

THE WAY OF OFFERING

Victor Hall, Murray Wylie - Brisbane Christian Fellowship BCF
David Falk, David Baker - Toowoomba Christian Fellowship TCF

First Edition Melbourne Businessmen's Seminar, April 2006
Second Edition Toowoomba Bible School, May 2006
Third Edition Coochiemudlo Island Retreat, June 2006
Fourth Edition December 2007

Published by **visionone**

© Vision One Inc. 2007

c/- Toowoomba Christian Fellowship TCF
10 Old Goombungee Road Toowoomba QLD 4350
Phone: +61 1300 885 048
Email: info@visionone.org.au
Restoration Fellowships International Inc

For a full catalogue of our Christian music & publications,
please visit:

visionone
.org.au

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
THE HEAVE OFFERING	5
Introduction	5
Hearts moved	6
Restoration today	7
Something from nothing	7
Time, resources and money	9
The Lord's house	10
The economy of God	10
Provision for infrastructure	11
Provision for personnel	12
For the personnel - training	13
Provision for increase in the work.....	14
A portion of the peace offering	15
Wave offering - the breast.....	16
Heave offering - the right thigh	16
An abundance.....	17
More than the tithe.....	17
Robbing God.....	18
At the apostles' feet.....	19
Joining the burden	20
THE BURNT OFFERING	21
A living sacrifice.....	22
The whole.....	22
A continual offering.....	23
Acceptable	23
A willing heart.....	24
No defect	25
Holy.....	25
Made by fire	26
Consumed by the Spirit.....	26
Sanctified by the Spirit	27
The drink offering	27

A sweet aroma	28
Converting offering to sacrifice.....	28
Fear of loss.....	29
Not your own	30
I will meet you	30
Life out of death	31
THE GRAIN OFFERING	32
Christ - the Firstfruits.....	32
May He remember	33
The first lump	33
When you enter the land.....	34
The memorial portion.....	35
Fruit.....	35
Sow and reap	36
Try me now	37
Give the rain	37
Rebuke the devourer	38
A generous 'eye'	38
Sell what you have.....	39
Firstfruits	40
Dorcas	40
Cornelius	41
Oil.....	42
Frankincense.....	42
Seasoned with salt.....	43
Firstfruits versus tithe.....	45
The fruit of election.....	45
Dedicates and sanctifies the harvest.....	47
Increase after its order	49
Firstfruits in areas	49
THE PEACE OFFERING	50
Fulfilment of a vow.....	50
Vows and oaths	51
Paul's example.....	52

INTRODUCTION

As we look toward the way ahead, it is clear that there are exciting times in front of us. The Lord is wanting to see growth and increase within His body. What are the foundations for generating increase? How do we properly join the Lord in His work? What is the way ahead? The way ahead is the way of offering.

We join the offering of Christ and so begin to plant, make increase, grow and build within the body of Christ. Offering is the mode of all these activities.

If anyone felt an acute burden to see the body of Christ grow, it was the apostle Paul. On that basis, he encourages us, 'Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with *fire*'. 1 Cor 3:12,13.

The world proposes many so-called 'effective building strategies'. Unfortunately, the church at large has adopted many of these strategies. In coming days, persecution will come upon the church.¹ The fire will soon reveal the nature of the buildings that have been built. For ourselves, now is the time to examine the way in which the Lord requires us to build. We must build in the way of offering.

It is clear from a study of the Old Testament that the way of offering is a vast subject. Our purpose here is not to provide a detailed analysis of *all* the offerings of Israel.² As we know from other studies, there were five principal offerings (burnt, grain, peace, sin and trespass), to which we are needing to add a specific focus on the giving of firstfruits and heave offerings. Our purpose here is to examine those offerings that relate directly to *increase* and their implications for us here and now. On this matter of increase, we are particularly interested in

1. The heave offering as the offering through which administration is established and then expanded.
2. The burnt offering as the doorway into the abundant life that is available to us in the body of Christ.
3. The grain offering and in particular, its relationship to the offering of firstfruits as the means by which we are remembered before God.

1. 2 Tim 3:12

2. For further details on the economy of offering, the reader is directed to UPS7, etc...

4. The peace offering as our expression of thanksgiving to God for His faithfulness in overseeing the harvest.

How do these four offerings connect with Paul's reference to building with 'gold, silver and precious stones'? The answer is that no one builds a house with these materials, but Paul is referring to the way in which the nation of Israel built the tabernacle in the middle of the wilderness of Sinai.³ As we begin our study we will see that the tabernacle was built by the raising of a 'heave offering'. An understanding of the heave offering forms the foundation of how we build for the future. This will answer the question, 'How do we get from where we are to where we need to be?'

We will examine the way in which we move forward (both collectively and individually) in the will of God. What are the building blocks in our own lives, families and businesses that enable us to make commitments and raise heave offerings?

An understanding of the *burnt offering* answers the question 'Am I accepted by the Lord?' The *grain offering* answers the question, 'Am I remembered by the Lord?' As a foundation, we all want to know that we are accepted and remembered by God. King David prays, 'May He remember all your meal [grain] offerings, and find your burnt offerings acceptable'. Psa 20:3.

If we commit ourselves to work in the Lord's kingdom then we will produce fruit.⁴ This enables us to bring the *peace offering*, in a spirit of thanksgiving for the fruit the Lord has produced in our life. We are able to make and fulfil commitments, as well have something from which we can raise heave offerings. This is our goal, and this is the way the Lord is asking us to build. It is the way ahead. Let us commence our study with the heave offering as the offering through which administration is established and expanded.

3. Exodus 35:10-19

4. John 15: 16

THE HEAVE OFFERING

Introduction

When we look at the state of the church today, we see that there is a great deal of work to do. For those who are burdened for *increase* in His body, this can be quite overwhelming. How do we get from where we are to where the Lord is asking us to be? An understanding of the *heave offering* shows us 'the way ahead'. We see that by training people for ministry, and financing infrastructure to support the ministry, the capacity to generate increase in the kingdom is established.

In this chapter we will examine the heave offering to see the way in which it works and what it achieves. We will refer to the way in which the first tabernacle was established in the wilderness of Sinai. This is a helpful example of 'something' being established from 'nothing', and shows us the way in which the Lord establishes administrations amongst us today.

After Israel had been in bondage for 400 years in the land of Egypt,⁵ the Lord sent Moses to command Pharaoh, 'Israel is My son, My first-born ... let My son go, that he may serve Me'. Ex 4:22. However, once the nation was delivered and had journeyed into the wilderness, they didn't automatically have a context in which they could meet with the Lord and practically serve Him. A tabernacle needed to be established. This is the context in which we observe the first 'heave offering' in the Scripture. 'Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Tell the sons of Israel to *raise a heave offering* for Me ... and let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them".' Ex 25:2,8.

The Hebrew word *trumah*⁶ is most accurately translated 'heave offering'. Most translations do not accurately translate this word. The New King James version simply uses the generic word 'offering'. This means that all the important differences between the various offerings become lost. The New American Standard Bible does recognise the difference between the heave offering and the other offerings and uses the word 'contribution'.⁷

The primary work of the heave offering is to establish a 'beginning'. It is the means by which 'something' is created from 'nothing'. For the Israelites, it was the difference between the desert floor and a functional tabernacle as the place

5. Acts 7:6

6. Strong's H8641 *trumah*, 'a present, as offered up, especially in sacrifice or tribute: gift, heave offering (shoulder), oblation, offered (-ing)'

7. Ex 25:2

of meeting. By establishing a beginning, the heave offering is also the foundation for generating increase. Each new beginning is itself 'increase', however the heave offering does more than that. It establishes the capacity, by means of personnel, infrastructure and resources, to generate increase. Every administration in Scripture is established by a heave offering. The growth in the early church was undergirded by the fact that 'all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, and lay them at the apostles' feet'. Acts 4:34,35.

An administration that comes down from Christ must be met by a heave offering if it is to be established. The heave offering is the means by which 'every joint supplies' and makes effective contribution to increase. Eph 4:16. It is the only means by which grace that is proceeding from Christ is established in an administration that generates increase.

Very practically, if the body of Christ is going to grow, buildings have to be built; messengers are going to have to travel and preach the word. The tithe and tithe of tithe are designated for the care of the existing work, and will be insufficient to facilitate the necessary expansion. It is the heave offering that bridges the gap between where we are, and where the Lord is calling us to be.

Hearts moved

Talking with Moses concerning the tabernacle, the Lord said, 'Tell the sons of Israel to raise a heave offering for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My heave offering'. Ex 25:2.

The Lord was absolutely committed to seeing His economy established. He addressed the corporate group, the sons of Israel, with a command. A heave offering needed to be raised. However, in terms of individuals, the heave offering was not driven by response to a command. 'From every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My heave offering.' Ex 25:2. The Lord only wanted a heave offering from those who carried the burden of it in their heart. The heave offering represented the Lord's burden. In terms of the tabernacle, it was the Lord's burden to see it established, not just someone's good idea. By raising a heave offering the people made a commitment to join the burden, and also signalled their willingness to practically carry the burden. The heave offering is always a commitment to both 'join' the burden, and then help 'carry' it. 'For each one will bear his own load.' Gal 6:5.

Restoration today

The need for restoration in the church today is clearly evident, and many people have a heart for such restoration.

Having wandered astray, we are restored by heeding the Lord's voice and returning to Him. 'Return to Me, and I will return to you.' Mal 3:7. This was the Lord's call to a nation that had turned aside from following Him. It was a command to restore the relationship that had been broken. 'But you shall say, "How shall we return?".' Mal 3:7.

The question is, 'How are we restored?' What is the foundation of restoration? The prophet Malachi teaches that restoration is founded on 'offering' and specifically the 'heave offering'.⁸

We see an excellent example of restoration undergirded by the heave offering in the days of King Hezekiah. 'Then Hezekiah commanded them to prepare rooms in the house of the Lord, and they prepared them. And they faithfully brought in the heave offerings, and the tithes and the consecrated things.' 2 Chron 31:11,12.

Every period of restoration among God's people was initiated by re-establishing the principles of offering. After the period of exile in Babylon, many sought to return to restore and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Cyrus, the King of Persia, decreed concerning those who wanted to return, 'let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord ... let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem'. Ezra 1:4. The Lord stirred the heart of the king to generate a heave offering for the Lord's people. Seventy years earlier, the temple had been completely destroyed.⁹ This heave offering initiated the restoration of the temple and the life of the nation of Judah to which it was central. It enabled something to be built from nothing.

Something from nothing

The heave offering enables the creation of 'something from nothing', as well as 'something from something'. When the Israelites came out of Egypt, they had nothing of their own and no capacity to generate increase. In this situation, the heave offering created 'something from nothing'. 'They had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and the Lord

8. Mal 3: 8-10

9. Jer 52:13

had given the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request.' Ex 12:35,36. They did not forcefully acquire these goods. The Lord gave them favour in the eyes of the Egyptians. Similarly, at the beginning of restoration after the Babylonian exile, we read 'the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia'. Ezra 1:1. Again, the Lord gave His people favour in the eyes of the Persians who controlled the resources of the day. In both instances, the people needed to find favour in the eyes of those who controlled resources, so they could receive something from which they could raise a heave offering. It is by this means that the 'kingdom of the world' becomes 'the kingdom of our Lord'. Rev 11:15.

