

The Tithing Law

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There is nothing that any human being can do to compensate for the spiritual and physical blessings that are freely given to them by their Creator. The greatest blessing that can be received is everlasting life that was made possible through the sacrifice of one of the heavenly sons of the only true God, and that son is known as Jesus Christ.

Therefore, it is a characteristic of God, and those who obey Him, to practice giving to others. In order to emphasize this principle, God has instructions within His law that are meant to teach this way of giving and sacrificing. If all of mankind were to follow these instructions, God's love and concern for His creation would be clearly evident because a portion of His blessings would be passed to others on an ongoing basis.

One of the ways this can be accomplished is through laws pertaining to our finances and other material blessings. This is summarized in a number of scriptures, and the following is an example,

Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the firstfruits of all your increase (Prov. 3:9; *NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted*).

In the above scripture, it is apparent that we are to use some of the material blessings that God gives us in a manner that shows honor and respect toward Him. From the opening pages of the Bible, we see a righteous individual doing exactly what is mentioned in Proverbs 3:9,

Abel also (i.e. in addition to the fruit of the ground, *all comments in parenthesis added throughout the document unless otherwise noted*) brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat (which is God's portion –cf. Lev. 3:16-17). And the Lord respected Abel and his offering (Gen. 4:4).

Abel was regarded by Jesus Christ as being righteous (Mt. 23:35) which means that he obeyed the commands given to him,

...For all your commandments are righteous (Ps. 119:172).

...And all Your commandments are truth (Ps. 119:151).

...And Your law is truth (Ps. 119:142).

At some point in Abel's upbringing he was taught about God's truth, which involved obedience to His commands and law. Because Abel obeyed the law regarding sacrifices and offerings, he was righteous. In other words, he did what was right in accordance with the commands he was given, either through his parents or from one of God's heavenly agents. Abel did not come up with the idea of bringing offerings. Instead, he was obeying the instructions given to him

regarding how to bring an offering. He could not have foreknown that the fat of the offering was God's portion without prior instruction (Lev. 3:16-17).

We see many examples of God's heavenly agents interacting with certain people throughout the Bible, and imparting information or giving specific commands to them (Gen. 18; 32:30; Ex. 3:2; Jo. 6:13-15).

Abel knew the law regarding the firstlings of the flock long before Moses gave the same instruction to the nation of Israel,

...that you shall set apart (Lit.- cause to pass over) to the Lord all that open the womb, that is, every firstling that comes from an animal which you have; the males shall be the Lord's (Ex. 13:12).

Everything that first opens the womb of all flesh, which they bring to the Lord, whether man or beast, shall be yours (i.e. Aaron and his family's); nevertheless the first born of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem (Num. 18:15)

But the firstborn of a cow, the first born of a sheep, or the first born of a goat you shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar, and burn their fat as an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord (Num. 18:17).

The offering of firstlings during the time of Abel and later during the time of Israel was prophetic because it pointed to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ,

For whom He (the only true God) foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His son (Jesus Christ) that he (Christ) might be the firstborn (i.e. from the dead – cf. Col. 1:18) among many brethren (Rom. 8:29).

In addition to the firstlings of the flock, the family of Aaron was to receive the firstfruits of each harvest,

All the best of the oil, all the best of the new wine and grain, their firstfruits which they offer to the Lord, I have given them to you (i.e. Aaron and his family). Whatever first ripe fruit is in their land, which they bring to the Lord, shall be yours... (Num. 18:12-13).

These firstfruits of the harvest were also prophetic because they pointed to the firstfruit harvest of mankind that was made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who was the firstling offering given by God the Father in order to cleanse the sins of mankind,

Of His (God the Father's) own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures (Jas. 1:18).

What the firstlings pictured prophetically has now been fulfilled in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. What the firstfruits pictured will not be fulfilled until Christ's return. These are still being gathered, spiritually speaking.

As the animal sacrificial system has been fulfilled through the sacrifice of Christ, the need for a priesthood to administer these sacrifices has ended. Therefore,

the produce of the firstlings and the firstfruits is no longer required to sustain this priesthood. Some argue today that the New Testament priesthood is entitled to receive offerings from the lay members, but this is incorrect because every member of the spiritual household of God is a priest,

..you (members of the church) also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ (1Pet. 2:5).

