

New Testament Truth On Old Testament Tithing



Discerning Motivational Truth From
Manipulative Error Concerning Giving

INTRODUCTION

This book is intended to be a source of insight and encouragement to the multitudes of true believers who have been placed under false guilt and condemnation by those that teach compulsory tithing. It's also a rebuke to greedy, selfish shepherds of the modern evangelical christian church who teach the false doctrine of compulsory tithing. It's written with the understanding that some pastor-teachers preach tithing sincerely, but in ignorance of the ramifications of their doctrinal error. Others, however, teach tithing out of a greedy desire for financial gain and or a desire to fulfill a prideful vision gratifying to their ego. If you're in this group, for you this book is an urgent call to repentance. If you're in the sincerely uninformed or misinformed group, I pray that this book will help you to see the error and dangers of teaching tithing to New Testament believers.

Before I embarked upon this doctrinal study and writing, I wasn't 100% convinced that tithing didn't somehow apply to the New Testament Church today, either. Rather than seek the teachings of other men, the Holy Spirit counseled me to seek the scriptures on the subject. Only after a thorough study of God's word have I checked current public opinion on the subject. After analyzing the issue thoroughly from a biblical perspective, however, I'm now totally convinced that the law of the tithe was to only be paid to the Levites under Old Testament law as a type of national tax to support the theocratic government of Israel at that time. This law has been subsequently replaced with the passing of the Old Covenant and the arrival of the New. This change of law has resulted in the obsolescence of the tithe and the beginning of voluntary giving as a component of New Testament fellowship.

I want to begin by giving you my personal experience with the teaching of tithing in numerous conservative evangelical christian churches. When a person becomes a Christian in America, the new believer is traditionally taught that obedience to the Lordship of Jesus Christ includes paying or giving a tithe of their gross earnings to the Lord for his work through the local church. Tithing is taught from a number of different angles accompanied by various attitudes. On one hand, some teach tithing gracefully, as if the Lord didn't require you're 10%, but desires it so he can bless you. On the other hand, some teachers of the law believe you're financially cursed by the Lord for robbing him of his 10% until you tithe. A more balanced blending of the two beliefs teaches that it's God's stewardship plan for our finances for us to give a first fruits offering to God and His church of one tenth of our gross income. If we give that tithe, God will bless the remaining 90% and make it go further than if we hadn't tithed. It teaches that you can't afford not to tithe because you can't out give God. I believed the balanced approach had some merit until I completed this study.

When I first became a Christian, I was introduced to tithing by a book I received as a

college graduation gift. The little gift book published by Hallmark was written by a man I now know to be an occultic 33rd degree Freemason false prophet, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale of Guideposts Magazine and the Power of Positive Thinking fame. This book taught that giving a tithe to the Lord and his work would open up forces to work for good in my life and bring blessings in return. After hearing pastoral prayers at the time of the church offering like “bless these tithes and offerings and multiply them to thy service, O Lord” each week, I began to feel I needed to begin tithing. After all, I had an income of over \$20,000 at 22 years of age. My budget could afford to give 10% to the Lord and if I did, I would receive a blessing according to Dr. Peale who quoted the Old Testament prophet Malachi to support his belief. Deep in my heart there was also a nagging guilt as I considered how relatively wealthy I was while I was told multitudes outside this country were starving to death. This thought would make me feel like I had to tithe to justify my comfortable lifestyle. There was also that pulpit voice each week saying,

“Lord, as owner of the cattle on a 1000 hills, though you don’t need it I return to you a portion of what you already own in recognition of you’re Lordship and faithful provision in my life” or “Lord, we return to you a tenth of our own with thanksgiving for your provision and in recognition of your sovereign ownership of our lives.”

Being a new Christian and overjoyed, after a couple of months of hearing this on a regular basis, I was ready to give a tithe of my income to the Lord. I began giving the tithe to the church, but as I grew in knowledge of the scriptures, I began to see that the priorities of the church weren’t always the priorities of the Lord. That inconsistency concerned me. As a result of that discernment, I began giving less than 10% to the church. To make up what was lacking, I gave the remainder of the 10% to parachurch organizations whom I felt were using the money more faithfully. Oh, I would here people around me saying that “parachurch organizations weren’t really the church and you shouldn’t give your tithe to them. If you’re going to give to christian groups outside your local church, you need to do that after you have given your tithe to your local church“. In spite of the indirect criticisms I heard, I continued to distribute my 10% or more between the local church and parachurch organizations until I went to seminary. While in seminary, my income was below poverty level I worked part-time and studied part-time. As a result, needing the money to simply live, I began giving less than 10%. I never really felt guilty about not tithing during that period, although I didn’t understand why I didn’t feel guilty if it was true that I was “robbing God” by not tithing. It seemed foolish to me to give away what I needed to live just so that I could see the Lord return to me what I needed. This seemed like bargaining with God to me. I also didn’t feel I needed to see a sign like this that the Lord lived, I already believed he was alive based upon scripture and my changed life alone. The giving I saw in the New Testament seemed to be a common sense, human need based giving. I simply didn’t see it as a compulsory requirement to keep the Lord happy and my heart right. I never could accept the teaching that says,

“Tithing isn’t for God, but for us. Giving the tithe reminds us who our provider is. We become selfish and self-sufficient if we don’t tithe.”

This teaching seemed almost contradictory to the prayers which taught me that I needed to tithe in order to receive God’s blessing on my finances and put in motion Dr. Peale’s Masonic “forces” of provision. If tithing wasn’t for God, why did I have to give it to him in order to receive his promised provision? Yet, I wondered why all Bible teachers I was familiar with, John MacArthur and some Calvary Chapel pastors not included, didn’t believe in tithing. Who was right? Was I self-deceived, or was I being deceived by the teachers of tithing? I now confidently believe that the scriptures are the only place we can go for the answer to this question concerning tithing. The purpose of this book is to clearly examine the traditional teachings of the church on tithing in order to determine biblically whether or not Christians are expected to tithe today and if they’re not, to whom and how much should they give.

CHAPTER 1

Before beginning this examination in order to determine biblically whether or not Christians are expected to tithe today, it's essential to review related doctrine as a foundation upon which the issue of tithing can be analyzed and biblically based conclusions safely drawn concerning tithing as a New Testament practice.

1. The blood of Christ has purchased his church

How was the church established?

The blood of the sinless Christ provides humanity's only means of salvation from the power and penalty of sin. The blood of Christ, shed as a ransom payment for sin, purchased the church. The church is totally paid for, there is no need for the church to collect tithes in order to pay for the church. (John 14:1-7; Hebrews 1:1-3; Acts 20:28)

2. Moral truth is determined only by scripture

The moral acceptability of church teaching, attitudes and actions is to be determined only from the sound doctrine of Jesus Christ and his apostles found only in the 66 books of scripture. Truth isn't determined by comparing ourselves against any other individual person or group of people inside or outside any period of church history. In relation to tithing, it really doesn't matter what church dogma or a famous teacher says on the subject. If tithing is for today according to the proper division of scripture, it doesn't matter who else disagrees, the word of the Lord stands true alone. (1 Corinthians 1:10-31; 2 Corinthians 10:12, 17-18)

3. The living body of Christ of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the living head

The church is the living body of Christ. Christ is the living Head of the body. Each christian is a member of the church of God, the body of Christ. Each christian is the temple of God housing within themselves God the Holy Spirit. With regard to tithing, if the scriptures don't support tithing today, we need to listen to the Lord of the scriptures because he alone is the head of the church.

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Ephesians 4:4-6; Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Romans 12:4-5)

4. The church is a living organism

Individual members of the body of Christ, the church, are also compared to living stones which make up a spiritual house which has Jesus Christ as it's chief corner

stone. This church doesn't require it's own building or formal doctrinal statement, although a church may make use of both of these things in their service to the Lord. (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5-10)

Because the church is a living organism, and not a building, tithing isn't required to support the church building.

5. The church isn't an organization

The church isn't a financial bottom-line oriented organization to be led by the coercive, authoritative external political power of a pastor functioning in the manner of a corporate executive officer. (Luke 22:24-27; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 1 Peter 5:1-3) Because the church isn't a financial organization, one can't rightfully teach that tithing is required to operate the church.

6. The work of ministry is spiritual warfare fought with spiritual tools

The weapons or tools designed by the Lord to be employed by the pastor and other members of the body of Christ in their wrestling match against the strategic, cunning methods of the devil are spiritual, not carnal. They are unrelated to unregenerate human nature. The devil's *kosmokrators*, or hierarchical organization of supernatural demonic beings, possess intellectual and spiritual power superior to mere human intelligence and ingenuity. Because of this, the war against the darkness of this world isn't truly accomplished through human excellence employing tools like secular music, organizational psychology, business marketing and systems integration. The tools of the body of Christ in it's service to their Lord are personal faith in and obedience to the word of God, the spoken word of God and prayer. (2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Timothy 2:15) Because the required tools of ministry in the church are spiritual, we can't insist that tithing is required to purchase ministry tools.