Once the children of Israel entered the promised land, the Lord required them to 'sow and reap'. This gave them the capacity to generate increase and then raise heave offerings from their harvests. In the wilderness, the resources for the heave offering were the 'spoils of Egypt'. Once they were in the land, they needed to generate the resources themselves by sowing and reaping. The emphasis of the heave offering had shifted from 'something from nothing' to 'something from something'. However, the imperative to give a heave offering remained the same. The Lord warned the people not to say in their heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth'. Deut 8:18. He knew that if that attitude pervaded their hearts then they would cease to give offerings from their harvests. So, today, if the heave offering ceases, then the capacity to generate increase in the kingdom ceases.

The heave offering was 'heaved' or 'lifted up' before the Lord.¹⁰ Like no other offering, it has the capacity to meet that which is coming down from heaven. Concerning the tithe and the heave offering, the Lord says 'prove Me now in this ... if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows'. Mal 3:10.

The Lord requires us to labour, sow and reap so that we can generate a harvest from which we can raise a heave offering. Recognising that all seed to sow comes from the Lord, we must remain committed to the principle of the heave offering if we want our seed to increase. Paul says to the Corinthian church, 'He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness'. Cor 9:10. Our seed refers to our 'resources' from which we generate increase. Our righteousness refers to our 'work in the kingdom'. An increase in seed means an increased capacity to generate increase. An increase in the harvest of our righteousness means that He is increasing the province of

10. Ex 29: 27

our work. This initiates a process of continual increase. That is, He gives us more seed, then we need more work. He gives us more work then we need more seed.¹¹ Paul describes this as the means by which ‘you will be enriched in everything for all liberality’. 2 Cor 9:11. This is an administration of liberality that is established and sustained by the heave offering. An economy is established ‘not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God’. 2 Cor 9:12.

Time, resources and money

The fundamental question of the heave offering is, ‘what is the need?’ What is the Lord’s burden, and how do we join it? Once we understand the Lord’s burden, it becomes our burden. We can then specifically generate from our time, resources and money to carry that burden. All of our efforts, the sweat of our brow, our sowing and reaping, are all focused on supplying that which is needed for increase in the kingdom.

In the early church, ‘all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales, and lay them at the apostles’ feet; and they would be distributed to each, as any had need’. Acts 4:34,35. This highlights a very important principle of the heave offering. In terms of our time, resources and money, we do not determine the ‘need’ according to what we want to give. Rather, we are burdened to give, so we lay down what we have at the apostles’ feet. From there, it can be allocated to the true need according to the Lord’s burden. In the example of the early church, they didn’t need ‘blocks of land’; they needed money. So, those who were committed to give their properties sold them and laid the proceeds at the apostles’ feet.

On the desert floor, the children of Israel raised a heave offering of gold, silver, fine linen, oil.¹² The people freely gave ‘resources’ and ‘measures of wealth’. Then the Lord said, ‘Let them construct a sanctuary for Me’. Ex 25:8. Immediately, the Lord also made a demand on their ‘time’.

We cannot over-state the value of giving ‘time’. Labour, freely given, is the greatest asset for generating increase within the economy of God. Many people have been given specific abilities and skills by the Lord so they can raise a heave offering out of their ‘time’ and help see an economy increase. Concerning the artisans whom Moses gathered to work on the tabernacle, the Lord said ‘and in the hearts of all who are skilful [or wise of heart] I have put

11. 2 Cor 9:10

12. Ex 25:1-9

skill [or wisdom], that they may make all that I have commanded you'.
Ex 31:6.

We read in Haggai concerning the restoration of the temple, 'the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel ... and the spirit of the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God'. Hagg 1:14. They may have been placing one stone on top of another, however they were participating in restoring an economy and establishing a platform for increase.

'According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.' Ex 25:9. The Lord required specific resources because there was a specific pattern. There is never scope to give resources as a heave offering simply because we don't need them. This would constitute an unacceptable offering. The question is always 'what resources are needed by the administration to generate increase?' Naturally, this limits the potential to give resources. However, it doesn't limit the potential to give and raise an offering.

The Lord's house

' "You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away. Why?" declares the Lord of hosts, "Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house".' Hagg 1:9. What a powerful rebuke! This was the message delivered to the people who had returned from Babylonian exile, who were no longer committed to rebuilding the temple. Rather than carrying the burden of seeing the Lord's house built, they had turned aside to focus on their own houses, lives and self-interests.

Haggai identified that the people couldn't generate increase in any facet of their lives because the house of the Lord lay in ruins. They had no commitment to the heave offering and increase within the kingdom of God.

The economy of God

As light is from dark,¹³ so there is a complete contrast between the economy of the world, and the economy of God. We do participate in the economy of the world to produce resources for the kingdom, however we are to be 'in the

13. 2 Cor 6:14

world', never 'of the world'.¹⁴ No one can serve two masters. 'You cannot serve God and riches.' Luke 16:13.

The Israelites needed favour in the eyes of the Egyptians to receive their goods, and the Jewish exiles needed favour in the eyes of the Persians. Jesus says, 'make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon'. Luke 16:9. However, the over-riding and summary statement concerning the economy of the world is 'when it fails'. Luke 16:9. Money is only ever a measure of wealth and a means of exchange. The economy of the world will fail. How much anxiety do we have concerning tomorrow? Why store up treasures that 'moth and rust' destroy?¹⁵

Provision for infrastructure

When the Israelites responded to the Lord and raised a heave offering, it made provision for the following three things:¹⁶

- The construction of the tabernacle and all its furniture
- The clothing, equipment and ordination of the priests
- The ongoing work of the tabernacle.

It firstly established the tabernacle, because that established the context for the priests to work and minister. However, the infrastructure, or the context, is never an end in itself. The tabernacle needed to be built 'according to the pattern', Ex 25:9, because it had a specific role to play in establishing the platform for ministry. It provided the context for the priests to minister before the Lord and be the 'messengers of the Lord of Hosts'. Mal 2:7.

In today's administration, we see the heave offering firstly establishing the infrastructure, then the personnel who do a work to achieve an outcome. So it runs from 'infrastructure', to 'personnel', to 'work', to 'outcome'. The Lord looks at it the opposite way. He begins with the outcome.¹⁷ The outcome is always the establishment of an administration by which righteousness increases forever. This determines the nature of the work. In turn, the nature of the work determines the necessary personnel. Finally, the work and the personnel determine the infrastructure that is needed. For example, buildings are absolutely necessary, but only insofar as they support the work of the

14. John 17:14-16

15. Matt 6:19

16. Ex 35:21

17. Isa 46:10

ministry and establish a platform for increase in the kingdom. This highlights the imperative that all 'infrastructure' must be constructed 'according to the pattern'.

Provision for personnel

How do we find provision so that more people can begin to undertake the work of the ministry? Interestingly, the priests were 'dedicated to the work' by way of a heave offering. 'It shall be from the children of Israel for Aaron and his sons by a statute forever ... their heave offering to the LORD.' Ex 29:28.

The heave offering was lifted or raised up before the Lord signifying that it was given to Him. However, the Lord then gave it to Aaron and his four sons to steward. By this means, the heave offering was 'to' the Lord, yet 'for' Aaron. The accountability to steward the heave offering rested squarely on the shoulders of Aaron and his four sons. In like manner, the heave offerings of the early church were placed 'at the apostles' feet'. 'This is the consecrated portion for Aaron and his sons ... on the day when Moses presented them to minister to the Lord as priests ... on the day He anointed them, by a statute forever throughout their generations.' Lev 7:35,36.

The heave offering was the portion given to Aaron and his sons as part of the ordination offerings. Specifically, they received the breast of a ram as a wave offering, and then the right thigh of the same ram as a heave offering. These offerings did not 'maintain' Aaron and his four sons; they 'ordained' them. They were the offerings that established them as priests before the Lord. When the people brought the ordination offerings they were dedicating the priests to their work. They were recognising the authority of Aaron and his sons to stand before the Lord as priests.

We raise heave offerings to enable the dedication of new personnel to the work of ministry. 'How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?' Rom 10:14. By this means the messenger (*angelos*)¹⁸ dimension of the body of Christ increases. This is the platform for increase in the body of Christ as a whole.

18. *Aggelos* is the Greek word that is translated 'angel' (we often use *angelo*' for ease of pronunciation). It means a 'messenger'. When Christ addresses the 'angels of the seven churches', Rev 1:20, in the book of Revelation, He is speaking to the corporate group of messengers within the church.

For the personnel – training

We have seen that the heave offering is the means by which new personnel are dedicated to the work of ministry. The tithe¹⁹ represents ‘what is’, and will only ever sustain the work of ministry commensurate with the current need. That is, it is only those who are currently in the kingdom who pay tithes.

How then do we make provision for those who are yet to come into the kingdom to be cared for? The heave offering is the means by which new personnel are trained, ‘proved’ for the future need of ministry and ordained to ‘walk with Christ in white’.²⁰ Rev 3:4.

Unlike the Israelites in the wilderness, when we raise a heave offering, it comes from our own harvest. It has been produced by our labour and the work of our hands. By raising a heave offering from our harvest, we are demonstrating faith to find a work in the kingdom. According to the sanctification of the Spirit, each member of the body of Christ will have a different work. Whether a person receives remuneration from the heave offering is completely dependent on the nature of the work. Not everyone who raises a heave offering will receive the heave offering.

In building the tabernacle, we could say that Bezalel and the other skilled craftsmen, would be examples of men receiving the heave offering and having a ‘work’ committed to them. To receive the heave offering is a ‘stewardship’. ‘Then Moses called Bezalel and Oholiab, and every skilful person in whom the Lord had put skill, everyone whose heart stirred him, to come to the work to perform it. And they received the heave offerings which the sons of Israel had brought to perform the work.’ Ex 36:3. Both men and women raised heave offerings, and the Lord committed ‘work’ to skilful women in the same way as skilful men. ‘And all the women whose heart stirred with a skill spun the goats hair.’ Ex 35:26. Receiving the heave offering does not make someone a priest; it simply means that there is a ‘work’ to do.

19. The tithe is established as ‘one tenth’ when Abraham paid a tithe to Melchizedek. Gen 14:20; Heb 7:9,10. Being a fixed percentage, it is commensurate with the existing harvest. More than the tithe is needed to generate increase.

20. When John sees Christ standing in the midst of the lamp-stands, He is clothed in priestly attire as indicated by the ‘robe’ and ‘golden girdle’. Rev 1:13. He then describes Christ’s appearance as having seven different facets, or dispositions, relating to His head and hair, eyes, voice, feet, right hand, mouth, and face. Rev 1:14-1). These dispositions describe various aspects of Christ’s ministry as a priest amongst the lamp-stands and the way He addresses the churches.

A priest must have a 'robe' and 'places to walk'.²¹ The heave offering does provide the opportunity for someone to be 'proven' in the work. That is, it is the training ground to see whether or not the Lord is giving them a robe. 'They will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.' Rev 3:4. New personnel will receive the tithe, only after the Lord has given them a robe and ordained them via the heave offering. The transition from heave offering to tithe is an action of the 'right-hand' of Christ.²²

The apostle Paul had every right to receive the tithe. However, he chose to largely support himself throughout his ministry by a heave offering. We read concerning Paul in Corinth, 'he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers'. Acts 18:3.

