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WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT OFFERINGS?

In this present era of God's Church, going back to Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong's time, it has always been the accepted custom to give "Holy Day Offerings" on the seven annual Holy Days. But **that "accepted custom" is not really based on the Bible**, even though various Scriptures are read in the messages given before those offerings are taken up. Those Scriptures are read in a misguided attempt to confer biblical authority, and even sanctity, on those seven offerings.

So let's clear the air and spell out in plain language what God has actually instructed His people to do.

THE INSTRUCTION

Here is the main Scripture ministers usually used to turn to when we introduced the taking up of the offering on a Holy Day.

Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty: Every man *shall give* as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee. (Deuteronomy 16:16-17)

These two verses supposedly provide the foundation for taking up seven offerings during the year, on each one of the seven annual Holy Days.

Now the immediate problem here should be clear. **The Bible nowhere speaks about taking up offerings seven times in a year!** "Three" is not really the same as "seven". So how on earth did we arrive at "seven" annual offerings?

The answer is simple:

Taking up seven offerings when the Bible says "three times" is based on plain old-fashioned greed!

There is no other reason! **A desire to get more from people** is the only reason for changing God's instructions to "seven". Oh yes, certainly, the appeals are suitably presented as "a desire to see God's work flourish and grow if only more money was available".

It is rather strange though to think and to reason that "the Work of the Almighty Creator God of all things" somehow depends on lots of money, which, so God tells us, happens to be "**the root of all evil**" (1 Timothy 6:10). (For a thorough discussion of this verse see my December 2015 article "God Hates All Forms Of Pride".) Is God's Work really so dependent on the root of all evil that we need to turn three offerings into seven?

Anyway, here is how the reasoning goes:

While there are three feasts in the year, the greater framework actually incorporates seven annual Holy Days. So we can reason ourselves into saying that there are **three** "**seasons**" when these offerings are to be given to God. But that isn't correct either, because **there are only two seasons** for all of the Holy Days: Passover to Pentecost are all in the spring, and the others are all in the fall (though technically Trumpets may **sometimes** be in the last week of summer). And the three annual "feasts" are **always** in only two seasons. You can't just invent your own "seasons", you know?

People reason: well, Unleavened Bread represents one season, then Pentecost represents the second season, and Trumpets to the Last Great Day represents the third season. But this reasoning is simply not true! Unleavened Bread and Pentecost are always in the same season, that season being spring. And in the Bible there is **no instruction whatsoever about various "seasons"**. This is thoroughly discussed in my article "The Distinction Between Feasts And Holy Days".

So to be quite clear: the Bible does not say anything about doing anything in "three seasons".

The point to recognize is that **people reason their way to seven times**, rather than having scriptural instructions for doing something seven times. In this regard there is a key we should keep in mind: **when people use reasoning** to arrive at a more favorable conclusion for their own personal position than the actual instructions present, then **that reveals** that their reasoning stems from **a specific motive** or desire! In this case the motive is very obviously a desire to in some way get more from people. That's what we normally call greed, right?

Understand this clearly:

Without a clear desire to get more from people, **nobody would ever attempt to turn "three" into "seven"**. That is, nobody except people who have already been thoroughly indoctrinated to accept that "three" implies "seven".

The motive was greed!

And that is what God predicted, that people's decisions would be motivated by covetousness. The Prophet Jeremiah recorded God's statements in this regard.

For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them **every one *is* given to covetousness**; and **from the prophet even unto the priest every one deals falsely**. (Jeremiah 6:13)

The expression "from the prophet to the priest" refers to all the religious leaders. And "dealing falsely" refers to those religious leaders **twisting the facts to promote their covetousness**. We cannot simply ignore this scalding indictment directed squarely at religious leaders, without at least asking ourselves: **Lord, are you also saying this about us?** Is there something here that we also need to change?

So ask your minister:

WHY do you want seven annual offerings when the Bible says three? If your desire is not to get more from me, then what actually is your motivation for changing a clear biblical instruction, to interpret it to your own advantage at the expense of God's people?

Your minister will be put on the spot, and he will be on the defensive. He may appeal to: well, that's the way the Church has always done it. If he does that, ask him: so do you actually believe that God means "seven" when God very clearly says "three"? Or do you just reason yourself into "seven"?

