrect the righteous dead. The three primary Feasts of Israel were held on entirely different dates of the calendar. If the families could not all come to Jerusalem for these Feasts, then the heads of households were required to attend as representatives of the households on these three occasions. There was not ONE super-large Feast. Rather there were three distinct Feasts for Israel in the counsels of God. Each was on a different date of the year. In a similar way, since we will find that there are three occasions in which God will resurrect the *righteous*, we should not try to blend them together, or equate any of these “*orders*” with the resurrection of the *wicked*. Each group or “*order*” of the righteous will be raised from the dead at its own time, with its own company of saints and with its own distinction from the others. This fact will settle a whole lot of confusion on the subject.

### ***An Outline of Chapter 15 with Emphasis on Verses 20-28***

A simple outline can be made in six (6) sections:

- 1.) A basic element in the Gospel proclamation is—  
the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (verses 1-11);
- 2.) The futility of our preaching the truths about Christ  
if Christ is not raised from the dead (verses 12-19);
- 3.) The sequence of the resurrection of the righteous  
in three “companies” or “orders” (verses 20-28);**
- 4.) The proof of the resurrection from the dead  
by the believers suffering willingly (verses 29-34);
- 5.) The types of resurrection bodies and the distinction  
between earthly and heavenly bodies (verses 35-49);
- 6.) The revelation of the mystery clearly spelled out—  
the Rapture of the Church saints of this age (verses 50-58).

In our focusing on verses 20-28 (section 3, above) I will print it out in a way that I hope will make it easier to comprehend without doing any damage to the text. Certain older Bible

teachers used this method (see E.W. Bullinger and the Emphasized Bible by Rotherham). I will place **in bold** certain words and the quotes from the Hebrew Scriptures. It is important to know what is being quoted. I will also indent certain portions in order to visually perceive their position in relationship to the whole of what is being said. Some words I will italicize and underline for further distinction. When we thus separate the passage into certain parts or sections, I believe we can better grasp the understanding (or perspective) of the last section especially. The last part of this section, verse 24 through verse 28, are all qualifiers concerning the third “order” to the resurrection of the righteous. In my translation of these verses I am going to be using both the New King James Version and the New American Standard Version interchangeably.

Verse 20. “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, and has become  
The ‘**Firstfruit**’ of those who have fallen asleep.

21. For since through man came death,  
also through Man came the resurrection of the dead.

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

23. But each in his own order (company or rank):

(1) *Christ the ‘Firstfruit,’*

(2) *afterward, those who are Christ’s at His coming,*

24. (3) *then the end,*

when He delivers up the Kingdom to God, even the Father,  
when He abolishes all rule and all authority and power.

25. For He must reign ‘**till He puts all enemies under His feet.**’

26. **The last enemy to be abolished is death.**

27. For ‘**He has put all things under His feet.**’

But when He says that, ‘**All things are put under Him,**’  
it is evident that He who put all things under Him  
is excepted.

28. But when all things are subjected to Him,  
then also will the Son, Himself, be subjected to the One  
having subjected all things to Him,  
in order that God may be All in All.”

I am sure that as we go through this study you will want to return again and again to these Scriptures to align yourself with the facts that the Apostle Paul is giving. Now we are going to start with verse 20 and go through each of the verses very slowly and carefully because each and every statement is very important.

#### “**FIRSTFRUIT**” (Verse 20)

The word which signals our interest at the start of this section of Scripture is the word “*firstfruit*” (or firstfruits). In Christ’s resurrection from the dead, He is said to be the “firstfruits”

of those saints who have fallen asleep in death. This word stands, therefore, as an insignia on the discussion that is to follow. Paul will repeat it in verse 23. Thus it is waved like a banner at the beginning of this very important section. To carefully understand it and to note its importance we must go back to the three Harvest Feasts of Israel.

First there was the Feast of Unleavened Bread, sometimes also called Passover, since the Passover meal was eaten the evening beginning this Feast of seven days. It was during this Feast that the offering of the “*Firstfruits*” was made (see Lev. 23:10,11). The offering was in the form of a “*sheaf*” or bundle of the first or early grain to be harvested. Sometimes this “*sheaf*” was called by its Hebrew name, “*Omer*,” which also had reference to a particular measure of grain (see Exo.16:36). This “*sheaf*” of “*firstfruits*” was to be “*waved*” up in the air (Lev. 23:11) on a Sunday morning which occurred during that Feast (see my study, *Christ Our Passover*, for a detailed explanation). This offering was not a separate Feast in and of itself as is often erroneously stated by many Bible teachers. It was simply a very special offering that was made during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This first Feast was actually not a harvest Feast, whereas the last two Feasts were specifically centered around the two times of harvesting in Israel. However, this first Feast took on a harvest theme by this particular offering of the freshly cut early grain as the “*sheaf of Firstfruits*” being waved up in the air. This special offering was intended as a token of the blessed full harvest that was to come. The full harvest would be celebrated some fifty days later after this offering was made. We will come back to this offering in a moment.

The second Feast was called by several different names. It is sometimes called “*the Feast of Firstfruits*” because it involved the Spring harvest of firstfruits (Exo.23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:17 & Num. 28:26). This Spring harvest Feast would also most often be called “*the Feast of Weeks*” (Heb. *Shavuot*, Exo. 34:22; Num. 28:26; & Deut. 16:10) because they would count off seven weeks from the offering of the “*wave sheaf*” during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Then after the seven *weeks* had been counted (49 days), on the early morning of the fiftieth day they would have the celebration of, as the Jews would say, *Shavuot (Weeks)*. A third designation for this Feast is the Greek word *Pentecost* which means “*fiftieth*.” This is what it is commonly called in the Gentile world and this is the designation that is used in the book of Acts chapter two. The main characterization of this Feast was the offering of the harvested grain in the form of “*two loaves of bread waved up before the Lord*” exactly as they had done fifty days earlier with the “*wave sheaf*” of grain. And here we see the vital interrelationship between these two offerings. We will have more to say about this later.

The third and final Feast of the year was also designated differently. It is called “*the Feast of Ingathering*” (Exo. 34:22, etc.) because it was the final fall harvest of all remaining nuts, fruits and any additional grain. It was also called “*the Feast of Booths*” because it is associated with Israel’s wilderness journey and their dwelling in booths of foliage for some forty years (Lev. 23:40-43). The most common name for this Feast was another name for booths which was “*Tabernacles*.” This is the most common designation (Lev. 23:34 & Deut. 16:16).

### ***The Feasts—God’s Timetable***

Now, an important consideration for us to make regarding these Feasts is that they served as a timetable or calendar of supreme significance. The whole liturgical calendar of the nation of Israel was centered around the celebration of these three Feasts. They were not only of

cultural significance to the mutual fellowship of the families of Israel, but they are called by God “THE APPOINTED TIMES OF THE LORD” (Lev. 23:4, NASV). God had stipulated this calendar of celebration for the nation of Israel as a very important memorial of things to come. “*Three times a year you shall celebrate a Feast to Me*” (Exo. 23:14). This is not merely a series of Feasts for the benefit of the people of Israel, but they were Feasts “TO GOD.” And again, “*Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord God*” (Exo. 23:17). And again, “*Three times a year all your males shall appear before Jehovah your God in the place which He chooses*” (Deut. 16:16). When we come over to the inspired Greek scriptures and observe the application the Apostle Paul makes from aspects of these Feasts, we will apply a similar *timetable or calendar* to the subject of the resurrection of the righteous “*to appear before God.*” Before we investigate this more carefully we must take note of verses 21 & 22.

