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Should Christians Pay Tithes?



*.... I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith
that was once for all entrusted to the saints. Jude 1:3 NIV*

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Genesis 14:20 (NIV) “²⁰ *And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand. Then Abraham gave him a tenth of everything.*”

Proverbs 3:9-10 (NIV) “⁹ *Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops;* ¹⁰ *then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.*”

Malachi 3:8-11 (NIV) “⁸ *‘Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. ‘But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’ ‘In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are under a curse – the whole nation of you – because you are robbing me. ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. ¹¹ I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,’ says the Lord Almighty.*”

Genesis 28:22 (NIV) “²² *and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.*”

A common charge launched against the Christian church and preachers today is that “all they want is your money.” To validate their charge, many will point out the fact that during church services, the offering basket is passed around several times instead of just once. They also point out the fact that most, if not all, television preachers close their broadcast asking for money, which some believe is there attempt to sell the blessing’s of God.

I would be dishonest if I didn’t admit that some churches, in my opinion, do pass the offering plate too much and by doing so, give folks the impression that they’re only interested in their money. It is also true that most if not all t.v. preachers ask for money, and in my opinion it does give the impression that they are trying to sell God’s blessings to their audience.

However, whether or not any church or t.v. preacher is after folks money is not for me to say since I cannot judge anyone’s heart. I can have an opinion, but that’s as far as it goes. However, it’s not whether or not churches or preachers are after money we want to focus on, our focus is on whether or not Christians should pay tithes based on the biblical teaching and example.

In order to answer the question, should Christians pay tithes in an objective way, and not come across as a pastor/preacher after folks’ money, I’ve decided to use two (2) factors which are:

1. What is the general teaching on tithes in the Bible?
2. What did the New Testament Church do as it relates to giving or tithing?

General Biblical Teaching on Tithing

When the subject of tithing comes up, it is inevitable that Malachi 3:8-10, the passage commonly used to support tithing will come up. However, many reject the usage of Malachi 3:8-10, usually for two reasons:

- 1) In Malachi 2:1 (NIV), we read, *“And now this admonition is for you, O priests.”* They say this means that from Malachi 2:1 – 3:10, God is talking to the priests, not the church. Therefore Malachi 3:8-10 cannot be used by the church/preacher to support the idea of tithing in the New Testament Church since it’s not intended for the Church.
- 2) Malachi 3:8-10 is given to those under the “law.” According to Romans 6:14 (NIV), we read, *“...you are not under law, but under grace.”* Therefore tithing is not for Christians since they are not under the law.

Other biblical passages, usually from the Old Testament, are also pointed out on the subject of tithing. For example, Proverbs 3:9-10 (NIV) says, *“Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine!”* The list of scriptures used to support tithing can go on and on, however, some will always find a reason to reject the idea of giving tithes.

The list of reasons to reject tithing may be longer for some; however, for the student of scripture, God’s word not excuses govern their giving. With that said, let’s look closer at God’s word. First, we must define “tithe.” A “tithe” is ten percent or a “tenth” of your income or possessions. For example: If you have one hundred dollars (\$100), a “tithe” would be ten dollars (\$10). Second, we must consider the question, “Where did the idea of giving a “tithe” originate?” To answer the question, we look at Genesis 14:18-20 (NIV) where we read, *“¹⁸ Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, ¹⁹ and he blessed Abram saying, ‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. ²⁰ And blessed be God Most High who delivered your enemies into your hand.’ Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.”*

There are five (5) things I’d like to point out from these verses:

- Nowhere was Abram forced or told he had to give a tithe to Melchizedek, this a “free will” tithe.
- This is the first mention of tithing in the Bible.
- This tithing was before the law and eliminates the excuse that tithing is for those under the law.
- Abraham was already rich before the mention of tithing.

- Abram did not tithe from his own personal wealth, he gave a tithe from the things taken in war. In Genesis 14:20 (Amp) we read, “...*Who has given your foes into your hand! And [Abram] gave him a tenth of all [he had taken].*”

It should be noted that in Genesis 14:22-23 (NIV), Abram said, “²²...*I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath* ²³*that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to say, ‘I made Abram rich.’*”

It is clear then that Abram had already said he would take nothing for himself from the things taken in war. However, we see from Genesis 14:20 that the tithe Abram gave to Melchizedek was not from his own possessions. Although Abram did give a tithe of all that he had taken in war, we do not find recorded in scripture him giving a tithe from his own personal wealth or possessions. With that said, Abram’s example of “free will” tithing is not a good example of tithing churches/preachers want to use.

