

Truth and Spirit Ministries

First Fruits

By Denise Bostic

Fact or Fiction? Can you tell me anything about first fruits? I heard a teaching about this but it is entirely new to me. Are Christians commanded by God to give a first fruit offering from their income? Does giving the first fruit cause the rest of our finances to be blessed?

In answer to your first question – yes, we can all learn about first fruits in God's Word. It is a **fact** that first fruits are very scriptural and the term is found in both the Old and New Testaments. The true spiritual meaning and understanding of first fruits however is only found within Christ and the light of the New Covenant.

In answer to your last two questions, it is **fiction** that *Christians* are commanded by God to give a first fruit offering from their income and that giving the first fruit offering will cause the rest of our finances to be blessed because:

- 1.) The Lord never commanded Christians that are under the dispensation of the New Covenant to bring a first fruit offering of *carnal* or material substance in the same manner that the Nation of Israel was commanded to under the Mosaic Law.
- 2.) Giving a first fruit offering according to the Old Testament Law will not cause the rest of our finances to be any more blessed than if we do not. The reason why is because those in Christ do not inherit their blessings by performing works of the law, but we receive our blessings by God's grace and faith in Jesus and what He has obtained for us by His vicarious sacrifice. (*Romans 4:13-16, Galatians 3:18*)

Today, when we hear teachings about a first fruit offering it is usually in the context that believers are to give money to a ministry or church based upon some Old Testament law or feast day. This is not the true meaning of first fruits however. In order to understand the real meaning of first fruits and to thoroughly answer all three of your questions, we must first know the difference between what first fruits pictured or symbolized under the Law of Moses and what first fruits have become as a *spiritual reality* in Christ and the New Covenant.

Old Covenant First Fruits

First, we will briefly address first fruits under the Old Covenant Law. The word is first mentioned in *Exodus 23:16*. God commanded the Israelites under the Mosaic Law to give offerings three times a year during the three Hebrew Feasts of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost and Tabernacles. (*Exodus 23:14-19*) The Israelites were commanded to bring the first fruits of the harvest from their lands unto God. These first fruits offerings consisted of the natural substances of the land like corn, wine, oil, honey, fruit, etc. They were also required to bring the first-born of their sons, cattle, herds and flocks unto the Lord. (*Nehemiah 10:35-37*) As we will learn, all of the carnal or fleshly works of the law were only shadows or substitutes until the reality could be manifested through Christ and the New Covenant.

Christ Is The End Of The Law

According to New Testament scriptures, offerings under the law were carnal ordinances and they could never perfect the one bringing them, only the ultimate sacrifice of Christ could do that. All of these *external* regulations of offerings of food, drink and various ceremonial washings were only temporarily put in place until Christ could bring the new order, which is the New Covenant.

(*Hebrews 9:8-18, 10:1-14*) We must understand that the law was not permanent, it was only a temporary system imposed upon the nation of Israel until Jesus Christ could come and faith be revealed. (*Read more about the temporary purpose of the law in Galatians 3:19-25*)

It is also important to understand that Christ brought an end to the law through His complete and perfect sacrifice on the cross. (*Romans 10:4*) Jesus fulfilled the law through His life, death, burial and resurrection. He abolished the ceremonial laws with all of its fleshly rules and regulations. (*Ephesians 2:15, Colossians 2:14, Hebrews 9:8-11*) New Testament Christians are not under the Mosaic Law, but grace. Believers are now under the law of faith in Christ.

Again, everything under the law (including the fleshly ordinance of the giving of first fruits) was only a shadow of the things that were coming in the New Covenant and were not the real things of God. All of these things prophetically pointed to some spiritual reality that would be revealed, manifested and received only in the light of Christ and the New Covenant. (*Hebrews 10:1, Colossians 2:16-17*) **The question to ask then is: what is the meaning of the spiritual reality of first fruits now that Jesus Christ has come?** In order to find the answer, we must look to the New Testament scriptures.

New Covenant First Fruits

It was never recorded that the Church gave first fruit offerings of carnal things. The true meaning of first fruits is revealed through the Atonement of Christ and the New Testament scriptures. The first fruit offerings of the Old Covenant Law represented or pictured something far greater than anyone could ever conceive. Contrary to what some teach, the first fruit offering is not a law that one must give *money* as an offering in order to receive a blessing from God. This is a fleshly teaching with its roots in the Mosaic Law and teaches believers a work-based religion instead of a grace-based faith. It teaches believers to operate in the flesh instead of the Spirit. We are not to receive and practice Old Testament teachings when Jesus has given us the greater realities under the New Covenant. Teaching, receiving and practicing Old Testament laws are from the carnal mind and not from the mind of Christ. Believers are not to be carnally minded, but instead to be spiritually minded now that we have been made new creatures in Christ. When we are hearing and obeying from the Spirit, we have the mind of Christ. (*Romans 8:6, II Corinthians 5:17, I Corinthians 2:16*)