The truth is that there is no justification anywhere, none whatsoever, for taking up offerings

seven times in the year. If your minister says: well, why don't you just divide your three offerings into seven parts, then you say: I don't believe that's what God wants me to do when God has said "three times in the year". Do God's instructions need to be massaged by the Church? Why can those instructions not be accepted at face value?

Is God not actually able to tell us what He really means? **Why** would God possibly have said "three", when all along God supposedly really meant seven? And **why** do we have to have an annual total in mind, which total could theoretically be divided into either three or seven? Why can't we just decide on an amount for an offering as a particular feast is approaching?

Why must offerings also be "budgeted"? Isn't such an encouragement to "budget" our offerings motivated by a desire to ensure that more money will be donated? Why could people not give exactly the same amount of money on each occasion as they did previously, but now only three times instead of seven times, meaning that the Church would only receive three-sevenths of what they received previously from the annual offerings? Why would that be a problem? Does God require or expect larger freewill offerings if those offerings are given less frequently? Why this wretched focus on the amount of money involved in offerings?

Money is the curse of this present evil age. The root of all evil is a curse on humanity. Money has always been a curse, from the very day that bartering / trading was invented by Satan (see Ezekiel 28:16). And money so very easily perverts character; it very easily destroys people. Satan, and not God, is the inventor of money. Money is our slave master, and more than anything else, it is money that dictates how we use our time.

Money dictates when we work and when we sleep and when we play. It dictates what we do and what we can't do because we have less money than someone else. It dictates what we eat and what we drink. In our present evil world we need money like we need to breathe air. We need money for almost everything we do. And we need to be very, very careful that money does not become the overriding motivation for everything we do.

It was the hypocritical religious leaders amongst the Jews who "bound heavy (financial) burdens" on people, and who schemed to pressure widows to donate their houses (i.e. donate their financial resources, see Matthew 23:4, 14) to them, or they just openly took the houses (i.e. the wealth those houses represented) from the widows.

The Church of God in this age has done something quite similar, as far as "binding heavy burdens" is concerned. The Church has looked at the Bible and then **figured out ways to get more money from God's people than God intended**. Pressuring people to give more is one form of a "heavy burden".

The focus on "**growing the Church's income**" has always been an embarrassing feature of the Church in this age.

That type of focus on the Church's income never even remotely existed during the days of the apostles. Such a focus had no part in Paul's ministry. In fact, **that focus on income and on growth of income never existed at any time in God's Church** prior to Mr. Armstrong's ministry. During his ministry there was this goal to grow the income by 30% every year. Mr. Armstrong was quite disappointed when the income growth fell below 30% starting in 1968. 30% more income every year was almost viewed as an entitlement, as long as we continued to live by God's laws. Constantly wanting more money, even if that money is supposedly for the Church, is still greed!

In our age it has always been a case of: brethren, God has placed all these open doors before us, but **we just need more money** to go through those doors in faith. So if you can give more, then please do

so. We believe that God wants us to inform you about **the Church's need for more money**, etc.

If you are going to be upset with me for calling a spade a spade, then we may as well go the whole hog and put the spotlight on examples of greed on the part of the Church. So here are six random examples:

1) God commands **three** offerings in the year. But that's not enough for us. So let's make it **seven**. Besides, we've already built our annual budget on receiving seven offerings; so we must have all seven. That is called greed.

2) Hey, after the Feast of Tabernacles people don't really need whatever second tithe is left over, because they will start saving second tithe for the next year, right? So therefore any **excess second tithe** should really be turned in to the Church, to us! **We can then give it to the salaried ministers who don't save their own second tithe** ... since, thanks to some clever reasoning, we have exempted the ministry (i.e. **we have exempted ourselves**) from saving second tithe and third tithe.

That's very much like what Congress did when they shoved Obama Care down our throats, but very conveniently **exempted themselves** from any and every part of Obama Care. As far as the Church is concerned, I know of cases back in the 1970's where people were disfellowshipped for not saving second tithe ... and they were disfellowshipped by ministers who themselves saved neither second tithe nor third tithe.

Consider this point very carefully, and see if it doesn't remind you of something Jesus Christ said:

The ministry has exempted itself from a major financial obligation that the ministry expects the church membership to comply with. We're talking about 10% (i.e. 2nd tithe), and some years even 20% (i.e. in 3rd tithe years), of a person's income, from which obligation the ministry has exempted itself. We're also talking about members who in many cases have smaller incomes than their ministers.

