

Tithing Today?

Tithing, like most other subjects found in the Bible, is fraught with controversy. There is much disagreement even among those who profess to follow the Bible. What many do not realize is that in the final analysis, people end up believing what they want to believe. As a result, they interpret the Bible to support their view. A look at the various arguments pro and con regarding tithing will quickly attest to this. Rather than first looking at their own motives in studying Bible questions and then asking, "What is it I want to do?" they have already decided what they want to do and simply use the Scriptures to support that decision. As a result, they constantly seek ways to get around what is directly stated or that is given by Bible example. They fail to ask, "What does this text or example really teach?" A positive approach to Bible study is what is needed—finding out what God instructs, rather than seeking ways to invalidate examples and commands. When it comes to the worship of God, all true worship is voluntary. Tithing is one of those voluntary acts that God appreciates when it is done from the heart. Historical sources that disagree about the subject of ancient tithing simply attest to the fact that men, for generations, have argued over how to obey God.

The Covenant with Israel

Leviticus 27 is not the first place the word "tithe" is mentioned. But since the chapter is concerned with the redemption of offerings, vows, and things sanctified to God, tithing is mentioned in passing. A much more detailed account is given in Number 18. Tithing laws were given in detail only after God entered into a covenant relationship with Israel. Not until after the Exodus did this agreement take place. God instructed, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine" (Ex. 19:5). A part of this agreement had to do with returning to God a portion of that which they received. God created the entire universe. All that is in the universe and on the earth belongs to Him (Job 41:11, Ps. 24:1, 1 Cor. 10:26, 28). He is the possessor of heaven and earth (Gen. 14:19, 22). But, God is not interested in amassing physical treasure; He desires spiritual treasure—men whose hearts and minds are dedicated to Him and who desire to help their fellow man.

At least five of the Ten Commandments are concerned with how we handle what God has given us. The first two commandments forbid idolatry. The Apostle Paul tells us covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5). Yet, the desire for material possessions, and the selfish grasping of physical things, is a major stumbling block for those who do not, or cannot, find it in their hearts to return to God a portion of His goodness. The eighth commandment forbids theft. God says that to refuse Him the portion He requires is theft (Mal. 3:8). The fifth commandment tells us to honor our parents. God is our spiritual father. Do we honor Him according to the Bible instruction: "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase" (Prov. 3:9)? Malachi instructs: "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? . . . (Mal. 1:6). The people of Israel refused to honor God by tithes and offerings. The tenth commandment forbids coveting. To withhold tithes from God is an act of covetousness. It is the selfish use of things God has designated as holy.

Why God Requires the Tithe

Regardless of to whom it was designated, the tithe is the Lord's (Lev. 27:30-32). In the Old Testament period, God assigned the tithes to be given to the Levites for their service in the congregation. Rather than choosing the firstborn of each family for His service, God chose the tribe of Levi. They became the priests

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and servants of God. They were the teachers and the judges of the land. It was their duty to teach Israel the laws and commandments of God (Lev. 10:11, Deut. 17:9-11; 24:8). If obeyed, these laws and commandments would bring a tremendous blessing and benefit to Israel and its posterity. The Levites were also the judges of the land (Deut. 17:8-13, 2 Chron. 19:8-11). By this means the tithe served to benefit the entire nation. Aaron and his sons were assigned to the priesthood while other Levites were assigned to assist the priests.

God commanded:

And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die. But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance. But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance (Num. 18:21-24).

Let us note, God owns the tithe. Because He possesses the tithe, He gave it to the Levites. The "tenth" in Israel was assigned to them. This made it possible for the Levites to serve God and the people of Israel. The purpose of the tithe, then, was for service. The Levites, in turn, tithed on what they received, even though this income did not come from crops or livestock (Num. 18:26).

The high priest was a type of Jesus Christ (compare Leviticus 16 with Hebrews 9). As a type of Christ, there is no indication he was required to tithe. But, neither did Christ. As the Son of God, Christ owned the tithes. For the services performed by the high priest and the Levites, tithes were to be received. God said the tithe is ". . . your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation" (Num. 18:31). As noted above, teaching God's truth was an important function of the Levites. Even in the future when the Kingdom of God is restored to this earth, the Levites will be teaching God's commandments and laws to the nations of the world. "And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths" (Ezek. 44:23-24).

