

# FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD

by Rod Reynolds

"Firstborn from the dead" is how Jesus Christ is referred to in Revelation 1:5 and Colossians 1:18 (New King James and other translations, some translations into English phrase it somewhat differently, but with essentially the same meaning). In this article, I want to discuss the implications of the title "Firstborn from the Dead," as it applies to Jesus Christ.

Is this term to be understood only as a title denoting preeminence, as some have suggested? Or does it also imply that Jesus Christ is the first, in time order, to be "born" from the dead, as a metaphor for the resurrection? We know that others were resurrected from the dead before Jesus Christ was. He himself had resurrected his friend Lazarus, who had died, and had also resurrected others from the dead during his ministry (Matthew 9:18-19, 23-25; 11:5; Luke 7:11-16, 22; 8:41-42, 49-56; John 11:11-45). So why is Jesus Christ called the "firstborn from the dead," and what significance does that have?

The Greek word translated "firstborn" in Revelation 1:5 and Colossians 1:18 is *prototokos*. It is a compound word derived from *protos*, "first," and *tikto*, "to bring forth," or to "bear" or "produce." The word is used several places in the New Testament, including the account of Jesus Christ's birth by the virgin Mary (Luke 2:7).

Scripture says of Jesus' birth to Mary, "And she brought forth her **firstborn** Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7).

## First in Order of Birth

In commenting on the use of the word translated "firstborn" in Luke 2:7 the Greek grammarian A. T. Robertson writes, "The expression naturally means that **she afterwards had other children** and we read of brothers and sisters of Jesus" (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*). Matthew names four brothers of Jesus, and mentions sisters, as well: "And when He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, 'Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?' So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house'" (Matthew 13:54-57).

The equivalent Hebrew word for firstborn is *bekor* (בכור), which, along with cognate words with similar or related meanings, occurs extensively in the Old Testament.

There are a few instances in the Old Testament where "firstborn" is used in a purely figurative sense of that which is supreme or preeminent over its kind, but in the vast majority of cases it is used of that which is literally the first in time order to be born of a parent, especially the firstborn son of a father. Scripture reveals that God from the beginning had a particular regard for that which was first to be born or produced, and claimed it as his own in a special way: "**Consecrate to Me all the firstborn**, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel,

both of man and beast; it is Mine" (Exodus 13:2).

Abel's offering was pleasing and acceptable to God, in part, because it included the firstborn of his flock. Cain's did not. "And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell" (Genesis 4:3-4).

### Rights and Privileges of Firstborn

Under the culture and legal system of the Old Testament firstborn sons were accorded certain rights, privileges and responsibilities solely by virtue of having been born first. Among them was a double portion of the inheritance divided among a father's sons.

"If a man has two wives, one loved and the other unloved, and they have borne him children, both the loved and the unloved, and if the firstborn son is of her who is unloved, then it shall be, on the day he bequeaths his possessions to his sons, that he must not bestow firstborn status on the son of the loved wife in preference to the son of the unloved, the true firstborn. But he shall acknowledge the son of the unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his" (Deuteronomy 21:15-17). It wasn't intended from the beginning that a man have two wives in the first place, but as with divorce, polygamy was tolerated under the Old Covenant system due to hardness of human hearts (cf. Genesis 2:21-24; Matthew 19:3-8; Ephesians 5:31; I Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6).

Among the patriarchs the birthright of the firstborn included chieftainship, or rule over the brothers and the entire family. Esau, the firstborn of Isaac, had sold his birthright to Jacob, his brother. Through guile, Jacob also received the blessing, that normally accompanied the firstborn status. In giving the blessing of the firstborn son to Jacob, his father Isaac said: "Let peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you. **Be master over your brethren**, And let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, And blessed be those who bless you!" (Genesis 27:29). The blessing in this case also encompassed title to the blessing of promise, passed down from Abraham, which included physical inheritance for their descendants of the choice parts of the earth and the spiritual blessing of fellowship with God in a covenant relationship.

### Covenant with Abraham

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.' Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: 'As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting

possession; and I will be their God" (Genesis 17:1-8).

Issac confirmed the blessing was Jacob's. "Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: 'You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. May God Almighty bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples; And give you the **blessing of Abraham**, To you and your descendants with you, That you may inherit the land In which you are a stranger, Which God gave to Abraham'" (Genesis 28:1-4).

