



Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

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This issue of PARABLES BOOKSHELF contains chapters 5-6 of *God's Plan of the Ages*.

One of the keys to receiving greater knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures and the ways of Yahweh, is to be faithful with what you have already received.

Have you obeyed the instruction the Father has already entrusted to you? Have you applied God's word to your own life? This is the chief way in which we can prove that we are lovers of the truth.

Those who love truth will obey the truth. It matters not to one who loves truth that obeying the truth is costly. Even

if it means they must suffer the loss of all things, those who love truth will choose to obey.

Many people do not love truth. They only obey God when His will coincides with their own. When God directs them to some action or attitude that is not in keeping with their own desire, they choose their way. These people cannot be said to be lovers of truth.

God gives those who do not love truth a very dire warning.

II Thessalonians 2:10-12

Because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved... for this reason God will send upon them a delud-

ing influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

What is described above is one of the chief reasons that man Christians today are not able to receive truth when they hear it declared. God has blinded their eyes because they have not been faithful to walk in the truth they have already received.

It is a terrible thing to have one's understanding darkened. If we would walk in the light, let us be careful to obey God in all things He has revealed to us.

Food for Thought

"If you are a Christian, you are not a citizen of this world trying to get to heaven; you are a citizen of heaven making your way through this world."

Vance Havner

Scripture Memory

I Peter 1:17

And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth...

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God's Plan of the Ages

The Soul that Sins Must Die

Death stands between every man and an inheritance in Christ, even as the Jordan River stood between the Israelites and their inheritance in the land of Canaan. We know that every man experiences a physical death of his body. It is not this death that makes a person a disciple of Christ, otherwise all men would be judged now to be Christ's disciples. It is the death of the soul that is referred to when Christ invited men to "Come, take up your cross, and follow Me."

The men who penned the books of the New Testament were not teaching Greek or Roman mythology.

between the Israelites and their inheritance in the land of Canaan. We know that every man experiences a physical death of his body. It is not this death that makes a person

Because this truth has been so little understood, being rejected by the majority of Christians today, it needs to have much emphasis laid upon it. **No man will enter into His inheritance in Christ apart from first experiencing death to his soul life.** We can either embrace this death to the soul's rule over our lives now by yielding our lives wholly to follow Christ wherever He directs, or we will have our soul life destroyed in the Lake of Fire in the age to come.

The necessity of dying to the life of the soul is revealed plainly in the following words of Christ.

Luke 14:26-27

"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate... even his own life (psuche - soul), he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

The Greek word "psuche" is translated as "heart, life, mind and soul" in the KJV Bible. It is a word used to describe that inner life that guides and animates a living being. The soul is influenced by many external forces. Prior to being born of the Spirit, the greatest influence upon the soul is the flesh. The flesh expresses its cravings and desires to the soul. The soul in turn decides what response

it will make to this input. The natural man is completely dominated by his soul. He is daily choosing to fulfill the desires and needs of the body, whether for food, sex, comfort, pleasure, ease, excitement, peace, or a myriad of other passions. The life of Adamic man is dominated by the soul. It is a sensual life, and one devoted to self-gratification.

The life of Christ is different. It is dominated by the Spirit. The focus of the life of Christ is not upon self, but rather upon pleasing the Father.

John 6:38

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

While Christ was in the flesh He lived entirely for the will and pleasure of His Father. He never deviated from this focus. Because Christ was born of woman, He knew the influence of the feminine soul. Being born of the seed of the Father, He also had the influence of the masculine Spirit. This led to conflict within Christ's being to see who would have ascendancy. Would Yahshua walk as a pleasing Son by being directed by the Spirit in all things, or would He capitulate to the passions and desires of the soul? This struggle was never seen more clearly than when Christ wrestled with drinking from that cup of suffering His Father presented to Him while in the Garden of Gethsemane. This cup contained the suffering of the cross, and death to the flesh.

Matthew 26:38-39

Then He said to them, "My **soul** is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me." And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."

Christ's hour of wrestling in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives shows us clearly that struggle that all who would be conformed to

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Christ must experience. The details of this event also serve as a great parable. It was from the crushed flesh of the olive that the Levites obtained the oil used for anointing, and to light the candlesticks in the Temple. The olive tree serves as a type of Yahweh's people, and the individual olives are a type of individual saints. Our lives must be crushed if the oil of anointing is to be released from within. If we are to be lights in a dark world, we too must experience the crushing of the soul in our own Gethsemane experiences.

That Christ's suffering occurred on the Mount of Olives was chosen by great design by His Father. The word Gethsemane means "olive press." It is where the olives are crushed to obtain the oil from them. Christ was experiencing the crushing of His soul while in Gethsemane. He had to make the decision to deny His soul's desires, and to put the will and pleasure of the Father above all else. It is this death to the soul that is the hallmark of everyone who is a disciple of Christ.

II Corinthians 4:11

For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Yahshua's sake, so that the life of Yahshua also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

As the soul is crushed, the life of Christ is revealed in us. It is appointed to Christ's disciples to be the first among men to follow Yahshua through the waters of death. This was symbolized in the crossing of the Jordan by those priests who were first to walk into the waters of the Jordan as they carried the Ark of the Covenant on their shoulders.

Joshua 3:13

"It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the Ark of Yahweh, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap."



As Christians, we are appointed to be priests of God.

I Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...