We have seen that Levites paid tithes on the tithes they received. As noted, the tithe they gave was not from what they had produced. So, the notion that only what one produced from land and livestock was tithed upon is false. Around the Feast of Tabernacles time the tithe was often converted into money and a portion given to the Levites (Deut. 14: 25-27). Money, then, was used in tithing. Gold or silver, often used for money, was determined by weight (Gen. 42:35, Ex. 35:5, 1 Sam. 9:8). The idea that only landowners tithed in the form of produce or livestock because they were the producers of crops and stock makes God a respecter of persons. How unfair to limit tithing to one class of citizens only. Those who embrace this view are touting nothing more than the egalitarian tax concept of soaking the rich. If there was ever a deterrent to a productive society, it is this kind of unfairness in assessing taxes. When it comes to tithing, what an accusation to make against God- the very epitome of fairness-that the whole tithing system was placed on the backs of landowners. God is fair. He does not require any single class of citizens to be financially responsible for tithing, from which all would benefit.

When Did Tithing Begin?

While we see detailed instructions on tithing introduced after the covenant was established with Israel, we should not assume this was when tithing began. Both Cain and Abel felt compelled to return a portion of

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what God had given them. We read:

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door . . . (Gen. 4:3-7).

Why was God displeased with Cain? For one thing Cain and Abel did not originate the idea of giving to God. Cain was faulted by God for what he failed to give. Sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). There is no sin without law (Rom. 4:15; 3:20; 5:13). Cain had violated a law God had set in motion at the very beginning. Cain was guilty of sin. The time for giving to God followed the harvest season. At this time tithes were given, with offerings as an added gift. Did Cain bring what was required? The Septuagint translates verse seven as, "Hast thou not sinned if thou hast brought it rightly, but not rightly divided. . . ?" What the Septuagint points out is that Cain failed to rightly divide his produce. But how? The Bible does not say. We can only conclude that he withheld a portion of what was due God either in tithes or in first fruits. What is clear is that the sin occurred because Cain did not give God what was required. Genesis 4:7 implies that a tithing law was set in motion at the time man was created. We know from both the examples of Abraham and Jacob that tithing did not begin with Moses on Mount Sinai. Paul mentions Cain's sin in Hebrews 11:4. He said Abel gave a more "excellent" sacrifice than Cain. The word "excellent" means "abundant," that is, greater in quantity proportionally than Cain. What is clearly inferred is that Cain sinned when he held back a portion of what was due God. He did not rightly divide his increase. The Bible warns us about the "way of Cain" (Jude 11).

Abraham's Example

Some insist the example of Abraham in Genesis 14:20 was done onetime only, and is not an example for us to follow. The fact is: Those who oppose tithing are more interested in what Abraham did not do, than in what he did. A look at Abraham's life points out many things which he did or did not do. We find no mention of Abraham keeping the Sabbath, yet the Bible states: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (Gen. 18:19). "Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen. 26:5). The Sabbath was given at Creation (Gen. 2:1-3). Abraham kept God's Sabbath. He also kept God's law of tithing.

Why did Abraham give God a tenth-a tithe? Tithing, an ancient institution, was practiced in Babylonia even before Abraham was born. Tithing records are found in Egypt, in Greek literature before the Trojan War, and in early Roman records. This pervasiveness among ancient nations attests to a custom derived from a common source. It was not left up to men to decide what portion one should give for religious purposes (The Tithe in Scripture, by Henry Lansdell, 22, 18). Of course not! The reasonable conclusion is that God taught man from the Creation what portion belonged to Him!

The account of Abraham's tithing is as follows:

And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. And Melchisedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all (Gen.

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14:17-20).

