



Depth Perception™

Commentary from Design For Ministry™
Los Angeles • Milwaukee • Philadelphia

A firstfruits cosmology 30 April 2006

*(excerpted from A Firstfruits
Cosmology: Reflections on the 115th
Psalm available from
www.DesignForMinistry.com)*

Recent years have brought a lot of conversation and planning for firstfruits to return as the basis for funding Christian ministry. The call is for households, congregations, ministry organizations and denominational offices to contribute beyond themselves first – doing so as a worshipful act of thanksgiving to God for what God has given, and as an example to their adherents. News reports tell us that there are struggles to implement this vision, however. It seems that while firstfruits stands on solid ground theologically, the operational struggle continues – how to be generous when there are bills to pay?

Could it be that the problem is not one of theology? Could it even be that the struggle isn't as operational as we think? Could it be instead that we need to tweak our cosmology a bit more in tune with what we find in Psalm 115? I think so.

When our giving is withheld so we can pursue our dreams first; when our giving is interrupted until the recipients can prove they are worthy; when we accept the firstfruits of others into the ministry with which we are affiliated with little intention to be firstfruits in orientation ourselves, then our approach is selfish.

Selfishness is the root of trying to create God in our image – to steer God according to our own demands – to take control of God who cannot be controlled and who does what he pleases. Selfishness leads us to burn many more resources (money, personnel, time) in seeking to remain in control rather than in picking up the priestly role we have been given so that the world might be blessed through us.

Another way to say this is that when we seek to control the giving relationship rather than be abandoned to it, we become an obstacle; a clogging point in the flow of what God wishes to do through a covenant people. In the end priests are here to do what pleases God, not necessarily to do convenient acts of self-preservation.

– mark I vincent