### ***The Two “Adams” (Verses 21 and 22a)***

In verses 21 and 22 Paul compares two men—Adam and Christ. Through the first “*man*” (Adam) came death. Through another “*Man*” (Christ) came the resurrection of the dead. Everyone vitally connected to the first “*Adam*” is dying. Every man vitally connected to “*Christ*” is going to be resurrected from the dead or “*made alive.*” Obviously, those connected to this second “*Man*” are going to experience the redemption of all that was lost by being connected to the first “*man.*” Since all the unbelieving wicked are headed for what the Bible calls “*the second death,*” they are not included in the blessings of the resurrection of the righteous—they are not said to be “*in Christ.*” Paul will later continue this theme in verses 45-49 of this chapter. It will further confirm to us that the resurrection of these second and third “*orders*” is the resurrection of the “*just*” unto “*life*”—and does not involve the resurrection of the “*unjust*” unto “*damnation.*” The resurrection of the wicked, being properly labeled “*the second death*” (Rev. 20:11-15), should not be expected to have any involvement in the resurrection which is before us—which is the resurrection of those “*in Christ*” and unto “*life.*”

Later in verses 42-49 Paul speaks of the natural bodies we have received from our physical forefather, “*Adam.*” Those bodies are said to be “*in corruption,*” “*in dishonor,*” “*in weakness,*” “*a natural body*” and “*of the dust.*” In contrast to this, the righteous will be raised in bodies that we will have received from the “*last Adam*” (Jesus Christ). The new bodies that are guaranteed to us in Christ are described thusly, “*in incorruption,*” “*in glory,*” “*in power,*” “*a spiritual body*” and “*heavenly.*” Consequently, when Paul made reference in the earlier passage that we are studying (verses 21 & 22) to the resurrection in the “*Man...Christ,*” it is to be understood that he is talking about the same resurrection of the righteous in glorified bodies as he later described in verses 42-49. This is further confirmation that the following “*orders*” of resurrection of the dead only concern the saved in Christ. This will again be emphasized in the last part of this verse 22.

### ***“In Christ Shall All Be Made Alive” (Verse 22b)***

The words “*in Christ*” are exclusive words. The lost or unsaved are never said to be “*in Christ.*” Four times in this chapter Paul uses the expression “*in Christ*” and once, “*in the Lord.*” In each and every case the expression means the very same people—the righteous by faith in Christ—see verses 18, 19, 22, 31 & 58.

Earlier in verses 18 & 19 Paul had said that if Christ, Himself, has not been raised from

the dead, then all of those who have fallen asleep “*in Christ*” have perished and are “*most miserable*.” However, since it is an established fact—attested to by many witnesses and by the evidences that Paul gives—that Christ was raised from the dead, then we have the confidence that all who are said to be “*in Christ*” will also be made alive. Therefore, the words “*in Christ*” (also found here in verse 22) are given in answer to the possible frustration that would result if Christ, Himself, were not raised from the dead. Now verse 22 immediately before us is talking about the very same people as verses 18 & 19. Paul’s designation is consequently very specific as to the fact that he is talking only about the resurrection of the righteous. So now we actually have double confirmation that Paul is herein exclusively talking about the resurrection of the righteous. There will be no unsaved or unrighteous in any of these “*orders*.” The Holy Spirit has therefore, made this very clear in this passage. It is important that this conclusion be observed because there are many interpreters of this passage of Scripture who carelessly mingle the resurrection of the lost with these “*orders*” of the resurrection of those “*in Christ*.” That will only bring confusion to the simplicity that is before us.

I will say again, and with the confirmations before us, that the following “*orders*” of this resurrection have nothing whatsoever to do with the resurrection of the lost. The resurrection of the lost is an entirely different subject from the resurrection that is before us.

### **“But Each In His Own Order”** (Verse 23)

Another crucial word that the Apostle Paul uses in this section is this word “*order*.” It seems simple enough. However, this particular word is only used one time in the Greek Scriptures and that is right here in I Cor. 15:23. That means that the word is different or somewhat unusual. The lexicons all say that it is a military term that means a “*company, or body of soldiers*.” As Paul uses the word in this statement, “*each in his own order*,” it means a series of “*companies, or bodies of troops*” each following the other as if marching in rank. This word is used in the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament. There it is used of the tribes of Israel as camped by “*rank and army in standard*” in Numbers 2:2, and as a “*troop*” in II Samuel 23:13. So there we have a good illustration of how it is used. The various Greek Dictionaries endorse this meaning:

Strong says, “Something orderly in arrangement (a troop), i.e. (fig.), a series or succession.”

Thayer says, “That which has been arranged, thing placed in order. Spec., a body of soldiers, a corps...I Cor. 15:23 where Paul specifies several distinct bands or classes of those raised from the dead.”

(By use of the word “*several*” Thayer implies more than two.)

W.E. Vine says, “That which has been arranged in order, was especially a military term, denoting a company; it is used metaphorically in I Cor. 15:23 of the various classes of those who have part in the first resurrection.”

(W.E. Vine is very accurate when he says, “*the first resurrection*,” because the first resurrection involves only the righteous.)

A Greek-English Lexicon, Arndt & Gingrich says, “A military term for bodies of troops in various numbers such as divisions or battalions of soldiers...In I Corinthians 15:23 the gift of life is given to various ones in turn, and at various times. One view is that in this connection Paul distinguishes

three groups: *Christ*, who already possesses life, *the Christian*, who will receive it at His second coming, and *the rest of humanity*...who will receive it when death, as the last of God's enemies, is destroyed."

The major difference from this last stated position by Arndt & Gingrich is that I am proving that the third "*order*" is most certainly not "*the rest of humanity*," but the rest of "*the righteous dead*," i.e., all the Old Testament and Tribulation saints who will be raised at the coming of Christ to rule and reign at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. The rest of humanity will be raised to damnation and not to life.

### **"Afterward...Then" (Verse 23 & 24)**

Of equal importance are the next two words. Fitting with the word "order" are the adverbs which show succession—"afterward" and "then." The Greek words "*epeita*" (afterward) and "*eita*" (then) are used where sequence is in view. Both of these words are employed here to signify a succession of events:

1. "*Christ the firstfruits*,"
2. "afterward [*epeita*—next in sequence] *they that are Christ's at His coming*,"
3. "then [*eita*—next in sequence] *the end...when death is destroyed*."

Identical language is used elsewhere in I Corinthians to illustrate this. I Cor. 12:28 says, "*God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that [*epeita*] miracles, then [*eita*] gifts of healing, etc.*" Again, right here in chapter 15, verses 5-7 it says, "*and that He (Christ) was seen of Cephas, then [*eita*] of the twelve: after that [*epeita*] He was seen of above five hundred...after that [*epeita*] He was seen of James; then [*eita*] of all the apostles.*"

In addition, the employment of these words gives confirmation to the fact that there are THREE "orders" to the resurrection of the righteous—"Christ" (No. 1), "afterwards..." (No. 2), and "then..." (No. 3).

