

Put God First Part 11

Giving The Firstfruits

“9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” (Proverbs 3:9-10 KJV)

The Bible speaks about the firstborn and the firstfruits that belong to the Lord our God. While we commit to put God first and as our priority, reading, and understanding the Word of God will inspire us more to do what God requires of us. **We honor the Lord with our bodies and lifestyle because we are His temple. We are also required to honor the Lord with every substance or belonging we have and with the firstfruits of all our increase. The firstfruits are the things that belong to God and we need to return them to the Lord.** As we obey this command, the Lord will add more to us and bless us abundantly beyond measure. He promised, ***“10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out.” (Proverbs 3:10 KJV)*** We put God first by giving Him our first fruit.

A. Honour God with the Firstfruits:

1. Honoring God with the firstfruits is an act of faithfulness expressed by giving: We ought to remember and honor God by bringing back to Him the first fruits that we have received from Him. It is the requirement of the Lord from us. ***“1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.” (Exodus 13:1-2 KJV)*** ***“12 That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD's. 13 And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem.” (Exodus 13:12-13 KJV)***

2. Honoring God with the firstfruits is commemorating God's mighty work of salvation and deliverance: God required the dedication of the firstborns and the firstfruits upon the deliverance of His chosen people from bondage and slavery in Egypt. ***“36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength. 37 He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.” (Psalm 105:36-37 KJV)*** ***“50 He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; 51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: 52 But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.” (Psalms 78:50-52 KJV)*** The Lord struck the firstborn of the Egyptians, human and animal, but He took out His people victoriously the day that He brought His people out of Egypt, ***“14 And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: 15 And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem. 16 And it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by strength of hand the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt.” (Exodus 13:14-16 KJV)*** **The Lord God has saved us, and as the Lord keeps doing great miracles and wonders in our lives, keeping us healthy, supplying all our needs, and blessing us in every area of our lives, we return to Him the first harvest of all our crops or our first month's whole salary and income every year as a token of our thanksgiving and acknowledgment of His goodness and wonderful work for having saved us from the bondage of sin and death.** Without God's saving grace and without God sustaining us and providing for our daily needs, we are nothing and we can do nothing. Thus giving God the firstfruit is to give our first salary, the first increase, the first income of every business, or the first month's income every year as submission to God's command. We also need to explain the reason for giving our first fruits to God to our children and our disciples for we who were once enslaved by sin and were in deep bondage and a slave to our wants and needs, have now been set free by the Lord through the blood of Jesus, the Firstborn from the grave. We all need to grasp the meaning and do what God requires of us to ultimately be blessed. ***“29 Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.” (Exodus 22:29 KJV)***

3. God had apportioned the firstfruits for the priests: ***“8 And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel; unto thee have I given them by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons, by an ordinance for ever. 13 And whatsoever is first ripe in the land, which they shall bring unto the LORD, shall be thine; every one that is clean in thine house shall eat of it. 14 Every thing devoted in Israel shall be thine. 15 Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the LORD, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem. 16 And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs.” (Numbers 18:8,13-16 KJV)*** **The Lord God had given the firstfruits to Aaron the priest for his living. The practical application of this command for us today is that the firstfruits will be used to support the pastor of the church.** ***“20 And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of***

Israel” (Numbers 18:20 KJV) The priests were not given inheritance but they were supported by the firstfruits as God ordained. There were twelve tribes in Israel including Ephraim and Manasseh and thus each tribe shouldered the responsibility each month of the year to support the priests with their first fruits.

4. God gave the distinction of firstfruits and tithes: *“21And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. 22 Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die. 23 But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.24 But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.” (Numbers 18:21-24 KJV) From the aforementioned Scripture it is clear that the tithes and the firstfruits are different entities. God allocated the tithes for the Levites and the firstfruits for the priest. The practical application of this instruction of God in the church today is to use the tithes to support the workers of the church and the firstfruits to support the pastor and his godly family.*

Similarly, in the book of Nehemiah, it has been clearly expounded that the tithes and the firstfruits are different entities. *“35 And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD:36 Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God: 37 And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage.” (Nehemiah 10:35-37 KJV) Again the tithes were to be given to the Levites and not to the priests because the priests received the firstfruits.*

Now to those who say the teaching of giving the firstfruits is in the Old Testament, my answer to them is that the teaching of the giving the tithes is also in the Old Testament, and we are still practicing it in the New Testament.

B. The Firstborn belong to God: *“11 And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 12 And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine; 13 Because all the firstborn are mine; for on the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be: I am the Lord.” (Numbers 3:11-13 KJV) The firstborn man and the firstling cattle and sheep truly belong to God and we cannot put aside this statute of God:*

“14 And the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, saying, 15 Number the children of Levi after the house of their fathers, by their families: every male from a month old and upward shalt thou number them. 16 And Moses numbered them according to the word of the Lord, as he was commanded.” (Numbers 3:14-16 KJV) So Moses numbered them as he was commanded.

“39 All that were numbered of the Levites, which Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the LORD, throughout their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty and two thousand. 40 And the LORD said unto Moses, Number all the firstborn of the males of the children of Israel from a month old and upward, and take the number of their names. 41 And thou shalt take the Levites for me (I am the LORD) instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel; and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstlings among the cattle of the children of Israel.” (Numbers 3:39-41 KJV) God’s purpose was to take the Levites as a replacement for the firstborn of all the Israelites.