There is much symbolized by the priests as they carried the Ark of the Covenant into the Jordan. The Ark was borne on the shoulders. The shoulders are symbolic of the place where authority and government rests.

Isaiah 9:6

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and **the government will rest on His shoulders...**

As mentioned previously, the Ark is a symbol of perfected man. Christ is the original, for He is the first of a new type of man. In carrying the Ark upon their shoulders, the priests were providing a type and shadow of those men and women who would one day take Christ as their Head. There is a parallel observed between the priests of Yahweh carry-

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ing the Ark with wooden poles on their shoulders, and the disciple of Christ bearing the cross. Even as the priests entered the waters that signified death, the disciple must be baptized into Christ and take up his cross which is an instrument of death to the soul. Those who are true disciples have yielded the rule of their lives to Christ. They have removed themselves as head, that they might take Christ as Head. This is the meaning of the following words of John.

Revelation 20:4

And I saw the souls of those who had been **be-headed** because of their testimony of Yahshua and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Revelation is a book that conveys truth through signs. It is a book of parables. Those who would be Christ's disciples must hate their own souls. They must accede to the Lordship of Christ in a very real

*The Christian is...
saved through death.*

and practical manner, taking Him as their Head. No man can take Christ as Head while his own head is still ruling. John describes these be-headed ones as coming

to life and ruling with Christ during the Millennium. This honor is reserved for the **overcomers** in Christ. It is for those who attain to the first resurrection, gaining the right of the firstborn of Christ.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; **over these the second death has no power**, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Because these ones have surrendered to the death

of the cross in this age, they will be spared from the second death in the next age. The second death is the Lake of Fire. Every person must experience death to the natural life in order to enter into resurrection life in Christ. There can be no resurrection apart from a death first taking place. We must die to that natural, Adamic life, ruled by the soul, in order to be resurrected into that new spiritual life found in Christ.

This process is inviolable. The Christian is not saved from death, so much as he is saved through death. It is by following Christ, taking up our own cross, and dying to self (that natural soulish life) that we are delivered from the kingdom of darkness and translated into the kingdom of light. It is by virtue of being born again of the Spirit of Christ, becoming a partaker of His divine life, that we find resident within our members the desire, and power, to deny ourselves, and yield our lives wholly to the Father.

Philippians 2:12-13

Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Christians like to speak of salvation as something that Christ obtained for all mankind at the cross. There are Scriptures that support such a conclusion. Once again, however, many Christians have fallen short of "rightly dividing the word of truth." They have not considered the whole counsel of the Scriptures. That which Christ has purchased for men and given to them freely, must be "worked out" in each individual's life. This is what Paul declared when he said "Work out YOUR salvation with fear and trembling."

Christ presents to men both a gate that they must enter by, and a way that they must walk. A man must enter by the gate AND follow Christ down the afflicted path, or they will fail to arrive at life.

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Matthew 7:13-14

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is *afflicted* (Greek “thlibo”) that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Many of the popular English Bibles today translate the Greek word “thlibo” in this passage as “narrow,” but that obscures Christ’s meaning. This is a different word altogether from that used in the first part of this passage describing a “narrow” gate. The word used there is “stenos.” Christ is describing two different things. Christ is the gate, or doorway by which all men must enter if they are to find resurrection life. There is no other name given under heaven by which men must be saved. Neither Mohammed, nor Buddha, nor Krishna, nor the other thousands of gods named in this world will deliver men from sin and reconcile them to the Father. The gate is very narrow. Christ alone is the doorway to life.

John 10:7-9

So Yahshua said to them again, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved...”

These words of Christ are true, but they do not constitute His entire counsel and testimony. Christ declared that “the gate is small,” but He also said, “**the way** is afflicted that leads to life, and few there are who find it.” The goal is life; resurrection life in Christ. To obtain it all men must enter by the gate and walk the path appointed by God that leads to life. That path is afflicted. It is a path of suffering leading to the termination of the soul’s rule over mankind.

Man’s soul has to be crushed. The cross must be embraced. Suffering must be endured in order for the self-life to lose its grip over man. The Bible reveals that there are two methods by which the sal-

vation Christ has provided might find its “outworking” in our lives. We can surrender to follow Christ by taking up our cross now, or we will be cast into the Lake of Fire which will similarly accomplish the work of bringing an end to the rule of the soul.

Matthew 10:28

“Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell.”

The word translated here as “destroy” is not speaking of annihilation. It is not suggesting that men’s souls will cease to be. Rather, it is a word denoting the subjugation of the soul in the same way that Christ intended when He said “He who would save his soul must LOSE it.”

Matthew 16:25

“For whoever wishes to save his soul will *lose* (apollumi) it; but whoever *loses* (apollumi) his soul for My sake will find it.”

The very same Greek word, “apollumi” is used in both verses.

Matthew 10:28

“Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to *destroy* (apollumi) both soul and body in Hell.”

As we look at these two verses side by side, we find that God has provided two methods by which the soul of man might experience “apollumi.” The soul can be subjected to the rule of Christ in this age by yielding fully to Christ as Head of one’s life, or the soul can be brought to this same place of subjection in Hell.

Man’s soul has to be crushed.

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Please do not pass over what was just stated. It is a very critical matter. The process of "apollumi," diminishing and subjecting the soul to the rule of the Spirit, is the purpose of Hell and the Lake of Fire. This fiery purging and transformation in the next age accomplishes the same work as those fiery trials encountered by Christians who voluntarily surrender their lives by taking up their cross and following Christ in this present age.