Notice, the tithe included the spoils of war. It was not limited to produce and livestock. Abraham returned the war booty to the king of Sodom, but not before giving God the tithe. This was not an isolated onetime act of tithing on Abraham's part. This Bible record is an example of why God could say of Abraham, "Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (Gen. 26:5). It was an example of the continual, faithful obedience to the tithing law given at Creation. Genesis 14:20 is the first place in the Bible where tithing is mentioned. Why? Because it reflects the law of "the tenth" and makes clear Abraham knew what was acceptable to God. Abraham tithed to God before he was circumcised (Gen. 17:24), illustrating one of the first steps of obedience in responding to the will of God. Jesus told the Jews in His day, ". . . If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39).

Did Jacob Tithe?

Some prefer to interpret the account given in Genesis 28 as a personal vow Jacob made, rather than a requirement. The reasoning is that if tithing was required Jacob would have been obligated to pay a tenth to God whether he prospered and returned in peace or not. The problem with this notion is that one tithes on his increase. One in business for himself, as Jacob was, could only tithe if he had been blessed and received an increase. Many businessmen suffer losses and do not tithe unless they have had profits. Jacob promised God that from now on any increase he had would be tithed upon, and he was so sincere in his commitment that he vowed to do so.

Notice the account:

And he [Jacob] dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. . . . And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee (Gen. 28:12-16, 20-22).

This promise to tithe was not to be a onetime event. Jacob promised that from now on all his increase would be tithed upon. Jacob's vow was conditional because he knew that without God's divine protection he would not live to tithe anything. He claimed God's protection and promised to continually tithe. The question that should be asked is, why did Jacob select the ten percent figure as the amount? From Abraham, of course, as Jacob grew to be a young man before Abraham died. When Jacob used the "if" in his vow to God he knew that God would have to meet a condition. Jacob was on a dangerous trip alone. He was just starting out on his own in life. He needed God's blessing and protection in order to be successful. With the assurance of God's intervention and protection, he promised to be faithful to return to God a portion of what he had been given. Why did he make such a promise? Because he was aware of God's requirement to tithe and knew tithing was an act of worship. Of course it was a voluntary act on Jacob's part. All true religious worship is voluntary. But the guideline for what should be returned to God was made plain from the beginning, and those who worship God adhere to that principle.

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Some who oppose tithing tell us Joseph did not tithe on the increase of Egypt, so tithing was not a law. The fact is: Joseph was not responsible for tithing in Egypt. Pharaoh was. And where would Pharaoh tithe? Certainly not to God. Also, we are told Israel did not tithe on the spoils from Egypt. There is no Scripture that states Israel did not tithe. To say this proves tithing was not a law is an example of determining a doctrine by means of omission. While this method can be utilized, it is not altogether foolproof and is not the most reliable way to come to understand the truth of any doctrine. The same can be said about the spoils of war listed in Numbers 31:26-30. While an offering was made in Numbers 31, the Scripture is silent on the matter of tithing. We should not assume, however, that it was not done and try to use this as proof.

What Does Malachi Say?

Many Bible prophecies are dual, that is, they were given for the particular time period in which they were written, or shortly after, as well as for long-range prophecies for the future. A look at Malachi, a book of the Minor Prophets, will quickly dispel any notion that it was intended for that time period only. See, for example, Malachi 3:1-5 and Malachi 4:1, 4-5. In the context of a great prophetic event yet to take place, we find this indictment:

Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it (Mal. 3:7-10).

Does this sound like tithing is no longer required, and that it should not be done today? This chapter of Malachi prophesies the coming of Christ and the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. In it we find the world under indictment for theft. We are admonished not to forget the Law of Moses (Mal. 4:4). Yet, people have forgotten the Law of Moses which includes God's Law of tithing. Christ will return to ". . . discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not" (Mal. 3:18). Tithing is an act of worship! God does not change (Mal. 3:6). How will we be worshiping God in that day?

Tithing and the New Testament

It is not that tithing is omitted in the Old Testament. Tithing is Scriptural. But the question that arises with respect to the New Testament is: How should tithing be administered? Some say tithing is no longer applicable and all contributions should be regarded as "Christian giving." We are told, we should give what "we think we can proportionally give." One problem with that, of course, is that God is not regarded as having any say in what one gives. The other problem is that contributions by most who hold to the "Christian giving" principle are usually far less than the ten percent delineated in the Old Testament. There are exceptions, of course. The question, however, is: Where did God ever give man the right to decide how much He requires? What is not recognized by many who oppose tithing is that all true worship is voluntary, and one who desires to return to God a portion of what he has received should not feel forced or coerced. A man must give to God in an attitude of willing and compliant obedience, otherwise giving is of little value.

