

## The Pentecost Offering

Paying Tribute to the King

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We've just counted fifty days, and have come to today, Sunday, June 8, 2003. It is the nineteen-hundred and seventy-second Pentecost of the Christian Era.

This day commemorates the giving of the Law from Sinai, the giving of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem in 31 A.D., and of course the founding of the Christian Church.

It reminds us that we are First fruits, part of that special early harvest, the first resurrection, and all the wonderful advantages and rewards that that promises us.

As mentioned, it teaches us to count. You might have thought that we did that when we were three, or four, or five years old, but this is a special kind of counting. Whether we counted fifty days, or whether we counted seven complete weeks it teaches us to count—to number our days, and to redeem the time that God has given us.

On this day God commands specifically that we should give an offering. You will remember that He mentions that "three times a year" we are to give it in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Weeks (which this is), and the Feast of Tabernacles.

Of course, we do this on all seven holy days of the year, but the feast of Weeks is one of those that is specifically mentioned. And as we will see (please be turning to Deuteronomy 16:9-12) He gives some very specific instructions about the Pentecost Offering that I would like to go through today.

In these specific comments that He makes in these specific instructions I think that it will help us to learn something about this particular offering on this day.

**Deuteronomy 16:9-12** You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from *the time* you begin *to put* the sickle to the grain. Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LOORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LOORD your God blesses you. You shall rejoice before the LOORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who *is* within your gates, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who *are* among you, at the place where the LOORD your God

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chooses to make His name abide. And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes.

Now this has a few interesting wrinkles in it that set it apart from the other holy day offerings.

I bet you didn't know that.

If we look at what God says about this offering it may give you some instruction. So, we will explore some of these interesting wrinkles for the Pentecost Offering this morning.

Notice first in verse 10 that God calls today's offering "tribute."

This was the first time I had noticed that when going through this. This is a tribute of a freewill offering. Or the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand.

In the Hebrew this word is "missat." It is really quite obscure. It is only used in this particular place. The translators are really unsure about how to translate this. They have to use the Aramaic word that is close to it to try to understand the Hebrew meaning.

In it's literal meaning, it means "abundance," or "sufficiency." But the translations that I looked in, probably about 75 or 80 percent of them render it as "tribute," and not as sufficiency, or abundance.

I guess that from looking at it, they figured that this is the meaning that God wants us to understand.

Now, we understand tribute differently than in terms of abundance or sufficiency. We understand tribute to mean "a gift that is given to a Lord by a subject in recognition of his ruler ship over him." It is a gift that maybe a subject nation would give to the empire to recognize that the empire ruled over them.

So this brings out a few ideas that maybe in this age of democracy and individual rights we don't think of very often, that we owe God tribute!

One of these things is that it emphasizes—reminds us—that we are under authority. We are in subjection. We are not the final arbiter or do not have the final say over ourselves and what we do, and where we're headed and all those other things that we, as Americans specifically, think that we're the sole sovereign over.

God says here in the Bible in this particular offering that we need to render tribute to Him as our Overlord.

Now, in the New Testament it is often couched in terms of slavery. Not just that we're a free nation under subjection to another, but in the New Testament this is actually made more, what we would consider, oppressive in that God is the Master, and we are slave.

Let's look at this in I Corinthians 6:19. These scriptures are rather well known.

**I Corinthians 6:19-20** Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Maybe even more fitting is Romans 6:16-18.

**Romans 6:16-18, 22** Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness? But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

So, the slavery that we have been called to is not an evil slavery at all, it is a slavery to the thing that we all desire—communion with God and everlasting life.

This slavery of righteousness, or slavery to righteousness, is a good thing. It is a good thing that we answer to a Higher Authority, and have this servant/master relationship.

It is only through this relationship that we can make it to the kingdom of God.

Our Lord and Master is God. We've been bought and paid for with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. And because of that, we owe God tribute in recognition for all that He has done for us, and, frankly, for His sovereignty—that He is sovereign Lord and Master over us in particular.

Another thing that we can understand about giving tribute is that not only are we slaves of this Master, we are part of a kingdom. Normally when tribute is given, it is given from a vassal to the king. That is how we understand it in terms of western civilization. Because of this relationship, we understand that we are a part of a kingdom, something greater than ourselves. Something greater than the sum of our parts you might say.

And as such we have certain responsibilities as citizens of that kingdom that we must fulfill. For the kingdom to function properly we must do our part. The same as Paul's example or illustration of a body—each individual part of the body has its own part to play. One part can't do the other part's job.

The same thing happens in a kingdom. A kingdom has to have different functionaries to make sure that the business of the government runs. It is all the things and services that are necessary for the population to get done and are provided.

Sometimes tribute is in the form of money, but at other times the king requires us to give of our time and energy in service.

Probably the most well known is that when the kingdom must go to war, he calls up the levies from the various vassals, and they had to go out and fight for the king. They had to fight his battles. They were called to be his troops on the front line. Sometimes God himself calls us to do certain things like that.

Our tribute—our offering—that we give today should remind us that the day of service and sacrifice is not past. There are times that He calls us to do things. If you will look in Hebrews 13:16:

**Hebrews 13:16** But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Notice back in Deuteronomy 16 something else He tells us about this.

**Deuteronomy 16:12** And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt,... and you shall be careful to observe these statutes.

We are supposed to remember this day as we are giving this offering that we were a slave in Egypt. We have been delivered from that. God brought us out. We are no longer under the yoke, or the hard rigor of Satan the Devil. But, we are under the tender

mercies of God.

Remember what Jesus tells us in Matthew 11:30 that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. So, our subjection to Christ is so much better than our slavery to sin and to Satan was in Egypt. It is just beyond comparison.

And so this echoes that first point in the idea of tribute that we're under authority. But, the authority that we serve is loving and kind, and gentle, and merciful and good for us.

The second thing that is mentioned here in verse 12 is that we're to be careful to observe all the instructions that God gives to us.

One of the requirements of being in subjection to another is obedience. If the master says, "Go dig a ditch," then we go and dig a ditch. If the master says, "Go fill in the ditch," then we go and fill in the ditch. And if the master says, "Go and dig the ditch again," then we go and dig the ditch again. (It sounds like the army, doesn't it?)

One of the requirements of being in subjection is to jump when the master says, "Jump!"

Paul says that eventually every knee will bow to God. But, for now, we are among the very few who have voluntarily submitted to this yoke. Jesus said, though, that our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees, or otherwise we will in no wise enter the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:20).

So, not only must we understand that we are under a master, but we must also understand that we must do what the master says.

So, this echoes the second point that as part of the kingdom that we have certain responsibilities to fulfill.

So, what does this Pentecost offering teach us?

That we are subjects of a great king, and it behooves us to offer Him tribute to recognize our position under Him.

And in recognizing our place, we also recognize what is required of us. Not just obedience, but also sacrifice beyond that. It makes us think beyond ourselves and personally making it to the kingdom, to the greater entities—of God and His kingdom, and the church that represents it on earth.

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This offering offers us the opportunity to make a difference beyond ourselves, slaves though we are.

**I Timothy 6:17** Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

I think that we should all count ourselves among the rich, because we are. We may think we live from hand to mouth, or from paycheck to paycheck, but we live better than even the most wealthy of people have lived in times past. These commands are to us.

**I Timothy 6:18-19** *Let them* do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.