

Truth and Spirit Ministries

FIRST FRUIT OFFERING

By Denise Bostic

Fact or Fiction? *Should a ministry teach giving a first fruits offering? During the Passover season, a pastor from a Church that my husband and I are visiting taught that giving the first fruits offering was an "investment" and "sacrifice". I guess that pitch was to get a larger offering from the congregation. He taught on the 7 feasts of the Old Testament to justify this teaching. He also told us to bring in our bills also. Is this appropriate?*

Thanks for writing in with your questions. It's always refreshing to come into contact with brothers and sisters in Christ that desire to know genuine truth from God and that also seek validation through His inspired word.

First, I would like to address your first question - should a ministry teach giving a first fruits offering? Not if it's taught according to the ordinances (or teachings, rules or regulations) of the Mosaic Law. There is a growing trend among many in the body of Christ that have been turning to or reverting back to the Mosaic Law but the New Testament scriptures speak against doing so. (*Read Romans 7, Galatians chapters 1,3, 4 and 5, Hebrews chapters 7-10*)

Always know that it is never right for a minister who is supposed to be a NEW TESTAMENT MINISTER OF CHRIST to bring you back or under the rules, regulations and bondage of the Old Covenant Mosaic Law. New Testament believers who are now in Christ are not under or bound to the conditions or requirements of the Law of Moses because He brought an end to the Law by:

1. Fulfilling the righteous requirements for us or on our behalf because we were unable to do so and
2. by abolishing the entire system of the Law and its ordinances because they were against us or only condemned us. (*Romans 10:4, Ephesians 2:14-15, Galatians 3:10-25, 4:21-31, 5:1-4, Colossians 2:13-14*)

The Old Covenant was based on a system of blessings and curses. (*Deuteronomy 28*) Israel gave by command; they were blessed when they obeyed and punished if they disobeyed. Christ redeemed men from the punishment or the curse of the Law when He died on the cross. (*Galatians 3:13*) We no longer must give by command or force but now that we are under grace, it is acceptable if we give according to what we have, but we are also free from condemnation and punishment if we do not have anything to give at the time that an offering is taken up. This is all due to God's grace. (*II Corinthians 8:12*)

We do not find any examples at all of the New Testament Church giving a first fruit offering of money or carnal substance as the nation of Israel was required to under the Law. This was only a shadow or picture of something far greater that would be revealed in the New Covenant. God now requires a better first fruit offering of His holy people. (*Read Romans 12:1-2*) This is the spiritual reality that is now in Christ - you, as a believer, are now the first fruit offering that God desires because now all believers are the true first fruits in Christ. (*Romans 8:23, James 1:18*) This fact does not mean that we should no longer give offerings, but only that we are now to give according to *New Covenant standards*.

Because the Church is not under the conditions or requirements of the Law, no one can use the Old Testament feast days to justify or prove that we must give a first fruit offering of carnal substance

(which includes money) because those days have been fulfilled in Christ. When Jesus said that He did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it - He meant that He did not come to just simply do away with it - He literally fulfilled the righteous requirements of the Law that God demanded in its entirety, including all of the Feasts of the Mosaic Law (*because they were included in the Law*). They were only to be observed by Israel until the Christ or Messiah would come to fulfill them. After Jesus died, He then was able to abolish the entire system of the Law because its purpose was *finished*. These days, including the 7 feast days, were only used *temporarily* in God's plan. They only pointed to or foreshadowed a greater reality that is only found in Christ and the New Covenant. (*Galatians 3:19, 4:8-11, Ephesians 2:14-15, Colossians 2:13-17, Hebrews 9:8-10, 10:1*)

And lastly, I don't know the express purpose of why this pastor asked you to bring in your bills. Again, if he would use the commands or feasts of the Old Testament Law to teach the congregation that we must give according to them in order to receive or be blessed by God financially, know that our answers, provision and peace are now found in Christ and not the rules and regulations of the Law. (*Romans 4:13-16, Galatians 3:6-18*) God does not want us to rely on observing works of the Law but instead to have faith in Christ and what he has already obtained for us through his total sacrifice.

In short, we are under grace, not Law. We receive the blessings of God through what Jesus has already obtained for us and because we have inherited these blessings by becoming sons of God, not because we must do works of the Law to obtain them. (*Romans 8:14-17, Galatians 3:26-29, 3:1-7*) Beware of those who would lead you into a trap of legalism and try to bring you into bondage to the Mosaic Law. Instead receive and walk in the freedom that Christ has now given you in His Spirit. (*Galatians 5:1, II Corinthians 3:13-18*)

Ministers of the Gospel should be teaching on the subject of giving according to *New Testament standards*. It is appropriate to give money and other substance to the Church (*meaning also seeing to the needs of the poor, widows and orphans*) and support those ministers who labor among us but we are to give out of love and by God's empowering grace - not according to the works of the Mosaic Law. (*II Corinthians chapters 8 & 9*) This is how the Church is supposed to give and this is also the example that the early Church set for us and it has been divinely recorded for our learning. Also know that ministers are accountable before the Lord and his people to be good stewards over all offerings that have been entrusted to their care and administration. (*II Corinthians 8:16-21*)

Of course we will be blessed for giving, the Lord already told us this. (*Luke 6:38*) There is a law of reciprocation. We will also reap what we sow. (*II Corinthians 9:6-7*) We can also give sacrificially and God will honor and bless it. (*II Corinthians 8:1-5*) But we should not be giving because there is a law written outwardly on stone that forces us to by command or because we fear that we will be cursed or punished for not doing so. The Lord wants us to not be as children in the area of giving. Children oftentimes must be told to give. Instead we should be spiritually mature, giving because it is now within our *nature* - the new nature that has been given to us in Christ.

God doesn't want us to give according to legalistic rules. Instead, we should give for the right reasons - because now we are empowered by supernatural grace, following the example of our Lord, obeying the will of God, being living sacrifices and proving our love to God and others by sharing what we have. (*II Corinthians 8:1-15, Galatians 5:14*) God is not looking at the *amount* when we give; instead He is looking at our *hearts*.

A final note: One of the greatest examples given in the Word that best explains God's will about giving is in *II Corinthians 8:1-7*. The Macedonians first gave themselves to God (*as living sacrifices*) so that they could do their part of serving the body of Christ (*love*) and then gave as much as they were able (giving is the will of God), even beyond their own ability (*sacrificially*). This all was possible because God gave them the grace to do it. They gave for the right reasons, with a right heart and a clear conscience. Hope this helps your understanding. God Bless.