Many who oppose tithing do so on the basis of past experiences. The approach of some churches in demanding tithes has bordered on extortion. Also, many who oppose tithing fail to find any connection

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between the Old and New Testaments. The fact is: The New is the continuation of the Old, expanded to the spiritual plane. When Jesus said man shall live “by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,” He certainly referred to the Old Testament, a fact seldom mentioned by tithing opponents. The tithing laws are found in the Old Testament. There is no necessity to repeat them in the New. Some insist the early New Testament Church did not tithe, that tithing originated during the centuries following the time of Christ, and was forced upon Christendom by the Catholic Church. The fact is: Tithing did not begin with the Catholic Church. It began at Creation, and was practiced by the righteous men of God long before the time of Israel. Furthermore, there is no Scripture that says the early disciples did not tithe. To attempt to prove a point by scriptural omission is not the most reliable way to prove anything. Unless one can find a clear command not to tithe, one should never assume tithing has been done away. The Bible is one complete book. The New Testament contains the same laws as the Old. Jesus did not do away with God’s Law. He expanded it. He said, “. . . That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20). The scribes and Pharisees scrupulously tithed. Tithing is an act of worship. Jesus said, “. . . Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21). The comparison here is obvious. Caesar had his just dues coming and so does God! The only Bible example of God’s just dues is the tithe.

We have all heard of religious scams. As a result many feel compelled not to tithe as they have no confidence in any church. While there have always been religious charlatans, there have always been God’s true and faithful servants. It is the responsibility of each of us to determine who are God’s true servants and who are not. Jesus said, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself” (John 7:17). Jesus said one can know the Truth, but he must first be obedient to God. In the days of Jehoram, king of Israel, the religion was corrupt. This did not stop those who feared God from giving God His dues. We read, “And there came a man from Baalshalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat” (2 Kings 4:42). The man of God was Elisha. He was not a Levite, yet the contribution was given to him, and he did not refuse it. The man who feared God sought out one he knew was a true servant of God. The notion that it was against the law to give contributions to anyone but the Levites is not supported by this example, and there is not one New Testament example showing that the Christians gave their tithes to the Levites. Furthermore, there is not one Bible command that states tithes are to be given to the Levites only. As this example illustrates, first fruits were required to be paid just as the tithe was, yet were given to a true servant of God. The same is just as true today.

The scribes and Pharisees were tithers par excellence. Obviously, many others tried to emulate them. Yet, in Mark 12:41-44, Jesus said the widow who placed a mite in the temple treasury had given more than all those who had cast in large amounts. Notice, she cast in a mite. What was a mite? It was a coin worth about a fraction of a penny. Jesus observed the rich cast in coins (see marginal rendering), so the notion that tithes had to be paid from land produce or in the form of livestock has no validity. Why? Coins were used from ancient times and we can certainly assume if contributions to the temple treasury were paid in coin, so were tithes.

Matthew 16:19 is sometimes quoted for proof that Christians should not tithe. The text states: “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Some insist this text limits what can be bound or not bound upon Christians, and that it is God alone who has the right to bind and loose. Applied to tithing this means that no church or group of men has the right to bind tithing upon anyone and that God alone has that right. And this is absolutely correct. God decided long ago what portion of our increase belongs to Him. The Old Testament has detailed instructions regarding tithing, and God has told us accordingly. Jesus said we are to live by every Word of God. The law of tithing is a part of

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that Word of God. However the decision we must make, is will we be willing to obey that instruction or will we constantly try to find ways around it?