We see in these words of Christ that Hell is not simply a place of torment for the adversaries of God as the church supposes. It is designed to accomplish that same work as the disciple's cross. It will bring an end to the rule of the soul. The saint can be spared the Lake of Fire **if** they will submit to the Headship of Christ now. The saint who rejects the suffering of the cross in this life, will most assuredly have to experience the Lake of Fire in the age to come.

The overcomer ... will not be cast into the Lake of Fire.

Revelation 2:11

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death."

These words are written to "the churches." The second death is the Lake of Fire. He who overcomes; he who works out his salvation with fear and trembling; he who embraces the cross now in this age; he who does not shrink back from the experiences of suffering Christ will lead him to, will not be hurt by the second death. The overcomers will attain to the first resurrection, and will not be cast into the Lake of Fire, for their names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. All who are born again of the Spirit of Christ have their names recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life, but those who do not walk as overcomers will have their names removed.

Revelation 3:5-6

"He who overcomes* shall be clothed in white garments, and *I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life...*, *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

This again is Christ's word to the *churches*. What happens to those Christians who walk unworthily of Christ, who do not experience the crushing of their soul life in this age, and who have their names blotted out of the Book of Life?

Revelation 20:15

And if anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire.

There is no entrance into that spiritual inheritance in Christ apart from passing through death first. The death of the soul precedes our entrance into the fulness of resurrection life even as the Israelites had to pass through the waters of the Jordan to enter the land flowing with milk and honey.

Yahweh reveals much through parables. The Law is full of arcane regulations in which few Christians today see any purpose or reason. Following is one seldom understood Law of God that bears much on this present subject.

Leviticus 12:2-5

"Speak to the sons of Israel, saying: 'When a woman gives birth and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean for seven days, as in the days of her menstruation she shall be unclean. On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. Then she shall remain in the blood of her purification for thirty-three days; she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed. But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean for two weeks, as in her menstruation; and she shall remain in the blood of her purification for

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sixty-six days.”

The woman who gave birth was judged to be “unclean” twice as long when she gave birth to a female child as when she gave birth to a male. From a completely natural perspective, such a judgment makes little sense. We must look to the spiritual truths signified in the Law to understand what is actually implied.

The soul of mankind is viewed as feminine. The apostle Paul in several places speaks of the Christian as being born of the “seed” of Christ. It is the female that receives the seed. As natural descendants of Adam, all men are dominated by the feminine soul, until they have Christ formed in them. The feminine soul must receive the seed of Christ in order for Christ to be manifest in our lives. Andrew Jukes, in his excellent book *The Restitution of All Things*, writes:

“For the woman is our nature, which if it receive seed, that is the word of truth, may bring forth a son, that is ‘the new man...’ But if, instead of bearing this ‘new man,’ our nature only bear its like, a female child, that is fruits merely natural, then it is unclean for a double period...”

Those Christians who protect the natural life, who remain soulish, will be judged as unclean in the eyes of Yahweh. Christ said “No man can be My disciple unless he hates... even his own soul.” Those who in this life bring forth only the feminine, soulish nature will require a period of cleansing much greater than those who bring forth the masculine image of Christ.

The only way for Christ to be fully formed in any person is for them to yield to be led of God’s Spirit. Whether you are male or female by natural birth, you become a “son” of God by submitting to the rule of the Spirit of Christ.

Romans 8:14

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are **sons** of God.

Those who receive the seed of Christ and yield their lives to the Spirit, subsequently progressing to have “the new man” Christ formed within them, will remain in their uncleanness a shorter time than those who continue to walk after the leading of the feminine soul. The first resurrection is for those who overcome the soul’s rule in this age. The next resurrection will not occur until a further thousand years have past (Revelation 20:5). Some remain unclean, ruled by the feminine soul, much longer than others.

There is great reason to “work out our salvation *with fear and trembling.*” That salvation which Christ has obtained for us must find its outworking in our lives if we are to be judged as clean before our Father. If we resist this process, refusing to embrace the cross, we will remain unclean for a much longer time. The end of the soul’s reign that could have been accomplished in this life by taking up the disciple’s cross will need to be completed in the Lake of Fire. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

*The first resurrection
is for those who
overcome...*

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The Firstborn

As we continue to lay the foundations for understanding God's plan of the ages, the topic of sonship needs to be examined. Yahweh created man because He desired to have sons. One of the most

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common titles used to refer to God in the Bible is Father. In approximately 270 instances the Bible uses the word Father when speaking of Yahweh's relationship to

man. In hundreds of additional occurrences men and women are called the sons, daughters, children, seed, and offspring of God.

The desire of God to have sons in His image, and after His likeness, was not to be immediately fulfilled upon the creation of Adam. Sin entered the creation and marred the image of man. The Earth would not see a son in the image of God until the appearing of Christ. Of Him, the Father testified:

Matthew 17:5

"This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased..."

Christ is the Firstborn Son of God. He is the express image of His Father.

Hebrews 1:1-6

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the ages; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels

did He ever say "You are My Son. Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son"? But when He again brings the **firstborn** into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him."

Christ came into the world to fulfill the desire of Yahweh that He might have sons. Mankind needed a Savior. Man could not attain to sonship in his fallen state. Humanity needed to be set free from its slavery to sin. The righteousness and divine nature which man lacked needed to be imparted to him. The process of restoring fallen man to God was begun in earnest at the appearing of Christ. Christ made a way for many more brethren to stand before Yahweh as sons.

