

TITHING

What are the Biblical purposes and principles behind Tithing?

The name "Tithing" is referring to a "tenth of the produce" from the earth, such as food, animals or personal produce, these were to be set apart for a special purpose. The action of using this tenth as part of the worship of God was an accepted action before the time of Moses.

Abraham paid Tithes to Melchizedek.

Genesis 14:18-20

" 18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. 19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: 20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all."

Heb 7:1,2

"For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;"

Jacob also committed the action to God,

Genesis 28:22.

"Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

The first Mosaic law instructions on Tithing are found in Leviticus. 27:30-32.

"30 And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD.

31 And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof.

32 And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD."

Later instruction were to explain the destination and for what the tithe is to be use for:-

Numbers 18:26.

"26 Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When you take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe.

27 And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshing floor, and as the fulness of the winepress.

28 Thus you also shall offer an heave offering unto the LORD of all your tithes, which you receive of the children of Israel; and you shall give thereof the LORD'S heave offering to Aaron the priest."

Numbers 18:21-24.

"21 And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

22 Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die.

23 But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.

24 But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance."

Numbers 18:26-28.

"26 Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When you take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then you shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe.

27 And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshing floor, and as the fulness of the winepress.

28 Thus you also shall offer an heave offering unto the LORD of all your tithes, which you receive of the children of Israel; and you shall give thereof the LORD'S heave offering to Aaron the priest."

Deuteronomy 12:5,6,11,17.

"5 But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall you seek, and thither thou shalt come:

6 And thither you 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:

11 Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall you 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 you vow unto the LORD:

17 Thou may 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 14:22,23.

"22 Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. 23 And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always."

The paying of Tithes was an important part of the Jewish religious worship.

Instruction on how to select the tithe(tenth) were given, For example, to prevent a person offering poor quality live stock as a tithe they had to count the animals into a field, every tenth one was selected for the Lord and became the tithe.

Leviticus 27:32ff.

The Levites were not allowed to keep all of the Tithe for themselves, they had to offer the best of the tithe as a Tithe to the priests,

Numbers 18:26ff .

The Tithe was normally to be taken to a specific place in each tribe, the place being nominated by God. However, if this had practical problems then the Tithe could be given as equivalent in money.

Deuteronomy 14:22-27.

Every Jew was required under the Levitical law to pay three tithes:

One tithe for the Levites to live on;

One for the use of the temple and the religious feasts;

One for the poor of the land.

Unfortunately, over time the simple laws given in the Pentateuch were added too by the religious leaders so that Tithing became a heavy load, turning it into a ritual with no meaning, Matt 23:23;

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe 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. "

Luke 11:42.

"But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

The Jewish Nation later turning away from God and so failed to make there Tithes. This made the prophets very angry with the Jewish nation over their failure to fulfill their Tithing duty:

Amos 4:4;

"4 Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years:"

Malachi 3:8-10.10

"Bring you 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."

New Testament Tithing

The word "Tithing" does not appear to be given as an instruction in the New Testament. The following are references to the word:

By Jesus as part of a parable, Luke 18:12.

" 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."

Matt 23:23; and Luke 11:42;

"But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

Jesus points out the religious leaders attitude to Tithes.

In Hebrews 7:5,8,9; the writer examines the Old Testament rules on the payment of Tithes.

"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: "

In 2 Cor. 9:1-15 Paul talks of the attitude of the Believer to giving financially, to finance the ministry and that a missionary should be supported by the church.

Because God, through the writers of the New Testament, has not declared that the Old Testament law of Tithes also applies to the Christian Church. However, the basic idea of this law remains. Tithing is an obvious way to show our priorities - to put God first in our life. We are to give God the first and best of what we earn.

For a true Believer the service of God should be greater now than in Old Testament times, a Christian should be willing to go beyond the ancient Hebrew in consecrating both themselves and their possessions to God.

2 Cor. 9:7;

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

Consider Mark 12:41-44. The Lord points out that this poor widow gave more than all the others put together, though her gift was the smallest, it cost her much. The value of a gift is not the amount, but by the attitude in which it is given.

The notes on "Tithing" as a PDF file for download.

