

## **GIVING – SHOULD WE STILL TITHE?**

In our study we aim to show that the practice of tithing or the giving of a tenth was a scriptural principle clearly practiced in the Old Testament but with no such teaching given for Christians today. We shall see as we investigate scripture that higher goals are expected from those who today are living for God. We will also establish that the teaching of giving to get from God or the explanation that we are not enjoying enough blessing because we do not give enough is to look at the principle from the wrong angle. We only give in return for what God has given to us. Such is clearly taught e.g. “we love Him because He first loved us” 1 John 4 v 19.

**PRINCIPLE PRACTISED** – The first man to offer his tithe was Abram when in Gen 14 he offered a tithe of the spoils of his victory on the battle field to Melchizedek. The offer clearly indicated that Abram had received from God and would use this to support Melchizedek, the man in service for God. A further example is found in Gen 28 v 20 – 22 when Jacob had his experience with God at Bethel and it forms part of a vow. Based on God giving to Jacob then he would reciprocate by giving a tenth.

Both of these incidents clearly pre date God’s dealings with Israel or the giving of the law. Interestingly when the nation of Israel are instructed to prepare a dwelling place for God in Exo 25 – 35 there is no mention of them giving a tenth to build God’s house. Scripture does however speak of the “willing hearted” 35 v 5 v 22 v 29 and also those “whose heart stirred them up” v 21 v 26. These contributed to the work of God.

**WHAT DID THEY TITHE?** – We very much think of the tithe as being an amount of money that would be given. Scripture teaches that it was more based on the produce that the people had received so in Lev 27 v 30 reference is made to the seed and fruit of the land and in v 32 it is the herd and the flock. In this section v 31 seems to indicate that where they were unwilling to give such and wanted to give money then they were required to add the fifth to the value of the tithe.

**WHAT DID THE TITHE SUPPORT?** – Having constructed a tabernacle for God with the need for those to undertake the varied services that were involved there was clearly a need to support such. So we are instructed in Num 18 how this would be provided. V 20 reminds us that Aaron and his descendants would have “no inheritance” but that through the provision of the people giving their tithe then there was support for those who served God v 24 “But the tithes of the children of Israel which they offer ..... I have given to the Levites”

**WHERE IS IT PRACTISED?** – Among other scriptures we find it in 11 Chron 31 v 5 – 10 where the scripture records the amount given as being “in abundance”. In Neh 10 v 37 – 39 the people who have returned from captivity are reminded of their responsibility. Sad to note that in ch 13 the Levites are having to depend on what they themselves can produce from land which they should never have had to resort to. In Mal 3 as the O/T closes the people are charged with having robbed God and when they question this they are told v 10 “bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse” and the promise of God is “I will open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing”.

**WHAT ARE THE NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES?** – There are two refs in the Gospels one repeated twice. The Lord Jesus questions the actions of the Pharisees in giving tithes of spices yet missing the “weightier” matters of the law Matt 23 and Luke 11. The second occasion is in the prayer of the Pharisee in the temple in Luke 18 where he prays “I give tithes”. Neither could be construed as teaching from the Lord Jesus that we should tithe today. The only other refs to tithes is in Heb 7 where the writer refers to the fact that the Levites were supported by the giving of tithes and that Abram gave a tithe to Melchizedek. Again no basis to teach that we should tithe today. Paul makes no reference to the giving of a tithe either in his nine church epistles or his four pastoral letters. Peter, James and John are equally silent. Great care must be taken when bringing Old Testament truth into the New when it is not specifically spoken in the New. Also in the teaching of the Lord Jesus he did make the point that there was a difference and we could not interpret Him as lessening the teaching of the Old. In the sermon on the mount in Matt 5 he said v21 “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time Thou shalt not kill ..... v 22 But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment”. He did go on to add similar “but I say unto you” in v28 v 32 v 34 v 39 v 44.

The New Testament has more to say about **GIVING OR PRESENTING**.

Rom 12 v 1 “Present your bodies a living sacrifice”. Does this not go far further than a tithe? The widow in Mark 12 in giving her “two mites” was giving “all that she had”

Clear teaching is given regarding the people of God **GIVING** in the letters that Paul wrote. They would give -

**REGULARLY** – 1 Cor 16 v 2 “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store”

**PROPORTIONATELY** – 1 Cor 16 v 2 “as God hath prospered him” 11 Cor 8 v 12 “according to that a man hath”.

**WILLINGLY** – 11 Cor 8 v 8 . Paul writes regarding giving to support the believers in Jerusalem but “not by commandment”. He brings the supreme example “ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor”. In ch 9 v 7 he writes that the giving was to be done “not grudgingly”.

**EQUALLY** (as to the burden) – 11 Cor 8 v 13 & 14 teaches the need to share so that a few are not “burdened” and also envisages a time when the tables are turned and those at Corinth receive help from those whom they have helped

**LIBERALLY** – 11 Cor 9 v 6 “he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully”. The farmer cannot expect a harvest unless first he has sown. His return will be proportionate to what he has sown.

While in the O/T there would be some excluded who did not have 10 in the first place to part with the tithe in N/T there appears to be room for all. There were those giving out of “deep poverty” 11 Cor 8 v 2. We do not measure in pure financial terms “first gave their own selves to the Lord” 11 Cor 8 v 5. This is the true message again of “present your bodies”. Giving has much to do with attitude “God loveth a cheerful giver” 11 Cor 9 v 7. All giving is relative “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift” 11 Cor 9 v 15. Any little that I give even if I present my body a living sacrifice could never compare with this.