

## Paradise Lost and Restored: What is Giving/Tithing? (Part 2)

Ricardo Campos, Pastor Grace Chapel, Orange, CA October 19, 2014

### I. Introduction

What does the Bible say about tithing, should we tithe today? If tithing isn't for today, then what does the Old Testament teach us about giving? Now whether you believe in tithing or not, are you actually giving/tithing? Does your tithing practice or the amount you give honor God? And is giving to God at the top of your list when it comes to your money?

### II. Giving in the Old Testament: *Tithing*

#### **Abraham and Jacob Tithe** (Genesis 14:20; 28:22)

In Genesis 14, after Abram defeats king Chedorlaomer and rescues his nephew Lot, Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God, blesses Abram. Then Abram decides to give him 10% of all the spoils of war. Does this mean we have to tithe today? No, because: (1) the 10% was not from Abraham's income; it was from the spoils of war, (2) this was a onetime event; there's no record of Abraham tithing again, (3) this was not a command from God; Abraham did it voluntarily, and (4) Abraham gave it to one individual not the Church—it didn't exist yet.

In Genesis 28, Isaac sends his son Jacob to find a wife from among his uncle's daughters. On the way, he stays in the city of Luz and has a dream. In the dream, the Lord repeats the promises He made to his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac. When Jacob awakes, he performs a religious act and makes a lifetime vow to give God 10% of everything God gives him. Does this mean we should tithe today? No, this was not a command; Jacob did it voluntarily as a way of honoring God for God's future blessings on him.

#### **The Levitical Tithe** (Numbers 18:21–24)

In Numbers 18:21–24, God tells Aaron how He's going to reward the rest of the Levites for their Temple duties; He's going to give them the first tithe. Does this mean we have to tithe today? No, because (1) the command was part of the Mosaic Law given to Israel not the Church, (2) the 10% was payment for the priests for their priestly duties, and (3) the 10% went to the tribe of Levi not the Church.

#### **The Party Tithe** (Deuteronomy 14:22–27, cf. 12:5–19)

In Deuteronomy 14:22–27 God commands Israel to give an additional 10%. But this time the people kept the tithe and used it to celebrate the annual festivals before God. Does this instruct us to tithe today? No, because (1) like the first tithe it was a command for Israel not the Church, (2) the 10% was used to celebrate the festivals, and (3) the 10% went to the people not the Church.

#### **The Welfare Tithe** (Deuteronomy 14:28–29)

In Deuteronomy 14:28–29 God commands Israel to give another 10% every third year. This was a welfare tithe for the poor in society: Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows. So, should we tithe today based on this? No, because (1) as with the others, this was a command for Israel not the Church, and (2) the tithe was given to the poor not the Church.

### **Other Old Testament Passages that Mention Tithing**, e.g., Malachi 3:8–10

There are other passages in the Old Testament that mention tithing. But all of them concern Israel when they were under the Mosaic Law. So they all refer to one of the three tithes in the Law. For example, Malachi 3:8–10 talks about the Levitical tithe—God says that this tithe was to provide food for His house, i.e., the Temple. Thus, this was the sustenance that went to the Levites for performing their Temple duties. Therefore, these Old Testament passages cannot be used to support tithing today. By the way, all three tithes added together equal 23.3% not 10%.

### **Tithing in the New Testament** (Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42; 18:9–12; Hebrews 7:4–10)

In Jesus' day Israel was under the Mosaic Law. Thus, all three references to tithing in the Gospels concern Israel—tithing by the Pharisees and Scribes—not the Church, which didn't exist until after Jesus' death. The last reference to tithing in the New Testament is in Hebrews, but it's a reference to the Levitical tithe and mentions Levi tithing not the Church.

## III. Giving in the Old Testament: *Giving to God First, Voluntarily, and of Your Best*

### **Voluntary Giving** (Exodus 25:1–9; 35:4–36:7)

In Exodus 25:1–9 God commands Moses to take a voluntary offering to build the Tabernacle. Exodus 35 and 36 records Israel's response; they actually had to stop them because they gave too much! 35:4–36:7. Voluntary offerings are also mentioned elsewhere, Leviticus 7:16; 22:18–23; 23:38—these were voluntary, from your heart; they weren't mandated taxes like the tithes.

### **Giving to God First and of Your Best** (Proverbs 3:9–10)

In Proverbs 3:9 God tells us to honor Him with our wealth and earnings. This is not part of the Mosaic Law, but it echoes the Law. Israel had to give to God first (and of their best) before they gave to themselves, that's what "firstfruits" means (e.g., Exodus 23:19). And if you honored God this way of your own freewill, He would bless you back, 3:10....*Is God an extortionist?* When God asks to be paid first, is He like a gangster who wants his cut up front? No! First, God doesn't need our money/possessions. It's all His anyway, Psalm 50:9–12. Second, every act of giving is an act of love and appreciation for God. It has nothing to do with appeasing Him or expecting something in return. It's simply an act of honoring love. If your gift is not from your heart, God would rather you kept it, 2 Corinthians 9:7.

## IV. Conclusion

**The Old and New Testament on Tithing**, every passage on tithing either involves one of the three tithes in the Mosaic Law or describes a voluntary individual act. Then what does the Old Testament teach us about giving? That we should voluntarily want to honor God with what He's given us. And we should think of giving to Him first and from our best not from our leftovers.

**How do I apply this to my life?** If you're still convinced that you should give 10% of your income to God, then give 10%. But do it: figure out how much money you make and then give God 10%. And let it be the first item on your list. If you think tithing doesn't apply today, then don't tithe. But you too need to figure out what you give. Is it 1%, 3%, 5%, more? Now ask yourself, "Does this amount honor God?" If the answer is "no," then increase it. If you don't give what you should—whether you tithe or not—because you're worried you won't have enough, then read Luke 12:13–34 again and realize that God promised to provide for all your needs.