

Financial Principles of the Bible

Part 4: The Tithe is Not from the Law

BRAD ETTORE
AGATHOS CHURCH
SEPTEMBER 20TH, 2015

Full Text (for reading on your own)

The Right Mindset About Money

It is very important that we have the proper mindset regarding finances before we even try to lay the foundational kingdom principles regarding finances. If we don't have the proper mindset regarding finances, we can learn the kingdom principles and even begin to operate in them, and they may work to some degree. But if we don't have that proper mindset, those principles are not going to operate in their fullness in our lives – and what little bit does work, you are going to find yourself struggling with heart issues. Despite being a believer, you too will experience a lot of the “piercing through with sorrows” that those that come into success through the world's system experience. However, if we approach finances with the mindset that God wants us to have, Proverbs 10:22 tells us that “the blessing of the Lord makes one rich and He adds no sorrow with it.” God's blessing is pure joy in our life.

God is for wealth and for blessings in our life. God takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servants. (Ps. 35:27) God likes our prosperity. He is for it. He designed it. God even claims the gold and silver to be His. (Haggai 2:8) Money is God's idea. Sex is the same way. God created sex – it is His idea; He is for it! But like many other things, there are ways He wants us to operate in it and ways He does not want us to operate in it. God is for money – for us having wealth – not against it at all!

OK, now that we know God's heart posture towards money, we need to establish what our heart posture towards it should be. And here is what our heart posture should be: NEVER allow money to become your source! That's the danger of it. Money wants to suck you in and make itself your God. Jesus warned us about exactly this saying “you cannot serve both God and mammon.” (Mt. 6:24) Choose who you will serve. We have to have the right heart posture toward money, thinking “my Father is for it and HE is my source always! Money is never my source! It is not my career, it is not my job, it not even my own abilities, intelligence, etc that I depend on. My job, talents, and bank account are not my source – God ALONE is my source always!” It is easy to say “amen” to that – but we need to have that truth way beyond mental assent. We have to know that in our heart!

The reason that the children of Israel went through the wilderness for so long was that God was getting His people to trust that He is their source – but they just wouldn't get it – so they just kept going around the mountain. God was saying “I really want to take you into something far greater

than this – it is called the promised land - but you’ve got to realize that I’m your source! All God was doing during that time was sustaining them. It was a supernatural sustenance: their clothes were not wearing out for 40 years, water was flowing out of rocks, manna was on the ground, quail were falling out of the sky. But they still complained! “Where’s our next meal?” they groaned. We’ve got to get beyond that. It’s once we realize that God is our sustenance that we can move into the promised land. God will promote us because He knows the riches won’t then destroy us. Once we know that God’s our source (not the riches), then He can pour the blessings into us!

The Foundational Kingdom Financial Principle

God likes our prosperity and He alone is our source. That’s the groundwork on which we can begin to build our house of wealth (blessing) according to the financial principles of the Kingdom. Being blessed financially means your needs are met AND you are able to meet the needs of others! If only your needs are met, that’s not wealth; that’s sustenance. If only your needs are met, you are still in the desert; you are still just being sustained. We need to move beyond that – to the point that we become a blessing to other people! That’s when we’ve stepped into the wealth. How far you want to go with that is really up to you. God is willing to go as far as you are willing and able! As long as your heart is right, He will just keep taking you there.

The foundational Kingdom principle about finances is the tithe. Many of us have no objection to the tithe, but there are some believers that object to it, so even if we are fine with the tithe ourselves, it is important (for the sake of others) that we would understand what their objections are so that we can minister to them from the Word and be a blessing to them. So, for those that have an objection to the tithe, what’s the primary or most common objection?

The number one objection to the tithe that some believers have is that they believe that it is “from the Law.” Even well respected Bible teachers often say something like this: “tithing is of the law, but we are no longer under the law, but under grace, so therefore the tithe is not for today.”

So, is tithing, in fact, from the LAW? The scriptural answer to that is NO! Tithing is in fact, not from the Law! It turns out, the problem most people have with tithing is actually not a theological issue – it is a money issue. We’ll take the next multiple sections to give examples from the Word of God that clearly show tithing is not from the Law that Moses received from God.

