

Put God First Part 12

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)

1. How to give the first-fruits: Majority of Christians do not practice the giving of the first-fruits though they want to obey this requirement of the Lord because they do not know how to manage it. If we consider to put God first in the area of our finances, surely the Lord will give us the wisdom to *give our first-fruit in a timely manner*. We have learned from the Scriptures that the practice is to give the firstfruit of every harvest which is corresponding to our first income of every year, first increase, and first profit of every business. The month that we give our firstfruit, we also need to give our tithe for that month.

Giving the firstfruit it has to be practiced from the first income. But in certain times the person will not be able to give the first income because he has no means to support himself. If we are not able to give our firstfruits because we do not have enough means to support ourselves or our families, in such cases, we need to give our whole tithes every month. Thereafter, we practically prepare ourselves to give the firstfruit by learning to budget and to save, willing to suffer by abstaining from unnecessary expenditure and worldly pleasures so that we can save and finally be able to afford to give the firstfruit to the Lord on time. We can also discipline ourselves to set aside an amount equal to our one month's income so that we can give our first-fruit to God within a year. Every person needs to program himself, that in a year, he needs to set aside one month income to the Lord as the first fruit. Even the Lord had commanded the Israelites that after they settled in the land the Lord had given them, that they needed to set apart the firstlings of their cattle and the first of all the fruit of the earth.

a) ***“11 And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, 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. 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.” (Exodus 13:11-14 KJV)***

b) ***“1 And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein; 2 That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there. 3 And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country which the LORD swore unto our fathers for to give us. 4 And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD thy God. 5 And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: 6 And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: 7 And when we cried unto the LORD God of our fathers, the LORD heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression: 8 And the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: 9 And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. 10 And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God: 11 And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you.” (Deuteronomy 26:1-11 KJV)***

c) ***“23 And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised: three years shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of. 24 But in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy to praise the LORD withal. 25 And in the fifth year shall ye eat of the fruit thereof, that it may yield unto you the increase thereof: I am the LORD your God.” (Leviticus 19:23-25 KJV)*** It was therefore the practice of the Jews to pluck off the fruit from their young trees, because their early fruit would hinder the growth of the tree, as well as the fruit because in the first three years they were not considered fully ripe. But the full-grown fruit in the fourth year was holy to the Lord and considered firstfruits to be given to the priests, and after that, it was all their own. This law in the case of fruit-trees seemed to run parallel to that in the case of animals, that no creature was to be accepted as an offering till it had completed eight days from birth. ***“27 When a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat, is brought forth, then it shall be seven days under the dam; and from the eighth day and thenceforth it shall be accepted for an offering made by fire unto the LORD.” (Leviticus 22:27 KJV)***

I usually teach the disciples who have overcome financial constraints and have enough saving, to keep aside a certain amount of money every month so that over a period of twelve months, it will add up to a month's salary, which can be offered as firstfruit without a struggle. We need to be cautious about that because if we are careful to do that then when the time will come to pay our firstfruit then we will not be squeezed and we will find ourselves able to do it.

2. Achan coveted some of the firstfruits: *"2 And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour." (Joshua 6:2 KJV)* The city of Jericho was the first city given to Joshua, a kind of firstfruit that the Lord commanded him to be destroyed by fire as an offering to Him. *"17 And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent. 18 And ye, in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. 19 But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the Lord: they shall come into the treasury of the Lord. 24 And they burnt the city with fire, and all that was therein: only the silver, and the gold, and the vessels of brass and of iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD." (Joshua 6:17-19, 24 KJV)* There are those who teach and use Jericho as the example of giving the tithes to God. That is not correct. Jericho was the firstfruit that God desired from His people not to give Him the tenth of it, but to give it all back to Him.

You cannot take from the firstfruit of God, otherwise you will be accursed.

Joshua confirmed that Jericho was the firstfruit that needed to be given all to God when he announced that those who will rebuild it will do it on the expense of losing their firstborn, the same as God did against the Egyptians who rebelled against God. Joshua confirmed that: *"26 And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it." (Joshua 6:26 KJV)* God did not tell about the other cities that were taken by the Israelites to be given back to Him except the city of Jericho because Jericho was the first city and the first fruit that needed to be given to God. Joshua announced that the one who will rebuild the city of Jericho will do that at the expense of his firstborn and the rest of what he has if he continued to build it in spite of God's warning and the inflicting punishment of God on that person. Such thing it really happened during the time of King Ahab. *"34 In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun." (1 Kings 16:34 KJV)* Rebuilding the city of Jericho was defiance to the commands of God and to His Word. Even God stricken Hiel first son but he did not fear God and did not stop what he is doing, therefore God continued to stricken him till he lost his youngest son when he set up the gates.

"1 But the children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing: for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed thing: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against the children of Israel." (Joshua 7:1 KJV) The first fruit that God gave to Joshua in conquering the Land, the city of Jericho was devoted to the Lord by fire, and all the silver and gold, and vessels of brass and iron were to be taken into the treasury of the Lord. But Achan coveted from therein, stole precious things, and kept under his tent. *"10 And the Lord said unto Joshua, Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? 11 Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. 12 Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you. 13 Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow: for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you. 14 In the morning therefore ye shall be brought according to your tribes: and it shall be, that the tribe which the Lord taketh shall come according to the families thereof; and the family which the Lord shall take shall come by households; and the household which the Lord shall take shall come man by man. 15 And it shall be, that he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel. 19 And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done; hide it not from me. 20 And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: 21 When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. 22 So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. 23 And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord. 24 And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. 25 And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with*