But you (members of the church) are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people.. (1Pet. 2:9).

As every church member is a holy priest why would some raise themselves up above others to the point where they claim the right to receive offerings?

But Jesus having called them (his disciples) toward *himself*, said, “You know that the rulers of the nations Lord over them and the great men exercise authority over them. ²⁶ “It shall not be this way among you (this is a command), but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant (as Christ was to us); ²⁷ “and whoever among you wishes to be first shall be your bondservant: ²⁸ “Just as the ¹ Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom in place of many” (Mt. 20:25-28; RNT).

Every priest today has the responsibility to provide for his household, especially the household of God. This has both physical as well as spiritual implications,

Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. ⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸ For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the spirit will of the spirit reap everlasting life (Gal. 6:6-8).

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).

How we manage our finances, including what we do with those finances, is a clear indication of what we value most,

Do not store up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and corrosion destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor corrosion destroy, and where thieves do not break in or steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there also your heart will be (Mt. 6:19-21; RNT).

Christ is showing that our main focus has to go well beyond the affairs of everyday life. Our priority has to be doing God's work and living in accordance with His law,

For this reason I say to you be not anxious about your life (do not focus on the physical aspects of life), or of what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; not even your body, what you shall put on. Is not life greater than food and clothing for the body? ²⁶ “Consider the birds of the heaven, that they do not sow, neither do they harvest, nor gather into the storehouses, *and* yet your heavenly Father nourishes them. Are you not of more significance than they? ²⁷ “And which of you, being anxious (wrong focus), is able to add one cubit to his life's span? ²⁸ “And about clothing, why are you anxious? Think about the lilies of the field; they do not labor, neither do they spin. ²⁹ “Yet I say to you that not even

Solomon in all his glory was clothed like one of these. ³⁰But if the grass of the field, which is today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, God so adorns; *Will He* not much more you of little faith? ³¹“Do not be anxious then, saying, ‘What might we eat?’ or ‘What might we drink?’ or ‘With what might we clothe ourselves?’” ³²“For all these things the nations seek after. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these. ³³“But seek first the kingdom of God (main priority) and His righteousness (obedience to God’s law); and all these will be added to you (Mt. 6:25-33; RNT).

Moses did not eat for forty days because his focus was entirely on doing God’s work at that time. He did not starve to death because God looked after him (Ex. 34:28).

If our focus is on doing God’s work, we will look for every opportunity to contribute in whatever way we can. For the majority of mankind’s sojourn on this planet, the work of God has been administered by the priesthood of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:1-10; 7:1-28). Abraham recognized this priesthood, and when the opportunity presented itself, Abraham gave a tithe (i.e. 10 percent) as an expression of gratitude for what God had just done for him,

Then Melchizedek king of Salem (peace) brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. ¹⁹ And he blessed him (Abraham) and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; ²⁰ and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And he (Abraham) gave him (Melchizedek) a tithe (10 percent) of all (Gen. 14:18-20).

This act of giving a tithe was not a coincidence because one of Abraham’s descendants, Jacob, did the same thing,

And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth (tithe) to You (Gen. 28:22).

Jacob’s tithe would also have been given to Melchizedek as the priesthood of Levi did not exist at this time.

So Abraham and Jacob understood, before this aspect of God’s law was given to the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai, that a tithe of whatever God gives to us actually belongs to Him,

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 to the Lord (Lev. 27:30).

As God does not require the tithes for Himself, he dedicates them to His work,

Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as a possession in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting (Num. 18:21).

God’s work today does not revolve around a physical tabernacle. The physical tabernacle has been superseded by a spiritual house,

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation (Heb. 9:11).

So the temple of God today is not a physical building but rather a spiritual structure comprising many members, who all are to contribute to God's work,

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are (1Cor. 3:16-17).

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have (received) from God, and you are not your own (i.e. to do as you please) (1Cor. 6:19).

...For we (i.e. collective church members) are the temple of the living God (2Cor. 6:16).

The law of tithing continues to apply to God's work today. All members of the priesthood are responsible for administering their own tithes for the purpose of doing God's work. These funds do not belong to a select group of individuals within a church organization who claim to be the modern representatives, or type, of the Levitical priesthood. This priesthood was completely suspended in 70 CE, and Paul foretold this event,

Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? ¹² For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law (Heb. 7:11-12).

