

A Review of *Understanding First Fruits*

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Understanding First Fruits is the very first published book by Pastor John Peters – a young, focused and promising preacher of the gospel. It is a Christian novel. The preacher casts himself in the mould of a man with limitless Godly potentials to impact greatly to a generation in dire need of genuine, unassuming, committed, uncompromising and truth-conscious revivalists and gospel crusaders. Pastor John Peters debut reveals him as a man with a strong belief in the ageless truth of God’s infallible word; a man with a passionate desire to maintain the ‘Ancient Land Mark’ which has suffered various forms of dogmatic erosions and denominational embellishments by many contemporary preachers and proselytizers.

The book is a ninety-nine-page inspirational piece designed and published in 2017 by Minson Nigeria Ltd of number 19 Ogbogoro Street, Mile 2, Diobu, Port Harcourt. The graphology and artistry of the cover design portrays a proportionate cluster of assorted fruits like apple, cashew, grape, banana and so on, as well as cash in local and foreign denominations. Then there is a well-dressed man in a sober and reflective mood, a man who seemed to have come to the realization that he needs to return to obedience to the word of God in giving him his first fruits as enunciated in the scriptures. This is why the book can be viewed as a timely inspirational treatise divinely projected to call believers to

repentance in a vital area where many Christians have either been ignorant of or deliberately ignored to their detriment; an area where they have robbed themselves of limitless spiritual blessings.

In emphasizing the value and relevance of this important book to Christians, the articulator of the foreword – a man of no mean stature; a retired Permanent Secretary of the Bayelsa State civil service, Senior Pastor and member, Central Executive Council of Greater Evangelism World Crusade, also a former Area Chairman of Scripture Union (Nigeria), Yenagoa Area and a member of Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) Advisory Council, Bayelsa State Chapter, Pastor Engr Dika Alfred Moses states:

The book *Understanding First Fruits* is born out of a strong desire by the author to see God’s people prosper physically and spiritually by obeying and practicing the doctrine of first fruits. The central truth of the book is the fact that God needs to have the first place in every area of our lives and he has instructed that it be given to him. Compliance will open the gate of such a one to the realm of needed prosperity. (ix)

Undoubtedly, that Pastor John Peter’s *Understanding First Fruits* has been given attention by such a spiritual colossus as the writer of the foreword is an eloquent testimony of its sterling qualities and richness. The diction of the book is readily accessible to all

categories of readers. This is, of course, one of the distinguishing beauties of the work.

Understanding First Fruits has a total of six chapters beginning with the first chapter with the enigmatic caption “The Mystery of First Fruits.” It is also important to note that this priceless piece is dedicated to the good citizens of Kingdom Stakeholders Ministries and to the Global Christian Community. A book dedicated to the Global Christian Community, especially as first book, is discerningly a revelation of the embracing nature and character of Pastor John Peter as a shepherd and a believer in Christ Jesus, for in reading a man’s book you are also reading the man and what he believes. It certainly portrays him as a broadminded and accommodating Christian who has no unnecessary denominational barriers and bias – the very cankerworms which have devoured and devastated the body of Christ in our time, almost rendering the Church impotent in the face of numerous end time challenges.

“The Mystery of First Fruits” as the caption of the first chapter situates the book in the appropriate scriptural context. The command and instruction given by God himself concerning first fruits is traceable to Exodus 13: 1-2, 12:

And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying sanctify unto Moses, saying sanctify unto me all the first born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.

That thou shall set apart unto the Lord all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the Lord’s.

This is where we first see the directive given by God concerning first fruits, obedience to which attracts immeasurable blessings from above. This chapter portrays that giving God our first fruits in cash or in kind symbolizes our acknowledgement of Him as our Father; the true giver and owner of all that we might think belongs to us. God clearly regards first fruits as His consecrated portion, which many of us have been tampering with to our disadvantage. In view of the instructions and mysteries surrounding the issue of first fruits in the scriptures the author unambiguously states:

Every firstborn, be it of human, plant or animals is the Lord’s. God claims sole ownership of whatsoever is first. You will not face hardship letting it go when you have the understanding that though it passes through you, you are not the true owner, you were just a channel. You see, not everything that is in your hand is yours. We are stewards. Let us treat material possession as such and we will not fight the right of ownership. From the onset, God made it explicitly clear that first fruits are debatelessly His, hence, should be sanctified unto him. (4)

The emphasis on the need to consistently set aside first fruits to God or to use the author’s words “redeem the first fruits” as a way of attracting greater divine blessings is clearly made in the book. The author identifies two major classes of first fruits: natural classes and spiritual classes. He maintains that ministers of the gospel have a great role to play in presenting Bible-based teachings on first fruits as a way of creating enlightenment and liberation from setbacks that are associated with non-adherence to divine instruction in

this regard. The blessings of adhering to divine instruction on first fruits are clearly stated to be unquantifiable, enduring and without sorrow. In conclusion, Pastor John Peters deserves commendation for possessing the discipline and obedience which it takes to pen down such laudable inspirations, and for reminding the 21st Century Church to return to obedience and observance of an important biblical teaching and instruction as first fruits. Indeed, *Understanding First Fruits* is a unique book which every Christian should read for personal, edification, blessings and liberation.