"He [God] remembers His covenant forever, The word which He commanded, for a thousand generations, The covenant which He made with Abraham, And His oath to Isaac, And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, To Israel as an everlasting covenant" (Psalms 105:8-10).

"For He remembered **His holy promise, And Abraham His servant**. He brought out His people with joy, His chosen ones with gladness. He gave them the lands of the Gentiles, And they inherited the labor of the nations, That they might observe His statutes And keep His laws" (Psalms 105:42-45).

The land God promised to Abraham's descendants eventually far exceeded the confines of the land of Canaan. "**Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south**; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 28:14).

"For the promise that he would be the **heir of the world** was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith" (Romans 4:13).

During the period of the kings, it was customary for the **firstborn son** of the king to succeed his father as king, though the custom was not always honored.

"And Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. Then Jehoram his son reigned in his place. He had brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat: Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azaryahu, Michael, and Shephatiah; all these were the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel. Their father gave them great gifts of silver and gold and precious things, with fortified cities in Judah; but he gave the kingdom to Jehoram, **because he was the firstborn**" (II Chronicles 21:1-3).

#### Firstborn Rights Could be Transferred

Under the law of the Old Covenant, **the right of the firstborn was to belong to him who was born first**. It is clear from Scriptural example, however, that **the right could be transferred to another for cause**. While the descendants of all Israel's sons were to share in his blessings, the greater part of the physical inheritance went to Joseph and his sons. Joseph was born later than Reuben, but was the firstborn to Israel's wife, Rachel. **In terms of the inheritance of physical blessings, Joseph had replaced Reuben as the firstborn** (Genesis 48:15-16; 49:22-26), while **the scepter, symbol of royal authority, was given to Judah** (Genesis 49:8-10).

Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, forfeited his right to firstborn status by committing adultery with Jacob's concubine.

"And Jacob called his sons and said, 'Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you **in the last days**: Gather together and hear, you sons of Jacob, And listen to Israel your father. Reuben, you are my firstborn, My might and the beginning of my strength, The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, **you shall not excel** [or you shall not have preeminence, as in the English Standard Version and some other translations], Because you went up to your father's bed; Then you defiled it -- He went up to my couch" (Genesis 49:1-4).

The blessing of Jacob, or Israel, on Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh is recorded as follows: "Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said: 'God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has fed me all my life long to this day, The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; **Let my name be named upon them, And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac**; And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth'" (Genesis 48:14-16).

In this case the descendants of Ephraim, the younger son, were to become greater than those of Manasseh, Joseph's firstborn. "Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said: 'God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has fed me all my life long to this day, The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; Let my name be named upon them, And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.' Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, 'Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.' But his father refused and said, 'I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude [or family, as in some translations] of nations.' So he blessed them that day, saying, 'By you Israel will bless, saying, "May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!" And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh" (Genesis 48:14-20).

Additional specific blessings on the descendants of Joseph, especially to be fulfilled in the "last days," or near the end of the present age, (verse 1) are recorded in the next chapter: "Joseph is a fruitful bough, A fruitful bough by a well; His branches run over the wall. The archers have bitterly grieved him, Shot at him and hated him. But his bow remained in strength, And the arms of his hands were made strong By the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), By the God of your father who will help you, And by the Almighty who will bless you With blessings of heaven above, Blessings of the deep that lies beneath, Blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father Have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers" (Genesis 49:22-26).

Green's Literal Translation renders verse 26 of chapter 49 as follows: "The blessings of your father are **above the blessings of my offspring**, to the limit of everlasting hills; may they be for the head of Joseph and for the crown of the leader of his brothers" (Genesis 49:26; for additional commentary on these Scriptures see [\*The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy\*](#), by Herbert W. Armstrong).

#### Scepter Promise to Judah

The scepter, representing the office of king, was given to Judah. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawmaker from between his feet, until Shiloh [understood as a reference to the Messiah] come, and the obedience of the peoples to him" (Genesis 49:10, Green's Literal Translation).

"Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel – **he was indeed 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 the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; yet **Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler**, [or the chief ruler, as in some translations] although the birthright was Joseph's" (I Chronicles 5:1-2).

