

Madison Heights Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
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MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

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Abundant Life for the World

In **Leviticus 24:5-9** the bread is set on the table of the presence. This is in front of what the Israelites understood to be the throne of God in the holiest place within the Tabernacle and ultimately within the temple. Every Sabbath day the people would bring a gift of bread and set it at the table of the Lord. These loaves that the people, through their priestly representatives, have brought before the Lord are for Aaron and his descendants who will eat them in a holy place. So, in the bringing of a gift to God, the gift given to God becomes a gift that goes back to the people.

There are specific instructions in Deuteronomy concerning offerings to the Lord. The Bible teaches the people to set apart a tithe of all the yield of their seed that is brought in yearly from the field. In the presence of the Lord, in a place that God will choose as a dwelling place for the name of God, the people were instructed to eat the tithe of their grain, of their wine, of their oil, as well as the first of the herd, and the flock, so that they could learn to fear the Lord. So, the tithe that the people are required to set aside for the Lord is actually to be used as a celebration. They are instructed to come to the place where they are to offer it and then they are to throw a banquet for the people. They are to eat the grain, drink the wine, and eat from the first of the flock. They throw a party to celebrate and praise God and to celebrate how God has blessed them. If they live at a great distance and are unable to transport their offering then they are to turn it into money. With the money secured in hand then they are to go to the place that the Lord chooses and spend the money on whatever they want; oxen, sheep, wine, strong drink, whatever they desired. They are to eat and drink there in the presence of God, each person and their household rejoicing together.

Remember in the story of Abraham at the oaks of Mamre? There is an offer of hospitality where you run out to the strangers and offer them to join you at your table. If they accept your invitation of hospitality then you're in good shape but woe to you if they refuse your offer of hospitality. The same is true with your offer of hospitality to God. According to the Bible, God doesn't accept offers of hospitality lightly. God especially desires justice for the vulnerable. God desires justice for the poor, the vulnerable, and the weak. You are not to make an offering of hospitality to God if you have blood on your hands. You don't make an offering if you don't take care of the vulnerable. In **Amos 5:21-24** we see where Israel has offered hospitality to God but God is displeased. God hates the festivals and assemblies and refuses to accept the offerings. This is because what God desires is justice and righteousness. A similar scenario can be found in **Isaiah 1:10-17**. God expresses great displeasure with the offerings, assemblies with iniquity, and appointed festivals. The prophets state that God considers them an abomination and cannot endure them. They have become a burden to God. Furthermore, God refuses to even listen to the prayers. Then the prophet Isaiah tells us what God really wants is for the people to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, and plead for the widow. God is a God of justice and desires that when we make our offer of hospitality it is with a heart of compassion and care for others.

George