

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)***

The first fruits are the things that belong to God and we need to return them to the Lord. As we do that the Lord will add more to us and bless us. We put God first by practicing giving Him our first fruit.

1- It is an act of faithfulness expressed by giving: God ought to be remembered and honoured by bringing to Him the first fruits that we receive from Him. God is waiting for it. ¹*“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 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)* ²*“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.”* ³*“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)* *“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)*

2- The explanation for giving the firstborns and the firstfruits: ⁴*“He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength.”* ⁵*“He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.” (Psalm 105:36-37)* ⁶*“He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence;”* ⁷*“And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham:”* ⁸*“But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.” (Psalms 78:50-52)* In the day that the Lord brought His people out of Egypt He stroked the first born of the Egyptians human and animal but He brought His people victoriously, ⁹*“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:”* ¹⁰*“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.”* ¹¹*“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)* As the Lord had saved us and as the Lord keep doing great miracles and wonders in our lives, and keep supplying all our needs and keep blessing us spiritually and materially then the first of all our income we need to bring and it belongs to Him. The practical application of this command to us today is to give the first salary, the first increase, the first income of every business, the first month income of a year and for every year.

3- It will be given to the priests: ¹²*“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)* The priest is the one to receive the first fruit and is for his living. The practical

application of this command to us today is that the first fruit will be directed to support the pastor of the church. ***“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)*** The Priests are asked not to work and not given inheritance and they will be supported by the first fruit. There were twelve tribes in Israel so every tribe will shoulder one month to support the priest with one month income.

4- The firstfruit is different from the tithes: “²¹ And, 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) From this Scriptures it is clear that the tithes and the firstfruits are different entities. The tithes God allocated to the Levites. The practical application of this command to us today is to use the tithes and will be directed to support the workers of the church.

In the book of Nehemiah also recorded that the tithes and the firstfruit are different entities as we can read in the following: ***“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)*** Again the tithes were to be given to the Levites and not the priests because the priests will receive the firstfruits.

“5 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying , 6 Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. 7 And thus shalt thou do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave * all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean . 8 Then let them take a young * bullock with his meat offering, even fine flour mingled with oil, and another young * bullock shalt thou take for a sin offering. 9 And thou shalt bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together : 10 And thou shalt bring the Levites before the LORD: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: 11 And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the LORD. 12 And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and thou shalt offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the LORD, to make an atonement for the Levites. 13 And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the LORD. 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. 23 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 24 This is it that belongeth unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: 25 And from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof, and shall serve no more: 26 But shall minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of the congregation, to keep the charge, and shall do no service. Thus shalt thou do unto the Levites touching their charge.” (Numbers 8:5-26) The Levites must act under the priests as attendants on them, and assistants to them, in the service of the sanctuary. Aaron offers them to God (*And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the LORD for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the LORD.”* (Verse 11), and then God gives them back to Aaron, *“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.”* (Verse 19) The Levites were taken to *do the service of the children of Israel*, that is, not only to do the service which they should do, but to serve their interests, and do that which would really redound to the honour, safety, and prosperity of the whole nation. God’s ministers, while they keep within the sphere of their office and conscientiously discharge the duty of it, must be looked upon as some of the most useful servants of their country. The children of Israel can as ill spare the tribe of Levi as any of their tribes. The Levites were separated unto God to serve in the sanctuary, and as they offered their service in the sanctuary they were serving the Israelites. It was the priests’ work assisted by the Levites to make atonement by sacrifice. Therefore if the service of the priests and the Levites in the tabernacle had been left to all the first-born of Israel, it would have been either neglected or done unskillfully and irreverently, being done by those that were not so closely tied to it, nor so diligently trained to it, nor so constantly used to it, as the Levites were; and this would bring *a plague among the children of Israel* —meaning, perhaps, the death of the first-born themselves, which was the last and greatest of the plagues of Egypt. To prevent this, and to preserve the atonement, the Levites were set aside and appointed to do this service, who should be bred up to it under their parents from their infancy, and therefore would be well versed in it; and so the children of Israel, that is, the first-born, should not need to come nigh to the sanctuary; or, when any Israelites had occasion, the Levites would be ready to instruct them, and so prevent sin. They were to enter upon the service at twenty-five years old, *“This is it that belongeth unto the Levites: from twenty and five years old and upward they shall go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation:”* (Verse 24). They were not charged with the carrying of the tabernacle and the utensils of it till they were thirty years old, *“Count all the men from thirty to fifty years of age who come to serve in the work in the Tent of Meeting.”* (Numbers 4:3). But they were entered to the service at twenty-five years old, a very good age for ministers to begin their public work at. They were to continue to serve till fifty years old; then they were to return from the warfare, as the phrase is *“And from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof, and shall serve no more:”* (Verse 25), After the age of fifty they will be free from the heavy work and will *minister with their brethren in the tabernacle*, to direct the junior Levites, and set them in; and they shall *keep the charge*, as guards upon the avenues of the tabernacle, to see that no stranger intruded, nor any person in his uncleanness. They shall not be put upon any service which may be a fatigue to them. This formula will be applied: The aged are most fit for trusts, and to keep the charge; the younger are most fit for work, and to do the service.

The body of the Priests and Levites were to minister before God to the welfare of the whole nation of the Israelites. God separated the whole tribe of the Levites and sanctified them to be His own, they should not do other than the work at the tabernacle and what is related to it, and for this reason God instituted the financial support for them by instituting the regulation of giving the firstfruits (to be ultimately given to the priest) and the tithes (to be given to the Levites).