7. Christ-like ministry is characterized by loving simplicity

Business administration isn't the biblical function of the pastor. Jesus Christ isn't impressed by or concerned over the attractiveness of church facilities. He's concerned that his body sacrificially cares for one another's needs. This truth is clearly evidenced by both the ministry of Christ and the ministry experience of the apostles of the early church. Although the most intelligent, creative and powerful person to have ever lived, the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ was one of humble simplicity, not flashy complexity. Likewise, the ministry of the apostles was characterized by simplicity. Like Christ's, the ministry of his apostles was definitely low overhead. (Mark 13:1-2; Acts 6:1-8; John 13:34-35; 2 Timothy 2:2-4; 2 Corinthians 11:3-4)

8. Biblical ministry involves studying, obeying and teaching sound doctrine

Being a living body rather than an organization, the church is to be served by those whose Christ-like character and spiritual gifts equip and qualify them to serve as bishops, elders and pastors. These individuals exist primarily to serve the Lord Jesus Christ by exemplifying the life of Christ and speaking all of the truth in love to the body of Christ. The shepherding work of these members involves first studying and then obeying and teaching sound doctrine from the word of God. The goal of the biblical pastor in teaching and preaching isn't balance. The goal is to rightly divide or teach the truth directly and correctly. The teacher's goal is to determine the one true intended meaning of a biblical passage and show how the moral truth it contains should be specifically applied in relations with God, the church, family, employers, customers, neighbors, businesses, schools and government. It involves exposing false doctrine and identifying and rebuking false teachers in order to protect the body of Christ. Their lives, like the Apostle Paul's, are to be modeled after the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the word of God. A survey of the New Testament will reveal that a significant amount of time was spent by both Jesus and the apostles exposing false doctrine and identifying and rebuking false teachers. This was also the experience of the prophets of the Old Testament. (Ezekiel 3:7-10; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Acts 20:25-31; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Titus 1:5-13; Titus 2:1-15; Timothy 4:1-7; 2 Timothy 3:10-17, 4:1-5; 1 Timothy 4:12-16; 1 Timothy 5:17; 2 Timothy 2:15-19) Pastors are responsible to study in order to rightly divide the word of truth concerning tithing and giving. Having studied to know the truth regarding tithing, the Pastor is responsible under Christ to communicate that biblical truth to the church.

9. Pastors, elders and bishops are to be held accountable by the body of Christ

Pastors are spiritually gifted but fallible human shepherds. Because of their fallibility, it's the responsibility of each individual member of the body of Christ to search the scriptures to see if what they are being taught is true. Pastors and teachers are to be held accountable by the body of Christ and corrected from scripture when they're wrong. (Acts 17:10-12; 1 Timothy 5:19-21) Pastors are expected to teach the biblical truth to the body of Christ about tithing. The church is responsible to assess the truth of church teaching on tithing against scripture. Independent of motives, if error is being taught instead of truth concerning tithing, the pastor-teacher should be corrected.

10. Since the Old Covenant was made obsolete by the New Covenant, Old Testament law and New Testament grace don't mix

Tithing existed prior to the Mosaic Law in Hebrew culture. (Genesis 14:20; 28:22) The 10 commandments Moses received from the Lord as recorded in Exodus 20:1-17 is God's moral law or the Decalogue. It was inscribed on stone tablets in 2 parts. These parts established man's duties to both God and man as permanent laws. (Matthew 5:17-18; 1 John 3:4)

Unlike the Decalogue, the civil and ceremonial laws, however, were intended to be temporary laws. Civil laws affected everyday relationships, Ceremonial laws affected religious activity such as tithing. The Book of Leviticus introduces ceremonial laws such as the law of sacrifice and the sin-offering. These laws, like the law of tithing, passed away with the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ and the foundation of the church following his resurrection. Acts 21:25 teaches that the apostles and elders of the early church decided to require the Gentiles turning from idols to faith in Christ to only “keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.” These early Christians weren’t expected to keep the other 600 plus laws that the Jews tried to obey. (Hebrews 7:11-12; Hebrews 7:22; 8:1-13; Acts 21:17-25)

Should our culture or the world around us dictate how we do church?

After reading the preceding foundational doctrine section, you may feel that I’m writing from the viewpoint of someone who believes that the teaching of scripture takes authority over what’s traditional or normal in our culture. You’re correct if that’s your perception. There’s no biblical faith without elevating scripture to its rightful place of authority above the teachings of any human being or organization.

To take scripture at face value we mustn’t see scripture through the lens of our culture or the world in which we live. We need to view our culture through the lens of scripture to see life’s questions from God’s perspective. The word of God is pure, flawless and eternal. It transcends culture. God knows all the future and has recorded a general knowledge of it for us in the scriptures. Jesus knew that the Temple in Jerusalem was to be destroyed in 70 A.D. when the disciples didn’t. He knew they shouldn’t be directing any attention towards anything less than the eternal. The disciples may have argued that beautiful stone buildings were needed for the early church, since it was the norm of the religious culture at that time to have a beautiful building, but they didn’t argue the point. They simply followed the teaching and example of Jesus and met in people’s homes instead of an expensive building. Their obedience to the truths that Jesus taught them led them to do things much differently than the traditional, cultural religion of their world. He taught them to seek things that were above, not earthly things. The root issue of tithing could be about where our affections are set. Should our hearts be set on a wonderful and prosperous visibly present earthly kingdom? Or, should our affections be set upon an invisible future kingdom we haven’t yet received, but wait for patiently amidst trials, persecution, tribulation and suffering? Or, is the gospel of balance the answer. Can we have the best of both worlds? Let’s begin the study and find out what the Lord has to say.

CHAPTER 2

Why does Abram give a tithe to Melchizedek?

One of the passages of scripture used to teach Christians that they are obligated to tithe to their local church is found in Genesis 14. This is where the concept of the tithe is first seen in the scripture. In this chapter is recorded the military ambush that Abraham (Abram) led in order to rescue his nephew Lot. 5 kings from Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Bela (Zoar) rebelled against 4 kings from Shinar, Ellasar, Elam and Goyim who were led by Chedorlaomer of Elam. As the 4 kings led by Chedorlaomer began to conquer other peoples, these 5 kings met the 4 kings in combat at the Salt Sea. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were defeated there while the survivors fled. The conquering 4 kings led by Chedorlaomer of Elam captured the possessions and food supplies of the troops of Sodom and Gomorrah, along with Abraham's nephew Lot. An escapee let Abram know that Lot had been taken captive. In response, Abram armed 318 of his personal servants and ambushed the 4 kings at night recapturing Lot and everyone and everything else that had been previously taken. When Abram returned from the victory, the king of Sodom came to congratulate him. Then Melchizedek king of Salem and priest of the Most High God brought Abram bread and wine and blessed him and the Lord for giving Abram the victory. Abram responded by giving the priest "tithes of all". The King of Sodom then told Abram that he could keep the goods he'd captured, but asked that Abram return the people. Abram refused to take anything from the King of Sodom so that he wouldn't be indebted to anyone but the Lord.

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 Melchizedek 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. (Genesis 14:17-20)

The act of Abram giving the king and priest of Salem tithes of all is the first recorded mention of tithes in scripture. Why did Abram pay this tithe to Melchisedec? In order to understand why, it's critical to understand who Melchisedec was and the historical context surrounding the event.

Melchizedek was called by God into the priestly office. There was no record of his birth or death. To us, it appears this great King of Righteousness and King of Peace, as he was called, mysteriously entered the world called to be a priest of God. Melchizedec came into and left the earth never to be heard of again except for

mention of him in the prophecy of Psalm 110 where that the King of Kings and Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, is called by God to mysteriously appear on the world scene to assume his God given role as King and Priest patterned after the order of Melchizedek, who also mysteriously appeared on earth called by God to be both King and Priest. Melchizedek is a type of Christ. He is given to us in scripture by the Lord to help us recognize and understand the coming role of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people *shall be* willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill *the places* with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

The priestly order of Melchizedek was continued in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was from the tribe of Juda, not Levi. (Hebrews 7:14) Jesus wasn't a son of Aaron destined to be a levitical priest. However, like Melchizedek, Jesus Christ became a priest because he was called of God after the order of Melchisedec. (Hebrews 5:10)

Does this symbolize the christian giving a tithe to the local church?

The scriptures tell us that as preist, Melchisedec blessed Abram. It was Abram's response to the blessing from God through Melchisedec to offer the Priest/King the tithe. Did Abram give Melchesedec the tithe because he was a priest or because he was a king? Was he offering the tithe to the Lord through Melchisedec the priest as tithing teachers say to illustrate to us that we should pay tithes to the Lord through the local church? Should it be used to teach the principle that tithing is the proper basis of giving to God? The following reasons explain why it's incorrect to interpret the historical account of Abram paying a tithe to Melchisedec as symbolic of the christian paying a tithe of his gross earnings to God through the local church.

1. There is no scripture telling us that Abram's act of tithing is recorded as a tithing model for the New Testament church to follow. It is clearly going beyond the scope of what's written to use this story to prove our responsibility to tithe today to the local church.

2. Scripture never tells us that Melchisedec is a symbolic representation of the church or that Abram symbolically represents a christian. To interpret Melchisedec and Abram as symbolic representations of the church and the christian would be inaccurate. To say that Genesis 14:20 is symbolic of the christian paying a tithe to the local church is an example of the faulty supernatural approach to biblical interpretation. In the supernatural approach to interpretation, a supposed hidden

meaning is discovered in the scripture that wasn't the intended meaning of the original writer.

3. There's a difference between a symbol and a type in scripture. A symbol represents something else. For example the word of God is symbolized by bread, the believer is symbolized by a sheep, etc. A symbol is usually defined clearly in the context of the scripture. Melchisedec isn't defined in Genesis 14 or Hebrews 7 as a symbol for the local New Testament church. He is defined as a type of Christ as a prophetic symbol pointing to the future high priestly function of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 5:5-10)

4. Scripture is intended to be interpreted literally in its historical setting and context unless otherwise stated. In its historical setting, it was the tradition of people to pay tithes to the King of a nation. Melchisedec was a great and superior King compared to Abram. (1 Samuel 8, Hebrews 7:4,7) Hebrews 7:7 tells us that the blessing was an indication of Melchisedec's greatness and superior rank.