Barnabas gained his introduction to the apostles by way of a heave offering. 'And Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means, son of encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet'. Acts 4:36,37.

Both Paul and Barnabas were committed to the principle of the heave offering. Interestingly, it is these two men who are separated for the work by the Holy Spirit. 'The Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them"'. Acts 13:2.

Provision for increase in the work

The heave offering establishes the personnel and the infrastructure necessary for an *increase* in the work of the ministry. We could say that it 'puts legs' underneath the work the Lord is seeking to do. It is the means by which we join the Lord in His work. The heave offering establishes the work of the ministry, it provides for increase in the work, and it also ensures the increase is sustainable. By this means it is the essential support structure for the work.

'Everyone whose heart stirred him and everyone whose spirit moved him came and brought the Lord's heave offering for the work of the tent of meeting and for all its service and for the holy garments.' Ex 35:21.

21. Ex 28:1-4

22. When Christ ascended He gave gifts to men. Eph 4:8. He gives to all a 'measure of grace', Eph 4:7, however there are five specific ministry graces that comprise His right hand - apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Eph 4:11. We see the right hand of Christ active when Paul and Barnabas were 'set apart for the work'. 'When they had fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they sent them away'. Acts 13:3.

Having built the tabernacle, every man needed to give a half-shekel to enable the work of the tabernacle to continue. This was a heave offering. The Lord told Moses to 'appoint it for the service (work) of the tabernacle of meeting'. Ex 30:16.

Continuing participation in the heave offering ensured that the people maintained 'one purpose' with the Lord. It ensured that they continued to participate in the Lord's work. So it is with God's people today.

A portion of the peace offering

Once the people entered the land, the Lord required them to 'sow and reap', and then bring 'peace offerings'. The peace offerings were the harvest offerings, offered in thanksgiving to God.²³ This signified a transition in the raising of heave offerings. As opposed to bringing 'something from nothing', it was now bringing 'something from something'. This is the framework in which we also work. We are not wandering in the desert with no 'resources' to our name. The Lord has given each of us a context in which we can labour and produce fruit. From the harvest of our time, resources and money we are required to raise a heave offering.

When a harvest was reaped, the Lord firstly required the gleanings be left for the poor.²⁴ Then the people would give firstfruits as a grain offering to sanctify the entire harvest, and entreat the Lord to 'remember' them in all their endeavours.²⁵ Once the entire harvest had been reaped, the tithe (ten percent) could be calculated and paid. Finally, in a spirit of thanksgiving, the peace offerings would be brought and offered to the Lord.

From every peace offering a portion was taken and given to the priests as a 'heave offering'. The 'breast' was used as a 'wave offering', and the right thigh or right shoulder was used as a 'heave offering'.²⁶ The peace offerings were given at the end of the harvest. However, with respect to the motivation behind the offering, the portion given to the priests as a heave offering initiated the beginning of the next harvest. By raising up the heave offering, the people were making a commitment to continue in the process of sowing and reaping to generate increase in the kingdom.

23. Lev 7:11-15

24. Lev 19:9,10

25. Neh 13:31

26. Ex 29: 27,28

Wave offering – the breast

The Lord was quite specific in identifying which portions of a sacrifice needed to be given to Aaron and his sons. It follows that there is significance in the portions identified. Nothing was done randomly. 'For I have taken the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering from the sons of Israel from the sacrifices of their peace offerings.' Lev 7:34.

Both offerings are lifted up before the Lord, however there is a distinction between a wave offering and a heave offering. The wave offering consisted of the portion of the 'breast', which represents the portion of the 'heart'. We could say it represents the desire of our heart to be included in a fellowship of giving and receiving. By lifting up a wave offering a person is saying to the Lord, 'Here I am, I want to be included in your economy'. The emphasis is 'inclusion and participation' as opposed to 'burden bearing'.

The priest carried 12 memorial stones on his breast-piece, over his heart, as he ministered before the Lord.²⁷ When the wave offering is given to the Lord we are 'remembered' according to the stones on the breast-piece. Our name is written in these stones and brought before the Lord.²⁸

Heave offering - the right thigh

By way of inclusion, the goal of the wave offering is to begin to touch the *burden* of the Lord for increase. Having touched the burden, we are then faced with a decision. Will we commit to join the burden and become a 'burden-bearer'? This becomes an issue of the heave offering. The heave offering was the portion of the right thigh or the right shoulder.²⁹ When we think of an animal, these are the heavy 'burden-bearing' portions.

So then, a person raising a heave offering is making a commitment to join and carry a burden for increase. They become active 'burden-bearers' within the economy of God. As such, other people will be relying on them. Those giving a heave offering also need to carry the accountability of the burden. This commitment means that the heave offering joins them to the 'governing' administration of Christ, by which increase is generated and sustained. 'For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders ... there will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace.' Isa 9:7.

27. Ex 28:21

28. Ex 28: 15-21; Rev 2:17

29. Ex 29:27; Lev 7:32

The priest carried 12 memorial stones on the breast-piece, and he also carried two onyx stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod.³⁰ When we give heave offerings to the Lord our name is 'remembered' by God according to these two onyx stones. The priest carried these stones as a 'burden' before the Lord on his shoulders. By means of the wave offering we are remembered in the stones over the heart, and by means of the heave offering we are remembered in the stones on the shoulder. 'To him who overcomes ... I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone.' Rev 2:17.

An abundance

The Lord called for a heave offering to establish the tabernacle and the people responded willingly. 'Everyone whose heart stirred him and everyone whose spirit moved him came and brought the Lord's heave offering for the work of the tent of meeting and for all its service and for the holy garments.' Ex 35:21. In fact, the people gave in such abundance that Moses eventually had to restrain them from giving. Ex 36:6. They had 'more than enough' to complete the work the Lord had asked them to do.

During the reign of King Hezekiah in Judah, the temple, the priesthood and the principle of offering were all restored. The people gave so abundantly in tithes, firstfruits, and heave offerings that it literally lay in 'heaps'. 2 Chron 31:4-7. The high priest of the day makes the observation: 'Since the people began to bring heave offerings into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat and have plenty left, for the Lord has blessed His people; and what is left is this great abundance'. 2 Chron 31:10.

When compared with the current need, the heave offering always leaves an 'abundance'. It is greater than the current need, however it is commensurate with the future need. By this means, it is the platform and energy for increase. The heave offering enables the dedication of personnel in the ministry and infrastructure that is commensurate with the future need of the body of Christ.

More than the tithe

Both the tithe and the heave offering were given to the priests as their sacred portion. They were both used for the work of the ministry. However, there are some very clear distinctions between the two.

30. Ex 28:12

The principle of the tithe was established when Melchizedek met Abraham.³¹ However, the children of Israel were only able to begin paying tithes once they entered the land of Canaan and had the capacity to reap a harvest. There were no harvests in the wilderness. All capacity to generate increase comes from the Lord and everything we produce also belongs to Him. However, in lieu of the whole, the Lord only asks for ten percent of all increase to be given to Him as a tithe. This is the Lord's sacred portion and as such, never belongs to us. Hence with urgency, we 'remove the sacred portion out of the house'. Deut 26:13.

Considering the tithe is ten percent of all increase, it can only be calculated once the full harvest is reaped. The tithe must follow the harvest. The heave offering as a portion of the peace offering is the beginning of the following harvest. It establishes the work of the ministry as a platform for future harvests. In a sense, it provides the 'seed to sow'.

The tithe is only ever commensurate with the current need of the body of Christ. It is a statement of 'what is'. In contrast, the heave offering is always greater than the current need giving it the capacity to generate increase. It is the statement of 'what is to come'. The heave offering has the capacity to sustain the work of the ministry at a higher level than the current need and therefore enable growth.

Robbing God

When we read the question, 'Will a man rob God?',³² many of us immediately think about the tithe. It is the Lord's sacred portion and to withhold it would clearly be a case of robbery. However Malachi mentions much more than the tithe. ' "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me!" But you say, "How have we robbed Thee?" In tithes and heave offerings.' Mal 3:8. He says the people have robbed the Lord in tithes and 'heave offerings'. Most translations simply use the word 'offerings' however the word is 'heave offerings'.

The heave offering is a 'free-will' offering. Like other free-will offerings this doesn't mean it is voluntary. It means that it must be given with a 'willing heart'.³³ The Lord commanded the nation of Israel to raise a heave offering. It has as much imperative in the Lord's eyes as the tithe.

31. Gen 14 :18-20

32. Mal 3:8

33. The Hebrew word *ratson* (Strong's H7522) means 'delight' or 'pleasure'. The Lord looks for those who find offering to Him a real delight and pleasure. They therefore offer with a willing heart.

How do we rob God if we don't give heave offerings? We rob Him of the capacity to establish administrations among us, by which the body of Christ increases and multiplies. The Lord *established* the tabernacle, however it was the people who *built* it.

If we rob God of either the whole tithe or heave offerings then we will be cursed. 'You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you!' Mal 3:9. The first definition of a curse is simply the absence of blessing. The Lord is no longer 'with us'. He no longer opens the windows of heaven on our endeavours or rebukes the devourer.³⁴ We are left to live under the sun, under the elements of time and chance.³⁵ When the Israelites refused to enter the promised land they also refused to enter the economy of God, which is the economy of sowing, reaping, and making offering. When, after refusing to enter, they suddenly decide to go in, Moses rightly warns them that the Lord is no longer 'with them'.³⁶

At the apostles' feet

In the infant stages of the New Testament church we see men and women taking the step of faith to sell their possessions and lay the proceeds at the apostles' feet.³⁷ What kind of faith enabled them to do this? It was the faith to see established an administration that would generate increase. The people were willing to join the apostles in the burden of seeing the body of Christ grow.

The feet of the apostles represent the altar. The altar is the place of offering, the feet of God Himself. We read concerning Christ that 'His feet were like burnished bronze'. Rev 1:15. This likens the feet of Christ to the bronze altar in the tabernacle of Moses. When the people laid their offering at the feet of the apostles they were laying it at the feet of Christ Himself. However, it was entrusted to the apostles to steward the heave offering. They carried the accountability of stewarding the resources of the body of Christ, and establishing an administration that would lead to increase. A generation later, Paul likewise carried a burden to steward the resources of the body. He carried this stewardship as part of an '*angelos* administration'.³⁸ With respect to the offering for Jerusalem he continued this order and appointed a brother, an 'apostle to the churches for the bountiful gift'. 2 Cor 8:19-23.

34. Mal 3:11

35. Eccl 9:11

36. Num 14:42

37. Acts 4: 34,35

38. See footnote on p 15

Today, when we raise heave offerings, we lay them at the feet of an ‘angelos administration’.

Joining the burden

The Lord commands all to come and join the burden of His work, which is to see the body of Christ grow. ‘We are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of itself in love.’ Eph 4:15,16.

Apart from a willing heart, there was no limit on who could raise a heave offering before the Lord, and participate in the Lord’s work. ‘And everyone whose heart stirred him everyone whose spirit moved him came and brought the Lord’s heave offering for the work.’ Ex 35:21.