It is important to remember that, in sequences such as this, the subject of the sequence remains in the same nature or character, i.e., the offices of the church, and those who have seen the resurrected Christ. Similarly, here in I Cor. 15:23 & 24 the first two in sequence, without controversy, constitute the resurrection of the righteous dead. It follows that the third "*order*" must be of the same nature or character, i.e., the remaining righteous dead who are not of the first two companies. To insert as the last order the resurrection as being that of the unrighteous who are destined to damnation is to get everything "out of order" and in disarray, to say the least. By no stretch of the imagination are Christ and His people to be placed "*in rank*" with the unrighteous who are marching to hell! I will emphasize again, therefore—do not confuse the two distinct kinds of resurrection, being that of the saved and the unsaved, with the three "*orders*" of the first resurrection.

### **1. "Christ The Firstfruit" (Verse 23a)**

This is the first "*order*" of all those "*in Christ*" to be "*made alive*" (v. 22). It is properly and specifically Christ, Himself, as the "*firstfruit*" of "*those who have fallen asleep*" (v. 20). It is noteworthy however, that though Christ's resurrection is primarily in view, in the "Firstfruit wave Offering" there was a bundle of stalks of grain waved up in the air, and not just a single

stalk of grain. Indeed, there were others who were resurrected from the dead at the time of Christ's resurrection. Matthew tells us that when Christ died on the cross there was a great earthquake and "many of the graves were opened." These saints arose from the dead and "appeared to many" in the city of Jerusalem, after Christ's resurrection (Matt. 27:51-53). Thus, there was sufficient number resurrected at this time to fulfill the picture of a bundle of grain waved in the air in the figure of the grain offering.

Since I have already commented about this offering on the first occasion that Paul gave it (v. 20), I will only briefly give the symbolism here. The meaning of the "*firstfruit offering*," originally offered on a Sunday morning following the resurrection of Christ, is the following:

- 1.) The initial planting of the seemingly dead kernels of grain serves as a picture of death—"except a grain of wheat falls into the ground and *dies*..." (John 12:24);
- 2.) The springing up of the new stalks of grain and their harvesting in the Spring speaks of the resurrection of the dead—"what you sow is not *made alive* unless it dies" (I Cor. 15:36);
- 3.) The ritual harvesting of the first grain and offering it to God speaks of Christ's resurrection as the "*Firstfruit*" sample of those to be raised (verse 23);
- 4.) In the ritual offering, the grain is not burnt on the altar or sacrificed in any way. Instead it is waved in the air. The *waving up in the air* of the bundle of grain to the Lord speaks of Christ's ascension up to God.
- 5.) This special offering stands as the *token guarantee* of the immediate greater Harvest to soon appear and to be celebrated some 50 days later.

I do not believe that any serious Bible teacher would disagree with this understanding of the "Firstfruit" offering. For additional information about the timing of this offering in the days of Christ see my Bible study, "*Christ Our Passover*."

## **2. "Afterward They That Are Christ's" (Verse 23b)**

Indeed, the second reason I believe Paul is using the symbolism of the three harvest Feasts of Israel as the backdrop for this passage of Scripture is because of the exact terminology he employs in this second "*order*." Paul does not say, "afterwards the Church," or "afterwards the saints of this age of Grace." Those designations may very well have been accurate and the group of saints he is speaking about, but that is not the wording Paul is inspired to use. It is important to realize that the wording Paul uses is designed to *connect* those resurrected in this second order *directly to Christ*, and to what Christ, Himself, *represented*. Christ is the "*Firstfruits*" of those to be raised from the dead. That meant that Christ is the representation of the "*Firstfruit Harvest*" to come. It follows, therefore, that the second group will be identified in substance as *belonging to Christ* and to what Christ *represented*. "*Afterwards they that are Christ's*" is, therefore, the wording that is descriptive of the Spring "*Harvest of Firstfruits*" which soon follows Christ's resurrection from the dead and will be celebrated some 50 days later at Pentecost. *The New Bible Commentary: Revised*, by Eerdmans Publishing Co. (page 1071), makes the following observation, "First fruits implies community of nature with the 'harvest' to follow; i.e., Christ's resurrection promises the ultimate home-gathering of all God's people. The full harvest was foreshadowed and consecrated by the first sheaf brought as an offering."

By the consecration of the “*Firstfruit, Wave Sheaf*” at Passover they signified the consecration of the whole harvest of Firstfruits, of which harvest the “*Sheaf*” is the first part and sampling. By this act of the consecration of the part and sampling they were in effect consecrating the whole harvest to the Lord God. Consequently, at the time of Christ’s resurrection there was the “*Wave Sheaf*” offering presented before the Lord, and so, at the time of the celebration of the whole harvest fifty days later, there was the “*Wave Loaves*” offering also presented before the Lord. Both offerings symbolized resurrection and ascension. Likewise, according to the principle stated by Paul in Romans 11:16—“*For if the firstfruit (Christ) is holy, the lump (the church) is also holy.*” What the one is, so is the other! In actuality, therefore, the “Feast of Firstfruits” (Pentecost) is the clear fulfillment of Christ’s words as recorded in John 12:24—“Unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it will bring forth much fruit.”

In this connection, one of the additional names for this particular Feast, which I have not mentioned before is “*The Feast of Conclusion*” (Heb. *Hag ha-Azereth*, or simply *Azereth*). This was the rabbinic name given to the Feast because of its close association to the offering of the “*Wave Sheaf*” during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This close connection between the two offerings is because of the “counting of days and weeks” from one to the other, by the similarity of the Harvest involved, by the similarity of the grain offering and by the similarity in the manner of both being “Waved” in the air before the Lord. Therefore, the rabbis considered it as a “One Day Addition” to the Feast of Unleavened Bread (for seven days), just like there was a one day extension to the Feast of Tabernacles. Tabernacles was a seven day Feast with an eighth day culmination celebration added—Lev. 23:36 & Num. 29:35. Therefore, the words “*Afterward they that are Christ’s*” carries the idea that is expressed in this other name that is given to the Feast—then “*The Feast of Conclusion.*”

The word “firstfruits” by itself simply has reference to the first harvest of grain in the new year. The early “Sheaf of Firstfruits” waved in the air during the Feast of Unleavened Bread was simply the token and dedication of the whole “Harvest of Firstfruits” to be celebrated 50 days later at Pentecost.

In addition, “they that are Christ’s” (I Cor. 15:23) is the same as “the dead in Christ” (I Thess. 4:16). In addition, the statement earlier in I Cor. 15:20, “firstfruits of them that sleep” has reference to Christ being the firstfruits of “those who sleep in Jesus” in I Thess. 4:14. In other words, “then they that are Christ’s” has reference to the Rapture of the Church as spelled out in I Thessalonians 4.