Pre-Law Tithing (Example 1): Abel and Cain

Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. (Gen. 4:2-5)

This particular verse of scripture does not specifically say refer to the offering as a tithe, but we can deduce that it was in fact a tithe by looking at the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament). In fact, because many of the Christian authors of the first several centuries read the Septuagint, they generally recognized this offering in Genesis 4 as tithing.

What's the Septuagint? In Jesus' day, most Israelites spoke fluent Greek, but did not speak fluent Hebrew – hence the Septuagint. We can give a lot of credence to the Septuagint because Paul often times quoted from it in his letters. This is why some of Paul's quotes do not line up perfectly with the Hebrew – it is because Paul was literally quoting the Septuagint. This should cause us to feel quite comfortable with the Septuagint because Paul (under the unction of the Holy Spirit) was using it as a source document for the Old Testament text.

When we read an English translation of the Gen. 4 account, we see ““If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. ” (Gen. 4:7, KJV) But, when we read the Septuagint, we see: “If thou didst rightly offer, but didst not rightly divide, didst thou not sin?” (Gen. 4:7, Septuagint) This is why the early church scholars considered Gen. 4 to be speaking of the tithe, not simply offerings – because tithes, not offerings, are divided from the whole. The Old Testament term was to “divide the portion.” The tithe was a very specific division, which was understood to be 1/10th. An offering, on the other hand, was whatever amount or portion you wanted to bring. You can offer to the Lord whatever you want to offer – it is your choice – it is a freewill offering. The tithe is a designated portion (1/10th). The implication from Genesis 4 is that Cain sinned in that he “did not rightly divide;” he brought less than 1/10th.

Someone may also get hung up on Gen. 4 speaking about the tithe because the word “first fruits” is used. Lets look at Deut. 26 (the most exhaustive teaching on the tithe we have in all of scripture). In verse 12 of Deut. 26, we see Moses specifically call the first fruits the tithe. The tithe is the first fruits of the crops when it comes in – it is just a very particular portion of first fruits – 1/10th – the first 1/10th that comes in. When you make \$100 through your employment, the first \$10 is supposed to go to God. If you have animals, it's the firstlings. If you have crops, it's the first fruit. It's the first fruits of our increase. (Prov. 3:9)

The tithe is called the first fruits, but there is another offering that is called the first fruits that the Israelites would do once a year. They would bring the first fruits of their first crop coming in to the Lord. That was just to say “thank you for this” - and guess what they did with it? They ate it! Why? Because the Lord was saying “I want you to enjoy it – with Me!” Take the first part of it, and bring whatever portion you want, bring it to me with Thanksgiving (acknowledge Me) and enjoy it! Sometimes when the Old Testament speaks about “first fruits” it is speaking about the first fruits offering, but other times it uses “first fruit” interchangeably with tithe. Genesis 4 is speaking to Abel offering the first fruits as a tithe to the Lord. Cain also made an offering, but it was not divided rightly (was not 1/10th). So there's the first example of tithing in the Old Testament approx. 2454 years before the Law was given through Moses.

Aside: The Offering Matters

If you think about it, the Bible is not very long considering that it represents “the wisdom of God towards man.” The fact that it is not many more volumes than it is tells us something – that God chose both His stories and His words very carefully! So, a really important question to ask yourself every time you are reading something from the Bible would be: why is God sharing this story with me? So, in that vein, why did God tell us this story about Cain and Abel?

We see from the Hebrew that Cain did not bring the first fruit, but just “some fruit.” You get your paycheck, you spend a little here, you spend a little there, and you remember “oh yeah, I do need to give something to the Lord I guess.” Cain brought the fruit, but not the first fruit. Abel also brought an offering, but he brought the firstborn of his flock and their fat. Not only did he give 1/10th, but he also gave his FIRST 1/10th & his BEST 1/10th. That is why it says he “gave the fat” – the best of the flock. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering. Why is God telling us this story about their offerings? For us to see that God had an emotional response to Abel’s offering!

Despite not respecting Cain’s offering, God was not angry with Cain; He simply said if you don’t do well, sin lies at the door. It was like a Father snagging a young son that was about to run into the street. You warned him out of love not out of anger. And God warns us about money now too.