In the same way for us today as a church, it is a very great kindness to the church that ministers are appointed to go before the people in the things of God, as guides, overseers, and rulers. When Christ ascended on high, he gave these 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) Therefore in the same way and for the same reason what God instituted in the Old Testament in regard to the financial support for those who were taking care of His tabernacle, the church today can be well provided and function for better by adopting the giving of the firstfruits (to be ultimately given to pastors) and the tithes (to be given to the workers).

5- The time the first fruit to be given: 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. In this case he needs to give his tithe and prepare himself to budget and to save, willing to suffer, abstain from worldliness and unnecessary expenditure to make himself able to give the first fruit to the Lord. That every person needs to program himself, that in a year, he needs to set aside one month's income to the Lord as the first fruit. Even the Lord recommends doing that to the Israelites after they are settled as we can read in the following passage:

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.” (Exodus 13:11-12)

B- ^d “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)

C- “Leviticus 19:23-25 “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.” It was therefore the practice of the Jews to pluck off the fruit, as soon as they perceived it knit, from their young trees, as gardeners do sometimes, because their early bearing hinders their growing. If any did come to perfection, it was not to be used in the service either of God or man; but what they bore the fourth year was to be holy to the Lord, as firstfruit to be given to the priests, and thenceforward it was all their own. This law in the case of fruit-trees seems to be parallel with that in the case of animals, that no creature should be accepted as an offering till it was past eight days old, **“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) nor till that day were children to be circumcised, **“^dAnd the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ²Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, and born a man child: then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean. ³And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.”** (Leviticus 12:1-3) God would have the first-fruits of their trees, but, because for the first three years they were as inconsiderable as a lamb or a calf under eight days old, therefore God would not have them, for it is fit he should have everything at its best; and yet he would not allow them to be used, because his first-fruits were not as yet offered: they must therefore be accounted as uncircumcised, that is, as an animal under eight days’ old, not fit for any use.

6- The sin of Achan was not withholding the tithes but withholding the first fruit to be given unto God: Jericho city was a kind of firstfruit that the Lord asked His people to give it fully to Him. **“^{d7} 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.”** (Joshua 6:17-18) The whole city needed to be devoted to the Lord. The Scriptures in Joshua 6 give us clue about the difference between the tithes and the first fruit, **“^{d9} 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.”** (Joshua 6:19) These are the things that can stand the fire (the tithes), but the firstfruit (the rest of the city) **“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 6:24) Jericho was truly the first fruit that God desired from his people to give to him, and that confirmed when Joshua announced, **“^{d6} 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) Joshua announced here that the one who reverse the command of God in giving Jericho to him by rebuilding it, he is reversing giving the first fruit to God, and he will loss his first born because of that and that what had happened during the time of King Ahab, **“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.”** (1Kings 16:34)

7- Giving the first fruit to God need to be done with understanding and with the power and the enablement of God The Holy Spirit: **“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) We are the firstfruits and we give our firstfruits to God with the enablement of God The Holy Spirit, in rejoicing today and in faith, living the moment of the future redemption of our bodies to glorified bodies in meeting with the Lord in the clouds.

8- The Firstfruit cannot cover sin or replace repentance Micah 6:6-8 “6 Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? 7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

9- Abel the first one mentioned in the bible who brought His firstfruit to the Lord: “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) The first giving of Abel was not the tithes but he gave to God the firstfruits (firstlings)

10- Giving The First fruit is the more excellent giving: “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)

11- Jesus is the firstborn (firstfruit) among many brothers: “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) This sheaf of first-fruits that need to be offered on the feast of unleavened bread, “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) was typical of our Lord Jesus, who has risen from the dead as the first-fruits of those that slept, **1 Corinthians 15:20** “**But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.**” It is very observable that our Lord Jesus rose from the dead on the very day that the first-fruits were offered, to show that he was the substance of this shadow. We are taught by this law to honour the Lord with our substance, and with the first-fruits of all our increase, “**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) They were not to eat of their new corn till God's part was offered to him out of it “**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 for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.**” (Leviticus 23:14), for we must always begin with God, begin our lives with him, begin every day with him, begin every meal with him, begin every affair and business with him; “**But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**” (Matthew 6:33)

12- How about us today?: “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) We are the church of the firstborn, the brothers of Jesus and our names are written in heaven. We ought to follow our Lord and Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ. If Abel

obeyed how much more we ought to obey today? God had done much to us and we need to be willing to put Him first in our lives and live for Him.

13- Not only the firstfruit but our whole life to God: Abel not only gave his firstfruit but his life he gave fully to God. He was willing to suffer and to die and stand persecution in obedience to God. Our whole life we ought to dedicate to live for God and be willing to suffer for Him in serving Him. ²⁵ *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:* ²⁶ *Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.* ²⁷ *And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.* ²⁸ *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:* ²⁹ *For our God is a consuming fire.” (Hebrews12:25-29)*

My Prayer: *Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the Cross for my sins and rose from the dead to give me eternal life. Lord I commit myself to abide with your word in doing your will. Lord I will continue to bring to you my firstfruits and I will teach my family and others to do so. Lord gives me the strength and the good health and the perseverance to achieve that. This all I ask and pray in Jesus name Amen.*