

# First Fruits Resurrection

## Matthew 27:51-53 NKJV

Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, 52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the graves after his resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

It has always amazed me that Matthew only gives this one sentence to cover this momentous event. If it had happened in our time, we would have written books on the subject, with interviews of those who talked with them, what they said, who they were, how long they stayed, how many there were . . . It hardly needs to be said that this was not the final resurrection from the dead, however, it is certainly one of the encouraging signs that God has given that there will indeed be a more complete resurrection. This article will set forth this event recorded in Matthew as the fulfilment of the symbolic offering of the Feast of First Fruits.

## Leviticus 23:9-14 NKJV

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 10 “speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘when you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. 11 he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. 12 and you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the Lord.

Before the harvest began, the owners were to go through the field and select enough to form a sheaf and bring it as an offering to the temple. It has been suggested there were always a few heads of grain that ripened early. Along with the sheaf a young male lamb without blemish was also sacrificed. As surely as the Passover feast was fulfilled, the other feasts were too, as they all pointed towards Christ. However, not many people take much notice of the first fruit resurrection in the New Testament. Most scholars recognize Jesus as being the first fruits, citing Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, but they overlook the detailed instructions in Leviticus just mentioned; the lamb was to be offered with a sheaf from the coming harvest. Both the lamb and the sheaf are the first fruits.

## 1 Corinthians 15:22-24 NKJV

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each one in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ’s at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father,

In the above verse, I have added a comma to the text between “Christ” and “the firstfruits”. The original Greek supplies no punctuation, and so all commas, speech marks etc., are at the discretion of the editors. I believe this suggested edit of mine conforms better with the reality of the first fruit resurrection cited in Matthew and in Leviticus. He rose first, the many saints very soon after as per the Feast of First Fruits (recorded in Matthew 27:52-53) and later, the final future resurrection being the harvest at the end of the age.

The word “appeared” is used 73 times in Scripture and about 60 of those times it speaks of the Lord appearing to his people, either in the Old or the **New Testaments. On occasion it’s used of an angel or a**

cherub, twice for a star and never for a mortal person. In particular in the New Testament it is used again and again concerning Jesus appearing to his disciples after the resurrection and included amongst the Scriptures using this word is the reference to those who appeared from the grave. It is not used in any other way. All of these appearances are short and temporary, indicating that these saints did not hang around to live and later die again.

### **Ephesians 4:8 NKJV**

**Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive,**

I suspect Daniel was among those who were raised and appeared at that time because he was told he would be raised at the end of the days. Our study revealed that the days mentioned were the days of the **end of the prophecy (Daniel 12:13). These saints, although they were in "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22), they were still captive in Sheol. Jesus leading "captivity captive" would seem to indicate Him raising all the saints in "captivity" as First Fruits when He Himself "ascended on high".**

There is debate over whether this resurrection included all the saints that had gone before or just a selection of them, noting that the word "many" might not mean "all". On the other hand it mentions **"the graves being opened" and that phrase on its own could very well be all inclusive.** It would seem strange to me to consider that He would have treated some of the saints of old differently when He **"took captivity captive" (Ephesians 4:8).** However, there is not enough given in the Word to make a dogmatic statement. My thoughts are that they were all resurrected (the graves were opened) but only **"many" of them stopped by in** Jerusalem where they showed themselves to "many" in the city. Whether they showed themselves anywhere else we can but speculate.

These saints that came out of their graves did not hang about and later die. They appeared, and then ascended so that when He presented Himself on High as the Lamb sacrificed, He would then, as our High Priest, have also presented the First Fruits from the Harvest. Thus Jesus has fulfilled the Feast of First Fruits just as surely as He has fulfilled every other aspect of the Law. Hallelujah!