Why is God asking for 10%? Think about this, what senior partner would say “I will take 10% and you keep 90%?” Is God being mean to us? Why does He even ask for 10% and the best 10%? Does He need it? His streets are paved with gold – and if that wasn’t enough gold, He would just speak! So, God doesn’t need the money. We know that. He loves us. We know that. So why’s he asking for our best 10%? God asks us to tithe for our sake - to sever our heart from a God out there who would want to snare us and grab us and pull us into a pit of sorrow and pain! God says “money has a spirit on it” – Jesus calls it Mammon. If you look at the history of the word Mammon, you will see that it is a spirit. That is exactly why Jesus personifies it. “You cannot serve God and Mammon.” Don’t be fooled, there is a spirit on money and it wants to pull you down. You have to make a decision – who are you going to serve? Who are you going to make your source: God or Mammon? Cain in Genesis 4 was on the verge of making money his source and God was saying “that’s not a good choice!”

When we bring something to the Lord, we need to realize that our offering really matters to Him! There is an interchange that is happening between us and the Father and it is a beautiful thing and He knows your heart stance in giving – if you are really bringing it to him joyfully. (Sometimes we do need to go through the process to get to the point of being joyful about giving. That’s fine! Just remind yourself of all that He has done in your life such that you can make an offering to Him with joy in your heart!)

As soon as we are thinking that we cannot give for whatever reason, money has become our source, not Him. We just remind ourselves that everything we have is a blessing from Him. When

we bring an offering to the Lord it shows that we understand that all the good in our lives is from Him. And God has a visceral response to it. It blesses God when you bring an offering to Him with a joyful heart. God loves a cheerful giver! (2 Cor. 9:7) So, God tells His children (us) this story of Cain and Abel's offerings to show that the offering does matter.

Pre-Law Tithing (Example 2): Abram with Melchizedek

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

Notice that Melchizedek was the "priest of God Most High." Why is that important? Because the priest is who we bring our tithes to. (More on that in a future teaching). Notice also that Melchizedek refers to God as the "possessor of heaven and earth." Ps. 24:1 echoes that same truth: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."

Abram had been blessed by God – he had just defeated 4 king's armies with his own personal army of 318. That was miraculous! So, what's Abram's response? He gave a TITHE OF ALL to Melchizedek!

Is someone tithing here? YES! And when did this event take place? More than 630 years before the Law ever came into existence! It is beyond argument – the tithe simply did not come from the Law!

Pre-Law Tithing (Example 3): Jacob

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God. 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 to You." (Gen 28:20-22)

The context of this scripture is that God had just told Jacob this:

I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."
(Gen. 28: 13b-15)

And Jacob's response was "if that's true, I am surely going to tithe to You!" The Hebrew for "a tenth" in verse 22 is one of the two Hebrew words that means "a tithe." In fact, the same word, *Asar*, is used throughout Deut. 14 as "tithe." So here we see Jacob making a vow that included tithing to the Lord – again hundreds of years before the Law was given through Moses. So where did Jacob get the idea of tithing? Perhaps from his grandfather (Abraham)? Perhaps as a divine revelation from God? But one place Jacob did not get the concept of tithing from: the Law! He spoke these words 482 years before the Law was given!

Did the tithe come from the Law? NO!

The Results of Tithing: Abram and Jacob

God's blessing is on the tither! Let's look at Abram and Jacob's stories to that end:

What happened when Abraham gave that tithe to Melchizedek? The king of Sodom came and told him to keep the spoils of war. Abraham told the king of Sodom "NO" even though he was 100% entitled to those spoils of war. Why did Abram deny those spoils? Because he did not want anyone to be able to say that they (a person and not God) had made him rich. Abram said "I don't want any of it. Take it all back. God is my source!" 4 verses later, we see God tell Abraham "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." That's God's response to that Abram's heart attitude. It turned out that Abram became so rich the land could not support him! He had to separate from his nephew Lot because they had too many cattle between them to be able to all graze on the same land. God blessed Abram's socks off because his heart attitude was "God, you are my source! I don't even need all these millions of dollars! God you are my source!" And God said, I am going to make those millions look like they were nothing!