Romans 8:29

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren...

Hebrews 2:10-16

For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

This is the goal of Yahweh's plan of the ages. He will conform man to the image of Christ, and thereby bring many sons to glory. Yet, even as this

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work of redeeming fallen mankind and bringing forth sons in the image of God began with a single man, so too will we see the spread and fulfillment of this work accomplished in successive and ever larger waves. In the end Christ must fill all things, but in the outworking of this process He must first be formed in a firstfruits group of men and women.

James 1:18

In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of **firstfruits** among His creatures.

The plan of God is to acquire for Himself a body of firstfruits and then to reconcile all of creation to Himself.

I Corinthians 15:22-23

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: The anointed firstfruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then the remainder, when He delivers up the kingdom to God the Father

These firstfruits will be preeminent among their brethren. By being the first to taste of death and suffering through becoming partakers of the cross of Christ, they will obtain a place of honor. They will be known as the firstborn from the dead, the firstborn sons of Christ.

Revelation 14:4

These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

Notice the qualification given here. "These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes." These are those who have accepted Christ's invitation to "Come, take up your cross, and follow Me." A lamb is a sacrificial animal. A lamb will go meekly and quietly to be slaughtered, not resisting the hand that guides it. So too will this be the atti-

tude and character of those who will be the firstborn of Christ. They will humbly yield their lives to Christ, and present themselves as a living sacrifice. They will surrender to pass through many fiery trials and experiences that serve to reduce the Adamic man that a spiritual creation after the image of Christ might arise. Even as Yahshua embraced the cross, and was perfected through sufferings, these ones too will do the same and serve as a pattern and testimony for their brethren to follow.

The first offspring from every womb belongs to Me...

These truths are observed in the types and shadows of the Old Testament. The firstborn male that opens the womb was reserved, set apart, as holy unto Yahweh.

Exodus 34:19

The first offspring from every womb belongs to Me...

This preeminence of the firstborn was not merely some archaic custom belonging to a patriarchal society. Yahweh does all things with great purpose and design. The emphasis on the firstborn is a pervasive theme throughout the Old Testament.

Exodus 13:1-2

Then Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, "Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me."

Exodus 13:11-13

"Now when Yahweh brings you to the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and gives it to you, you shall devote to Yahweh the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males be-

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long to Yahweh. But every first offspring of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.”

Every detail in the Law of God is significant. It was only firstborn *males* that were devoted unto Yahweh. We saw the significance of this in the preceding chapter. Man must rule over the feminine soul, taking upon Himself the masculine spiritual character of Christ. Only spiritual men will be counted as the firstborn of God.

Yahweh singles out donkeys as an exception to the law of the firstborn. This is due to what donkeys represent. The donkey is renowned for its stubbornness, whereas the lamb is known to be meek

The lamb is known to be meek and yielding.

and yielding. It is a true statement that no man will ever qualify as a firstborn son of Yahweh unless he adopts the meek and submissive attitude of a lamb. Those

who are stubborn must have their necks broken. Stephen, the first martyr of Christ, reproached the Israelite leaders for their stubborn resistance of God's work in their lives.

Acts 7:51

“You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.”

Both history and the Scriptures reveal that God had to deal with the Jews very harshly due to their stubbornness. A generation would not pass from the time Stephen spoke these words until Jerusalem would be destroyed and tens of thousands of Jews slaughtered. Yet, even among the Jews there was a remnant who humbled themselves, embraced the shame and suffering of Christ's cross, and qualified themselves to be firstborn sons.

The firstborn are considered holy unto God. They become His unique possession. They are accorded honor and glory above all others.

Luke 2:22-23

Now when the days of [Mary's] purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought [Yahshua] to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "**Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord**")...

Colossians 1:18

And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, **the firstborn** from the dead, **that in all things He may have the preeminence.**

Although the above Scriptures are specifically speaking of Yahshua, there will be many who are the firstborn of Christ who will receive similar distinction and honor. The spiritual substance of the shadow of the firstborn is fulfilled in those who attain to the first resurrection. Both deal with birth order; first the natural, then the spiritual. Regarding those who attain to the first resurrection, we read that they too are considered especially holy unto God, and are blessed by Him.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Only those saints who attain to the first resurrection will be so honored. The apostle Paul spoke of his own earnest yearning to attain to this group.

Philippians 3:10-14

To get to know him, and the power of his resurrec-

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tion and fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death, - ***If by any means I may advance to the earlier resurrection, which is from among the dead.*** Not that I have, already, received, or have, already, reached perfection, but I am pressing on - if I may even lay hold of that for which I have also been laid hold of by Christ Jesus: - Brethren! I, as to myself, reckon that I have, not yet, laid hold; one thing, however, - the things behind, forgetting, and, unto the things before, eagerly reaching out, ***With the goal in view, I press on for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus.***

[Rotherham Emphasized Bible]

Paul understood that there is a premier resurrection from the dead. There is a prize to be contended for. The prize is to be numbered among the firstborn of Christ. Paul buffeted his body and kept it under subjection that he might not be disqualified. He ran the race as one who was not without aim, for he knew what awaited those who crossed the finish line first. Paul applied all diligence, all discipline, all focus and determined effort, in the pursuit of attaining to the number of the firstborn from the dead.

If you and I have any inkling of what awaits the firstborn we will also be gripped by the pursuit of this high calling.