Paul writes to the Philippians, ‘I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God’. Phil 4:18. The Philippians had stirred themselves in faith to raise a heave offering and thus ensured that Paul was ‘amply supplied’. By this means, the grace that Christ had committed to Paul was effective in establishing an administration to generate increase. The Corinthian church did the same, and Paul responds, ‘as your faith grows, we shall be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you, so as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you’. 2 Cor 10:15,16. Grace is coming down from Christ, however we must raise a heave offering to meet it. This is the only means by which an administration that reaches to the regions beyond can be established.

The heave offering establishes the personnel and infrastructure as the foundation for an administration, and then finances the work of an administration so that increase is generated. By this means, the heave offering answers the question, ‘How do we get from where we are to where we need to be?’ Having examined the heave offering, let us now turn our attention to the burnt offering which is perhaps the most foundational aspect of our participation in God’s administration of offering.

THE BURNT OFFERING

One of the most well known verses on the subject of offering is found in Paul's letter to the Romans. 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.' Rom 12:1.

Paul is actually encouraging us to be a 'burnt offering'. He doesn't begin by saying, 'I think it would be a good idea'. He says, 'I beseech you'. We sense that he is appealing to us with all the energy that he can muster. Why such urgency and imperative?

The Lord outlined five types of offerings to the nation of Israel.³⁹ The burnt offering is the first and most essential of these five. It forms the basis for all the other offerings. Obviously, we no longer offer 'bulls and goats'; however the principles of offering that the Lord established still stand. When we look at the nature of the Old Testament offerings we do gain valuable insight into the way in which the Lord requires us to offer today. This is why Paul uses so much Old Testament symbolism to teach on the subject of offering.

The burnt offering was continually on the altar, and there was only one altar. So, any other offering that needed to be burnt was 'added' to the burnt offering. This was true for the memorial portion of the grain offering, the fat of the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. In practical terms, the burnt offering was the foundation of all the other offerings. It kept the fire burning.

Likewise, the burnt offering is foundational for us. It is the foundation by which we walk humbly in the life that He has given us to minister in His body. It is the doorway into the abundant life that is available to us in the body of Christ. We are unable to offer any of the other offerings if we don't firstly offer ourselves as a living sacrifice. If our life is not 'wholly' and 'continuously' given then there will be no fire on the altar. The Holy Spirit will not be interested in anything else we try and give. As we shall see, nothing we put on the altar will be able to generate a sweet aroma before the Lord. Clearly, for any offering to be effective, it must be undergirded by a life 'wholly' given. Paul says, concerning the church in Macedonia, 'They firstly gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God'. 2 Cor 8:5.

39. Lev 1-6

A living sacrifice

The Lord views everything that we offer as being representative of ourselves. When the Israelites brought their offering to the temple, they firstly 'laid hands on it'.⁴⁰ This signified that they were fully 'identified' with the offering. It was no longer simply a bull or goat; it was representative of them. This principle adds meaning to the command, 'none shall appear before Me empty-handed'. Ex 34:20. We can't approach the Lord without an offering, and we must also be willing to 'lay our hands on the offering'. We are saying, 'Here is my offering, and it fully represents me!' Actually, Paul doesn't draw any distinction between our offering and us. He simply says 'present yourself' as the offering. 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice.' Rom 12:1.

Is the phrase, a 'living sacrifice', a contradiction in terms? How can a sacrifice, which is killed and burnt, be living? This touches the heart of the gospel message – true life comes out of death. So Jesus says, 'Take up your cross and follow Me'.⁴¹ Many view obedience to this command as foolish.⁴² However, this is the doorway to abundant life. When, by faith, we lay our life on the altar, we soon prove this to be so. The notion of a 'living sacrifice' is no longer a contradiction; it is a living reality.

The whole

The Lord often places a simple yet very important prefix before the term 'burnt offering'. It is the word 'whole'. We realise the powerful implications for our life as soon as we begin to reflect on this. When Moses blessed the tribe of Levi (the priests) he said, 'They shall put incense before You, and whole burnt sacrifice on Your altar'. Deut 33:10. We only participate in the burnt offering when we offer our 'whole' life. Nothing is to be withheld. It is impossible to lay down only *part* of our life. It's almost unthinkable that an Israelite would try to offer a lamb with one leg missing! We either die with Christ or we don't.⁴³ In that sense, it really is 'all or nothing'.

Christ definitely requires our 'all'. We recall the situation where Jesus was asked to nominate the greatest commandment. He replied, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart'.⁴⁴ Scales then fall from the eyes of the scribe who asked the question. He suddenly realises, 'this is the fulfilment of

40. Lev 1:4

41. Luke 9:23

42. 1 Cor 1 18

43. Rom 6:8

44. Matt 22:37

the burnt offering that we have put on the altar for centuries'. He says, 'to love Him with all the heart ... is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices'. Mark 12:33. Why is it more? It is the fulfilment.

A continual offering

The Lord required a lamb to be offered as a burnt offering in the morning and evening of every day. This meant the offering was before the Lord 'day by day continually'. Ex 29:38. Obviously 'day by day' means every day. It doesn't mean that we present ourselves as an offering on Sunday and then live however we want for the rest of the week. When Luke records the well-known command of Jesus to 'take up our cross' he includes one all-important word - 'daily'. He says, 'if anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me'. Luke 9:23.

'This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord.' Ex 29:42. Looking at the subject of the burnt offering, it is clear that the two defining terms are 'whole' and 'continual'. The entirety of our life needs to be offered to the Lord each day. This means from the moment we open our eyes in the morning to the moment we close them at night. Paul testifies that he has embraced this reality when he makes the statement, 'I die daily'. 1 Cor 15:31.

Acceptable

Can we narrow the emphasis of the burnt offering to one word? If we present ourselves as a living sacrifice, what does this actually avail to us in our relationship with the Lord? The answer is quite simple - 'acceptance'. The primary emphasis of the burnt offering is 'acceptance'. 'May He remember all your [grain] offerings, and find your burnt offerings acceptable.' Psa 20:3.

We all want to know that we are accepted. Whether it is within our family, at work, school, or in our sports team, we want to know that we belong and have a place. Of course the most critical place to be accepted is before the Lord and within His body. This is the acceptance that the burnt offering avails. When we lay down our life in the manner prescribed and demonstrated by Christ, then we can be assured that we have a place and portion in Him. This is our hope as we present ourselves as a living sacrifice, wholly and continually given.

The need for offering to be acceptable is established in Cain and Abel.⁴⁵ God had by some means asked the two brothers to bring an offering. Abel kept sheep and so he offered the first-born of his flock. Cain tilled the ground and accordingly offered produce from the ground. We know that the Lord accepted Abel's offering, but not Cain's. *Our offering always represents us.* The Lord was not firstly looking at the type of offering on the altar; He was looking at the heart and life of the giver. So He says to Cain, 'if you do well, will you not be accepted'.⁴⁶ He refers to Cain being accepted, rather than his offering being accepted. The burnt offering always operated in this manner. It was 'accepted on behalf' of the offerer. As we've discussed, there is now no distinction between our offering and us. We are the 'living sacrifice'. Is our heart, and the entirety of our life, acceptable before the Lord?

Both Peter and Paul pick up the imperative that our life needs to be acceptable as a burnt offering. 'You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.' 1 Peter 2:5. 'Serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.' Heb 12:28.

A willing heart

We read concerning the burnt offering that, 'he shall offer it of his own free will'. Lev 1:3. This doesn't mean voluntarily - the Lord *requires* the offering. It means with a 'willing heart'.⁴⁷ A willing heart is necessary for any offering to be accepted by the Lord. When the Lord asked the people to bring a heave offering to build the tabernacle, He only 'accepted' it from those who gave with a willing heart. 'From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering.' Ex 25:2.

The Lord's primary interest is always the 'heart of the giver' rather than the offering itself. We know that the practical expression of offering has changed vastly since the nation of Israel camped in the wilderness. However, the imperative to give with a willing heart has not changed. The Lord always looks at the heart. 'For man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.' 1 Sam 16:7.

Paul says, 'though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing'. 1 Cor 13:3. He is clearly referring to our participation as a burnt offering. If we don't have the right 'heart attitude' then we can't lay down our

45. Gen 4:3

46. Gen 4:7

47. See footnote on p 23

life in an acceptable manner. A willing heart is a heart motivated by 'love' and by nothing else.

No defect

For an offering to be acceptable before the Lord it couldn't have any defect. The Israelites were never permitted to offer an animal that was blind, maimed, had broken bones. In fact, in most cases the Lord required the offering to be perfect. We know that we are the 'burnt offering'. Considering that none of us are perfect, this seems to present us with a quandary. How can the offering of our life ever be acceptable before the Lord? This is only answered in Christ, and the realisation that He is the perfect offering. To be accepted, we need to join the offering of Christ.

'By one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.' Heb 10:14. There is much that could be said regarding this verse, however let's just say that it highlights a clear need to be 'sanctified'. The word 'sanctified' is probably best understood as 'set apart'. Our commitment to be a burnt offering is really a commitment to be 'set apart'. It is a commitment to be 'wholly' and 'continually' given to the Lord. By this means, we are set apart to a process of 'burning' that purifies us so that ultimately we have 'no defect'. The key is that we are 'set apart' to the process. It is a process whereby everything that is not 'of God' is destroyed, and everything that is 'of God' is refined.⁴⁸

Holy

Referring again to our key verse in the book of Romans, Paul couples 'acceptable' with 'holy'. These two principles go hand in hand. Our offering cannot be 'acceptable' if it isn't firstly 'holy'. The word 'holy' has the same meaning as 'sanctified'. It means completely set apart, separated and dedicated to the Lord. If acceptance is our goal, then sanctification is the pathway we walk to reach that goal.

We do minister before the Lord as priests. Like the priests of old, we are to be completely set apart and dedicated to Him. What then is our priestly service? It is to offer our selves as a living sacrifice on the altar. In this way we follow in the footsteps of Christ who was the great High Priest.

We read that 'whatever touches the altar must be holy'. Ex 29:37. However, this doesn't mean that we don't offer until we feel our life is 'holy'. How can

48. Mal 3:3

we possibly make this judgement? It is the altar that sanctifies the offering.⁴⁹ Our life is 'set apart' as soon as we relinquish control and place it on the altar.

Made by fire

Possibly the most obvious statement concerning the burnt offering is that it was 'an offering made by fire'. Lev 1:9. However, this statement has a lot more significance than simply explaining that the offering was burnt. The fire signifies two things. It represents the 'refining process', and it also represents the Holy Spirit.⁵⁰ 'A fire shall always be burning on the altar; it shall never go out.' Lev 6:13.

The priests put wood on the altar every morning to ensure that the fire never went out. There can be no burnt offering without fire. It follows that as we lay down our lives as a burnt offering we will be touched by fire. This is the refining process by which our offering is made acceptable.

So Peter says, 'Do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you'. 1 Peter 4:12. He is leaning on the symbolism of the burnt offering. If we lay our life down on the altar, we're not to be surprised when we feel the heat of fire. Of course our hope is that the fire is producing something. We know that the life the Father gives us can be likened to gold. Gold is only refined in a fire.⁵¹

Consumed by the Spirit

When the disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, 'tongues of fire' rested upon them.⁵² There are many instances in the scripture where it is clear that fire is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The statement, 'our God is a consuming fire', Heb 12:29, describes the activity of the Holy Spirit. He 'consumes' our offering. 'And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering.' Lev 9:24.