### **“*New Grain Offering*” (Lev. 23:16)**

Fifty days after the offering of the “*wave sheaf of Firstfruits*” was the offering of **the two loaves of bread** made from **one lump of dough** at the “*Feast of Firstfruits*” (Heb. *Hag Habikurim*), most often called the “*Feast of Weeks*” (Heb. *Shavout*) or “*Pentecost*” (Greek, 50<sup>th</sup>). The offering from one batch of dough that was in the form of two loaves of bread is called the “*New Grain Offering*” in Lev. 23:16. It is undoubtedly a fact that the spiritual meaning and explanation of this particular offering lay dormant in Israel’s history until the time of the revelations given to the Apostle Paul concerning the “*One New Man*” (Eph. 2:15), which is also called “*One Bread*” (I Cor. 10:17).

This One New Man, which is “*the church which is Christ’s body,*” actually began on the

Day of Pentecost. Pentecost is the birthday of the Church. No doubt the spiritual significance of Pentecost points to the church of Jesus Christ created on that Day. Even to this time Jewish teachers are only speculative as to its meaning. It has even been spoken of as a “mystery” feast (see, *The Jerusalem Post, International Edition*, June 1, 2006, “What’s In A Name” by rabbi Reskin). It was only in post Biblical times that they assigned the giving of the Law for a purpose in the celebration. That God has now made manifest the spiritual explanation of Pentecost will become clear as we compare Rom. 8:11 & 23 with I Cor. 15:23. Likewise, in several other passages, Paul will show how the Church’s resurrection is vitally connected to that of Christ’s resurrection (see I Thess. 4:14; I Cor. 15:20; Rom. 8:11, etc.). No doubt, “*They that are Christ’s*” (I Cor. 15:23) is the same as “*the dead in Christ*” (I Thess. 4:16) who will rise first.

**“*Firstfruits of the Spirit*” (Rom. 8:11 & 23)**

Not only is Paul saying by positive inference in I Cor. 15:23 that the next “*order*” in the resurrection of the saints is the “*Harvest of Firstfruits,*” but that is explicitly what he says in Romans 8:11 & 23. Thereby we will have confirmation that the Church of Jesus Christ is represented by the “*Firstfruit*” harvest. Listen to Paul’s words:

*“But if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you,  
He Who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal  
bodies through His Spirit Who dwells in you...And not only this,  
but we also ourselves, having the **firstfruits** of the Spirit, even we  
ourselves groan within ourselves waiting eagerly for the adoption  
as sons, the redemption of our body.”*

Thus, the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ is specifically identified as having the “***Firstfruits of the Spirit***” in anticipation of its resurrection from the dead. This fits perfectly with Paul’s second “*order*” of those raised from the dead in I Cor. 15:23. Consequently, one could translate I Corinthians 15:23 in the following manner in order to consistently demonstrate the truth of Roman 8:11, 23:

*“But each in his own order:  
Christ the **firstfruits** (the wave sheaf offering at Passover),  
Afterward, those that are Christ’s, having the **firstfruits**  
of the Spirit (the wave loaves offering at Pentecost),  
at His coming.”*

No one argues that the token “*Firstfruit*” is other than Jesus Christ. That is what it very plainly says twice. Likewise, no one should argue that Christ’s resurrection was not the immediate token and guarantee of the resurrection of the Church of Jesus Christ, which was born on the Day of Pentecost, and is symbolized by the offering on this Feast, and is specifically said to possess the “*firstfruits of the Spirit*” in anticipation of its bodily redemption.

Consequently, the second “*order*” in this resurrection sequence is again demonstrated to be that of the Church of Jesus Christ. Likewise, this means that there must be a separate and distinct resurrection “*order*” exclusively for the Church!

And it also means there must be a separate and distinct “*order*” to accommodate the resurrection of the Old Testament and Tribulation saints!

### *The Wave Loaves at Pentecost*

Fifty days after the offering of the “*wave sheaf*” of “*firstfruits*” at Passover is the offering of the “*wave loaves*” of the “*Feast of Firstfruits*.” The spiritual significance of this offering is the following:

- 1.) The planting of the seeds in the Fall served as a picture of death—or more appropriately, of those who are said to have “*fallen asleep*” in Christ;
- 2.) The ripened stalks of grain ready for harvesting speak of the resurrection from the dead to new life;
- 3.) A “*New Grain Offering*,” as it is designated by the Spirit of God, speaks of the Church of Jesus Christ as a “*New Creation*” (II Cor. 5:17), or “*One New Man*” (Eph. 2:15);
- 4.) However, this grain is not offered in its raw state, but is ground up into fine flour and kneaded together in one batch, and speaks of the members of the Church as being totally assimilated into one entity—i.e., “*By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body*” (I Cor. 12:13) and being “*one bread*” (I Cor. 10:17);
- 5.) Baked (tried and tested) with leaven, which actually speaks of the Church’s rapid growth into a wholesome food;
- 6.) The large batch of dough divided into two loaves simply speaks of double fruitfulness. (Some interpreters think this may mean Jew and Gentile. However, in the Church the Jew and Gentile are all mingled together in the one batch);
- 7.) The “*waving up in the air*” speaks of ascension (Rapture) up into heaven, even as it did in the case of Christ as the “*wave sheaf*”;
- 8.) To be presented “*before the Lord*” speaks of the Church’s collective gathering in heaven before God;
- 9.) Accompanied by the various blood sacrifices, all of which speak of this special offering being done on the basis of the total, finished work of Christ as our Savior;
- 10.) The number 50 simply signifies *fullness or completion*. In seven days God *completed* His work of creation (Gen. 2:1,2).  $7 \times 7 = 49$  signifies *perfect completion or fullness*. The Celebration is on the next day—the 50<sup>th</sup>. As with the celebration of the Jubilee (50<sup>th</sup>) year (see Lev. 25:8-13), so it is with Pentecost in terms of days.

In confirmation to number 10. above, we should note that the literal translation of Acts 2:1 is “*When the Day of Pentecost was completed*” (see, The NASB interlinear Greek-English New Testament). The word commonly translated “fully come” is actually the Greek word *sumpleroo*, and it means “*to fill completely*” or “*to be completed*.” This gives us the meaning of the numeral 50—“*fullness or completion*.” Since Pentecost is also prophetic of the future resurrection and ascension of the church, then it follows when the “*fullness or completion (50<sup>th</sup>)*” of the out-calling of the “*Gentiles*” comes (see Rom. 11:25), the antitypical Pentecost will be “*completed*” and the Age of Grace will have been terminated.

In this regard, please keep in mind the designation of later rabbinic tradition in naming this Feast “*The Feast of Conclusion*.” “*Completion*” and “*Conclusion*” are synonyms.

### 3. *“Then The End When...Death Is Abolished”* (Verses 24-26)

Many are puzzled (and for a long time, I was one of the many) about this last order of the resurrection in this passage of Scripture. By now you are tired of me saying this has nothing whatsoever to do with the resurrection of the unjust at the final termination of the earth after the Millennial reign of Christ. However, I have needed to emphasize this because many interpreters of the passage erroneously suppose this symbolizes the resurrection of the unsaved at the end of the Millennium. This error would be like saying that at the final Feast of Israel all the Jebusites, Philistines, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites and Amorites will appear before the Lord instead of the Israelites. This would not be in proper “order,” but in chaos. This last grouping would not fit into the Divine typology of these Feasts. Moses never ordered any collective gathering for the pagan idolaters. All three Feasts and all three “orders” are to be attended by the people of God—nobody else. There are simply three stages in which all the righteous will appear before God in resurrection—the resurrection of the just.