There are many New Testament examples of the use of money in both contributing to the work of God and in giving to the poor. The fact is: Paul clearly stated that the ministry has a right to be supported by contributions (1 Cor. 9:13-14). He said the shepherd had a right to the milk of the flock according to the law (verses 7-8). What law was he talking about? The Old Testament law of tithing, of course! There was no other. The Levites, he said, lived "of the things of the temple"-the tithes and offerings. While Paul did not choose to exercise this right at that time, he made it plain it was a right assigned to the New Testament ministry. Paul said the Lord ordained that they who teach the gospel should live of the gospel. What does ordained mean? It means to appoint or give an order. If each one determines for himself to give as much or little as he pleases, there would be no need for an order. What has been God's requirement from the beginning? The tithe, of course! The notion that one should give what he can proportionally to God is a direct repudiation of God's instruction regarding the tithe. God has never given man the right to decide the amount. God has already decided that. What He does is give us the right to decide whether or not we will follow His instruction. The fact is: Anything less than ten percent is not a tithe. A tithe is ten percent.

There is no need to repeat the tithing law in the New Testament. Like the Sabbath law, the tithing law was presupposed. There are several texts in the New Testament that demonstrate the requirement to return to God His due. "His due" is used to support His true ministry. Take Galatians 6:6 for example. In the King James Version it reads: "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." The text is much clearer in The Living Bible. Here we read: "Those who are taught the Word of God should help their teachers by paying them." Paul went on to say in Galatians 6:7 that we reap what we sow. The implication is clear. Those who refuse to support His true work will reap little spiritual help. Without the help of God, man stands no chance of ever attaining eternal life. Tithing or supporting the work of God is an act of worship. It is the responsibility of each of us to know and recognize God's true ministers. It is then our duty to support them.

Take a look at 1 Corinthians 9:11-14, mentioned in part earlier. Here Paul speaks of sowing and reaping. The ministry sows spiritual things by teaching the Word of God, while reaping physical things from those they teach. Those who sow to the flesh, that is, they have no interest in spiritual things and see no value in returning to God His due, shall reap the corruption of death. By putting to practice the spiritual principles of God, which include returning to God His due, they store up treasures in heaven. Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:19-21). When they sow to the Spirit, they reap life everlasting. "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:8). The Word of God is clear on this. Those who have little interest in the things of God have little interest in returning what He claims is His.

This same principle is seen in Romans 15:26-27. The Gentile Christians were able to make a contribution to the needy brethren in Judea. Why? Paul explains, ". . . For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things" (v. 27). God's Word was committed to the Jews. The Jewish Christians were the ones who took the gospel to the Gentiles. The Gentiles had profited immensely in the spiritual blessings of the Truth. Christianity is, both historically and spiritually, the religion of the Jews. The saints in Jerusalem had contributed much to help spread the gospel. Now in a time of need, it was their turn to be helped. The principle of providing physical remuneration to those who render spiritual service is seen in this example.

Philippians 4:15-19 reveals that the Apostle Paul received financial support from the Philippians. He

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refused to do so in Corinth because “evil workers” were receiving contributions under false pretenses. Paul did not want to be lumped together with this unsavory lot.

To the Philippians Paul wrote:

Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

The book of Philippians was written from Rome where Paul was imprisoned. Yet, the Philippians continued to support him financially.

Paul mentioned more than once that he, along with other workers of the gospel, had the authority to forbear working (1 Cor. 9:6, 2 Thess. 3:9). Brethren were reminded not to become slack or weary in their obligation to support the ministry (Gal. 6:9).

Paul told the Corinthians:

Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself (2 Cor. 11:7-9).

Paul was determined to undermine the claims of those false ministers who would not preach except for money. Paul was dedicated to the Truth and preached in Corinth regardless of the lack of support there. None of the true ministers in Corinth took support from the Corinthians at that time (2 Cor. 12:17-18). But, that did not mean they were not deserving of that support. We have seen this demonstrated clearly from the Scriptures. Paul proved he was a true minister sent from God, and at times was willing to go without in order to preach the gospel (1 Cor 4:1-2). The true ministers of God could not be accused of preaching for money.

That elders are to receive financial support from the flock they serve is seen in 1 Timothy 5:17-18. We read, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.” The word “honour” in verse 17 means “price” and refers to a sum of money. The Living Bible makes the meaning very plain in verse 17. “Pastors who do their work well should be paid well and should be highly appreciated, especially those who work hard at both preaching and teaching.” These verses clearly demonstrate that true ministers should be given sustenance and support. The laborer is worthy of his reward.