I Corinthians 9:24-27

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises ***self-control in all things.*** They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

Paul clearly had something in mind here other than

the common view held today by a majority of Christians concerning what awaited him in the afterlife, in the resurrection from the dead. Paul discerned that there was a prize for which to strive. Paul was raised as a Pharisee. He knew the Law and the prophets. Paul discerned the types and shadows of the Old Testament. He discerned that something of a profound nature was foreshadowed in the laws of the firstborn and the laws regarding firstfruits. He wanted to be numbered among that elite company.

The Old Testament reveals the special significance of the firstborn male.

Genesis 49:3

Reuben, you are my first-born; My might and the beginning of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.

Reuben was the firstborn son of Jacob. In what is spoken of him we can discern the role God has chosen for the firstborn. What does it mean to be “preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power”? The word preeminent is defined as “*surpassing all others.*” Yahweh was showing forth through a natural type a profound truth of the kingdom of God. There will be firstborn sons of God, and there will be latter born sons. The firstborn will be preeminent among all others. Attaining to the number of the firstborn is a goal every Christian should strive towards.

The firstborn will be preeminent among all others.

The Bible reveals that receiving the honor and distinction of the firstborn was something that could be lost due to walking unworthily. The honor could be given to a latter born son who distinguished himself. Although Reuben was the firstborn son of Jacob according to natural birth order, the rights and privileges of the firstborn were lost to him and given to Joseph.

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Genesis 49:3-4

Reuben, you are my firstborn; My might and the beginning of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. **Uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence**, because you went up to your father's bed; Then you defiled it - he went up to my couch.

Reuben had illicit sexual relations with his father's concubine Bilhah.

Genesis 35:22

It came about while Israel was dwelling in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it.

Note: Yahweh changed Jacob's name to Israel.

Jacob declared that Reuben was "uncontrolled as water." This testimony reveals that he had no self-control. Water flows through the path of least resistance. It cannot restrain itself. It will always sink lower and lower, unless an outside force restrains it.

Man will debase himself unless restrained.

This is the condition of sinful man. Man will

debase himself unless restrained. Reuben could find nothing within himself to restrain his fleshly impulses. Even when he knew that his actions would bring great shame and dishonor to his father, this knowledge did not prove adequate to cause him to rule over his sinful desires.

Certainly there is in this a great parable for Christians today. There are many who are born again of the Spirit of Christ who continue to live carnal (fleshly and sensual) lives. Even though their lack of self-restraint and personal denial are dishonoring to the Father, they do not find within themselves the will to rule over their souls. They are unrestrained. They follow whatever course their soul and sinful flesh presents to them. In so doing, these

ones are disqualified as firstborn sons. These ones will not attain to the first resurrection.

In Joseph, the eleventh born son of Jacob, we see another spirit. Joseph loved his father more than his brothers. When Jacob sent his sons out to tend the flocks, we find that Joseph remained at home with his father. There was a special bond and fellowship between them.

Genesis 37:13

Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them." And he said to him, "I will go."

Joseph was eager to do the will of his father. In like manner, those who will receive the right of the firstborn are eager to do the will of Yahweh. Joseph's brothers were envious of him and treated him shamefully. They sold him as a slave into Egypt. In Egypt Joseph faced temptation akin to that of his elder brother Reuben, yet Joseph's response was very different.

Genesis 39:7-10

It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her or be with her.

Consider the situation in which Joseph found himself. God had given Joseph dreams when he was seventeen years old of being promoted above his brothers. Yet, Joseph found his experiences taking him lower, rather than higher. Joseph's brothers continued living as the free sons of a wealthy fa-

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ther, while Joseph was a slave in a foreign land. Joseph must have been tempted to believe that Yahweh had abandoned him. He might have given into self-pity, reasoning that there was little reason to resist the advances of this Egyptian woman. After all, he must have been very lonely in this foreign land, and here was one manifesting a desire to be with him, even if it was in an illicit manner.

Joseph did not give in to such unworthy thoughts. He remained faithful in his commitment to honor God, and to not defile his master's wife. Had he done so, he too would have been disqualified for the right of the firstborn. By manifesting self-control Joseph distinguished himself among his brethren. Self-control is at the very heart of that which is needed to qualify as an overcomer in Christ and attain to the first resurrection. The last of the fruit of the Spirit named, which encapsulates all the rest, is self-control.

Galatians 5:22-25

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, **self-control**; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Yahshua have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

To attain to the first resurrection, a Christian must overcome the sinful passions and desires of the flesh. It is only those who overcome who will be counted worthy of that resurrection. Joseph was elevated to the throne of Egypt. In a similar manner, those who distinguish themselves among their brethren will be granted to sit with Christ on His throne.

Revelation 3:21-22

He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

That which Reuben lost due to his lack of self-control, proved to be Joseph's gain. The Scriptures similarly warn believers today to not walk carelessly, and thereby let someone else take the crown that could be theirs.

Revelation 3:11

"I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown."

Joseph stands as a type of those who will obtain glory and honor above their brothers. He is a shadow of those saints who will receive a double portion and the birthright belonging to the firstborn.

Genesis 48:21-22

Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers. ***I give you one portion more than your brothers***, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

I Chronicles 5:1-2

Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, ***his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph*** the son of Israel; so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright. Though Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came the leader, yet ***the birthright belonged to Joseph***)...

