

Th122 Foundation Doctrines

Lesson Th122 – 22 Resurrection of the Dead - Jesus

A Christian song that was popular a few years ago talks about one thing that makes Christianity different from other major religions. It says that you can visit the tombs of the founders of other religions and find their bones there. But if you visit the tomb of Jesus, you will find that it is empty. He is risen! He is risen indeed! Thus far we have learned the first four foundation doctrines of the church. Those are: Repentance, Faith, Baptisms, and Laying on of Hands. Today we will begin discussing the fifth foundation doctrine: The Resurrection of the Dead.

God commanded the Israelites to have seven celebrations or feasts each year. The first was the Feast of Passover. It happens every spring on the fourteenth day of the first month of the Jewish calendar. It is a feast of salvation and was given to the Jews as a reminder of God delivering the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage.

The second feast was to begin the very next day and it was to run for seven days. It was called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Leaven, or yeast, is what causes bread dough to rise. When the Jews fled Egypt, they did not have time to allow their bread dough to rise. They were forced to cook their bread without yeast.

The third feast of the year happened on the first day of the week following the first Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This feast is called the Feast of Firstfruits. Spring had come to the land and certain plants were already bearing fruit or grain. The Israelites were commanded to take some of this early barley and flax harvest and bring it unto the Lord as a sacrifice. This early harvest was not the main harvest. That would come seven weeks later during the fifth feast—the Feast of Pentecost, also called Feast of Weeks.

Then the largest harvest of the year would happen at the end of summer during the Feast of Trumpets. Each of these feasts plays a significant role in God's supernatural calendar of eternal events. Students of the Bible have understood that at the time of Christ, the Jews had several different calendar systems in use. One was the agricultural or civil calendar. Then there were several religious Hebrew calendars, depending on whether the person was more conservative or more liberal. This helps to understand the various names used for the months and various interpretations given to the feast days by the writers of the Gospels.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke agree that Jesus' last supper with his 12 disciples was their celebration of the Passover Feast and took place on Thursday evening. Later that night Jesus was betrayed and arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Feast of Unleavened Bread would have begun the following day, Friday. It was this Friday when Jesus was dragged before the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, and was sentenced to death. Since the next day would be the Jewish high sabbath it was very important to the Jews that Jesus be crucified on that Friday and that he should be dead and buried before night fell. And so, it was. Jesus was crucified early Friday morning around nine. He hung upon the cross and died at three in the afternoon. One of the Jewish leaders, a righteous man, asked the Roman governor for Jesus' body, to bury it.

Governor Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead, but after confirming Jesus' death, released his body for burial.

It was the Jewish tradition to bury their dead on the same day the person died. The body would be wrapped in clean cloth with spices to reduce the odor of decay. Caves, or tombs carved into the rock, would be used as a temporary resting place for the dead. There the body would decay until only the bones were left. It was then that the family would open the tomb and carefully collect the bones. After wrapping them with new cloth, they respectfully placed the bones into a small stone box and replaced them in the tomb. By this method a family tomb would be used many times. But it was late in the afternoon when Jesus' body was released for burial. There was no time to properly prepare his body with spices. Instead he was quickly wrapped with clean cloths and then placed into a brand-new tomb that had never been used before.

The sun set that Friday evening and all of the Apostles and believers were in shock and deep despair. It was the supposed to be the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—a time of happiness and joy. Instead it was time of incredible sorrow. The next day was Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath or 'Holy Day.' The following day would be the first day of the week after the Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This was the beginning day of God's third feast, the Feast of Firstfruits. While the Jews prepared to bring their Firstfruit harvest offering to the Temple, God was preparing his own Firstfruits. For it was early Sunday morning that the unbelievable happened. Jesus Christ's body had been supernaturally transformed. He had been resurrected from the dead! The disciple Matthew wrote that tombs were opened and the bodies of many saints who had died were also raised to life, like Lazarus had been raised. And coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, they entered the holy city.

Christ's resurrection is God's firstfruits resurrection. Jesus conquered death through his redemptive work on the Cross. Paul preached that Christ had to suffer and was "the first to rise from the dead" (Acts 26:23). He taught the Corinthians, saying, "Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him" (1Cor 15:20-23). Jesus' resurrection is the demonstration of the promise made to every believer, that we too will one day be resurrected from the dead. And we will be with our resurrected Lord for all eternity.

This story is **important** because it gives us insight into God's plan for his Son Jesus, and God's promise to those who believe in him. Because Christ lives, we also shall live!

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God has planned the events of his timetable so that significant New Testament events took place on special days of the Old Testament calendar. He intended for us to see Christ's resurrection as the firstfruits of those who have died and will be raised in supernatural spirit bodies.

To **review** this lesson, answer the following questions:

1. What was the third feast in the Jewish calendar? [Pause 5 seconds]

- A. If you answered, “The Feast of Firstfruits,” you answered correctly.
2. What was God’s firstfruits harvest at the time of Jesus’ death? [Pause 5 seconds]
A. If you said that Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is considered to be God’s firstfruits, you are correct.
3. What is the fifth Foundation Doctrine? [Pause 5 seconds]
A. If you said, “Resurrection of the Dead is the fifth Foundation Doctrine,” then you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to this lesson as many times as is necessary to learn the story. You should be able to clearly explain the concept of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead as being a Firstfruit promise of God that we will also one day be resurrected from the dead. Memorize First Corinthians 15:20-23: “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him” Find a few people and teach them this important principle.