In order to understand the meaning of the spiritual reality of first fruits under the New Covenant, it is helpful to know that in the Old Covenant there was the *first of the first fruits* (*Exodus 23:19 KJV*) and then *the first fruits*. (*Exodus 23:16 KJV*) The symbolism of these two are very significant and the answers are revealed in Christ. The *first of the first fruits* was symbolic of and represents Jesus Christ and that He is the *first* of the first fruits (of the Spirit) to be offered up as a living sacrifice and to be raised from the dead. (*I Corinthians 15:20, 23, Hebrews 10:5-10*) The first fruits were symbolic of and now represent all of those who have come to believe in Christ because of His perfect sacrifice. Jesus is the *first born* among many brethren. (**Romans 8:29**)

It is also important to know the symbolism behind the giving of the first fruits by the Israelites under the law during the Feast of First Fruits (Pentecost). This act prophetically pointed to the time when God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh and believers would receive the first fruits of the Spirit. This promise was fulfilled with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in the Book of Acts almost 2000 years ago. This is made very clear in the literal translation of the Greek. **“And in the fulfilling of the day of Pentecost, they were all with one mind on the same place.”** (*Acts 2:1 Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*) Jesus fulfilled the law in its entirety, including bringing total fulfillment to all the Hebrew Festivals. (*Colossians 2:16-17*)

Since Jesus had fulfilled the law through His sacrifice, this released the promised outpouring of God's Spirit just as prophesied by the Old Testament prophet, Joel. (*Joel 2:28-32*) On this historic day, 3000 souls were harvested and brought before God as a first fruits offering! All believers that have come to Christ since are now called first fruits or those who have the first fruits of the Spirit.

(Romans 8:23, 16:5, I Corinthians 16:15, James 1:18 KJV) As we learn from these scriptures, we find that first fruits are not money but *people* who are in Christ. The difference between the Old and the New Covenants can clearly be seen. In the Old Testament a physical harvest was offered up to God by the fleshly works of men, in the New Covenant however a spiritual harvest of precious souls are offered up to God by the Spirit. *The latter is the acceptable sacrifice to God now.*

As the first begotten Son of God or the first of the first fruits, Jesus became our forerunner and entered into the Holiest Place before us on our behalf. (Hebrews 6:19-20) Now, because of what Jesus has done for us we are now in Him and are also first fruits unto God and we will also be raised from the dead as well because of His sacrificial Atonement. (I Corinthians 15:20-23) These are the spiritual meanings and the true realities that are clearly revealed within Christ and the New Covenant.

Some ministers today teach that believers are to give a first fruits (money) offering to their ministries or Churches based upon the *external, fleshly* regulations of the Mosaic Law and the Hebrew Festivals but neglect to teach the spiritual reality of first fruits. This is due to carnal thinking and teaches giving according to an Old Covenant Law that in reality has been abolished in Christ.

Those who take Christians back under the rules and regulations of the law are leading believers away from God's grace and obscuring the true identity of God's people. In short, it teaches people to give for the wrong reasons. We should not allow anyone to bring us under the bondage of the law that Christ has set men free from. (Galatians 5:1) Christians are not under the law but grace. We cannot earn our inheritance blessings through works of the law but only by faith in Christ and what He has accomplished for us by His sacrifice. Ministers that teach otherwise are not teaching in line with the truth of the gospel and do not yet comprehend the depths of the sacrifice of Christ and what He has obtained for us. (Galatians 2:14-16)

You Are The First Fruit Offering!

Believers are now the first fruits in Christ! Knowing this, how are we to give first fruits unto God in the New Testament? The Apostle Paul had a wonderful revelation concerning this and gave instruction to the Church in this regard. **“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.** (Romans 12:1-2)

In light of all that God has done for us, we should now offer ourselves up to Him as living sacrifices as an act of worship. When we offer ourselves entirely to God, this means that we are surrendering to His divine will for our lives. This is the offering that God truly desires and this is pleasing to Him. Jesus understood this and was the first to offer Himself up as an acceptable sacrifice unto God in order to accomplish His perfect will. (Read Hebrews 10:5-10) He is our example to follow. God does not desire carnal or material offerings of blood, food and drinks. Money is also material and falls under this category as well. (Matthew 6:24, I Corinthians 9:11 KJV) He desires the complete sacrifice of our spirits, souls and bodies. God does not desire your money as a first fruit offering; instead YOU are the first fruit offering that God desires!

Does this mean that we are never to give monetary offerings to the Church or any of God's ministries? Not at all! How are we to give then? God no longer wants His people to give by the *outward* rules and regulations of Old Testament laws and days but instead to give out of a much higher law, the Law of Christ, which is written inside our hearts. He now desires us to give money (and other things) out of a spirit of love and by God's empowering grace. (II Corinthians 8:1,6,7-9) We are not giving in order to obtain blessings based upon the merits of our own works but we receive God's blessings freely by grace and through faith in Christ and what He has done for us. We are giving to others, because God has given us so much!

We need to learn how to give, as God would have us to. He wants us to give with a right heart and for the right reasons. We should give monetary gifts to the Church (brethren) or God's Ministries out of an overflow of love and grace so that we might be a blessing and support one another's needs in the Body of Christ and help to spread the most important message on the earth to mankind- the Gospel of Christ and the Kingdom of God. Will God bless us for giving? Absolutely! But not because we are working for it but because of what Jesus has done for us and we are now His beloved sons and daughters!