There is another, final important reason why we can know this third “order,” wherein “*death is abolished*,” could not possibly be talking about the resurrection of the wicked. The resurrection of the wicked or unjust is specifically identified as “the second Death” (Rev. 20:6 & 12-14). In other words, Death is NOT Abolished in the resurrection of the unjust. There is a resurrection all right—but not to Life! For the lost, Death is not an *enemy*, but rather an *instrument* in the order of God to punish the lost. They will be brought back into physical existence, but that existence will be in eternal Death and separation from God. This Death will never be destroyed.

Now our attention can be drawn to this third “order.” We shall see that there is one important difference in this last “order” of the resurrection of the righteous in comparison to the first two “orders.” In this “order” there will be no “*wave offering up to God*” as there was with the previous two “orders.” Rather, we shall find that these resurrected saints will go right into the Millennial Kingdom on earth to directly assist and rule on earth. They will not be transported into heaven as was Jesus Christ, and as will be the Church of Jesus Christ.

#### ***The Resurrection of The “Old Testament” Saints And The “Tribulation” Saints***

In the Hebrew Scriptures, and also a few times in the Greek Scriptures, there is very plainly stated the fact of the resurrection of the righteous from the dead. In addition, sometimes the exact timing of that resurrection is clearly indicated. The references in the book of Daniel (Chap.12) and in the book of Revelation (Chap. 20) include the saints of the “Great Tribulation” as well. Note the following references:

- 1.) Job 19:25-27      *“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at the last (day) on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh shall I see God...”*  
(Notice that Job’s resurrection will take place when his Redeemer stands upon the earth—not when Christ comes in the air.)
- 2.) Isa. 25:6-9      *“...And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever...and the rebuke of*

*His people He will take away from all the earth...And it shall be said in that day: 'Behold, this is our God: we have waited for Him, and He will save us...'*

(Notice, "death is swallowed up" when Christ delivers Israel.)

- 3.) Isa. 26:19-21 *"Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead... For behold, the Lord comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity..."*  
(Notice, the resurrection takes place when Christ comes to judge the inhabitants of the earth.)
- 4.) Hosea 13:9-14 *"I will be your King...I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction!..."*  
(Notice, this happens when Messiah comes to be King!)
- 5.) Dan. 12:1-3 *"...And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time (the Great Tribulation) ...And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some (at the end of the Millennium) to shame and everlasting contempt."*  
(Notice, this happens when Daniel's people are delivered at the end of the "time of trouble, such as never was...")
- 6.) Dan. 12:13 *"But you (Daniel), go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days."*  
(Amazing! Notice, this will happen at "the End.")
- 7.) Luke 14:14 & Acts 24:15 *"The resurrection of the just."*  
(Simply stating that there is the resurrection of the Just.)
- 8.) Rom. 11:15 *"For if their (Israel's) being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead."*  
(Notice, resurrection will take place when Israel is restored.)
- 9.) I Cor. 15:24-26 *"Then the end, when...the last enemy that will be destroyed is death...for He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet."*  
(Notice, like Daniel and the same time as all the rest.)
- 10.) Rev. 20:4-6 *"...Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the Word of God...And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years...Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection..."*  
(Notice again, this takes place at the end of the Great Tribulation.)

When we thus read all these passages carefully, they make it very plain that all the saints living before the time of the present Church Age expected their resurrection to occur at the last day—the time of Messiah's coming to deliver Israel and to rule on earth. The book of

Revelation speaks of this same resurrection, but primarily mentions those who have suffered martyrdom during the Great Tribulation. Actually, a careful study of the book of Daniel will indicate that this resurrection will occur some seventy-five days after the conclusion of the Great Tribulation (see my chart on *“The Future Week of Prophecy”*). We shall see that when the Messiah returns to earth, the first thing He will do is to destroy all earthly kingdoms and fight against the enemies. Then there will be a great cleansing for Israel, at the conclusion of which the dead shall be raised.

***“Then The End”*** (verse 24)

The Greek word *“telos”* simply means “end, termination, cessation, consummation, completion, last part, close or conclusion.” In a few cases this word carries the idea of “fulfillment, aim, goal, purpose or outcome.” Another radically different way in which it is used is in reference to the collection of “tax, customs or duties.” It is derived from the word *“tello”* which means to “set out for a definite point or goal.” However, this word *“tello”* is never used in the Greek New Testament, and *“telos”* rarely has that meaning (purpose or goal) in the Greek Scriptures. Thayer’s Lexicon says “what ‘end’ is intended the reader must determine by the context.” In a moment we shall see that the immediate context supplies us with the answer in terms of a quotation from Psalm 110:1, which is a clear prophecy about the second coming of the Messiah to rule and reign on earth in mighty power. In a similar way it is also a fact that the most often employment of this word *“telos”* is in description of the great last day event of the second coming of Christ at the ***“end”*** of the age—Matt. 10:22; 24:6, 13, 14; Mk. 13:7, 13; Luke 21:9; I Pet. 4:7; Rev. 2:26. Paul also employs the word with reference to the *“end”* of the present age—I Cor. 1:8; 10:11; II Cor. 1:13; Heb. 3:6, 14 & 6:11.

Interestingly enough, and also a must for our consideration, is the fact that the third and last Feast on Israel’s calendar is said to be at the ***“end”*** of the year—Exo. 23:16 (KJV). The Hebrew word for *“end”* here literally means *“the going forth or out,”* and is most often translated in this case as *“the end of the year.”* Also, in Exo. 34:22 it is said that the Feast occurs at the *“course or turn”* of the year and is sometimes translated *“at the end of the year”* as well. Furthermore, as I pointed out earlier, in the book of Daniel it is expressly stated that this resurrection will occur *“at that time (the conclusion of the great time of trouble)”* and *“(you) shall stand in your lot, at the end of the days”* (Dan. 12:9 & 13). In fact, all the prophecies from the Hebrew Scriptures concerning the resurrection of the saints of old state that it will occur at this same end time event of Messiah’s coming to judge and rule on the earth. These facts do supply the third reason why I believe Paul is using the symbolism of the Three Harvest Feasts of Israel as the backdrop for the three *“orders”* of the resurrection of the righteous.

***“When He delivers up the Kingdom to God,”***

Qualified by

***“When He Abolishes all Rule, Authority and Power,”***

Qualified by

***“For He Must Reign ‘Until He Has Put All Enemies Under His Feet’”***

(Verses 24 & 25, Psalm 110:1)

*“Then the End”* in I Cor. 15:24 is first qualified by *“When He delivers up the Kingdom to God.”* However, *“When He delivers up the Kingdom to God”* is itself qualified by *“When He*

*abolishes all rule, authority and power.*” Then the “*abolishment of all rule, authority and power*” is explained by the events in Psalm 110 which Paul now quotes. We could totally misunderstand when this “*end*” takes place were it not for Paul quoting this particular Psalm. This Psalm is one of the most often quoted passages in the Greek Scriptures—see Matt. 22:44; Acts 2:34,35; Heb. 1:13; Heb. 10:13 & here in I Cor. 15:25.

