

THE TITHE

The tithe is a tenth of the produce of the earth consecrated and set apart for special purposes. The dedication of a tenth to God was recognized as a duty before the time of Moses. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek¹ and Jacob vowed unto the Lord and said, "Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."² The first Mosaic law on this subject is recorded in #Le 27:30-32.³ Subsequent legislation regulated the destination of the tithes.⁴ The paying of the tithes was an important part of the Jewish religious worship. In the days of Hezekiah one of the first results of the reformation of religion was the eagerness with which the people brought in their tithes.⁵ The prophets sternly rebuked the neglect of this duty.⁶ It cannot be affirmed that the Old Testament law

¹ **Gen. 14:20** And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. **Heb. 7:6** But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

² **Genesis 28:22** 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.

³ **Leviticus 27:30-32 AV** "30 And all the tithe of the land, *whether* of the seed of the land, *or* of the fruit of the tree, *is* the LORD'S: *it is* holy unto the LORD. 31 And if a man will at all redeem *ought* of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth *part* thereof. 32 And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, *even* of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD."

⁴ **Numbers 18:21-28 AV** "21 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. 22 Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die. 23 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. 24 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. 25 And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, 26 Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, *even* a tenth *part* of the tithe. 27 And *this* your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though *it were* the corn of the threshing floor, and as the fullness of the winepress. 28 Thus ye also shall offer an heave offering unto the LORD of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the LORD'S heave offering to Aaron the priest." **Deuteronomy 12:5-6 AV** "5 ¶ But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, *even* unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shall come: 6 And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:" **Deuteronomy 14:22-23 AV** "22 ¶ Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. 23 And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always."

⁵ **2 Chronicles 31:5-6 AV** "5 And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all *things* brought they in abundantly. 6 And *concerning* the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the LORD their God, and laid *them* by heaps."

⁶ **(Amos 4:4 AV)** "Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, *and* your tithes after three years:" **(Malachi 3:8-10 AV)** "8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. 9 Ye *are* cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, *even* this whole nation. 10 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

of tithes is binding on the Christian Church, nevertheless the principle of this law remains, and is incorporated in the gospel.⁷ Christians ought to go beyond the ancient Hebrew in consecrating both themselves and their substance to God because of this liberty. Every Jew was required by the Levitical law to pay three tithes of his property 1. one tithe for the Levites; 2. one for the use of the temple and the great feasts; and 3. one for the poor of the land.⁸ This corresponds to the ministers, the church facilities, and the benevolent giving of the church today. To which we add the command of Christ to go into all of the world and preach the Gospel.

When questioned concerning entry into the kingdom, Jesus Christ said, sell it all and give the whole sum to the poor. So while the New testament Church is not under law and bound as such by giving ten percent two things must be considered. First the Old Testament is still God's word and where we have been released from the law as a taskmaster, we are to hold to the equity of that law. Second without the tithe there will be no church and no missions of the church. Paul in the New Testament speaks of the offerings the churches are to take up and says with no shadow to misunderstand that the minister is worthy of his hire. Paul also says that he had the right by command to demand the people take care of his needs but that he (Paul) chose to work and earn his own keep less one of them think they had some control over him and he needed their gifts. That was Paul's choice and not his command to the church, which was to give with joy and liberally as God had given to them.⁹ Being under grace and not the law brings in the freedom of conscience of the believer; it does not do away with the teaching of the Bible concerning the tithe. We turn to the whole Bible then to find out what the tithe is and for what purpose it was given. It is clear that God's will is for the present believer to give now even as it was God's will for the Old Testament saints.

God is not sitting in heaven with a calculator waiting to pounce on the person who fails to tithe. However God only blesses man that man may be a blessing. God will therefore hold man accountable not only for the tithe but God will hold man responsible for all that God by grace puts into that man's stewardship. Tithing is a measure of a person's faith and trust in God as well as a good work of obedience brought about by the Holy Spirit given to all believers.

Christ pointed out the widow who contributed her last two small coins as an example of giving being a measure of man's trust in God.¹⁰ To not tithe today is no different than

open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it.*"

⁷ **1 Corinthians 9:13-14 AV** "13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live *of the things* of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? 14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

⁸ This first paragraph is a paraphrase of Easton's Bible Dictionary entry for tithe. Scriptures provided are from the 1769 AV (Authorized Version).

⁹ **2 Corinthians 9:7** Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

¹⁰ **Mark 12:42 AV** "And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing."

those whom God accused of robbing Him in Malachi.¹¹ Modern believers then need to be even more careful of the tithe less they take advantage of the liberty they have in Christ for sin. To not trust God is the sin, not withholding the tithe.

We can also connect this to several passages that command all to love every other person to include enemies. It is also a direct connection to the verses where the believer is asked what good does it do to tell a person to go and be blessed, warmed, and filled unless you give them the means to do these things. The simple fact then is that God has given to the believer a great opportunity to be used of God in meeting the temporal needs of others and the church. It is a privilege then to give to God who indeed rewards those who are faithful to Him.

Dr. Chuck Baynard - November 2003

¹¹ “ Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.” (Malachi 3:8 AV)