Melchizedek received tithes, and those who are true Christians are part of that same priesthood today,

..but he (Melchizedek) whose genealogy is not derived from them (Levitical line) received tithes from Abraham and blessed him (Abraham) who had the promises (Heb. 7:6).

As Christ is Melchizedek (Heb. 7:8; also see the study: Melchizedek), he is entitled to receive the tithes of his people and use them to do his Father's work,

But Jesus answered to them, "My Father is working until now, and I work" (Jn. 5:17; RNT).

The work of God was constantly thwarted because the nation of Israel refused to obey God's command regarding tithing,

"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. ¹⁰ Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food (spiritual as well a physical) in My house, and prove Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing (spiritual and physical) that there will not be room enough to receive it (Mal. 3:8-10).

Christ prophesied that this condition would continue well into the future, and partly because the majority of people's treasure is in their physical pursuits rather than serving and obeying God,

Then he (Christ) said to his disciples, "The ¹harvest indeed is plentiful, but the ²workers are few. ³⁸Therefore ¹beseech the Lord of the ²harvest so that He might send out ³workers into His ²harvest" (Mt. 9:36-38; RNT).

Christ noted that tithing was still to be observed during his ministry but he told the Pharisees that tithing alone was not enough,

Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you give a tithe of mint and anise, and cumin, but you neglect the heavier provisions of the law: judgment and mercy and faith; these it was necessary to do, and the others not to neglect (i.e. tithing) (Mt. 23:23; RNT).

Christ expects those he is working with to sacrifice whatever is necessary to get his Father's work done. He predicted that his followers would do an even greater work because there would be many more doing the same work he was doing. Although it is primarily a spiritual work, we are still physical beings living in a physical world that requires physical sustenance, and expenditure,

Amen, Amen I say to you, he who trusts in me, the works which I do, that one will do also; and greater than these he will do because I go to the Father (Jn. 14:12; RNT).

During Christ's ministry there were expenses that had to be paid, and there was a communal money box that his followers used,

But he (Judas) said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and possessed the moneybox where things had been thrown in (by others) , *which* he was taking (Jn. 12:6; RNT).

Christ knew the heart of Judas, and knew that he was stealing from the money box. Christ knows who is working and who is hindering his Father's work today,

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb.13:8).

Tithing pre-dates the law given at Mt. Sinai, and is a means through which God gets His work done. Each member today has the responsibility to manage their finances and contribute as they are able, and with a willing attitude. It could be argued that a tithe is the bare minimum standard of giving,

But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver (2Cor. 9:6-7; cf. 1Chr. 29:9, 17).

In fact, when other aspects of God's law are examined closely there are many examples of His people going above and beyond the commands they have been given,

Israel was commanded to keep the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread for seven days, but the people were so grateful and joyous during the time of Hezekiah's reforms that they celebrated for an additional seven days (2Chr. 30:21-23).

The apostle Paul made it very plain that God's people today do not have to approach God the Father through a Levitical High Priest (Heb. 5:1-3). Instead, God's people have the responsibility to go directly to their Father in Christ's name and discuss all the matters pertaining to their life and conduct, including what they do with their finances. What God's people do with their finances today is between themselves and the only true God; it is not the business of, nor under the control of any hierarchal church structure or organization,

For through him (Christ) we both have access by one spirit to the Father (Eph. 2:18).

Also in Hebrews 10:19-22,

Therefore, brethren, having confidence to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by a new and living way which he consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, his flesh,²¹ and having a High Priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

When the church members in Corinth went to God about conditions that were having a negative affect on the brethren in Judea, they decided to put aside relief funds as they were able,

For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have. For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened (2Cor. 8:12-13; cf. 1Cor. 16:1-3).

When the apostle Paul had physical needs the church members in Macedonia looked after him,

And when I was present with you (in Corinth), and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what was lacking to me the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied... (2Cor. 11:9).

In most cases, Paul was able to provide for himself out of income he derived from tent making,

After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.² And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla and he came to them.³ So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers (Ac. 18:1-3).

You yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.³⁵ I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he said, 'It is more blessed to give than receive' (Ac. 20:34-35).

In all the New Testament examples, we see church members taking responsibility for the needs of others. No where do we see them handing this responsibility over to a physical priesthood (church ministry) to administer as they see fit (Ac. 2:44; 4:32).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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