When we read Psalm 110 we will see clearly the basis for determining just exactly “*When*” this end time event takes place. I will quote it from the NASV:

1. “*The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at My right hand,  
Until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.’*”
2. *The LORD will stretch forth Thy strong scepter from Zion, saying,  
‘Rule in the midst of Thine enemies’...*
5. *The Lord is at Thy right hand; He shall shatter kings  
in the day of His wrath.*
6. *He will judge among the nations, He will fill them with corpses,  
He will shatter the chief men over a broad country.”*

It is clearly here in Psalm 110:1-7 that the Messiah will “*Abolish all Rule, Authority and Power.*” According to this Psalm the very first days of the rule of the Messiah will be done while He is “*in the midst of His enemies.*” In other words, at the beginning of His reign He will be a warrior King doing battle with the enemies. It will be “*the Day of His Wrath.*” He will destroy armies, kings and governmental powers on earth. He will judge the nations of earth in wrath. There will be multitudes of slain. Thus, the first work of the Messiah is to subdue and destroy all God’s “*enemies.*”

Knowing the prophesied time of the resurrection of the saints of old, the Apostle Paul adds in this passage of I Corinthians 15 that “*The last enemy to be abolished is death*” (v. 26). Therefore, when death has been abolished and the saints of old are resurrected “*all enemies will have been placed under His (Messiah’s) feet*” (v. 25). “*All Rule, Authority and Power*” will have been abolished—including “*Death.*” And this is precisely “*When*” He victoriously “*delivers up the Kingdom to God.*” Christ “*delivers up the Kingdom...**WHEN** He abolishes all rule...(with) All enemies under His feet.*” Consequently, “*The delivering up of the Kingdom*” is not left up to our guesswork about when it is done. It is nowhere said to be done after He has reigned on earth for a thousand years. It is done at the very beginning of His reign, upon the destruction of all earthly powers and the resurrection of the saints of old.

Alford’s Critical Commentary on the New Testament (pages 1075 & 6) makes the same observation. He states that at the point “*When it (the Kingdom) shall be fully established, every enemy overcome, everything subjected to Him,*” He will “*Deliver it (the Kingdom) up to the Father.*” In further clarification, Alford observes that Christ, being “*the mediatorial King,*” will “*At that very time of the end, Matt. 25:34, He first calls Himself by the title of THE KING, the name will no sooner be won, than laid at the feet of the Father, thus completing by the last great act of Redemption, the obedience which He manifested in His Incarnation, and in His death.*”

In summary, remember the following facts: 1.) The “*end*” in view is the time “*when He (Messiah) abolishes all rule and all authority and power;*” 2.) This happens in fulfillment of Psalm 110:1, when “*all enemies are made the footstool of His feet*” at the second coming of Christ; 3.) Having subdued all enemies, including the last one—“*death*” (meaning the resurrection of the Old Testament and Tribulation saints) takes place at this time; 4.) According

to Daniel and the prophets this resurrection is at “*the end*” or “*the last days*” at Messiah’s coming; 5.) According to the Feast typology outlining God’s prophetic time clock, the last Feast is held at “*the end of the year;*” 6.) At this time the Messiah “*delivers up the Kingdom to God;*” 7.) And the resurrection of the unjust is not in view. It is at the end of Christ’s thousand year reign, is not an “*enemy*” and is not “*abolished,*” but is called “*the second death.*”

### **“He Delivers Up The Kingdom To God” (Verse 24)**

What does it mean “*to deliver up the Kingdom to God*”? It is important to remember that in the Millennial Kingdom the Messiah (Christ) functions as a Mediatorial King. That is, Christ is the administrator of His Father’s Kingdom. Throughout the Gospel accounts the Kingdom is described as “*My Father’s Kingdom,*” “*the Kingdom of Heaven,*” or “*the Kingdom of God (meaning the Father).*” In the book of Daniel, chapter 7 verses 9-14, we are given a preview of what takes place in heaven immediately prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ. “*The Son of Man*” (*one of the titles of Christ*) is said to be “*brought near to the Ancient of Days (God the Father)*” from Whom He receives “*a Kingdom.*” This Kingdom is to be set up upon the earth when Christ comes “*in the clouds of Heaven.*” It is a very vivid scene. Christ, therefore, becomes the administrator of His Father’s Kingdom.

At the spectacular event of the second coming, the Messiah will first rule “*in the midst of His enemies*” according to Psalm 110:2, which we read above. He will do battle with all the enemies, conquering and subduing them. The various “*rulers, authorities and powers*” will be destroyed or brought into subjugation. The “*last enemy*” to thus be subdued is “*death,*” itself. The final company of the righteous will be resurrected from the dead at this time. The Kingdom will then be firmly established throughout the earth and the Messiah will stand Supreme as “*King of kings and Lord of lords*” (I Tim. 6:15). Daniel the second chapter verse 35 tells us that after smashing all earthly kingdoms into dust, the Messiah’s Kingdom will literally grow and “*fill the earth.*”

It is very appropriate in light of all these facts that the Son of God, in turn having subdued all enemies, delivers His authority back in direct submission to the Father Whom He is representing. In other words, “*delivering up the Kingdom to God*” is not an act that takes place at the very end of His reign of one thousand years. Rather, it is the grand triumph, in which the Kingdom is firmly established, and will be administered by the Son, in full submission to the Father. This grand act of submission happens at the very beginning of Messiah’s reign. It will be the celebration of triumph and the proclamation of the Father’s supreme authority.

Again I will affirm that this “*delivering up of the Kingdom to God*” is not talking about lifting up the Kingdom, as if it were some great package, and transferring it back into His Father’s hands in the future New Heavens and Earth. On the contrary, it is the grand event recognizing the success and victory of the Son of God in establishing God’s Kingdom on earth. It is the crowning achievement of destroying God’s enemies and establishing the Kingdom in force on earth, and then placing that Kingdom under the headship and authority of God the Father in heaven—“*...then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be All in All*” (I Cor. 15:28).

Please notice that at the time Messiah sets up the Kingdom, many passages of Scripture record the praise, honor, glory and submission given to the Father—Rev. 5:13; 11:15; 12:10; Matt. 6:9-13; Obadiah 21; Dan. 7:27, etc., etc. The ultimate purpose of all Christ’s work is to the

exaltation of the Father—Philippians 2:10,11.

This truth of Christ offering up the Kingdom is illustrated for us in the Bible by the account of King David having subdued most of his enemies, having been given a degree of rest and peace in his domain, and in turn giving all praise and submission to God in heaven—read II Sam. 7:1 and verses 18-29. David cried out at that beautiful moment, as he contemplated building a house for God, “*Let Thy Name be magnified forever, saying, the Lord of Hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of Thy servant David be established before Thee.*” In other words, David was recognizing that the kingdom belonged to God and that His name alone should be praised. David was a mediatorial king ruling under the direct leadership and headship of God—a theocracy on earth. Thus, David’s kingdom was actually called “*The Kingdom of the Lord over Israel*” and “*The Kingdom of the Lord in the hands of the sons of David*” (see I Chron. 28:5 and II Chron. 13:8).