“And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better”

Hebrews 7:4 indicates that Abram was a distinguished patriarch but the payment of the tithe by Abram to King Melchisedec was an indication of the Melchisedec's superior greatness.

“Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.”

! Samuel 8 shows us that the kings of the nations of the world at that time took a tenth from the people under their rule.

And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. (1 Samuel 8:5-7,9-11,15,17)

Abram seized and returned both Lot and the goods and people of Sodom as a result of his military victory. When the King of Sodom offered to give Abram the goods he'd seized on his behalf, Abram refused the offer in order to prevent the King of Sodom from stealing any of God's glory in this conquest. If Abram swore to the Lord that he wouldn't take anything from the King of that wicked city Sodom, why would a

righteous God want to take a tithe consisting of things from corrupt Sodom? The Lord would be receiving what Abram wouldn't from corrupt Sodom if Abram was in fact paying a tithe to the Lord through Melchisedec as some teach. It seems inconsistent with Old Testament teaching to believe that the Lord would be interested in receiving a tithe which included non-agricultural goods from a wicked city like Sodom.

It was the tradition of the nations at that time to pay tithes in tribute to their kings. Melchisedec was a King superior in rank to the distinguished patriarch Abram. In the literal historical interpretation of Genesis 14, it's logical to conclude that Abram payed the tithe to Melchisedec because he was a superior King, the principal king of the region, according to the tradition of the nations at that time. (The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament, pg. 47; The International Bible Encyclopedia, volume iv, pg. 2987; The New International Dictionary of the Bible, pg. 1020;)

When Genesis 14:20 is considered in it's historical context, it becomes clear that it's a misapplication of the scripture to use it to illustrate that the christian should give a tithe of his gross income to his local church. Also consider that the biblical tithe consisted only of agricultural products. Abram's tithe consisted of the spoils of war, not agricultural products. The misapplication of this passage is most likely a product of seeing the passage through the grid of church tradition and removing the scripture from it's historical context. If a person reads Genesis 14 presupposing that tithing is expected of the New Testament believer, it's logical that they will consider Abram paying a tithe to Melchisedec to be like them giving a tithe to their local church. This would be a prime example of the dangerous practice of making the reader's culture control the meaning of a passage of scripture rather than properly allowing the historical context control the interpretation.

Review questions:

1. Who was Melchisedec? What two positions of influence did he hold?
2. What does 1 Samuel 8 teach us about the historical tradition of kings in relationship with the tithe?
3. How does 1 Samuel 8 relate to Genesis 14:20 and Abram paying a tithe to Melchisedec?
4. Does the scripture teach that Melchisedec symbolizes the local church?
5. Does the scripture teach that Abraham symbolizes the christian?
6. Why is it a misapplication of Genesis 14:20 to use it to illustrate that the christian should give a tithe of his gross income to his local church?

CHAPTER 3

What is the biblical definition of the tithe?

Some scholars believe that the law of the tithe stemmed from God's command to Israel to bring the firstfruits of their land into the house of the Lord. The firstfruits commands are found in Exodus 23:19, 34:26; Leviticus 2:12; 23:9-14; Numbers 18:12, Deuteronomy 18:4, 26:2-11; 2 Chronicles 31:4-5 and Nehemiah 10:35-37. The firstfruits weren't to be burnt, but given to the priests to eat as their due share for their temple service. The firstfruits were to include the Israelite's best farm produce: corn, wine, wheat, oil, honey and fleece.

Israel was a theocracy with the Lord as their chief ruler. The tabernacle represented his Lord's presence and was where the priests and Levites administered legal offerings and ceremonies. The priests performed sacrifices with the Levites assistance. The priests and Levites also taught the Law containing Israel's civil and religious rules and served as legal counsels in court decisions. (A Survey of Israel's History, Wood, pg. 158)

The first (best choice) of the **firstfruits** of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. (Exodus 23:19; 34:26)

As for the oblation (qorban-sacrificial offering) of the **firstfruits**, ye shall offer them unto the LORD: but they shall not be burnt on the altar for a sweet savour. (Leviticus 2:12)

All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, them have I given thee. (Numbers 18: 12)

And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein; That thou shalt take of **the first of all the fruit of the earth**, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there. And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country which the LORD sware unto our fathers for to give us. And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD thy God. (Deuteronomy 26:1-4)

The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance. Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them. And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw. *The firstfruit also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him.* For the LORD thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for ever. (Deuteronomy 18:1-5)

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf (omer-1/10 of an ephah or about 2 litres) of the **firstfruits** of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering unto the LORD. And the meat offering thereof *shall be* two tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire unto the LORD *for a sweet savour*: and the drink offering thereof *shall be* of wine, the fourth *part* of an hin. And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: *it shall be* a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. (Leviticus 23:9-14)

Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the LORD. 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. (2 Chronicles 31:4-5)

Nehemiah 10:37 indicates that the first fruits of dough, offerings, fruit, wine and oil were received by priests and taken to the storerooms of the temple of God while the tithes of the land produce went to the Levites in the farming villages. All priests were Levites, but all Levites weren't priests. (A Survey of Israel's History, Wood, pg. 159) Priests had to belong to Aaron's family and only they could minister at God's altar and enter his sanctuary. (Exodus 28) The Levites belonged to the larger family of Levi. (The New International Dictionary of the Bible, pg. 592)

Nehemiah 10:38 explains that of the tithes of the ground taken in the farming villages by the Levites, they were to bring 10% of those tithes ("the tithe of the tithe" or "all the tithes into the storehouse" from Malachi 3:10) to the chambers or rooms of the storehouse in the temple of God. Tithes were also given out of agricultural products by landowners only. Money or non-agricultural products weren't tithed.

And that we should bring the **firstfruits** of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers (storerooms) of the house of our God; and *the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage*. And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and *the Levites shall bring up **the tithe of the tithes** unto the house of our God, to the chambers (rooms of the storehouse), into the treasure house*. For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers (storerooms), where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God. (Nehemiah 10:37 -39)

The law of the tithe is defined in the Old Testament scriptures of Leviticus 27:30-34; Numbers 18:20-32; Deuteronomy 12:6-17, 14:22-29 and 26:1-15.

And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel; unto thee have I given them by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons, by an ordinance for ever.

And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou

have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel. 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. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 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. And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshingfloor, and as the fulness of the winepress. 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. Out of all your gifts ye shall offer every heave offering of the LORD, of all the best thereof, even the hallowed part thereof out of it. Therefore thou shalt say unto them, When ye have heaved the best thereof from it, then it shall be counted unto the Levites as the increase of the threshingfloor, and as the increase of the winepress. And ye shall eat it in every place, ye and your households: for it is your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation. And ye shall bear no sin by reason of it, when ye have heaved from it the best of it: neither shall ye pollute the holy things of the children of Israel, lest ye die. (Numbers 18:8, 20-32)

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 shalt come: 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: And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee. Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you. But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your **tithes**, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD: And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you. Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee. Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart. Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water. Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the **tithe** of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand: (Deuteronomy 12:5-17)

Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. 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. And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee: Then shalt thou turn it into money,

and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: ²⁶And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household, And the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee. *At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates:* And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest. (Deuteronomy 14:22-29)

And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein; That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there. And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country which the LORD sware unto our fathers for to give us. And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD thy God. And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: And when we cried unto the LORD God of our fathers, the LORD heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression: And the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God: And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you. *When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled;* Then thou shalt say before the LORD thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them: I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given ought thereof for the dead: but I have hearkened to the voice of the LORD my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me. Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey. (Deuteronomy 26:1-15)

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. And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof. 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. He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it: and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed. These are the commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses for the children of Israel in mount Sinai. (Leviticus 27:30-34)

These passages of scripture teach the following truths concerning the tithe:

- A general tithe was to be paid on all Israel's agricultural and livestock production

to the Levites by landowners. Non-agricultural products weren't tithed. (Leviticus 27:30-32; Numbers 18:21; Deuteronomy 26: 1-10; Nehemiah 10:37; Hebrews 7:4-5)

- Each year 10% (tithe) of all Israel's agricultural and livestock production was to be taken to the location chosen by the Lord for his sanctuary. They would eat from it before the Lord at the national festival. (Deuteronomy 12:5-7, 14:22-23)
- If the location of the sanctuary was too far for a person to travel to, or they were unable to transport the tithe, they could exchange their tithe for money. With the money gained from this exchange, at the sanctuary they could buy whatever their soul desired to eat before the Lord at the national festival. (Deuteronomy 14:24-26)
- The Levites were to take the tithe from the Israelites. They received what was left from the tithe after the Israelites ate their portion at the national festival. (Numbers 18:21-32)
- The Levites were to take a "tithe of the tithe" (10% of the 10%) received from the Israelites and give it to the priest. The priest was to offer it as a heave offering to the Lord. (Numbers 18:8, 26-32; Nehemiah 10:37-39)
- Every third year was the year of tithing. The tithe was reserved at home this year instead of being taken to the temple. The tithe from the produce of that year was to be gathered and stored in the cities for distribution to the Levites and the needy in the city: strangers, orphans and widows. (Deuteronomy 14:28-29, 26:12; Nehemiah 13:10-13)

Jewish historical tradition harmonizes the tithes mentioned in Leviticus and Deuteronomy into 3 different tithes: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd or poor. (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, pg. 2988) It teaches the following:

- 1st tithe: 10% given to Levites. Levites give 10% to priests.
- 2nd tithe: 10% of the remaining 90% had to be gathered and ate at the temple in Jerusalem. Those living far away could exchange it for money, adding a 5th part to it's value, to buy food, drink or ointment. 10% of the cattle was included in this tithe for use at the temple.
- 3rd or poor tithe: 2nd tithe was given entirely to the Levites and the poor.