The New Testament Church and Tithing

There are several assumptions made regarding the New Testament Church’s position on tithing. Some of them are:

- The New Testament Church taught that you’re robbing God if you don’t tithe.
- The New Testament Church taught that you’ll be cursed with a curse if you don’t tithe.
- The New Testament Church taught that you won’t be blessed unless you tithe.

However, none of these statements can be found in the New Testament. In fact, there is no New Testament **command** to pay tithes. Some will argue that tithing is implied in the New Testament and based on these implications the current church should give tithes. However, most references used to support tithing in the New Testament Church are from the Old Testament and do not directly apply to the Church. The best way to determine whether or not the New Testament Church paid tithes or not is to examine the New Testament openly and honestly. Not only should we examine tithing, but also the New Testament examples for any giving.

Two crystal clear examples of New Testament giving that shed light on the subject come to mind. In Acts Chapter four, verse thirty two (NIV), we read, “*All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.*”

In verse 34-35 (NIV) we read, *“³⁴ There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.”*

From our examination of the New Testament Church’s giving we learn:

- Nobody considered their possessions their own anymore; they realized that **all** they had belonged to God and they freely gave what they had.
- What they owned, they sold as the need arose in the Church.
- They didn’t give a mere tithe (10%) of the money they got for the sale of their possessions; **they gave 100%** of it and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

If we must insist on clinging to the idea that tithing is not a New Testament command, then we as Christians, should follow the New Testament Church’s example for giving. The clear example we have is the Christian giving 100% of what he/she has. For whatever reason, most of us would not give 100% of what they have to the Church. Therefore, until we can match the New Testament Church’s example of giving, which is 100%, a tithe is a good place to start in the area of giving.

Although many passages used by some to support tithing do not apply to the New Testament Church or current Church, I personally believe the promises of God do apply to those that give their tithes. To be specific, Malachi 3:8-10 gives us three things that God promised to give to those that gave their tithes. Consider the following:

- In verse 10, God said he would open up the windows (more than one window) and pour them out a blessing they would not have enough room to receive. I believe tithers are blessed above and beyond everyone else.
- In verse 11, God said he would “rebuke the devourer” so he would not destroy the fruits of the ground. I believe that tithers may not always see abundance, but will not lose what they have.
- Also in verse 11, God said he would protect their vines in such a way that it would not “cast her fruit before the time in the field.” I believe that the property and etc. of tithers is under special divine protection.

So, should Christians pay tithes? Absolutely!! A tithe is the very least a Christian should be giving back to God. However, there are a few things to keep in mind regarding your tithes:

- When you tithe to your local church you should not see it as giving money to your church or the pastor, you should always understand it as giving unto the Lord. It is the Lord that we always aim to please and show our appreciation through our giving, not the church or pastor.
- Your tithes should be given to the local church you are a member of. Unless you have made a special agreement with your local church to do, otherwise, always give your tithes to the local church where you are a member.
- **Never** give your tithes to a ministry on t.v. or otherwise while you are a member of a local church. It is your responsibility to support the local church that you are a member of with your tithes. Any preacher or ministry that would ask you to give them your tithes instead of the local church you are a member of is a thief and should be ignored. In fact, any attempt made to steal the tithes from a local church from any outside church, preacher, or ministry should be reported to the pastor of that local church immediately.

Finally, my brothers and sisters in Christ, it's time to shed the false notion that 10% of what we have belongs to God while 90% belongs to us. Psalm 24:1 (KJV) says, *“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.”*

So when we tithe, we are giving back to God what is his anyway, everything belongs to him. It's not that God needs your tithe that causes us to give them; we give them to say, “Here Lord, thank you for your many blessings you've bestowed upon me. Thank you for entrusting me with the house I live in, the money in the bank, the car I drive, and the clothes I wear.” To not give tithes is saying to God you neither appreciate nor recognize his many blessings that he has bestowed upon you. If God took one blessing from us, say our health, how would we be able to even earn a living? Show God you appreciate his many blessings and that you recognize that all you have belongs to him by giving your tithes.

God Bless,
Pastor D. M. Duncan

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