The struggle for the birthright is seen throughout the Old Testament, for it points to this most profound issue in the kingdom of God. There is an inheritance in Christ to be contended for, and only a remnant will qualify themselves for it. Jacob earnestly desired both the birthright and the blessing. His twin brother Esau was the firstborn, but he showed little regard for his inheritance. Esau forsook his birthright to satisfy the appetite of his

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flesh. For a bowl of pottage, Esau gave his birthright to another. Esau stands as a sign, and a warning, to Christians lest they too should forfeit their spiritual inheritance by putting the temporal fulfillment of their natural appetites above the will and pleasure of God.

Hebrews 12:15-17

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God..., that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

The apostle would not give such a warning to the saints unless there were those in the body of Christ who stood to commit a similar transgression.

When he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected...

When the saints stand in judgment and see that inheritance that is reserved for the overcomers in Christ, it will be too late. There will be found no place for repen-

tance though it is sought with many tears. The honor of being the firstborn of Christ will have passed beyond their grasp.

There are resurrections other than the first. All men will in their own order be resurrected to life in Christ. Nevertheless, there will be much that distinguishes the firstborn sons of God, and the latter born sons. The apostle Paul discusses the differences that will exist in the resurrection of the dead in the following passage from his letter to the church in Corinth.

I Corinthians 15:35-42

But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?" You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, per-

haps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the **glory** of the heavenly is one, and the **glory** of the earthly is another. There is one **glory** of the sun, and another **glory** of the moon, and another **glory** of the stars; for star differs from star in **glory**. **So also is the resurrection of the dead.**

We see in this passage that Paul's subject is the resurrection of the dead. He is particularly pointing out that there will be differences of glory among those who are resurrected. Those who attain to the first resurrection will be preeminent among their brethren. They will be like the Sun shining in its strength.

It is the Father's desire that His children contend for the prize of attaining to the first resurrection from the dead. In this will He be greatly glorified, that of a free will His sons laid down their lives to attain to that conformity to His own image and likeness that He has desired for them.

The Harvest Allegory

Before Yahweh ever began to form the creation, He had fully worked out the plan of the ages from the beginning to the end. Everything that exists, or will exist; every event that has occurred, and is yet to transpire, was planned before the creation began.

Isaiah 14:24

Yahweh of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand..."

Yahweh will accomplish all His good pleasure. Knowing that Yahweh has perfect and complete

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power to perform all His desire, and perceiving Him to be perfect in knowledge and wisdom, we are able to agree with Scripture's testimony that everything in the creation is accomplished according to a master plan that Yahweh established by His own counsel.

Ephesians 3:8-11

Unto me - the less than least of all saints, was given this favour, unto the nations, to announce the glad-message of the untraceable riches of the Christ, and to bring to light - what is the administration of the sacred secret which had been hidden away from the ages in God, who did all things create: In order that now, unto the principalities and the authorities in the heavenlies, might be made known, through means of the assembly, the manifold wisdom of God, - according to ***a plan of the ages*** which he made in the anointed Jesus our Lord.

[Rotherham's Emphasized Bible]

Those things God will do have been known from ancient times. Yahweh has set testimonies in His creation, among the heavens, and on the earth, to proclaim His will. Thousands of years ago Yahweh established a witness in the scriptures that He entrusted to man. The Law and the prophets give testimony to Yahweh's plan of the ages.

Our Father has not neglected to provide a testimony of the resurrections of mankind. Even as plants mature and crops are harvested on the Earth, the day will come when mankind will reach maturity. The time of man's harvest will be at hand. The Bible frequently uses a harvest allegory to show forth the resurrections of mankind. The crops we grow arise from the dust of the earth even as man's flesh was formed of the dust of the earth.

Genesis 2:7

And Yahweh God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

We have previously observed Christ's parable where He compares men to both wheat and tares that are sown in a field and grow together. There are many more Scriptures that compare men to various types of plants that arise from the dust of the earth. Following is a small sampling of the great variety of Scriptures which employ this allegory.

John 12:24-25

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal."

Psalms 1:1-4

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of Yahweh, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers. The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.

Psalms 80:8-13

You removed a vine from Egypt; You drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground before it, and it took deep root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shadow, and the cedars of God with its boughs. It was sending out its branches to the sea and its shoots to the River. Why have You broken down its hedges, so that all who pass that way pick its fruit? A boar from the forest eats it away and whatever moves in the field feeds on it.

Psalms 92:12-14

The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree, he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the

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house of Yahweh, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still yield fruit in old age; they shall be full of sap and very green...

Isaiah 40:23-24

He it is who reduces rulers to nothing, Who makes the judges of the earth meaningless. Scarcely have they been planted, scarcely have they been sown, scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, but He merely blows on them, and they wither, and the storm carries them away like stubble.

I Corinthians 3:6-7

I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

A great many more Scriptures could be cited, as the comparison of men to plants is one of the most abundant analogies that Yahweh uses in the Bible. There are truths that we can glean (pun intended) as we look at men in this light.

One thing that is observable in the natural realm is that plants bear fruit at different times of the year. Even so, Yahweh has determined that men should come to maturity at different times which He has established by His own counsel. Every man must eventually arrive at a state of conformity to Christ so that Yahshua might "fill all things." However, this subjection of all men to Christ will occur "each in his own order."