From these passages of scripture and Jewish historical tradition it's clear that the tithe was a legal national tax that supported the theocratic government of Israel at that time. Tithes weren't freewill offerings to the Lord. They were a legal, compulsory income tax upon the agricultural products of landowners only. They were used to support the governing Levites and the needy. In modern terminology, we could estimate that the tithe was equivalent to a national tax rate of 20% or more of the Israelite's gross income.

Review Questions:

1. What type of government did Israel have when the law of tithing was instituted?
2. Who administered the legal and religious rules and ceremonies within this government?
3. Who were tithes to be paid to or received by?
4. How does our government differ from Israel's at that time?
5. How is our government funded?
6. How was the government of Israel funded at that time?
7. What was the difference between the first fruits offering and the tithe?
8. Describe the 3 different tithes according to Jewish historical tradition?
9. Which tithe was to provide for the needs of the poor?
10. What is the meaning of the tithe of the tithe and how does it relate to the teaching of Malachi 3:10 concerning all the tithe?
11. If an Israelite was a fisherman, was he required to tithe fish?
12. Briefly summarize how the Old Testament law of tithing differs from the modern practice of tithing as traditionally taught in the local New Testament church?

CHAPTER 4

Who does the scripture teach is supposed to receive tithes?

Hebrews 7:5 teaches that it is those that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people (their brethren) according to the law. This scripture clearly teaches that tithing was a legal obligation.

And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: (Hebrews 7:5)

And that we should bring the **firstfruits** of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers (storerooms) of the house of our God; and *the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage*. And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and *the Levites shall bring up **the tithes of the tithes** unto the house of our God, to the chambers (rooms of the storehouse), into the treasure house.* (Nehemiah 10:37-38)

There is no other individual or group throughout the entire scripture aside from the Levitical priests who are commanded to receive tithes in the office of the priesthood. The Levitical priests are not equated with the spiritual leadership of the New Testament Church anywhere in scripture. To say that the laws in place to support the Levitical priesthood of the Old Covenant should be transferred to govern the support of the leadership of the New Testament Church under the New and better covenant is going beyond the truth taught in scripture. It's fitting scripture into our own ministry paradigm rather than conforming our ministry to the truth of scripture. The scriptures never tell us that the offices of Pastor, Elder or Bishop are symbolized by the order of the Levitical Priesthood. Hebrews 7:11-12 make it clear that the priesthood was changed from the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament Law system.

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.

For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

In the better testament, the New Testament, the unchangeable high priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ took effect.

For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did;

by the which we draw nigh unto God. And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore. (Hebrews 7:18-22, 28)

It's also important to note that tithing, like circumcision, wasn't on the apostles and elders list of the Jewish law items that the Gentiles needed to do when they turned to faith in Christ. (Acts 15:1-29; 21:17-26)

Conclusions:

1. Tithing was a legal obligation under the theocratic government of Israel.
2. The tithe was only to be received by the Levitical priests, the sons of Levi.
3. The Old Testament legal system has been abolished. The priesthood of the New Testament has been changed to a better one than the Old Testament priesthood.
4. Under the New Testament, Jesus Christ has become the high priest forever.
5. Scripture doesn't equate the Levitical priesthood with the leadership of the New Testament Church.
6. Jesus Christ isn't a Levitical Priest so the christian isn't legally obligated to give him a tithe.

CHAPTER 5

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands (Acts 17:24)

...for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (2 Corinthians 6:16)

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: (1 Peter 2:5-9)

Is a christian “robbing God” if they don’t tithe to their local church?

Many pastor’s consider tithing like a fuel line to fund themselves and the budget of their church. In order to keep that fuel line operating efficiently, ministers have developed various means of teaching people to tithe. For example, Ministryhelps.com offers a seemingly popular four book series by Leon Bible called Tithe and Offering Scriptures for \$59.85. This package includes a 5 step pattern for ministers to follow in order to encourage people to tithe. Their website offers this bit of advice to ministers to encourage them to purchase the 4 books.

“It’s a fact: Pastors who simply read a verse of Scripture before receiving the Offering have higher Tithing and Giving than those who don’t!”

These scripture based books teach popular doctrinal error concerning the Old Testament system of worship. The false equivalents listed below are used in concert with other scriptures to teach people to tithe to their New Testament church.

- The Old Testament Temple = New Testament Church Building = God’s House
- The Old Testament Levites and Priests = New Testament pastors

None of these equivalents can be supported from scripture. The New Testament scriptures teach the following counter truths:

- The church is the living body of Christ.
- Each true believer is a member of the church of God, the body of Christ.
- Each true believer is the temple of God housing God the Holy Spirit within.

- Individual members of the church are compared to living stones.
- Each member, or living stone, makes up the church which is a spiritual house.
- This spiritual house has Jesus Christ as its chief corner stone.
- The Levitical priesthood was replaced by the high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ.
- Each true believer is a priest of God.

Church history teaches that the payment of tithes was established late in the 6th century. (History of the Christian Church, Volume 2, The Medieval Church, Sheldon, pg. 98.) The Encyclopedia Britannica differs slightly on this. It teaches that tithes weren't commanded by Christian church leaders until around the 9th century. The encyclopedia also states that it was awhile after tithing began before the church required tithe on non-agricultural items.

"Tithes in Christendom"—The earliest authentic example of anything like a law of the State enforcing payment appears to occur in the capitularies [ecclesiasticals] of Charlemagne at the end of the 8th or beginning of the 9th century. Tithes were by that enactment to be applied to the maintenance of the bishop, clergy, the poor, and the fabric of the church. In the course of time the principle of payment of tithes was extended far beyond its original intention. Thus they became transferable to laymen and saleable like ordinary property, in spite of the injunctions of the third Lateran Council; and they became payable out of sources of income [not just farming and herding, but other trades and occupations and salaries paid in the form of money] not originally tithable." (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1963, volume 22, page 253, 'TITHES') (source:<http://www.bible-truths.com/tithing.html>)

In light of the fact that tithing wasn't taught in the life of the early church and isn't mentioned in any of the church letters, how do we account for the popularity of this doctrine in the modern church?

One of the most popular passages in the Bible used to teach tithing to the New Testament Church is found in Malachi 3:6-12. It reads as follows:

For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob (Levitical priests in context. Levi was a son of Jacob) are not consumed. 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. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

This passage is typically used to teach that if a Christian isn't tithing to his local church then he is "robbing God". This is a strong statement since in context it teaches that the failure to tithe has separated the "robber of God" from God. If the 2004 Barna Research Group statistics are correct that only 7% of Christians tithe to their church, 93% of the church is cursed by the Lord for their robbery.

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. (Malachi 3:7-9)

Based upon this misinterpretation of the passage, what other characteristics would describe a person who doesn't tithe *if* it's true that the christian is commanded to tithe 10% to their local church? Based upon the scriptures below, those robbing God should be described as selfish, greedy, lying, cursed thieves who are separated from God unless they return to him by beginning to tithe.

For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. (Ephesians 5:5-6)

And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. (Revelation 22:13-15)

This is a heavy accusation against a professing christian because the scripture teaches that someone with those personal character qualities is destined for hell, not heaven. It could actually be said that teaching tithing in this manner makes tithing, a part of the Old Testament legal system, a condition of salvation. This gospel would be another gospel, a false and legalistic gospel that adds the requirement of keeping the law of tithing to faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. This is similar to the issue Paul addressed in the epistle to the churches of Galatia in which false teachers were mixing obedience to elements of the law in addition to faith in Christ as a condition of salvation. Paul's answer to these teachers was as follows:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to

be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. I would they were even cut off which trouble you. (Galatians 1:6-8, 3:1-3,10-14, 4:9-11, 5:1-12)

Tithing teachers rarely, if ever, actually admit or even realize for that matter, that they're actually teaching another gospel. Rarely does a tithing teacher directly teach that a person must pay tithe to be saved. Some teach that tithing is a mature response of gratitude toward salvation in which they recognize that they're merely a manager of God's property. Others may see tithing as a youthful, legalistic giving that is better than mere impulse giving or no giving at all. Although these tithing teachers aren't teaching another gospel, they do, however, need to recognize that tithing is Old Testament law replaced by graceful giving under the better New Testament. However, if tithing is taught as a commandment to be obeyed by the christian, the teacher is insinuating that the one who doesn't tithe isn't saved. At best, compulsory tithing teachers of this type are on the edge of preaching another false gospel which could leave them accursed.

Is tithing under the new and better priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ a fruit or condition of salvation? Is paying tithe recognizing we are the financial manager and God is the owner? In order to answer these and other questions, it's important to study the teaching of Malachi 3:6-12 which is often used to promote tithing.