This truth is repeated again at the time Solomon was about to assume the Kingdom—see I Chron. 29:10-13. The exact words of David in praise to God were, “*Thine, O Lord, is the GREATNESS, and the POWER, and the GLORY, and the VICTORY, and the MAJESTY: for all that is in heaven and in the earth is Thine; THINE IS THE KINGDOM, O LORD, and Thou art exalted as HEAD ABOVE ALL.*” This is precisely what Jesus Christ, the Mediatorial King, will say and do at the time of His coronation and triumph (see Matt. 6:10-13). This is what it means to “*offer up the Kingdom to the Father.*” The Messiah (Anointed Prince) has triumphed and is placing Himself and the Kingdom under the authority of God the Father in heaven.

***“For He has put all things in subjection under His feet”*** (Verses 27 & 28)

In verses 27 and 28 the Apostle Paul quotes from a second passage to affirm the same basic truth of Christ’s victory and accomplishments and then the ultimate submission of all to God the Father. This quotation is from Psalm 8 and verse 6. It is similar in nature to Psalm 110:1 as it would apply to Jesus Christ. However, when one looks at Psalm 8 it is first of all evident that it is talking about the place of rule that God has given to Adam and to his posterity. Nevertheless, there is a double application of this Psalm. Since Christ is also referred to as “*the Second Man*” and “*the Last Adam*” (see I Cor. 15:45-47), and since “*Adam is a figure of Him Who was to come*” (Rom. 5:14), it is perfectly appropriate to apply the truth of this Psalm to “*the Second Man*” as well. That is what Paul is doing in I Cor. 15:27 & 28.

It is interesting to note that Paul quotes from these same two different Psalms in the book of Hebrews as well as here in I Corinthians 15. In Hebrews 1:13 Paul quotes from Psalm 110:1 and applies it directly to Christ. Then in very close proximity, in Hebrews 2:5-9 he quotes from Psalm 8:4-6 and also applies this to Christ in a secondary manner saying, “*We do not yet see all things put under Him. But we see Jesus...*” (vs. 9 & 10). This is the same thing Paul is doing in I Corinthians 15, with the exception of the “*not yet all things.*”

In the passage before us in I Corinthians 15 Paul makes it clear that it is God’s intent to subject all things to Christ. The “*all things*” in I Cor. 15 are specified as “*all (earthly) rule, authority and power.*” This has to do with the physical sphere in which He is going to set up the Kingdom of God on earth. “**When**” that event happens, at the second coming of Christ, to subdue all His enemies including “*death,*” “**Then**” the Son, Himself, will be subjected to God the Father, that God may be “**All in All.**”

### A Summary

Were I to summarize this Bible study in an abbreviated manner, I would do so by the following outline statement:

First, the wave offering of the Firstfruits at the Feast of Unleavened Bread  
Symbolizes the resurrection and ascension of Christ—  
The “Firstfruits” of the dead—in resurrection.

Second, the wave offering of the two Loaves of Bread at the Feast of Pentecost  
Symbolizes the resurrection and ascension of the Church—  
The Firstfruits Harvest—“They that are Christ’s.”

Third, the final ingathering of Harvest at the End of the year Feast of Tabernacles  
Symbolizes the resurrection of Old Testament and Tribulation Saints—  
The Harvest and gleanings at “the end”—“death abolished.”

### A Secondary Spiritual Application

There is a secondary application concerning these truths about God having “all things put under His (Christ’s) feet” (Ps. 8:6) that is fulfilled in a vital spiritual sense for this present Church Age. Though it is clear here in I Cor.15 and also in Hebrews 2 that the apostle Paul applies the principle of Psalm 8:6 to Christ’s future reign in “*the Age to come*” (Heb. 2:5), yet it is also true that Paul makes another application of Psalm 8:6 to Christ’s victorious work in defeating Satan in His death, burial and resurrection at the beginning of *the present Age*. In fact, the victorious work of Christ in obtaining redemption for mankind is so pronounced in the theology of Paul’s epistles that we could just as well say that this spiritual reality is the “primary application” of Psalm 8 that Paul makes. In this case the “secondary application” would be the future application to the accomplishments at the second coming of Christ and the beginning of His millennial reign.

In I John 3:8 we are told, “*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the Devil.*” In II Timothy 1:10 we are given those glorious words about “*the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, Who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*” In Colossians 2:10-15 we are informed that the believer is “*Complete in Him, Who is the head of all principality and power.*” And that “*He has forgiven us all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross, having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.*” Once again in Ephesians 1:20-23 Paul is inspired to say of God’s work for us in Christ “*...which He brought about in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this Age, but also in the Age to come. And ‘He put all things in subjection under His feet’ (Ps. 8:6), and gave Him as Head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him Who fills **all in all.**”*

It is clear that this is the spiritual work of Christ in victory over the spiritual authorities and powers on our behalf. The apostle Peter (I Pet. 3:22) adds concerning Christ “*Who is at the*

*right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.*” The subjection of the spiritual forces as a result of Christ’s victory in His death, burial and resurrection is paramount to Christ’s future physical victory over the Satanically inspired national forces which will be accomplished at His second coming.

The application of Psalm 8:6 to the victorious work Christ accomplished over Satan in His substitutionary death, burial and resurrection is absolutely necessary in order for the application of this principle to the future. The important difference between these two applications is that one concerns itself with Christ’s spiritual defeat of Satan in the cause of bringing about spiritual redemption, whereas the other concerns itself with Christ’s defeat of Satan in the physical realm of Satan’s control over the nations. First of all, Christ must have defeated Satan in the spiritual realm of his spiritual control over the souls of men because of sin. Obviously, redemption from the guilt and penalty of sin is a necessary prerequisite to Christ ruling over mankind on a redeemed earth. Only after the spiritual victory could He ever defeat Satan in the physical realm of his control over the physical kingdoms on earth.

These two different applications concerning the “abolishment of death” and the placing of “all things under Christ’s feet” can easily be confused unless we see and accept both applications. Sad to say, once again, many teachers in Christendom will quote one application to cancel out or to misinterpret the application of the other. However, each are true in its own sphere. Man is not merely a fleshly body. He is primarily a spiritual entity dwelling in a physical body. Death is not merely a physical phenomenon. It is first of all spiritual separation from the life that is in and with God. We must first of all obtain “everlasting spiritual life” before we could ever be granted the blessing of “everlasting physical life.” There must be the abolishment of death spiritually before there can be the abolishment of death physically.