Judah was the last of four sons of Jacob to be born by his wife, Leah. Reuben, as we've seen, was disqualified. The two who were born next in order by Leah were Simeon and then Levi. These two had murdered Shechem, who had sought atonement for fornicating with Jacob's daughter, Dinah (Genesis 34). Because of their crime their descendants were to be scattered among the other Israelite peoples in the latter days (Genesis 49:5-7). But the kings of Israel would come primarily from descendants of Judah, as would ultimately the Messiah.

Eventually, David, although he was not the firstborn among his father's sons, was chosen by God to become king of Israel. And **he became one regarded by God as a firstborn son**. Speaking of David: "But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him, And in My name his horn shall be exalted. Also I will set his hand over the sea, And his right hand over the rivers. He shall cry to Me, 'You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.' Also **I will make him My firstborn**, The highest of the kings of the earth" (Psalms 89:24-27).

*Keil and Delitzsch* Commentary remarks as follows: "What is promised in Psa 89:26 is a world-wide dominion...." Largely unknown to most people is the fact that David's kingdom was worldwide in its scope and influence, and even more so under his son, Solomon (cf. *The 'Lost' Ten Tribes of Israel...Found!*, Steven M. Collins, chapters 1-2).

But what we read in Psalm 89 concerning David, was not complete in David, nor even in his son Solomon. **In Jesus Christ, a descendant of David, this promise of worldwide dominion and other promises have been or will be fulfilled to the utmost.**

#### Jesus Resurrected from the Dead

Jesus Christ, after a ministry of three and a half years, being about 33 years old, was crucified and died an agonizing death. But women disciples of his came looking to anoint his body after he had been dead and buried for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:39-40). The

morning after that period, they arrived at the tomb where he had been laid.

"Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?' But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away--for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. **He is risen!** He is not here. See the place where they laid Him'" (Mark 16:1-6, for a detailed explanation concerning the sequence of events related to Jesus' death, burial and resurrection see our booklet, [When Is the Biblical Passover?](#), available as a pdf file you can download, or as a print copy by request).

After his resurrection, Jesus had remained for forty days before he ascended into heaven. "The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom **He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs**, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:1-3).

Peter proclaimed on the Day of Pentecost following Jesus' death and resurrection: "For David says concerning Him [Jesus Christ]: 'I foresaw the Lord always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.' Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, **He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne**, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning **the resurrection of the Christ**, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. **This Jesus God has raised up**, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:25-36).

No doubt the news of the empty tomb where Jesus had been laid was well known in Jerusalem by the time Peter spoke to the crowd on the day of Pentecost. And he had been seen alive by more than five hundred witnesses after being publicly executed, by being whipped to near the point of death with a scourge (a whip consisting of a handle with leather strips attached, with jagged pieces of bone or metal tied to the ends which lacerated and tore chunks of flesh from the victim with each blow). Then he was nailed to a cross, and finally, had a Roman spear thrust into his side (John 19:34, for more details about the punishment Jesus endured see chapter 8 of [When Is the Biblical Passover?](#)).

Paul wrote: "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that **He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once**, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time" (I Corinthians 15:1-8).

Paul, who had previously persecuted Christians, became himself a disciple, a follower, and apostle of Christ after Christ appeared to him in a vision, and later personally taught him. Paul testified: "But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. **For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.** For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, **I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem** to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. But they were hearing only, 'He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy'" (Galatians 1:11-23).

So Paul, the former persecutor, did not confer with any of the apostles who had known Jesus Christ until three years after his conversion. Yet he was soon a foremost teacher within the Church, and was **teaching the same doctrine** that the other apostles were teaching, the doctrine **he had been taught by Jesus Christ.**

Paul continues: "Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain" (Galatians 2:1-2).

"But from those who seemed to be something--whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man--for those who seemed to be something **added nothing to me.** But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do" (Galatians 2:6-10).

So **there was harmony in the teaching of Paul and that of the other apostles**. His primary mission was to proclaim the gospel among the Gentiles, but they asked that he remember the poor among the circumcised, as there was poverty among the followers of Jesus in Judea, due largely to persecution. Paul took pains to raise money to send to the Judean Christians during the course of his ministry.

Paul, in presenting a defense before the Roman authorities regarding charges brought against him by Jewish leaders, said: "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, **saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come--that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles**" (Acts 26:19-23).

