



Foundations

Hebrews 6

'Resurrection of the Dead'

RESURRECTION

Jesus used the illustration of a seed 'dying' in the ground before sprouting and producing fruit to explain the nature of his own death and resurrection:

Jesus replied, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies it produces many seeds.' (John 12:24)

Seed producing fruit after its own kind is a fundamental principle in creation (Gen 1:11-12), and all creation declares the God's glory and his purpose. Because Jesus's incarnation is the centre-piece of God's eternal purpose (he's 'the first-born over all creation' and 'the firstborn from among the dead' Colossians 1:15, 18) we can see that the whole concept of seed and fruit, which is so fundamental to life, ultimately points us to Jesus's death and resurrection. Every shoot that appears through the ground each springtime is prophesying about Jesus's resurrection!

This image of Jesus as the seed that dies and then produces many seeds is taken up by the NT writers and linked to the idea of firstfruits.

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1Cor 15:20)

Firstfruits offerings which were important part of two of the Feasts of Israel (for information on the Feasts see Leviticus 23) and they expressed the worshipers' dependence and trust in God: the firstfruits were a promise and guarantee of the harvest to come – their food for the rest of the year.

The two firstfruits offerings were wave offerings: the priests literally waved the offering before God. The Sheaf of Firstfruits came first and took place on the first day of the week after the Passover – what we now call Easter Sunday, or Resurrection Day. The second was celebrated 50 days later and so was called the Festival of Weeks, or Pentecost (meaning 50) where instead of a sheaf, loaves of bread were waved before God. On Easter Sunday the resurrected Jesus was put on display for the first time, on Pentecost the church was put on display for the first time – and the harvest of souls began! Jesus's words in John 12:24 had been fulfilled.

Now it shouldn't surprise us that Jesus isn't the only firstfruits the NT mentions – we also are called firstfruits:

*He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of **firstfruits** of all he created.* (James 1:18 - see also Rom 8:23, Rom 11:16, 2Thes 2:13, Rev 14:4).

Likewise, Jesus being the firstborn from the dead isn't an end in itself – it is so that we, who are called 'the church of the firstborn' (Heb 12:23), can become just like him:

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. (Rom 8:29)

Questions for discussion:

- What connections can you see between Jesus's resurrection and our new life?
- What are the implications of understanding that we are firstfruits?