

# FIRSTFRUITS CELEBRATION

4 February 2024

## INTRODUCTION

Today is a very special day on the Church Calendar. **It is a Celebration – a Time of Thanksgiving and Rejoicing!!!** Last week really set the tone – I witnessed the Joy of the Lord on His people like I never did before. It was beautiful to behold. As Pentecostals we were instructed in the way of the Tithe and Offerings yet there was a feature of the feast of Pentecost that was not fully understood – the Firstfruits! It is plain in Scripture that **God exists and operates in three-fold measures**: He is Father, Son and Holy Spirit; He creates Man who is spirit, soul and body; Time is divided into past, present and future; we Worship with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; in Prayer we ask, seek and knock. We are told that a 3-fold cord cannot be broken. Our giving to God includes 3 very distinct presentations - Firstfruits, Tithes and Offerings.

**Nehemiah 12:43-44**, 'Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off.<sup>44</sup> And at the same time some were appointed over the rooms of the storehouse for the offerings, the firstfruits, and the tithes, to gather into them from the fields of the cities the portions specified by the Law for the priests and Levites; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and Levites who ministered.' [KJV]

### **(1) The POSITION of the Firstfruits - FIRST**

The POSITION that the Firstfruits or the Firstborn occupies in the Kingdom of God is FIRST – not second, third or last. Hence, the name FIRSTfruits or FIRSTborn! Interestingly and rather appropriately, we are introduced to the concept in the FIRST word of the Hebrew Bible. What are the first three words of the Bible?

**Genesis 1:1**, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' [NKJV]

'In the Beginning' – in Hebrew is one word – 'bereshiyth,' which comes from the word 'Reshiyth' and that means 'Firstfruits.' Reshiyth is one of two words used for Firstfruits – the other will be mentioned later – and it means '**first, beginning or best**.' I am of the opinion that God created the entire universe on the principle of the Firstfruits. Firstfruits are the fruits that ripen early before the harvest which comes usually months later. So you can see that this principle is evident in the earth. It is no surprise that David says, 'EARLY in the morning will I seek your face,' or that as Church we meet on the FIRST day of week. What is your position/stance on the Firstfruits? Hopefully this word will help you decide your position or stance.

### **(2) The PRINCIPLE of the Firstfruits - PREEMINENCE/PRIORITY**

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A principle is a foundational truth or **rule upon which a system is built**. For example, marriage as a system is built on the principle honour, submission and trust. When you neglect those principles the marriage collapses. All of life is built on principles – it works for you if you comply and works against you if you do not. God says the Firstfruits and the Firstborn is MINE. Why? Because God is FIRST and there is NO ONE else who is BEFORE Him. The Principle of First Things holds that **when God is given the FIRST place – Priority, Worship & Honour – all of life comes in its rightful order, function and blessings**. When life is in rightful order it is called PEACE. Relationships, studies, career, finances, marriage, are thereupon covered by the Lord. God is now obligated to underwrite your life with the heavens. He becomes your guarantor and collateral until you reach the designated end. Neglect this principle and life is filled with chaos, disorder and curses. Hence, the first commandment is ‘You shall have no other gods BEFORE me!’ Because there is no other – God is the FIRST cause of Creation. The Principle is simple...Let God be God!

**Psalms 24:1-6**, ‘The earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. <sup>2</sup> For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters. <sup>3</sup> Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? <sup>4</sup> He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. <sup>5</sup> He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. <sup>6</sup> This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek your face.’ [NKJV]

### (3) The PRACTICE of the Firstfruits

### - HONOUR

**Proverbs 3:9-10**, ‘Honour the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; <sup>10</sup> So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.’ [NKJV]

When we bring an offering to God we express our HONOUR to God! **Honour is the value system of the Kingdom**. When you value someone you ascribe honour to them. To know the value of a person – you must esteem them – evaluate or estimate. You must do your homework with the question – what does God mean to me or if you remove God from my life, what will be missed? If you do that exercise correctly you will come up with the answer, **without God I am nothing!!!** The very breath that I breath is from the Father – all life comes from him and all of life must to Him, return. Based on that evaluation, He should occupy the first place and first priority of my life. To honour God appropriately, therefore, is to offer Him the first and the best!!!