Malachi is a prophetic warning to the people and priests of Israel written about 460 B.C. A major focus of his message is addressed to the priests who are being indicted by the Lord through Malachi for the following reasons:

- Treating the Lord worthlessly by intentionally offering less than their best to him
- Hypocritically failing to practice what they are preaching to the people
- Acting above God's law. Presuming they can break his law and retain his blessing
- Teaching lies and confusing good and evil in people's minds
- Misrepresenting God's character by questioning his promises of just judgment
- Failure to care for the needy

A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar;

and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 1:6-8)

And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law. And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously. Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment? And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 2:1-2, 7-9, 13-17, 3:5)

The prophet calls the people and priests of Israel to repent of their indifference, sin, idolatry, hypocrisy, arrogance and lying in order to escape the justice of God's judgment at his second coming. He reminds them that the Lord has loved them and desires them to return to him.

The indictment used by tithing teachers to urge people to tithe to their local church is Malachi 3:7-10:

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. (Malachi 3:10)

A close look at these scriptures reveals the following inaccuracies or inconsistencies with other scripture in the doctrine of tithe teachers.

- The modern evangelical church commonly teaches that it has 2 only two ordinances. Those ordinances are the Lord's Supper and Baptism. Malachi 3:7, however, calls tithing one of God's ordinances. An ordinance is a commanded

observance. Since tithing is called an ordinance by scripture, tithing teachers are inaccurate in saying that their churches have only 2 ordinances. To be consistent with their misinterpretation of scripture, tithing teachers should list tithing as a 3rd church ordinance. Tithing teachers can't do that because they know that the New Testament doesn't teach tithing as an ordinance in the way it does Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

- All the tithes are to be brought into the storehouse according to Malachi 3:10. The storehouse was the temple treasury overseen by the Levites. (Nehemiah 13:13; 1 Chronicles 26:20; Nehemiah 10:37-38) There's no temple and no storehouse in the New Testament Church. The scriptures don't indicate that the storehouse symbolizes or represents the local church as tithing teachers insist. Because of this, it's going beyond what is written and poor hermeneutics to teach that the storehouse of the temple represents the local church of the New Testament.
- The tithes were intended to provide meat or food for God's house according to Malachi 3:10. God's house or temple in the New Testament isn't a physical building or physical temple. In the New Testament, individual believers are the temple of the Holy Ghost. The community of believers is built together to become a spiritual house, a holy temple, as the following scriptures reveal.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5)

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19)

The tithe was intended to provide meat, meaning food, for the Levites and needy. In order to be consistent with the scriptural purpose of tithing, tithing teachers would need to instruct the church to use all tithes received exclusively to provide food for themselves and the needy. Tithes can't be dedicated to building and program costs to be consistent with the biblical purpose of tithes. Even if tithing was for the New Testament church, tithing teachers use the tithe received in a manner inconsistent with the biblical purpose of the tithe.

- Malachi 3:10-12 teaches that tithing brings an economic blessing to those who tithe. If a teacher is going to teach tithing to the New Testament Church, in order to be consistent with his misapplication of this passage, he'd also have to teach that tithing will result in God's blessing bringing increased wealth to the christian.

This teaching, however, would be inconsistent with the New Testament teaching of 1 Timothy 6:3-10 which states:

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but dotting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, ***Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.*** But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

- Malachi's exhortation to prove God shouldn't be interpreted to test God to find out if you can out give him. It isn't an exhortation to the believing New Testament Church to act presumptuously toward the Lord and test him like we would a savings bank-placing our tithe in the offering plate and then looking to see if we got it back with interest at the end of the month. He was talking here to people who didn't know his true character and he was challenging them to prove, or find out the truth about it. The scriptures are clear that we are to obey rather than presumptuously test the Lord. (Matthew 4:5-7)

1 Timothy 6:5, "supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself" in the KJV teaches that if anyone teaches that living a godly christian life is a means to acquiring material wealth that we should stay away from that teacher. To teach that tithing guarantees economic prosperity due to God's blessing on your finances is false teaching that should be shunned according to 1 Timothy 6:5. Most people naturally love money and desire prosperity. If the Lord actually promised that he would make sure we got back more money from him than we gave to him each time we give, everyone would want a piece of his pie. Using Malachi 3:10 to promise christians overflowing financial blessings when they tithe is a type of the old lying prosperity preacher line, "you can't outgive God so gimme your money, your seed, and God will return it to you 2-fold, 4-fold...all according to how much seed you sow".

1 Timothy 6:9-14 teaches that if anyone deliberately purposes to become materially wealthy that they'll encounter enticements to sin and allurements to forbidden evils that will unexpectedly trap them, lead them away from the truth into error and bring torture to their soul. This lust for wealth will eventually destroy their lives and ultimately sink them in hell. According to the Bible and cultural observation within our culture, the rich are particularly susceptible to the sins of pride, selfishness, faithlessness, favoritism, fraud, lying, greed, covetousness, social injustice and oppression of the poor.

Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are

corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. (James 5:1-6)

Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? (James 2:5-7)

In truth, **tithing to gain God's financial blessing** is a trap leading away from the truth of God's word to sin, evil and hell.

In the Old Testament wealth was a sign of God's blessing. (Deuteronomy 8:17-18; 2 Chronicles 1:11-12; Ecclesiastes 5:19,6:2) In the New Testament, both rich and poor alike may be blessed as the scriptures below indicate. The rich man Zacchaeus was saved although he didn't give up all his wealth because he was repentant over his past sins and received Jesus.

And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19:1-10)

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life. (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

On the other hand, let's not forget that the Lord Jesus Christ was a financially poor, yet holy man. In fact, by today's haughty conservative middle-upper middle class evangelical standards, Jesus Christ might be labeled indigent, or an imbalanced ex-carpenter and homeless religious fanatic. Not only was Jesus voluntarily poor, but so were his holy apostles who followed his lifestyle.

Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side. And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. (Matthew 8:18-20)

But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. (2 Corinthians 6:4-10)

The New Testament speaks in 5 places of filthy lucre in the context of the character qualities of a New Testament church leader. Filthy lucre (aischrokerdos) means with an eagerness for money or financial gain or a tendency to be wrongly influenced by the desire for money. If you wonder if you're wrongly influenced by money in your position, ask yourself if you compromise what you know to be right in order to keep your position. If you compromise biblical commands and or principle for the sake of keeping your position, you're not working for the Lord; you're main motivation is filthy lucre. (1 Peter 5:2; 1 Peter 3:3; 1 Peter 3:8; Titus 1:7-14)

In Paul's day, like today, church leaders mixing law and grace wrongly influenced by a greedy desire for financial gain were teaching things they shouldn't teach. They were teaching human, rather than divine commandments. They were lying, deceiving, seducing and overturning the divine order in entire families with their false teaching. These teachers loved filthy lucre. They weren't qualified by biblical standards to be church leaders, yet they were. In light of that fact, the next time a greedy pastor tells you not to rebuke him for his greed by saying, "touch not the Lord's anointed", remind him that Titus 1 commands you to rebuke him. In addition, remember that Titus 1 tells us that there are men in pastoral roles whom the Lord has not put there for they're not qualified by biblical standards to manage the church. Some are simply there for filthy lucre's sake. In my years in the church, I have seen a handful of men I knew well enough to know that they weren't qualified by biblical standards to be pastoring eventually leave the pastorate. Not every pastor is truly a pastor; particularly in America, where the church runs off true shepherds that tell the whole truth. A.W. Tozer once said that he preached himself out of about every pulpit in the country. That was decades ago and the spiritual life of today's church has only degenerated further.

We've seen how compulsory tithing teachers are actually mixing law and grace and creating another gospel. Could the teaching of compulsory tithing be used to overturn divine order in families, helping to seduce them and lead them away from the truth?

Absolutely!

Compulsory tithing imposes another financial stress upon single wage earners in the lower to middle income brackets. The heaviest impacted are those families with young children in which the mother needs to remain home managing the home and

caring for the young. For example, the addition of the compulsory 10% 501(c)3 corporate religious tax imposed upon church membership by its leadership increases the tax burden of the average family about 7.5 % annually after deductions. For a single wage earner trying to support his young family on an income of \$30,000, the 10% tithe tax actually costs about \$2,250 annually. That's approximately the cost of a private christian education for the child which isn't affordable on that income while tithing. Other than presume upon God for the money, his other choices are to work an additional part-time job himself, or send his wife to work outside the home during the day or take an evening job to pay for the schooling. This further isolates Dad and Mom from one another and the child, draining the parents physically, emotionally, and spiritually. While Dad finds it difficult to find the time and energy to teach his family God's word; the public school, television, music, magazines, antichristian friends, internet, computer and video games are seductively educating the child for Satan's purposes. Yet on Sunday, the family attends church and deposits their money into the offering plate to appease either their God, their conscience, their pastor or any or all of the above. Meanwhile, the child is entertained more in Sunday School and Youth Group while being separated again from their parents who are busy listening to their lukewarm pastor preach the same old gospel message again with little or any practical, specific meat in it that might really effect daily family behavior and values. Even if the Sunday School and Pastor do a faithful job teaching, the child is still getting just 1-2 hours of biblical input weekly versus the 60-80 hours of secular thought being deposited into the memory bank. In thousands of hours of work with Christian youth, I've seen the tragic results of this senseless cycle at work in kids who attend church and may even profess to be saved; but whose self-centered lives are filled with hatred, lies, worldliness and hypocrisy largely because their pastors preach and teach for filthy lucre instead of the Lord.