If we offer in the manner that the Lord prescribes, then the fire of the Holy Spirit refines and sanctifies our offering. If we try to offer in a different way, then the same fire will devour us. This was the result for Nadab and Abihu (sons of Aaron) who offered 'strange fire' before the Lord. 'Fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.' Lev 10:2.

49. Matt 23:19

50. Rev 4:5

51. 1 Peter 1:7

52. Acts 2:3

If we build our life out of precious stones then it will be ‘refined’ by the fire. However, if we build with wood, hay and stubble then as soon as it is placed on the altar it will be destroyed. ‘It will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.’ 1 Cor 3:13.

Sanctified by the Spirit

When the children of Israel came up out of Egypt they were led by a ‘fiery’ cloud.⁵³ The fire was always in the cloud, however it was only seen at night. We know that fire is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. So, it was the Holy Spirit who was leading the children of Israel on their wilderness journey. He determined when and where the tabernacle would be erected.

Jesus says, ‘when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth’. John 16:13. What truth does the Holy Spirit guide us into? The truth concerning ‘who we are’ and how we are able to make acceptable offering before the Lord. Remember, He is the one who consumes our offering. Who better to guide us concerning the type of offering, and life, which will stand the test of the ‘fire’?

The Holy Spirit jealously guards the boundaries of our life that the Lord has established.⁵⁴ He says to us, “Don’t offer like that; that’s not you! Offer like this!” In this way He sanctifies our offering and ensures it is acceptable. Paul clearly recognised this crucial role that the Holy Spirit plays. ‘That the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.’ Rom 15:16.

The drink offering

The morning and evening sacrifice consisted of the burnt offering, the memorial portion of the grain offering, and the drink offering. The drink offering was poured over the sacrifice to ensure that the whole gift produced a soothing aroma. It consisted of flour, oil, and wine.

So, the preparation of this offering would have involved the crushing of grapes in a press to produce the wine. Isaiah describes Jesus as the one who was crushed for our iniquities,⁵⁵ and was then ‘poured out’ as the drink offering. ‘He poured out His soul to death.’ Isa 53:12.

53. Ex 13:21

54. Jas 4:5

55. Isa 53:8-10

Paul also desired to be a drink offering to ensure that a soothing aroma ascended before the Lord. 'Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.' Phil 2:17. Interestingly, he viewed himself as being poured out on another's offering. This describes his attitude to empty himself so that another could be revealed. His goal was that the offering of others produced a sweet smelling aroma. This is the 'mind of Christ' that Paul talks about when he says, 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus'. Phil 2:5. We are to have the mind, and attitude, to continually empty ourselves so that others can be revealed.

A sweet aroma

The goal or outcome of the burnt offering is that a 'sweet aroma' ascends before the Lord. 'It is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.' Lev 1:17. The Hebrew word for 'burnt offering' is *olah* which simply means, 'ascending'. Our offering is in vain, unless something ascends before the Lord.

The burnt offering (as well as the memorial portion of the grain offering, and the fat of the peace offering) was to generate a 'sweet aroma' before the Lord. A sweet aroma is necessary because the Lord only meets with us when *something* ascends before Him.

The aroma from *our* offering is 'sweet' when it is both 'holy' and 'acceptable'. We've discussed both of these terms. The Lord 'remembers' us when a sweet aroma ascends. He remembers who He has created us to be, and the words that He has spoken to us. It is in the aroma that He *knows* us. We can do anything with our life in the name of Christ, however if nothing ascends before the Lord then He will not know us. 'I never knew you.' Matt 7:23.

A sweet aroma is also the greatest witness to those who are yet to meet the Lord. 'But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.' 2 Cor 2:14.

Converting offering to sacrifice

'And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an *offering* and a *sacrifice* to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.' Eph 5:2. A distinction can be drawn between these two terms: offering and sacrifice. The Greek word that is translated 'offering' could also be translated

‘presentation’.⁵⁶ The notion of offering here means that we are ‘bringing’ or ‘presenting’ something. The Israelites presented their offering to the priests and then the priests arranged it as a sacrifice on the altar. Our offering then needs to be converted into a sacrifice. It needs to be killed, arranged on the altar, and burnt. There is no sweet aroma ascending until the *offering* is converted into a *sacrifice*.

Practically speaking, we may have many ‘good ideas’ regarding the things that we could give to the Lord. However, our ideas and thoughts need to be converted into substance. They need to equate to tangible commitments. Christ loved us, and therefore ‘gave Himself’ for us.⁵⁷ He did actually ‘die’ on the cross.⁵⁸ He converted His love to a substantial and tangible commitment. This is the way we are to walk as we follow in His footsteps.

Fear of loss

We are confronted with a call of the Lord to lay our lives on the altar as a ‘living sacrifice’. This does mean that we need to overcome the fear of ‘losing something’. The fear of loss is probably the biggest issue that stops us from laying down our life. As we know, the burnt offering was always the ‘whole’. We must be willing to let all things of our own go in Christ. We must lay down our whole life in Him. To answer this fear, it is critical to look at the experience of Christ as the burnt offering.

King David foresaw that Christ would offer Himself as a burnt offering and that the Father would not allow His offering to corrupt. ‘Nor will You [Father] allow Your Holy One [Christ] to see corruption.’ Psa 16:10. When we lay our life on the altar we know that it is immediately touched by fire. However, everything that we have received from the Father cannot be burnt; it cannot be destroyed. We have been ‘born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible’. 1 Peter 1:23. It follows that the only things we can possibly lose in the fire are those things that are not ‘of God’. We need to ask ourselves, ‘Are these the things that we want anyway?’ To use Paul’s analogy, it is only ‘wood, hay, and straw’ that can be burned.⁵⁹

56. The two different Greek words used in Eph 5:2 are *prosphora* (G4374) which could be translated ‘offering’ or ‘presentation’, and then *thusia* (G2378) which is translated ‘sacrifice’.

57. Eph 5:2

58. Phil 2:8; Mark 15:39

59. 1 Cor 3:12-14

Not your own

‘All things come from You, and of Your own we have given You.’ 1 Chron 29:14. This is a statement made by king David as he looked upon a vast array of offering that the nation of Israel had brought before the Lord. This really is a fundamental principle of offering. Everything that we have comes from the Lord.⁶⁰ When we give, we are simply giving back to the Lord that which is already His. This principle relates to all the offerings, but none more so than the burnt offering.

Paul instructs us, ‘you are not your own, for you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body’. 1 Cor 6:20. How do we glorify God in our bodies? We present ourselves as a living sacrifice. In real terms, we don’t have an option. The Lord commands us to lay down our life as a burnt offering. As we walk before the Lord as priests this is our only ‘reasonable’ and ‘rational’ way of life. ‘Present your bodies a living sacrifice ... which is your reasonable [temple] service.’ Rom 12:1.

I will meet you

The burnt offering needed to be on the altar in the morning and evening of every day. When we offer ourselves as this morning and evening sacrifice, we establish a daily interaction with the Lord. This should be our heart’s desire – to meet with the Lord daily! ‘This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet you to speak with you.’ Ex 29:42.

The Lord does promise to meet with us daily if we are committed to laying down our life as a ‘whole’ and ‘continual’ burnt offering. He promises to speak with us concerning our life. By this means we truly ‘know’ Him and He ‘knows’ us. Abraham was called the ‘friend of God’ for one simple reason.⁶¹ He was absolutely committed to a life of ‘offering’. We know that He was even willing to place his only son on the altar.⁶² There is no danger of the Lord saying, ‘I never knew you’, if we commit ourselves to a life of offering. The imperative that the Lord places on our becoming a ‘burnt offering’ is driven by His desire to give us abundant life and to have a relationship with us.

60. 1 Cor 4:7

61. Jas 2:23

62. Gen 22: 1-10

Life out of death

In the final analysis, we will only offer ourselves as a burnt offering if we believe in resurrection life. If we don't believe that life comes out of death then it would be foolish to lay our life on the altar.

The Lord asked Abraham to offer Isaac as a 'burnt offering'.⁶³ So Abraham had to very quickly resolve whether or not he believed in resurrection life. God had promised him that he would be the 'father of many nations' however he only had one son. We know that he did believe that God could bring Isaac back from the dead because he said to those who were with him, 'the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you'. Gen 22:5; Heb 11:7-19.

The burnt offering is the doorway to abundant life. Abraham unlocked the fullness of the Lord's blessing toward him because he didn't withhold his son. 'because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son - blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply.' Gen 22:16,17.

We know that Christ died and was then raised from the dead.⁶⁴ This is our assurance and guarantee that life comes out of death.⁶⁵ This is our hope that enables us to lay our life on the altar.

63. Gen 22:2

64. Rom 8:34

65. Rom 6:4

THE GRAIN OFFERING

Does God remember me? We may often ask this question, particularly when life gets difficult or we find ourselves in a 'day of trouble'. King David began his prayer by saying, 'May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob set you securely on high!'. Psa 20:1. There is no greater 'security' than the knowledge that the Lord is actively involved in our life. If we genuinely want to know the Lord, then this is the assurance we search and long for. We want an assurance that we are known and remembered by Him.

How do we gain this assurance? How can we be certain that God remembers us? The answer lies in the principle of 'firstfruits'. This will be the focus of our study. The Israelites presented the firstfruits of their grain harvests as a grain or meal offering, thus establishing a link between the grain offering and firstfruits. This explains David's terminology when he prays, 'may He remember all your [meal] offerings'. Psa 20:3. Again, many of our translations do not do the meaning of this verse justice. The Hebrew word for offering used here is *minchah*,⁶⁶ which refers specifically to the grain, or meal, offering.

When we give 'firstfruits', we dedicate our *entire life* to the Lord. It ensures that He is actively involved in every facet of our life. Our relationship with Him naturally deepens as we 'prove Him faithful'. By this we do gain an *assurance* and a peace that we are known and *remembered* by Him.

Christ - the Firstfruits

'But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have died.' 1 Cor 15:20. The wonderful truth concerning firstfruits is that they guarantee the harvest to come. On this basis, we can draw tremendous strength from the reality that Christ is raised from the dead. It means that resurrection life is not only possible; it is available to each and every one of us. As we follow in Christ's footsteps and lay down our life, it is guaranteed.

When we give, we are likely at some stage to doubt whether or not God does actually remember us. In a sense, Christ experienced this doubt in its fullness. He cries out, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'. Mark 15:34. If we experience this doubt we only need to look at the experience of Christ to

66. The Hebrew word *minchah*, (Strong's H4503) means 'to bestow, 'to make a donation', or offering, usually a bloodless and voluntary one. A 'gift', 'oblation'.

get all the reassurance we need. Did the Father remember Him? Did the Father draw Him out of many waters?

Christ is the 'firstborn among many brethren.' Rom 8:29. In keeping with the principle of firstfruits, the 'many brethren' are guaranteed. The Lord invites us to be one of these brethren; to be the son who He knows and loves. The pathway is simple; follow Christ and give.

