

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

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THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL #7

For since, in fact, through a man came death, through a Man, also, comes the resurrection of the dead. For even as, in Adam, all are dying, thus also, in Christ, shall all be vivified. Yet each in his own class: the Firstfruit, Christ [lit. a first fruit anointed]; thereupon those who are Christ's in His presence; thereafter the consummation, whenever He may be giving up the kingdom to His God and Father, whenever He should be nullifying all sovereignty and all authority and power. (1 Corinthians 15.21-24 CV)

In the last issue, it was established that in his defense of the resurrection of Christ, consequently, the resurrection of all mankind, Paul likened resurrection to a harvest in which crops are gleaned from the field at various stages of the harvest season. We need to be reminded that in the parables of *the mysteries of the reign of the heavens*, the Lord Jesus explained that He, as the Son of Man, sowed the good seed in the field, which He purchased. To redeem the treasure hidden in the field, the Lord bought the entire field, which is the whole world (see Matthew 13). In other words, the Lord not only purchased His treasure, which I believe refers to the firstfruit Christ, but He also purchased all of the crops in the world, which I believe refer to all the dead. Thus, He purchased the whole world, the field, which means that He possesses not only His treasure hidden in the field but also all else that the field contains, which must refer to all mankind. Psalm 2 confirms this, as the Father decreed to His Son: **'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession'** (Psalm 2.8 NASB). Christ possesses all the earth.

Now, with this in mind, we can continue with the order in which the troops or classes are resurrected and who might be included in each troop.

The good news is that just as a farmer harvests different kinds of crops at different times of the harvest season, so will God harvest mankind through resurrection. Consequently, there are troops or classes of people raised in order, the first being a firstfruit, a barley harvest, followed by a more general harvest, a wheat harvest, and concluding with the final harvest of all that is left, a grape harvest.

To reiterate, Christ is in a class or order all by Himself. He is the Firstfruit and the Firstborn, and, as such, no one else is included with Him. His resurrection is unique in the sense that He is the first Man to put off mortality and put on immortality. As Paul wrote to Timothy: He is **the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality** (1 Timothy 6.15-16).

If we accept this line of thinking, then who are **the firstfruit Christ**? Some see this as referring to those who were resurrected after Jesus rose from the dead. However, neither Scripture nor the historical record offers proof that this group was raised to anything other than mortal life; thus, they died again and did not enter immortal life at that time.

Perhaps, the answer to this question is discovered in the phrase **the firstfruit Christ**. According to the *English Sublinear of the Concordant Greek Text*, the first group that Paul lists is simply "firstfruit anointed." I see two ways of looking at this, both of which come to the same conclusion. First, the word *Christ* can also be translated as the word *anointed*. In other words, the first troop to be raised up is the "anointed firstfruit." Second, if we remain with the word *Christ*, it simply refers to the corporate

body of Christ. In referring to the one body with many members, Paul referred to the body as Christ (1 Corinthians 12.12).

It only follows that if Christ Himself is a firstfruit, then there is other firstfruit to follow. Again, as a reminder, during harvest time, a farmer picks a crop of several pieces of fruit and declares it to be his firstfruit.

So then, who are included in the firstfruit anointed? One of the most common interpretations of the identity of this troop is that it comprises all who have believed on Jesus. However, there is another interpretation that I see as more in line with Scripture. The firstfruit anointed is the troop of believers that will be counted worthy to attain to the oncoming eon to reign with Christ; they are sons of the resurrection (Luke 20.34-36). This troop is what I often refer to as the ones who conquer through Christ and His love. Not all who believe in our age are conquerors. Many have secured immortal life, but not all have secured eonian life to reign with Christ in His coming kingdom. This troop also includes all the conquerors of past eras prior to Calvary; all who died in faith looking for the promise but not receiving it, for they are waiting for the better resurrection (see Hebrews 11).

Consequently, I believe *the firstfruit anointed* refers to those who attain to the *out-resurrection* that Paul sought to attain (Philippians 3.11), the *first* or *former* resurrection that John saw in his Patmos vision (Revelation 20.5-6), and the *better* resurrection that is accounted to the ones who gained approval through their faith but did not receive what was promised (Hebrews 11.39).

The ones who will be considered worthy of the *first* or *better* resurrection, the *out-resurrection*, are ones who will have conquered while they lived in their bodies of death. How will they have conquered? They will have conquered through grace, faith, and love. Hebrews 11 lists the many that walked by faith and conquered in their day. Paul declared: **We are more than conquering through Him Who loves us** (Romans 8.37 CV). How do we conquer? We do it through love—love for our God and Savior, love for one another, and love for our enemies. If we love, we also forgive, including our enemies that do us much harm, for this is what we are commanded to do (Matthew 5.44; 6.14). If we want to be in the *out-resurrection*, we must love, obey, forgive, and endure, and this is done by laying down our lives even unto death, if necessary.

They conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not love their lives in the face of death. (Revelation 12.11 HCSB)

These are the ones who overwhelmingly conquer through the One Who loves us and who will be priests of God and of Christ that will reign with Christ for 1,000 years.

God declares the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46.10), and we see that as Adam was a son of God, so will all mankind be sons of God, not all at the same time but all eventually. We see the firstfruits of sonship in *The Unveiling of Jesus Christ*. The conquerors will be firstfruits of our present eon that will become God's sons in the eons of the eons. They are the first called according to the purpose of God to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8.29).

“He who overcomes [conquers] will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.” (Revelation 21.7 NASB [CV])

Those who are found worthy to attain to the first resurrection (Revelation 20.5-6) and the eon [age] to come (Luke 20.34-38) will be the first to be called *sons of God*, even *sons of the kingdom* (Matthew 13.38). They will be the righteous that will brightly shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13.43).

This is the firstfruit anointed troop of the Lord. Let us conquer while it is still day and before the midnight shout goes forth that the Bridegroom has come!