Appeals to instructions intended to help with the desperate circumstances of many poor Levites in biblical times don't really hold much water, when those instructions are applied to **a salaried ministry** in our age. In biblical times the majority of Levites were not at all well off ... in spite of all the **nonsensical theoretical reasoning** about one tribe (i.e. Levi) supposedly getting a full tithe from 11 other tribes and therefore supposedly having more wealth than the other tribes.

That stupid argument looks great on paper, but it never ever worked out that way in all of Israel's history, that Levites were financially better off than the average Israelite. The Israelites as a whole didn't tithe faithfully any more than they kept the Sabbath and all of God's other laws faithfully. When the Israelites time and again went into various forms of paganism, they didn't at the same time tithe faithfully to the Levites. And then when the ten tribes split off in the days of King Rehoboam, most Levites ended up even more desperately poor.

Moses' own grandson Jonathan (see the story in Judges 17 and 18), a Levite, was so poor that he traveled the country in search of work, eventually accepting the job of being Micah's private pagan priest, and later becoming the chief pagan priest for the whole tribe of Dan. It all started because Jonathan was desperately looking for a way to earn a living.

It was precisely because **the majority of Levites were poor**, even in the days of Moses and Joshua, that God instructed the Israelites to help the Levites at the annual feasts. Deuteronomy 14:27 is not speaking about a salaried ministry being helped at the feasts; this verse is speaking about helping **Levites who in the real world had little or no income, and who came to the feasts with nothing**.

Today many ministers have more money than many of the members they serve ... and then they still receive a second tithe allotment from money sent in to the Church by those members. That is actually embarrassing.

It was never God's intention that a salaried ministry, who can very easily save their own second tithe, would be exempted from saving second tithe, and then exempt themselves from paying third tithe, instead demanding a portion of the second tithe saved by the people in the Church. That is what God is speaking about in Jeremiah 6:13, using clever reasoning to make our own circumstances easier at the expense of God's people. Can we not see that?

That's what Jesus Christ meant about binding a heavy burden and then not lifting even a finger to help carry that burden. Demanding a "tithe of the tithe" from God's people, and then also laying claim on people's excess second tithe is called greed. Do people who have a smaller income than the minister still need to support him with their "tithe of the tithe"? If it would be a hardship for the salaried minister to save his own second tithe, why would it not be even more of a hardship for members with smaller incomes to have to contribute a portion of their second tithe to the minister?

Appeals to collecting the tithe of the tithe and the excess second tithe are always presented as "this money will be used to help needy families get to the Feast". **That is a very distorted picture.** The truth is that the overwhelmingly greater part of such money collected is given to the salaried ministry as their second tithe allotment from the Church. Only a very small portion of such funds ends up supporting needy families to get to the Feast.

It is not unlike most charities who claim to help people in various needy circumstances (e.g. victims of floods and earthquakes, charitable foundations, etc.). In most cases these charities keep over 80% of what they collect as payment for themselves and their own "expenses". As God said, everyone is given to covetousness, **including all "charitable foundations"**. People who contribute to those charities don't realize that most of what they contribute is kept by the people who run the charities. Likewise, most of the second tithe sent to the Church is used for **people who are on the Church's payroll**, i.e. salaried ministers. It is high time that a salaried ministry started saving their own second tithe!

3) When we want to engage in some building project, then we ask people to contribute to **a special Building Fund account** that has been set up for certain building projects. Just be sure you contribute to this project **in addition to your regular tithe** (and in addition to your budgeted **seven** annual offerings), and not in place of it. Wanting more so we can supposedly do more is called greed.

4) The **Co-Worker Letters** that Mr. Armstrong used to send out were glaring manifestations of greed! The sole purpose for those letters was to stir up emotions **so that people would be moved to send more money**. Mr. Armstrong with a tinge of pride admitted as much on one occasion in my presence, back in the 1970's at the Regional Director's church-owned home in Johannesburg, when he said: well, fellas, **if I don't write those letters, then the money doesn't come in**.

5) The whole concept of creating **a "co-worker status"** within the Church context is an expression of greed! During Mr. Armstrong's time we conveniently divided all humanity into three separate categories. Those categories were: #1 = Church members, #2 = Co-workers, and #3 = all other people on earth, loosely referred to as "the world". You're familiar with those three groups, right?