When Yahweh sought to give a testimony of the resurrections of man in the Law delivered to Moses, He chose to use annual gatherings as the symbol to represent this matter. Three times a year Yahweh required that all males appear before Him at a place He would choose. These appointed times (*moedim* in Hebrew) serve as types of the three resurrections. Each of them occurred at a time of harvest. The three feasts and the harvests associated with them are:

Passover/Barley

Pentecost/Wheat

Tabernacles/Grapes

Yahweh chose these three crops to reveal specific truths about those men who would attain to each of the three resurrections. Before I address what is revealed through these three types of plants, let us first establish the foundation upon which we can correctly conclude that the Feasts were intended as symbols of the resurrections of man.

When Yahweh delivered the Law to Moses, He did so to provide mankind with types and shadows that would give those with understanding insight into the hidden mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

Colossians 2:16-17

Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a **festival** or a new moon or a Sabbath day - things which are **a shadow** of what is to come...

The word "festival" that Paul used here is a reference to the Feasts established by Yahweh. The apostle says that these "are a shadow of what is to come." The Law with its festival ordinances was given to Moses 1,500 years before Christ was born. It would be about 2,000 more years before a group of firstfruits sons would pass through death into life at the first resurrection. The hour is now close at hand. Those things that have been foreshadowed from ancient times are soon to take place.

In the details of the Feasts of Yahweh we can discern much about the character and timing of the three resurrections of man.

Deuteronomy 16:16

Three times in a year all your males shall appear before Yahweh your God in the place which He chooses, **at the Feast of Unleavened**

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Bread (Passover) and at the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) and at the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles)...

Appearing before God is symbolic of resurrection. Men were required by Yahweh to leave their dwelling places and journey to a place where they were to meet with Him. At each feast the men were to bring with them the firstfruits of that which was being harvested in that particular season.

Exodus 23:15

And none shall appear before Me empty-handed.

Each resurrection will be distinct in its character even as the three feasts, and the crops associated with them, were different. God looks for fruit in the lives of men. Christ told His disciples, "You shall know them by their fruit." Yahweh knows every man by his fruit. He knows those who are the barley crop. He knows those who are wheat. He also knows those who are grapes.

Passover, and by extension the first resurrection, is associated with the barley harvest. Barley is an early ripening crop. It matures in the spring of the year, being spared the heat and drought of the summer months. This is a parable. Those who attain to the first resurrection come to maturity quicker than the rest of the body of Christ. Be-

cause they gave themselves eagerly to pursue God's will for them of becoming like Christ, they will not have to experience the heat of the Lake of Fire, even as barley doesn't have to go through the heat of summer.

The Barley of Passover differs from the wheat of Pentecost in a very significant way. Barley contains very little gluten, while wheat has an abundance of gluten. Gluten is the component of grain that reacts

with yeast to make the bread rise. Because barley lacks gluten it is often baked as an unleavened bread. This is a parable, for bread represents man's flesh and leaven represents sin.

The Last Supper was held during the Feast of Passover. During that meal, Christ took an unleavened loaf of barley bread and said to His disciples, "This is My BODY, broken for you." The bread had to be unleavened, for Christ was completely righteous, having never sinned.

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

The disciples partook of this meal during the days of unleavened bread prescribed by Moses.

Exodus 12:15

"Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel."

These days are called The Feast of Unleavened Bread, and they are part of the larger Passover celebration. The Feast of Unleavened bread occurs at the time of the barley harvest. The barley loaves represent not only Christ, but those overcomers in Christ who buffet their bodies and keep them under subjection. These ones do not permit their flesh to rise up in the presence of sin. They keep their bodies under the rule of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:24

Now those who belong to Christ Yahshua have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

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Wheat is harvested at Pentecost, and therefore corresponds to the second resurrection. Wheat contains an abundance of gluten. At Pentecost Yahweh gave instructions that the wheat presented to Him be baked as a leavened bread. Pentecost occurs fifty days after Passover.

Leviticus 23:16-17

“You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to Yahweh. You shall bring in from your dwelling places two loaves of bread for a wave offering, made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of a fine flour, **baked with leaven** as first fruits to Yahweh.”

It was not a random whim of God to instruct Israel to remove all leaven from their homes during Passover and to bake the barley as unleavened bread, anymore than it is a meaningless requirement that the bread at Pentecost must be baked WITH leaven. Yahweh is showing forth truth through means of parables.

Those who do not rule over the flesh with its passions and desires, will be excluded from the honor of attaining to the first resurrection. Because many Christians sow to the flesh, rather than to the Spirit, they must wait until a later resurrection to enter into their inheritance in Christ. God will not be mocked. Whether a person is a Christian, or an unbeliever, they will reap what they sow.

Those Christians who walk in a manner unworthy of Christ will not only be excluded from being numbered among the firstborn of Yahshua, they will have to experience “apollumi” in the lake of fire, because they did not present themselves to God as “a living sacrifice” in this present age.

Revelation 2:11

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.**”

Revelation 20:14

This is the second death, the lake of fire.

There is a parallel observed between the baking of the leavened loaves of wheat at Pentecost and the Christians who share a place with the unbelievers in the lake of fire. The action of the yeast in wheat bread continues to cause the bread to rise until the bread is placed in the oven and baked. The heat of the oven stops the reaction between the leaven and the gluten in the bread. Similarly, many Christians will only turn away from sin and learn righteousness as they go through the heat of the lake of fire.

The last feast of the year is Tabernacles, often called Sukkot, or the Feast of Booths. It is held in conjunction with the harvest of grapes. Grapes represent those men and women who have given themselves fully over to sensuality and have become the enemies of God. Even as the fruit of the grape can induce drunkenness, attended by an absence of self-control, so too are there many men and women who set aside all inhibitions and give themselves fully to a pursuit of selfish pleasure and ungodliness.

