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Depth Perception

31 March 2013

If the church is the body then the offering is breath (excerpt)

The following is excerpted from [Presentations from the 2013 Stewardship Summit](#). Click [here](#) to learn more.

Deep runs the misconception that sacrifices made at the tabernacle and the temple were largely a way to pay for sin. So many Christians hold the mistaken impression that the animals brought in sacrifice primarily lost their lives so that the worshipping person might live. They are taught to think of Jesus on the cross in the same way. They are dimly aware that other offerings were expected, but they think the sin offering was the biggie, and it becomes the only sacrifice that receives consideration.

From deeper study, we learn that most of the offerings called for, and most of the offerings made...were acts of worship designed to do little else than say thank you to God, to declare one's companionship with God, or to proclaim one's worship of God. These offerings were not intended as payment for sin, but as adoration of God. This deeper study also teaches us that Jesus on the cross is a representation of ALL types of offering—a sin offering, yes—but also a burnt offering where God as man offers his own life so that God looks and sees and proclaims forgiveness and makes a people from it who serve beside him (Rev 5:9,10), just as he proclaimed the covenant promise of a rainbow to Noah.

A person breathing in the mercy of God—these gifts of life and time and land and harvest; a person who organizes their life according to Sabbath observance, instruction to tithe, and expectation to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly before God (Micah 6:8), is the person pictured for us in Deuteronomy 26. It is the picture of a person bringing the firstfruits from their fields and presenting them to God. It was their exhale of thanksgiving for what God had given on the inhale. This firstfruits presentation was not just an offering of substance, but an offering of confession of faith, an offering of one's life to be a hospitable agent of God, and the offering of an expectation that God would respond and make future gift giving possible. Such a person came to the place of worship and in an act of worshipful covenant made their gift.

When making this offering, the person did not say "Look at me!" an act even Jesus condemned (Mt 6:1). Neither did they say, "Don't look at me!" which has become the larger and more corrupting wink-wink, nod-nod game played in modern religious philanthropy. Instead, they laid it at the feet of the priest, with the priest's complete knowledge of who gave the gift and its amount. Then the person stepped back and recited their litany of faith, their intention to live according to God's covenant, and their expectation that God would see their exhale and respond by providing yet again on the inhale, so that gifts of thanksgiving and worship might be offered yet again. The person's style of life was indistinguishable from their gift. Neither was the person distinguishable from their peoplehood. Receiving from God and offering back to God was the worshipful and loving respiration that kept that person and that person's covenant with God alive.

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