May He remember

What do we mean by the notion that the Lord 'remembers'? Obviously, we are not inferring that He is senile, and needs reminding. Also, it doesn't mean He only has time to think about a certain number of people, and we need to vie for His attention.

'You scrutinise my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O Lord, You know it all.' Psa 139:3,4. He knows each of us, and yet we are told to give 'firstfruits' so we are remembered.⁶⁷ It is our 'name' that the Lord remembers. The biblical meaning of a name is much more than a title. The Lord remembers 'who we are', and who He created us to be. He remembers who He predestined us to be before the foundation of the world.

In a sense, giving firstfruits is really a 'plea' to the Lord. We are crying out to be remembered and we are crying out for the Lord's involvement in our life. By giving the first, we are entreating Him to be actively involved in all our endeavours. We can be confident that His involvement is based on the 'remembrance' of our name. This is an extremely reassuring thought. Everything that happens is pointing us toward the person He wants us to be - the person He 'knows'!

The first lump

'And if the first piece of dough be holy, the lump is holy.' Rom 11:16. This is a key passage to look at on the subject of firstfruits. We know the Israelites presented their firstfruits as a grain or meal offering. This explains Paul's terminology when he talks about the first piece of 'dough'. Today, we generally give our time, resources, or money as representatives of the firstfruits of success in our life. The principle enunciated by Paul still rings true. If firstfruits are holy, then the entire harvest is holy. We can understand 'holy' as being 'set apart'. So, if we give firstfruits, we dedicate or 'set apart'

67. Psa 20:3

our entire life to the Lord. Our entire life is set clearly before His face. He remembers and knows us.

Why did the Lord hear the groaning of the children of Israel in Egypt?⁶⁸ When Abraham offered Isaac on the altar he activated the principle of firstfruits. In giving Isaac, the first son of promise, he dedicated the rest of his descendants to the Lord. He 'set them apart' before the Lord, guaranteeing that the Lord would be actively involved in their lives. So when the Lord hears their groaning, He doesn't just hear a lot of 'whinging'; He remembers the covenant He made with Abraham. He remembers them as Abraham's descendants.

Perhaps we do find ourselves in a 'day of trouble' like the nation of Israel in Egypt. If we give firstfruits we know that the Lord hears us. This is the reassurance that giving firstfruits avails - our entire life in all its 'ups and downs' is set clearly before His face.

When you enter the land

'And now behold I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, O Lord, have given me.' Deut 26:10.

The Lord commanded the Israelites to give firstfruits 'when they entered the land'. They were not required or given in the wilderness. In the wilderness, they had no context in which they could sow and reap and produce fruit. The promised land provided this *context*; it gave them the opportunity to produce something that they could give.

'He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.' Deut 26:9. The land was often described as 'flowing with milk and honey'. This is not simply a poetic statement. Neither is it simply a statement concerning the type of produce they would find in the land. It describes a land that has an abundant capacity to generate increase. It is a land 'full of opportunity' - the opportunity to labour, sow, reap, and give. It is a land full of abundant life. This is the land that the Lord places before each one of us.

Every tribe received an inheritance in the land. Likewise, we each have an inheritance, a place and a portion: not in Palestine but in the body of Christ. The body of Christ is the context in which we labour and give as a living 'member'.

68. Ex 6:5

The memorial portion

'When anyone offers a grain offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour. And he shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it.' Lev 2:1. This was the way that the Israelites presented their firstfruits to the Lord. The priests would take a handful of the flour with its oil, and all the frankincense and burn it on the altar. This constituted the 'memorial portion', and the rest then belonged to the priests.

It was the memorial portion of the grain offering that was added to the burnt offering and drink offering to form the 'morning and evening sacrifice'. As we know, this burnt offering ascended before the Lord as a sweet-swelling aroma.⁶⁹ It is the ascending aroma that draws our life, and our name, to the Lord's remembrance. The fact that the memorial portion was added to the burnt offering is significant. There is little value in giving firstfruits if our entire life is not '*wholly and continually*' given. The burnt offering always forms the foundation.

Practically, when we give time, resources, and money as firstfruits it does ensure that there is 'food in the Lord's house'. The greatest portion of the grain offering was given to the priests. Our giving is tangible, and has tangible outcomes. It facilitates growth in the body of Christ. So, when we give firstfruits they will be used in the work of the ministry. However, at the same time, we can be absolutely confident that *something* is ascending before the Lord. This is the significance of the memorial portion. Our firstfruits may be used in any practical manner, but at the same time our name is being remembered.

Fruit

The Scriptures use the analogy that the Father comes as a vinedresser looking for fruit. What is the 'fruit' that He's looking for? Jesus says, 'My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples'. John 15:8.

Fruit can simply be defined as 'success'. Specifically, it is success in becoming the person the Father has predestined us to be. We know the Father has 'named' us before the foundation of the world. We are 'fearfully and wonderfully made'⁷⁰ with differing and distinct abilities. Referring to the

69. Lev 2:2

70. Psa 139:14

parable of the talents, Christ then gives ‘grace according to ability’.⁷¹ The Holy Spirit then appoints us to a ‘work’. Using the natural abilities we have received from the Father, and grace from Christ, we are now able to labour in the work that is ours. These are the works ‘prepared beforehand that we should walk in them’. Eph 2:10.

We will produce ‘good’ fruit if we diligently labour in the abilities, grace, and work that is ours. Our fruit glorifies the Father because it reveals the life He has given to us, and the person He has created us to be. It is also the evidence of our discipleship, because we can only bear ‘good fruit’ when we follow in the footsteps of Christ. He clearly demonstrated how to steward and sow the life the Father gives us, and bear fruit.

So we ask ourselves:

What are the abilities the Father has given me?

What is the grace I have received from Christ?

What is the work that the Holy Spirit is asking me to do?

Am I labouring in these to produce fruit?

Sow and reap

How do we generate fruit from which we can give? There is only one way – sowing and reaping. The Lord established this as the means by which increase is generated from the very beginning. As any farmer knows, sowing seed and producing a harvest involves a significant amount of labour. This is foundational to producing increase. ‘He who gathers by labour will increase.’ Prov 13:11.

As soon as the children of Israel were able to eat the produce of the land the manna ceased.⁷² Miraculous provision is not a long-term source of blessing. The Lord doesn’t want us to live in a wilderness; He wants us to live in His body. He wants us to labour, sow and give in His body. This is not just the means by which we experience increase individually but the means by which the entire body grows and builds itself in love.⁷³ The body of Christ only grows as each member is committed to giving and sowing seed.

71. Matt 25:15

72. Josh 5:12

73. Eph 4:16

‘Behold a sower went out to sow.’ Matt 13:3. The parable of the sower teaches us to be diligent and liberal in sowing. We can afford to be liberal, because the Lord gives us an abundance of seed to sow. Abundance of new life is freely given to us. ‘Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness.’ 2 Cor 9:10.

Try me now

‘ “And try Me now in this,” says the Lord of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it”.’ Mal 3:10. There are few instances in Scripture where the Lord actually invites us to ‘try Him’. However, Malachi clearly describes one such instance. On the negative side of the equation, if we fail to tithe and make offering (specifically heave offering) we are robbing God. However on the positive side, if we do tithe and make offering so that there is food in His house then He promises to bless us.

The grain offering was a primary means by which there was ‘food in the Lord’s house’. It was only the memorial portion that was burnt on the altar; the rest was given to the priests to be their food. When we give firstfruits, we are invited to ‘try Him’. He promises to give increase in our life by ‘opening the windows of heaven’ (giving the rain) and rebuking the devourer.

When the Lord fulfils His promise, and the full harvest is in the barn, then we have proven Him faithful. This naturally deepens our relationship with the Lord, and our ability to trust Him. Perhaps this is why the Lord so actively encourages us to ‘try Him’? He knows how much deeper our relationship becomes with Him when we step out in faith and He meets us.

Give the rain

‘Then He will give you rain for the seed which you will sow in the ground, and bread from the yield of the ground, and it will be rich and plenteous.’ Isa 30:23. We read in Malachi that when we make offering, the Lord promises to do two things: give the rain (open the windows of heaven) and rebuke the devourer. What do we mean by ‘giving the rain’? ‘Rain’ describes everything that only God can give that is absolutely necessary for increase in our life.

Now many people who never give firstfruits are very successful in life. This is simply ‘time and chance’ – the rain falls on the ‘just and the unjust’.⁷⁴

74. Matt 5:45

Firstfruits offering ensures that we are not living under time and chance. We receive the right amount of rain, at the right time, according to the purpose the Lord has in our life.

If we don't believe that the Lord will give rain, then we will neither sow nor give firstfruits. 'He who observes the wind will not sow.' Eccl 11:4. How often do we balk at giving because we add up the numbers and work out that we will be short? This doesn't account for the fact that God promises to give rain for increase. This is the quotient that never sits on our spreadsheets. It is the quotient that only He can give.

Rebuke the devourer

'And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground.' Mal 3:11. What is the devourer that the Lord rebukes? It can be anything outside of our control that can deplete or destroy the increase in our life. Interest rate rises and taxation increases can eat away at our finances. Excessive work demands can confiscate our time. Break-downs of equipment and devaluation can deplete our resources. Sickness can confine us to our beds.

Many of these things the Lord allows to touch us to produce character.⁷⁵ Moreover, character enhances our ability to generate increase and minister life to one another. As soon as any of these or other things begin to 'smother and destroy' the life of God in us, they have become a devourer. At the point that something begins to devour, the Lord promises to rebuke it. If we have committed our life into His hands and safekeeping then nothing can snatch us away. We can draw great confidence from this. Everything that touches our life is promoting growth and increase within us.

Often the greatest devourer that touches our life is our own attitude.⁷⁶ Again, the Lord promises to 'rebuke the devourer'. This is often what is happening when we receive rebuke. The Lord is being true to His promise. An attitude needs to be removed from within us to enable us to receive the fullness of our inheritance.

A generous 'eye'

Historically, the Hebrew was described as having a certain type of 'eye' when they gave firstfruits. They were said to have an 'evil' eye, a 'middling' eye, or

75. Rom 5: 3-5

76. 2 Cor 6:12

a 'generous' eye.⁷⁷ This described their attitude and faith when they gave. Perhaps the analogy of the eye is used because it is representative of the entire body, and the window into a person's heart. 'The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light.' Luke 11:34.

A person with an 'evil' eye was a person who had little faith for a large harvest. Accordingly they gave little firstfruits. A 'middling' eye described a person who was caught between anxiety and faith. They wanted to believe for a harvest, but anxiety had gripped their heart and was holding them back in their giving. A 'generous' eye described the person who was in faith for a large harvest and gave firstfruits accordingly.

We can ask, is it formulistic? In a sense, it is. If you want a large harvest then give large firstfruits offerings.⁷⁸ Give firstfruits commensurate with the harvest that you are in faith for. So often we are gripped by anxiety which stops us from giving. What if God doesn't remember me? Yet the Lord promises that when we give our firstfruits offerings, He guarantees the harvest to come. He guarantees we will be remembered, and we cannot 'out-give' God.

Sell what you have

Jesus says, 'sell what you have and give alms'. Luke 12:33. Why? Because there is nothing that we possess that is more valuable than the assurance we gain by giving firstfruits. The assurance that we are known and remembered by God is priceless. What wouldn't we sell to gain this peace and security?