If instead of Dad working extra, Mom goes to work, this puts a heavy physical and emotional stress on the already stressed mother; potentially overturning the divine order for the home. In God's plan for the home, Dad is designed by the Lord to be the financial provider while Mom manages the domestic front. (Titus 2:4-5) When Dad's always working, Mom is forced to do double duty. When Mom's working outside the home, Dad is forced to do double duty. In either case, the child suffers because the parents are overworked and unable to spend the necessary time required to properly bond with and care for the needs of the child.

Have you tried to be both Mom and Dad at the same time, compulsory tithing teaching Pastor? It can be physically and emotionally draining just being Mom. My wife broke her ribs and was in bed for a few days while our child was nursing. I tried to fulfill Mom's role during that period. It was tough. I can't imagine doing both Mom's job and trying to work outside the home at the same time. The worst thing, however, is the rejection that the impressionable young child is going to suffer when

Mom doesn't have the time to effectively love the child; even abandoning the child to another's care.

Compulsory tithing teaching Pastor; have you ever considered the potential negative impact of your financial demands upon the minimal financial resources of the young and elderly of the Lord's church?

How do you feel about the false guilt that you place upon those that can't afford to give a tenth and are afraid to make their needs known for fear of criticism or rejection?

Do you irresponsibly presume upon the grace of God, having deceived yourself by your own tithing teaching that the Lord will bless and provide for you're tithers if you continue to preach legalistic, compulsory Old Testament tithing to squeeze the last 10% out of every church member.

Have you denied mercy to financially stressed sincere Christians families who ask you if they can deduct your Christian school tuition from their tithe bill? Have you told them they can't because they would be paying for the services of a business instead of giving to the Lord? Yet, at the same time your church is incorporated as an IRS 501(c)(3) organization which you run as a religious business.

You know that these humble, naïve souls sense within their spirits that something isn't fair with your religious system. However, they lack the biblical discernment and naively trust your superior knowledge to be able to realize that you have unfairly burdened them. Like many pastor-teachers who lay the compulsory tithe burden upon others, are you unwilling to cut the fat from your lifestyle in order to help families like this? Or do you continue to aspire to live selfishly above the financial level of those that support you? Do you envision pouring thousands or even millions of dollars into superfluous buildings and programs to the neglect of the church's needy pastors, missionaries, Christian school teachers, orphans, widows, homeless, hungry, single mothers, sick and elderly? Isn't it all simply for the sake of an egotistical purpose driven vision and the "American Dream"?

The following blazing hot message was delivered by the Lord prior to his crucifixion to the hypocritical religious fraternity of Jewish Pharisees. The Old Testament tithing law was still in place at the time of this confrontation which explains why Jesus tells the Pharisees that they should pay tithe. This encounter shouldn't be used to teach that Jesus was affirming New Testament tithing by his church. Jesus' blood, the blood of the New and better Testament, hadn't yet been shed when he spoke to these words to the Pharisees. His church was physically non-existent at that point in time. The New Covenant hadn't yet been established. What this passage does teach,

however, is that the hearts of these clean cut, crooked religious leaders were lacking an unselfish, compassionate commitment to biblical truth and justice. They tried to appear squeaky clean, while using their religious authority to greedily coerce money from their followers, even elderly widows needing mercy. Instead of offering mercy, however, these snakes would try to coerce even more out of the needy. (Luke 20:46-47)

But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. (Matthew 23: 13-14, 23-26)

Where do **you** really stand with the Lord, compulsory tithing teaching Pastor? Just like your members, you too must discern whether you're truly his friend or his enemy.

Jesus let the Pharisees know where they stood with him near the end of his sizzling message when he told them what's recorded for our instruction in Matthew 23:33:

Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

You can escape hell, compulsory tithing teaching Pastor, if you'll simply repent of your selfish Old Testament compulsory tithing tradition and sin, come under the authority of God's word and place **your** trust in the Lord Jesus Christ both to save and provide your needs as he's promised to do for those that trust him.

You that preach that you're people should walk by faith, do you walk by faith; or do you manipulate the word of God and coerce people to give to support your egotistical, short sighted greedy American vision.

You that teach others to be servants, are you a servant or a pleaser and manipulator of men?

You that teach generosity, are you generous to those living in poverty within your church or do you live above their level materially and expect them to support you. Are you pouring resources into the temporal projects here while overseas your Christian brothers and sisters are in need of water, food, clothing and a place to hide for their lives. I don't say these things to condemn you, but to awaken you and shake you out of your box. Are you ready to renounce the misuse of your position and become a humble follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, or are you going to persist in justifying your false teaching and greedy coercion of the needy potentially bringing damnation upon

your own soul?

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. (Matthew 7:15-27)

CHAPTER 6

Giving according to the New Testament scriptures

The first 5 chapters have been used to show that tithing is an obsolete Jewish law which was a type of income tax given to the Levites used to support the theocratic government of Israel. This giving was compulsory. The people were legally required to give tithes. They were also instructed to be sensitive and give to help the poor and needy according to the scriptures below. (Deuteronomy 15:11; Proverbs 11:24-25, 22:9, 28:27)

In the New Testament, compulsory giving no longer exists aside from government taxes Christians are required to pay by law. The purpose of this chapter will be to explain and summarize what the New Testament teaches about voluntary giving. The teaching of the New Testament on giving can be summarized as follows:

- **God is our provider. He promises to provide our food and clothing for each day.** (Matthew 6:11; Luke 11:3; Matthew 6:25-32; 1 Timothy 6:8)
- **New Testament believers are commanded to give to the government by paying legally required taxes.** (Matthew 22:17-21; (Romans 13:1-7)
- **God desires to use wealthier believers to provide for believers in legitimate need of life's necessities. He gives generously to generous saints so that they can continue to be generous to needy saints, accumulating treasure in heaven instead of treasures of material wealth on earth.** (Matthew 6:19-21; Philippians 4:10-19)
- **God desires we give willingly and cheerfully, not reluctantly feeling like we have to** (2 Corinthians 8:11-12; 2 Corinthians 9:8)
- **God desires financial equality among believers as those with insufficient income are supplied by the extra income of other believers.** (2 Corinthians 8:13-15; Acts 2:44-45; Acts 4:32-35)
- **God doesn't measure our generosity based upon the size of the gift. His reward to us for giving is based upon the degree of unselfish sacrifice and cheerful willingness accompanying our giving.** (Luke 21:1-4, 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6)

- **Christians are to regularly give to poor Christians that are in need; not to the rich whose needs are already met.** (Galatians 2:10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Acts 20:33-35; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; Luke 14:12-14)
- **Those that have the means to help needy Christians will receive in return from the Lord according to the attitude in which they give. If you give willingly with joy, you'll receive a generous spiritual and material blessing. If you're cautious or annoyed and upset about having to help the needy and give reluctantly to them, you'll receive little blessing in return from the Lord.** (2 Corinthians 9:6)
- **Those that serve other believers spiritually, such as Pastors and Elders, have a right to be paid for their service by those benefiting from their ministry.** (Romans 15:25-27; 1 Corinthians 9:7-14; 1 Timothy 5:17-18; Galatians 6:6)

The fellowship of the ministering to the saints proves our love for God and his active grace in our lives as we love others in a tangible way by giving to those in need. We are to abound in this grace. (James 2:14-17; 2 Corinthians 8:1-8, 24; 1 John 3:16-19; 2 Corinthians 9:12-15; Matthew 25:31-46)

- **Giving results in individuals and churches which are thankful to the Lord** (2 Corinthians 9:12; 2 Corinthians 8:9-9:15; 2 Corinthians 8:1-4)

The word fellowship amongst modern churches is usually used to describe little more than smiles and friendly conversation between Christians. Biblical fellowship or koinonia, however, goes much deeper than social and spiritual conversation. It even exceeds empathy for and prayer on behalf of others. Fellowship involves active partnership and sharing of life and service in Christ. Biblical fellowship involves an unselfish ministry of sharing with needy saints. This service involves an active participation in the suffering of other saints by generously giving to them. The scripture below illustrates the opportunity that deep poverty amongst a body of believers presents for deep generosity on the part of those with an abundance to supply the need of their brothers and sisters in Christ. *This passage should not be used to teach that we should give even if we're poor.* In context, 2 Corinthians 8:12-15 teaches that the Lord expects those with an abundance to supply the lack of other saints so that there is an equality.

Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us **the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.**

New Testament giving can be summarized very simply:

Saints should regularly, proportionately, voluntarily, cheerfully and generously set

aside money to be shared with needy saints which may include those that work hard faithfully teaching them the word of God. Needy saints are in the place of receiving, not giving gifts. The size of the gift given should be decided solely by the giver. It should be based proportionately upon the giver's financial condition or his ability to give. The Lord will bless the giver with both material and spiritual blessings in this life and in eternity. The size of the Lord's blessing will be based upon the degree of cheerfulness and generosity with which the gift was given. Those that give cheerfully and generously will be rewarded accordingly by the Lord, both in this life and in eternity. Financial rewards in this life shouldn't be used to accumulate treasured stuff on earth. These rewards should be invested in heaven by ministering to the needs of the saints. In this life the Lord promises only to meet our most basic needs of food and clothing and provide cheerful givers enough to continue to help those in need. Pastors, Elders and deacons are responsible to manage the distribution of gifts to those in need.

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. (Philippians 2:1-4)

Conclusion

This chapter will close this book with a look at some misconceptions and deceptions concerning tithing. It will expose deceptive teachings potentially leading people into self deception, bondage and the false guilt that can be associated with compulsory tithing.