**Exodus 23:19** “Bring the best of the Firstfruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God.” [NIV] specifics **Numbers 18:12-13**, ‘All the best of the fresh oil and all the best of the fresh wine and of the grain, the first fruits of what they give to the Lord. I have given them to you. <sup>13</sup> The first ripe fruits of all that is in their land, which they bring to the Lord, shall be yours; every one of your household who is clean may eat it.’ [NKJV]

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The second word for **Firstfruits as mentioned here is 'bikkurum' means 'a promise to come.'** Giving thanks before the actual harvest knowing that this is promissory note, a down payment, a lay-bye. I will return and fulfill my promise to you. While the Tithe is about the sealing of the past; the Firstfruits is about the securing the future; and the Offerings, the structuring of the present.

Israel used to be predominantly an agricultural or farming nation but that has changed like with so many nations through the industrial revolution. The world has transformed into a manufacturing economy. The rabbis worked out the percentage of the fruits that ripened early as opposed to the full harvest months later. **They discovered that it is approximately 2.5% which equates to one week income out of 52 weeks.** Therefore, we calculate our Firstfruits offering by taking our monthly income and multiplying by 12 which will yield one's yearly gross. Divide that amount by 52 will give you a weekly salary. If you earn R10 000 a month before deductions your annual income would be R120 000. Divide that by 12 and you have your Firstfruits Offering of R2310.

### (4) The POWER of the Firstfruits

### - LIFE

I cannot tell you how this works – it is beyond my pay grade – it is a mystery. All I know is when you place something in God's hand it is infused with Grace. It no longer operates within the limitation of its earthly, natural existence but becomes a vehicle for divine miracles and manifestations. I showed you the example of the ordinary staff of Moses that become the rod of God through which God performed 42 miracles. How can a stick frack water from a rock? How can a boy's lunch feed 12 000 people? Meen ayaaz!!! But it does!!!

**1 Kings 17:8-16**, 'Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, <sup>9</sup> "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." <sup>10</sup> So he arose and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the city, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink." <sup>11</sup> And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." <sup>12</sup> So she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die." <sup>13</sup> And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it FIRST, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son. <sup>14</sup> For thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.' " <sup>15</sup> So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days. <sup>16</sup> The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by Elijah.' [NKJV]

The power of the Firstfruits is **to sustain life in all its Glory!!!** Story of the Angel of Death over Mt Moriah!!!

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### (5) The PERSON of the Firstfruits

### -CHRIST

The ultimate expression of the Firstfruits is a Person! **Heaven's Firstfruits is Christ and he is offered/ sacrificed before the foundation of the Earth.** Therefore, by him and through him all things were created. What do you do with the Firstfruits? You offer it up – sacrifice it! For God so loved the world that He GAVE his only begotten Son that whoever believes should not perish but have everlasting life. The power of the Firstfruits is that it sustains life! What if God did not offer up His Firstfruits or Firstborn? No promise to come!!!

**Colossians 1:15-18**, 'He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.<sup>18</sup> 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 pre-eminence.' [NKJV]

**I Corinthians 15:20-23**, 'But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the Firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.<sup>21</sup> For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.<sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.<sup>23</sup> But each one in his own order: Christ the Firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.' [NKJV].

Today as we celebrate the Firstfruits we celebrate JESUS! Communion – proclaim the Lord's Death TILL HE COMES!!!

### Conclusion

What happened if Israel did not OFFER the Firstfruits to God? It is of no good to you and your future. In fact God said if you do not want to redeem the donkey for use then break its neck. Why? The firstborn is not yours but mine. Let me remind you of Achan and His family? God said offer up the spoils of Jericho to me in fire – do not take anything for yourself. The other cities later – no problem but not Jericho. Why? It was the FIRST city given to Israel. **Achan withheld some of the gold and he lost his life and his legacy!!!**

Today, we honour God with our Firstfruits because He is the FIRST CAUSE and BEGINNING of all of Creation. As we place the FIRST of our income for the YEAR in His hands, we are confident that God goes before us and sustains our life. Our HARVEST is certain and we will not live in Fear, Anxiety or Worry. God will work ALL matters together for our GOOD and His GLORY!!! Christ in us is the HOPE of a Glorious FUTURE.

Amen!!!