Look at the blessing in Jacob's life! Jacob was working for a deceitful man, Laban. God changed the genetics of the sheep so that the young of that flock came out "spotted" in order to bless Jacob! That's God's supernatural blessing on the tither. God will literally change the genetics of sheep to make you rich if He needs to! He will move heaven and earth. You have to know that tithing to the Lord is declaring Him to be God over your finances! And when you say "YOU are the God over my finances" God says "OK, then I will be God over your finances!" He will move Heaven and earth to bring blessing into your life.

Post-Law Tithing (Hebrews 7): Jesus is Our High Priest Now

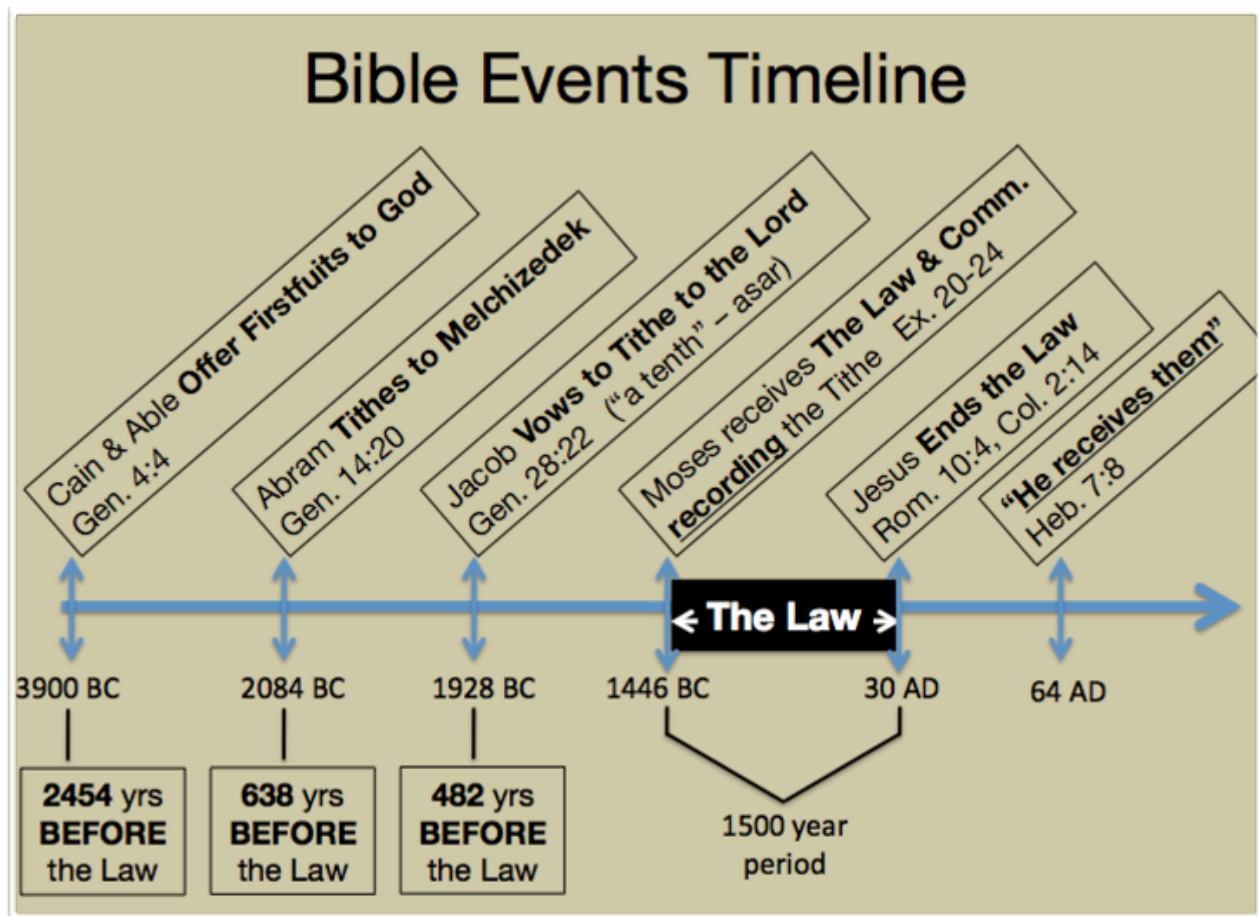
Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and

blessed him who had the promises. Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. (Heb. 7:4-9)