- **Tithing tests our faith in the Lord as our provider**

In spite of the fact that one of the names of the Lord is Jehovah-Jireh meaning the Lord will provide (Genesis 22:14), tithing is taught as a test of faith in the Lord as the provider. To those that feel they must test the Lord, I would ask, is your faith based upon visible signs and wonders or in the written word of God. He is Jehovah- Jireh!

Malachi 3:10 says:

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.

Malachi 3:6-10 was studied in chapter 5. For numerous reasons it was concluded that this verse applied under the Old Covenant and doesn't apply to the New Testament Church under the New Covenant. The idea that tithing is a test of our faith comes from the words "prove" me, translated "test" me in the NIV and NASB in verse 10. The word prove is the Hebrew word bachan which means to investigate and try in order to realize the true character of something. The Lord is simply telling the Israelites that if they tithe they will realize his true character. He's encouraging them that tithing will only help them better realize who he is. He isn't counseling them concerning tithing so that they learn how to use him in order to obtain wealth.

Malachi 3:10 isn't teaching us to test the Lord, for it is written, "thou shalt not tempt (test) the Lord thy God". (Deuteronomy 6:16; Luke 4:12) Preachers have used this verse to teach people to presume upon God and test him by asking people to give offerings they really can't afford to give. These false prophets promise givers that God will return their gift to them multiplied many times over if they'll simply test the Lord. The faith of the gift giver is endangered when the offering given in faith isn't multiplied and returned to the giver as promised. Jesus cautioned his disciples with regard to the deceitful methods of the religious leaders of his time who were deceitfully devouring the resources of widows. They warn us today to be discerning concerning those in church leadership who would deceitfully devour our finances.

Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the

highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts; Which devour widows' houses, and for a shew make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation. (Luke 20:46-47)

There's no scripture teaching that the purpose of tithing is to test the Christians faith. One's faith is tested by the calling to be a moral light in an antichristian world system, to care for orphans, widows, and other needy saints in their distress.

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. (James 1:27)

In addition, even if tithing was intended to be a test of faith, not everyone's faith would be tested by tithing. Unless tithing is a universal test of faith for every believer, it would be incorrect to teach that tithing is intended to be a test of faith. It's also obvious that tithing isn't a test of faith when the 10% tithe is taken off the top of a large gross income. The tithe off the top of a large salary will never be missed unless the giver is covetous and overextended financially.

It's likely that many that tithe compromise biblical commands and principles in their careers in order to succeed professionally. Do we really believe that God is honored by receiving a tithe taken off the top of an income earned by sinful compromise and trust in man as provider rather than the Lord? Yes, a person can pay tithe and ultimately have their trust in man, not God, as their provider. The scriptures teach us in 1 Samuel 15:22 that God prefers our obedience before our gifts.

And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

Tithing can be a source of self-deception and false assurance of salvation to someone who's compromising morally in the workplace. Consider those that compromise biblical commands and principles in order to succeed at work, but appear outwardly righteous at church. Because they play church so well their naïve pastor may be clueless concerning the everyday ethical compromises they make in order to succeed professionally. Or the pastor may simply not have any idea what type of ethical issues professionals face today. On the other hand, lukewarm pastors may realize the moral and ethical compromise that professional careers may entail, however, they simply don't care enough or have the courageous faith needed to address these critical issues. They succumb to fear and remain silent in order to avoid interrupting the flow of the tithe upon which they've built their American dream. In any case, without the concern of the pastor or another member of the church, compromising tithers continue deceiving and being deceived.

Truthfully, tithing can be a source of false assurance to the one tithing. It can be used by the devil to deceitfully convince a lost hypocrite or lukewarm compromiser that all is well with their soul. Church leadership often plays into Satan's hands in helping

deceive a professing christian concerning their true spiritual state. This can occur if leadership establishes extra-biblical outward measures like tithing for evaluating a person's relationship with the Lord.

Consider the example of a nice, smiling, professing American Christian. This person doesn't smoke, drink, or swear. They live in a nice home, drive a nice car, dress conservatively, attend church and tithe faithfully. By today's outward evangelical conservative christian fruit inspection criteria, this person would usually be considered a model christian. Professing Christians of this nature often receive affirmation of their faith from church leadership because they pass the standard fruit inspection criteria (christian testimony, attendance, tithing...) established by the leadership. They are attractive people that will help attract others like themselves. The problem in this scenario, however, is that extra-biblical inspection criteria can't inspect the human heart or the foundation of a person's life. It can only judge the outward, visible portions of the life. In this example the person may be a sincere, wholehearted disciple of the Lord. Or, the person may be a greedy, control freak serving as a powerbroker in the church serving their ego rather than the Lord. Their true spiritual state can't be accurately determined by a set of extra-biblical external criteria. This is especially true when you consider that the criteria doesn't take into account whether or not they exercise biblical faith at work where they spend 50% or more of their waking hours. As long as church leadership affirms the faith of others based upon external extra biblical criteria, the possibility exists that people will be given false assurance of salvation.

The scriptures teach the human heart is naturally deceitful and exceedingly wicked. Satan knows how to exploit the deceitfulness of the human heart within the church. Today, just as in Jesus' day, a good "Pharisee" knows how to shine the outside of their life so that they appear righteous among their religious friends, even though in their real world they live a hypocritical lie in order to keep their position of employment. Here's what gentle Jesus had to say to the hypocritical tithers of his day:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. (Mathew 23:23-28)

Do hypocritical tithers exist today? For example, consider a professing christian who tithes and passes the standard outward fruit inspection criteria. At work, however, the

person habitually compromises biblical principles and commands in order to succeed. In spite of their outward profession of faithfulness to Christ amongst the church, this person lives a hypocritical lie much of their week. Is this a common problem in our churches. Certainly! Our churches are full of hypocrites led by lukewarm pastors delivering unspecific, impractical, meatless messages never teaching and challenging the church to uncompromisingly serve the Lord at work. Yet the same pastors will teach and preach tithing. What's wrong with this picture? Why is church leadership blind to the critical issues surrounding tithing? The scripture below teaches us that not having a single eye and trying to serve both God and money leaves a person blind and in the dark. The problem with blind shepherds is oftentimes the love of money overshadowing their desire to serve the Lord.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (Matthew 6:22-24)

It's certainly more of a test of faith for every professing christian to avoid being a friend of the world system than it is for them to tithe. Professing Christians are to be in the world, but not of the world. They are to remain separate from that which would pollute their body, souls and spirit. They're called to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord.

Holiness is a very challenging calling these last days. Without holiness, however, no one will see the Lord.

Pastors, you need to lead the way by putting aside your fears and addressing real life moral and ethical issues from a true biblical perspective. The church needs courage modeled in the pulpit in order to inspire courage in the workplace. Some areas of compromise with biblical principles and commands in the workplace which could pollute a person include:

- Promotion of materials, programs, events and agendas which contradict the commands and principles of scripture
- Lying, stealing from competitors, and manipulating others in order to meet goals
- Operating out of a heart of competitive greed and pride rather than service to the Lord and others.
- Smiling and laughing at off-color, distasteful, unloving jokes and conversation in order to fit with the team
- Taking on an attitude of competitive greed to fit into the corporate culture
- Spending employer money on things or events that the commands and principles of scripture oppose

- Use of methods and materials in their work which the commands and principles of scripture disapprove of
- Working for a corporation whose products or by-products are harmful to the spiritual, emotional or physical welfare of man and or his environment
- Furthering the antichristian agenda of the employer by efforts on their behalf
- Teaching antichristian lies and occult material to students rather than or in addition to biblically based truth
- Helping further an antichristian corporate agenda such as diversity programs which mandate you to affirm and or promote homosexuality and lesbianism or equality of world religions
- Asking subordinates to do things that contradict the commands and principles of scripture
- Selling products that reflect antichristian values
- Hiding flaws in products in order to sell them
- Exaggerating product benefits to increase sales
- Boasting of your accomplishments and or degrading the efforts of others
- Hiding faith and light in order to preserve your position of employment
- Ignoring family and personal health needs in order to succeed or causing others to do the same
- Joining hands with the proud crowd in unfairly treating and or shunning good employees that don't fit into the company mold
- Unfairly and or abusively threatening others
- Failing to pay a fair day's wage for a fair day's work to a direct, indirect, or sub contracted employee or purchasing from companies who fail to do the same
- Administering student or employee discipline rules unfairly
- Signing a contract in which you agree to keep your religious beliefs quiet and abide by diversity principles contrary to God's word.
- Working 7 days a week
- Cheating on legally owed taxes or legally stealing

In addition to being deceitful in this way, compulsory tithing can also make someone feel generous when they're really stingy. This can occur when the person lives in the lap of luxury and tithes out of prosperity that which really costs them little or nothing. Yes, compulsory tithing has the potential to be a very deceitful habit, not a test of faith.

- **Tithing is a form of worship. In order to worship, we must tithe**

The Old Testament civic and ceremonial laws that passed away with the arrival of the New Covenant included other things like offering blood sacrifices and burnt offerings to the Lord. In order to be consistent with the idea that we must tithe to worship because tithing is a form of worship, we would need to teach that we should offer

things like blood sacrifices and burnt offerings along with our tithes today. However, the truth is that in the New Testament our worship involves presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, not our tithes, to the Lord. (Romans 12:1)

3. Jesus tithed so we should tithe

According to the law of Moses, carpenters like Jesus wouldn't tithe. They didn't produce agricultural products. As the story in Matthew 17:24-27 reveals, Jesus didn't pay the annual temple tax prescribed as law as recorded in Exodus 30:13-16. Jesus himself was the temple of God and the King of the Kingdom of God. Jesus explained to Peter that they didn't have to pay this tax because he was the King of the Jews and Peter was his child. But in order to avoid causing the tax collectors and Peter to mistrust him, he miraculously put a coin in the mouth of a fish that Peter would catch allowing Peter to pay the temple tax for both of them.