The problem is that **God divides all human beings into only two groups** and not three! Those two groups are: #1 = those who are called and chosen (i.e. church members), and #2 = all other human beings. (In this context we don't need to make a distinction between those who will be in the 2nd resurrection, and those who will be in the 3rd resurrection ... otherwise we must also make that distinction for those groupings during Mr. Armstrong's time.)

So the Church artificially created a group which we called "co-workers". But **such a group does not exist before God**! In fact, some people used to go so far as to say something like: "**God only called him** (or her) **to be a co-worker** and not a church member".

Such a claim is totally absurd! Do you grasp what such a statement is actually saying?

The statement "God has only called him to be a co-worker" says: "**God has only called him to not be in the first resurrection**"! It is ridiculous to claim that there is any kind of "calling" to **not** be in the first resurrection.

It is the height of greed to claim that God will "call" people to give money to the Church, but without God supposedly also "calling" them to salvation. It makes it look like God is desperate to find people who will donate their money, when it is in fact the Church that is desperate to get its hands on more money.

The only calling from God is to have the opportunity for salvation in this present age. And people either respond to God by repenting and submitting their lives unconditionally to God, or they don't respond to God.

Responding by giving lots of money without actually repenting and submitting their minds to God doesn't count! That type of response is a failure!

When people do not submit their minds to God, then whatever else they may do is of no value before God. And however much money they may give to the Church achieves nothing before God. Though they give their bodies to be burned, and all their money to the Church, if they don't willingly change their way of thinking and submit their minds unconditionally to God, it profits them nothing (that's the principle of 1 Corinthians 13:3). **It is not their money that God wants** ... it is their submissive minds that God wants. This is thoroughly explained in my 2013 article "What Is Real Repentance?".

But that "co-worker status" was created to make the people who give us money feel good. Without ever directly saying so, it sort of implied that co-worker status was the first step towards full church membership. And it was a supposed status that unconverted people could claim simply by giving money. The blunt truth is that **co-worker status was in a small degree in the mold of selling indulgences to unconverted people**. We never directly said so, but implied was that co-workers are better off before God than the rest of the world ... and that's what paying for indulgences implied ... that people are supposedly better off in the sight of God if they give money to the Church.

And there was one more benefit for the Church in creating a co-worker status for people. We made a point of saying "you can't pay for The PLAIN TRUTH", because Jesus Christ instructs us: freely you have received, freely give (see Matthew 10:8). And the Church said: we will never ask you for money. **But we were really hoping that people would send us money!** Every morning the day's mail would be very quickly divided into two groups (as a student I worked in the College's Mail Department): **letters with money** were the first group, and all the other letters were the second group. The letters with money received an expedited treatment; they were the most important category of mail for the Church.

So **with our mouths** we said: we never ask for money. But **with our minds** we said: **we hope** today's mail contains more money that yesterday's mail. That was an attitude of greed!

Since we knew that God does not want us to ask people for money, **we got around that restriction** by creating the artificial "co-worker" class of people. Once we decided to confer co-worker status on anyone, then we felt free to ask them for money on a monthly basis! Creating the imaginary "co-worker" status was **our way of getting around God's intention that we don't ask people for money** (Matthew 10:8 again).

To state this very plainly:

Conferring co-worker status on people had no more value for those people than the emperor's invisible new clothes. **The Church was the one and only beneficiary** of conferring co-worker status on people, because that status justified the Church asking those people for money on a regular basis! It "justified" asking for money by reasoning: well, we are not asking the general public for money; we are only asking our co-workers for money.

Co-worker status was an invention that sprang from a motivation of greed. It was based on a desire to have a larger pool of people to ask for more money. Relying exclusively on the tithes of Church members (plus their three annual feast offerings) wasn't going to be enough for us. So we needed to find ways to expand that base of financial supporters.

Anyway, so much for the fake category of "Co-Worker status".

6) Announcing total amounts for offerings, and then converting that into dollar and cents amounts **per person present** is a disgusting practice! That is so perverse, and **so focused on greed**! Is God in heaven going to be impressed by this breakdown into per person amounts? God is not impressed! Are we shaming those who are poorer? Are we engaging in diabolical comparisons between different congregations?

What on earth is the possible point of breaking offerings down into "per person" amounts? **What twisted mind even thought up that idea?** Are we encouraging pride and smugness in the amount that our particular congregation contributed, because we happen to have a few wealthy families amongst us? Or do we want some congregations to feel that they are "not pulling their weight"?

