

## THREE TIMES IN THE YEAR

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There is a custom in the Churches of God to take up an offering from the congregation on each of the holy days. There is no commandment in the scriptures to do so. However, the custom is often justified with the following scriptures:

Deu 16:16 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:

Deu 16:17 Every man [shall give] as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee.

To take up an offering on every holy day is not the correct interpretation of these scriptures.

**FIRST**, the words 'three times in a year' are based on Ex 23:14 which says:

Ex 23:14 Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year.

Ex 23:15 Thou shalt keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty:)

Ex 23:16 And the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the Feast of Ingathering, [which is] in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field.

Ex 23:17 Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God.

This has to do with the CATEGORIES of holy days. These categories are: Sabbaths, New Moons, and Feasts. (Comp 2Chr 31:2-3) If you examine Lev 23 carefully, you see that there are indeed THREE FEASTS in the year - the FEAST of Unleavened Bread, the FEAST of Firstfruits, and the FEAST of Tabernacles.

Trumpets is not called a feast. It is called a Sabbath (Lev 23:24), or a Day (Num 29:1), or a Memorial (Lev 23:24), but not a FEAST. There is only one verse where Trumpets appears to be called a feast. Ps 81:3-4 says Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn FEAST day. However, the marginal reference in the Companion Bible says: "Some codices with two early printed editions, Aramaic and Syriac, read 'days' plural, IE, festivals." If 'days' is the proper translation, this verse then shows a connection with Num 10:10, which gives ALL the occasions when Trumpets were blown - on all New Moons and all Feast days - not just on the day of Trumpets. This verse therefore would not prove that Trumpets is a feast.

Atonement is also not called a FEAST. It is called a Sabbath (Lev 23:32) or a Day (Lev 23:27). So this special offering is only to be taken up at the three FEASTS in the year, not the Sabbaths, nor the New Moons, nor any other holy day.

**SECOND**, when God SAYS to offer three times in a year, he MEANS three times - ONCE during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, ONCE on Pentecost, and ONCE during the Feast of Tabernacles - not on each holy day. We can use our own judgment as to which day during Unleavened Bread and Tabernacles that this offering is taken up.

**THIRD**, this is a special offering taken only from the MALES, not from the entire congregation. It should be a special ceremony where the males of the congregation stand and 'appear before the Lord' and give their offering.

If we are going to obey this commandment of the Lord, we should follow his instructions, not our own customs.

Taking an offering from the entire congregation has been justified by saying that MALES means HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD. Thus, it is OK for female heads of household to give the offering. But if you look up the word MALES in the concordance, it really does mean MALES.

Taking an offering on all holy days has been justified by saying: 'Are we to appear empty on some holy days and not on others?' But what if God has a REASON for requiring this offering on some holy days and not on others??? And if God does not REQUIRE an offering on a holy day, why should we be told that we will appear empty if we do not give it anyway???

Actually, there would be nothing wrong with taking up a voluntary offering on all holy days from the entire congregation as long as God's commandment is obeyed. But the problem is that it would be awkward for the church to take an offering on the three feasts only from the males and then besides that, take an offering on every holy day from the entire congregation. So they obviously chose to reject God's commandment.

Cain's sacrifice was not accepted because it was not done according to God's will. (Gen 4:5) The sons of Aaron were killed because they offered 'strange fire' which the Lord commanded not. (Lev 10:1) So I ask, why should the Lord accept the offering which is taken up on every holy day by males and females alike when this is something he did not command? If we do it the way the Lord commands, surely he will give us the understanding of why it is required only on the Feast days, as well as bless and accept the offering. Notice here the blessing God has promised for doing this correctly!!!

Exd 34:23 Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel.

Exd 34:24 For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year.

Let us be willing to repent and correct even our smallest errors and not continue in them just because this is the way it has always been traditionally done.