**The First & The Best**

**Reading - John 3:12-17**

**What God Gave To Us**

God gave the us First & The Best! ***[Romans 5:5-9] Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. 6For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.  7For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.  8But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.  9Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him***.

***[Acts 2:38] Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.***

The First Fruits. ***[1 Corinthians 15:20-23] But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.  21For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.  22For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.  23But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.***

***[Romans 8:22-24] For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.  23Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.  24For we were saved in this hope...***

What does God give to the repentant sinner? ***[Luke 15:20-24 ] And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.  21And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’  22But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.  23And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.  24For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’.***

What does Jesus provide for us? ***[John 16:7] But I tell you that I am going to do what is best for you. That is why I am going away. The Holy Spirit cannot come to help you until I leave. But after I am gone, I will send the Spirit to you.***

What did He give to the strangers at the wedding feast in Cana? ***[John 2:10] and said to him, “Everyone serves the best wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the best wine until now.”*** 

How does Jesus describe Himself? ***[Revelation 22:13] I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”***

What did Jesus say He was giving to us as we sought to be righteous? ***[Luke 6:37-38] Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;  38give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”.***

***[Ephesians 3:14-21] For this reason I bow my knees to the Father £of our Lord Jesus Christ,  15from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,  16that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,  17that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,  18may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— 19to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,  21to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.***

**Old Tesatament Pattern Established *[Galatians 3:24] [Romans 15:4]***

God demanded the first and best of Israel. ***[Numbers 17:15-21] 17The Lord spoke to Moses, saying,  18“Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land to which I bring you  19and when you eat of the bread of the land, you shall present a contribution to the Lord.  20Of the first of your dough you shall present a loaf as a contribution; like a contribution from the threshing floor, so shall you present it.  21Some of the first of your dough you shall give to the Lord as a contribution....***

God provided for the priests. ***[Numbers 18:8-14] The Lord spoke to Aaron, “Behold, I have given you charge of the contributions made to me, all the consecrated things of the people of Israel. I have given them to you as a portion and to your sons as a perpetual due... every offering of theirs, every grain offering of theirs and every sin offering of theirs and every guilt offering of theirs, which they render to me, shall be most holy to you and to your sons.... 11This also is yours: the contribution of their gift, all the wave offerings of the people of Israel. I have given them to you, and to your sons and daughters with you, as a perpetual due. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it.  12All the best of the oil and all the best of the wine and of the grain, the firstfruits of what they give to the Lord, I give to you.  13The first ripe fruits of all that is in their land, which they bring to the Lord, shall be yours..***

The priests were obligated to give in kind. [***Numbers 18:25-32] And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,  26“Moreover, you shall speak and say to the Levites, ‘When you take from the people of Israel the tithe that I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall present a contribution from it to the Lord, a tithe of the tithe.  27And your contribution shall be counted to you as though it were the grain of the threshing floor, and as the fullness of the winepress.  28So you shall also present a contribution to the Lord from all your tithes, which you receive...  29Out of all the gifts to you, you shall present every contribution due to the Lord; from each its best part is to be dedicated.’  30 ‘When you have offered from it the best of it, then the rest shall be counted to the Levites as produce   31And you may eat it in any place, you and your households, for it is your reward in return for your service in the tent of meeting.  32And you shall bear no sin by reason of it, when you have contributed the best of it*** .

God said it was a sin to withhold the best for themselves. ***[Malachi 1:6-14]. But you say, ‘How have we despised your name?’  7By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, ‘How have we polluted you?’ ... 8When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? ... With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says the Lord of hosts.... I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand.. You bring what has been taken by violence or is lame or sick, and this you bring as your offering! Shall I accept that from your hand? says the Lord.  14Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished.***

***[Malachi 3:8-10] Will man rob God? Yet you are robbing me. But you say, ‘How have we robbed you?’ In your tithes and contributions.  9You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you.  10Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.***

Other verses concerning the FIRST and the BEST! **[Leviticus 23:5-12] - Leviticus 2:12 - Leviticus 23:15-17 - Numbers 28:26 - Exodus 23:16 - Exodus 34:22 - Exodus 22:29 - Exodus 23:19 - Exodus 34:26 - [Numbers 15:20-21]**

**Making Application To Us *[Romans 12:1-2] Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.  2And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.***

Everything and EVERYONE secondary to Jesus. ***[Luke 14:26-27] “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.  27Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.***

***[Matthew 22:36-39] “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”  37And He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’  38“This is the great and foremost commandment.  39“The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’  40“On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets***.