### ***The Unfolding of These Two Applications***

I would like to explain further why there are these two distinctive applications of this principle and how it is unfolding in time by the following manner—

When the Son of God came to earth, He came as “*a Minister to the Circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers” (Rom. 15:8). They were promised a literal, earthly kingdom, wherein they would be delivered from all their enemies, and so it is stated in Luke 1:68-72—“*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant.*”*

Therefore, Christ was literally born as a direct descendent of King David, for the Messiah Who would reign must be a descendent of David. Many other things Christ did, too numerous to even list here, which were fulfilled literally and physically in preparation for that prophesied Kingdom. However, as we all well know, Israel rejected her Messiah, and the Kingdom that was offered to them was taken away, to be given to another generation (Matt. 21:43). (Please see my Bible study on *The Kingdom of God*.) The establishment of this Millennial Kingdom was postponed by reason of Israel’s national rejection of her King. The enemies of Christ would

propagandize this as an evidence of failure and Christ as being a false Messiah. It would thus seem to many that the prophecies of John the Baptist, Christ and the disciples that “*the Kingdom of God was nigh at hand*” (Mark 1:14,15) would fall to the ground in failure. But God did not deem it proper to allow their voices to thus appear to be false. Therefore, in God’s predetermined plan there was, indeed, a Kingdom that was set up. This came as a result of Christ’s sin-conquering death, burial and glorious resurrection from the dead, with the keys of death and hell. But it was not the prophesied Messianic kingdom; it was a spiritual Kingdom to be established instead. Indeed, towards the end of Christ’s ministry He spoke of a spiritual aspect of the Kingdom of God (John 18:36 and Luke 17:20,21). This Kingdom would apply to the present Church Age (Rom. 14:17 & Col. 1:13). This present spiritual Age is parenthetical in nature until such time as the prophesied physical Kingdom should be established.

Another illustration of this principle is in the prophecies about a coming “baptism of the Holy Spirit” made by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:11, etc.). John was actually not talking about the baptism of the Holy Spirit that characterizes this particular Age because this Age was a “mystery” that was not made known in past times (Eph. 3:1-7). John was talking about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that the prophets spoke of which would happen at the beginning of Messiah’s Millennial reign (Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 36:25-33; Joel 2:28, etc.). However, in light of Israel’s rejection of Christ and the postponement of that Kingdom, God would not allow John’s words to fall to the ground as if unfulfilled. In God’s plan, a baptism of the Holy Spirit did take place. Christ told the disciples privately about “the promise of the Father” the night of His betrayal (John 14,15 & 16). This baptism is unique for this Church Age and characterizes the present spiritual Kingdom of God.

We can illustrate this principle of double or multiple application again by the prophecy of Christ being the “chief cornerstone” (Acts 4:11; I Pet. 2:7; Eph. 2:20 & I Pet. 2:6). In their original settings the prophecies of Messiah as the “chief cornerstone” apply to Christ in the Kingdom Age of His rule on earth (Psalm 118:22-26 & Isa. 28:16). This is when the rejected Messiah will indeed reign over a repentant Israel. Therefore, this prophecy is applied to the Church Age in a secondary manner only.

### ***Spiritual Application Today***

Thus it is, just before the beginning of this present spiritual Kingdom, Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, is said to have “conquered him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14). Likewise, as I gave before, there is an abundance of references made by Paul and the apostles that speak of the many accomplishments of Christ in His sin-conquering death, His descent into hell and His glorious resurrection from hell with the very keys of death and hell. Therefore when Christ ascended on high and sat down at the right hand of the Father, He subjected Himself to the Father in preparation for the coming spiritual phase of the Kingdom of God. Consequently, it is realistic to understand that after the resurrection of Christ into His glory, having subdued Satan in the spiritual realm and guaranteed spiritual life and a future resurrection to all believers, He delivered up the spiritual Kingdom to the Father, and sat down at His Father’s right hand that God the Father may be “all in all.”

One of the unique characteristics of this present spiritual Kingdom (Rom. 14:17 & Col. 1:13) is the fact that, positionally, of all believers it is said “...*Who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*” (Eph. 1:3, 19-23).

That there was a tremendous spiritual warfare going on at the time of Christ's crucifixion, and in His bearing away our sins under the judgment of God, becomes very clear in the teachings of the Spirit of God through the apostles. By taking upon Himself all our sins, Christ humiliated Satan and his forces of evil and gave unto all who trust in Him eternal life. The supreme significance of this achievement meant that all spiritual authorities had become subjected to Christ and the victory accomplished paved the way for the future victory over Satan in the physical realm of his rulership on earth.

Please take note of, and study carefully the accompanying charts on this important subject. The accomplishments of Christ at His death and resurrection should never be confused with those accomplishments yet to come at His second advent. These charts are entitled *The Crowning Victory and Exaltation of Christ—No. 1, Spiritual* and *No. 2, Physical*. In between these two is the chart on the additional theme of victory at the *Rapture* of the Church.

### **Conclusion**

I am indeed thankful for the ministry of Maurice M. Johnson in his emphasis upon this great victory that Christ accomplished by His death and resurrection. Furthermore, we should not allow the distinctive truths of each of these two different Kingdoms to cancel out each other in our minds. These are apparently contradictory entities unless we separate the two spheres of victory and defeat of Satan—one spiritual and one physical. In Biblical carefulness, we must not allow the beautiful truths of the spiritual application to block out the spectacular application to the events surrounding the second coming of Christ. Many teachers attempt to do just that.

THE END

## **APPENDIX**

A number of years after I had seen the parallel between the Harvest Feasts of Israel and the “orders” to the resurrection of the righteous, my attention was directed to a book by the very popular Hal Lindsey, entitled *The Rapture*. Towards the conclusion of his book (page 160) he makes the observation that “Israel’s harvest could be a type of the various states of the first resurrection.” However, his explanations were not positive and at first he left the thought that “stage three will be at the end of the millennium” (page 158). Nevertheless, on page 161 he diagrams this suggestion by a chart of the three stages following the same outline as I have given in this Bible study. The three stages he gave in the following order: Christ the Firstfruits, secondly the Church, and thirdly the Old Testament and Tribulation saints at the second coming of Christ. In this regard he also stated concerning this view that “these verses seem to indicate that the first resurrection, the one of life, will end with the resurrection of the saints at the end of the tribulation” (page 162). Mr. Lindsey’s book was first published in 1982, just a year after I saw the same basic principle. I was somewhat heartened by this observation because it demonstrated that what I saw was not some whimsical dream—others have seen the same basic truth.

In addition, *The Lamplighter*, a publication of “The Lamb & Lion Ministries,” by David R. Reagen, has also published a chart depicting this sequence very clearly. They show the relationship between the three Feasts and the three orders to the resurrection of the righteous. See the March-April 2003 issue and the July-August 2005 issue.

### **Please Take Note of the Following Charts Attached**

- 1) **“Israel’s Sacred Year Calendar” concerning the Feasts of Israel.**
- 2) **“The Future ‘Week’ of Prophecy.”**
- 3) **“Various Positions on the Interpretation of I Cor. 15:23-28.”**
- 4) **“Satan’s Subjugation In Three Successive Stages.”**
- 5) **“The Crowning Victory and Exaltation of Christ, # 1, Spiritual.”**
- 6) **“Subduing Death in Victory at the Rapture” (Parenthetical).**
- 7) **“The Crowning Victory and Exaltation of Christ, # 2, Physical.”**