Romans 1:32

Though they are fully aware of God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them themselves but approve and applaud others who practice them.

[Amplified Bible]

These are the last to come to maturity. They are the last group from among mankind to be resurrected. They must experience the wrath of God in full measure.

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Having this introduction to the symbolism of the three feasts established by Yahweh, let us look once more at Paul's words to the saints in Corinth relating to Christ's work of subjecting all things to the Father.

I Corinthians 15:22-26

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: the anointed first fruits (Barley/Passover), after that those who are Christ's at His coming (Wheat/Pentecost), then the remainder (Grapes/Tabernacles), when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

The more one learns about the Feasts, the better able they may discern the relationship between the feasts and the resurrections as described by Paul in these words. At Passover the firstfruits offered to Yahweh were to be anointed with oil.

Numbers 28:17-20

On the fifteenth day of this month shall be a feast, unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days... You shall present an offering by fire, a burnt offering to Yahweh: two bulls and one ram and seven male lambs one year old, having them without defect. **For their grain offering, you shall offer fine flour mixed with oil...**

The fine barley flour of Passover was to be mixed with oil. This was "the anointed firstfruits." Paul says that these are the first to be resurrected. When Paul writes of those who are last to be resurrected, he concludes with the statement, "For [Christ] must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet." Grapes are harvested and then crushed under the feet of men. From ancient days, this was the method of extracting the juice from the grape.

Paul attaches to his words on the order of the resurrection the words "He must reign until He has

put all His enemies under His feet." These words express the thought that the resurrection work of God among mankind will not be complete until the enemies of God are crushed and then reconciled to the Father. These will be last in resurrection. Like grapes which are trodden under the feet of man, the enemies of God will be trodden under God's feet, experiencing His wrath.

Isaiah 63:2-6

Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press? "I have trodden the wine trough alone, and from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them in My anger, and trampled them in My wrath; and their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, and I stained all My raiment. For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and My year of redemption has come. And I looked, and there was no one to help, and I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; so My own arm brought salvation to Me; and My wrath upheld Me. And I trod down the peoples in My anger, and made them drunk in My wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."

God's work among mankind will not be finished until all mankind has appeared before God. Each group of men must be harvested from the earth, "for as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order." The enemies of

The enemies of God, like grapes, will be harvested last of all.

God, like grapes, will be harvested last of all. They must endure the wrath of God. Before the ages are concluded, all who were incensed with Yahweh will be ashamed. They will confess "Surely in Yahweh I have righteousness and strength."

Yahweh was very deliberate in choosing these three crops to represent the various groups of men to be resurrected. Not only are the three resurrections of man observed in the Old Testament in the feasts established by Yahweh, they are proclaimed all the way to the last book of the Bible. In Revelation

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chapter fourteen, all three resurrections are in view.

Revelation 14:1-5

Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads... These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as **firstfruits** to God and to the Lamb. And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.

In these words we see the overcomers in Christ. These are firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. They are the first to pass through death into the resurrection life of Christ. Later in this same chapter we see the next group to be resurrected.

Revelation 14:14-16

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.

The harvest allegory is clearly being employed in this chapter. We have seen the firstfruits, now a second resurrection is occurring. The earth is being reaped. Those who have come to maturity must be gathered together to be presented before the Father. Immediately after this we see a third and final reaping of the earth.

Revelation 14:17-20

And another angel came out of the temple which is

in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

In this chapter we see a distinct parallel to Paul's words in I Corinthians chapter fifteen, and to the three feasts of Yahweh with their associated harvests. This chapter of Revelations begins with the firstfruits of Passover standing on Mount Zion with Christ. It ends with the grapes of Tabernacles being harvested and trodden under foot. In between is the wheat harvest of Pentecost. John further elaborates on the enemies of God in this chapter.

Revelation 14:9-11

Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up to the ages of ages; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

Christ must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. How fitting it is that the Holy Spirit pictures these enemies as grapes. What marvelous design is seen in Yahweh's creation where the grape harvest is in the end of the year, long after the barley and the wheat have been gathered in. There is an appointed time for all things.

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PARABLES PRECEPT— The Bible



Although most of the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, the Scriptures began to be translated into Aramaic around 400 B.C.. This was due to the Jewish people adopting the Aramaic language while in captivity in Babylon. To make the

Scriptures readable to them in their common language, the Hebrew scriptures were translated into Aramaic.

A couple centuries later the Greek Empire held great sway over the part of the world in which the Jews lived. As a result they adopted Greek as a common language and once more a translation of the Scriptures was initiated.

Around the year 250 B.C. a group of 70 or 72 translators worked to produce a manuscript of the Hebrew Scriptures in the Greek language. This manuscript is called the Septuagint. It is often referred to with the Roman numeral for 70, LXX. The Septuagint was in use during the time of

Christ and His apostles, and was used among the early church.

Although the Septuagint was initially written 250 years before Christ, the oldest copies in existence today are from around 400 A.D.. This would be similar to obtaining a book copied this year, 2010, that was originally written in the year 1360 A.D..

Due to the many translations, the Bible has gone through, and numerous copying over the period of many thousands of years, there have been errors introduced into the text. This is one reason that the Christian must study carefully the Scriptures asking the Spirit of Christ to guide them into truth.