Notice that the author of Hebrews says in verse 8 “Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives.” The “of whom it is witnessed that he lives” is Jesus! (Acts 2:32 uses this “witness” language, as does Act 3:15) So, verse 8 shows us that Jesus is receiving tithes right now! Why? Because Jesus is the High Priest in the days of the New Covenant (now). Deut. 26 (the most exhaustive chapter on the tithe) says we bring our tithe to the one who is priest in those days. In these days that is Jesus Himself. Wow!

So how do you bring your tithe now? On your own you bring your tithe before God to worship Him with it. You say “Jesus as my High Priest I bring my tithe into the house of the Lord. Father, I declare before you that you are my God and my source and everything I have is from you. I thank you for my health, car, house, money in the bank.” You worship God. Then you take your tithe to the house of the Lord (where He is choosing to make His Name abide to you). And Heb. 7:8 tells us that Jesus then receives that tithe!

Biblical Tithing Timeline



Tithing was taking place before the Law, through the Law, and way after the Law! The Biblical timeline of tithing is like Interstate 70 in that sense. Just because it runs through Indiana does not mean it starts there. Tithing ran through the Law, but it came from before the Law and continued after the Law! Tithing is not from the Law!

The tithe is a gift from the Lord to set His people free and in return He gives them blessing. God says “here is what I want to do. I am going to set you free from a demonic spirit and in return I am going to bless you!” What part of that deal is anything but awesome? When we bring the tithe to the Lord it takes an axe to the trunk of the tree of that spirit that says “money you are my source” and instead says “God, you are my source!” God says “OK, now I am going to show myself strong on your behalf in this area.”

Text Summary (for reading as a group)

If we don't have the proper mindset regarding finances, kingdom principles about money are not going to operate in their fullness in our lives – and what little bit does work, you are going to find yourself struggling with heart issues. Despite being a believer, you too will experience a lot of the “piercing through with sorrows” that those that come into success through the world's system experience. However, if we approach finances with the mindset that God wants us to have, Proverbs 10:22 tells us that “the blessing of the Lord makes one rich and He adds no sorrow with it.”

God takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servants. (Ps. 35:27) God likes our prosperity. He is for it. He designed it. We simply need to decide that we will NEVER allow money to become our source! Once we realize that God is our sustenance that we can move into the promised land. God will promote us because He knows the riches won't then destroy us. Once we know that God's our source (not the riches), then He can pour the blessings into us!

Being blessed financially means your needs are met AND you are able to meet the needs of others! If only your needs are met, that's not wealth; that's sustenance. We need to move beyond that – to the point that we become a blessing to other people! That's when we've stepped into the areas of wealth and how far you want to go with that is really up to you. God is willing to go as far as you are willing and able! As long as your heart is right, He will just keep taking you there.

The foundational Kingdom principle about finances is the tithe. Many of us have no objection to the tithe, but there are some believers that object to it, so even if we are fine with the tithe ourselves, it is important (for the sake of others) that we would understand what their objections are so that we can minister to them from the Word and be a blessing to them.

The number one objection to the tithe that some believers have is that they believe that it is “from the Law.” The scriptures clearly show that tithing is in fact, not from the Law! For example, in Gen. 4:2-5, we can see from the Septuagint that Cain did not “rightly divide” his tithe (1/10th) from

his income to give to the Lord. Abel, however offered a full 1/10th and gave the best and first of his flock. That is an example of tithing nearly 2500 years before the Law was given to Moses.

We also learn from the story of Cain and Abel's offerings that God was pleased with one offering and not pleased with the other. The offering does matter to God; He in fact had an emotional response to Abel's offering!

Despite being displeased with Cain's offering, God was not angry with Cain. He simply said if you don't do well, sin lies at the door. It was like a Father snagging a young son that was about to run into the street. God warned Cain out of love not out of anger. God is asking for our best 10% for our sake - to sever our heart from a God out there who would want to snare us and grab us and pull us into a pit of sorrow and pain! Cain in Genesis 4 was on the verge of making money his source and God was saying "that's not a good choice!"