Remember Jesus makes this statement in the context of teaching us 'not to worry about our life'.⁷⁹ Anxiety is the greatest enemy of giving. When we become anxious we hold more and more tightly to the things we have. Yet we can never find security in these things, which increases our anxiety. We can quickly be caught in a vicious cycle. In contrast, when we take the step of faith to give we find true peace and security in the knowledge that we are known by God. Now, the Lord knows that we have needs. So he says, 'seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things will be added to you'. Luke 12:31. When we lay a foundation of giving, then we are truly able to enjoy the blessings that the Lord bestows upon us. We can properly steward everything that we have, not holding anything too tightly and always willing to give.

77. Taken from Edersheim, *The Temple - Its Ministry and Services*, Chapter 19. Electronic copy

78. 2 Cor 9:6

79. Matt 6:25

The answer to anxiety is to 'give'. Such a statement rolls off the tip of the tongue but it often requires significant faith. It involves completely committing our life into the Lord's hand, although there is no safer place to be.

Firstfruits

The term 'firstfruits' is fairly self-explanatory. It is the 'first' of the fruit that is produced in our life – the first and the best. As soon as we begin to experience some success in life we are confronted with a very important decision. Do we remember the Lord? Do we remember to give? This was always the danger confronting the children of Israel as they entered the promised land. Would they say, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth'? Deut 8:17. The potential to adopt this attitude was always a much bigger threat than any inhabitant of the land ever was. This is often the case; the greatest threats to our walk with the Lord come from our own attitudes.⁸⁰

'The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the Lord your God.' Ex 23:19. We give firstfruits in acknowledgement of many things that unfortunately we can easily forget. Firstly, we are acknowledging that He is the Redeemer who has delivered us from captivity. He has called us 'out of darkness into His marvellous light. 1 Peter 2:9. He has given us a place in His body.'⁸¹ Secondly, we are recognising that all power to generate increase is from Him. It is the Lord who gives us the capacity to labour. Every 'ability' we possess is from Him. The grace we receive in abundance is a gift from Christ.⁸² This explains the great thankfulness by which firstfruits are presented. Finally, we are acknowledging that it is only the Lord who can guarantee the harvest. We need Him to remember us; to give the rain in its season, and rebuke the devourer. We need Him to watch over every facet of our life.

Dorcas

The word 'alms' is often translated 'charitable deeds', however this fails to capture the full meaning of the word. Alms are those things in our life produced according to ability and grace that are given as firstfruits. They

80. 2 Cor 6:12

81. 1 Peter 2:5; 1 Cor 12:27

82. Eph 3:7; 4:7

correlate directly to the memorial portion of the grain offering because we see them 'ascending'⁸³ in exactly the same manner.

Described in the book of Acts, are two 'role-models' in the giving of alms – Dorcas and Cornelius. 'At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and alms which she did.' Acts 9:36. Dorcas was a 'certain disciple'. This means she was a follower of Christ with specific gifts and graces out of which she was making offering. This is the case for all of us. We all have differing abilities and specific grace from which we offer and give firstfruits.

Her alms were ascending before the Lord, so that He was continually remembering her. When she died, the Lord knew that according to her name it was 'not yet her time'. Her friends obviously wanted her back, and the Lord concurred. He knew there was still more for her to do; more for her to give and bless those around her. Even death cannot stand in the way of the Lord achieving His purposes in our life if we are committed to give.

Cornelius

Like Dorcas, Cornelius is a role model in the giving of alms. He is described as a 'devout man and one who feared God with all his household who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always'. Acts 10:2. He has the amazing experience of being met by an angel who says 'your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God'. Acts 10:4. This establishes a very clear link to the grain offering and firstfruits.

So, we can be absolutely confident that when we give firstfruits it ascends before the Lord. No matter who we are or where we are, the Lord remembers us and meets us accordingly. Cornelius was not a Jew; he was a centurion in the army. However, it was his faith that opened the door for the gospel to be preached to the Gentiles. His faith enabled a multitude to be saved. As he faithfully gave firstfruits from day to day, he would have had no idea of the harvest that would follow. He simply continued to give and seek the Lord. This is an excellent example for us to follow. All we need to do is be faithful in giving firstfruits – the rest is in the Lord's hands. There is no limit to the things that He can achieve in and through people who are willing to give. To have alms ascending is the most effective way of saying to the Lord, 'Here I am – send me'.⁸⁴

83. Lev 2:2

84. Isa 6:8

Oil

'And he shall pour oil on it.' Lev 2:1. Oil was an essential ingredient in the meal offering. Regardless of the exact manner that the offering was presented, oil needed to be mixed with it or poured on it. As we know, oil often represents the 'Holy Spirit'.⁸⁵ It follows that the Holy Spirit plays an important role in the offering of firstfruits.

If we give firstfruits offerings in faith for a certain type of harvest, then we want to know that we have faith for the right harvest. We want to know that our firstfruits do actually correspond to our 'name'. If our firstfruits don't correspond to our name then we could say that we're not giving the Lord anything He can 'work with'. This is why the Holy Spirit is so important. He 'guides us into all truth'.⁸⁶ The truth concerning 'who we are', how we're to offer, and what we're to have faith for. Firstfruits offering will only ever be a recipe for disappointment if we have faith for the wrong things. However, mixed with oil, guided by the Spirit, they are completely effective in unlocking the full blessing of the Lord.

The five foolish virgins learnt this lesson well. The Lord says to them, 'I do not know you'. Matt 25:12. This means that nothing from their lives was ascending before Him. They had no oil to keep their lamps burning so they couldn't see how they were to walk, offer and make themselves ready for the Master's coming.

Frankincense

'He shall bring it to Aaron's sons, the priests, one of whom shall take from it his handful of fine flour and oil with all the frankincense.' Lev 2:2. We see frankincense used a number of times in the Scriptures. Most notably, it was one of the three gifts that were given to Jesus when He was born. 'They presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.' Luke 2:11. It was also one of four 'sweet spices' used to make the incense that was burnt on the golden altar. 'Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, and pure frankincense.' Ex 30:3. Frankincense is actually a tree sap that is still widely used today and is well known for its aroma. It is very interesting that frankincense was only necessary in the memorial portion.

We can say that frankincense represents a 'sweet spirit'. Certainly, it was used to produce a sweet aroma. A sweet spirit is absolutely necessary in all our

85. 1 Sam 16:13

86. John 16:13

relationships and offering if we want something ‘pleasing’ to ascend before the Lord. Our heart attitude needs to be right. ‘Let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.’ 2 Cor 9:7. In a sense, regardless of our attitude, our giving does supply food in the Lord’s house. However, we can be sure of one thing. If we don’t have a sweet spirit, nothing will ascend before the Lord.

Seasoned with salt

‘Every grain offering of yours, moreover, you shall season with salt, so that the salt of the covenant of your God, shall not be lacking from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.’ Lev 2:13.

What do we mean by the ‘salt of the covenant’, and why is it so critical that our offering is seasoned with this specific type of salt? We know that God has sworn an oath over each one of us concerning ‘who we are to be’. It is according to this oath that He makes covenant with us. When we offer firstfruits, the Lord remembers our name and He remembers His covenant. However, none of us are yet the person the Lord predestined us to be. When we offer, we are saying ‘remember me’, and ‘continue to mould me into the person you want me to be’. Salt signifies this process of change. Our offering is ‘seasoned with salt’ if we are submitted to the change that the Lord needs to bring in our lives. Of course, this change is always consistent with His covenant – it is the ‘salt of the covenant’.

Mark draws the clear parallel between ‘salt’ and ‘fire’. ‘For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt.’ Mark 9:49. When our life is seasoned with fire then our offering is seasoned with salt. This explains why the fiery trial touches our life⁸⁷ – our offering needs to be seasoned with salt. We need to submit to the fiery trial that brings change in our life. We need to be changing.

Generating increase

The Lord is the owner of all and therefore requires an acknowledgment of this. The portion representing this power of increase is presented to the five ministries for the apostolic work. Deut 8:7-10.

Firstfruits presented at the apostles’ feet represents the Lord’s portion as the first of labour and increase. It is the ‘first and the best.’ It is to be given to Him in acknowledgment that

87. 1 Peter 4:12

- He is the deliverer who redeemed from captivity and provided the promised land for increase
- the power to make wealth is from Him
- He is the guarantee of success in the final harvest in so far as He gives the rain and rebukes the devourer.

‘So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.’ Prov 3:9,10. The energy for increase is in the offering of firstfruits, not tithing. Tithing acknowledges God’s ownership but offering casts us upon God as the *alpha* and *omega* of all our endeavours. Firstfruits offering acknowledges God’s ownership of everything, of all our ability and productivity. ‘What do you have that you did not receive?’ 1 Cor 4:7.

Given that we are not generally an agricultural community, the biblical principles are applied to all areas of life. The basic principles of ‘ploughing, sowing, watering, reaping, are not the address of this paper, nevertheless their importance is unquestioned.

‘But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.’ Matt 13:23. Firstfruits is the generative mechanism, guaranteeing the ‘vats overflow and the barns are full.’ Prov 3:9,10.

Firstfruits guarantees that the ‘blessing abides on the house’. Ezek 44:30.

Generating bread to eat and seed to sow is the benefit to the offerer as he casts himself upon the God who ‘*commands blessing*’. In the words of Jesus, the predestination of every believer has a general direction and goal – to ‘*bring forth fruit*’. ‘The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you.’ Deut 28:8.

Firstfruits offerings are brought in expectation and gratitude to God for the provision of that which He alone can generate and preserve. They represent what the labourer receives from the goodness of God.

The Scriptures guaranteed a blessing and increase to those who gave acceptably, with a true heart. To not give or to ‘hold back what is justly due’ was to rob God. To give acceptably was to enter into His divine provision ‘that He may bless you in all the work of your hand that you do’. Deut 14:29. His

promise was to then send the early and latter rains and to rebuke the devourer so that the yield might overflow.⁸⁸

Firstfruits versus tithe

Most Christians probably have a good understanding of tithing and recognise its importance. However, the principles of firstfruits offering are much less well known. One person can give a \$100 as a tithe, and another can give \$100 as firstfruits. What are the differences between the two?

Firstfruits are never quantified; they are simply the ‘first’. The size of a firstfruit offering is completely dependent on our faith for the harvest to come. In contrast, the tithe is always one tenth. God requires ten percent of the increase in lieu of the whole. The tithe cannot even be calculated until the entire harvest is reaped, whereas firstfruits offerings are given right at the beginning of the harvest.

When we pay our tithe, we have ‘removed the sacred portion from our house’.⁸⁹ We have discharged an obligation that the Lord places on every believer. No offering has occurred because the tithe was never ours to give. However, firstfruits do constitute an offering. We are giving to the Lord out of the things that He has entrusted to us to steward.

Tithing requires *obedience*; firstfruits offering requires *faith*. It takes faith to give the first and best not yet knowing what the rest of the harvest will bring. The energy for increase in our life, and the body of Christ, is never found in tithing. The tithe is always ten percent of the current harvest; it doesn’t in anyway foreshadow future harvests. In complete contrast, firstfruits are given in faith for future harvests. They entreat the Lord to give the increase that only He can give. If we want to experience increase in our life, then more than the tithe is needed. We need to give our firstfruits offering.