Do we not understand that with God "two mites" from one person may well be more valuable than some other person's $10,000.00 contribution (see Mark 12:42-44), even if the church wouldn't care to receive those two mites (think of two mites as making a 25 cents feast donation in our age today). **Why** do we break offerings down into per person amounts, if it is not from **a desire to constantly get more**? It is all motivated by greed.

Look, the reason for breaking offerings down into "per person amounts" is so that it will allow us to diabolically compare the offering taken up from a congregation of 500 people with the offering taken up from a congregation of 35 people. We want to see if they are on a par. **That is diabolical!** To be clear, "diabolos" is Greek for "the devil"!

Anyway, let's continue. Here is the point:

As long as people blur the distinction between feasts and Holy Days, they can also blur God's instructions regarding monetary offerings to God, i.e. "feast offerings" or "Holy Day offerings".

The Bible speaks about "Feast Offerings". It is the Church that has turned this instruction into "Holy Day Offerings". But **"Holy Day Offerings" are not what God has instructed**! There is no such thing as "Holy Day Offerings", any more than there is such a thing as "the feast" of Trumpets! And the Holy Days are not in any way associated with financial offerings. If anything, taking up monetary offerings during Holy Day services actually **detracts** from the holiness of those days. Why focus on "the root of all evil" during God's Holy Day church services? We can't have it both ways: money is a root of all evil as far as the world is concerned, but at the same time we need to encourage God's people to give more of that root of all evil to us. That doesn't fly.

Holy Days are not the time for us to engage in things like buying and selling, and Holy Day church

services specifically are not the time for monetary transactions. But if the monetary transactions are for the benefit of the Church, well now ... that is a different matter. **If the Church is going to benefit from such monetary transactions on a Holy Day, then that is perfectly acceptable, isn't it?**

That line of reasoning is so perverse! If we shouldn't be dealing with money on the Sabbath and on the Holy Days, then we shouldn't be taking up monetary offerings for the Church during Holy Day services either! It's really that simple! Otherwise we imply that monetary transactions are okay on any day of the year, as long as God is supposedly the Beneficiary of such transactions. In practice it is the Church organization and not God that is the beneficiary of such monetary transactions, but that's another matter.

Anyway, once again: why has the Church promoted the unbiblical idea of "Holy Day Offerings"?

The answer is greed!

The term "**Holy Day Offerings**" automatically **assumes seven offerings**, because there are seven Holy Days. "**Feast Offerings**", on the other hand, **implies three offerings**, because there are only three Feasts.

The Church wants to get more from the people than God has instructed. And taking up offerings for an unbiblical seven times every year is likely to bring in more money than if offerings are just collected at the three biblically endorsed occasions. It's that simple!

Over the past 30-50 years many ministers have read Deuteronomy 16:16-17 more than a hundred times to God's people, only to promptly imply that **"three" supposedly means "seven"**.

Listen!

These commanded offerings have nothing whatsoever to do with Holy Days! **God did not intend Holy Day services** (neither weekly nor annual) **to be associated with taking up offerings!** To link the taking up of offerings to **a church service** on a Holy Day is **a perversion of God's instructions** in Deuteronomy 16:16-17.

Making monetary offerings the focus of Holy Day services is only slightly better than the pagan religions. They take up offerings on every **weekly** day they think of as "holy", i.e. at their Sunday services; and we "only" take them up on every **annual** Holy Day; so we are therefore (supposedly) more righteous than the pagans. [Comment: I once in person heard Mr. Herbert Armstrong make this comparison of weekly offerings in the worldly churches versus "only" seven times a year in God's Church.]

The fact that God nowhere in the Bible endorses "seven" annual offerings is immaterial. **Who cares what God actually instructs?** We know that God really meant "seven" even though God said "three", and that's good enough for us!

Is that how you see it, or how your minister sees it?

We really want seven offerings, because that's what we budget for, seven offerings; and we will not be satisfied with only three offerings, because then we'll have a shortfall in **our anticipated annual income**. And besides, we have already thoroughly indoctrinated the people to expect seven "Holy Day" offerings in the year.

God's instruction is as plain as it could be! We are to give to God an offering at the three annual feasts, and **that doesn't mean during a church service** either! It is the false churches that instituted the

practice of taking up offerings during their Sunday services, and we have simply gone along with that concept and **adapted it to Holy Days**. We don't realize how thoroughly Satan has deceived the whole world, including us.

Church services should never be the time when offerings are taken up!