As soon as we are thinking that we cannot give for whatever reason, money has become our source, not Him. We can fix that by just remind ourselves that everything we have is a blessing from Him. When we bring an offering to the Lord it shows that we understand that all the good in our lives is from Him. And God has a visceral response to it. It blesses God when you bring an offering to Him with a joyful heart. God loves a cheerful giver! (2 Cor. 9:7)

In Genesis 14:18-20 we see Abram tithe to Melchizedek. Notice that Melchizedek was the "priest of God Most High." Why is that important? Because the priest is who we bring our tithes to. Abram had been blessed by God – he had just defeated 4 king's armies with his own personal army of 318. That was miraculous! So, what's Abram's response? He gave a TITHE OF ALL to Melchizedek! And when did this event take place? More than 630 years before the Law ever came into existence! It is beyond argument – the tithe simply did not come from the Law!

In Genesis 28, God speaks to Jacob in such a profound way that Jacob's response was "if that's true, I am surely going to tithe to You!" Where did Jacob get the idea of tithing? Perhaps from his grandfather (Abraham)? Perhaps as a divine revelation from God? But one place Jacob did not get the concept of tithing from: the Law! He spoke these words 482 years before the Law was given! Did the tithe come from the Law? NO!

God's blessing is on the tither! After he tithed, God told Abraham "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." That's God's response to that Abram's heart attitude. It turned out that Abram became so rich the land could not support him! He had to separate from his nephew Lot because they had too many cattle between them to be able to all graze on the same land. God blessed Abram's socks off because his heart attitude was "God, you are my source! I don't even need all these millions of dollars! God you are my source!" And God said, I am going to make those millions look like they were nothing!

Look at the blessing in Jacob's life! Jacob was working for a deceitful man, Laban. God changed the genetics of the sheep so that the young of that flock came out "spotted" in order to bless Jacob!

That's God's supernatural blessing on the tither. God will literally change the genetics of sheep to make you rich if He needs to! He will move heaven and earth. You have to know that tithing to the Lord is declaring Him to be God over your finances! And when you say "YOU are the God over my finances" God says "OK, then I will be God over your finances!" He will move Heaven and earth to bring blessing into your life.

Tithing is also clearly described after the era of the Law as well! In Hebrews 7:8, we that Jesus is receiving tithes right now! Why? Because Jesus is the High Priest in the days of the New Covenant (now). Deut. 26 (the most exhaustive chapter on the tithe) says we bring our tithe to the one who is priest in those days. In these days that is Jesus Himself. Wow!

So how do you bring your tithe now? On your own you bring your tithe before God to worship Him with it. You say "Jesus as my High Priest I bring my tithe into the house of the Lord. Father, I declare before you that you are my God and my source and everything I have is from you. I thank you for my health, car, house, money in the bank." You worship God. Then you take your tithe to the house of the Lord (where He is choosing to make His Name abide to you). And Heb. 7:8 tells us that Jesus then receives that tithe!

Tithing was taking place before the Law, through the Law, and way after the Law! The Biblical timeline of tithing is like Interstate 70 in that sense. Just because it runs through Indiana does not mean it starts there. Tithing ran through the Law, but it came from before the Law and continued after the Law! Tithing is not from the Law! The tithe is a gift from the Lord to set His people free and in return He gives them blessing. God says "here is what I want to do. I am going to set you free from a demonic spirit and in return I am going to bless you!" What part of that deal is anything but awesome? When we bring the tithe to the Lord it takes an axe to the trunk of the tree of that spirit that says "money you are my source" and instead says "God, you are my source!" God says "OK, now I am going to show myself strong on your behalf in this area."

Points to Ponder . . .

- Imagine you were talking to a well-meaning brother or sister in Christ who was struggling financially. You gently bring up tithing and they "correct" you that tithing is not for the New Covenant believer. What would you share with them?
- God loves a cheerful giver. Perhaps you have had (or may have) experiences in preparing an offering where you are less than "cheerful." How would you handle that? What would you do?
- How is God being kind to us in asking us to tithe our best 10%? Perhaps you have a personal story of how tithing has been a blessing in your life?