

Did Christ really rise from the dead? In 1885, a tomb was discovered which is now known as the Garden Tomb, or Gordon's Tomb, because British General Charles Gordon was convinced that this was the tomb in which Christ had been buried.

It was outside of present day Jerusalem and it looks like the one described in the Bible. Over the centuries it had been covered with layers and layers of debris. Once the area was cleared, they gathered all the dirt, dust and debris from inside the tomb and shipped it back to Great Britain for scientific analysis. After all the tests, they determined there was no trace of human remains. This could have been Jesus' tomb, since no human remains were found in it. General Gordon concluded that Christ did rise from the dead.

It isn't important to know WHERE Christ was buried. What's important is to know and believe that Christ rose from the dead. We can imagine the pain and despair the disciples were feeling starting Friday evening, all day Saturday and into early Sunday morning. Their good friend and Savior was dead. Nobody had ever raised themselves from the dead. The only one who could raise the dead was Jesus and now he's dead. And even though Jesus had predicted his own resurrection ... and his enemies knew it ... his own disciples didn't quite grasp it could actually happen!

The idea of Jesus coming back from the dead was too good to believe. It sounds impossible. It is, but Jesus did. It's also impossible to believe, and yet the Holy Spirit has enabled you and me to believe that Jesus rose from the dead.

People are constantly trying to avoid death, or put it off as long as possible. No doctor, no matter how talented they are, can stop death. Eventually every patient of every doctor and the doctors themselves die. Death is that great enemy that no one can overcome ... except Jesus.

What is more important to know than WHERE Christ was buried, is WHY Jesus rose from the dead. Paul calls Jesus the **"firstfruits of those who**

have fallen asleep." Paul uses a beautiful term here to connect the resurrection to us. He says that when Christ rose, **he was the firstfruits**. Back in Leviticus 23, God declared that in the Spring, his OT people, the Israelites, were to celebrate the Feast of Firstfruits. On the day after the Sabbath, on a Sunday, God told them: **"Offer the firstfruits of the crops you have planted in your fields. Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God."**

So when Paul calls Christ the **firstfruits**, what he's saying is that he's the first and the best of a crop that was just beginning to be harvested. Jesus rose from the dead, so lots more will follow.

That **firstfruits** parallel to the Easter resurrection of Jesus is fascinating, isn't it? On the day after the Sabbath, Sunday, Easter Sunday, Jesus was raised. Let's pick up on Paul's picture and point out that: **EASTER IS OUR FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS**. Today, we'll learn that: (1) Adam was the firstfruits of our death. (2) Jesus is the firstfruits of our life.

(1)

The Apostle Paul is on his third mission trip and he's writing back to Corinth, a congregation he started on his second mission trip. In previous chapters, Paul is battling the false teachers in the congregation who laughed at the idea that dead people can rise. Which of course is the whole point of Christianity and of Easter. Paul doesn't tip toe around it: **Christ has indeed been raised from the dead**. Jesus' resurrection is undeniable and indisputable!

In fact, Paul says Jesus is merely **the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep**. Jesus fell asleep in death on the cross on Good Friday and woke himself up to life on Easter Sunday. That is significant, and so is this: **Since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through by a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive**. If Adam's sin meant death for all people, it's fitting that Christ's lack of sin means life for all people.

That explains everything, doesn't it? It's so disappointing that we all still die. With all the advancements in medicine ... we can engineer vaccines, fix broken arms and legs, replace organs, open blocked arteries, and destroy cancer cells ... and yet, we all still die after 70 years ... a few less or a few more. Why is that? It's because death is genetic. We don't die from the cancer or heart disease. What kills us is the cancer of sin and the heart disease of guilt. Once Adam sinned, he passed on the fatal sin-gene that kills us all.

That is all ... except the second Adam, the perfect Adam, our Savior Jesus. The one who healed hearts and bodies in his ministry will raise every heart and body together. His body given into death and his blood poured out on Calvary's cross erases our sin. His resurrection to life has cleared our pathway to life forever. Your baptism has changed your genetics from sinful souls into forgiven children of God.

(2)

So, how come we don't see that now? The Spirit whispers: "*Be patient!*" And Paul explains: **But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits ...** that's Easter Sunday; **then when he comes, those who belong to him ...** that's what we're patiently waiting for. **Then the end will come ...** that's Judgment Day; **when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power ...** that's mission accomplished!

And that's what happened, right?

- Jesus did away with sin on Good Friday, when he crucified it all away.
- Jesus did away with the power of Satan, when he returned to life and descended into Satan's fortress of hell not to suffer, he took care of on the cross on Friday. He was taking a victory lap.
- **The last enemy to be destroyed is death,** and Jesus will do away with that when he raises us from the dead when he returns on Judgment Day.

The risen Jesus conquered death. Death's days are numbered. Death is living on borrowed time.

Death is slapping death in the face because of Easter. As soon as Christ returns you'll never face death again. You'll never face the threat of death again. You'll never face the symptoms of death again ... no pain, no weakness, no sadness.

That's how **Easter Is Our Feast of Firstfruits**. Adam was the firstfruits of our death. But Jesus is the firstfruits of our life. So, how does that news and this Easter firstfruits message change your life right now?

The Apostle Paul made this note in his second letter to the Corinthians: **If Jesus is the firstfruits of the dead, then bring your firstfruits to him.**

- The first and the best time you spend every day is with Jesus.
- The first and the best money in your account goes to Jesus.
- The first and the best of your skills go to serve Jesus.

There's also a natural one for us today. If every enemy ends up underneath Christ's feet, including death, then let's not fear death. When our bodies are buried, it's like a parent kissing their child good night. They know that they will wake up in the morning. And we will too.

- Tomorrow we flip the calendar on a new month ... but Christ is risen!
- The clock is ticking ... but Christ is risen!
- We get sick or weak ...but Christ is risen!
- Sin still tempts us and Satan is still strong ... but Christ is risen!
- Loved ones die ... but Christ is risen!
- I'm going to die and so are you ... but Christ is risen!

Jesus is the **firstfruits** from the dead, and there is a great big resurrection to life harvests that will follow. Paul identifies those included in that harvest: **IN Christ all will be made alive.** Those who are IN Christ are those who believe IN Jesus as their Savior. No matter how you look at it, death loses, Christ wins, and so do we.