That's simply not what church services are for! That should really be self-evident to us. It was, after all, self-evident to the Apostle Paul! Paul kept the seventh-day Sabbath, and Paul did not keep the first day of the week. So the seventh day of the week was for church services. And if for some emergency reasons an offering was needed, then **the first day of the week was the ideal time to collect such offerings**!

Now **concerning the collection for the saints**, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. **Upon the first *day* of the week** let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)

The principle of "that there be no gatherings when I come" certainly also applies to the idea "that there be no gathering in of an offering during church services on the holy Sabbath day or on any annual Holy Day". Taking up financial offerings is simply not something that should ever take place during holy time church services. After all, money is the root of all evil. Money is simply not compatible with church services during holy time.

It should be clear that church services on neither the weekly Sabbath nor on the annual Sabbath days are appropriate for taking up offerings. That is what the heathen do. And we are not to follow their examples; we are not to learn "the way of the heathen" (see Jeremiah 10:2). But that is exactly what we have done with our so-called "Holy Day Offerings" ... **we have learnt the way of the heathen**.

The correct teaching of the Bible is: We are to give God an offering three times in the year **at** the three annual Feasts.

GIVING THREE FEAST OFFERINGS

Here is what should happen.

1) **The Feast of Unleavened Bread** covers a period of seven days. The offering could be given to appropriate officials of the Church at any time during those seven days, as long as it is outside of any planned church services. **Giving offerings is not supposed to be a spectator sport!**

Here is what Jesus Christ said:

Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: **otherwise you have no reward of your Father who is in heaven**. (Matthew 6:1)

"Before men" is exactly how we handle our offerings! We have a sermonette (nowadays mostly called "the offertory", as it is in some of the world's churches) devoted to psychologically **urging people to give more** before we then "sound a trumpet" to encourage people to give more. Instead of sounding a literal trumpet, we today simply call it "**special music**" for when the offering is being collected. But that "special music" serves the same purpose as did "the trumpet" 2000 years ago when offerings were being collected.

Therefore when you do your alms, **do not sound a trumpet (i.e. special music) before you**, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues (i.e. **in the churches**) and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (Matthew 6:2)

The trumpet sound was supposed to make what was about to happen something special. And that is exactly what the "**special** music" while the offering is taken up is supposed to do ... make that taking up of an offering "something special". We are pretty close to doing **exactly what Jesus Christ said we are not to do**. We turn giving an offering into a really formal and almost sanctimonious occasion. That's not really what God wants!

But when you do alms, **let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing**: (Matthew 6:3)

Jesus Christ expects us to also apply this principle to our three annual feast offerings. It is ridiculous to believe that throughout the year our offerings should be totally discreet, but at God's feasts we need to present our offerings in public routines, followed by public announcements, to the point of breaking them down into amounts per man, woman and child present at that time. Talk about sounding "a trumpet" when we give our feast offerings! Such breakdowns literally beg for diabolical comparisons with other congregations.

That your alms may be in secret: and your Father who sees in secret himself shall reward you openly. (Matthew 6:4)

This principle applies to **all offerings**, and not just to "alms"! But instead we trumpet out how much we collected and how much that is per person. We know that if we relied on people to discreetly hand in their offerings at some time during a feast outside of church services, then it is almost certain that **we will get considerably less money from God's people**. Some people will "conveniently" overlook giving an offering, and they will feel far less pressured to make their offerings "as big as possible".

So we need the atmosphere, and the mood, and the group setting, and the stirring pep-talk, and the music to maximize the amount of money we will get from people. **We do a sales-job in collecting the offerings.** We feel we need to "remind" people of their responsibility to give us these offerings, because left to themselves people might just forget to give us the money we are looking for.

It is one thing to **mention in passing** that God wants us to give offerings at the three annual feasts. It is another thing altogether to make people giving us their money the focal point of our message. Never forget Jeremiah 6:13.

If God's people of their own volition are not motivated to give offerings at the three annual feasts, once they have come to understand that this is what God has instructed, then **we shouldn't try to talk them into giving offerings**, or psychologically pressure them into giving offerings for a very simple reason:

Obedience that results from psychological pressure exerted on people is not really what God wants!

Such offerings are not really "freewill offerings"! And then they are worthless before God. The will has been pressured and worked on psychologically before that offering was then taken up. How often have ministers asked people to open their envelopes and add more money to their envelopes before handing them in? **That's called greed**, even if it isn't personal greed.