"This they shall give, every one that passes among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs): an half shekel shall be the offering of the Lord. Every one that passes among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the Lord. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls. And you shall take the atonement money of the children of Israel and shall appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls" (Exodus 30:13-16)

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee. (Matthew 17:24-27)

- **Tithing is an act of obedience, not legalism**

Tithing isn't commanded in the New Covenant, so it isn't an issue of obedience. To teach that it is an act of obedience can put an undiscerning nontithing believer under the bondage of false guilt and condemnation for being accused of living in disobedience.

- **You have to give your tithe to your local church because it is the bride of Christ for whom Jesus gave his life**

The scriptures never directly state that the church is the bride of Christ. Yes, you can build that theology by carefully putting together various scriptures and ignoring Revelation 21:9-10 that says that the bride, the Lamb's wife, is that great city, the

holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God. Remember that the Pharisees were condemned by Jesus for claiming that the responsibility to give to the temple exempted them from helping out their needy parents financially. (Mark 7:9-13)

- **Because of the principle of “cultural accommodation” (“I have been made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some”) taught by Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:22, Pastors and others don’t have to live frugally if they are ministering in an affluent area to affluent people.**

In 1 Corinthians 9:22 Paul says “I have been made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some“. Paul isn’t advocating that Christians blend in as much as possible with their affluent neighbors so that they can reach them for Christ. This isn’t a universal truth or the oddly dressed John the Baptist would have fit in better with his contemporaries. The key to understanding Paul’s message lies in the context of the passage.

In the proper interpretation of the bible or hermeneutics, the context in which a verse lies is “king“. In other words, the context in which a verse lies controls the intended meaning of any individual verse within that particular passage. In 1 Corinthians 9 the context is that Paul is explaining to the church his rationale for not being paid by the Corinthians for his preaching. He explains that for the sake of reaching as many people as possible that he has renounced his right to be a paid minister. Instead, he has chosen to “suffer all things, lest he should hinder the gospel of Christ“. (1 Corinthians 9:12) Paul is explaining to the Corinthians that by preaching the gospel for free, he is free to be a servant to all the different groups of people around Corinth. Paul isn’t obligated to anyone or anything in Corinth except to be faithful to the preaching of the gospel of the Lord in his ministry. (1 Corinthians 9:16-18) Maybe Paul knew that if he wasn’t on the payroll of any one particular local group, he would avoid the temptation of being manipulated by or limited by that group in the scope of his ministry. Maybe his decision was influenced by the thought that if he preached for free he couldn’t be accused of preaching for money and wouldn’t be tempted to settle down comfortably in Corinth. (1 Corinthians 9:18) By renouncing his right to earn his living from preaching the gospel to the Corinthians and instead willingly choosing to preach for free, Paul is free to make himself a servant to all in Corinth (Jews, those under law, the lawless, the weak) that he might certainly or no doubt save some. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23) The word translated in verse 22 as “by all means” shouldn’t be interpreted to mean that we are to do whatever it takes and use whatever methods or tools available to us in order to save the lost. “By all means” is the Greek adverb παντως (pantos) meaning no doubt, certainly, surely or at any rate in this context. Alfred Marshall’s The Interlinear NASB-NIV Parallel New Testament in Greek and English translates παντως “in any case”, not “by all possible means”. Sakae Kubo’s A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament translates παντως as certainly or by all

means, not “by all possible means” as the NIV does. Moulton’s The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised 1978 Edition translates παντως “at any rate” or by all means. Again there’s no sign of the word “possible” in the translation of the Greek adverb παντως accurately translated in the KJV as “by all means” and meaning in context, no doubt, certainly, surely, in any case or at any rate.

In context this is what Paul means by saying that “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23:

By renouncing his right to earn his living from preaching the gospel to the Corinthians and instead willingly choosing to preach for free, Paul is free to make himself a servant to all in Corinth (Jews, those under law, the lawless, the weak) that he might by all means, certainly, no doubt, at any rate, or in any case save some.

Instead of actually raising his standard of living to reach the Corinthians, Paul renounced a higher standard of living so that he would be free to become a servant to anyone he needed to preach the gospel to. In doing so he avoided the trap that wealth can bring to the christian. (Ephesians 5:3; 1 Timothy 6:17)

- **10% is where our giving to God should begin. The tithe is a minimum starting point in giving to God.**

This doctrine is erroneously built upon the foundation of the misinterpretation of Genesis 14:20 which teaches that Abram paying a tithe to Melchisedec is symbolic of the christian paying a tithe of his gross earnings to God through the local church. Chapter 2 showed that Abram payed the tithe to Melchisedec because he was a superior King, the principal king of the region, according to the tradition of the nations at that time.

Genesis 28:22 tells of a deal that Jacob vowed to tithe to the Lord at Bethel if God would take care of him. **There’s no record of God asking for the tithe.** There was no temple tax at that time. All that can be inferred is that Jacob was acting out the cultural tradition he was familiar with which entailed paying a tithe to your King. In this case, Jacob was recognizing God as his King. To use this verse to teach that the starting point in giving to God is 10%, would be comparable to teaching the church that everyone needs to give half of their goods to the poor in order to be saved because that’s what Zacchaeus did when he met Jesus as recorded in Luke 19. It’s twisting a scripture that shows one man’s encounter with the Lord and using it to manipulate the church to give 10% to God. Pastor, would you have liked it if I told you before you were saved that you had to give 50% of your goods away before you could be saved because that’s what Zacchaeus did when he met Jesus? Then why do you teach that we should vow 10% of all we have to the Lord because that’s what Jacob vowed to the Lord?

In addition, New Testament giving was always for the saints in need.

Now concerning **the collection for the saints**, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)

The giving was to needy saints, not to the Lord. Yes, it was to be done like everything else we do for the glory of God. Yes, It's true that what we do for those in need we do for the Lord. (Matthew 25:35-45) However, New Testament giving is to saints in need, not to support facility and program costs. New Testament giving isn't a mysterious act of faith. It's not placing 10% of our gross income into a plate symbolic of the hand of God and after a hocus-pocus prayer trusting that the Lord will multiply the gift.

How are the tithes and offerings typically spent today. Approximately 40 % is allotted to staff salaries, 20% on facilities, 10% on program costs, 15% on missionaries, and if there's any left over it may be used to help the needy. In other words, between \$.55 and \$.65 of every dollar is actually supporting a person. The remaining \$.35 to \$.45 of every dollar given is spent on superfluous buildings and programs. For the average church budget of \$100,000 that means between \$35,000 to \$45,000 annually is spent superfluously on buildings and programs. If every church in this nation were to liquidate the buildings and programs, meet in our comfortable homes and channel that wasted \$35,000 to \$45,000 into people instead of things, the church in America might experience the joy of true biblical fellowship. (Acts 2:42-47) The tares and powerbrokers might flee the church leaving mostly the serious, people might actually get to really know and love one another biblically. Accountability and discipleship would purge, cleanse and revive the body of Christ. Our neighborhoods would really take notice of the church as being a vital part of everyday life. Dormant spiritual gifts of all types would surface in people who have become pastor pacified. Why wait for the inevitable government persecution to mature? Maybe it's time to take a leap of faith and proactively reorganize the church from the central building model to the house church model.

How long do you really think it will be before it will be a hate speech crime to preach Romans 1:18-32 against homosexuality and lesbianism? America's legal system follows Europe's lead and it's already an imprisonable hate speech crime just across our northern border in Canada. It's already wrong for an IRS 501(c)(3) religious organization to teach things contrary to clearly defined public policy. Are you sincerely able to say that American public policy is 100% in agreement with all of the biblical commands and principles contained in the 66 books of the Bible? Wake up, Pastor, stop compromising and kidding yourself before your building and programs are shut down or you get yourself in so deep with the government that you lead many souls to hell.

Pastor, why would I want to give that \$.35 to \$.45 of every tithe dollar to support superfluous, life choking expenses rather than support needy saints in China, Iraq, Sudan, Algeria, Romania or even America? I can't in good conscience give to support superfluous things when there are lives depending upon my gift. If you don't know what I'm talking about, please check out www.persecution.com.

We are to give all of ourselves, including all of our finances to the Lord. We are to present our lives as sacrifices to him. The offering of our lives can be costly for some, especially when it involves a sacrifice in the way we earn our livelihood.

In case you're tempted to consider God as a micro-managing cost accountant checking the books to see if we've robbed him of his 10% tax, make sure that you look at the big picture please. Better yet, let the Lord be the judge and rewarder regarding such issues. Case in point: who would you say has given more of his resources to the Lord, the person in Case A or Case B below?

Case A: A person who voluntarily in obedience to the Lord gave up \$30,000 of annual salary from a past career in order to pursue a new vocation at which they earned \$25,000 annually and gave 2% off the salary to those in need.

Case B: A person pays a 10% tithe on a \$100,000 annual salary

Answer: Case A actually gave $\$30,000 + \$500 = \$30,500$ while Case B only gave \$10,000.

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