stones.” (Joshua 7:10-15, 19-25 KJV) Achan brought trouble to the whole community and calamity to his own household by stealing from the first city which God said had to be given back to Him. Achan transgressed the covenant with God and was accursed. **Therefore it is so dreadful to take first things which are of God’s. To take the firstfruit that belongs to God, the meaning of it is to rebel against what God recommended. Therefore the plague that had fallen on the firstborn of the Egyptians will fall on those who reject the teaching of giving the firstfruit to God. The firstfruits is to support the living of the priests, who are responsible to teach the people not to rebel against God.** Achan, the son of Carmi and Hiel the Bethelite, both of them who resisted the commands of God through Joshua, by breaking the command of giving the firstfruit to God received the consequences of their sins as we had read. As well as the Lord disciplined his own people for that transgressions as we had read in *Joshua 7* for the transgression of Achan, and as we can read in *1 Kings 17* for the transgression of Hiel the Bethelite whose sin was condoned by King Ahab: **“1 And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.” (1 Kings 17:1 KJV)** For three and half years there was no rain fallen down. God caused severe famine because the transgression of His people reached to the point to nullify the teaching of giving the first fruit. **The people are not willing to give their firstfruits to God because they cannot afford either because they had spent it on their idols, or they are not willing to give the firstfruit to God because they want and are planning to spend it on their idols, pleasures, desires and plans to do their own will.**

Abel was killed by Cain after he offered His fruit. Elijah was about to be killed by Ahab when he announced to him the judgment of God in withholding the rain from them. Those who do the will of God and who teach the will of God and implement it, they will be persecuted and be put on high danger from those who oppose the truth of God. **Such evil attitude and defiance against God and His Word will bring God’s wrath, famines and scarcity, as the famine that had happened at the time of Elijah. All the wars, the famines, the plagues in the world are God’s wrath on the people who are opposing and defying His Word and defying doing His will.**

D. Giving the More Excellent Sacrifice, the First-fruit:

1. **“3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering:” (Genesis 4:3-4 KJV)** Abel was the first man mentioned in the Bible who offered His first-fruit to the Lord. He was a shepherd and he brought the firstlings of his flock. **“4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” (Hebrews 11:4 KJV)** **The New Testament in recommending Abel and his giving to the firstfruits, then recommends to us bringing and giving the first fruit to God.**

2. **“5 In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD’S passover. 6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. 7 In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. 8 But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. “9 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: 11 And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.” (Leviticus 23:5-11 KJV)** Our Lord Jesus Christ was the Passover who died on the day that the Passover lamb was slaughtered. **“5 In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD’S passover.” (Leviticus 23:5 KJV)** The day after Christ’s death was the Sabbath. **“6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. 7 In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.” (Leviticus 23:6-7 KJV)** The Sheaf of the First-fruits that was offered on the Feast of Unleavened Bread after the Sabbath typified the Lord Jesus. The day after the Sabbath was the first day of the week when the Lord was resurrected from the dead. To this day we celebrate the first day of the week, as the Lord’s Day. **“10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: 11 And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.” (Leviticus 23:10-11 KJV)**

3. **“29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” (Romans 8:29 KJV) “20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” (1 Corinthians 15:20) Our Lord Jesus Christ is the real Firstborn and the true Firstfruit. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were events that foreshadowed the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ who gave His life and His blood for the redemption of our sins. He was the Firstborn of God the Father and the Firstborn among us, the children of God. Our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the very day that the first-fruits were offered to show that He was the substance of the shadow. **“10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: 11 And he****

shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.” (Leviticus 23:10-11 KJV)

4. “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) We are taught by this law to honor the Lord with our substance, and with the first-fruits of all our increase. **“14 And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.” (Leviticus 23:14 KJV)** The Israelites were not allowed to eat of their new corn till God’s portion was offered to Him. The Israelites were the chosen people of God in the Old Testament who were guided by the Lord’s instruction in every aspect of their lifestyle. **If we claim to be the chosen people of God, we must begin with God and always live our lives with God – begin every day with Him, begin every meal with Him, begin every affair and business with Him. We should choose to honor God with our lives, with our substance, and with every firstfruit of our labor and increase.**

5. “22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” (Hebrews 12:22-24 KJV) We are the Church of the Firstborn, Jesus Christ who is the first who rose from the death, and we are the brothers of Jesus and our names are written in Heaven. **We ought to follow our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. Our first-fruits and life testimony should also be like that of Abel that even when we are dead it is still spoken about. We should give not only our tithes and first fruits but our whole life to God. Abel not only gave his firstfruit to God but also his life. He was willing to suffer and die and withstand persecution in obedience to God. We ought to dedicate our whole life to live for God and also be willing to suffer for the glory of His Name. If Abel obeyed and gave his life as first fruit to God, how much more we need to obey Him today? The Israelites were redeemed by the blood of the lamb and henceforth observed giving their firstfruits to God. Then how much more should we who are redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus! How much more should we observe giving our firstfruits, our whole life and all that God requires of us!**

6. “23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” (Romans 8:23 KJV) We have the firstfruits of the spirit, even the Holy Spirit that the Lord promised to give us. We give our firstfruits to God with the full understanding and by the enabling of the Holy Spirit, with rejoicing, in faith, and living the moment awaiting the future redemption of our bodies to gain a glorified body when we meet with the Lord in the clouds. As we practice giving our firstfruit, our barns will be filled with plenty, and our presses shall burst out with new wine. Thus we resolve to put God first and His Kingdom of righteousness, and surely we will lack no good thing: **“33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33 KJV)**

I give my firstfruit as I give what is equal to one month income per a year. This is in addition to the giving of my tithes. I give my first fruit in this way: I divide whatever income I have into twelve portions and give one portion to the Lord; I put it in an envelope, write my name on it and specify the giving as firstfruits and I drop it in the collection basket.

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 brining 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 you 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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