The fruit of election

There is a clear and simple summary of the reasons for our inclusion in the kingdom of God. We are ordained to ‘bring forth fruit and that fruit should remain’, meaning it should be of lasting eternal quality. It must be able to stand the test of fire.

88. Mal 3:10

89. Deut 26:13

In the model of the Israelites upon their entry into Canaan, see God appoint for each tribe, family and person:

- a name: the identity of each is in their name
- a place: their portion in the land where the 'sole of their feet tread'
- a task: the predestined task is the career path by which we bear fruit.

If *calling* defines the identity of each in the design and predestination of the Father, then *election*, or choosing, defines the purpose or work of each identity in the harvest. The task is assigned by the 'Lord of the Harvest' who is 'thrust forth' by Him.

The harvest fruit of election in Israel was 'corn, wine and oil' in the Feast of Tabernacles. The anti-type for the church is the fruit of a multitude which no man can number gathered to the day of atonement's completion during the Feast of Tabernacles from the 'field of the world'. The individual reward of inclusion in this number is 'fruit unto eternity'. John 4.

The Macedonians exemplify for us the model of bringing firstfruits. 'They first gave themselves.' 2 Cor 8:5.

Without resources, the believer is dependent upon the presentation of himself to God as the offering.

Firstfruits offerings are acceptable to God as a '*representative* of self' in the predetermined calling of one to whom God has given ability and identity. These attributes become the beginning of the power to make increase and wealth.

Firstfruits are given as *representatives* of the commitment of our:

- time
- resources
- money

'The first of the firstfruits of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God.' Ex 23:19. 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest.' Lev 23:10; Num 15:18-21.

Firstfruits are presented to God as *representatives* of the beginning of increase and harvest. As such, they represent and define the potential of the career and task of the steward (giver).

The steward is admonished to honour the Lord in two ways. From:

- the first of the harvest
- the increase.

‘Honor the LORD from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.’ Prov 3:9,10.

Firstfruits offerings are acceptable to God as a ‘*representative* of the success’ of the calling, of one to who God has given power to make increase. They represent and demonstrate acknowledgment and utter dependence upon God to produce and procure:

- spiritual food
- material provision
- sovereign protection.

Firstfruits themselves are defined by the identity of each person. A person’s election defines and designates his purpose and work in the Father’s design, according to the substance of the first man in predetermined identity. Election incorporates the task assigned by the Lord of the Harvest.

Dedicates and sanctifies the harvest

‘And if the first piece of dough be holy, the lump is holy.’ Rom 11:16. Sanctification is the lifestyle and vocation of one set apart and dedicated to the Lord. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of sanctification. He is therefore the firstfruits of the inheritance of the believer. Sanctification defines the process and result of the one who cooperatively works and labours with the Holy Spirit of sanctification. A sanctified life is a life free to the task of the calling and therefore making their ‘election sure’. 2 Peter 1:10. Election is the definition of the task, co-operatively bearing fruit in all things which seem ‘good to the Holy Spirit and to us’. Acts 15:28. Fruit is necessary for sanctification to be operative. Rom 6:22.

If the firstfruits offering (lump) is holy then the *whole lump* is holy (sanctified). The grain offering was the means by which firstfruits were presented. Paul leans upon this principle in Romans. If the firstfruits offering is holy, the harvest is holy.

‘You shall bring in from your dwelling places two loaves of bread for a wave offering, made of two-tenths of an ephah; they shall be of a fine flour, baked with leaven as firstfruits to the LORD.’ Lev 23:17; 2:12.

The bringing of firstfruits dedicates (devotes) and therefore sanctifies the whole harvest to come. They are representative tokens of the harvest and as such they are to exemplify the harvest to come. Firstfruits in the land of Canaan was the town of Jericho. It was therefore the ‘devoted (*cherem*) thing.’

The focus of the labour thrust forth is in the final sense ‘the field of the world.’ Paul sought always to be fruitful and to find firstfruits as a beginning among the churches. Proper application to the principle of firstfruits is foundational to Paul’s mode of evangelism. He sought ‘fruit’ in each place, ‘that I may have some fruit among you’. Rom 1:13. Particularly, he sought faithful people whom he deemed to be firstfruits.

Firstfruits offering defines our co-operative work with the Lord of the Harvest according to election, according to foreknowledge by the Spirit of sanctification. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of sanctification. 2 Thess 2:13. Firstfruits sanctify and guarantee the harvest to come.

‘And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.’ Ex 23:16. Firstfruits are given as a commitment by the offerer to harvesting increase and future sowing. They are the commitment to the further pursuit of labour and success in the calling and election of the steward.

Firstfruits offering *represents* and foreshadows the ever increasing success of a life’s work in the duties of calling. Each vocation and career path results in quantifiable success as the ‘fruit of labour.’ Firstfruits offering represents our utter dependence upon Him to carry the seed sown to harvest into the barns. It means generating bread to eat and seed to sow. Firstfruits are our appeal to God to guarantee the risk, He ‘rebukes the devourer’. Mal 3:11.

‘Then He will give you rain for the seed which you will sow in the ground, and bread from the yield of the ground, and it will be rich and plenteous.’ Isa 30:23. Firstfruits are offered in gratitude to God for His provision of that which He alone can do. The work of the Spirit of sanctification is to thrust forth labourers into the harvest. At this point there is an assumption of formed and secure identity.

The one thrust forth is chosen-ordained to 'bring forth fruit'. John 15:16. Fruit is the biblical representative term for success. Fruit speaks of the success of labours.

Increase after its order

Every thing that God does, He foreshadows and represents in firstfruits. Each presentation of firstfruits represents an increase after its own order. It brings forth of its own order of life in various forms.

- **The Holy Spirit**
'And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.' Rom 8:23.
- **Christ and the new creation**
'But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who are asleep.' 1 Cor 15:20. 'Christ the Firstfruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming.' 1 Cor 15:23.
- **The born-again believer**
'In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first among His creatures.' Jas 1:18.
- **The 144,000**
'These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.' Rev 14:4.

Firstfruits in areas

Paul accounted firstfruits to the Lord in two areas. Further to this, he identified them by name as the firstfruits of Asia and Achaia. Clearly, these 'firstfruits' related to Paul's sowing, reaping and generating increase on his portion of God's holyLand. He worked his works of righteousness and generated a harvest for the Lord. In order to sanctify the whole harvest of the Gentiles, he recognised these households as 'firstfruits'.

'You know the household of Stephanas, that they were the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints.' 1 Cor 16:15. 'Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert [lit. firstfruits] to Christ from Asia.' Rom 16:5.

THE PEACE OFFERING

There is always risk involved in any undertaking that generates increase. It is a step of faith to sow seed, work hard, and believe God for increase. We will be familiar with the great feeling of thanksgiving when we take a step of faith and the Lord proves Himself faithful. This is the spirit behind the peace offering. It is an offering of thanksgiving before the Lord for His faithfulness in overseeing the harvest until it is safely in the barn. The peace offering is the 'harvest offering'. When we read in the Scriptures about the 'offering of thanksgiving' it is referring to the peace offering.⁹⁰

'Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.' Heb 13:15.

This offering is much more than simply saying 'thanks'. It is a tangible offering to the Lord and His work from our harvest. In some cases this offering was completely voluntary. In others, it was required as the fulfilment of a vow and as such, completely non-negotiable.

There were three distinct types of peace offerings that could be presented to the Lord from the harvest:

- thanksgiving offerings
- the fulfilment of a vow
- voluntary or free-will offering.

Regardless of the motivation for the offering, certain portions were given to the priests as wave and heave offerings.⁹¹ The portion of the breast was given to the priests as a wave offering. The portion of the right thigh was given to the priests as a heave offering.

Fulfilment of a vow

There is no compulsion upon us to make vows in the direct sense. However, the Christian life is never about the minimum required to get to heaven. If we want to be active, burden bearing members in the body of Christ and fulfil our predestination then we are going to have to make commitments. A vow is simply a 'commitment'.

One of the most fundamental exercises of offering in the scripture is the making of a vow. The Lord asks for vows and requires that we fulfil the

90. Lev 7:13

91. Lev 7:14

commitments we make. The 'votive' offering, being one of three types of peace offerings, represented the 'commitment to' and 'fulfilment of' a vow.

'Make vows to the LORD your God and fulfill them; let all who are around Him bring gifts to Him who is to be feared.' Psa 76:11. 'Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High.' Psa 50:14. 'I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving ... I will pay my vows to the Lord.' Psa 16:17,18.

Once a person has made a vow there is no 'turning back'. The Lord requires the vow or the commitment be fulfilled. We could say, the vow is written in His book and we must give an account accordingly. The person vowing was 'devoted' to the Lord and historically could not be redeemed. Solomon, in his wisdom, therefore instructs us:

'When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed - better not to vow than to vow and not pay.' Eccl 5:4,5. 'It is a snare for a man to devote rashly something as holy, and afterward to reconsider his vows.' Prov 20:25.

One of the clearest examples of a vow in Scripture is the 'vow of a Nazarite, to separate himself to the Lord'. Num 6:2. The Nazarite had to abide by specific laws of separation concerning wine, their hair etc... while they were under the vow. The vow was fulfilled after the prescribed time, and after the appropriate offerings had been made. We see here that a vow is not necessarily for life. A vow can be made for a 'season'.

Vows and oaths

When we begin to discuss the necessity to make vows, we may recall the words of Jesus, 'I say to you make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet'. Matt 5:34. We can see that some comment on the difference between a vow and an oath is necessary. At the most fundamental level, only God can swear an oath. He swears an oath when He swears by Himself. 'For when God made a promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself.' Heb 6:13.

We have no ability to swear an oath by ourselves. Neither should we try to swear an oath by any external object, eg heaven, earth. An oath is solely the province of God Himself. He then makes covenant with us, according to the word of His oath.

We are encouraged to make vows. A vow is simply the practical expression of commitment to godly service. It is a commitment to participate in the covenant that God has made with us according to His oath. By this means, our vows bind us to the word of the oath. We are not trying to swear an alternate oath; we are binding ourselves to the oath that God has sworn concerning us.

What were the promises that God made to Abraham according to the word of His oath? He said, 'I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply you'. Heb 6:14. When we make vows, we are making a commitment to participate in the economy of God that He is establishing amongst us by covenant. It is an economy of blessing, increase and multiplication. The peace offering is the means by which we commit to service in this economy by 'vow'.

Paul's example

We will conclude with a few observations concerning the commitment of Paul to an economy built on the 'vow'. That is, the 'making' and 'fulfilling' of commitments. Paul understood the need to fulfil his own vows, and led by example. We read, 'He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow'. Acts 18:18.

He also made every effort to ensure that those under his care fulfilled their vows. He wrote to the Corinthian church to tell them that he was sending brethren to 'prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation'. 2 Cor 9:5. The church had 'previously promised'; they had made a commitment that needed to be fulfilled.

In terms of his work, Paul relied heavily on the faith of others to fulfil their commitments. He could only be enlarged in his work toward the regions beyond as they were enlarged in their faith to support him by way of vows and commitments. 'Not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men's labour, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we shall be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you.' 2 Cor 10:15.