The *Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Commentary* on verse 23 remarks: "The construction of this sentence implies that in regard to the question 'whether the Messiah is a suffering one, and whether, **rising first from the dead**, he should show light to the (Jewish) people and to the Gentiles,' **he had only said what the prophets and Moses said should come.**"

#### In What Sense was Jesus Christ the First to be Resurrected?

Even though the way this is phrased in the original does not explicitly state that Christ was the first to rise from the dead, but only that he would rise from the dead and give light to both Jews and Gentiles, it is nevertheless true, as a number of Scriptures make plain, that Jesus Christ **was the first to rise from the dead in a certain respect**.

Adam Clarke comments on Acts 26:23: "*That he should be the first that should rise from the dead*] That is, **that he should be the first who should rise from the dead so as to die no more**; and to give, in his own person, the proof of the resurrection of the human body, no more to return under the empire of death. **In no other sense can Jesus Christ be said to be the first that rose again from the dead**; for Elisha raised the son of the Shunammite. A dead man, put into the sepulchre of the Prophet Elisha, was restored to life as soon as he touched the prophet's bones. Christ himself had raised the widow's son at Nain; and he had also raised Lazarus, and several others. **All these died again**; but the human nature of our Lord was raised from the dead, and **can die no more. Thus he was the first who rose again from the dead to return no more into the empire of death**" (*Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*).

Jesus Christ is **firstborn from the dead** insofar as **he is the first and so far the only person who has been resurrected from the dead to eternal life**. Paul wrote to Timothy of Jesus Christ that **he "... alone has immortality"** (I Timothy 6:16; for more concerning the subject of death see our article [What Is Death?](#)).

"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son

Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and **declared to be the Son of God with power** according to the Spirit of holiness, **by the resurrection from the dead**" (Romans 1:1-4).

**Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the firstborn son of God in that he is the first to have been resurrected from the dead to become fully like God, an immortal Spirit being in the image and likeness of God.**

"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 worlds; 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.' And of the angels He says: 'Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire.' **But to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever**; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness **more than Your companions**.' And: 'You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail.' But to which of the angels has He ever said: 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool'? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:1-14).

More clear in verse six is the following: "When God was about to send his **firstborn Son** into the world, he said, 'All of God's angels must worship him'" (Hebrews 1:6, God's Word to the Nations Version).

#### Others to be Resurrected in Like Manner

Jesus Christ is the **firstborn from the dead to enter into eternal life. But he is the forerunner of many more**. "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, **that He might be the firstborn among many brethren**" (Romans 8:29). As explained in our article "[Are the 'Lost' Predestined to Hell?](#)" this passage of Scripture simply means that mankind exists for the purpose of becoming like Christ, immortal and sharing his nature. There will be countless others who will follow Christ into immortality in future resurrections.

**"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits [Greek: firstfruit] of those who have fallen asleep**. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. **For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order**: Christ the firstfruits [more accurately, a firstfruit, as in Young's Literal Translation], afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the

end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For 'He has put all things under His feet.' But when He says 'all things are put under Him,' it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, **that God may be all in all**" (I Corinthians 15:20-28).

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, **now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him**, for we shall see Him as He is" (I John 3:1-2).

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, **who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body**, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself" (Philippians 3:20-21).

#### Jesus Christ has Preeminence

**Not only is Jesus Christ first to be resurrected as explained above, he has supreme authority—preeminence—as the firstborn of God.** "He has delivered [aorist, should be "delivers"] us from the power of darkness and conveyed [aorist, should be "conveys"] us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the **firstborn over all creation**. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 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**. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Colossians 1:13-20).

**He holds the status of the firstborn over all creation. This implies he has a status superseding—that is, superior to—that of any created thing.**

"...and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the **firstborn from the dead**, and the **ruler over the kings of the earth**. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Revelation 1:5).

Although Jesus Christ has authority over the kings of the earth, he is not yet exercising his authority to govern the earth as he will when he returns in power.

Daniel saw a vision from God which he wrote down. "I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is

an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14).

Jesus Christ testified before his persecutors that he was the one spoken of in Daniel's vision. "But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, 'I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!' Jesus said to him, 'It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven'" (Matthew 26:63-64).

In the Olivet prophesy he said, "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:30-31).

Meanwhile, it's up to us to follow the admonition of Paul to Timothy: "... pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (I Timothy 6:11-15).

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