

IS TITHING A NEW TESTAMENT PRINCIPLE?

By Brother Mike Sutherland

The principle of tithing and/or giving to God transcends the law. It was required of Cain and Abel and was the root cause of the first murder in the history of the world. *Genesis 4:3-8* says:

³ And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. ⁴ And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: ⁵ But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. ⁶ And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? ⁷ If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. ⁸ And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. *Genesis 4:3-8*

Though the word tithing is not mentioned in the context, the word “offering” is. Cain did not bring that which God required for an offering. It was Cain’s anger over being called out for not bringing that which God required for an offering that led to the first murder. That same problem exists today because men still love money more than they love God. **Tithing is a matter of the heart.** God’s requirement from the very beginning is that tithes and offerings would be used to support those that minister unto him and those that minister his word unto man. God formally introduces the principle of tithing in *Genesis 14:19-20* when it is said:

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. *Genesis 14:19-20*

The word “tithes” literally means “a tenth”. The events recorded in the lives of Cain, Abel, and Abraham long preceded the giving of the law to Moses at Mount Sinai in Exodus chapter 20. From *Genesis 5:3*, we know that Adam was 130 years old when Seth was born, but we do not know exactly how old Adam was when Cain and Abel were born. If Adam were say 100 years old, that would mean that Cain and Abel were born somewhere around 3,900 B.C. According to James Ussher’s chronology, the date of Seth’s birth was somewhere around 3874 B.C. The events recorded in *Genesis 14* occurred somewhere around 1,900 B.C. That means that the principle of giving offerings to God had been in effect for about 2,000 years before Abraham. The ten commandments were given somewhere around 1,490 B.C. That would mean that Abraham’s tithing preceded the law by at least 400 years. It is obvious throughout the Old Testament economy that God required both tithes and offerings. In the next to the last chapter in the Old Testament, God rebukes Israel for robbing him. He said in *Malachi 3:8-11*:

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⁸ Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. ⁹ Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. ¹⁰ Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. ¹¹ 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. *Malachi 3:8-11*

Malachi chapter three was under the law, but its principles far preceded the law. Many professing Christians today try to make tithing a matter of “the law” or an Old Testament doctrine. In the New Testament, the issue of tithing came up at least two different times in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. In *Matthew 23:23* and *Luke 11:42* the Lord Jesus Christ had this to say:

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. *Matthew 23:23*

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. *Luke 11:42*

Note that in neither case was the offending Pharisees rebuked for tithing. In fact, the Lord Jesus Christ said that they ought to have tithed on their goods. Their stinging rebuke came from the fact that they thought that tithing put them above other matters of the heart. Tithing is a matter of the heart just as judgment, mercy, and faith are. The Apostle Paul took a principle from the law and applied it to the financial support of the pastors and elders in the New Testament church

⁴ Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. *Deuteronomy 25:4*

³ Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, ⁴ Have we not power to eat and to drink? ⁵ Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? ⁶ Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? ⁷ Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? ⁸ Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? ⁹ For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? ¹⁰ Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. ¹¹ If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall

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reap your carnal things? ¹² If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. ¹³ Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? ¹⁴ Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. *1 Corinthians 9:3-14*

¹⁷ Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. ¹⁸ For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward. *1 Timothy 5:17-18*

Twice in Paul's epistles the Holy Ghost warns us that we are not to "muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn". That ox in the New Testament is those that minister in the New Testament church. They are the workmen of the New Testament church. Paul pulls up "the law" and applies it to New Testament giving. Mind you that we have already proven that tithes and offerings transcend the law. What the Holy Ghost says is that they that work in the ministry "should live of the gospel". The context of *1 Timothy 5:17-18* proves that the phrase "worthy of double honour" is talking about financial support for those that minister the gospel. What "double honour" literally means is double financial support. What does all this say?

It says that, just as it is in the Old Testament, the tithing principle that is rooted in what many call "the law" has some very practical application to the New Testament church. If tithing is not required of the New Testament believer, then how are our church facilities and church ministries to be supported? How are we to send forth the missionaries commanded in *Matthew 28:19-20*? How are we to support our pastors and preachers? Do we expect our pastors and elders to minister to us AND work a secular job to support themselves financially? If you reject tithes and offerings for the New Testament church, then you must take Jehudi's penknife and cut *1 Corinthians 9:3-14*, *2 Corinthians* chapters 8 and 9, and *1 Timothy 5:17-18* out of your version of the Bible. Chapters 8 and 9 in *2 Corinthians* deal with the financial support of missionaries. The Holy Ghost further elaborates on the fact that tithing transcends the law in *Hebrews 7:1-10* where he states:

¹ 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; ² 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; ³ Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. ⁴ Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. ⁵ 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: ⁶ But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the

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promises.⁷ And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.⁸ And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.⁹ And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.¹⁰ For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.
Hebrews 7:1-10

You can argue about who Melchisedec is, but it is obvious from the book of Genesis and this passage here in Hebrews 7 that he is God: whether he be God the Father or God the Holy Ghost you will have to decide for yourself. Melchisedec cannot be the Lord Jesus Christ because Melchisedec had no father and no mother. The Father of the Lord Jesus Christ was God himself; if you will, God the Holy Ghost. God the Father had no father and no mother. It can also be said that the Holy Ghost had no mother, but did he have a father? Could it be that Melchisedec was an Old Testament physical manifestation of the Godhead: a perfect type of Christ in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily? We digress. The whole point of this discussion is that Abraham, who was outside the law, paid tithes. Abraham (Abram) was giving tithes to this Melchisedec and the Holy Ghost makes it plain in *Hebrews 7:9-10* that the principle of tithing transcends the law because it was given before the law and before the Old Testament was written. The Holy Ghost makes it plain that Levi, who was under the law, paid tithes in Abraham, who was NOT under the law. Abraham in turn paid tithes in Melchisedec. Those who have a problem with tithing in the New Testament either hate the church or do not love the Lord Jesus Christ and his church like they ought to. We suspect that the root of the problem is described in *1 Timothy 6:9-10*:

⁹But 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.¹⁰ 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. *1 Timothy 6:9-10*

At the root of the problem is the love of money. Those who oppose New Testament tithing are lightning fast to accuse pastors who preach on tithes and offerings of being, as the old Englishman would say, “money grubbing lusters of filthy lucre” while they are turtle slow to offer up financial support for the ministry. Their giving is as the oozing of molasses in February. They want to be ministered to in spiritual things, but they do not want to minister to the physical needs of those who minister to them. That is the height of selfishness and hypocrisy. Since God loveth a cheerful giver, how do you think he feels about those who fight New Testament tithes and offerings?

Tithing is a firstfruits offering. That means that you tithe ten percent off of your gross income before any employer, union, or government agency hits it for taxes and dues. Tithing is a matter of the heart. Tithing is actually a love offering. If you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you are going to tithe.

If you are miserly in tithing, you are going to be beggarly in God’s spiritual and financial blessings. That is a scriptural principle. We are not talking about unscriptural gifts and “seed money” to unscriptural para church organizations such as charities and television ministries. Tithing is to be “storehouse tithing”. The New Testament storehouses are local church ministries and not some seedy television “ministry”.

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As an aside, soliciting money for prayer clothes is not scriptural. Prayer clothes are for Muslims and other of Satan's sinister ministers.

We close with the consequences of not tithing:

Doing
Everything
But
Tithing

If you did not catch that, if you will not tithe, you are accumulating a massive **DEBT**, not to man, but to God.