

## CHAPTER 12

### ON TITHING & GIVING IN THE CHURCH

Tithing is giving to God (or for service to God), one-tenth of a person's income. I don't know how many of the religious groups require their members to tithe. The number though, is large. Even the loosely connected followers of some TV evangelists are cajoled into tithing.

*The problem with tithing is that it is neither required nor desired by God.*

In the denominations that adhere to this doctrine, the ministers and other church leaders are engaging in a great financial 'ripoff' of its members. In addition, they engender an unnecessary, but heavy burden of guilt...especially among members who try, yet just cannot afford to tithe. Obviously, not everyone is rich..... and not everyone is poor. A certainty though, is that there are a lot more poor people than rich ones. Those who are financially well off, have little trouble paying their one-tenth amount. Those who are poor however, usually encounter financial hardship because of tithing. A tenth of a very small income can be a huge amount of money to someone barely able to feed the children at home.

Those who tithe, seem to be continually exposed to a form of emotional blackmail from their leaders. So they continue the practice. They are taught that their sacrifice will not go unrewarded by God. Their leaders practically guarantee it. Those who decide not to tithe are often riddled with guilt over not having kept up with the periodic offerings of the one-tenth amount.

With a careful study of the scriptures, you can see why their view of tithing is *NOT* a correct one. The time of sacrificing is over. The Old Covenant is past, and the New Covenant ushered in the era of the church. In the church, the scriptures teach us that giving is a different concept than it was under the Law. This was one of the many important things Paul was trying to tell the Jews in the Book of Hebrews. The final sacrifice has been made- Jesus died for the sins of all mankind; there is no other sacrifice due or expected by God that could come close to that made by His Son;

*Heb. 10:1-4 (NIV)*

*The law is only a shadow of the good things that are*

*coming- not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*

People don't seem to realize that offerings in this church era are not for the purpose of sacrifice. Their offerings are to provide for the functioning and administration of the church, and for carrying out the intended purpose of the church..... which is to provide for and ensure salvation at the end of all things.

Let's investigate then, the scriptural basis for why tithing is *NOT* required by God, and let's find out what God indeed does require of the church in the way of the offerings.

#### VISITOR:

Tithing was a long-standing tradition of the Old Covenant that God made with his chosen people. We are simply continuing the plan that was long ago set up; if it pleased God then, well..... it should equally well please him now;

*Gen. 14:20 (KJV)*

*... And blessed be the most high God which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.*

*Mal. 3:8-10 (KJV)*

*Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove 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.*

ME:

These statements are indeed, biblical truths. Their application however, was in the era of the Old Law. The requirement for giving the tenth part of income back to God, was an important part of God's requirement for Israel.

For the church however, Jesus established a transition in thinking about the tithe. Once the New Covenant was established and the church formed, a new plan for giving to God and for serving God, came into being. Look at these New Testament scriptures in which Jesus is showing that a rigid rule for giving the tenth of income is unimportant. Jesus knew that the church would soon be instituted. He knew how the giving was to be done. What matters now, are the intentions and commitment of the one doing the giving;

*Mark 12:41-44 (NIV)*

*Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said. "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."*

Paul's letter to the church at Corinth gives us firm indication of how members of Christ's body (the church) are to give. Perhaps the most direct statement on the subject is this one;

*I Cor. 16:1 & 2 (NIV; my underlining)*

*Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so*

*that when I come no collection will have to be made.*

Within the church then, the giving was not the tenth of income. It was according to a person's means. When you give according to how you've prospered, someone rich will likely far exceed the tenth of income. A very poor person will most likely give a lot less than the tenth.... and not feel guilty about it;

*II Cor. 8:1-12 (NIV; my underlining)*

*And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability.... see that you also excel in this grace of giving. ... And here is my advice about what is best for you in this matter: Last year you were the first not only to give but also to have the desire to do so. Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.*

*II Cor. 9:5-7 (NIV; my underlining)*

*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly, or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

In II Cor. Chapter 8, those who gave 'even beyond their ability' may easily have only been able to give an amount whose percentage was far *short* of ten percent of income. In Chapter 9 of II Cor., giving what one has decided, may well easily exceed the ten percent requirement.

Remember, the church is Christ's body.... its members are the Christians being saved. The establishment of the church constitutes a significant part of

God's New Covenant with mankind. Under this covenant, the Old Law steps aside, in deference to the New Law;

*Heb. 7:5 (NIV)*

*Now the Law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people.....*

*Heb. 7:18 & 19 (NIV)*

*The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.*

*Heb. 8:6 & 7 (NIV)*

*But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with the first covenant, no place could have been sought for another. But God found fault with the people...*

So, if you are bound by some denominational yoke demanding that you present your tithe, consider all these scriptures about the New Testament church. Think hard about their meaning... and compare them to what your leaders may be fervently teaching in error.