Hebrews 7 and Tithing

One fact is certain: Tithing is found in the Bible long before the time of Moses. Abraham gave tithes to Melchisedek. The statement in Genesis 14:20 is the link to what Paul tells us in Hebrews 7. Melchisedek was a tithe-receiving priest. Christ is also. Christ is now our great high priest after the order of (with the same rank as) Melchisedek (Heb. 6:20). Paul describes Melchisedek: “To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which

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is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually” (Heb. 7:2-3). This cannot be talking about any man. This description clearly refers to an immortal being. Since Christ has the same rank as Melchisedek, the conclusion is inescapable. Christ is Melchisedek, the priest of God.

As high priest, Christ has a ministry. That ministry is the New Testament ministry of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3:6). From the Old Testament we find that the tithe is the Lord’s, not the Levites’ (Lev. 27:30). The tithes were given to the Levites for their service, but the tithe is the Lord’s to use as He sees fit. Jesus Christ, as Melchisedek, has always had the authority to receive tithes. By the sacrifice of Christ, the Levitical priesthood came to an end, and the tithe was transferred back to Melchisedek. Paul tells us, “If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Hebrews 7:11-12).

What law is Paul talking about here? The tithing law! See verses 5-6, 8.

Tithing remains but the administration is different. Now there is a spiritual administration. No longer is there a Levitical Priesthood. Instead there is a New Testament ministry-the ministry of Melchisedek, or Jesus Christ. To support that ministry, Paul says the tithe has been transferred back to Christ (Heb. 7:12-16). It is used in His work. Perfection could not come under the Levitical priesthood (Heb. 7:11); it can come only under a spiritual administration. Christ, was manifested in a physical life, lived a perfect, sinless life, and was sacrificed in our stead. By the acceptance of that sacrifice and our repentance, we can receive the power of God by means of the Holy Spirit. We can then have the strength to overcome the pulls of human nature and to qualify to enter the Kingdom of God.

Some argue that the law in Hebrews 7:12 refers to the Law of Moses and has no bearing on tithing. Paul supposedly stated this to demonstrate the superiority of Christ’s priesthood over the Levitical. It makes little sense to exclude tithing from the subject of this chapter when tithing is mentioned three times. And if the chapter is talking about the Law of Moses only, why is tithing specifically mentioned? The fact is: Even if tithing had not been mentioned in this chapter, the Law of Moses includes tithing! Paul says the priesthood was transferred to Melchisedek including the right to receive the tithes. They were given to the Levites, but now have been returned to Christ! He is our eternal, everliving High Priest who guides and directs His Church today through His chosen ministers.

Melchisedek was a tithe-receiving priest. So is Christ. The New Testament ministry is His ministry. Hebrews 7 does not abolish tithing. Rather, it substantiates the perpetuity of the priesthood of Melchisedek-an everlasting priesthood. Jesus, the great High Priest in heaven, seated at the right hand of God the Father (Heb. 4:14) guides and directs His true Church today. He uses a ministry to do His work. When we give to the Church, we give to Christ. The priesthood of Christ is the restored priesthood of Melchisedek. Tithing is an act of worship. All true worship of God is voluntary. This is the basis of the New Testament administration. And, it should be the basis of our tithing today.

Some will continue to insist there is no tithing law today, that we come under the principle of “Christian giving.” Whatever the view one holds, this fact is certain: Every instruction regarding tithing in the Bible clearly reveals that God claims the tithe as His. Those who adhere to the belief of “Christian giving” must surely acknowledge that nowhere, in either the Old or New Testament, does God endorse a tithe figure of less than ten percent. Those Christian givers, who wish to abound, will not hesitate to recognize this.

How did the people of Israel rob God? In tithes and offerings (Mal. 3:8). If an attitude of voluntary cheerfulness is not there, it makes little difference, however, whether one adheres to the principle of

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Christian giving, or to the principle of tithing. When it comes to contributions, the Apostle Paul instructs, “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:6-7).