“42 And Moses numbered, as the LORD commanded him, all the firstborn among the children of Israel. 43 And all the firstborn males by the number of names, from a month old and upward, of those that were numbered of them, were twenty and two thousand two hundred and threescore and thirteen. 44 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 45 Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine: I am the LORD. 46 And for those that are to be redeemed of the two hundred and threescore and thirteen of the firstborn of the children of Israel, which are more than the Levites; 47 Thou shalt even take five shekels apiece by the poll, after the shekel of the sanctuary shalt thou take them: (the shekel is twenty gerahs:) 48 And thou shalt give the money, wherewith the odd number of them is to be redeemed, unto Aaron and to his sons. 49 And Moses took the redemption money of them that were over and above them that were redeemed by the Levites: 50 Of the firstborn of the children of Israel took he the money; a thousand three hundred and threescore and five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary: 51 And Moses gave the money of them that were redeemed unto Aaron and to his sons, according to the word of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.” (Numbers 3:42-51 KJV) God was so particular about His claim of the firstborn and the firstlings. The small number of first-born which exceeded the number of the Levites (273 in all) were to be redeemed, at five shekels apiece, and the redemption-money given to Aaron. This was how all the

firstborn of Israel and the firstlings of their cattle were given to God, and God gave them as gifts to the priests who ministered before HIM.

“14 Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine. 15 And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering. 16 For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me. 17 For all the firstborn of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. 18 And I have taken the Levites for all the firstborn of the children of Israel. 19 And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary. 20 And Moses, and Aaron, and all the congregation of the children of Israel, did to the Levites according unto all that the LORD commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did the children of Israel unto them. 21 And the Levites were purified, and they washed their clothes; and Aaron offered them as an offering before the LORD; and Aaron made an atonement for them to cleanse them. 22 And after that went the Levites in to do their service in the tabernacle of the congregation before Aaron, and before his sons: as the LORD had commanded Moses concerning the Levites, so did they unto them.” (Numbers 8:14-22 KJV) The Levites who were taken as replacements of all the firstborn of Israel underwent the process of cleansing and sanctification as commanded by the Lord before they were given to Aaron to assist in the service at the tabernacle of God. ***This was to assure the safety and prosperity of the whole nation – that there be no plague among the children of Israel, which means that the last plague of Egypt, the death of the first-born among the Egyptians, would not happen to the community. Moreover, the priests who were supported by the first-fruits were to teach the Israelites obedience unto God, so that God’s wrath due to rebelliousness would not come upon them as had happened to Pharaoh and the Egyptians.*** Today we can apply in our congregations this same formula so that God’s ministry will continue. The body of priests and Levites are to minister before God and for the welfare of the whole church. They are to keep themselves holy and sanctified for God who separated the whole tribe of the Levites and sanctified them to be His own. They were not given any possession of the land but God instituted the financial support for them by the regulation of giving the tithes to the Levites and the firstfruits to the priests. The Levites were also commanded to give their tithes, a tenth of the tithe to Aaron the priest. ***“25 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 26 Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the Lord, even a tenth part of the tithe. 27 And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshing floor, and as the fullness of the winepress. 28 Thus ye also shall offer an heave offering unto the Lord of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the Lord’s heave offering to Aaron the priest.” (Numbers 18:25-28 KJV)***

C. Giving God the Tithes, Firstfruits, and Offerings: The congregation of God in the wilderness was led by Priests and the Levites to draw near to God. In the same manner in the church today, when Christ ascended on high, He gave gifts. ***“8 Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. 11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:” (Ephesians 4:8,11-12 KJV)*** Wherefore what God instituted in the Old Testament with regard to the financial support for those who are taking care of His tabernacle, is relevant in the church today and the giving of the firstfruits, tithes, and offerings for continuous service to God in His Tabernacle is a requirement of God which cannot be overlooked.

My dear and beloved: God is calling you today to give your heart, your life and to give everything you have in the hand of God. Be willing to go along the path that God had ordained for you to pass through. The word of God says the following: ***“29 Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.” (Exodus 22:29)*** If you have enough income then start to set aside your firstfruits and bring them to God on monthly bases. But if you have enough saving, then I encourage you to trust God and to obey Him by bringing what is equal to your one month salary as your firstfruits to God, and to continue to do that on yearly bases. Test and see how the Lord will accomplish his promises and thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine, ***“9 Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: 10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.” (Proverbs 3:9-10 KJV)***

My Prayer: Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins to give me eternal life. Lord thank you for your Word that teach me about giving my firstfruits. Lord thank you for all your blessings that you had given to me.

Come now back to the Lord, repent and renounce all your sins. Lord forgive me I repent of the following sins

Lord I commit my heart to you and my life to serve you and to do your work and your will. Lord I commit to give my firstfruits to you. Lord help me in my life and provide all my needs to continue to serve you.

Lord bless my Brothers and Sisters, who had committed their lives to follow you and to serve you. Lord uphold them with your grace and provide all their needs. Lord I pray for those among them who committed themselves and are willing to bring their firstfruits to you. Lord let your promise will come true in their lives, that their barns be filled with plenty, and their presses shall burst out with new wine. Lord help those who are in financial needs and sustain them and solve their financial problems and help them to pay all their debts. Lord I pray for your grace to be abound in their lives. Lord protects their jobs, the visas and the income of each and every brother and sister and bless the places and the companies that they are working. Lord bless and prosper those who are regularly bringing their tithes, offering and their firstfruits to your house. Lord let your Word and promises be fulfilled in their lives.

Lord bless your church and make it grow. Lord I pray for more evangelism and more people will be reached out for Christ. Lord use all the finances collected to reach new people and to support all the needs in the church. Lord I pray for more Bible study groups to be opened. Lord those who are obedient anoint them with the Holy Spirit and use them to reach the lost and to bring the fruit that you desire to see in the life of your church. Lord help us and protect us as we persevere in serving you. Lord bless us, enlarge our territory, let your hand be with us and free us from harm so that we will not feel pain. May the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all in Jesus name, Amen.

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