2) **Pentecost** is a one-day Feast. But Pentecost is always on a Sunday. That makes it a double Sabbath. With Pentecost we always have holy time from Friday evening at sunset until Sunday evening at sunset. For Pentecost the feast offering could easily be given before church services start, or during

the lunch break between services, or even after the afternoon services, with perhaps some people doing it at each of those three time-slots.

Let’s also acknowledge that in order to keep Pentecost at some feast site location, as we see people doing in the Book of Acts, people were required to arrive at that "feast site" (i.e. Jerusalem in the Book of Acts) before the weekly Sabbath started, and to only leave after the Feast of Pentecost had concluded. So those people could also have presented their Pentecost Feast Offering before the weekly Sabbath started, or after the Holy Day of Pentecost had concluded. They did not really need to present their offering during "holy time". If people were bringing bags of wheat or barley, or animals (cattle, sheep, goats) as their offering, there would have been the incentive to part with that offering as quickly as possible, to be free of the responsibility to look after that offering.

Discreetly giving the offering outside of actual church services would also change the focus away from the offering being "**taken up from**" God’s people towards the offering being "**given by**" God’s people. With "taking up from" it is the Church that takes the initiative and gets the process going. With "given by" it is the members who take the initiative and carry out the process. That is a different focus and different perspective.

3) **The Feast of Tabernacles** also covers a period of seven days. The offering could easily be given to appropriate officials of the Church at any time during those seven days, as long as it is outside of any planned church services. Once again: **giving offerings is not supposed to be a spectator sport!** And neither are the feast offerings intended to constantly set new record highs ... it is greed that focuses on "new highs" or "new records".

It is perfectly acceptable for feast offerings to be smaller than they were the previous year! Offerings do not have to constantly get bigger and bigger!

I have witnessed occasions where ministers, perverse men, actually scolded the congregation because they, those perverse ministers, were offended at the small "per person" amount of the offering! Talk about greed!

What if such "ministers" had been in congregations where a large number of people could not afford to give more than "two mites"? People should never be coerced into giving more than they can actually afford to give. This approach (scolding God’s people for giving less than expected by the minister) illustrates that the focus on total amount and on amount per person is so perverse and so depraved!

The "**total amount**" of an offering should always be **totally immaterial**! The purpose of the feast offerings is not to meet **somebody’s stupid budget**! The purpose is to express thanks and gratitude and appreciation to God for God’s help and protection and blessings. And that doesn’t imply giving more than in previous years. And God’s people should **never** be psyched up to give more than last year!

God is not judging the amount of the offering!

We can show God gratitude and appreciation even when our offerings are smaller than they were in previous years. Only God knows our circumstances, our attitude, and our commitment, and how we have been blessed. And the cash value of our offerings is basically unimportant to God. And when the Church places a lot of importance on the cash value of offerings received, then that importance is **evidence of greed**. It is evidence of expecting and budgeting for gifts before those gifts are even given. In other words, **the Church very easily looks upon seven annual offerings as an entitlement!** That approach is bad!

Anyway, it is clear from the Bible that God has ordained for His people to bring three feast offerings in

the year. And it is equally clear that the Church was motivated by greed when it reasoned its way into turning those three annual offerings into seven annual offerings.

I understand that some of you, especially those who are ministers, are going to be upset and/or offended by the things I have said in this article. But **I am telling you the truth**! And deep-down you know it.

And for many years I was in the same position you are now in ... I was the one who had to get up and present some kind of message before the offering was then taken up, with special music adding a note of piety to the occasion. I may well have done that anywhere from fifty to a hundred times or more myself, for all I know. And just like you, at that time I didn't understand, and I was not motivated to look into it. I just did it the way we had always done it in this age. At that time (it's now well over 20 years since I last "took up an offering") it didn't occur to me to even question this practice.

But God will wink at the times of our ignorance in this matter (the principle of Acts 17:30). The past is past, and when we freely acknowledge our faults to God, then God will remove the guilt associated with those faults. And what now counts is the second part of that verse: "... **but now (God) commands all men every** where to repent".

I have told you the truth. And having read this article you are now accountable for that truth. That accountability may even make you somewhat unhappy? I can't help that. But you can now no more claim ignorance in this matter than I can claim ignorance. So acknowledge that nowhere in the Bible is there any justification whatsoever for expecting **seven** annual offerings from God's people. That practice is simply wrong!

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