

EASTER IS THE BEGINNING OF A GREAT HARVEST

[1 Cor. 15:20](#) “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.”

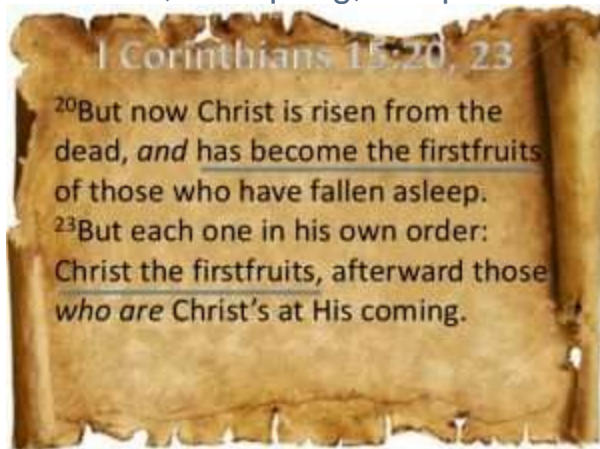
Solomon in his Song (2:11-13) describes spring in these words, “For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of the birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell.” Can anyone improve on such a beautiful description?

How many poems and songs have been written about this wonderful season? In spring the days are lengthened, the brown covering of decayed leaves is gradually replaced by a beautiful green carpet, the skeleton-like trees and branches become filled out with soft and tender foliage.

After the long death and burial of winter, springtime is resurrection time for Nature when everything is reborn in a newness and freshness of life.

Perhaps the greatest joy of spring is the anticipation of the warmer seasons to come. Spring is actually a pledge and promise of another harvest to follow in the summer and the fall.

Is it not appropriate that Easter occurs in the spring of the year in the Holy Land. There is a reason for this and Paul calls our attention to it in our text, for Easter, like spring, is a promise of a wonderful harvest to follow.



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1. THE FIRSTFRUITS OF EASTER

Some of the members of the Corinthian congregation denied the resurrection of the dead. Paul, in this chapter, considered this dreary thought and gave a list of some of the dismal consequences if there were no resurrection of the dead or of Christ. He concludes, “Then is our

preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” and “We are found false witnesses” and “Ye are yet in your sins.” Paul wished to emphasize the fact that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the cornerstone of the Christian faith.

In triumph Paul continues, “But now is Christ risen from the dead.” How can he be so certain that Christ is the Firstfruit of the resurrection harvest? Aside from the fact that Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus, St. Paul confidently states, “He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep,” v 6.

If two or three people would joyfully declare they had seen the first wildflower or robin of spring, would anyone think of doubting their word? Would we ever dream of doubting the word of five hundred people? Now it would take greater faith on our part to believe that these five hundred brethren were deliberately lying about seeing Jesus alive after Easter than to believe in His resurrection from the dead.

These five hundred were not ordinary witnesses but were the best obtainable, for they were all “brethren”, people who put their trust in Jesus as the Savior who is “the way, the truth, and the life.” Is it conceivable and reasonable to believe they remained “brethren” for twenty five years, if they had lied about the resurrection of Jesus and were continuing to live in this lie? Just the opposite, the resurrection of Jesus kept them in the brotherhood all these past years.

These five hundred brethren were living witnesses, “The greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.” Twenty five years after Easter Paul can confidently write for the benefit of the whole world of his day that most of the five hundred witnesses are still living, and he is virtually saying, “If you doubt the Easter story, ask these living witnesses.” Paul is implying that he knows the names of many of the five hundred and where they live, and would be glad to give this information upon request. No one would dare make such a claim were it not true and certain. Christ, then, is like the first sprout or bud of spring after a long, dark winter. Lent and Good Friday are past, death has been overcome, the blade of hope has appeared, Christ is risen.



One of the most striking things about the firstfruits and Easter is recorded in [Lev.23:11](#), “The priest shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.” In other words, the sheaf of the firstfruits should be waved before the Lord on the first day of the week, the day when Jesus Christ rose from the dead. How remarkable!

The firstfruits were offered and dedicated to the Lord as a pledge and promise of the harvest to follow. It, too, is to be dedicated to the Lord and for His service.

2. THE FINAL FRUITS OF EASTER

“While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease,” is the promise of the Lord ([Gen.8:22](#)). We know that summer and the harvest will follow the spring, and no one questions that fact. The same certainty exists with the resurrection of Jesus for He has “become the firstfruits of them that slept.” Christ was the first stalk to become ripe, but others are on the way and will follow Him.



The fruits are springing up all over and everywhere we look in the world we see the final fruits growing and ripening. Some grains are already ripe for

harvest, others are just pushing through the ground, but the final harvest will be immense. What a beautiful scene, the waving grain in the fields as far as the eye can see, all standing as a memorial to the work of the Holy Ghost.

As the firstfruits are given to the Lord as a pledge and promise for the coming harvest, so the harvest itself will be dedicated to the goodness of the Lord. God gave His Son as the firstfruit so that He could claim the whole harvest. Every stalk in this field believes that Jesus Christ is “the resurrection and the life.” All who believe that He died and rose again for the sins of the world have peace with God, peace within themselves, and peace with their fellowman.

The important event is the gathering of the harvest. On that last great day the reapers will gather in the fruits and the heavenly barns will be filled. What a day of joy. The Father is happy because He has a harvest to share His glory in eternity; the Son is satisfied that His offering is not in vain; the reapers, the holy angels, rejoice to know that other creatures of God will share their bliss and happiness. But above all, the ones who are harvested will forever bask in the pleasures and joys of the heavenly Father.

Take another look at our Easter lilies, they are so white and beautiful, and they remind us of Christ our Lord, who is the first breath of spring for us. But let us never forget, we have been dedicated to the Lord, to believe in Him, to serve Him, and to be gathered with Him. And “so shall we ever be with the Lord,” transplanted from this world into the heavenly gardens.

Spring is here for the Church because we have seen the firstfruits today. Hallelujah! AMEN.

PRAYER. Lord Jesus, we rejoice with Thee in Thy great triumph over death and hell. Thou didst conquer all enemies for us. Thy victory is for us like the fresh breath of spring. May we always remember Thy comforting words, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” Today we begin a new life with Thee and await the great harvest day when we shall be gathered in Thine arms. Glory, praise, and honor be to Thee O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. AMEN.